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# THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION OF TEACHERS AND BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENT LEARNING

Gabriella Blakey

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**THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION OF  
TEACHERS AND BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENT LEARNING**

By

**GABRIELLA DURAN BLAKEY**

B.A., Secondary Education, New Mexico State University, 1999  
M.A., Educational Leadership, University of New Mexico, 2006

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Education  
Educational Leadership**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**December, 2013**

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## **Dedication**

For those “Believers” who believed in me.

For our students in our public schools, I will never give up on you.

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It is only with the support, knowledge and love of others that I was able to complete this work. To my dissertation chair, Dr. Allison Borden, who inspired me not only to be a scholar, but to become a better teacher, leader, and person. She is not only my mentor and hero, but also a true friend. She has pushed me to think, inquire, and believe in myself in ways I never thought were possible. Her devotion to students is admirable and has encouraged me to become a better teacher in my own work.

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**ABSTRACT**

One of the most challenging aspects of being a school leader is the struggle to get the school staff to embark on school improvement initiatives. The culture of the school can be a powerful driver in or a resister to our ability to move a school forward to increase student learning. New teachers struggle to understand the culture of the school along with the unwritten norms, values, and customs. As they observe the school culture, beginning teachers try to understand their individual power and role in the school culture.

A teacher's belief in students can help students enhance their chances of education success in the classroom and beyond. Many new teachers enter the profession with this intent. However, disenfranchised veteran teachers can negatively impact their beliefs and convey a school culture that harmfully changes the beliefs of the new teachers.

This study answers two research questions: How are new teachers' beliefs shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders? In addition, what impact does this dynamic have on school culture? Face-to-face interviews of the new teachers at the site, a questionnaire for new and veteran teachers, an electronic diary entry, a veteran teacher



interview, and an interview with the principal were utilized to collect data for this study. The study finds that the new teachers' beliefs were influenced by their colleagues and by their principal. This influence by their colleagues and by their principal once they entered the profession was both positive and negative, depending on the interactions the teachers had with colleagues. Although formal settings, such as department meetings, staff meetings, and professional learning communities provided time for interaction with a range of colleagues, the informal settings were the spaces in which colleagues had more impact on new teachers' beliefs. Of further interest, the study finds not all of the teachers believed their students were capable of learning, thus having an effect on the overall culture of the school.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

The strongest predictor of student performance is the percentage of qualified, content-certified teachers in a school (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Every year, school principals work to hire new teachers of high quality in hopes of improving student performance. As new teachers enter the classroom, they take on a responsibility for each student's intellectual, emotional, and social development (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). In addition to hiring new teachers, school leaders are aware of the effect the culture of their school will have on the ability of their teachers to not only improve student performance, but continue in the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). As new teachers enter the profession with high expectations to increase student achievement, they are held to the same accountability for student performance as veteran teachers with greater experience in the classroom (Huling-Austin, 1990). The success that new teachers have in their new classrooms their first year does not only depend on their own efficacy and knowledge, but on the interactions they have with established colleagues in their school (Kardos et al., 2001). In addition, this assimilation process can impact the teachers' beliefs about their students (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009).

As new teachers enter the teaching profession, they begin to assimilate into their new environment. Unfortunately, negative aspects of the assimilation process may contribute to the loss of 40 to 50% of new teachers within their first five years in the profession (Ingersoll, 2003). The majority of these teachers are in schools described as low performing, urban schools (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This high turnover in urban, low income, low performing schools contributes to a lack of continuity in instruction and the

academic growth of students is negatively affected by this teacher turnover (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Guin, 2004; Love & Kruger, 2005).

Additionally, new teachers in low-income schools obtain considerably less support for mentoring and curriculum development than new teachers in higher income schools (Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004). New teachers in low-income schools are less likely to receive a preview of their job and are less likely to have a good match with a mentor as they transition into the school. However, research points to the impact highly-skilled, highly supported teachers can have on increasing student achievement, especially in low-income schools (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Darling-Hammond, Berry, Haselkorn, & Fideler, 1999; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010; Johnson et al., 2004; Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001).

This high teacher attrition contributes to the school principals' struggles to create a collaborative organization with a focus on student learning. As they hire new teachers each year, they hope to bring in teachers with positive attitudes, teachers that are enthusiastic about their contribution to their school and society through their work as classroom teachers (Muhammad, 2009). Their colleagues influence these new teachers as they navigate the culture of the school. Colleagues disenchanted with the work of the school may have a damaging effect on these new teachers and their longevity in the field of education (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Kardos et al., 2001; Peske et al., 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

New teachers navigating within the embedded culture of a school may be influenced by veteran teachers not only through formal interactions, but also through informal interactions that take place at lunchtime, during hallway duty, on walks to the parking lot, and at social gatherings. School leaders must be aware of these influences and be proactive in supporting



new teachers as they work to create positive school cultures, which we hope will evolve into high-performing learning organizations (Muhammad, 2009).

This study builds on a body of literature that suggests that their peers, via formal and informal settings and interactions, influence teachers coming new to a school. This influence of veteran teachers may affect new teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their philosophies of student learning. This socialization process may not only affect the culture of the school, the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom, but it may also impact new teachers' longevity in the field (Cherubini, 2009b; Opfer, Pedder, & Lavicza, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

### **Problem Statement**

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, schools have become focused on teaching to a standardized test and concerned over penalties for students failing these tests (Byrd-Blake, Afolayan, Hunt, Fabunmi, Pryor, & Leander, 2010; DuFour et al., 2010; Graham, 2005; Muhammad, 2009; Newton, 2010; Rothstein, 2004). Schools today are under pressure to increase student achievement and lower the achievement gaps between students based on gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010; Rothstein, 2004). Scores from standardized tests are now the central indicator to hold schools and districts accountable for student achievement.

New Mexico is faced with increasing pressures to increase student achievement and close the achievement gap in its schools. People in New Mexico vary in terms of how they understand and use the word "Hispanic." The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) defines Hispanic as "A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" (NCES, 2013). More than 50 percent of fourth-graders in New Mexico are of Hispanic descent, yet the achievement gap of

more than 20 points on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) between children of Hispanic descent and White students is one of the largest in the country (Hemphill, Vanneman, & Rahman, 2011). In fact, the gap between Hispanic and White students in New Mexico is 21 points in 4<sup>th</sup> grade math and 22 points in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading. The gap actually increases in the upper grades with a 26-point gap in 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and a 24-point gap in 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading (Hemphill et al., 2011).

In response to this achievement gap, New Mexico's education reform initiatives include high-pressure changes such as an evaluation system for teachers and principals and a school grading system based on standardized test scores.

These types of education reform initiatives are peripheral or technical changes that do not address the deep changes needed in schools today (DuFour et al., 2010; Graham, 2005; Muhammad, 2009). Furthermore, they cause school leaders to respond to this type of pressure with similar technical changes, therefore not allowing school leaders to dig deeper into the cultural shifts needed to address inequities in our schools. These types of technical changes we see in schools can also be described as doughnuts, where change occurs only at the periphery: "We are very good at explaining the periphery (the demographics of the students, the teachers, the funding), but we do not understand the hole in the center (what makes the child learn). The center is the essence of schooling, where the fundamental, but frequently unstated, priorities of education are generated, and our explicit understanding of that is a void. All the rest—student test scores, teacher pay, length of school term, attendance of students and teachers—are simply indicators on the periphery...Deeply understanding the culture, the constraints, and the opportunities of schooling was not high on the intellectual agenda of educational researchers..." (Graham, 2005, p. 198).

School leaders often identify the need to focus on these technical changes as a priority in raising student achievement (DuFour et al., 2010; Kardos et al., 2001). Examples of technical changes, modifications that are believed to allow the professionals to do their job more effectively, might include changing the daily schedule, block scheduling, canned curriculum, change in courses offered, etc. (Muhammad, 2009). These changes are surface-level changes, changes that have been made throughout the history of education reform in our public schools. However, cultural change is much more complex and often overlooked in school reform. Nevertheless, cultural change should be a priority for school leaders if they are working to build a healthy culture with the goal of universal student achievement (Deal, 1983; Flores, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001). Muhammad (2009) described this type of change: it "...takes knowledge of where a school has been in agreement about where the school should go. It requires an ability to deal with beliefs, policies, and institutions that have been established to buffer educators from change and accountability...But cultural change must be achieved – and it must be achieved well – if we are to prepare our current and future generations for an ever-changing world that is becoming more demanding each day" (p. 16).

Technical changes are often difficult to make, but cultural change is much more difficult and should precede any type of technical change (Muhammad, 2009). The culture of the school can be a powerful driver or a resister to our ability to move a school forward to increase student learning. Principals must work to create a school vision and mission that focus on high levels of learning for all students. This work often requires teachers to modify current practices to meet the needs of a changing student population. A toxic school culture can impede any school reform initiative needed to increase student achievement (Deal, 1983; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009).

School leaders must understand the complexity of the school's culture in order to make substantial cultural change or maintain the current culture of the school. The organization must have a clear understanding of its purpose and a clear plan to achieve its purpose. Without this focus, a toxic culture can be quickly fostered throughout the organization (Flores, 2004; Hargreaves, 1995; Muhammad, 2009). School leaders must understand their staff and the organizational culture in order to develop a healthy climate and culture focused on student learning (Barth, 2002).

These school leaders should focus on improving the school's culture by building healthy relationships between teachers, students, and parents. Measuring the climate of the school and focusing on student learning are important to increase student achievement. In an effort to create substantial cultural change, school leaders spend time working with their school staff establishing a vision and mission that all children can learn, and it is the responsibility of the staff to ensure that students do learn (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009). The Professional Learning Communities Framework is often used in schools by principals as a foundation for the work, where the underlying assumptions are that all children can learn and all children will learn because of what we do (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). In moving forward with that belief that all children will learn because of what we do as a fundamental belief for the school, many teachers voice resistance to change. It is surprising to discover the number of staff that does not believe that all children can learn. Furthermore, many staff members do not believe it is necessarily their responsibility to ensure that they do learn. Openly or covertly, they advocate for sustaining the status quo. Their job is to teach, not to ensure students learn, with many teachers not seeing the learning process as a reciprocal one (Muhammad, 2009).

As school leaders work to establish a mission and vision focused on student learning, it is imperative that new teachers at the school are supported in this mission. The introductory period of new teachers into a school can shape the career of these teachers and the school environment (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993). Public school teachers enter a complex social situation as they begin their professional careers. How they adapt to the school culture and how the culture adapts to them not only affects their ability to stay in the profession, but it affects their ability to ensure children are learning at high levels (Schempp et al., 1993). Teachers enter the profession to positively affect the lives of their students (Ingersoll, 2003; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Schempp et al., 1993). They believe that they can help students enhance their chances of education success. However, disenfranchised veteran teachers can transmit a culture that works to break down the beliefs of the new teachers (Tillman, 2005).

Student learning can thrive or suffer under the embedded culture of a school (Deal, 1983; Hargreaves, 1995). At many of our schools today, these high-pressure technical changes have created feelings of disillusionment and hopelessness among veteran teachers (Barth, 2002). This type of toxic culture can become destructive and demoralizing for the school, but school leaders can overcome this type of culture with effective induction systems for new teachers entering the school (Bolman & Deal, 2002). It is important that school leaders understand their own school culture and the ways in which the new teachers are integrated into the school culture via formal and informal methods. A positive, supportive work environment is of utmost importance in creating a school focused on student learning and a culture in which teachers thrive and enjoy their work. The influence of the support system and culture within the school can play a significant role in determining if teachers stay in the profession after their first year of teaching

(Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003b; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Peske et al., 2001). School leaders cannot underestimate importance of creating a positive, supportive school culture to retain teachers and enhance the learning environment for students.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it addresses an area of school culture important to school leaders. As school leaders introduce new staff members into their school communities, it is imperative to understand the influence of veteran teachers on new teachers as they adapt to the school. This study can provide insights into the impact of formal and informal relationships on new teachers' beliefs about student learning. What influences new teachers as they adapt to a new school culture? Many teachers enter a new school with a positive attitude and eager to work hard, however, they are influenced by veteran staff members who discourage the new staff members from working towards school reform. How can school leaders strategically work with new teachers to move the school forward in the belief that it is our duty to ensure students learn? In order to move a school forward, it is essential for school leaders to learn the root causes of staff resistance to change and identify concrete strategies to improve a school's culture.

School initiatives created to address school culture are typically technical and structural changes (Deal, 1983). Changes such as scheduling teachers as teams, creating collaboration time, providing student data to teachers, and creating common assessments are often instituted to create a culture focused on student learning. However, the technical changes do not change the embedded culture of the school (Muhammad, 2009). Technical change does not make up for poor instruction or the lack of professionalism. Therefore, schools must be willing to look deep into the culture of the school to make significant change, which will impact student learning. School leaders must reflect on new staff members and ask questions such as: How are they

adapting to our school culture? How do other teachers influence them? How do the resisters interact with the new teachers? How effective are schools at mentoring and nurturing new staff and what strategies could strengthen their attachment and commitment to the school?

### **Purpose of the Study – Research Questions**

This study was designed to answer these research questions: How are new teachers' beliefs shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders? In addition, what impact does this dynamic have on school culture?

### **Definition of Terms**

#### *New Teacher*

A teacher who is within the first two years of teaching, or a teacher within the first two years teaching at a particular school site.

#### *Veteran Teacher*

A teacher who has been teaching at a particular school site for more than three years (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Muhammad, 2009).

#### *Believers*

Muhammad (2009) described four different types of teachers in our schools. The first group is the "Believers." Believers are teachers who believe in the school's core values. They believe that all students can learn and it is their job to ensure student success. Believers believe in academic success for every student. Believers are an important driver of positive school culture because they have the values and core beliefs that drive a school forward for students. These teachers have a commitment to the profession, to their students, and to the community.

### *Tweeners*

The second group is the "Tweeners." Tweeners are teachers new to the school culture. Some are new to the profession, others new to the school. Tweeners spend time learning the school norms, expectations, and culture. Tweeners believe in organizational stability. They struggle to become a part of the Believers or the Fundamentalists as they fit into the school culture. Tweeners are important to the stability and longevity of the school as an organization. As Muhammad (2009) described, they are also important to the growth of the organization, "Tweeners are also important to the evolution of the school and its culture because they present the best opportunity for the growth of the Believers...Administrators who provide these new professionals with proper support can fill that slate with good experiences and drastically change the culture of the school" (p. 52).

### *Survivors*

The third group is the "Survivors." Survivors are a small group of teachers who are so overwhelmed by the demands of the profession that they are clinically depressed. Survivors typically represent a very small number of teachers in the school. Survivors have given up on their teaching profession and use their energy to make it through the end of the school year. They do not have a long-term commitment due to their short-term goals to make it to the end of the school year. Their peers often agree the Survivors need to leave the profession.

### *Fundamentalists*

The fourth group is the "Fundamentalists." Fundamentalists are teachers who are opposed to any kind of change and organize to resist change. They hold power and are a major obstacle in school reform. Muhammad described these teachers as, "...an experienced educator who believes that there is one pure and undisputable way to practice: the traditional model of



schooling. They are vanguards of tradition and the protectors of the status quo” (2009, p. 61). Fundamentalists are committed to the traditional model of schooling and will work obstinately to protect the traditional system. The fundamentalists have a “blatant and overt opposition to change” (Muhammad, 2009, p. 62).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study follows the work of Anthony Muhammad (2009) who conducted an ethnographic study of 34 public schools in the United States to examine school culture. His study observed how educators interacted in the school culture and communicated their beliefs about students through their behavior. Based on these beliefs, his theory categorizes teachers into four categories: Believers, Tweeners, Survivors, and Fundamentalists.

In order for school leaders to produce a healthy school culture, school leaders must challenge Fundamentalists in their beliefs and support those teachers voicing opposition to their beliefs. Believers and Fundamentalists work against each other (Muhammad, 2009). Often, “Tweeners” enter their teaching positions holding core values, similar to the Believers, that all children can learn and it is their responsibility to ensure that happens in their classroom. However, the Fundamentalists can be fanatical in their efforts to influence on the “Tweeners” as they navigate the culture of the school. School leaders must make it a priority to create a healthy culture to lessen the influence Fundamentalists may have on Tweeners.

A socio-cultural theoretical framework was used with Muhammad’s framework to understand the processes needed in a school to create a culture of collaboration and collegiality with staff members. Vygotsky (1986), through his socio-cultural theory, argued that the development of an individual depends on the interactions and tools brought by others in the social learning experience. The social interaction one has with their peers and the quality of

those interactions is essential to their learning and development (Vygotsky, 1986). Therefore, a socio-cultural theoretical framework can be used to examine the process needed to develop a culture of collaboration focused on student learning in the school setting.

### **Delimitations**

This study was conducted at one middle school with 867 students and 53 staff members. Nine of the staff members were in their first year of teaching at the school. Qualitative data via face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, electronic diary entries, and responses to multiple-choice items on questionnaires were collected during this study. The sample consisted of nine ‘Tweeners’ teachers and thirty-nine veteran classroom teachers that will be identified as “Believers” or “Fundamentalists”.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### Teacher Beliefs

Beliefs teachers hold about the profession and student learning originates prior to when they enter their first classroom as a full time teacher. In fact, the socialization of teachers into the profession is unusual in comparison to other occupations (Lortie, 1975). The teaching profession is the only occupation in which the socialization into the occupation occurs as an observer of the profession at an early entry point. Most teachers were immersed into the occupation as an observer as early as four or five years old. Therefore, beliefs about teaching are acquired early on in a child's life as a student. It is their own experience in the profession as a student that shapes their beliefs at a very early age (Lortie, 1975).

Many teachers experience teaching from the vantage point of a student for sixteen years prior to entering the profession. Lortie (1975) describes this experience, "Teaching is unusual in that those who decide to enter it have had exceptional opportunity to observe members of the occupation at work; unlike most occupations today, the activities of teachers are not shielded from youngsters. Teachers-to-be underestimate the difficulties involved, but this supports the contention that those planning to teach form definite ideas about the nature of the role (p. 65)."

Due to this phenomenon that teachers experienced the profession as an observer, teachers teach in the same way they were taught (Lortie, 1975). Many teachers imitate teaching strategies and behaviors they observed as a student. Additionally, most teachers enter into the profession because they had a positive experience as a student and did well in the education system (Muhammad, 2009). Therefore, strategies used may be comfortable for the teacher to use, but not necessarily appropriate for individual student learning.

This problem of teaching strategies may also be affected by the limited amount of time teachers spend learning about teaching as a profession. Prior to entering the field as a profession, rather than as a student, teachers have as little as six weeks to a year of practice in the job during student teaching. This limited amount of time to understand teaching from the teaching standpoint provides teachers little training in the practical work of the teacher. Therefore, teachers use their frame of reference from their sixteen years as a student to understand the profession. This phenomenon also contributes to the widespread notion that ‘anyone can teach’ (Lortie, 1975).

Not only do teachers develop beliefs about classroom strategies and the profession of teaching, they begin forming beliefs about students early in life. As students, teachers began to form beliefs about student learning by observing their peers. As students, they may have experienced grouping by ability, watched students who struggled, or struggled themselves as learners. Therefore, their beliefs around student learning began prior to their first day of teaching. However, these beliefs teachers hold about student learning are crucial to the success of student performance in the classroom. The belief of a teacher can affect a student’s self-fulfilling prophecy and lead to higher or lower performance in the classroom (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Although explicit or implicit, these messages about a student’s ability are transmitted to students through the teacher-student relationship, the feedback offered through evaluative comments, what teachers do to try to reach the student (input), and the opportunities for the individual student to respond (output) (Hall, Rosenthal, Archer, DiMatteo, & Rogers, 2001).

If school leaders want to create a positive culture focused on universal student achievement, they must ensure collaboration that allows for “Believers” to be seen by

“Tweeners” as the leaders of the mission and vision of the school. School leaders must work to empower the “Believers” to take on leadership roles and create platforms for them to articulate their beliefs (Muhammad, 2009). This type of support for “Believers” can support the principal’s mission of working to ensure all students are successful. As “Tweeners” hear from “Believers” in this way, they regularly reconnect with their passion to help students despite their level of stress. As “Tweeners” work with “Believers” to collaborate on their work with students, they are often invigorated and reminded of why they chose this type of work (Muhammad, 2009). When “Tweeners” are not given the opportunity for this type of collaboration with “Believers,” due to their high levels of stress, they are easily influenced by the negativity of “Fundamentalists.” Their high levels of stress can cause them to easily lose focus and a sense of purpose in terms of their work.

### **Theory X and Y**

It is important to recognize how individual human behavior can influence the organizational culture and the productivity of members within the organization. Motivation of individuals can contribute to their efficiency within the workplace. These theories of human motivation in organizations includes Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). One theory, Theory X, believes all employees are lazy and dislike working. Due to this belief, the leader needs to closely supervise workers. Without supervision, employees do not have ambition and will avoid responsibility. In a school setting, this would imply principals must closely monitor teachers. The culture of the school with a Theory X principal may have a culture of mistrust and a punitive atmosphere. The principal will often blame the teacher in situations without examining the system or lack of training which may be the root of the problems (McGregor, 1960).

