**Utilizing PLC and Coaching to Support Students in Purposeful**

**Academic Conversations**

**By Viviana Espinosa**

**Submitted in partial completion of**

**Reach Institute for School Leadership Administrative Credential and**

**Masters of Educational Leadership**

## Abstract

Costano, a K-8 school located in East Palo Alto, serves a low –socio economic and ethnically diverse community, of which 65% are English-language learners.  After conducting several rounds of classroom observations at Costano it became apparent that while teachers delivered instruction that was of high quality and mostly engaging, they were not providing enough meaningful and strategic opportunities for students to engage in conversation around content. Research supports the need for academic conversation to provide students with the opportunity to build academic language and conversation skills while providing teachers with a formative assessment to assess student content understanding and language ability. To build teacher instructional capacity we utilized a professional development model called a professional learning community (PLC). This model seeks to authentically engage participants in collaborative inquiry around a common problem of practice and build their learning community while refining their classroom practice. To support the implementation of new learning that came from the inquiry group, studies suggest the use of a peer or instructional coaching model.  A group of eight participants, including both teachers and administrators, formed a professional learning community. Each community member paired up with a colleague for instructional coaching with the common goal of supporting students to hold academic conversations. Data collected through classroom observations, personal interviews, and feedback forms were analyzed along with researcher and meeting notes showing that all participants grew their understanding around academic conversations, all enjoyed the experience of being part of a Professional learning community that included coaching

cycles, and all participants found the inquiry cycle meaningful and relevant. The level of implementation, depth of content knowledge, and availability of participants varied. A common understanding of classroom practices were being built and questions arose throughout this research that suggests further study.

### Problem of Practice

Costano Elementary and the 49ers Academy is a K-8 school located in Ravenswood City School District in the city of East Palo Alto.  There are close to 600 students attending our elementary and middle school program with the ethnic makeup of mostly Latino, African-American, and Pacific Islander populations. The school is located in a culturally rich community that is statistically inflicted with issues of high-poverty and high-crime.  The majority of our students and families are bilingual with languages including Samoan, Tongan, and Spanish. Our school strives to provide each student with the tools necessary for academic success and civic responsibility by providing a model environment to foster such achievement.

Over the past seven years, Costano and the 49ers Academy has steadily grown to become a school community known for its teacher leadership, professional learning communities, innovative teachers, and supportive yet dynamic administration. While the majority of the other schools within the district remain in Program improvement status, Costano and the 49ers Academy has been out of PI for the past three year. Seven years ago this school, as well as the other five schools in the district, was under close curriculum surveillance of the adopted Open Court Curriculum. This curriculum sought to standardize instruction to the point where teachers were feeling disempowered to teach and design instruction to best meet their students needs. Through a grassroots teacher

movement, a handful of teachers resisted the restraints put on by the district. These teachers sought out a new approach to literacy instruction called balanced literacy which included the use of the reading and writing workshop models. In their classrooms they began to transition from the previously scripted curriculum to one that required a level of teaching expertise. The teachers began to see students motivated and engaged and all the while their reading and writing scores rose. This caught the eye of the district who slowly began to gravitate towards a similar literacy approach. It took teacher leadership and supportive school administration to make this cultural and instructional shift to occur.

Skip forward seven years and teachers at the site report the use of a balanced literacy instructional program, however data collected points to a disconnect between what is said to be done and what is actually occurring in the classroom. Sitting in a data meeting with administration, grade level after grade level of teachers explain how the students they have received this year are simply not prepared. Reading scores are not meeting grade-level expectation and the validity of certain scores are questioned for reliability. While teachers report that structures are in place to support the balanced literacy approach, the transfer of skills and knowledge from the year prior are not being seen by the incoming teacher. Administration has begun doing bi-monthly grade-level check-in with each grade-level in addition to bi-monthly classroom observations. Peer observations and peer coaching are both new structures supported by the school site, providing a culture where relational trust is being built. Walking into classrooms, the majority of teachers exhibit a strong instructional pedagogy, however the expectations of students and understandings of content vary by teacher.

At the end of the 2013-14 school year staff came together to complete a needs assessment for literacy. The need that all grade-levels agreed upon was a focus on building and supporting students' academic language. A theory of action was created that included professional development from Literacy consultant, Dr. Adria Klein, and professional development around peer coaching to continue to build our site's instructional and collaborative capacity. Adria Klein was to provide professional development for building and supporting students' academic language for two sessions during this school year. Peer coaching was to occur three times during the school year following a two-day Coaching intensive in the summer.

After the initial academic language PD, administrators conducted classroom observations, noting instruction that supported the building of academic language. Drawing from research provided from *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning* (City, E., Elmore, R.F.,Fiarman, S., & Teitel, L., 2009), the relationship between the student, the teacher, and the content is analyzed to exhibit the importance of these elements in providing effective instruction to students. With the triangulation of these three elements, administrators analyzed notes taken documenting teacher moves and student moves around academic language during classroom observations. It was noted that generally teachers had a strong expertise around content knowledge and utilized tier-two vocabulary, instructional pedagogy supported by the gradual release of responsibility theory and scaffolded directions as needed, and an overall positive learning environment for students.

Moving back to the triangulation between teacher, student, and content it was noted that the relationship between student and content was observed with limited

interaction. Students' participation was limited by few opportunities to process their thoughts orally aside from a standard turn-and-talk structure that started the conversation but did not support the use of real dialogue. Students were observed repeating directions, responding to teacher directed questions, and few students were provided the opportunity to share their thoughts or findings.

The problem of practice has been identified through classroom observations, analysis of data, and preliminary research. Through these multiple points of data it was noted that students are not given the opportunity to discuss and interact with content in meaningful ways to support and build their academic language and to support them to formulate their own ideas and understandings around content.  In order to support a more culturally responsive approach, a shift in teacher practice to include opportunity for students to engage in dialogue needs to occur.

**Review of the Literature**

In order to address the problem of practice that looks at the need for students to have the opportunity to engage in dialogue around content in order them to formulate their own ideas and understandings, the review of literature focusing on critical theory, critical pedagogy, peer coaching, collaborative inquiry, and academic conversation is examined.

This study seeks to create a culturally relevant educational experience for students coming from East Palo Alto's historically marginalized communities by providing meaningful and structured opportunities for students to engage in authentic dialogue. The theoretical framework of critical pedagogy is utilized as a conceptual framework acknowledging factors that lead to an undemocratic schooling experience where students'

lived experiences and voices are silenced and invalidated.  The role of dialogue as an essential factor that supports students to construct meaning and empower students with the goal of creating a democratic schooling experience within critical pedagogy is explored.

The literature on academic conversations and accountable talk is reviewed to influence the instructional moves necessary to support students to engage in dialogue around content. Finally, literature around collaborative inquiry, instructional coaching, and peer coaching was reviewed as methods of shifting classroom instruction.

**Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory towards a Critical Pedagogy**

**A Liberatory Pedagogy**

Paulo Freire (1921-1977), educator of the world, through his work to help improve the lives of marginalized populations, was called the "inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy" (McLaren, 2000, pp.1). As an educator, Paulo Freire worked towards creating a liberatory pedagogy with such pivotal work as *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Freire examined the role of oppressive structures and their effects on marginalized populations with the goal of emancipating the oppressed towards a liberatory perspective through a dialogic process where real-life problems are posed and analyzed with the goal of co-constructing new knowledge. The goal of this dialogic process is to create what he calls "praxis" or action based on critical reflection and dialogue with the aim of social transformation. Paulo Freire viewed teaching as a political act and attested to the idea that teachers are political operatives, moral agents, cultural workers, philosophers, and community researchers. In viewing teaching as a political act that involves taking on multiple roles, he challenged teachers to welcome the

acknowledgment of political and economic influences upon education.  In exposing these influences, the teacher can guide students towards a critical perspective of the world around them.

Freire noted the way schools were being used by "dominate interests to validate their own privilege while certifying the inferiority of students marginalized by social and economic factors" (Kincheloe, 2008, pp.71) and his work aimed to interfere with what he called a "dehumanizing process" by proposing a liberatory pedagogy which, premised in the ideals of hope and love, would work towards creating a humanizing schooling experience. One component of critical pedagogy that is utilized to counteract the dehumanizing process is that of dialogue.

**The Role of Dialogue**

The role of dialogue as discussed by Freire and Shore (1987) in the article titled *What is the "dialogical method" of teaching?* describes dialogue as "a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it"(pp.13). In this way dialogue is part of the knowledge gaining process where individuals are situated together to discover their personal truths within a larger social and political context.

The notion of filling students with prescribed knowledge is described by Freire's (1970) banking theory of education where the teacher deposits information in students' minds. The aim for the student is to repeat the knowledge deposited by the teacher in its initial form.  This style of teaching does not view the student as a human being with experiences and perspectives, but rather as an empty receptacle. This type of banking

education closely resembles traditional methods of direct instruction where teachers hold the knowledge and pass it on to their students. Their students are passively memorizing knowledge that may or may not relate to their daily lives or their way of knowing. This model of education does not support critique or critical thinking. It does not build from students' funds of knowledge and affirm their ways of knowing.

John Dewey's notion of progressive education suggests that teachers formulate lessons based on their students' life experiences.  For John Dewey (1916), whether or not an education helps build knowledge rests in "whether that experience makes possible a deeper appreciation for, and intelligence about, future experiences" (pp.76). He defined education as "that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct subsequent experience" (p. 76). Dewey explained how it is through the connection of real experience and information that higher forms of knowledge can be reached (Kincheloe, 2010).  It is in starting with student life experiences through the dialogic process that generative themes emerge to further guide their investigation in looking to problem solve. Critical teachers can help students to question their experiences and to recognize the important points where those experiences may intersect with larger social, political, or literary issues (Kincheloe, 2010). Through these types of rich schooling experiences driven by dialogue, students will begin to see themselves as part of a larger globalized society and give a purpose and meaning to their schooling context.

**Towards democratic schooling**

Henry Giroux, influenced by the Frankfurt School, Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy, and Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on cultural capital, helped develop critical

pedagogy as it exposes the forces that try to undermine the struggle for democratic schooling. Giroux exposed the positivistic view that is held in schooling institutions, which asserts the belief in natural science for providing all knowledge, delegitimizing the belief in social and cultural perspectives as a factor involved in cognitive development. By delegitimizing knowledge that is influenced by social and cultural perspectives, this positivistic view rejects knowledge that is not in agreement with popular culture and with those who hold power. This limited view in defining knowledge is being used inequitably as a tool to reject the ways of knowing formed and acknowledged by marginalized populations (McLaren & Kincheloe, 1994).

Connecting with the work of critical theorists, critical pedagogists, and ideas behind cultural responsiveness, culturally relevant pedagogy is defined and presented.

**Culturally relevant pedagogy**

Based on conclusions from ethnographic research of seven effective teachers of African American students, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1996) designed a culturally relevant pedagogy that lies on three propositions (1) students must experience success, (2) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and (3) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the existing order (p.287-288). Culturally relevant pedagogy holds nine assertions in developing a framework for its understanding. These are the assertions:

- Culturally relevant teachers need not come from the same ethnic group as the students they teach.

- Socio-historical-political realities beyond the school constrain much of what happens in classrooms and must be understood well by the culturally relevant teacher.

- It is desirable to teach content that is culturally relevant to students' previous experiences, that fosters their natal cultural identity, and that empowers them with knowledge and practices to operate successfully in mainstream society.

- It is desirable to involve the parents and families of children from marginalized and normalized groups.

- It is desirable to include students' first languages in the school program and in classroom interactions

- Culturally relevant teachers are personally warm toward and respectful of, as well as academically demanding of, all students.

- Teachers who teach in culturally relevant ways spell out the cultural assumptions on which the classroom (and schooling) operate

- There are five components of culturally relevant classroom management: using group work, controlling indirectly rather than confrontationally, avoiding "spotlighting," using an unhurried pace, using the home participating structures of the children.

- Racism is prevalent in schools and needs to be addressed. Some recent studies show that it can be tackled.

Ladson-Billings (1996) suggested using the assertions previously listed as a place to begin reflection on the topic of social justice. She wants us to examine how it is

supported or impeded through current classroom and schooling practices. She also suggests collaboration amongst teachers as well as other key interest groups with a goal of systematic change in both school and district policies (p.304-305). By providing students with a culturally relevant educational experience, teachers align their daily practices in the classroom with the above mentioned assertions and beliefs.

**Academic Conversations and Accountable Talk**

Building off the importance of the dialogic process in supporting students to build ideas of their own, Goldenberg (1992) provided research on Instructional Conversations. In his research he looked at how discussion promoted comprehension for students and he identified both instructional elements and conversational elements to support instructional conversations.  The instructional elements include having a thematic focus, activating prior knowledge/schema, promotion of complex language and expression, direct teaching, and elicitation of bases for statements or positions. The conversational elements include having fewer "known answer questions", responsivity to student contributions, having connected discourse, creating a challenging but non threatening atmosphere, and general participation including "self- selected turns." He discusses the role of the teacher as weaving through the elements to facilitate and support the conversation (p. 316).

Jeff Zwiers'(2008) built on the research of Goldenberg's instructional conversations in  utilizing the framework in his research on academic classroom discussions. He noted the relationship between talking and thinking and the importance of both in academic development. Zwiers describes rich and meaningful classroom talk as a "tool for working with information such that it becomes knowledge and

understanding" (p. 101). He defines what he calls teacher "display" questions and he examines the differences between traditional IRF classroom procedure and real discussions. He defines IRF as being highly teacher centered and following a structure where the teacher initiates a display question, a student responds to the question, and then the teacher gives feedback to the student. In discussing discussions, Zwiers (2008) states the importance of open-ended questions to provoke more thoughtful student responses. His work looks at the use of visuals such as prompt posters to support students in holding a conversation (p. 130).