On the contrary, Theory Y believes employees are ambitious and intrinsically motivated. This theory points to work being a natural part of human behavior. Theory Y leaders believe if the conditions for the organization are provided, the employees will be self directed in accomplishing tasks and objectives of the organization to which they are committed. Therefore, most people want to do well at work (McGregor, 1960). In a school setting, the principal would believe that most teachers want to do well at their work. The intrinsic satisfaction teachers will receive will motivate them to do a good job. The principal would develop a climate of trust with the teachers that is necessary for the culture of the school. Shared decision making would be evident so that teachers have a say in decisions that influence them (McGregor, 1960).

### **Teacher Attrition**

For many years, states have been concerned about the growing number of retirees from the teaching profession that will in turn cause a massive teacher shortage. However, the number of retirees has slowed down in the past five to seven years (Ingersoll, 2012). The teaching profession continues to be one of the largest occupations in the United States, however, the turnover in teachers continues to be higher than for other professional occupations including lawyers, architects, nurses, and engineers (Ingersoll, 2012). Teacher turnover today is not due to the baby-boomer phenomenon of retirees; rather it is due to the high number of teachers leaving the profession within their first five years. These new teachers are leaving due to their dissatisfaction with the job and organizational factors (National Commission on Teaching, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002, 2012). The percentage of teachers leaving the profession within their first five years is estimated to be between 40% and 50% of teachers (Ingersoll & Perda, 2012).

Attracting teachers to and retaining them in the profession continues to be a problem in our schools today. For a variety of reasons, as many as fifty percent of teachers leave the

teaching profession in their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson et al., 2004). According to the Schools and Staffing Survey (2008), 279,600 of the 3,867,600 teachers surveyed changed schools after one year. More importantly, 347,000 teachers left the teaching field completely. Of these teachers leaving the profession, 71,000 were within their first two years teaching and 216,900 of the teachers leaving the profession were teaching at schools with more than 60 percent of their students on free and reduced lunch programs (NCES, 2008).

The school environment has a significant impact on the new teacher's decision to remain in the profession (Carter & Carter, 2000). Not only does this attrition rate indicate school leaders will need to recruit new staff members into their schools, but they also will need to work to retain those teachers they have teaching in their schools. Individual school sites, due to their school culture, have a great deal of influence on the new teacher's decision to leave the profession and the manner in which the school operates can have a large impact on the success of the new teacher (Olebe, 2005). Supporting and retaining effective teachers is important to improving student achievement in our schools today (DuFour et al., 2010; Haycock, 1998; National Commission on Teaching, 2003).

For the past twenty years education has moved further into a movement of accountability, resulting in high stakes tests. In 2002, Congress passed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, which mandated testing students to determine how well the school was performing based on the number of students passing, or failing, the test (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010; Graham, 2005). The focus on these tests increases the pressure on teachers and many teachers find themselves teaching to the test. This pressure has added to lower teacher morale across many schools. Lower morale of teachers, in turn, decreases effective teaching and learning in the

classroom (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010) School leaders must be aware of factors contributing to low morale as they work to instill a positive culture in their school. Teacher concerns and the dissatisfaction of their work is often based on: the teacher's ability to maintain discipline in the classroom, ability to effect sufficient academic progress, capacity to satisfy the expectations of the educational institution, teacher's ability to adjust to inadequate facilities or supplies (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010). These factors can lead to low staff morale, a toxic school culture, and low student achievement (Barth, 2001). School leaders should work to create systems, supports, and norms that encourage individual learning and organizational learning. These systems and supports are difficult to create in most schools, yet are important to the morale and professional growth of teachers (Opfer et al., 2011).

Educators often enter the field of education to give back to the community and have a sense of purpose in their career (Love & Kruger, 2005). However, the suggestion to link evaluation to student performance on standardized assessments and adjust educators' pay accordingly does not take into serious account the motivating factors of educators. Rather, the initiative is based upon the assumption that educators are not working to their potential under the current evaluation system due to the lack of monetary reward (Sandel, 2009).

### **Motivation to Enter the Profession**

Teachers entering the profession today are much different than those entering the teaching field twenty years ago. New teachers of today often have more career opportunities open to them and many options to choose from upon finishing their degree at the university (Peske et al., 2001). Whereas teachers twenty years ago entered the profession with expectations of loyalty to an organization and belief in a single career choice, teachers of today are open to various plans for their future. They often are open to where future paths may take them in their



career, often outside of their classroom (Peske et al., 2001). Teach for America works to encourage teachers to enter the profession, however, in a recent study by Donaldson and Johnson (2011) nearly half of the Teach for America Corps members left the teaching profession for other professions after completing their service. More importantly, more than half leave their placement in low-income schools after two years (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011).

Teacher retention is especially important in low-income schools (Ingersoll, 2002). Programs such as Teach for America have been formed to place teachers in these low-income, high-minority schools throughout the country. Unfortunately, up to 21% of teachers in these schools leave their schools each year. Only 14% of teachers in higher-income schools leave their school after the first year (Planty, Hussar, Snyder, Provasnik, Kena, Dinkes, KewalRamani, & Kemp, 2008). This type of teacher turnover is detrimental to students in these schools who need not only stability in their staff, but high performing teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Ingersoll, 2012).

Although new teachers entering the profession are open to future career opportunities and movement outside their current placement teaching at a school, they are fully committed to the sense of calling they feel to the work in the field of education (Ingersoll, 2012; Peske et al., 2001). Rather than being attracted to teaching due to the stability of the work or commitment to a specific school, many teachers today are committed to a sense of calling (Peske et al., 2001). They are motivated to enter the profession due to their passion, love for their work with students and service to their community. Yet, this type of motivation can be deflated by the negativity they face in their colleagues, overwhelming workloads, and lack of support during their first years of teaching. Few teachers enter the teaching field with plans to make it a lifelong

career; therefore, the experience of their first few years teaching can impact their longevity in the profession.

Teachers entering the field today enter for a variety of reasons, but most see teaching as a temporary way to give back to their community. Whether teachers are entering the classroom due to a prelude to another career or entering as a second career to find meaningful work, they are not committed to a life-long career in the classroom. Therefore, they have high vulnerability to negative colleagues and are more likely to leave the classroom within their first five years due to unconstructive experiences.

### **Establishing Healthy Culture**

The cultures of schools are shifting from isolation to collaboration. Collaboration such as teachers working in Professional Learning Communities within their schools enables teachers to find a sense of self-efficacy and self-worth (Fernandez, Day, Hauge, & Moller, 2000). This type of collaborative work is critical in building up teachers' sense of personal value in their work. Cohen and Brown (2013) describe Professional Learning Communities as a place where, "...educators learn and work together, engaging in open and honest conversations and practice that is focus on effective instructional practices. Teachers learn from each other: learning, trying, and reflecting (p. 3)."

However, this type of collaborative work requires healthy school culture. School leaders often can point to toxic cultures within their schools as having a direct impact on the success or failure of students. However, the definition of school culture varies throughout the field of education. Concepts such as saga, climate, and ethos are often used in reference to school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999). School culture refers to the attitudes, beliefs, values, traditions, and practices that influence the way teachers interact with one another and perform their

professional responsibilities (Barth, 2002). Deal and Peterson (1999) defined school culture as, “deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of the school’s history” (p. 32). Using this definition of school culture, school leaders can examine established core values within their specific school community. Furthermore, they can determine if these values are healthy to the learning environment. Defining the importance of school culture cannot be underestimated because it does not only define how schools operate on a daily basis, but, more importantly, why they operate (Barth, 2002; Bolman & Deal, 2002; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

The culture of a school is an important driver of the ability of a school to move forward and focus on student learning. It is the blend of norms and values that is accepted by the teachers in the school. These norms and values include the formal and informal practice among colleagues (Cherubini, 2009b; Kardos et al., 2001). A healthy school climate is one that has an alignment of school actions with goals, collaboration, collegiality, administrative support, resources, and teacher input for decision-making. A positive school culture provides collaborative professional learning that leads to positive student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

**School culture and student achievement.** There are strong correlations between healthy school cultures and student achievement (Stolp, 1994). For example, Thacker and McInerney (1992) completed a study to examine the correlation between school culture and student achievement. They analyzed the school culture in relationship to elementary student test scores. The school created a new mission and vision to focus on student learning outcomes. The school developed a plan to include detailed steps to ensure this mission and vision became a reality in the classrooms. The study collected the student test scores after the new goals were

developed and embedded within the school. After reviewing the data, their results showed a 10 percent decrease in the number of students who failed the statewide assessment. This correlation between school culture and student achievement is an example of the importance of school leaders working to establish a strong, collaborative school culture focused on student learning (Thacker & McInerney, 1992).

School culture also has a direct impact on the motivation of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Deal, 1983; Hargreaves, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989). In fact, school culture is the largest predictor of teachers' commitment in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1989). It is the culture of the school that directly impacts teacher satisfaction and commitment (Cherubini, 2009b; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Yukl, 1989). Therefore, it is important to create a culture in which teachers are valued, committed, and satisfied. The commitment and job satisfaction of teachers are correlated with their perceptions of the school culture. In turn, student achievement is linked to the performance of the classroom teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Therefore, in toxic school cultures, teachers are dissatisfied at work and the students' learning suffers (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Rosenholtz, 1989).

In a healthy school culture, teachers are motivated to increase student achievement and there is a clear focus on student learning (DuFour et al., 2010; Spiegel, 2012; Thacker & McInerney, 1992). Students are susceptible to the motivation of teachers and can often lose their motivation when the teachers have low expectations and are dissatisfied in their work (Hoy & Tarter, 1997; Spiegel, 2012) and unhealthy school climates lack teacher and student motivation (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). In addition, academic achievements in these schools were not valued. Conversely, healthy school climates had an environment conducive to student success and

achievement. Studies have been completed to discover the relationship of job satisfaction with student achievement (Hoy & Tarter, 1997; Spiegel, 2012; Thacker & McInerney, 1992).

As schools realize the importance of creating a healthy culture focused on student achievement, the role of the principal begins to evolve. With the prominence of school climate, we have seen a shift from a management orientation of schools to the focus on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Muhammad, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2001; Tillman, 2005). The school principal is concerned with the managerial component of running a school that includes tasks such as budgets, paperwork, and following district and state mandates. However, the most important aspect of the principal's job is to inspire the staff to ensure high levels of learning for all students in their classrooms (Bolman & Deal, 2002; DuFour et al., 2010). The principal needs to articulate clear expectations and facilitate growth of students and teachers through the development of positive school culture (Barth, 2001). This type of school leader redefines the work of the school principal and emphasizes the commitment to cultural changes, rather than technical change (Barth, 2002; Bolman & Deal, 2002; Fullan, 1992; Sergiovanni, 2001).

**Collaborative culture.** A school staff cannot work in isolation to create a healthy school culture focused on universal student learning. Collaboration is an essential key to promoting a positive school culture focused on student achievement (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Kardos et al., 2001). The traditional work in schools where teachers are isolated behind their classroom doors is comfortable for teachers such as the "Fundamentalists" because it does not expose their work to their colleagues. However, collaboration allows teachers to become critical friends, enhance their practice, and share ideas. This type of work is driven by the paradigm that we are much more effective together than we are apart, specifically when "the

collaboration and affiliation experienced by new and experienced teachers [that] provided a culture of professional learning that focused on student outcomes” (p. 1013). Collaboration must be strategic and a priority for leaders transforming school culture. School leaders cannot underestimate the importance of creating an environment built on collegiality (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

Collaboration is often stressed as being a part of healthy school culture. However, collaboration must be well planned, have a clear purpose, focused on results, and committed to student learning (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Hargreaves (1995) studied the effects of both traditional and collegial school cultures on student learning, describing the importance of collaboration, but warning against excessive collaboration and the increase in ‘collaboration for its own sake.’ School culture is impacted by collaboration in that, “No school culture, and certainly not the collegial, can make exclusive claims to collaboration, but collegial schools have a firm architecture that fosters collaboration...If the relationships between school culture and school improvement are to be tested empirically, it will be essential to look beneath the cultural features, such as collaborative attitudes, to their underlying structures” (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 42).

Collaboration should be well planned and based upon a living systems theory (Wheatley, 1999) that will enable school leaders to build a healthy school culture. The living systems theory within an organization (Wheatley, 1999) occurs when, “each organism maintains a clear sense of its individual identity within a larger network of relationships that helps shape its identity. Each being is noticeable as a separate entity, yet it is simultaneously part of the whole system. While we humans observe and count separate selves, and pay a great deal of attention to the differences that seem to divide us, in fact we survive only as we learn how to participate in a web

of relationships” (p. 20). Therefore, schools operating on a living system theory can create an organization with a collaborative vision and healthy school climate.

**New teachers entering the culture.** Although on some occasions teachers enter into a brand new school, most often teachers are entering a school with a well established professional culture (Kardos et al., 2001). This professional culture can have a positive or negative impact on students. It includes things such as “...a set way of doing things, memories about the past, shared understandings about what is possible, and practiced strategies about how to make things happen or how to resist change” (Kardos et al., 2001, p. 256). This established culture could have a positive or negative effect on new teachers as they assimilate into the school. The longer the school has been established, the more likely a new teacher’s views and contributions will be excluded and their needs ignored (Kardos et al., 2001). There will be more resistance to change the longer the school has been in existence, “...during an organization’s birth and early growth, its culture begins as a distinctive competence, a source of identity, the ‘glue’ that holds things together. When an organization reaches maturity – the stage that characterizes most schools – its culture generally becomes a constraint on innovation and a defense against new influences” (Schein, 1992, p. 46).

New teachers adapt to the norms and values embedded in a school’s culture. A conservative and compliant school culture can replace the new teacher’s enthusiasm and proactive attitudes (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992; Kardos et al., 2001). As Flores (2004) described, “Individualism, low morale and commitment amongst teachers, the existence of ‘vested interests’ and the excessive bureaucracy in schools were recurring themes referred to by teachers to account for the loss of idealism, the emergence of routines and a sense of ‘giving up’” (p. 313). It is a complex process, that of becoming a new teacher and adapting to the

culture of the school (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Flores, 2004; Tillman, 2005). As new teachers begin their career in a school, they strive for their personal and professional acceptance from a variety of stakeholders including students, coworkers, and administrators (Flores, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001; Peske et al., 2001). However, the process through which the teacher adapts to the school culture is an important part of preparing the teacher for a successful professional life or causing the teacher to leave the profession after a short time period.

Organizational theorists define culture as, “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1992, p. 22). This theory is useful in terms of understanding how the new teacher navigates the school. As they try to understand the norms and assumptions of the organization, they begin to develop a, “mental map of the organization...to understand others’ expectations” (Schein, 1992, p. 22). The organizational socialization into the professional school culture determines how the new teacher will establish relationships with their colleagues who are already in the school (Cherubini, 2009b). It is important that the initial orientation into the school culture provides teachers the ability to find their place in the school culture to feel security and respect from colleagues (Bullough et al., 1992).

As a school creates a culture with a focus on student learning, it is important to provide the environment for the new teacher to understand the common purpose of the school. The ability for the new teacher to have a positive learning experience as a new teacher can extend into their ability to focus on the students’ ability to learn. Teachers in schools with a focus on



learning often find their own professional learning is responsive and focused on student motivation. In schools without a focus on learning, teachers do not have a shared or common purpose for learning. Furthermore, teachers do not see themselves as a collective body focused on a collective mission to improve student achievement (DuFour et al., 2010; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989; Tillman, 2005). The school environment plays a key role in enhancing teacher learning to focus on student achievement.

New teachers coming into a school often work on their own to adapt to the common practices of the school. As they navigate the system on their own, they struggle to understand the culture of the school along with the unwritten norms, values, and customs. They often rely on their own observation to understand these unwritten rules. They must rely on their own self-efficacy to work on a day-to-day basis in their classroom (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Kardos et al., 2001). Although new teachers are often eager to succeed in the classroom, they are also insecure in their new role as a teacher and rely on their observations to determine the culture, the power players, and the values of the school (Flores, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001). New teachers observe their colleagues to determine "...how they interact with students, what instructional approaches they promote or suppress, what topics they deem appropriate or out of bounds for discussion at meetings, whom they look toward for expert guidance, how they use their planning time, and whether they encourage peers to exercise leadership beyond their classrooms" (Kardos et al., 2001, p. 251). As they observe the school culture, beginning teachers try to understand their individual power and role in the school culture (Schempp et al., 1993).

Teachers are influenced by their colleagues in formal and informal settings. As new teachers create their 'mental map' of the organization (Schein, 1992), they begin to take note as to how staff members interact with students, which topics are discussed at meetings, the norms

for participating in groups, the value of taking on leadership roles, and who is considered to be an expert teacher. These observations are conducted in formal and informal settings. An example of formal settings would be grade level meetings, staff meetings, or department meetings and they are they settings in which new teachers adapt to the school culture. Meetings also serve as the main venue for determining school duties (Schempp et al., 1993) and as opportunities for new teachers to be viewed by their colleagues and administrators. Meetings serve a variety of purposes; including understanding how various stakeholders contribute to the discussion. Meetings are important parts of the school culture (Schempp et al., 1993) because, “These events gave our teachers a visibility they could not achieve in their normal, daily course of duties” (p. 472).

School leaders should view informal settings as places of influence for new teachers where they gain understanding of the common purpose of the school. These informal settings are venues for alliances within the formal settings to create goals that are often opposite to the work of the school. These settings are a primary example of where “Fundamentalists” work to influence the “Tweeners” (Muhammad, 2009). Informal settings in a school could include staff lounge, parking lots, hallways, and staff social events. “Fundamentalists” use these venues to control their personal agenda and form an argument against the work of the ‘Believers.’ ‘Believers are often left out of these settings, allowing “Tweeners” to be influenced by ‘Fundamentalists.’

Formal and informal settings set the stage for the culture of the school and have a direct influence on teachers. The learning experiences of teachers in their first two years teaching in a school are intrinsically related to issues of school culture and leadership (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). These experiences lead teachers to focus their core beliefs on student learning, including

a belief that all children can learn, or a belief in the status quo and excuses for mediocrity (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009). Typically, the experience of new teachers can be divided by three main themes that are found within their experiences: 1) the competition and unwillingness to collaborate with each other; 2) the bureaucratic control of teachers; 3) the unwritten and implicit rules of school culture (Flores, 2004). These themes cause new teachers to step back from their initial enthusiasm for teaching. Without support for new teachers during their first year, new teachers will withdraw from their colleagues and become isolated (Kardos et al., 2001).

### **Establishing Safe Learning Environment**

It is important for schools to create a culture for new teachers where they feel safe to try new ideas, share practice, and discuss problems. New teachers expect and welcome support and encouragement from experienced teachers, but instead they often find these colleagues criticizing new ideas and discouraging new teachers from trying new teaching methods (Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Gasner, 2001; Kardos et al., 2001; Schempp et al., 1993; Tillman, 2005). New teachers find they have to accept, reject, modify, or accommodate the established traditions and perceptions of veterans. Sometimes this dynamic draws a divide between new teachers and veteran teachers. They often find disagreement in philosophy and pedagogy. The result of this situation is that new teachers will conform to the veteran teacher or become disenfranchised and isolate themselves in their classrooms (Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Schempp et al., 1993).

**Entering the culture.** Public school teachers enter a complex social situation as they begin their professional career. How they adapt to the school culture and how the culture adapts to them not only affects their ability to stay in the profession, but it affects their ability to ensure children are learning (Schempp et al., 1993). Teachers enter the profession to positively

affect the lives of their students (Bullough et al., 1992; Cherubini, 2009a; Flores, 2004). They believe that they can help students enhance their chances of education success. However, disenfranchised veteran teachers can transmit a culture that breaks down the beliefs of the new teachers (Tillman, 2005).

Teachers entering their first phase of teaching are not only vulnerable, but they find themselves navigating through phases of teaching (Tickle, 1994). There should be an emphasis by school leaders on adequate support and guidance needed during the initial years of entering the teaching profession. As teachers enter the field of teaching, they often find themselves navigating the initial stage of teaching and moving into a survival stage (Huling-Austin, 1990; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Olebe, 2005). Their ability to work through these stages directly impacts the teacher's decision to continue in the career, or find a new profession. Teachers come in during the first weeks of school with positive attitudes at their peak. During their first four to five months on the job, their positive attitudes diminish as they adapt to school culture and their colleagues (Bullough et al., 1992; Cherubini, 2009b; Johnson & Kardos, 2002). As teachers work through the initial stage of teaching, professional cultures are important to guide new teachers as they develop their sense of identity and decide on their career choice (Cherubini, 2009b; Johnson & Kardos, 2002). New teachers often leave the profession because they are dissatisfied with their work environments. They do not feel successful, welcomed, and have feelings of isolation (Cawyer et al., 2002; Ingersoll, 2012).

Veteran teachers, identified as Fundamentalists fighting to maintain the status quo, see new teachers entering into the school as vulnerable and may take the opportunity to discourage them from believing in their original reasons for wanting to become a teacher (Muhammad, 2009). As new teachers bring in new ideas, these Fundamentalists often discourage their

colleagues from moving forward with new ideas by responding with comments such as, ‘we’ve tried that before and it didn’t work’ or ‘that doesn’t work for the kids we have here.’ This criticism decreases new teachers’ motivation and commitment to students. New teachers become more compliant and less enthusiastic (Flores, 2004; Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

New teachers toil through their first year of teaching with varied degrees of success. Many schools have a sink or swim mentality about teachers entering their new role: “It is implied that the outcome of a new teacher’s initial experiences of one of two conditions; namely, either surviving the initial stage of their professional development or perishing in trying to do so” (Cherubini, 2009b, p. 89). Therefore, it is important for schools to create strong mentoring programs that provide support and a culture where it is safe to fail.

Within Professional Learning Communities, school leaders work with veteran teachers and novice teachers to create a culture of collaboration and a focus on student learning (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). This type of collaboration with colleagues is important in driving positive change within a school given that, “An examination of the school culture literature reveals a growing emphasis on teacher collaboration as a key factor in fostering teacher and school development, as well as in implementing successful innovation and change efforts” (Flores, 2004, p. 300). This points us towards the importance of developing mentoring programs to support new teachers in their adaptation to the school culture.

**Mentoring.** Creating a collaborative culture is important for schools to develop as organizations (Barth, 1991; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Kardos et al., 2001; Schein, 1992). School leaders must build communities focused on academic improvement and collective responsibility, but they also must focus on strategies for bringing new members into their organization (Bryk et al., 1999). Opportunities for meaningful interaction with colleagues

through a formal mentoring structure can increase the opportunities for new teachers to find pleasure in their work, build their self efficacy, and feel confident to help students reach their full potential (Bullough et al., 1992; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Mentoring programs are used by many districts to address the issue of low teacher retention rates and help support teachers as they face isolation and frustration in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Tillman, 2005). However, not all mentoring programs have addressed teacher attrition, efficacy, or effectiveness (Cherubini, 2009a; Feiman-Nemser, 2007). Many of the mentoring programs seen in schools today stress the importance of daily routine issues, technical aspects of the particular school, and classroom management technique. However, these mentoring programs often fail to address the cultural and climate conditions of the school (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a).

There are several types of mentoring programs currently in use. Quality mentoring programs can be good for new teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999). Due to the positive impact mentoring programs may have on new teachers mentoring programs tend to be supported by teacher unions, school leaders, and policy makers. Unfortunately, most formal programs are non-effective short-term programs and only provide support for the first year (Cherubini, 2009a; Fidler & Haselkorn, 1999; Huling-Austin, 1990; Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Furthermore, they tend to be poorly designed and difficult to monitor, implement, and evaluate (Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002; Fidler & Haselkorn, 1999; Muhammad, 2009). Many mentoring programs tend to underestimate the intense assistance needed by teachers and are designed as short-term, centralized programs used to mentor larger groups of teachers at one time (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999; Fidler & Haselkorn, 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Effective mentoring programs are systematic and sustainable (Cherubini, 2009a; Fidler &

Haselkorn, 1999; Ingersoll, 2012). Mentoring should not only be one-on-one mentoring but also include collaborative organizational structures and practices (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). However, most mentoring programs are developed by individual schools, isolated, short-term, and vary from site to site (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). New teachers need three to four years to achieve competence as an effective teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2007). Other non-effective programs are isolated and lack training of the mentors. Often, teachers get together but they are not sure how to talk effectively about teaching and learning.

Another problem with mentoring programs is that they often focus on why teachers leave and stay, but are not designed to assist new teachers in the various aspects of their job (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Mentors can help in the psychosocial aspect of new teachers by providing counseling, acceptance, and friendship (Cawyer et al., 2002). Effective mentoring programs should be designed to provide professional and personal needs. Therefore, it should not only address the content and pedagogy, but also allow time for personal reflection, collaboration, and developing positive self-esteem (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010).

New teachers are not only new to the profession, but they are new to a particular school culture. They should be aware of the school culture they are entering and how they can fit into the existing system. It is important that mentoring programs be school-based and that they support a school culture focused on student learning (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 1999; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Muhammad, 2009). Often school leaders forget experienced teachers who are new to a school also need mentoring. They need a system of support to understand the culture of the school, especially if the leader is working to transform a toxic culture into a healthy culture (Cohen & Brown, 2013; Gasner, 2001; Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2012). A healthy school culture is essential for collaborative, successful, job-

embedded professional development (Cohen & Brown, 2013). This healthy culture should cultivate a professional, collaborative environment for teachers and, in turn, increase student motivation and achievement with teacher productivity and satisfaction (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Marzano, 2003).

Mentoring programs must address the teacher's role in the culture of the school. One way to influence school culture with mentoring programs is to stress the importance of the collective responsibility of welcoming new teachers. The school should have a collective and systematic way of bringing new teachers into the school culture (Bryk et al., 1999). As new teachers come into a school, the system to welcome them into the culture has to be reflective and sensitive to the developmental needs and challenges of new teachers (Cherubini, 2009a). These mentoring programs should be systematic and include small talk with the mentor to cover a variety of topics and begin to form a bond with the mentee (Cawyer et al., 2002). Then the relationship can move into more in-depth conversation and develop a level of trust to express frustration and seek assistance.

The impact of Fundamentalist teachers on Tweeners is often overlooked in many of these mentoring programs. Mentoring programs often link novice teachers with veteran colleagues, but little is done in schools and districts to pair these relationships based on the beliefs teachers have about student learning. School leaders should be strategic about placing "Believers" as mentors for the "Tweeners," rather than leaving the partnership up to convenience pairing such as the teacher next door or department chair. The process through which these new teachers are assimilated into the new school environment and the impact of the teachers who influence them, can significantly influence their success in the classroom (Huling-Austin, 1990; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003b; Kardos et al., 2001). School leaders that are concerned with



improving student learning for all students should work to strategically develop mentors who work with new teachers to turn a toxic culture into a healthy culture over time (Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Muhammad, 2009; Tillman, 2005).

Mentoring programs have been used by various schools and school districts to varying degrees to keep teachers in the profession. Mentoring is used as a collaborative partnership in which individuals share and develop mutual interests (Tillman, 2005). It began in the early 1980s as a method to address the attrition rate of teachers and provide a smooth and efficient transition into the culture of teaching (Tillman, 2005). Many educators and policymakers agree that effective mentors and mentoring programs directly impact teacher retention (Feiman-Nemser, 2007). Teachers are less likely to leave the profession because of work related issues if they make it through the beginning stages teachers successfully. They need to learn how to cope with the stress of their new role as a teacher and navigate the new organizational culture (Borich, 1996). One way to help fight the anxieties about the organization and adaptation to the school culture is through mentoring programs (Cawyer et al., 2002). Mentoring can be used as a way to transmit the school's culture and help teachers adjust to the norms and values of the school (Tillman, 2005).

**Leadership.** The school principal is vital to establishing, maintaining, and reinforcing the culture of the school (Bryk et al., 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1991). Based on a principal's assessment of her or his school culture, the principal must be committed to initiate changes if the culture proves unhealthy. DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2008) pointed out that the lack of emphasis on the culture and climate in our schools has led to failed reform efforts in the last 30 years. This lack of emphasis can be a factor in maintaining the status quo in schools today. Schools are unable to move forward via progressive education policy due to the lack of

attention leaders have set aside examining the culture of a school (Deal, 1983; DuFour et al., 2010; Hargreaves, 1995).

Developing a collaborative vision for the school focused on student learning is part of creating a healthy school culture. A principal alone cannot develop a vision or a school culture; rather it must be done in collaboration with the school community. This collaboration is important for a healthy school culture and strong vision because as Fullan (1992) explains, “Principals are blinded by their own vision when they must manipulate the teachers and the school culture to conform to it” (p. 20). School principals serve as change agents to transform the teaching and learning culture of the school. The vision of the school must reflect this ability to change. The principal must be willing to collaborate with others and gather the interests and skills of all stakeholders to create a collective vision that will be of benefit to the whole school (Northouse, 2004). Furthermore, that vision should permeate the school to help new teachers develop their talents as they acclimate themselves to their new school (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005).

As school leaders work to establish a collaborative vision for the school with a focus on student learning, they must pay careful attention to the climate of their school. School leaders must see themselves as teachers of teachers and work to promote student learning and achievement through adult learning (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). A school climate that undermines the capacity of teachers to be adult learners is detrimental to the climate of the school and the promotion of student learning and achievement. The lack of focus on adult learning as a central mission of the school leader can also have a powerful effect on teacher retention rates (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).

The vision of a school should be adaptable, revisited, and begin to change as the culture of the school changes (Stolp, 1994). Schools often create a vision for a school, hang it on the wall and leave it on display for years on end. However, the vision of the school must adapt to new challenges that arise every day in our schools. Transformational leaders rely on the ideas, values, and commitment of the organization and are committed to creating a culture focused on student learning; the vision of the school must be created to reflect this type of culture (Sergiovanni, 2001). It is important to adapt the school vision because, “At any one point there will be a particular image of the future that is predominant, but that image will evolve” (Senge, 1990, p. 17).

The vision of the school should not be of importance only to the school principal. It should have meaning beyond the leader, and beyond the school. The vision of the school should be a part of the entire community and include not only school staff members, but parents, neighbors, and community partners. The school vision should be strong enough to establish in the school community the reason for the school’s continued existence. The vision is not a slogan to be developed at a meeting. Rather, it is a collective vision developed by a committed group of faculty: “Educators can clarify a general sense of direction at the onset of an improvement initiative, but a shared vision emerges over time as a result of action, reflection, and collective meaning based on collective experiences” (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008, p. 145).

This type of collective, reflective, adaptable vision, a critical aspect of our schools, is often overlooked. New teachers coming into the school should be able to see the school mission and vision so engrained in their day-to-day routine that it defines the mission of the work. New teachers should feel the vision and mission inspire them to work as a part of the

school to continue their work with students. School leaders should be specific about their mission, such as stressing innovation and improvement, and articulate that mission with teachers, students, parents, and the greater education community. It is essential the leader share this mission publicly in order for teachers to understand the goals of the school and, together, work towards student achievement. If a school leader is not open about her vision and mission, teachers do not have a common understanding of the mission of the school and work in isolation on separate courses.

Many school leaders have a priority to transform their school culture and build a collective culture focused on student learning. With this focus, leaders should take an active role in these mentoring programs for new teachers in their school (Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour et al., 2010; Gasner, 2001; Stolp, 1994; Tillman, 2005). Principals should know what to expect from new teachers and provide assistance for new teachers. It is suggested that principals focus time and energy on teachers new to the school by setting aside specific time to interact with these teachers throughout the year (Tillman, 2005). It is important that principals convey a strong message to new teachers that they are valued in the school community and that their work is key to the success of students. The support the principal gives to a new teacher can help teachers maintain their enthusiasm and belief in teaching (Gasner, 2001).

The perceptions new teachers have of the quality of school leadership will influence how the new teachers adapt to the school culture. Principals should establish a positive culture where new and veteran teachers feel comfortable exchanging ideas that will move the school forward in a positive direction (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Effective school leaders are often described as “being knowledgeable, strong and goal-oriented, but at the same time, flexible, encouraging, supportive, helpful and close to staff” (Flores, 2004, p. 309). However, laissez-faire leaders are

often described as having a “lack of orientation and organization in the running of the school, the non existence of shared goals and values, lack of vision, information and support” (Flores, 2004, p. 309). Therefore, not only should school leaders work to ensure colleagues are influencing the new teachers, but they must be cognizant of their own leadership.

The work of the school leader and the collaborative relationships with veteran teachers will have an impact on new teachers’ attitudes after their first year teaching. Teachers in schools with supportive and encouraging leaders and effective working relationships complete their first year with positive attitudes towards teaching (Flores, 2004). In a study conducted by Tillman (2005), the mentor and principal agreed that new teachers in the school could be influenced by the idea held by other teachers that students could not learn or had no desire to learn. New teachers believed it was important to include socialization into the school culture as part of a mentoring program to counter the negative perceptions and expectations other teachers had of students. As described by a mentor, “New teachers come to the school with a great deal of energy. It is up to the mentor and the principal to tap into that energy and let them know that they are a part of the school. This work included tapping into their talents and convincing them to work toward the philosophy, goals and mission of the school to provide students with a quality education” (Tillman, 2005, p. 621).

### **Summary**

As school leaders work to create a culture focused on student learning, they must be aware of the beliefs of their staff and the influence the entrenched staff has on teachers that are new to a particular school. Teachers within their first two years of teaching have to navigate the culture of the school, even if they are experienced in the field (Muhammad, 2009). Not only can the formal structures, such as meetings and mentoring programs, influence the new teacher, but

informal structures may have a large influence on new teachers as they adapt to the new school (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Muhammad, 2009). Creating a positive environment within the informal structures of the school could be beneficial to the overall climate of the school.

Conversations in the teacher's lounge, parking lot, and hallways could have an influence on new teacher's philosophy of student learning. I looked at the beliefs of new and veteran teachers and the influence spoken and unspoken beliefs have on the overall culture of the school and on the new teacher's beliefs about student learning. School leaders can benefit from understanding this phenomenon of teacher induction as they build a culture focused on the belief that all children can learn and it is our job, as educators, to make sure that happens (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by two research questions: How are new teachers' beliefs shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders? In addition, what impact does this dynamic have on school culture?

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methods**

The purpose of this study was to understand the influence of veteran colleagues and school leaders on new teachers' beliefs about student learning and the impact this dynamic may have on school culture. This qualitative case study focused on the new teachers' beliefs about student learning and interaction with colleagues' beliefs through the course of a school semester. Face-to-face interviews of the new teachers at the site, a questionnaire for new and veteran teachers, an electronic diary entry, a veteran teacher interview, and an interview with the principal were utilized to collect data for this study. The data were coded and analyzed in order to help answer the research questions.

#### **Rationale for the Research Design**

School leaders need to understand the existing culture at their schools and determine if a cultural change is necessary. It is important to determine if achievement of the students is affected by an unhealthy school culture. The unit of focus was the school in which the study took place to examine how new teachers are acculturated within the school's formal and informal culture; therefore, case study methodology was used for the study. Data collected about individual teacher beliefs were used to understand the culture of the school. On the teacher questionnaire (Appendix A), ten questions explore teachers' perceptions of their colleagues' beliefs about student learning and collaboration; three questions look into the teachers' perception of student learning, and four questions examine areas where colleagues come in contact with one another. Although each question measures a different aspect of student learning and collaboration, together the questions add up to a good overall index of teacher's beliefs. Based on survey responses, I categorized the teachers into categories described by

Muhammad (2009) as the “Believers, Tweeners, or Fundamentalists.” Moreover, I used the data collected to examine relationships between the Fundamentalists, Believers, and Tweeners as the Tweeners experience their acculturation into the school.

The research design of a case study should include five important components:

- A study’s questions
- Its propositions, if any
- Its unit(s) of analysis
- The logic linking the data to the propositions
- The criteria for interpreting the findings. (Yin, 1994, p. 20)

There are six types of data collected in case studies, including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 1994). Researchers could choose to use a variety of data collection techniques to complete their study. Based on the blueprint drawn by the researcher at the beginning of the study, they can add or delete these sources of data collection as they begin their study. In some studies, researchers utilize only one method of data collection, whereas in other studies a multitude of different sources are used (Miles & Huberman, 1984). For this study, I conducted face-to-face interviews, collected survey responses, and solicited an electronic diary entry. As I began my research study with my inquiry question, new questions arose as the data were collected. These became new questions at the end of the report for areas of further research.

Case study methodology is an effective research tool used to understand the culture of the school. The bottom up approach is important to begin to develop theory out of the data collected from the teachers. For this study, I surveyed 48 teachers at the middle school. Ten of these teachers were new teachers to the school. Six teachers took part in two, in-depth



interviews over the course of the semester and produced a solicited electronic diary entry. One veteran teacher and the school principal took part in an in-depth interview. Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) identified important organizational factors that influence teacher commitment: (1) sense of purpose about the work, (2) mutual respect and affiliation, (3) administrative support, and (4) opportunities for decision-making. These factors, along with Muhammad's (2009) description of teachers (Believers, Fundamentalists, and Tweeners) were used as a framework for collecting and analyzing data on the teachers.

The data collected helped me understand the culture of the school. After collecting data, I coded these data into themes emerging from the information. This information enabled me to develop a theory based on the rising themes. Using Muhammad's (2009) framework and based on their responses to the questionnaire, I determined the category into which each teacher falls, Believers, Fundamentalists, or Tweeners.

### **Context for the Study**

This study was conducted at one middle school with a population of 867 students and 53 staff members. The school building is over seventy years old and ten of the staff members are in their first year of teaching at the school. The school principal was in her second year as school principal. Qualitative data from face-to-face interviews, electronic questionnaires, and electronic diary entries were collected during this study. The sample for this study consisted of nine 'Tweener' teachers and thirty-nine veteran classroom teachers.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I do not have an affiliation with the school site and could remain impartial in the collection and analysis of the data. However, I did work in the school district for the past twelve years as a teacher and school administrator. As a new teacher in a school district outside of New

Mexico, I did face the challenges of a first year teacher as outlined in the review of the literature. Additionally, in my role as a school principal I have worked with new teachers to the school to acculturate them to a positive school culture focused on student learning.

### **Participants**

Teachers were the participants and they include teachers that are new to the school and veteran teachers. The principal was also a participant. However, the school was the unit of analysis. New teachers were coded as “Tweeners” for the study. New teachers included any teacher within their first two years teaching at the school. Using this description, there were ten “Tweeners” at the site who are within their first two years of teaching at the school. These teachers were surveyed in the middle of their second semester of the school year. Six of the “Tweeners” were interviewed twice within the course of the semester, and entered responses in an electronic diary. One veteran teacher and the school principal participated in one, in-depth, face-to-face interview. Veteran teachers were surveyed at the beginning of the study; no further data were collected from veteran teachers. The participants and the school were assigned pseudonyms.

### **Instrumentation**

Veteran teachers already established in a school may influence the beliefs of new teachers coming into the school (Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009). Therefore, I developed the instrument that was used in this study to gain insight into teachers’ interactions with their peers and their beliefs about student learning. I chose questions from the Professional Learning Communities Handbook (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2008; NCES, 2008) and the School and Staffing Survey (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker et al., 2008; NCES, 2008). I adapted the questions to reflect new teacher beliefs (see Appendix A

for questionnaire and codebook). The survey was used to measure a teacher's current beliefs and the influence others have on their beliefs. Questions were chosen based on the following criteria: 1) Do the items ask about the teacher's interaction (time and place) with their colleagues? 2) Do the items reflect the perception teachers have of student learning? 3) Do the items reflect the teacher's belief in their ability to reach student needs?

I solicited an electronic diary at the end of the spring semester from teachers who participated in the interviews (Appendix B). Such diaries can be used by individuals to document their daily lives and experiences (Allport, 1942). The diary used was less structured and allowed participants to describe their experiences (Janesick, 1999). This personal document was collected using an electronic tool called Survey Monkey. I hoped to capture reflections, thoughts, and encounters the teachers experienced (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994).

I conducted face-to-face interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the beliefs of the "Tweeners" and how they changed throughout the course of the spring semester (Appendix C). The use of the interviews and questionnaires offered an understanding of the culture of the school based on the beliefs held by the teachers and principal. The interviews and questionnaires allowed me to identify themes emerging from the data, similarities, discrepancies and differences among the "Believers" and "Tweeners" on the staff.

An interview with the principal was conducted once during the course of the semester to gather data about the school's culture and her role in establishing a professional culture focused on student learning (Appendix D).

### **Human Subjects Protection**

This research was conducted under the auspices of the University of New Mexico's Human Research Protection Office, IRB protocol 13-001. A letter of support from the

Albuquerque Public Schools (Appendix E), the consent form for the electronic diary (Appendix F), the consent form for the electronic questionnaire (Appendix G), and the consent form for face-to-face interviews (Appendix H) were approved under IRB protocol 13-001.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Qualitative researchers, “strive for understanding; that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with informants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meanings” (Creswell, 2002, p. 193). Creswell (2002) also identified eight verification procedures that a researcher should use to ensure reliability and validity:

1. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation: I worked in the district for the past 12 years and as a middle school principal for four years, 2008 through 2012. I have worked with the principal as a colleague for the past seven years. I, myself, was a new teacher in a new school district 13 years ago and remember the stress of my first year in a new school; I am sensitive to the needs of the teachers. I visited with each teacher on an individual basis frequently through the course of a semester.
2. Triangulation: I used three sources of data to help me continuously look through data to identify themes, patterns, and examples emerging in the study.
3. Peer debriefing: I reviewed the emerging themes, ideas, and findings with my committee chair during the study.
4. Negative case analysis: I used descriptive phenomenological inquiry to determine analysis and insight into these data to identify themes and patterns. I examined both the supportive and discrepant data to assess whether I should retain or modify the conclusion (Maxwell, 2005). I reviewed these data with my committee members to check my own biases and assumptions.