In Zwier and Crawford's (2009) research on beginning academic conversations in the classroom, they began by first analyzing the features of a good conversation and began comparing these features to what they observed in classrooms and what they noted in conversations in their own lives. Beginning with Goldenberg's (1992) features of effective whole class discussions they recorded and analyzed student conversations. Through the use of open- ended conversations and conversation prompts based on conversation features, they noticed that students were able to extend and elaborate on their ideas, engage in deeper discussions around theme rather than story retell, utilize new vocabulary to express their ideas, and students became more independent thinkers and talkers. Students gained an ability to converse on their own as they began to understand "the recursive nature of conversation" (p. 73).

More recent work done by Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard (2014) takes a close look at the power of conversation to support student to build complex ideas and solve problems. They also discussed the role of teachers in supporting and guiding conversations in school, classroom conditions that support students' building on one

another's language in an authentic manner. They mentioned the importance of providing students with opportunities to practice utilizing the skills needed to build ideas with partners.

Researcher J. D. Wilhelm (2014) describes what he calls 'dialogic teaching.' In his research he looked into finding ways to include talk in the classroom that was guided by more authentic questions and with classroom extensions that hold a real world purpose and value. In this way he saw talk as a vehicle to empower students as knowledge seekers where they talk to learn and at the same time they learn to talk.

**Shifting Instructional Practice**

To support teachers to shift their current instructional practice to one that is more culturally relevant by providing students with meaningful opportunities to discuss and dialogue around content, a collaborative inquiry model of professional development followed up with instructional or peer coaching is introduced. A literature review of professional learning communities, peer coaching, and instructional coaching are presented to support this intervention model.

**Professional Learning Communities**

The idea of a "professional community" first appeared in literature in the early 1990s (Cuban, 1992; McLaughlin, 1992), and has its roots with organizational theory literature. This idea of a professional learning community connects with the term community of practice. In defining the term community of practice, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) define it as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis"(p.4). Wenger (1998) acknowledged that knowledge being gained by

a group within a work force is an important factor of a workplace's efficiency and it is a valuable resource. Louis (2006) examined how this group learning process creates a shared culture that can lead to the improvement of teachers' instructional practices and can promote the implementation of agreed upon effective practices.

Within a Professional learning community, the relationships being built through the shared learning experience and shared vision is a key element that can positively affect student learning. As staff grow as a learning community and work together they move towards the creation of a shared responsibility with the end goal of student success ( DuFour & Eaker, 2004; Hord, 1997; Roy & Hord, 2006).

Leclerc, Moreau and Lépine (2009a; 2009b) identified seven indicators that research on PLC's identify as crucial to evaluate the progress of a PLC in a school;

1. The school's vision

2. The physical and human conditions that encourage teachers to cooperate, learn, and share together

3. The cooperative culture of the school

4. The manifestation of leadership from both teachers and principals

5. The dissemination of expertise and shared learning

6. The topics addressed based on concerns related to student learning

7. Decision making based on accurate data

(Cate, Vaughn, & O'Hair, 2006; Dibbon, 2000; Du- Four & Eaker, 2004; Hord, 1997; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Leclerc et Moreau, 2009; Miller, 2005; Roy & Hord, 2006; Schussler, 2003; Stoll & Temperley, 2009).

Leclerc, Mo- reau and Lépine (2009a; 2009b) used these seven indicators to identify three stages of progression and created the Observation Grid for the Progression of Schools as Professional Learning Communities (PLCOG)2. There results noted the importance of making time for meetings, ensuring support for teachers, having a follow-up to the collaborative meetings, and the involvement of teachers in the decision making. These factors four factors are to support the progression of a PLC regardless of the stage. They go into further detail in suggesting recommendations for the three stages of progression.

At the initiation stage, they stress the importance of having team members accept and share a vision with clear expectations. They also discuss the importance is of these meetings being structured and productive with some administrative guidance. They state that the initiation stage is where the development of a culture of collaboration must be built. The second stage, implementation, focuses on building the culture of inquiry and it identifies the need for administration to promote this culture of inquiry. The final stage, integration, has PLC's operating with a distributed leadership among teachers, an understanding of the need to monitor student learning, and providing more options for teachers to grow as professionals (2009a; 2009b).

**Instructional Coaching**

In the late 1970's and early 1980's Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers conducted research around the topic of teacher professional development. In this period, they began to identify factors that supported teachers' learning and factors that supported teachers to implement what they were learning in their classrooms. They noted that when teachers learned new practices along with the underlying theory for the practice, the opportunity to

practice the skill and receive feedback, and the observation of new practices being demonstrated, they were able to thoughtfully and purposely implement these new skills in their teaching practice (Showers et al., 1987).

Research by Swift, et, al. (2009) described the importance of literacy coaches having literacy content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and habits of reflective practice. They described the coaching cycle to include a pre-conference, a lesson observation, and a post-conference. They identify how the coaching framework utilizes the gradual release of responsibility paradigm (Pearson & Gallager, 1983) where teachers a gradually given responsibility for full and thoughtful implementation of a new skill or strategy into their practice.

**Peer Coaching**

Peer coaching similarly to instructional coaching was first introduced to teacher education by Joyce and Showers (1982) as a strategy that can help facilitate the transfer of new skills from the staff development to the actual practice in the classroom. Peer coaching by definition, usually includes two colleagues engaged in a mutually supportive relationship (Neubert & McAllister, 1993). Instructional coaching involves components of a pre-observational conference, observation, and post-observation conference within a cyclical process. The initial formation of the peer coaching model was primarily designed to help facilitate follow-up support to a professional development (Leggett & Hoyle, 1987). More recent studies have discussed newer approaches to peer coaching  such as reflective peer coaching (Vidmar, 2006) and collaborative peer coaching (Jewitt & MacPhee, 2012) which help redefine possibilities for the use of peer coaching. Reflective peer coaching is a model of peer coaching that focuses on developing reflective

practitioners. The aim in reflective peer coaching is to promote self- assessment and collaboration amongst teachers. While, collaborative peer coaching uses a model of peer coaching that focuses on the method 2 +2 where teachers observe each others classrooms and leave two compliments and two suggestions for improvement. The aim of this approach is to enhance teaching skills and student learning while supporting a collaborative working environment for teachers. Further research on peer coaching done by Ackland, R., 1991; Bowman & McCormich, 2001; Robbins, P.,1991; Slater, C. & Simmons, D., 2001; Skinner, M.E. & Welch, F.C., 1996; Jewett, P.,& MacPhee, D. 2012, have helped study the impact of peer coaching on teachers.

The review of one study conducted with the peer coaching model by Huston and Weaver (2008) defines peer coaching "as a formative, collegial process whereby pairs of faculty voluntarily work together to improve or expand their approaches to teaching". Their study's review of peer coaching literature provided a rational for such a practice by stating that several documents show the benefits of peer coaching ranging from improved faculty morale and motivation, increased collaboration among faculty, to more careful time and attention brought to one's pedagogical choices (Brancato, 2003; Menges, 1987; Skinner and Welch, 1996). Another effect of peer coaching explored was the role of reflection on teaching practices during the coaching process where it was noted that reflection on practice often including critical reflection and this was conceived as being a benefit of this types of coaching (Huston & Weaver, 2007). Additionally, other literature presented the belief that the essential foundation for creating a non-evaluative professional development through peer coaching lies with mutual trust and respect as well as confidentiality (Slater & Simmons, 2001).