5. Clarifying researcher bias: I addressed my subjectivity and objectivity openly in my telling of the stories of the teachers. I am conscious that I was a first year teacher at one time and that could cause me to reflect and interpret these data through my own experiences. I made an effort to capture the words of the teachers through their own words and stories.
6. Member checks: Throughout the study, I took analyses, interpretations, and conclusions from the interviews back to the participants to verify the accuracy and credibility.
7. Rich, thick description: I reported the information from the study with deep, detailed descriptions to allow readers to determine whether the conclusions are transferable to their own settings. I taped and transcribed interviews, coded themes and categories, kept a log of my work, and documented each step of the study in detail.
8. External audit: I had my committee chair and members of the committee serve as external auditors for the study. They examined whether or not the findings and conclusions are supported by the data.

### **Sample**

Purposeful sampling was used to determine the school site and selection of teachers. This strategy allowed me to collect data from typical representatives, capture heterogeneity of the population, and deliberately examine teachers (Maxwell, 2005). Fifty-three staff members were surveyed, with ten of those surveyed in their first year of teaching at the school. The school's student population is ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. The student population includes White, Hispanic, Native American, Black, Asian, and other students. The socioeconomic status of these students ranges from low to high SES. For the purpose of this

study, “veteran” teachers were considered as having taught at the school site for longer than three years. A new teacher was in the first two years teaching at the school site.

Vogt (2007) describes purposive sampling as, “...gathered deliberately, with a purpose in mind, but not randomly. The cases chosen might be selected because they seem typical or perhaps because they are diverse” (p. 81). For this study, I was interested in veteran teachers, veteran teachers new to the school, and teachers new to the profession and new to the school. Instead of randomly surveying teachers without taking into consideration their years working in the school, I needed to be quite strategic about the target population of teachers. Therefore, criterion purposive sampling was used to determine if there is any relationship between the beliefs of the two groups of teachers. Based on the answer on the questionnaire to the number of years the respondent has been teaching in the school, the teachers were divided into two categories: NEW and VETERAN. Using this method of criterion sampling, I was able to find teachers on the basis of the number of years they had been teaching in the specific school. This method also allowed me to ensure I had an adequate number of teachers from both categories.

Additionally, I needed to determine which of the categories outlined in the literature the teachers fell into: Believer, Fundamentalist, or Tweener. These categories were determined by their answers to the electronic questionnaire hosted by Survey Monkey. The values for 8 items were averaged to create a score. Based on this average score, individuals with an average score of 4 or 5 were categorized as “Believers.” Those with an average score of 1 or 2 were categorized as “Fundamentalists.”

### **Administration of the Questionnaire**

I attended a staff meeting for all of the teachers at the site in February of 2013. At this meeting, I explained the study, as well as the link to the questionnaire that would be coming to

them via their school district email address. I followed up with teachers four times via their district email to remind them of the survey link. I contacted the principal individually to participate in the interview. The questionnaire sent to all staff members consisted of 10 questions. However, a few of the items contain several sub-questions. This layout allows the instrument to appear shorter, thus, increasing participation due to perceived ease of completing the questionnaire.

At the staff meeting I explained the importance of the interviews for any teacher within their first two years teaching at the school. I also expressed interest in interviewing a couple of teachers who had been teaching at the school longer than five years. A flyer with my contact information was distributed to all teachers at the staff meeting in the event they were willing to be interviewed as part of the study. In addition, the questionnaire included a link to a separate page where the participants with one or two years of experience could indicate that they were willing to participate in the interviews and the electronic diary data collection. I also posted three flyers in the mailroom for the teachers to view. Six “Tweeners” teachers and one “Veteran” teacher volunteered to participate in the face-to-face interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

Ten questions with multiple responses explored teachers’ perceptions of their colleagues’ beliefs about student learning and collaboration, three questions looked into the teachers’ perception of student learning, and four questions examined areas where colleagues come in contact with one another. Although each question measured a different aspect of student learning and collaboration, together the questions add up to a good overall index of teachers’ beliefs. The questionnaire was hosted by Survey Monkey and I downloaded the responses to my personal computer for analysis.

The interviews and diary entries were transcribed and the transcripts were analyzed through a reading and coding process (see Appendix I for an example of a coded transcript). I developed a label for the themes emerging from the data collected and organize them into categories. Then, I looked for relationships between the categories.

After the questionnaires were collected, I calculated the appropriate descriptive statistics for the responses using a computer program (SPSS). After calculating the descriptive statistics, the responses of the teachers were coded to categorize teachers into one of the three categories outlined in the review of the literature: Believers, Fundamentalists, and Tweeners. The fourth group, Survivors, was not coded for this study. The literature suggests they are a very minor number of teachers, one or two, and do not affect the Tweeners, Believers, or Fundamentalists in the development of a positive school culture (Muhammad, 2009). After the surveys were categorized, the responses were coded.

It is important to develop a coding system to decipher the raw data (Maxwell, 2004). Therefore, the responses to the questionnaires were divided into themes emerging from the survey responses. The analysis of these themes helped to determine if the interactions with the veteran teachers, novice teachers, and/or principal, influenced their beliefs. The interviews conducted with the novice teachers were also coded using themes that helped me determine the level of influence veteran teachers had on the novice teachers' beliefs throughout the semester. The open-ended interviews and electronic diary entries offered a broad overview of the needs of the novice teachers and their thoughts regarding the influence their peers and principal have on their beliefs.

The information extracted from the interviews and electronic diary entries, categorized into themes from the literature, provided a deep understanding of the beliefs and culture of the



teachers. The individual interviews and electronic diaries of the new teachers determined how they were adapting to the culture of the school and if they were adjusting their beliefs about students based on their interactions with their colleagues. This information helped me to understand the influence the principal, 'Believers,' and "Fundamentalists" have on "Tweeners" and shaping the culture of the school.

### **Limitations**

This was a case study at a single site. Therefore, this study gave insight to only the teachers teaching at the specific location at a specific place in time. Transferability of my findings of this case study to other settings can be limited because it is a only one location (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to discover how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders. I was also interested in better understanding the impact this dynamic may have on school culture. I used the results of the analyses of the responses to the questionnaire (See Appendix A for questionnaire and codebook) to create a description to help better understand the broader culture of the school. After understanding the context in which the new teachers are operating, I report the qualitative findings of the study. I assigned pseudonyms to all participants and the school.

#### **School Description**

Robert Kennedy Middle School is relatively large, with 867 diverse 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 62 staff members located in the middle of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The school building is over seventy years old, and the history of the school permeates the old lockers and dark hallways. Teachers in the school range in experience from teachers brand new to the profession to teachers with more than twenty-five years of experience. Due to the increase in retirees, some staff are new to the school, but not new to the profession. From a survey of 48 of the teachers, I found that fourteen teachers were in their first two years at the school; seven of those teachers were in the first two years of the profession. Two teachers are new teachers in their third to fifth year of teaching. Seventeen of the teachers have been in the teaching profession six to fifteen years. Fourteen teachers have sixteen to twenty-five years experience in the teaching profession, and seven teachers have been teaching for over twenty-five years.

## Tweeners

This study sought to determine how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions with colleagues. Although years of experience and years in the school vary, it was important to examine the teaching experience not only in the profession, but experience at the school in which the study took place. As Muhammad (2009) described, "Tweeners" are teachers new to the school culture. Some are new to the profession, but others only new to the school. I conducted a contingency table (crosstab) analysis (Table 1) to determine how many teachers, out of the 47 that completed the electronic questionnaire, were new to the profession and/or new to the school.

Table 1.

*Cross-tabulation of Number of Years Teaching and Number of Years Teaching in Current School*

		Number of Years of Teaching Experience							Row Totals
		1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	More than 25 years	
Number of Years Teaching in Current School	1st year	5	0	1	0	3	0	1	10
	2nd year	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
	3-5 years	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	5
	6-10 years	0	0	5	3	0	0	1	9
	11-15 years	0	0	0	4	1	2	1	8
	16-20 years	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	5
	21-25 years	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	5
	More than 25 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Column Totals		7	2	7	10	9	5	7	

As can be seen in Table 1, five teachers are in their first year of teaching at the school and their 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> year in the profession. Due to their inexperience in both the school and the profession, these teachers have little experience within a school setting on a daily basis. Another five teachers were also in their first year of teaching at the school, but they are veteran teachers, including one teacher with 6-10 years of experience, three teachers with 16-20 years in the profession, and one teacher with more than twenty-five years of teaching experience. An additional four teachers are also considered “Tweeners” because they are only in their second year teaching at RFK Middle School. Two teachers are in their second year at the school and their 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> year in the profession. One teacher is only in her/his second year of teaching at the school, but has 6-10 years experience in the profession. The fourth teacher of this “Tweeners” group is in her/his second year of teaching, but brings 11-15 years of teaching experience to the work at this school.

The contingency table analysis presented in Table 1 also provides an understanding of the overall tenure of teachers working within the school. It appears several teachers have only worked in this particular school during their teaching career. We see in Table 1 that two teachers reported that they have 21-25 years of experience in the teaching profession and 21-25 years teaching at the school. Even more interesting is the one teacher who has over 25 years teaching experience both in the school and in the profession.

### **Teacher Interaction**

I wanted to understand how new teachers’ beliefs are shaped by interactions with colleagues and school leaders and the impact the dynamic has on a school culture. However, first it is important to get a clearer understanding of the school culture in which these teachers are working on a daily basis. Teachers are often teaching in their own classrooms for most of

their workday; however, at times they interact with colleagues outside of their classroom instruction time. Muhammad (2009) points out that new teachers navigating the embedded culture of a school may be influenced by veteran teachers not only through formal interactions, but through informal interactions that take place at lunch time, during hallway duty, on walks to the parking lot, and at social gatherings. Therefore, the survey asked respondents when and where they interact with colleagues.

Lunchtime is a time of day teachers reported spending time with their colleagues. Table 2 presents the distribution of the times teachers eat lunch with their colleagues. Just over 70 percent of teachers indicated they eat lunch with their colleagues three or more days a week. All teachers participating in the survey indicated they at least eat lunch with colleagues once a month, if not more frequently.

Table 2.

*Frequency with which Teachers Eat Lunch with Colleagues*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Every day	16	34.0
3-4 days/week	17	36.2
1-2 days/week	11	23.4
Less than 4/month	3	6.4
Never	0	0
Total	47	100.0

Although teachers indicated they talk to each other often informally at school, Table 3 presents the responses to the number of time teachers talked with colleagues outside of the

school building. The teachers interact with each other outside the school building rather infrequently; in fact, nearly sixty percent of teachers only talk with colleagues outside of work once a semester or less often.

Table 3.

*Frequency of Teacher Interactions Outside of the School Building*

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Daily	1	2.1
At least once a week	0	0
At least once a month	18	38.3
Once a semester	13	27.7
Once a year	13	27.7
Never	2	4.3
Total	47	100.0

### **Topics of Discussion**

The socialization of teachers into a school's culture impacts their effectiveness in the classroom and longevity in the field. However, this socialization also contributes to their beliefs about student learning and affects the culture of the school (Cherubini, 2009b; Opfer et al., 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the topics of discussion for teachers in these settings. Almost fifty percent of teachers responded that their main topic of discussion when talking with colleagues outside of their classroom is daily work frustrations. Teachers wrote about frustrations related to student behavior, talking with parents, and

classroom lessons that were not successful. Frustrations for these teachers seemed to be related to issues over which they felt they had little or no control.

Table 4 presents a summary of the topics discussed between teachers in these informal settings.

Table 4.

*Topics Discussed Between Teachers in Informal Settings*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Changes within the school	10	21.3
School and/or district mandates	6	12.8
Social topics	3	6.4
Daily work frustrations	22	46.8
Personal life	6	12.8
Total	47	100.0

Topics of conversation focused on negativity can influence the school culture, especially in informal settings. Tweeners in the school believe in organizational stability and are yearning to become a part of the Believers or the Fundamentalists (Muhammad, 2009). Muhammad (2009) also points out that, due to the high levels of stress “Tweeners” face when “Tweeners” are not given the opportunity to collaborate on their work with students and be invigorated by the work with students, they are easily influenced by the negativity of Fundamentalists. This focus on negativity not only affects the culture of the school, but also causes teachers to lose focus and their sense of purpose in the work (Deal & Peterson, 1999; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009).

I also conducted a contingency table analysis of the topics discussed and number of years of teaching to understand how these discussions might be impacting the culture of the school (see Appendix J for the table). I observed that half of the teachers in their first year of teaching discussed their personal life and social topics when talking with colleagues. However, twenty of the thirty-seven teachers teaching more than one year at the school cite work frustrations as their primary topic of conversation when talking with colleagues. This dynamic has a negative impact on the culture of the school.

### **Teacher Beliefs**

I was also interested in better understanding with whom these “Tweener” teachers are interacting and their overall beliefs related to student learning. To understand this aspect of the school culture, I conducted another contingency table analysis (see Appendix K for the complete table) with how often teachers eat lunch together, the percent of students they believe are capable of learning, and if they feel they are making a difference in the lives of their students. One of the teachers responding to the survey completely disagrees that s/he is making a difference in the lives of students. S/he also believes that only 50-59% of her/his students are capable of learning; however, this teacher does not eat lunch with colleagues. Thirteen teachers eat lunch every day with their colleagues and agree that they are making a difference in the lives of their students. However, only two of these teachers believe 100% of their students are capable of learning. Appendix G displays that two of the thirteen teachers who eat lunch every day with their colleagues and agree that they are making a difference in the lives of students also believe that 100% of their students are capable of learning.

Believing 100% of students can learn and feeling you are making a difference in the lives of your students is crucial to not only the culture of the school, but the teacher’s sense of self



efficacy. Only eight out of forty-seven teachers completely agreed they make a difference in the lives of children and believe 100% of their students are capable of learning. However, these teachers are not necessarily interacting with other teachers during lunch. In fact, only one teacher from this group eats every day with others. Three of these teachers eat less than 4 days a month with colleagues, and one teacher responded they never eat with colleagues. However, although thirteen teachers agreed that they are making a difference in the lives of children, eleven of these teachers believe less than 100% of children are capable of learning. These teachers do eat lunch every day with their colleagues.

### **Believers and Fundamentalists**

To understand the possible staff dynamics in terms of the number of Believers and Fundamentalists in the school, I calculated a score in order to be able to assign teachers into either the Believers or Fundamentalists category. Table 5 displays the items and value assigned for each question. Using items 8a, 8b, and 9a-f, each response was given a score. For example, if a teacher responded “very true” to item 8a, they would be given a score of a “5” for that specific question. The values for the eight items for each teacher were averaged. An average score of a 1 or 2 indicates a teacher is a Fundamentalist, a score of 4 or 5 indicates a teacher is a Believer. A score of a 3 indicates a teacher is neutral, or does not display the strong beliefs of a Fundamentalist or a Believer.

Table 5.

*Items Used from the Questionnaire to Calculate Each Teacher's Average Score to Determine Status as Believers or Fundamentalists*

Items 8a and 8b					
My efforts are vital to making our mission and vision of the school a reality.	Not very true 1	2	Partially true 3	4	Very true 5
My efforts are essential to making our mission and vision of the school a reality.	Not very true 1	2	Partially true 3	4	Very true 5
Items 9a – 9f					
My success in teaching students is due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own efforts.	Completely Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Completely Agree 5
My success in teaching students is due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own abilities.	Completely Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Completely Agree 5
My struggles in teaching students are due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own efforts.	Completely Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Completely Agree 5
My struggles in teaching students are due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own abilities.	Completely Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Completely Agree 5
I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of students.	Completely Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Completely Agree 5
I utilize professional networks to obtain resources for classroom instruction (examples: Discovery Education, Edutopia, NCTE).	Completely Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Completely Agree 5

The overall culture of the school, which new teachers are entering, includes thirty teachers that have a score of a “3,” suggesting that they are neutral in their beliefs. However, eight teachers, with an average score of “4” are “Believers.” In contrast, six teachers, with average scores of “2” are “Fundamentalists.” Six of the seven teachers who are new to the school and new to the profession averaged a score of “3” across the eight items. This score indicates that they have neutral beliefs and have not begun to lean towards being a “Believer” nor a “Fundamentalist.” However, one of the seven new teachers has a score of a “2,” suggesting that s/he is leaning towards the beliefs of a “Fundamentalist.” If we include all teachers new to the school, including the six experienced teachers who are new to the school, we find that twelve of these “Tweeners” have a neutral score of “3.” Two of the teachers have a score of “2” indicating they may be forming the beliefs of a “Fundamentalist.”

### **Vision and Mission**

As school leaders work to establish a mission and vision focused on student learning, it is imperative that new teachers at the school are supported in understanding and connecting to this mission (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009; Schempp et al., 1993). Believers see the direct connection between their work and the mission of the school. They are teachers who believe in the school's core values. They believe that all students can learn and it is their job to ensure student success (Muhammad, 2009). Thirty-three percent of teachers responding to the survey are Believers according to their connection to the mission and vision of the school. These Believers indicate their daily efforts are vital and essential to making the mission and vision a reality. Therefore, they have a direct commitment to their work and the work of the school. In contrast, forty-four percent of teachers feel their efforts are not vital and essential to the mission and vision of the school. These teachers are

Fundamentalists who do not see the direct connection to their work and the vision of the school as a whole.

### **Self-Efficacy**

A strong sense of self-efficacy can give teachers the confidence to help students reach their full potential (Bullough et al., 1992; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Furthermore, teachers are more likely to actively engage in examining a variety of ways to improve students' achievement if they feel a sense of collegiality and have opportunities to learn (Hausman & Goldring, 2001). The study examined teachers' self-efficacy by asking if they felt their success and struggles were due to factors beyond their control, rather than their own abilities.

The acculturation into the profession for teachers begins at an early entry point. In fact, teachers begin to observe the profession from the vantage point of a student at least sixteen years prior to entering the profession (Lortie, 1975). Teachers come into the profession with sixteen years as a student, and most have a very short student teaching experience to learn the sophisticated practice of teaching. In fact, many teachers had a positive experience as a student and their beliefs about teaching originated from their personal experiences as students (Lortie, 1975).

Teachers enter the profession to positively affect the lives of their students (Bullough et al., 1992; Cherubini, 2009a; Flores, 2004). They believe that they can help students enhance their chances of educational success. However, disenfranchised veteran teachers can transmit a culture that breaks down the beliefs of the new teachers that were formed at an early age (Lortie, 1975; Tillman, 2005). According to the survey, seventy-seven percent of teachers feel they are

making a difference in the lives of students. Only nineteen percent of teachers disagreed that they were making a difference in the lives of students.

One of the primary distinctions between Fundamentalists and Believers is their belief in the capability of students to learn. They believe that all students can learn and it is their job to ensure student success. Believers believe in academic success for every student. Table 6 depicts the percent of teachers who believed in every child having the capability to learn. Thirty-eight percent of the teachers were strong Believers who believe every child in their classroom can learn. However, as many as twenty-one percent felt that although most children are capable of learning, they felt there was at least one percent of their students who were not capable of learning.

Table 6.

*Percent of Students Teachers Feel Are Capable of Learning*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
100%	18	37.5
99%	10	20.8
80-98%	6	12.5
70-79%	4	8.3
60-69%	3	6.3
50-59%	6	12.5
Below 50%	1	2.1
Total	48	100.0

Of even greater interest is the number of veteran teachers that do not believe 100% of their students are capable of learning compared to the number of teachers new to the school with similar beliefs. A contingency table analysis presented in Table 7 reveals that of the fourteen teachers new to the school, eight believe 100% of their students are capable of learning. However, one teacher that is in her/his first year at the school believes that only 50-59% of her/his students are capable of learning. On the other hand, out of the teachers that have been teaching in the school more than 15 years, only one teacher believes that all of her/his students are capable of learning.

These data in Tables 6 and 7 are concerning when linked to expectancy beliefs and self-fulfilling prophecies. Teachers beliefs that some students are more able than their peers affects the actual achievement of students (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). This disbelief in students affects the way in which teachers approach students, their feedback on student work, and opportunities for students to respond (Hall et al., 2001; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

Table 7.

*Contingency Table Analysis of the Percentage of Students Believed to be Capable of Learning by Their Teachers and the Number of Years the Teacher Has Been Teaching in the School*

		Percentage of Students the Teacher Believes Capable of Learning							Row Totals
		100%	99%	80-98%	70-79%	60-69%	50-59%	Below 50%	
Number of Years Teaching in the School	1st year	6	0	2	0	1	1	0	10
	2nd year	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	4
	3-5 years	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	5
	6-10 years	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	9
	11-15 years	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	8
	16-20 years	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	5
	21-25 years	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	5
	More than 25 years	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Column Totals	17	10	6	4	3	6	1	47

## The Interviews

**Participants.** In addition to disseminating an electronic questionnaire, I invited staff members to participate in in-depth semi-structured interviews and an electronic journal entry. Teachers volunteered to participate in this form of data collection. Six teachers new to the school, one veteran teacher, and the principal participated in semi-structured interviews.

Tom is a new teacher to the school. Although it is only his second year at this particular school, he had one year of teaching experience prior to his position at RFK Middle School. He is an enthusiastic teacher excited for leadership positions within the school. His first year

teaching was at a school on the other side of town. He described his first year teaching as an atrocious experience. He did not care for the school and felt the staff was extremely unwelcoming to new teachers. Due to this experience, he was determined to have a better experience at his next school. Due to budget cuts and layoffs, he was cut from his position at his first school. Tom was put onto a 'must-hire' list that the school district uses to place teachers who have lost their positions at their current school. He was nervous because there was a stigma attached to being placed on this list. However, due to his overwhelmingly optimistic attitude, he was excited about the opportunity ahead. After his first interview, he was hired at another school across town. Although excited about the position, Tom continued looking for a school closer to home. Luckily, he found RFK and finds its location close to his home the main reason he is happy to be in his second year teaching at RFK.

Jennifer is in her first year teaching at the RFK middle school. The reputation of RFK led her to make a change from teaching in the private sector to teaching in a public school. Although Jennifer was hesitant to teach in public schools, she heard RFK was "a very good school and meant for [her]." Although she felt the district process was a bit overwhelming to navigate, she finds her teaching position at RFK to be worth the effort.

Vera is finishing up her second year teaching at RFK and indicates she landed here "because it was the only place I could find a job in the entire city." Vera did not know anything in particular about the school, but feels it "was just kind of luck of the draw that this school had an opening." Her positive energy impressed a principal in an earlier job interview. Although that principal was unable to hire her due a hold up in the Human Resources Department, she referred Vera to the principal of RFK. The principal of RFK was impressed with her enthusiasm and energy and hired her to begin her teaching career.



James is in his first year teaching at RFK. Much like the other teachers interviewed, the reputation of the school encouraged him to apply. Following in his father's footsteps to become a teacher, James was excited to get a classroom of his own. The teacher he was replacing had retired, and James felt lucky to be able to take up where the retiree left off.

Michaela is in her first year teaching at RFK. Her hopes were to teach at the high school level, but she is happy to have a job and learning to appreciate the middle school-aged children. Her experience as a student led her to become a teacher because she always loved going to school. Her time in high school encouraged her to want to replicate that positive experience for others in her classroom. A recent college graduate, she is motivated and excited to do her best in the classroom.

Robert is in his second year teaching at RFK. He spent his summer driving to schools introducing himself to principals in an effort to get a job in a time when so many jobs were cut. Upon arriving at RFK to submit his resume, he found the environment to be inviting and fascinating. The location was near his home and he was always impressed with the children he saw in the neighborhood walking to and from school. Although he did not get to teach his favorite subject his first year, he found 'getting his foot in the door' was an exciting first step in his career.

Christine, a veteran teacher, serves in many leadership roles at the school. She started teaching in the private sector, but found the benefits of health insurance and retirement were the motivation to work in the public schools. She student taught under the teacher she would replace and was motivated by the 'very, very high standards' that were set for the students in her mentor teacher's classroom. This motivation encouraged her to take a position at RFK where she is now in her eighth year of teaching. She now serves on a variety of committees and has

helped to hire a few of the teachers. In her eight years at RFK, she has worked for three principals.

Patricia is in her second year as principal of RFK Middle School. Although she has worked as an assistant principal, this is her second year as a school principal. Patricia is welcoming to visitors and her calm energy is felt in the school office as she talks to staff and students.

**Self-efficacy.** Teachers enter the field excited to begin their teaching profession. In fact the teaching shortage is not due to the inability to recruit teachers; rather it is the high number of teachers who leave the school due to problems they encounter throughout the year (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). School structures that fail to meet teachers' needs diminish the enthusiasm of new teachers as they begin their career. This phenomenon often causes teachers to question their motives for entering the profession in the first place (Barth, 2002). Their self efficacy is an important factor in the retention of teachers and positive change in the classroom (Colley, 2002).

The teachers interviewed who took on leadership roles outside of the classroom appeared to have a connection to the school and desire to continue their career at the school (Fullan, 2001; Kardos et al., 2001). Their enthusiasm appeared to be fueled by their leadership roles in the school. Tom, for example, explained he liked being involved in the school and taking on a leadership role. Tom's previous experience in his first year of teaching was described as isolating and he felt like an outsider intruding on an established culture. In fact, he stated he was surer of the importance of this role as a leader, due to his start at his previous school that was isolating. Tom explained he had taught at another school for one year and had a bad experience. He told himself he would make this experience different by taking on leadership

roles at his new school, “I think I also felt a little surer of myself coming into a new school because I had already done it before. It was nice because there were other new teachers so that was a nice way to feel like, ‘Oh, I’m not the only person here,’ where at the school I was at before I was the only new person.” He felt it was important to become connected to his new school and take initiative. He explains, “I just have always kind of wanted to take on a bigger role at the school, I guess. I kind of like having my hands in a lot of baskets.” He also feels his personality lends itself to take on leadership at an early stage in his career, “It’s just funny because people seem a lot more gun shy about it and I understand why. Maybe it’s just my personality because I’m pretty confrontational, not in a bad way, but if there’s something that I’m curious about or need answers to, I don’t feel intimidated by asking questions. I think a lot of people, especially if they are new, do feel intimidated.” Tom feels that it is a “very collaborative school...It’s awesome and it’s neat and it’s fun to watch especially because I feel like you’re much more productive when it’s collaborative. I think it has to do with it’s a really established school and you still have a lot of really established teachers and when they pass down that torch of, ‘This is the nature of our school. This is how we get things done because we’re concerned about student success.’ Then, our expectations are clear across the board.”

However, other teachers were not as confident as Tom, nor as willing to take on leadership roles at such an early stage. They felt the need to build up their own confidence with colleagues and as classroom teachers before moving onto leadership roles (Cherubini, 2009a; Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Michaela explained her hesitation,

I have been asked to take on leadership roles at the school. But, I feel like it’s because nobody else wants to do it. If they knew me and how uncomfortable I feel as a teacher right now...I don’t think they would think it was a good idea. I try to put on a good

show for them to think I know what I am doing, but right now I am just trying to keep my head above water without anyone knowing I am kind of drowning.

Others explained:

They always mention the new teachers should take on committees, chairs, and things like that. Some do. But, for me I just don't feel I know enough of what I am doing just within my classroom to take on more things outside. -Michaela

I feel I need to just focus on my classroom – I can't imagine taking on anything else. -Robert

I think they only encourage new teachers to take on committees because it's a job no one wants to do. I see it as an initiation into the teaching profession...but, I'm not ready. -James

The principal feels I would be a good leader, but I think I am a little shy in front of the old guard. -Vera

**Motivation.** James became a teacher because his father was a teacher. He remembers wanting be a teacher when he was a young child. He recalled, "From a young age, I knew I enjoyed teaching. I remember I was in the first or second grade. I sat down with my little sister and little cousin and was trying to teach them the addition tables. They were like 4 years old...I made them sit there and watch me....I enjoyed it. I enjoyed teaching people and helping them discover things. I didn't know what I wanted to teach. I just knew I wanted to be a teacher." This desire and motivation must remain strong enough to retain James through the lows throughout his career (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a). However, at this point in time he feels he has the potential to remain in the profession. He explained, "I can see myself here for at least 10 years....this is something that I got from one of my mentors. He said, "Stay somewhere until

you feel like you're stagnant. Then, go find a new ...find a change of pace. Find some way to rejuvenate you....As long as I can keep what I'm doing fresh and I can still feel excited about it every year, I don't really see a need to leave.”

Other teachers felt the same way about becoming a teacher:

It was something natural to me, I couldn't think of anything else I want to be. -Vera

I really, really like math...it was important for me to give back to our community and help our kids just 'get it.' -Jennifer

It's exhausting....but, I can't picture doing anything else. -Tom

After time in the private sector, I realized there was something missing in my career...the money was nice, but I needed a sense of purpose. -Jennifer

I became a teacher because it was important to make a difference. -Michaela

I started as a finance major, but just felt it wasn't rewarding. -Robert

**Philosophy.** Teachers' philosophies of teaching change as they progress in their careers.

In fact, this adaptation is often due to the influence of Fundamentalists on Tweeners (Muhammad, 2009). Colleagues who are Fundamentalists and disenchanted with the work of the school can have a damaging effect on new teachers and their teaching philosophy (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Kardos et al., 2001; Peske et al., 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Teachers new to the school have already begun to notice changes in their philosophies over the course of the one to two years they have been teaching in the school. James mentioned members of his PLC talked about their philosophy at their meetings. When asked if it had changed he responded, “Yeah. A little bit. Mostly it's changed from having worked with students. I developed my philosophy in school and as a student teacher. Now, being the guy in charge, it's like 'whoa.' Okay, I need to rethink some stuff.”

Michaela indicated she forms her philosophy a little bit every day after interactions with her colleagues, “For me it was just listening. I like to hear other teachers’ philosophies and put in my two cents sometimes. I feel like as a younger teacher, I want to just listen and absorb. Then, I can pick and choose what I want to bring into my own philosophy.”

Tom’s belief in kids became stronger as he became a parent. He feels like he was always meant to be a teacher, but as a parent has naturally learned to manage things in the classroom with kids. He also attributes his empathy for kids to seeing them each as somebody’s child. However, he knows not every teacher at his school feels that way although he points out, “I think they should. I think teaching is innate to some people, but also think it’s a skill that needs to be learned and processed more strongly. Even though we get frustrated in the classrooms, we know that at the end of the day, you’ve done something.”

**Immersion into the culture.** New teachers in a school struggle to understand the unwritten norms, values, and customs. They are often eager to succeed and participate in discussions on how to better their practice. However, they use observations of their colleagues to understand the power players and their expected role with colleagues outside of their classroom (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Kardos et al., 2001). Formal settings, such as grade level meetings and professional learning community meetings are often a time for new teachers to begin to create their ‘mental map’ of the school (Schein, 1992). Their role in these meetings is often as a listener.

Vera advises new teachers, “Be careful what you would say to certain people because I think sometimes you need to vent about something. I remember when I was a new teacher I was like, ‘I need to vent to a very trusted person right now.’ It wouldn’t even be a real issue it’s just something you have to talk about so I’d just tell them that. Don’t just tell everything to

everybody because...I don't think it's teachers, I think adults in general are just like kids and it will get around." It is important teachers develop relationships with a trusted colleague, "I told the friend that I made we would just call each other like, 'I need to talk to you.' She's a little bit ahead of me though, it wasn't her first year, but it was her first year here. We were both newbies. It was nice."

Each of the teachers discussed classroom management as being a primary topic of discussion with colleagues. All interviewees mentioned that it is not just a topic of conversation, but it is also a controversial topic for veteran teachers.

James pointed out classroom management as his primary struggle. He felt this was an area where he turned to veteran colleagues for help. He describes, "It's something I was always not very concerned with. When you're working side by side with another teacher during student teaching and they have a very set standard, as long as they're in the room, the kids are going to follow that. I never had to think about it on my own. I got here and I realized that I didn't have a set standard of my own. I didn't know what had been here before. It was sort of chaotic for the first month or so of class before I really had established what it was that I expected them to do. Even still, the kids are very inconsistent."

Michaela struggles with classroom management and turns to colleagues for advice. However, she admits sometimes colleagues give poor advice. She explains,

Mostly it was the classroom management thing. That's been my biggest pitfall and sometimes I've gotten advice, but I didn't think it would work for me. I thought it was too circumstantial to the other teacher's situation or philosophy and it just wouldn't work for me. I didn't try their advice, not because I thought it was bad. I just didn't think it would work for my classroom.

Often Fundamentalists become frustrated and angry when they begin to notice Tweeners influenced by Believers (Muhammad, 2009). After feeling frustration when listening to Fundamentalists discussing classroom management, Vera decided to teach a workshop on the topic. She describes,

Admin asked me to teach a classroom management workshop. I did a workshop with a bunch of the teachers about positivity and respect. We have a lot of teachers that just didn't buy into the whole thing....I think that they were really focused on that one kid that was going to do something terrible instead of the entire class...I really feel like people here write referrals for the dumbest things.

Vera's ability as a new teacher to take on a leadership role and push against the status quo was threatening to the veteran teachers within the school. Vera explained veteran teachers tried to disagree with her methods of classroom management and indicated she did not yet have experience dealing with difficult students. Fundamentalists, through their influence in the school, work to prevent this behavior in Tweeners (Muhammad, 2009).

Although Tom was not involved in leadership roles at his previous school, he is now. As part of the school's Instructional Council, he has a say in the decisions in the school. At his previous school he saw the Instructional Council as "the administration's pets." Now that he is part of that group he is not sure if his participation has caused him to see value in the Instructional Council from a different viewpoint. When asked about the feeling of now being 'the administration's pet' Tom responded, "I haven't seen that here. I saw it at the last school I worked at, but I don't see it here. But, I don't know if I just don't see it because now I'm part of it." Either way, he feels his role as a leader has had a positive impact, "I volunteered to do it and I think it's been instrumental in helping me understand how things run. I don't think that from



that experience I have necessarily garnered more friendships, just a better knowledge of how the school runs and playing what kind of roles outside of what I probably would have recognized.”

**Proximity to colleagues.** Robert Kennedy Middle School is a very large school. In fact, the school consists of multiple floors and buildings. Therefore, the proximity to other teachers was a key factor in terms of which teachers interact with one another and the isolation teachers may have in working with other teachers within the school. Teachers interviewed mentioned proximity as being a significant factor in their interactions with other colleagues.

I enjoy talking with the teacher next door during passing periods and venting about the class I just had. But, sometimes I see people in a staff meeting or at the mailboxes and think, ‘I wonder what they would have to say about my kids,’ but it’s weird because I don’t even know their name even though we work at the same school. I end up only really having the perspective from the teachers who teach next door to me. -James

Most of the people I’ve met, I met at the staff meetings. I sat with the teacher next door to me. She had her people she knew. I got to know all of them. We all sit at the same table every meeting, so they are the people outside my hallway that I know. - Jennifer

It’s mostly just proximity. The people I interact with the most are the people that use the workroom at the same time as me. I’m almost always making copies. -Robert

I know the people in my hallway, for the most part. These are the teachers I problem solve with during passing period and vent to after a bad day. But, honestly, I could run into some teachers who work here at the store and wouldn’t even know we work at the same school. -Vera

It's a big school. I meet people through proximity; the teachers I am close to are really the only teachers I know. I sit with them in meetings and talk with them in the hallway. Most of them are in my PLC. -Christine

James points out that being so close in proximity to a veteran teacher really helps him: I think it would be more challenging if we weren't so close together just because, well, for me personally it would be more challenging. I get distracted quickly. It's nice being able to come in here and be like, 'Hey, quick question for you.' Get an answer, go back out and teach. Whereas, if I try to remember it for later I might forget.

Tom explains it is difficult to get to know other teachers in the school. "It's a big school. I've talked to other teachers that are kind of like, 'Well, I don't know who on the so-and-so committee.' I don't know the teachers if they're not in my PLC, or hallway, or getting their mail at the same time."

Vera cites proximity to her grade level team hurting communication with the team and even team dynamics,

Our team is really close except for one of our team members is on the other side of the building, which is kind of difficult. The other two members on my team are literally right across the hall...sometimes someone just brings someone up in the hallway and then three of us know about it, but the other one we have to tell later. It is not efficient at all.

This issue proves difficult when discussing students and causes communication issues with the other teachers (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

The hallways seem to create the culture of the school and several teachers alluded to the idea of each hallway having 'its own culture.' When asked if this culture was created by the

teachers or the principal, Tom responded, “I would say that it’s mostly from the teachers, just because our principal, she’s newer to the school, too. I’ve been here as long as she has and they’ve had several principals before that. I would say it’s the teachers because we have a lot of really senior staff that’s been here 10, 20, 30 years.”

**Mentoring.** Mentoring programs within the school can be used to address the issue of teacher attrition, isolation, and frustration (Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Tillman, 2005). However, many mentoring programs address the paperwork, daily routines, and technical aspects of the teaching profession (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a). Michaela and James both pointed out that they are participating in a district-mentoring program. This program supports the teachers with ideas and suggestions, but “doesn’t know specific school issues, mostly they help us with paperwork.”

Thoughtful selection of mentors for teachers is vital in connecting new teachers to veteran teachers (Colley, 2002). Vera described her mentoring program, but felt her mentor did not share common beliefs, practice, or philosophy. This mentorship relationship resulted in completion of a program, but did not help stimulate professional growth or teacher satisfaction (Griffin, Wohlstetter, & Bharadwaja, 2001).

Several of the interviewees described their mentoring experience as this technical type of mentoring, while the mentoring related to the cultural and climate conditions of the school was left up to an informal process. This informal process is often where Fundamentalists influence Tweeners (Muhammad, 2009). Informal mentoring can often focus on negativity and in turn influence the culture of the school. Tom points out the informal mentoring that takes place with new teachers, “It was kind of informal...but, the nice thing is every hallway kind of seems to have their own culture. This is our seventh grade hallway and right away, the teachers across

the hall were coming over and seeing if we needed anything. I had several questions and they helped me with the 'RESPECT Card' we use for school-wide discipline.”

Vera points out her informal mentoring, “Everyone was really nice. Almost like uncanny nice but they were so supportive. I remember my department chair called me in July and helped me set up my room, and taught me all about 'RESPECT' cards, and how things work in the school, and gave me a tour. It was really nice because the school that I did my student teaching at was less than friendly.”

The importance of finding a trusted colleague as a mentor is important to the success of and providing support for the new teacher (Cawyer et al., 2002; Tillman, 2005). Vera describes, “You know what I'm going through so that was nice....just use the people who try to help you that's one of the good ones because I think so many times those new teachers, we have to appear to be like 'I know everything that I'm doing right now' because you don't, you don't want to show like a sign of weakness and it's like there are people you can ask for help and it's fine.”

## **Formal Culture**

**Professional Learning Communities.** Each interviewee explained formal collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). They each also explained the need for time to share information about instruction through content and time to share information about specific students (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker et al., 2008; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Teachers explained that in the previous year PLCs were divided up by grade level, where the focus was on individual students. For example, all content teachers shared the same students they had assigned to their classes. Therefore, if there were concerns regarding student behavior and/or performance, the teachers would meet during their

PLC time to discuss strategies to reach specific students. Due to the fact that each teacher in the PLC has the same students, they were able to collaborate on strategies that worked for the student in math that perhaps would work in science. Since the teachers were able to collaborate on the same students they were able to try strategies that were successful. However, this year teachers collaborate in this formal setting based on content. When asked about how they collaborate with colleagues, they each mentioned these PLC meetings.

This year, our PLC is different. Our PLC is based on content. We meet with the Language Arts Department so that's a little different. -Tom

When we meet as a seventh grade team, it has to be kind of on our team, which is fine because our kids are much mellower this year than last year. -Vera

We always tie it back to Common Core this year and give each teacher time to talk about whatever it is they want to talk about specifically for methods in the classroom and teaching practices in the classrooms. -Robert

PLCs last year were based off of student teams and this year they're based off of content according to prep period. -James

We don't talk about students much, we do that in the hallway and when we find time. Our PLCs are on content so it's really focused on Common Core. -Jennifer

However, based on feedback from the teachers to the administration, the school is going to be grouped in PLCs by student teams next year. The veteran teacher describes this change as a positive change, "Personally it's better to talk about the students. I'd rather have it be about the students and different ways to help them."

Although two of the new teachers interviewed took on leadership roles from the beginning, the other teachers indicated they do not feel comfortable speaking up at their

collaboration or PLC meetings. They did feel informal conversations with colleagues were easy, but in the formal setting they were determining their role within the group (Cawyer et al., 2002; Kardos et al., 2001). As James points out, “I actually try not to talk. When I do, I felt like they listen very respectfully. Even if they’re thinking, ‘God, what is this guy talking about?’ They’ve never let on and I feel I can talk. I just don’t.”

As conflict arose with other teachers, Vera described her role as a new teacher (Cawyer et al., 2002; Kardos et al., 2001),

I would just try to stay neutral. You try to avoid as much as you can. Of course someone comes into your room and is just like this happened with this...and I’m like, well, I’m just going to listen...I think some of them tried to keep me out of it. I think there were definitely some that tried to get me involved in it.

### **Informal Culture**

Often, when staff members express negative feelings in informal settings where the conversation was initially positive, the tone shifts to emphasize the negative. Often the negative feelings of staff members can perpetrate others through conversation in informal settings. As James explains, “I was just frustrated and venting a little bit. I saw a teacher I student taught with. It was a running joke between us. Everyday he’d tell me, ‘Quit now. Go home. It’s not worth it.’ When we saw each other at the staff meeting, he just smacked his forehead and shook his head at me.”

Several teachers noted that frustration and ‘venting’ takes place in the hallway, lunchtime, parking lot, and other informal settings:

Most of the time when the bell rings after a bad class, I just go out to the hallway and talk to the first teacher or even adult that I see. -Vera

Lunchtime is a time to just let out all of our frustrations. I hold stuff in around the students, but at lunch we just all vent. I thought it was funny, but it's kind of negative when I really think about it. -Jennifer

I always park next to the same teacher and realized they know all about my bad day, but honestly...I don't even think I know their name. -Robert

Most of these conversations focused on negativity, while the structured formal settings focused on constructive conversation. James points out,

Mostly people complain about lack of consistency. Now that they pointed it out, the lack of consistency bothers me sometimes. I just try to be as consistent as I can. From the top, it's like hats in the building, iPods during lunch, stuff like that. It's like some people feel this way about it, some people feel that way about it. There's no consistency across the board. It's really hard to enforce any rule.