**Coaching as a Sustainable Professional Development**

Professional development is necessary for teachers both experienced and freshly into the teaching profession. However, there is a lack of opportunities for teacher development that seeks to improve one's teaching practice that is supportive of one's personal inquiry as an educator. This transformational approach to coaching is guided by a teacher's  inquiry to critically reflect through a dialogic process with the aim of transforming literacy instruction.  Traditional professional development where new skills or strategies are presented, but never supported or critiqued, has been an ineffective approach with few teachers transferring their new knowledge back to the classroom. In Schon's (1987) study of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action created strong connections between acting, reflecting, and learning in a developing professional context (Huston & Weaver, 2007). Schon's study connected the potentially ineffective approach of direct instruction on professional performance with its lack of relevant experience in using newly acquired cognition (Huston & Weaver, 2007). In acknowledging the role of experience in professional learning, Schon further suggests that "we study the experience of learning by doing and the artistry of good coaching" (Schon, 1987, p.17) supporting the idea of  professional learning being supported through active reflection while teaching followed with further reflection on the actions used in teaching.

 It has been established that literacy coaching positively impacts teachers and students (Casey, 2006; Duncan, 2006;Toll, 2006; Jewett & MacPhee, 2012). In an ideal world every site would have knowledgeable literacy coaches that could support teachers in trying new strategies and skills within their own school context. However, since not

every site is afforded this type of support a more localized approach that brings teachers

together to collaborate on improving their instructional practices through a process called

peer coaching (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Peer coaching holds a framework that promotes

collaboration and dialogue which allows individuals to develop their own perspectives,

form their pedagogical views, and model instructional strengths for others (Dale, 1994).

**Theory of Action**

The first problem of practice shows teachers not providing students with

structured opportunities for students to have meaningful academic conversations while

the second problem shows that the current literacy inquiry group was not leading teachers

to shift their classroom instruction. To support both problems of practice my theory of

action and formulate ideas of their own through the use of academic conversations.

## **Theory of Action**

| Problem | Literature Review | Intervention | Goals |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Teachers are not providing students with structured opportunities to have meaningful academic** | **Shifting teacher practice-** supported through coaching, school culture/climate, interest, relevant, inquiry<br><br>**Professional Learning Community-**supports collaborative inquiry learning culture, leadership support, factors, stages,<br><br>**Instructional/Peer Coaching-**context embedded, supports targeted | **Professional Learning Community-** Goal-supporting students to engage in academic conversations; Once a month; 4 factors for PLC; Leadership support<br>**Coaching-Instructional Coaching** 2 teachers Once a week<br>**Peer Coaching** | **Shift in teacher practice to include Academic conversations.**<br><br>**To define and have a common understanding of academic conversations**<br><br>**To create a plan for supporting teachers to have academic conversations** |

| conversations. | skill/strategy/procedure  **Academic**  **Conversations-** constructivist,  function, structure,  academic language,  internalization of  content | Remaining teachers | **throughout the**  **school.** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The current**  **inquiry group**  **has not lead to**  **teaching shifts.** | | | |

The intervention plan included the use of a professional learning community

model for inquiry paired with instructional/peer coaching. This intervention took the

literacy group of seven members and developed a professional learning community

model of inquiry.  PLC's took place once a month for sixty minutes before school. Each

member paired up with one or two colleagues for coaching following each PLC meeting.

Three meetings took place followed by two rounds of coaching.

Prior to the first meeting I met with each member individually to ask whether they

would like to participate, to answer any questions, and to discuss with whom they would

like to be paired up with for coaching. Our inquiry group included myself, as an

administrator, our principal, and five classroom teachers of second, third, fourth, and fifth

grades. I selected this model knowing that we had a mixture of veteran and new teachers

with a varied degree of content and teaching expertise. This group included the two

administrators as collaborative participants in this PLC. All seven members had been

trained in peer coaching and three of the four also received training in instructional

coaching. Two members in this inquiry group, including myself, are in Reach's

Instructional Leadership Academy. The remaining three members were first or second

year teachers. Although all members had received some training in peer coaching, the

veteran staff, including the four coaching leads for this study, had participated in several

years of training around coaching.

*Professional Learning Community Meeting Number One*

Prior to the first meeting I met with another participant to help brainstorm and

plan the agenda prior to the meeting. Once the agenda was drafted, I emailed each

participant for their input or feedback. On the morning of our PLC I provided donuts,

post-its, and colored agenda copies. I projected the agenda on a google-sheet so it could

be reviewed and revised as needed.

 During the first meeting we discussed an article that defined PLC's and we co-

constructed our inquiry question.  In order to support this process we utilized several

protocols, we reviewed the norms, and we assigned roles. I penciled in a sentence stem

that the article provided to help us craft our inquiry question. The inquiry question we

created was "*How can we improve students' academic language through the use of*

*academic conversations?*" Once our question was crafted we looked at how it could be

measured and decided to include "*as measured by classroom observations, student*

*scripting, and student videos?*"

Then we discussed what tools we would need and what tools our students would

need. We decided on a co-constructed anchor chart with sentence stems for students to

use and we decided to try and use a tool for scripting student talk. Utilizing a brainstorming protocol, everyone paired up to determine how they go about implementing academic conversations. The lower grade teachers decided on utilizing student pairs while the intermediate grades focused on utilizing a grand conversation structure.

I had already paired up participants based on their preferences and I made sure that each group included a participant who had more experience in coaching.  There were four groups in total. Each group met for ten minutes to discuss when they would meet to hold their pre-conference for the coaching cycle. The last five minutes I brought all participants together to fill out their feedback forms and review the agreed upon next steps. All participants were present for this first meeting.

*Coaching cycle number one*

Prior to each coaching cycle I checked in with each pair to make sure they had planned a pre-observation conference, observation focus, observation day, and debrief. I also asked if they needed classroom coverage for any of these meetings to occur. All teachers had planned for these meetings to occur during their prep time, collaboration time, or before/after school. All four groups completed a coaching cycle and one of the groups completed a reciprocal peer -coaching model where both members went through a cycle. Each member with a classroom brought a video of pre-selected students engaged in an academic conversation.

*Professional Learning Community Meeting Number Two*

Prior to the second meeting I met with two members to plan and draft the next agenda.  We decided the most beneficial use of time would be to share insights from their

coaching cycle and to provide the majority of the time for coaching groups to break off and watch their videos.

On the day of our meeting I provided a projected draft agenda, printed colored copies, donuts, and background music. One member came ten minutes late and another came fifteen minutes late. We reviewed and revised our norms and agenda.  We used the first ten minutes to share artifacts or any new insights since our last meeting. I provided forty-minutes for groups to meet and watch classroom videos with their coaching partners. They each took the student scripting tool to focus on academic conversation components during the video. Four of the seven participants utilized the tool as our group discussed. Each partnership reflected on their cycle together and then we regrouped as a whole. I provided five minutes for quiet individual reflection on insights and personal next steps. We took turns sharing and then I gave each participant a feedback form. After this second PLC meeting I met individually with each participant to collect their feedback. I had only received one form and decided to speak to them in person. Each member with a classroom was to bring a video of their selected students engaged in an academic conversation for the last meeting.

*Coaching cycle number two*

The second coaching cycle took place during our state testing and was completed by two out of the four groups. One teacher decided that she had taken on too much this year as a new teacher and could no longer continue in the inquiry group.

*Professional Learning Community Meeting Number Three*

Similar to the prior two meetings I met with two teachers to plan and draft our agenda. We decided on starting with pairs meeting for coaching first and then provided

time for each individual to share out. On the day of our last meeting I once again

provided donuts, a projected agenda, printed agenda copies, and background music. We

were now six members and we began ten minutes earlier than the prior two meetings. Our

group reviewed and revised the agenda and norms. Each coaching pair watched and

analyzed their videos together. Then we came back as a whole group. Once again, I had

provided time for individuals to quietly reflect in writing on their successes/ insights and

next steps. We then discussed next steps for the following school year. The group agreed

that this model of PLC and coaching was effective and it should be continued the

following year during school hours. I left the last five minutes for appreciations.  After

the meeting I met with each participant individually to ask post-intervention questions.

## Intervention Plan

| Professional Learning Community | Instructional/ Peer Coaching |
|---|---|
| Four factors to address:<br><br>1. Support/follow up-<br><br>    • instructional coaching/peer coaching<br><br>2. Involvement of teachers of decision making-<br><br>    • think tank<br><br>3. Encouragement<br><br>4. Time-extend meeting time and pay teachers | • Meet with at least 2 teachers for instructional coaching<br><br>• Support remaining teachers to set up time for peer coaching<br><br>• Cover classes to support peer coaching<br><br>• Go through at least 2 coaching cycles which may include- co-teaching, lesson study, student data review, book/curriculum study (situational leadership model) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Include Leadership support<br><br>  1.  Building relational trust<br><br>  2.  Accountability<br><br><br>Utilize current inquiry group of  7 | •   Provides support/follow up as<br><br>     identified as a factor needed for PLC |

## Research Methods

I utilized a mixed methods approach of both qualitative and quantitative data to measure both the intervention impact as well as the process. Sine the problem of practice was addressing the need for students to be provided structured opportunities to engage in discussion around content the use of academic conversations, I aimed to measure the effectiveness of pairing a professional learning community inquiry group with coaching as professional development. Both PLC's and coaching were familiar structures for veteran staff at our site, however half of this particular literacy committee included newer staff.

We had met once a month since September as a literacy committee. Based on a needs assessment the year prior, academic language was an identified area of need for our students and was the focus for this committee. Although we shared a

common focus, we did not craft an inquiry question, and did not focus on student

data.  Since half of the group included veteran staff, they spent the majority of time

sharing their perspectives with newer staff and it was not a true collaborative

inquiry. The goals for our newly structured PLC were to define and have a common

understanding of academic conversations, to implement academic conversations

with more structure, and to empower students to engage in discussion around

content.   The process and impact of shifting from a literacy committee to a PLC with

an inquiry question, with professional norms, and with a focus on student data was

measured through pre and post-surveys and interviews, meeting agendas and notes,

researcher journal notes, feedback from PLC meetings, classroom observations,

coaching videos, and videos of students engaged in academic conversations.

The second component of the intervention is the pairing of coaching, both

peer and instructional, with the PLC structure.  As veteran staff with experience in

both peer and instructional coaching I paired up with three other staff to take act as

leads in the coaching processes.  Two of these four lead participants were

administrators. To measure the effectiveness of this intervention I used video clips

from coaching debriefs, notes from our PLC meetings, pre and post interviews,

meeting feedback, and researcher journal notes.

I began a researchers journal and wrote in it three times a week reflecting on

PLC meetings, PLC planning sessions, coaching sessions, classroom observations,

and any conversation with other research participants.  To begin the study I

interviewed each participant individually with set questions that about content,

community, and process questions around the topic of study. I repeated this

interview at the end of the study. Based on their responses I allowed for follow up questions and made note of those questions that were in addition to the scripted questions.  I also provided them with a pre and post Likert scale asking them to rate their knowledge on academic conversations, their use of academic conversations in their classroom, their knowledge and feelings of effectiveness of PLC's, the effectiveness of the coaching cycle, and the effectiveness of pairing PLC's with coaching. The scale was from 1 5 signifying completely agree. I also put in a space for short answers below each question.

I took three rounds of classroom observations for each participant, once after each PLC. It must be noted that academic conversations were not taking place for each observation due to scheduling conflicts however at least one conversation was observed in each classroom teacher's room. During each observation I scripted student and teacher talk. I utilized videos of students engaged in academic conversations to note the structure of participation, the procedures and routines in place, the language used by students, and the teachers reflection of those classroom videos. Since each classroom teacher brought two sets of videos and they were asked to openly reflect on any insights on their practice from the coaching cycles, I kept note of each participant's response.

For each PLC , I utilized a google sheet to create and share an agenda and at the end of every meeting I gave feedback forms to each participant. Feedback forms were only completed by two out of the seven participants. For this reason I met with each participant individually to ask them what went well, any insights they had, and anything they would change. I took note of their responses in my researcher journal.

I began analyzing the quantitative data collected from the pre and post survey.
The scale was 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. I
looked to see if there were any changes or patterns. I began to note patterns
emerging throughout the data between new and veteran staff. I compared this
quantitative data with their interview responses and found that the interview
responses showed a more accurate depiction of what is meant by "I completely
agree or somewhat agree." The survey was limited by 10 questions and did not
allow for more targeted responses.  I also cross reference the PLC meeting notes to
take note of their reflections and responses. It was noted that the effectiveness of
the PLC did correlate with the participant's feelings on their understanding of the
content of academic conversations. I began to create categories of codes based on
the expected goals, shifting teacher practice to include academic conversations, to
define and have a common understanding of academic conversations, and to refine
and improve upon our current literacy committee with a PLC and coaching
structure. I added fifteen additional categories including the effect of including
administrative leadership, the level of coaching expertise, and the role of
confidentiality.  I also cross referenced the self-reported data with the data that I
collected and noted that the level of shared understanding of academic
conversations and on defining effective instruction greatly impacted their
perception. I noted an impactful relationship between content understanding and
instructional capacity. Once I had categories under each goal, I connected like
categories, categories that were expressed through at least 2 out of 3 forms of data,
and categories that were expressed by more than one participant. Taking these

categories I placed them into like themes aligned to the original goals or expected

outcomes for this study.