However, in PLCs James indicated, "We pretty much just talk about Common Core. We don't really talk about the school or what's going on. Most of the student talk happens in the hallway or at lunch."

Teachers have begun using informal time to discuss student concerns in informal settings causing an increase in frustration around student learning (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Muhammad, 2009). Vera describes her frustration, "It's not for those little five-minute meetings we are having...with all these kids swarming around us. It is hectic and crazy." Whereas, a structured PLC meeting as DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker (2008) described it is more useful and authentic for teachers. Vera finds that, "It is not hectic and crazy. We are all usually there, too."

## Leadership

The principal works to create a collaborative organization with a strong mission and vision (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001). However, a toxic school culture can impede any effort for collaboration or reform (Deal, 1983; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Muhammad, 2009). The impact of the informal culture can hinder a principal's work in moving a school towards their mission and vision. Tom describes, "It helps having a good administration that's very positive. At the same time, I barely see them or interact with them. I interact much more with other teachers."

The Instructional Council is the leadership organization of the school. This group meets twice a month and consists of a representative from each grade level and each department. The principal and a parent also sit on this council. Each interviewee cited the Instructional Council, a decision-making body, as being a place to collaborate with school leadership and make decisions for the school. Those on the Instructional Council have a positive opinion of the work of the school. Other teachers point to feeling the school does not respond to change easily. They point to a strong unionized staff that "will stand up for what they feel is best and I think that they are pretty good for the most part about letting their feelings known. It's not made a secret. Their opinion needs to be heard."

One example brought up was the switch in PLCs to meet by department, rather than grade level team. The principal listened to the complaint, but decided department meetings were essential for Common Core Standards. This action was presented in each interview as a decision the principal made for the direction of the school.

People were just livid. They were mad but we're moving in the direction of Common Core and it was important that we started meeting as content and collaborating that way.



The decision was made that that's the direction that we were going to go and a lot of people were really upset. -Tom

A lot of people were really upset about it because they were really used to things being a certain way and they feel like any time people feel that a certain way is challenged, they're really quick to be angered about it. -Vera

As a leader makes changes to the school, some advocating maintaining the status quo become frustrated and influence Tweeners or retire (Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Muhammad, 2009; Tillman, 2005). Tom noticed the increase in new teachers due to retirees, "I just think when you have a staff of senior and you go through another shift like we have or another administration change and things change with administration...I think some people are just like, 'I'm done. I've already been through changes.' It's time anyway." However, the Tweeners I interviewed that appear to be influenced by Believers said:

I like change. I think change is important. I think change is necessary because we have students that change constantly and their needs change constantly and our society changes constantly and you have to be able to adapt to that. -Vera

Change is good...I don't know if my colleagues would agree, but I think it's best for our own development. -Tom

I'm willing to change anything that will help the kids do better. If it means throwing out a lesson 2<sup>nd</sup> period that didn't work for 1<sup>st</sup> period...I'd do it. -Michaela

I like that we keep doing new things...it's like we just want to keep getting better and better. -James

## **The Principal as a Leader**

Patricia is in her second year as principal of RFK Middle School. Although she has worked as an assistant principal, this is her second year as a school principal. Patricia is welcoming to visitors and her calm energy is felt in the school office as she talks to staff and students.

Leadership begins with a strong mission and vision for the school (Deal, 1983; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Fullan, 2001; Miller, 2002). Patricia describes her mission and vision as, “Instilling more shared leadership possibilities that are proactive, optimistic, and aligned with district and state expectations”(Deal, 1983; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Fullan, 2001; Miller, 2002).

The principal’s role as a facilitator in mentoring teachers in an environment that supports teacher learning is critical in the establishment of a positive culture (Davis & Bloom, 1998; Feiman-Nemser, 2007; Gasner, 2001). Patricia feels the school helps with the immediate transition of teachers, but she feels the district should facilitate it. She explains, “I think that the transition for teachers is incumbent upon the schools, I wish that there was more of a transition for them in the district. But I feel like everything is incumbent on the schools to take care of this.” Brock and Grady (2001) agree that district mandated mentoring programs, which provide sustained support, help teachers transition into the classroom. However, Birkeland and Johnson (2002) explained that although the design of mentoring programs is important to teacher retention, the climate of the school is critical in the way new teachers are embraced as a part of the established faculty. Therefore, the role of the school in assimilating teachers into the environment can significantly influence the culture of the school and success of the teacher.

Patricia explained that there is no formal induction program at the school. She described the current induction of new teachers:

We connect them with the instructional coach with, if they're special ed then the head teacher, and each person has a certain job. Like, our secretary has a packet of information that she provides to the teacher. I'll have either a cup or a t-shirt so they'll have something to wear to indicate that they are proud of their school. The assistant principal does a certain amount of key orientation. And then other teachers, I put department chairs with them...sometimes I'll have sunshine committee kind of do something kind of welcoming for them.

This type of collective mentoring is important to the collective culture of the school. Dufour (2003) explained this process of mentoring is driven by all stakeholders to support the new colleagues in the school.

Patricia also has teachers shadow each other if they are taking over a classroom in the middle of the year. However, if the teacher is taking over for a "Fundamentalist" teacher, this shadowing can move the "Tweeners" towards the "Fundamentalist" rather than "Believer."

Patricia describes this challenge,

I don't care if that teacher's been a little bit toxic, if their attitude isn't good. I kinda, you know prep the teacher and say look, you know, these are kind of some of the concerns, but I want you to know where the teacher is in the curriculum. I want you to see how the class has been accustomed to performing.

Muhammad (2009) contends, "Fundamentalists" influence "Tweeners" through the informal culture of the school. This negativity is often in environments where the principal and/or "Believers" are not present. Patricia describes this influence of "Fundamentalists" on

“Believers” at her school. When asked, “Have you ever seen any of the negative or toxic staff try to engage the new teachers into becoming negative?” Patricia responded:

It’s stuff I don’t see, but I think that stuff happens. I think it happens especially at this school and maybe at every school because I have seen it at every school in which I’ve been, but I think even more so here because it’s an older guard. And, most of that comes with more traditional attitudes about education. I think people are pretty creative. Like it doesn’t happen, at least in my perspective, it doesn’t happen in public. I don’t see it. They don’t tell me they’re doing it. They do it more in a department meeting, or in a PLC, or in the hallways, or at lunch. I think it happens. There’s indoctrination, and some people are pretty overpowering.

Shared leadership is important in creating a working environment that encompasses respect, trust, and collaboration (Bolman & Deal, 2002; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Kelley et al., 2005; Schein, 1992). Patricia sees this distribution of power as important to the new teachers and as essential to shaping the culture of the school. When describing leadership positions at the school, she told me:

..and so that’s been one of the things I’ve been trying to work toward as well, how do you open up new possibilities to the newer people...and I’ve done some little kind of behind the scenes encouragement. You know ‘you really ought to consider leadership in your department’ or ‘I think you’d be highly effective’ ‘you have great ideas; I’ve witnessed you talking with others about those ideas.’ This type of shared leadership not only creates collaboration, but shifts the influence of “Fundamentalists” on “Tweeners” to situations where “Believers” influence “Tweeners.’ Patricia describes this type of shift, ‘So what we’re seeing now is a change of the guard.’

Change in a school culture must be inspired by the principal, thoughtful, and executed with strong collaborative relationships (Barth, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Goldenberg, 2003). Patricia understands this change in structures and has thoughtfully paired PLCs for collaboration. Her need to change the structure of leadership is a way to remove power from the 'Fundamentalists, "...maybe because they've just seen more things. They're waiting for it to pass or something. But they lead, they lead in a pretty negative way and it's not good. So it influences and impacts others. So, I've been trying to look at the structures in order to get a better shared leadership system."

She describes this task of structural change as time-consuming, but crucial to her moving towards a collaborative, positive culture. She explains,

It really takes a lot of energy and strategy to like, try to mold something. Because, we have some people that are just 'this is the way it's going to be and I'm going to keep it this way...and you're not going to change it.' So, sometimes you don't try to change it just by confronting, you change it through a change of culture with a change of structure. And, so, it's a slow process...for me, it's like if you have positive, proactive, action oriented, knowledgeable people in these leadership positions – including instructional council ...we have a really balanced perspective, because we have an old guard here and they are guarding.

## Chapter Five

### Introduction

In this final chapter of the dissertation, I restate the research questions and review the major methods used in this study. This case study was designed to answer these research questions: How are new teachers' beliefs shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders? What impact does this dynamic have on school culture? As I examined and analyzed the data to answer these questions, I learned the stories of new teachers working in a large school to find themselves in this profession they have chosen. Through their stories, we can begin to have insight into the struggles and celebrations of new teachers as they navigate through the culture of a long-standing school. The principal in the study also shared a story of new school leaders working to establish a vision and collaborative culture in their schools.

I disseminated an electronic questionnaire, conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and collected an electronic diary entry to gain specific knowledge about the acculturation of teachers, beliefs on student learning, and the culture of the school. Participants included teachers and the principal. They volunteered to participate in the study. The electronic questionnaire was available for all 53 staff members, 48 staff members completed the survey. The face-to-face interviews took place at the school in a private setting.

This chapter begins with a restatement of the problem and the purpose of the study. Next, the findings of the study are examined in relation to the literature that was examined for the study. Finally, implications for practice and further research are identified.

## **Problem Statement**

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, school reform efforts have pressured schools to become focused on standardized test scores. In states such as New Mexico, recent reforms use standardized tests to not only measure student performance, but also determine the effectiveness of a teacher. Penalties for the teachers of the students failing these tests are high-stakes, including loss of employment or lower pay (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010; DuFour et al., 2010; Graham, 2005; Muhammad, 2009; Newton, 2010; Rothstein, 2004). The Race to the Top program provides funding for states that transform their teacher evaluation models to include teacher accountability based on student performance on standardized tests. It requires the use of a value-added model that is used to measure individual teacher's effectiveness based on the growth of their students' standardized test scores. These reform measures are seen as a misuse of standardized test scores and have a negative impact on the culture of a school for teachers and students.

Reforms such as these teacher evaluation models are technical changes often seen in schools and school districts across the country (DuFour et al., 2010; Graham, 2005; Muhammad, 2009). These technical changes cause school leaders to be reactive and compliant, rather than thoughtful and transforming. School leaders need to be able to dig deeper into the cultural shifts needed within their school to address inequities and student achievement. The cultural change needed in schools today is complex and is often overlooked in school reform. However, this type of change should be a priority for school leaders in order to build a healthy culture focused on universal student achievement (Deal, 1983; Flores, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001).

This type of cultural change is complex due to the intricacies within individual schools. The organization must have a clear understanding of its purpose and a clear plan to achieve its

purpose. Without this focus, a toxic culture can be quickly fostered throughout the organization (Hargreaves, 1995). School leaders must understand their staff and the organizational culture in order to develop a healthy climate and culture focused on student learning.

However, most often school leaders enter a school with an established organization and veteran teachers. As the school leader establishes a mission and vision focused on student learning, it is important that teachers new to the school are supported in this work. It must be well communicated and deliberate in action. As new teachers enter a school, they enter one of the most complex social situations of their professional careers. How the new teacher adapts to the school culture and how the culture adapts to them not only affects their retention in the profession, but it affects their ability to ensure children are learning at high levels. The support principals provide to new teachers during this transition has been cited as one of the major factors that influence teachers' retention in the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The first year of teaching is the most important year of a teacher's career and a chance for principals to help these new teachers develop skills and determine if these teachers will become successful educators (The New Teachers Project, 2013).

A teacher's belief in students can help students enhance their chances of education success and success beyond the classroom. Many new teachers enter the profession with this intent. However, disenfranchised veteran teachers can negatively impact their beliefs and convey a school culture that harmfully changes the beliefs of the new teachers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was designed to answer these research questions: How are new teachers' beliefs shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders? In addition, what impact does this dynamic have on school culture?



In response to the first research question, *How are new teachers' beliefs shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders?*, it appears that at this specific school the new teachers' beliefs were influenced by their colleagues and their principal. Although a teacher begins to form their beliefs about teaching and learning as they enter this profession as a student, they are influenced by others as they progress in their career (Lortie, 1975; Muhammad, 2009). The teachers interviewed explained they began forming beliefs about teaching and about becoming a teacher at a very young age. Although their induction into the profession as a student began early, their induction into the profession as a professional was short. In fact, most teachers spent seventeen years in the profession from a student's vantage point and only one year in pre-service teaching as a student teacher.

As revealed throughout the interviews and survey responses, this influence by their colleagues and their principal once they entered the profession was both positive and negative, depending on the interactions the teachers had with colleagues. Although formal settings, such as department meetings, staff meetings, and professional learning communities provided time for interaction with a range of colleagues, the informal settings were the spaces in which colleagues had more impact on new teachers' beliefs. Most teachers spent time eating lunch with their colleagues and talking with colleagues during times such as passing periods. These informal settings often served as a time to unwind or voice frustration over topics such as state mandates or student behavior.

In response to the second research question, *What impact does this dynamic have on school culture?*, it appears according to the survey responses and interviews, these interactions of veteran colleagues and school leaders do have an effect on the overall culture of the school, whether it is healthy or unhealthy. The socialization of teachers contributes to their beliefs about

student learning and affects the culture of the school (Cherubini, 2009b; Opfer et al., 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The topics of conversation during the informal settings mostly regarded daily work frustrations. This type of conversation is an avenue through which Fundamentalists influence Tweeners and contribute to the creation of a negative culture within the school. The high number of interactions between teachers during these settings and the topics discussed could have a negative impact on the culture of the school.

### **Recommendations for Leaders**

This study was useful because it addressed an area of school culture important to school leaders. As school leaders introduce new staff members into their school communities, it is imperative to understand the influence of veteran teachers on new teachers as they adapt to the school. This study can provide insights into the impact of formal and informal relationships on new teachers' beliefs about student learning. It also leaves school leaders with an understanding of opportunities for professional development and mentoring.

I have had the opportunity to lead a school with an entrenched staff, many who had taught in the school for more than twenty years. I also have had the opportunity to open a brand new school and hire staff from the start. In both of these settings, I found it was important to understand the formal and informal relationships of colleagues and how our beliefs affect students learning. I also have had the opportunity to work in upper-middle class schools, as well as lower socioeconomic schools. The issue of teachers' beliefs about student learning and student achievement is not isolated to schools typically considered higher performing. In my experience, schools across racial composition and socioeconomic status face challenges with employing teachers who do not hold the belief that all children can learn. This hard realization

is important for school leaders and education reformers to understand if they hope to encourage change in our schools.

**Hiring.** Many teachers enter a new school with a positive attitude and an eagerness to work hard; however, veteran staff members influence these newcomers and discourage them from working towards school reform. School leaders must strategically work with new teachers to move the school forward in the belief that it is everyone's duty to ensure students learn. They must be aware of where what beliefs teachers hold prior to coming into the school, where the beliefs come from, and how they influence the culture of the school. Many beliefs teachers hold are formed prior to their entry in the profession. In fact, the socialization of teachers into the profession is unusual in comparison to other occupations (Lortie, 1975). The teaching profession is the only occupation in which the socialization into the occupation occurs as an observer of the profession at an early entry point. Most teachers were immersed into the occupation as an observer as early as four or five years old. Therefore, beliefs about teaching occur early on in a child's life as a student. It is their own experience in the profession as a student that shapes their beliefs at a very early age (Lortie, 1975).

The hiring of staff is essential to creating a culture focused on learning. I, like other educators, always thought if I could hire my own staff from the opening of the school I would be able to have a strong culture focused on the belief that all of our students can learn and it is our job to make sure they do learn. However, as leaders we must remember this notion that teachers come with habits of "school" and have little experience in the professional work of teaching. It is through observation as a student that many teachers began to learn the craft. As Meier (1995) describes, "But the habits of schooling are deep, powerful, and hard to budge. No institution is more deeply entrenched in our habitual behavior than schools" (p. 141).

In hiring my staff prior to the opening of our new school, I chose to spend the majority of the interview with teachers discussing teacher beliefs about student learning. Interview questions focused on their beliefs, rather than their content knowledge. However, I did not account for their own habits and experience in school. Therefore, if I were to hire staff again I would be sure to understand their own self-knowledge of their beliefs. I would recommend leaders use criteria outlined by Meier (1996):

If I could choose five qualities to look for in prospective teachers it would be (1) a self-conscious reflectiveness about how they themselves learn and (maybe even more) about how and when they *don't* learn; (2) a sympathy toward others, an appreciation of differences, an ability to imagine one's own "otherness" (3) a willingness, better yet a taste, for working collaboratively; (4) a passion for having others share some of one's own interests; and then (5) a lot of perseverance, energy, and devotion to getting things right! (p. 142)

**Professional development.** Schools vary in professional development models from district-wide trainings, one-shot workshops, and embedded learning such as Professional Learning Communities. Although most conversations where Fundamentalists influence Tweeners occur in informal settings, it is important for school leaders to participate in formal settings such as department meetings and PLCs. By participating in these meetings, school leaders are able to reiterate the mission and vision of the school in a collaborative setting. Principal participation in PLCs also helps cultivate a collaborative culture with shared leadership. As Cohen and Brown (2013) explained, "Successful professional learning communities will require a shift in the traditional leadership role from leader-centered (top-down) to shared leadership. Principals need to lead from the center rather than the top (p. 2)."

As principals work to provide meaningful professional development for teachers, it is important they see themselves as a teacher of teachers. The focus on adult learning as the work of the principal is an essential foundation for effective teaching and learning (Cohen & Brown, 2013). This work of principals to provide meaningful professional development to support teachers and set direction for the school is essential to retain teachers and influence student achievement (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPoint & Meyerson, 2005).

Theory Y leaders believe if the conditions for the organization are provided, the employees will be self directed in accomplishing tasks and objectives of the organization to which they are committed. Therefore, most people want to do well at work (McGregor, 1960). In a school setting, the principal would believe that most teachers want to do well at their work. The intrinsic satisfaction teachers will receive will motivate them to do a good job. The principal should develop a climate of trust with the teachers that is necessary for the culture of the school. Shared decision making would be evident so that teachers have a say in decisions that influence them (McGregor, 1960). Shared leadership is important in creating a working environment with respect, trust, and collaboration (Bolman & Deal, 2002; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Kelley et al., 2005; Schein, 1992). School leaders must establish trust as an essential component of building relationships with teachers. Trust, respect, and collaboration, or the lack thereof, can create or destroy reform efforts. Any type of school reform involves risk. Therefore, it is important to create a safe and trustworthy environment to allow teachers to try new practices and employ creative strategies to reach students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, Cohen & Brown, 2013, Westbrook & Hord, 2000).

In my experience hiring my own staff I have come to the realization that leaders must be willing to have honest and courageous conversations about the teachers' beliefs. It is in trying

times, difficult teaching moments, that teachers fall back on what is comfortable in the classroom; meaning, they revert to their experience as a student and deploy traditional teaching methods. Perhaps this frustration allows space for the “Fundamentalists” to promote their beliefs of status quo and encourage resistance towards education reform. However, school leaders can use this dissonance and challenge as professional development opportunities. Rather than defining professional development as a one-time workshop or canned program, it can be defined as professional growth for teachers.

This dissonance can create a space for inspiring and intellectually challenging conversations for teachers. It can allow school leaders to create the time for reflection on their beliefs and values as a teacher (Davis, 2006). As a school leader, I can encourage teachers to move beyond what they experience in the classroom that is creating frustration, to begin analyzing what is happening in their classrooms. As teachers express frustration regarding student behavior, instead of allowing “Fundamentalists” to encourage teachers to give up on students, I can encourage teachers to think about the problem from the student’s perspective, perhaps opening opportunities to reach the student using a different approach. Encouraging new solutions with teachers rather than shifting back to what is comfortable for teachers based on their experience in the education system is critical if we, as school leaders, want to reform education and reach our diverse student populations.

**Teachers as leaders.** Teachers in the study who were in leadership roles were more connected to the mission and vision of the school. Their participation in this leadership capacity provided them the support they needed and the courage to do this work from the principal and colleagues that encouraged them to create positive change within the school. Leadership

positions can include department chairs, grade level chairs, PLC leaders, or even sponsoring a school organization.

Often school leaders do not want to overwhelm new teachers with responsibilities outside of the classroom. However, the results from this study might encourage leaders to provide new teachers leadership roles outside of the classroom. This connection to the school furthered their desire not only to continue their career at the school, but in the profession. Those teachers without leadership roles were more disconnected from the vision and mission of the school and influenced by Fundamentalists. Of course, in allowing these leadership responsibilities, school leaders must be cognizant to provide ongoing support for these teachers as they take on outside responsibilities. This support should be responsive to the individual needs of the teacher and help to ensure their work inside of the classroom is as rigorous as their responsibilities outside of the classroom.