**Data Collection Plan**

| Expected Change | Data Source 1 | Data Source 2 | Data Source 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Shift in teacher practice to include academic conversations** | Classroom observation notes | Videos of academic conversations | Pre & Post interview |
| **To define and have a common understanding of academic conversations**<br><br>Expected Change | Survey-5 point Likert scale with space for written response (pre and post) | Classroom observations/ PLC notes on discussion | Pre & Post interview |
| **To refine and improve upon our current inquiry group/ PLC structure with coaching** | Interview-pre and post | Survey at the end of each session | Coaching data/observations/ anecdotes |

**Analysis and Findings**

With the three goals of shifting teacher practice to include academic

conversations, to define and have a common understanding of academic

conversations, and to refine and improve upon our current literacy committee with

a PLC and coaching structure in mind, I categorized the data within these three goals and used a triangulation of data to come up with like themes.

The first goal of shifting teacher practice to include academic conversations was achieved in four out of the five classrooms that were included in this study. Based on classroom observations, meeting notes, and student videos it was evident that this study had shifted practice to include conversations, however each classroom teacher had shifted or grown their practice for different reasons.

One teacher developed an understanding of academic conversations as a structure that would support students to collectively foster a way of analyzing texts and everyday situations. She began to understand that it was not a set curriculum or procedure, but rather a dynamic structure that the teacher can help facilitate. Once she watched videos of grand conversations she utilized the academic language stems and felt comfortable enough to try it out. With coaching, she was able to begin to refine her practice and is excited to go deeper.

 A second teacher was utilizing grand conversations from the beginning, however she was focusing less on the language and ideas and more on the procedures. After each coaching cycle she openly shared her next moves as a facilitator. These moves included changing the physical seating for her students, to pre-planning open-ended questions that would prompt more discussion. Her last coaching cycle she was focusing on equity of voice and created speaking norms in her classroom.

A third lower grade teacher realized that she wanted to focus on student pairs for academic conversations. She began to analyze their sentence structures and

came up with language stems that would support her students to stay on track and to participate. She utilized think, draw, share as a part of her structure in supporting students with academic conversations. She realized sometimes students needed more time to come up with an idea before discussing their idea or opinion with a partner. She enjoyed scripting student talk and looks forward to using language readers to build students sentence structure in the Fall.

The fourth teacher had already had quite a bit of experience with academic talks especially utilizing her Math talk structure, however she did not utilize them as often in discussing literature. She had very interactive read alouds and structures such as turn and talk where students would openly engage in discussion around literature, however it was not an everyday practice to hold actual conversations around content. For her, this study helped her focus in and refine her academic conversations utilizing all that she learned and already knew. She also enjoyed coaching a colleague which she stated "allowed me to see academic conversations from a different perspective."

The fifth classroom teacher did not shift her practice to include academic conversations, however as a new teacher she felt as if she was beginning to listen more closely to her students to see what they understood. She said she would utilize this new form of assessment to think about the questions she asks her students and she will try to include more depth of knowledge level two or three questions.

Reflecting on the diverse shifts that occurred for each participant, I infer it was an effect of choice. I structured this PLC and coaching model so teachers would work towards a common inquiry around academic conversations while creating

their own personal action plans that addressed their needs and interests.  During

the first PLC after we constructed our group's inquiry question, I realized that every

teacher in the group had her own teaching style, teaching experiences, and different

grade level. With this realization, I had each member decide how she would like to

implement academic conversations in their classrooms. Each teacher made an

action plan and these action plans were shared and were the focus of their coaching

cycles. I find that its important that teachers have choice when speaking of

professional development, as long as there is a common understanding and vision.

The second goal was to define and have a common understanding of academic

conversations. This goal was more difficult to measure from the data. At a surface

analysis of the survey, all participants had an ability to define academic

conversations and all participants self-reportedly felt as if they had developed a

common understanding with others in the inquiry group. However, I noted that the

depth of understanding was quite different for each participant. This was also where

a teacher's knowledge on instruction and application impeded some newer staff. It

may have been more helpful to develop a rubric of understanding or perhaps a

continuum. Overall, on a basic level this goal was achieved as shared in the survey

and interview data.

The third goal was to refine and improve upon our current literacy

committee with a PLC and coaching structure. This goal was met as evidenced by

participant survey responses, PLC meeting notes, and individual interviews. All

seven participants found this structure to be highly effective, meaningful, and

something they would want to continue. The one participant who did not continue

with the inquiry group felt as if the timing of our meetings was the greatest deterrent.  She enjoyed the structure, however she had stated that she had spread herself too thin and was not getting units or being paid for the extra time. She stated that she would join the inquiry and coaching structure the following year if it was during her contract hours.

As far as data showing that there was an improvement, scores for participants feeling as if they had taken something away were at 4's and 5's (completely agree) where the initial survey many were at 3's and 4's. When participants shared what they liked most, they enjoyed the feeling of being part of a professional community and felt as if they were part of a collective unit. They also said the coaching was the most helpful since it supported them on an individual basis. Coaches also stated that the opportunity to coach others mutually beneficial as they gained content knowledge, a new perspective, or refined their coaching skills. Two coaches also enjoyed working with teachers who had their former students. Overall this goal was met and all participants felt as if this model honored them as professionals.

After analyzing the data to see if the goals were met, these four themes popped out as essential learnings 1) PLC's fostering collective ownership; 2) Coaching paired with a PLC structure supports implementation and accountability; 3) Leadership as learning partners; 4) The importance of building both content and instructional capacity.

*PLC's fostering collective ownership and community*

All participants mentioned the feeling that the PLC structure fostered a space where learning and growing was expected and supported.  There was a shared

understanding that we were there to support our students and an agreed upon area

of need.  This shared understanding connected newer and veteran staff in various

grade levels that did not normally have opportunities to interact outside of the

school events. It brought all parties to the same discussion. As suggested through

research on PLC's, factors such as support and follow up, involvement of teachers in

decision making, encouragement, and time played a vital role in this study (Leclerc,

Mo- reau and Lépine (2009a; 2009b). As the facilitator I made sure to send out the

draft agenda in a timely manner, responded to requests and emails within a day, and

added the coaching structure as a means to support the PLC  learning and

implementation.

The second factor of involving teachers in the decision making  process

occurred from the inclusion of two teachers in the planning and drafting of our

agenda meetings. It continued through the use of our meeting agendas as living

documents intended to be revised and modified as decided by participants. Every

meeting our agenda was revised and our norms were continually being added to.

Participants were also given choice to select their coach and what area they would

like to focus on in their classroom within the given topic.

The third factor of providing encouragement was done through providing

donuts and a clean and organized space for our meetings. I also utilized coaching

language to facilitate meetings and always referred back to the norms, gave

appreciations, and held one-on-one conversations to keep up the momentum of the

study.

The fourth factor of time seemed to be of vital importance. Our meetings were held at 7:30 before school. Teachers were not paid for their time and participation was optional.  Having these meetings before the school day impacted the study. Two out of the three meetings, participants came in late negatively affecting the culture and the flow of the meetings. One participant stated that she could no longer participate and the morning meeting time was a factor in her decision as she was a commuter like several of the participants.