**Believers and Fundamentalists.** In order to move a school forward, it is essential for school leaders to learn the root causes of staff resistance to change and identify concrete strategies to improve a school's culture. In this case study, it was found that most teachers were in neutral in their beliefs. However, eight of the teachers are "Believers" and six are "Fundamentalists." It is important for the principal to understand who these teachers are as she works to establish a culture focused on teaching and learning. It cannot be assumed that a tenured teacher is a "Fundamentalist" as this is not always the case. In fact, one participant in this study was a teacher with over 25 years experience and still believed 100% of her/his students were capable of learning. However, this teacher responded that s/he eats lunch with colleagues less than four times a month. In contrast, eleven teachers who responded they believe less than 99% of their students are capable of learning eat lunch with other teachers

every day. School leaders must take the time to know who these teachers are and know more about their beliefs if they are to build a positive culture focused on student learning.

School leaders should survey their staff often throughout the year to gather information about their beliefs and gain understanding of the embedded culture at their schools. Using this type of data, principals can strategically pair new teachers with teachers who are working towards the collective vision and mission of the school. This type of collaboration cannot be left up to chance if a principal wants to move her school forward.

**Mentorship.** As school leaders work to create cultural change within their schools, it is important to create strategic mentors for new teachers. Often, mentoring of new teachers is left to the most veteran teacher, or department head. However, principals must work to strategically pair teachers with a mentor who is working as a partner in the school towards reaching the vision and mission. Again, a survey could be created to gather information about the beliefs of teachers and establish strong mentor-mentee relationships that collectively work to further the vision and mission of the school. A teacher who has a strong belief that all children can learn and that it is her job to make it happen could be a better mentor for the new teacher than the teacher who is an expert at paperwork, but does not hold positive beliefs about students.

**Self-efficacy.** The study found that thirty teachers had a score of a “3” on the items used from the questionnaire to calculate each teacher’s average score to determine status as Believers or Fundamentalists (Table 5). This large number of teachers with a score indicating they are neutral in their beliefs is concerning. As a principal, I would be concerned that so many teachers are neutral in their beliefs because they do not feel strongly one way or the other in their beliefs about student learning. Should the majority of these thirty teachers with a “3” become Fundamentalists the school may possibly slide into a very toxic culture.



This lack of concern for student learning could lead to lack of concern in the classroom. A strong sense of self-efficacy can give teachers the confidence to help students reach their full potential (Bullough et al., 1992; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Furthermore, teachers are more likely to actively engage in examining a variety of ways to improve students' achievement if they feel a sense of collegiality and have opportunities to learn (Hausman & Goldring, 2001). However, if teachers are indicating according to their responses to the on the questionnaire that they do not have the confidence to help students reach their full potential, it is likely to be seen in the classroom. Furthermore, it could be seen in the climate of the school that teachers are disengaged or dissatisfied. School structures that fail to meet the needs of teachers diminish the enthusiasm of new teachers as they begin their career. This phenomenon often causes teachers to question their motives for entering the profession in the first place (Barth, 2002). Their self efficacy is an important factor in the retention of teachers and positive change in the classroom (Colley, 2002).

**Teacher evaluation.** Although teachers form their beliefs from their early experiences, it is important that principals are willing to have conversations about those beliefs and how they are seen in the classroom. In evaluating teachers, it is vital that principals begin conversations with teachers regarding their beliefs about student learning. Due to the fact that 62.5 percent of teachers believe less than 100% of their students are capable of learning, it is important to see if this belief is evident in their teaching. This astounding percentage of teachers could have a profound impact on the academic performance of the children in their classrooms. It could lead to over 50% of the students feeling their teachers have given up on them or chose not teach them in the same way in which they teach the students that they do believe are capable of learning.

Teachers' beliefs about students' learning can contribute to students forming a self-fulfilling prophecy and this leads to higher or lower performance in the classroom (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Although explicit or implicit, these messages about a student's ability are transmitted to students through the teacher-student relationship, the feedback offered through evaluative comments, what teachers do to try to reach the student (input), and the opportunities for the individual student to respond (output) (Hall et al., 2001). Therefore, classroom observations should include data collected in the classroom on these explicit and implicit messages about a student's ability. As a principal, I would also like to collect student climate surveys on the classroom to determine if students are impacted by the beliefs, or non-belief, their teachers have in their ability to learn.

**Proximity.** Another opportunity for principals to allow Tweeners to be influenced and supported by Believers is in the physical environment of the school. The study revealed that teachers are most exposed to and influenced by teachers in close proximity to their classroom. The teachers in close proximity are the teachers with whom the new teacher will eat lunch and collaborate in informal settings. The study revealed that teachers are influenced during these settings. Therefore, it is important to physically pair new teachers with Believers. This regular exposure and support will help the new teacher adapt to the school environment in a positive manner, focused on the vision and mission of the school.

### **Suggestions for Additional Research**

**Beginning teacher.** This research could easily be replicated at another school site. In fact, much of the data collected in this case study is important information for principals to gather at their own schools. A survey for all teachers would provide the principal with information needed to further the work of her school. Additionally, interviewing new teachers

throughout the year is important in developing relationships with teachers and ensuring they have the support they need.

It would be interesting to follow new teachers from the interview process for their first job to the end of their second year teaching. A case study analysis of the teacher, rather than the school, would improve our ability to better understand how she/he navigates the first years of teaching.

**Mentoring.** It would be fascinating to examine mentoring programs for these new teachers, as they come to understand not only their profession, but also the culture in which they have been immersed. Further research into the individual school mentoring programs could help us understand the support that teachers need as they enter the field. As mentoring programs are examined, so must be the process of pairing mentors with mentees. Looking into methods of mentorship within individual schools could be further examined through this study.

**Hiring practices.** The data I analyzed revealed interesting groups of teachers that shared common philosophies. For example, five teachers who have both been in the profession and at the school for 6-10 years had strong beliefs about every student's ability to learn. These data provoked me to ask, who hired these teachers? What is the role of the principal in hiring and subsequently, her role in retention? Understanding these data by matching the beliefs to the previous principals could help school leaders in their hiring practices.

**Self-fulfilling prophecies.** Data collected revealed that 62.5 percent of staff believes less than 100% of their students are capable of learning. A second study to collect data on the student achievement of students in comparison with the belief teachers have about their students would be intriguing to determine any relationships between their beliefs and achievement of students. In this study, it would be fascinating to collect classroom observations

including the climate, feedback, and input (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) of teacher behaviors and the actual achievement of their students.

This research helped address the questions that I began with, but left me with many more to answer. I am hopeful that I will be able to use this research to continue examining the culture of our schools and working with school leaders to create collaborative schools focused on student learning. In my experience, schools across racial composition and socioeconomic status face challenges with employing teachers who do not hold the belief that all children can learn. This hard realization is important for school leaders and education reformers to understand if they hope to encourage change in our schools. Until we are willing to take a profound look into the beliefs of teachers and implications of those beliefs on students, we will continue our surface level changes in the United States education system and shy away from examining and addressing the deep rooted beliefs that impact our children on a daily basis in our schools.

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Appendix A

Teacher Survey and Codebook

Teacher Survey

**Dissertation Survey**

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**\* 1. How many years have you been teaching?**



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**\* 2. How many years have you been teaching at your current school?**



---

**3. How often do you eat in a faculty lounge?**

Every day  
 Yes  
 No

---

**4. If you do not eat lunch every day with your colleagues:**

How many days a week?

How many days a month?

Never?

---

**5. How often do you talk to your colleagues in the following settings?**

	Never	Infrequently (1 or 2 times a month)	Frequently (once a week)	Always (Every time and/or every day)
While on duty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In between classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lunch time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After school, while at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Before School, on school grounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Dissertation Survey

### 6. How often do you talk with your colleagues outside of work?

- Daily
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Once a semester
- Once a year
- Never

### 7. What are the main topics you talk about?



## Dissertation Survey

### 8. Please read the following statements and provide a response.

	Not very true		Partially true		Very true
My efforts are vital to making our mission and vision of the school a reality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My efforts are essential to making our mission and vision of the school a reality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My input is respected by my colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My colleagues encourage me to try innovative ideas to respond to student needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My colleagues encourage me to take responsibility to ensure all students learn at high levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training has been provided to enable me to apply teaching practices that will assure my students are successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support has been provided to enable me to apply teaching practices that will assure my students are successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been encouraged by my principal to develop relationships with my colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been encouraged by my colleagues to develop relationships with other colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what I have always done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell me what to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Dissertation Survey

### 9. To what degree to these statements describe your perception of student learning at your school?

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely Agree	N/A
My success in teaching e students i d p a i l y t o factors beyond my control rather than my own efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My success in teaching e students i d p a i l y t o factors beyond my control rather than my own abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My struggles in teaching e students i d p a i l y t o factors beyond my control rather than my own efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My struggles in teaching e students i d p a i l y t o factors beyond my control rather than my own abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I utilize professional networks to obtain resources for classroom instruction (examples: Discovery Education, Edutopia, NCTE).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I ask for help, other teachers in my school are willing to help me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 10. What percent of your students do you believe are capable of learning content?

### 11. What percent of your students do you believe are capable of learning content?

### 12. Do you help with school-wide activities?

- Yes
- No

**Dissertation Survey**

**13. If yes, which ones?**

## Survey Codebook

<b>Dataset</b>	Teacher culture
<b>Overview</b>	Information on a teachers in a school, including their experience, beliefs, and perceptions about colleagues
<b>Sample Size</b>	48 teachers

<b>Structure of the Dataset</b>			
<b>Col. #</b>	<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Variable Description</b>	<b>Variable Metric/Labels</b>
1	ID	Case identification code	
2	YRSTEACH	Number of years teaching	1 = 1-2 years 2 = 3-5 years 3 = 6-10 years 4 = 11 – 15 years 5 = 16 – 20 years 6 = 21 – 25 years 7 = more than 25 years
3	YRSINSCHOOL	Number of years teaching in current school	1 = 1 <sup>st</sup> year 2 = 2 <sup>nd</sup> year 3 = 3-5 years 4 = 6-10 years 5 = 11 – 15 years 6 = 16 – 20 years 7 = 21 – 25 years 8 = more than 25 years
4	EATLUNCH	Times eating lunch with colleagues	1= every day 2=3-4 days/week 3=1-2 days/week 4=less than 4/month 5=never
5	TALKDUTY	Times the teacher talks with colleagues while on duty	1 = Always 2 = Frequently 3 = Infrequently 4 = Never

Structure of the Dataset			
Col. #	Variable Name	Variable Description	Variable Metric/Labels
6	TALKBTWNCLASS	Times the teacher talks with colleagues between classes	1 = Always 2 = Frequently 3 = Infrequently 4 = Never
7	TALKLUNCH	Times the teacher talks with colleagues during lunch	1 = Always 2 = Frequently 3 = Infrequently 4 = Never
8	TALKAFTERSCHOOL	Times the teacher talks with colleagues after school	1 = Always 2 = Frequently 3 = Infrequently 4 = Never
9	TALKBEFORESCHOOL	Times the teacher talks with colleagues before school	1 = Always 2 = Frequently 3 = Infrequently 4 = Never
10	TALKEVENTS	Times the teacher talks with colleagues at school events	1 = Always 2 = Frequently 3 = Infrequently 4 = Never
11	TALKOUTSIDE	Number of times the teacher talks with colleagues outside of work.	1 = Daily 2 = At least once a week 3 = At least once a month 4 = Once a semester 5 = Once a year 6 = Never
12	TALKTOPICS	Topics discussed with colleagues	1 = changes in the school 2 = school/district mandates 3 = social topics 4 = work frustrations 5 = personal life
13	EFFORTSVITAL	Efforts are vital to making our mission and vision of the school a reality.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
14	EFFORTSESSENTIAL	Efforts are essential to making our mission and vision of the school a reality.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
15	INPUTRESPECT	Input is respected by my colleagues.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true

Structure of the Dataset			
Col. #	Variable Name	Variable Description	Variable Metric/Labels
16	ENCOURAGEIDEAS	Colleagues encourage me to try innovative ideas to reach student needs.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
17	ENCOURAGERESPONSIBILITY	Colleagues encourage me to take responsibility to ensure all students learn at high levels.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
18	TRAINING	Training has been provided to enable me to apply teaching practices that will assure my students are successful.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
19	SUPPORT	Support has been provided to enable me to apply teaching practices that will assure my students are successful.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
20	RELATIONSHIPSPRI	I have been encouraged by my principal to develop relationships with my colleagues.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
21	RELATIONSHIPSCOLL	I have been encouraged by my colleagues to develop relationships with my colleagues.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
22	ALTPROBLEMS	I am able to seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what I have always done.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true
23	DECISIONS	I am empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	1 = not very true 2 3 = partially true 4 5 = very true

Structure of the Dataset			
Col. #	Variable Name	Variable Description	Variable Metric/Labels
24	SUCSESSEFFORT	My success in teaching students is due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own efforts.	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = completely agree 6 = n/a
25	SUCCESSABLE	My success in teaching students is due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own abilities.	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = completely agree 6 = n/a
26	STRUGGLEEFFORT	My struggles in teaching students are due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own efforts and abilities.	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = completely agree 6 = n/a
27	STRUGGLEABLE	My struggles in teaching students are due primarily to factors beyond my control rather than my own abilities.	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = completely agree 6 = n/a
28	MAKEDIFF	I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of students.	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = completely agree 6 = n/a
29	PRONETWORK	I utilize professional networks to obtain resources for classroom instruction.	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = completely agree 6 = n/a
30	HELPME	Teachers are willing to help me when I ask for help.	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = completely agree 6 = n/a

Structure of the Dataset			
Col. #	Variable Name	Variable Description	Variable Metric/Labels
31	STUDENTLEARN	Percent of students capable of learning	1 = 100% 2 = 99% 3 = 80-98% 4 = 70-79% 5 = 60 -69% 6 = 50 - 59 % 7 = below 50%
32	SWACTIVITIES	Help with school-wide activities	1 = yes 2 = no



## Appendix B

### Electronic Journal Entry

1. How has your educational philosophy on student learning changed this year from last year?
2. What do you feel is the biggest problem facing your school? How do you respond to that problem? How do your colleagues respond?
3. What are you looking forward to with your students for the upcoming school year? How do you feel your colleagues can help or hinder your goals for the school year?
4. Describe a time you were frustrated in your classroom. How did you work through this situation?

## Appendix C

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Teachers

1. I am curious to hear about your general impressions of your first few months teaching at this school. What experiences stand out to you as you think over the past few months?
2. Tell me a little bit about yourself and why you became a teacher.
3. How did you hear about this school and what made you want to teach here?
4. In what ways has your experiences matched your expectations you had before you came here and in what ways have your experiences been different?
5. Have you been a part of any mentoring programs as a teacher? Can you describe for me your experience in that role?
6. As you think back over the past few months, can you describe for me some of the most significant challenges you have faced?
  - a. How have you responded to those challenges?
7. Are there structures within the school day that foster collaboration between you and your colleagues? Tell me about them.
8. Describe your role when you collaborate with colleagues relating to conversations around student learning.

## Appendix D

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Principal

1. Describe your working relationship with new and veteran teachers on campus.
2. What is the mission and vision of your school? How is it seen in day-to-day activity at school?
3. What is your role in establishing the culture of the school?
4. What is your role in helping new teachers address challenges they might encounter at the school?
5. What opportunities are given to teachers to collaborate on issues of student learning?
6. What challenges do you face in facilitating the creation of a school culture that supports new teachers? What are the sources of the problems that you face in facilitating a positive school culture?
7. What strategies do you use to cultivate a positive school culture?

## Appendix E

### Research Letter of Support



WINSTON BROOKS  
SUPERINTENDENT

SHELLY GREEN  
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

THOMAS GENNÉ  
DIRECTOR  
RESEARCH, DEPLOYMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

February 12, 2013

This is intended as a letter of support and interest in the research proposed by Ms. Gabriella Blakey titled: "A case study of how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions with colleagues and school leaders and the impact the dynamic has on school culture".

Ms. Blakey proposes a qualitative study to determine how a new teacher's beliefs might be shaped by others during the inevitable acculturation process new to teaching educators will engage in as they seek professional accommodation and respect. Ms. Blakey expresses concern that student achievement may be affected by an unhealthy school culture and that new educators while trying to "fit in" will also have their beliefs shaped by the culture. I find hope in Ms. Blakey's interest in whether a new teacher's acculturation might also have an effect on the culture of the school.

A proposal such as Ms. Gabriella Blakey's comes as a refreshing examination of the essence of what contributes to quality teaching and thus learning. So much of what has purported to research teaching and learning of recent years has really been an examination of what needs to be done in the classroom to have students score the most points possible on standardized assessments; and now in recent times wrongly concluding that those student scores are a measure of teacher competence. While I wait impatiently for the madness to pass I applaud Ms. Blakey's willful determination to examine school culture and its ability to influence the teaching beliefs and quality of teaching in new educators. This is research that makes sense and offers to contribute useful knowledge to the profession of teaching.

I heartily endorse Ms. Blakey's research project. It is with great interest and anticipation that the APS Research Review Committee waits to receive and review her proposal. We fully encourage the University to act on her IRB application so the approval process may proceed as efficiently as possible.

Please feel free to contact me if necessary.

**Thomas Genné**  
Director  
Research, Deployment and Accountability  
Albuquerque Public Schools  
[gennet@aps.edu](mailto:gennet@aps.edu) 505.872.6814



## Appendix F

### Informed Consent for Diary Entry

#### University of New Mexico Informed Consent Cover Letter for Electronic Diary Entry

STUDY TITLE: A case study of how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions with colleagues and school leaders and the impact the dynamic has on school culture

Gabriella Blakey from the Department of Educational Leadership is conducting a research study. The purpose of the study is to understand the influence of colleagues on new teachers' beliefs about student learning as the new teacher is acculturated into the school. You are being asked to participate in this study because you teach at the site of the study, Jefferson Middle School.

Your participation will involve an anonymous diary entry. The response should take about 25 minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. There are no names or identifying information associated with this diary entry. The electronic diary includes questions such as: "What are your goals for your students? Describe how your colleagues help or hinder you in reaching these goals." You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort when answering questions. All data will be kept until the study is completed in a password protected Survey Monkey account and in an encrypted file that has its own password. The encrypted file will be located on a password-protected, personal computer that has a different password.

The findings from this project will provide information on how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions of colleagues and school leaders. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (505) 266-4845. If you have questions regarding your legal rights as a research subject, you may call the UNM Human Research Protections Office at (505) 272-1129.

By selecting "yes" in response to the question below, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research study.

Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely,

Gabriella Blakey

Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership University of New Mexico

HRPO #:13-004

Version: 022013

APPROVED: EXPIRES: 03/15/13 OFFICIAL USE ONLY 01/31/14

## Appendix G

### Informed Consent for Electronic Survey



#### University of New Mexico Informed Consent Cover Letter for Electronic Questionnaire Entry

**STUDY TITLE:** A case study of how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions with colleagues and school leaders and the impact the dynamic has on school culture

Gabriella Blakey from the Department of Educational Leadership is conducting a research study. The purpose of the study is to understand the influence of colleagues on new teachers' beliefs about student learning as the new teacher is acculturated into the school. You are being asked to participate in this study because you teach at the site of the study, Jefferson Middle School.

Your participation will involve an anonymous survey. It should take about 15 minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. There are no names or identifying information associated with this survey. The electronic survey includes questions such as: "How often do you eat lunch with your colleagues?" You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort when answering questions. All data will be kept until the study is completed in a password protected Survey Monkey account and in an encrypted file that has its own password. The encrypted file will be located on a password protected, personal computer that has a different password.

The findings from this project will provide information on how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions with colleagues and school leaders. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (505) 266-4845. If you have questions regarding your legal rights as a research subject, you may call the UNM Human Research Protections Office at (505) 272-1129.

By selecting "yes" in response to the question below, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research study.

Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely,

Gabriella Blakey Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership University of New Mexico

HRPO #:13-004 Page 1 of 1

Version: 022013

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## Appendix H

### Informed Consent for Interviews

#### The University of New Mexico Consent to Participate in Research

**A case study of how new teachers' beliefs are shaped by interactions with colleagues and school leaders and the impact the dynamic has on school culture**

#### Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by Gabriella Blakey, who is the Principal Investigator. The purpose of the study is to understand the influence of colleagues on new teachers' beliefs about student learning as the new teacher is acculturated into the school.

This study is being conducted to answer the following research questions. How are new teachers' beliefs shaped by interactions with a range of veteran colleagues and school leaders and what impact does this dynamic have on school culture?

As a researcher I am interested in gaining the perspectives and experiences of teachers new to a school and how their beliefs are shaped by others. My intention is to understand the acculturation of these teachers into the school and the impact this dynamic has on the culture of the school.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you teach in a middle school.

This form will explain the research study, and will also explain the possible risks as well as the possible benefits to you. If you have any questions, please ask me.

#### What will happen if I decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:

- You will be scheduled at your convenience to participate in a series of 3-4 interviews not to exceed one hour in length.

HRPO #:13-004 Page 1 of 5 022013

Version:

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The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board (HRRC/MCIRB)

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- Interviews will be audio taped.
- **How long will I be in this study?** Participation in this study will not exceed more than three to four sessions of one hour each.
- **What are the risks or side effects of being in this study?** There are no risks associated with this study.
- **What are the benefits to being in this study?** A benefit to this study will be that you will be given an opportunity for in-depth discussion about professional issues. During this process, you may learn more about your own beliefs about school culture, which you may wish to share with peers.
- **What other choices do I have if I do not want to be in this study?** There is no penalty for not being included in this study.
- **How will my information be kept confidential?** I will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but I cannot guarantee confidentiality of all study data. Information contained in your study records is used by study staff and, in some cases it will be shared with the sponsor of the study. The University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) that oversees human subject research, and the Food and Drug Administration and/or other entities may be permitted to access your records. There may be times when we are required by law to share your information. However, your name will not be used in any published reports about this study. A copy of this consent form will be kept in Gabriella Blakey's home office. Information collected as part of the study will be labeled with your initials and a study number. Electronic information (without your name) will be entered into a computer database that will be stored in an encrypted file that has its own password. The encrypted file will be located on a password-protected computer that has a different password. Information in paper format will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Gabriella Blakey's (Principal Investigator) home office. Gabriella Blakey will have access to your study information. Data will be stored for one year after her dissertation is accepted, and then will be destroyed.

**What are the costs of taking part in this study?**

There is no cost associated with this study.

**Will I be paid for taking part in this study?**

There is no payment for taking part in this study.

**How will I know if you learn something new that may change my mind about participating?**

You will be informed of any significant new findings that become available during the course of the study, such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participating in the research or new alternatives to participation that might change your mind about participating.



**Can I stop being in the study once I begin?**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point in this study.

**Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints at any time about the research study, Gabriella Blakey will be glad to answer them at 505 266-4845.

**Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research subject?**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may call the UNMHSC HRRC at (505) 272-1129. The HRRC is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human subjects. For more information, you may also access the HRRC website at <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/hrrc/>.

**CONSENT**

You are making a decision whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you read the information provided (or the information was read to you). By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research subject.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this study. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

---

Name of Adult Subject (print)      Signature of Adult Subject

**INVESTIGATOR SIGNATURE**

Date

I have explained the research to the subject or his/her legal representative and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

---

Name of Investigator/ Research Team Member (type or print)

---

(Signature of Investigator/ Research Team Member) Date

APPROVED: EXPIRES: 03/15/13 OFFICIAL USE ONLY 01/31/14

The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board (HRRC/MCIRB)

## Appendix I

## Coded Sample of Interview

- Speaker 1: The first thing I wanted to hear was just kind of what... how long have you been at this school and what made you want to come teach here?
- Speaker 2: I've been here for ... this is going to be the end of my second year and actually I came here because it was the only place I could find a job in the entire city.
- Speaker 1: Oh, wow.
- Speaker 2: I was excited to come here anyway so it was kind of left out but yeah, when I graduated I knew one person who got a job at APS and it was because of [redacted] hire list ... In fact I was offered two separate jobs that they had within because most hires ended up on the list and they had to ... It was really stressful. Then I ended up ... I'm dual certified, so I'm certified in [redacted] My [redacted] wasn't working out so I was like so you need a [redacted] teacher and they needed one here so that was ... kind of got my foot in the door with that.
- Speaker 1: Okay, was there anything about this school particular that you were interested in or was it just kind of a luck of the draw that it was the school that had an opening?
- Speaker 2: Luck of the draw. I was actually recommended by another principal at another school who tried to hire me and then my guess was like the [redacted] hire list was repopulated again. She tried to work with HR, HR wouldn't let them hire me so she recommended me to our principal and she, yeah so that's pretty cool.
- Speaker 1: Your first year when you were here if you can think back to that is there anything that ... was your general impressions of what you thought stepping into the school for the first time?
- Speaker 2: Everyone was really nice. Almost like uncanny nice but they were so supportive, I remember my department chair called me in July and helped me set up my room and taught me all about [redacted] cards and how things work in the school and gave me a tour. It was really nice because the school that I did my student teaching at was less than friendly.
- Speaker 1: Okay.
- Speaker 2: I mean they weren't sad people or anything they just kind of ... it was a lot more secluded and people didn't really talk to one another and it was a high school too so this environment was really ... it just seemed that everyone was really supportive and nice.
- Speaker 1: Were you matched up with somebody specifically to help you or was it just ...?

- Speaker 2: No, it was just my department chair. We have ... the mentorship program, so I did have a mentor teacher who was also really helpful but they were so many people that helped me that didn't have to help me. They'd say, "How are you doing with your PDP?" That was really cool.
- Speaker 1: Do they still help you?
- Speaker 2: Yeah, well they offer it so it's like it ... we have our second PDP coming up and one of the teachers that I work with really closely she's been teaching for about 15 years and she's like, "I know you've done this before but if you have any questions still ... feel free to ask." Yeah definitely.
- Speaker 1: Okay, what about your ... so when you came out of college and you were ready to go into teaching and you were really excited to start your first job was there anything that happened that changed your expectations or how did your expectations go into your first year teaching change as you started?
- Speaker 2: Yeah, okay so well I was going to teach high school [REDACTED]. That was what I was going to teach, I was like I'm not doing middle school. I mean I thought middle schools were cute but my license is 7 through 12 so I was determined. I taught high school for student teaching, I was really excited about it, no jobs anywhere. Then I had interviewed at high school for a [REDACTED] position they ended up getting back to me too late I had already taken the job here. I hadn't taught [REDACTED] before and I hadn't taught middle school before and I went from 10<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. That was kind of like a culture shock a little bit.
- I remember this one kid was like crying because he lost a tooth and I just remember thinking like, "How old are you guys?" That was a little different and the whole middle school environment was different because I never expected to like middle school, I thought that that was just a part of ... and now I love it, now I want to stay in a middle school environment it's really interesting. That's ... there were a lot of things that I think fell exactly with that communication there, we had like ... like how the departments work and stuff like that and that there was always rivalries between certain teachers and that sort of stuff.
- Speaker 1: As a new teacher when you saw these rivalries happen how did you fit into that mix?
- Speaker 2: I would just try to stay neutral. You try to avoid as much as you can. Of course someone comes into your room and is just like this happened with this and I'm like well I'm just going to listen.
- Speaker 1: Yeah, do you feel like as a new they tried to involve you more in that or less?

- Speaker 2: I think some of them tried to keep me out of it I think there were definitely some that tried to get me involved into it but I just stay quiet.
- Speaker 1: Do you think the people that tried to get you involved were people that had the more negative side or the more positive side?
- Speaker 2: I mean honestly both sides I thought had like good points maybe that's why I tried to stay neutral I was like well I see this issue and this issue.
- Speaker 1: What was the reason that you became a teacher in the first place?
- Speaker 2: I wanted to be a teacher since I was really little.
- Speaker 1: Really?
- Speaker 2: Like really little. I always thought I was going to be a teacher and then one day I decided I was going to do science instead. I was doing the technology academy at my high school and I was graduating and I was slated to start as an astronomy major and I was just thinking one day and I was like, "But I still really want to be a teacher." I just changed it. I knew that it was what I really wanted to do. You know how you get lost in the high school questioning of what do you want to do and this and so but I ...
- Speaker 1: Then you didn't become a science teacher?
- Speaker 2: No, I don't know. That never occurred to me. I've always wanted to do science, I think science would be ... if I get another endorsement that's what I want to do.
- Speaker 1: What kinds of ... starting a new school year what are your goals for your students?
- Speaker 2: I really, really ... it's big to me that they understand that we have to respect each other like huge through the entire year because otherwise our learning environment is not going to be the way that we can feel comfortable in it. Then the other thing is that I want them to see that we don't do things for grades, we don't do things so that you can get an A, you don't do things so that you make your teacher happy you do things because that's what we do to learn. That's something that I usually try to stress. Even if you don't do a darn thing in class that's the thing I want them to leave with is that you're not doing this for a grade you're doing it for the whole process kind of thing.
- Speaker 1: Do you feel like other teachers have the same goals as you?
- Speaker 2: I think a lot of them do. I wouldn't say all of them but I'd think a lot of them or at least the ones that I hang out with kind of have the same expectations.



Speaker 1: When you came in how did you pick which ones you hang out with?

Speaker 2: Well one of them was also brand new.

We ended up hanging out a lot and it just ... there were some that ... I was pretty nice to everybody and eventually someone says, "Oh you know maybe we could go grab a coffee after." Then you just kind of ... you kind of shift around. I think sometimes people are definitely a little weary of a new teacher because they're not sure how they're going to fit in but I think like I said everyone has been really cool and nice and stuff.

Speaker 1: Have you ever had any experience where you've had a different philosophy than other teachers?

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: How does that play out?

Speaker 2: Usually I'll try to stand my ground but tell them obviously you respect their opinion too. It hasn't come into play in regards to actual instruction. It's not like something ... because usually it's my class.

Speaker 1: Right, it happens outside of classroom?

Speaker 2: Yeah and it'll just be something like maybe if we we're talking in a team meeting or something and someone happens to say, "well I think that we need to do this" I'll just say, "you know what actually I'd rather do this."

Speaker 1: What happens after that?

Speaker 2: Nothing.

Speaker 1: People just ...

Speaker 2: Yeah, sort of say I'm sorry I disagree or I think that this way is better and ... it's really agree to disagree which I like it's not like well I think you're wrong and you need to look at this article. It's just ... we all kind of do whatever we think we should do best.

Speaker 1: How many people are on your team?

Speaker 2: Four.

Well it's like we do the core teams. What I was just talking to you about, I was kind of referring to last year because we changed our teams this year and we're changing them back next year. It was like we were trying something new we did

core teams last year so it was social studies, science, language arts, I was like, "What do I teach?" and then we would all share like the vast majority of our students. We were teams by content and we weren't teams by content this year we were so those language arts teachers and we've got six.

- Speaker 1: Okay and then next year you're going back to the ... you guys share common students is that the correct?
- Speaker 2: Yeah, the team one, we call it team and content and the team one is the one where we all share the students. The content one is the one that we developed for common core and that was the idea, it was that we start developing instructional strategies for common core. It's really good, but I feel like we could do that on our own time and a lot of other teachers did too and that's why we change back to team next year.
- Speaker 1: Okay, when you were part of the team experience and say ... I'm sure you brought up or somebody brought up the student that they were having behavior problems with how did the team respond to that?
- Speaker 2: It would depend on the student. A lot of times first we'd talk about how they were doing in our classes so like a student that is messing around in this class doesn't necessarily have to mess around in this other person's class. Then we would talk about how they handled it the first time and then if it was a continuing problem we would parent conferences with all their teachers. We all had the same prep which was brilliant because then we could just say okay well then on Tuesday for our meeting we're going to call a parent in. It was really good to get a handle on those kids that they're not like chronic problems but it's something that you want to rectify before they move on to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. That was something that we did.
- Speaker 1: As a new teacher in that experience do you feel like if you gave your opinion on how to work with the student were they receptive to that or were they not?
- Speaker 2: Last year yes, this year not as much.  
This year I think ... but I think it's also the personalities of the teams.
- Speaker 1: Right because it's a different team.
- Speaker 2: Yeah and it's not ... I don't think that it's anything to do with being new. I think maybe, sometimes it does a little bit but I think it's more just like that they're very ... they just have a different philosophy than I do and I guess that they're never disrespectful. It's not like well you're wrong it's just we disagree but yeah.
- Speaker 1: You talked a little bit about the mentoring program you're in what was your experience being in a mentoring program?

Speaker 2: It was really helpful. It was just kind of weird because it was [REDACTED] I don't know how else I could explain to you the content that I never taught before so there were all these things my mentor teacher thought I would know that I didn't know so we had to go back and ...

Speaker 1: Content-wise?

Speaker 2: Yeah, like [REDACTED] I knew what they were but I'd never ever used them in my entire life because we did things like graphic organizers so that was ... just different things like that but I think that it was a little difficult for both of us to do but it doesn't really matter .... There was a couple of times ... I don't know, maybe it's just ...

There were a couple of times that I felt like a little dressed down when there was something that I didn't do well on that kind of bothered me but I didn't think it was so much me as the persons personality in general.

Speaker 1: Right, when they match mentors do they take into account like personalities or is it more like ...?

Speaker 2: No.

Pretty much just here's your mentor teacher kind of thing.

Speaker 1: Does your mentor teacher help you basically make friends at school or do they help just with the content kind of ...?

Speaker 2: They can. There's a lot of different things that they wanted her to do that I was like, "I don't need you to do that." That was one of them "does your mentor teacher introduce you to different people in school?" and I was like, "I'm good."

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: She would have I'm sure if that had been something that I would have been worried about.

Yeah, I'm all right. We hang out, her and I hang out and she was really cool.

Speaker 1: Yeah, do you still work with her?

Speaker 2: Not as much this year because we're in different grades and different contents. It's a little more disjointed but I'll see her every once in a while and we'll talk.

Speaker 1: Okay, if you think about your first two years teaching what is the most significant challenge that you've faced?

- Speaker 2: Do you think in general for all new teachers or for me specifically?
- Speaker 1: For you specifically.
- Speaker 2: Changing contents and grades three times was really hard because I still don't have like a set curriculum because I went from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] math to [REDACTED]. It's like every year ...
- Speaker 1: Every year you're a new teacher?
- Speaker 2: Yeah, and it's like I'm doing my dossier next year and I'm like I've never taught anything. I'm sure I'll be fine though.
- Speaker 1: How do you work through that?
- Speaker 2: A lot of ... this year was a little bit easier than last year because last year I had nothing to fall back on, I'd never taught [REDACTED] before, I didn't ... there was a ... my department head like I said I asked her what do you do for the first couple of weeks, what should I structure my lessons around, what's your philosophy on ... then like the curriculum maps and stuff obviously were really helpful because they tell you what you're supposed to do at a certain time. That was really helpful and I think this year it's just more getting used to it and getting used to back into ... it's not [REDACTED] anymore it's [REDACTED] and stuff like that. A lot of not sleeping sometimes but they call them your survival years for a reason anyway.
- Speaker 1: Is there another teacher that teaches the same subject you do and the same grade level?
- Speaker 2: Yes.
- Speaker 1: Do you work with that person?
- Speaker 2: Yes, she's wonderful.
- Speaker 1: Okay, so that's been helpful?
- Speaker 2: Yeah, she's super wonderful and then she's the same way. It's "I'm not going to do this but you're more than welcome to do this" or vice versa.
- Speaker 1: Okay, how long has she been teaching?
- Speaker 2: Ten years I think, 10 or 11 years.
- Speaker 1: Okay.
- Speaker 2: She's been here for I think almost 10 or 11.



Speaker 1: What about school system wide, do they ... does the administration, the instructional coach do they do anything to mentor new teachers into the school?

Speaker 2: The instructional coach kind of did last year, not so much and admin not really either. I know they are like they ... our principal is really nice about stuff, she'll come to see you how is everything are you doing okay? She's like of course her door is always open if I needed to go talk to her about something I could have, but I mean as far as an actual program or something like that they didn't really do anything like that.

Speaker 1: Back to the students'. If you are in class and you just have one student that you just can't reach and is a behavior problem, what do you do?

Speaker 2: I think, well it depends on the reach in the behavior problem. One of my big things is that when I was a kid I used to get really frustrated when adults didn't treat me like an adult which obviously you're not an adult, you're a kid and I know that now but I think that sometimes they don't respond to that authoritarian kind of "you have to do it this way or else" or like how some teachers say "Well I don't back down." Well, I don't want to confront them in the first place.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: I'll kind of ... like today I had a student today who just didn't not want to work and we kind of sat down and I asked what was going on and then eventually they just said they don't feel like working. I'm like okay well if you don't want to work how about we just get this part done today and we can kind of just ... because there was something bad that happened to a friend. That kind of stuff to make them feel that they're important and to make them feel like you are investing in them being successful and they're not going to get away with just sitting there.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: At the same time they're still people and it's still big deal. I remember my boyfriend broke up with me in high school, I was so devastated.

I did not want to do anything that whole day. I don't really have a lot of behavior problems that I see with kids in my classes. I'm not trying to be like "my kids don't" but I just ... I don't really like to confront them in the first place because I don't see a point to unless they're being confrontational first.

Speaker 1: Do you see other teachers being more confrontational?

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: Do they ... do you feel like they set the tone to discipline in the school?

- Speaker 2: I think it's very individualized because I think the kid knows it's a different approach for each teacher and I think that administration knows that too. I think they pretty much support us no matter what our style is or what we're doing or what we should be doing. That's kind of nice.
- Speaker 1: Do you think like ... when you were in school you probably had to write your philosophy of education. Do you feel like that has changed in the past two years?
- Speaker 2: No.
- Speaker 1: Do you think it's gotten stronger?
- Speaker 2: I think so. I think it's kind of something that I've wanted to reaffirm again. Especially it was interesting teaching content because it didn't really change, it was kind of general this is what I want to do with my kids this is what I want my kids to understand and stuff. I think I didn't realize how hard it would be to get them, but I don't think it's changed at all.
- Speaker 1: Describe what your role is when you are talking with colleagues in conversations that are about student learning. For example, there are four teachers sitting around and you're talking about student learning, how do you as an individual contribute to that conversation?
- Speaker 2: I wouldn't say that I'm the leader of the conversation but I definitely put in more than my two cents. I'll get engaged and discuss different things and I'm not afraid if someone disagrees I'm like, "Well that's fine." It's not the end of the world or anything but I'm not like the leader of the conversation. I think that's just kind of... I'm not really a conversational leader but...
- Speaker 1: Do you feel you want to take on any leadership positions at the school?
- Speaker 2: That's funny because I've thought about it. The principal feels I would be a good leader, but I think I am a little shy in front of the old guard. Once I've been here a while I am sure I'd feel more comfortable.
- Speaker 1: Actually just one last question is so say like next year a new teacher comes in and you kind of see that they're like you were your first year. What are some things you would tell them as far as like ... what are things just at this specific school what are things they should be aware of to kind of navigate their way through the school?
- Speaker 2: Be careful what you would say to certain people because I think sometimes you need to vent about something. I remember when I was a new teacher I was like, 'I need to vent to a very trusted person right now.' It wouldn't even be a real issue it's just something you have to talk about so I'd just tell them that. Don't

just tell everything to everybody because...I don't think it's teachers, I think adults in general are just like kids and it will get around."

Speaker 1: What would happen if a new teacher came in and they were venting about something to the wrong person what ...?

Speaker 2: I mean like if they said something about someone then ...

Speaker 1: A fellow colleague?

Speaker 2: Yeah. That would get around.

You never know who's friends with ...

I told you about the friend that I made we would just call each other like, 'I need to talk to you.' She's a little bit ahead of me though, it wasn't her first year, but it was her first year here. We were both newbies. It was nice.

Speaker 1: That was easier?

Speaker 2: Yes.

I would be like "You know what I'm going through," so that was nice. Yeah I mean it's not ... and just use the people who try to help you that's one of the good ones because I think so many times those new teachers we have to appear to be like I know everything that I'm doing right now because you don't, you don't want to show like a sign of weakness and it's like there are people that you can ask for help and it's fine.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: It's hard to do, it's really hard to do.

Speaker 1: Well very good, well thank you.

## Appendix J

### Contingency Table Analysis of Topics Discussed and Number of Years Teachers Have Been Teaching in the School.

		Number of Years Teaching in the School								Row Totals
		1st year	2nd year	3-5 years	6-10 years	11- 15 years	16- 20 years	21- 25 years	More than 25 years	
Topics Discussed	Changes in the school	1	0	2	0	3	2	2	0	10
	School/district mandates	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	6
	Social topics	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
	Work frustrations	2	3	2	6	3	3	2	1	22
	Personal life	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	6
Column Totals		10	4	5	9	8	5	5	1	47

## Appendix K

### Contingency table analysis of the number of times teachers eat lunch together, their beliefs about student learning, and if they feel they are making a difference in the lives of students.

Level agreement with the statement “I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of my students.”			Percent of Students Capable of Learning							Row Totals
			100%	99%	80-98%	70-79%	60-69%	50-59%	Below 50%	
completely disagree	EATLUNCH	every day			1			0		1
		Never			0			1		1
		Total			1			1		2
disagree	EATLUNCH	every day	1		1	0		1		3
		3 to 4 days week	0		0	1		0		1
		1 to 2 days week	0		1	0		0		1
		less than 4 days month	1		0	1		0		2
		Total	2		2	2		1		7
neutral	EATLUNCH	1 to 2 days week	0			1				1
		less than 4 days month	1			0				1
		Total	1			1				2
Agree	EATLUNCH	every day	2	4	2	1	1	3	0	13
		3 to 4 days	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2

		week								
		1 to 2	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3
		days								
		week								
		less	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
		than 4								
		days								
		month								
		never	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
	Total		6	8	3	1	2	4	1	25
completely	EATLUNCH	every	1	2			1			4
agree		day								
		3 to 4	1	0			0			1
		days								
		week								
		1 to 2	2	0			0			2
		days								
		week								
		less	3	0			0			3
		than 4								
		days								
		month								
		never	1	0			0			1
	Total		8	2			1			11
Total	EATLUNCH	every	4	6	4	1	2	4	0	21
		day								
		3 to 4	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	4
		days								
		week								
		1 to 2	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	7
		days								
		week								
		less	6	1	0	1	0	0	0	8
		than 4								
		days								
		month								
		never	4	1	1	0	0	1	0	7
	Total		17	10	6	4	3	6	1	47