*Coaching paired with a PLC structure supports implementation and accountability*

Peer and instructional coaching had been a common practice at our site, however it was done in isolation and confidentiality of the process was the norm. Coaching, whether peer or instructional coaching, was the factor that all participants agreed supported them to implement their new learning from the PLC around academic conversations. One participant stated " The coaching kept me accountable to try out what I said I was going to do in my classroom." Another participant stated, " I think coaching helped me make sense and make a realistic plan for including academic conversations in my regular routine. It's great to have someone be a thinking partner with my class in mind."

All participants agreed that coaching was beneficial for all parties. The dynamic and personal nature of the coaching process made the inquiry relevant and transferrable in their unique contexts.   The professional learning community inquiry structure being paired with coaching bridged the collective learning with the individual. It utilized the professional capital in a relevant and meaningful way.

One participant shared "I really enjoyed coaching a colleague because I could see the direct impact on my former students."

*Leadership as learning partners*

Interestingly the inclusion of site administration, the principal and myself as academic dean, was a topic mentioned by all participants. The shift in viewing an administrator as not only an instructional leader but as a learning partner was supported by all participants. As one participant stated, "It made it okay to make mistakes and just try things out because they valued what we were trying in our classrooms." Another noted, "I appreciated seeing them out of their comfort zone and leading through participation in our shared inquiry."

While both administrators were initially hesitant with pushing the traditional bounds of their roles, they both felt in helped them connect with teachers in a personal yet professional way. Both administrators enjoyed engaging in all parts of the process and sought support from one another to grow our expertise as coaches. One administrator stated, "It is tricky knowing when to step in and participate as a member and when to sit back and hold my opinion knowing that my words hold different value to newer staff."

*The importance of building both content and instructional capacity*

During this study it became apparent that the level of content capacity around language and academic conversations did not necessary correlate to participants' instructional capacity to implement.  While all participants gained a deeper understanding of providing students a structured and meaningful opportunity to discuss content through academic conversations, their varying levels

of depth in understanding impeded or supported their ability to implement the structure.  One coach noted, "While she was exited to implement academic conversations, she did not have the classroom environment to do it successfully." Another coach noted that her coachee had a strong and supportive classroom environment, however her lack of depth in understanding the purpose behind academic conversations led to an inorganic structure that continued to be teacher centered.  One coach shared, "it was implemented similarly to the standard turn and talk with more focus on the participation structure and less focus on supporting the conversation."

In part, I view the varying levels of depth and understanding as an effect of a lack of oversee of the coaching processes. While each lead coach had received similar formal training in the past, we did not have our own inquiry in order to norm our practice. In the end, coaches were not provided sufficient support, however coaches did note that they could have had more of an impact if they could have had more time to go through more coaching cycles.

## Implications and Conclusions

This study utilized a pairing of two structures, the PLC and coaching, to support the implementation and shared understanding of academic conversations while growing a professional community of learners. All participants found this pairing to be effective and a model of professional development that they would like to continue to be a part of. This study was context specific in the existing or historical structures put in place for peer/instructional coaching, professional

learning communities, built-in collaboration time, teacher leadership, and supportive administration.

Using a paired structure such as these could provide leadership opportunities for teachers as facilitators, peer coaches, and members of a collective unit focused on a shared goal. This structure allows for participation of both administration, coaches, and teachers alike as long as the school culture holds a shared vision for adult learning that fosters relational trust, a growth mindset, and mutual respect.

This study took place over a ten week period which was impacted by state testing. Feedback from the PLC meetings was not consistently returned by all participants changing the method of communication to conversation. Additionally, as researcher and administrator there was little time to meet with the four lead coaches to discuss issues and share our learnings. I held all the input and analyzed the data myself, leaving me to infer sentiment. Lastly, not all participants were present for the duration of the meetings and the entire study.

Further data is needed to pinpoint the factors needed to make this model for professional development generalizable as this study was intentionally created to support the specific context created at Costano school. However, the findings of this study suggest that this model of professional development pairing coaching with a professional learning community has potential to support teachers in implementing new learning, deepen understanding around an area of interest, and build a community of learners invested by both administration and teachers alike.

As a school administrator, I came away with several implications for leadership. To begin I learned the importance of clear and consistent communication. While some participants enjoyed creating and sharing in the moment, others needed process and think time, so I made sure to send out all agendas and invites ahead of time. I checked in with individual participants on the weekly basis to ensure that they had everything they needed,  to ensure that they knew what was expected, and to openly discuss any anxiety or difficulties that they encountered. Communication was especially important when it came to data collection. While I had initially intended to have more written feedback, I soon realized that it was efficient for some teachers to share verbally. It was my job to ensure I was asking the same questions as to not skew the data. Participants also seemed to enjoy the face time one on one with an administrator.

A second take-away was the inequitable power distribution created between administrators and teachers. Being a new administrator with former grade-level colleagues, I was aware of the potential impact of my input and participation in creating an inequitable or untrusting environment. I carefully chose language that was less evaluative and more facilitative and I ensured that equity of voice was a norm I would focus on upholding.  This awareness did impact the frequency and my style of participation, however in the end, all participants shared that they enjoyed learning alongside administrators.

Another implication from this study is the value in training teachers as peer coaches. With tight budgets and issues of teacher turnover, peer coaching is a collaborative and empowering way to build teacher leadership that is data, inquiry,

and student driven. Additionally, the benefits in training all staff in coaching language and the coaching cycle helped build trust that continuous learning is valued and supported. It was important to have this structure be highly visible to all staff so the culture of peer learning is grown. After realizing the importance of norming our coaching practices, I would also suggest that the peer coaches create an inquiry group of their own to support one another.

Finally, I realized the importance of creating a schedule that reflects the vision you hold for teacher learning and growth. In my case I created a schedule that allowed flexibility for coaching, collaboration, and observation with built in days and times that support staff could cover classes if needed. Reflecting on the feedback provided by participants of this study, I would include the PLC structure as part of the embedded site professional development. Having it during the normal school day would exhibit to teachers that their time and expertise as professionals is valued.

References

Ackland, R. (1991). A review of the peer coaching literature. Journal of Staff
    Development, 12(1), 22-27.

Ajayi, L. (2011). Teaching Alternative Licensed Literacy Teachers to Learn from
    Practice : A Critical Reflection Model. Teacher Education Quarterly, 38(3),
    169-189.

Apple, M. W. (2006). *Educating the" right" way: Markets, standards, God, and
    inequality*. CRC Press.

Bartolomé, L. (1996). Beyond the methods fetish: Toward a humanizing pedagogy.
    *Breaking free: The transformative power of critical pedagogy*, 229-252.

Bartolomé, L. I. (2004). Critical pedagogy and teacher education. *Teacher Education
    Quarterly*, *31*(1), 97-122.

Bourdieu, P. (2008). 15 The Forms of Capital. *Readings in economic sociology*, 280.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*
    (Vol. 4). SAGE publications Limited.

Bowman, C.L., &McCormick, S. (2000). Comparison of peer coaching versus
    traditional supervison effects. The Journal of Educational Research, 93, 256-
    261.

Dewey, J. (1933). How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking
    to the educative process. Boston: D.C. Heath.

Freire, P. (2000). Pedagogy of the oppressed (30th edition). New York Continuum.

Gay, G. (2000). Culturally responsive teaching. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gay, G., & Howard, T.C. (2001). Muticultural education for the 21st century. The
    Teacher Educator, 36(1), 1-16.

Giroux, H. A. (1983). *Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the
    opposition*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Giroux, H. A. (1984). *Ideology, culture & the process of schooling*. Temple University
    Press.

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1982). The coaching of teachers. Educational Leadership, 40, 4-10.

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. Educational Leadership, 53(6), 42-45.

Kimble, C., Hildreth, P. M., & Bourdon, I. (2008). *Communities of practice: Creating learning environments for educators*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age

Ladson-Billings, G. (1992) "Reading between the Lines and Pages: A Culturally Relevant Approach to Literacy Teaching." Theory into Practice 31: 312-320.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). What We Can Learn from Multicultural Education Research. *Educational Leadership*, *51*(8), 22-26.

Lave, J. (1987). *Cognition in practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

LECLERC, M., MOREAU, A. C., DUMOUCHEL, C., & SALLAFRANQUE-ST-LOUIS, F. (2012). FACTORS THAT PROMOTE PROGRESSION IN SCHOOLS FUNCTIONING AS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY. *International Journal Of Education Policy & Leadership*, *7*(7), 1-14.

McLaren, P. (1998). *Life in schools*. New York: Longman.

Owen, S. s. (2014). Teacher professional learning communities: Going beyond contrived collegiality toward challenging debate and collegial learning and professional growth. *Australian Journal Of Adult Learning*, *54*(2), 54-77.

Robbins, P. (1991). How to Plan and Implement a Peer Coaching Program (Report No. ISBN0871200184-4). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curricular Development.

Roberts, K. E. (2012). The Linguistic Demands of the Common Core State Standards for Reading and Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades. *Seminars In Speech & Language*, *33*(2), 146-159. doi:10.1055/s-0032-1310314

Schon, D. A. (1987) *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. Bergin & Garvey.

Skinner, M.E., & Welch, F.C., (1996). Peer coaching for better teaching. College Teaching, 44, 153-156.

Slater, C.L. &Simmons, D. L. (2001). *The design and implementation of a peer coaching program*. American Secondary Education 29.3, 67.

Swift, M., Artz, N. J., & Bickel, D. D. (2009). The Content-Focused Coaching Model in Early Childhood Literacy: Preparing Early Childhood Coaches to Assist Preschool Teachers to Read Aloud Using the Text Talk Approach. *CEDER Yearbook*, 161-178.

Van Manen, M. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. Curriculum Inquiry, 6(3), 205-228.

Veenman, S., &Dennessen, E. (2001) The coaching of teachers: Results of five training studies. Educational Research and Evaluation, 7, 385-417.

Waddel, D.L., &Dunn, N. (2005) Peer coaching: The next step in staff development. The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 36(2), 84-9; quiz 90-1.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (2005). Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity (13th ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Wilhelm, J. D. (2014). Classroom Conversation: Inquiry, Dialogism, and Deep Understanding. *Voices From The Middle*, *22*(1), 74-76.

Wright, N. (2009). Shifting Teachers' Practices: How Literacy can be a Focus for Altering Pedagogical Practices. *International Journal Of Learning*, *16*(4), 503-514.

Zwiers, J., & Crawford, M. (2009). How to Start Academic Conversations. *Educational Leadership*, *66*(6), 70-73.

Zwiers, J., O'Hara, S., & Pritchard, R. (2014). Conversing to Fortify Literacy, Language, and Learning. *Voices From The Middle*, *22*(1), 10-14.

Zwiers, J., O'Hara, S., & Pritchard, R. (2014). Cutting to the Common Core Changing the Playing Field. *Language Magazine*, *13*(7), 28-31.

Zwiers, Jeff. (2008). *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classrooms.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 320 pp.

**Appendix i**

Literacy Committee Agenda

Norms:
- Be an active participant
- Have a growth mindset

Objectives:
- Come up with an inquiry question and redefine ourselves as a Professional Learning Community

| Agenda Item | Objective | Time |
|---|---|---|
| **Welcome and Agenda review** | Review objectives and feel happy to be here | 7:30 |
| **Professional Learning Community** | Defining a PLC (characteristics, common goal)<br>- Skim article<br>-Agree on characteristics | 7:35 |
| **Inquiry question** | -Formulate an inquiry question (pair share /whole group share out) | 7:45 |
| **Academic Conversation Next Steps** | -Data collection (video of partnership of focused students) by Monday March 9th | 8:10 |

**Appendix ii**

**Literacy PLC**

**Norms:**
**-Be kind**
**-Assume positive intent**
**-Active participation**
**-Equity of voice**

Academic Conversation Stems

| Item | Objective | Time |
|------|-----------|------|
| **Review/ revise agenda** | • Update any info<br>• Share schedule | 7:20-7:25 |
| **Review Note-taking guide** | • Clarify purpose of note-taking guide | 7:25-7:30 |
| **Partner up & Video time-**<br><br>**Morgan/ Tiffany**<br>**Dellamano/Trinkle/ Gina**<br>**Espinosa/Maag/ Kub** | • Meet with a partner to watch/ take notes on your video<br>• Each partner has 15 minutes | 7:30-8:00 |
| **Reflection** | • Reflect on the video and identify possible next steps | 8:00-8:05 |
| **Share -out** | • Each person shares a next step | 8:05-8:15 |
| **Group next steps** | • Meet with a pre-identified peer coach<br>• Bring back another video tape<br>• Feedback form | 8:15-8:20 |

| **Agree/Prefer** | **Clarify/Question** |
|---|---|
| I agree that.....because.... | I'd like to clarify.... |
| I prefer......because | What did you mean.... |
| | What does it mean.... |
| **Disagree** | I have a question....(why, how) |
| | I was wondering... |
| I disagree that...because.... | |
| A different perspective to that is.... | |
| Another perspective might be..... | |
| | |
| **Partly Agree** | |
| | |
| I partly agree that....because.... | |
| I agree that....however..... | |

| **Paraphrase** | **Elaborate** |
|---|---|
| So what you are saying is... | I'd like to build on that idea... |
| So are you saying that... | I'd like to elaborate.... |
| What I understand is... | To add to what you're saying.... |
| In other words.... | |

| **Make a connection** | **Predict/Infer** |
|---|---|
| It reminds me of... | I predict that......because..... |
| I have a connection to.....it reminds me of..... | I think that.....because..... |
| | I inferred that.....because..... |

# PLC Feedback

**What did you enjoy about today's PLC?**

**What ways could we have improved today's meeting for you as a professional?**

**What would you like to know more about? What would you like to have more time discussing?**

**Overall, what would you rate today?**
**(5 being well structured, facilitated, engaging, and purposeful)**

5          4          3          2          1

**Final thoughts:**

**Thank You!!!**