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A Teacher-developed Process for Collaborative Professional Reflection

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In Spring 2000, a group of five elementary school teachers met to investigate the nature of professional reflection and develop a process of collaborative reflection as productive professional development. These teachers' beliefs that reflection is both necessary and valuable, coupled with their recommendation that it be collaborative, served as the basis of the process for collaborative reflection developed by the group and described in this paper. While designing the process, these teachers felt very strongly about how it should look and thus, they included many perceived requirements or 'shoulds' in their design. Interestingly, when the viability of these 'shoulds' were tested, the testing teachers wrestled with the process as designed, finding their naturally emerging reflection process to be more holistic than sequential. Yet, as these teachers struggled with the order of the designed process, they engaged in the tasks themselves, which propelled them through effective reflections.

Prescriptive professional development prevents many teachers from becoming autonomous learners who are responsible for their own professional growth (Dillon-Peterson, 1986; Scribner, 1999). To encourage teacher ownership of professional development, the kinds of activities available to teachers needs to change. Specifically, more authentic learning activities need to be provided (Stein *et al.*, 1999).

One particularly authentic and valuable part of teacher professional development is reflection. Reflection can be difficult to define, but for this discussion, reflection refers to a natural process of active self-evaluation, often coupled with effective communication (Harris *et al.*, 2001). Reflection can help teachers see things in new ways, leading in turn to growth as professionals both in and outside of the classroom. It often requires teachers to hear and consider a variety of perspectives (School Development Program, 2001).

Teachers gain varied perspectives when they are permitted and encouraged to reflect collaboratively with colleagues (Van Gyn, 1996). Collaboration thus becomes the nexus of teachers' professional development and reflection. Teachers who are trying to become more reflective on and in their practice have a lower probability of achieving success if working alone rather than collaboratively (Van Gyn, 1996). For

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example, Vanderbilt's program of professional development, Schools For Thought, attributes much of its success to the emphasis on collaborative reflection (Miller & Bray, 1998). Not only does collaboration with colleagues increase the likelihood that a teacher will be successfully reflective—it can also add to each teacher's feeling of autonomy and confidence in her own professional development (Chase *et al.*, 2001; Day, 1993).

Teacher Reflection as Professional Development

Much of the research on teacher reflection as professional development has been theoretical in nature (e.g. Allen & Casbergue, 1997; Scribner, 1999; Stanley, 1998). Research on practical applications of teacher reflection has typically focused upon either student teachers or teachers who are in their induction year (e.g. Chase *et al.*, 2001; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Lee & Barnett, 1994; Loughran, 1996). A smaller amount of research has studied practical applications of teacher reflection in depth for all teachers (e.g. Miller & Bray, 1998; Rodriguez & Johnstone, 1986; Van Gyn, 1996).

The applied research often points to activities that can lead to effective teacher reflection. Activities usually recommended as forms of teacher professional development include reflective journaling (e.g. Miller & Bray, 1998; Reagan *et al.*, 2000; Schoenbach, 1994), writing autobiographies (e.g. Fenwick & Parsons, 1998), observing colleagues in the classroom (e.g. Miller & Bray, 1998; Reagan *et al.*, 2000), engaging in action research (e.g. Bennett, 1994; Schoenbach, 1994; Van Gyn, 1996), participating in book groups (e.g. Chase *et al.*, 2001; 1999; Schmale, 1994), and discussing classroom-based issues as part of a guided inquiry group (e.g. Cady, 1998; Miller & Bray, 1998). These professional development activities are typically prescribed for rather than chosen by teachers, although there are exceptions to this pattern (e.g. York-Barr *et al.*, 2001). If teachers elect to participate in professional reflection, they will find models or processes that have been developed by experts rather than by teachers themselves (e.g. Fullan & Hargreaves, 1999; Miller & Bray, 1998; Reed & Koliba, 1995). Yet even in these prescribed models, recommendations for specific processes for teacher reflection are either completely absent or are so tightly structured that they do not allow participants to reflect in an open-ended manner so that they might experience more ownership of their professional development (Reed & Koliba, 1995).

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Building a Process for Teachers' Collaborative Reflection

In Spring 2000, a group of five elementary school teachers met to investigate the nature of professional reflection and develop a process of reflection as productive professional development. These teachers, along with three university researchers— the authors of this paper—met throughout one semester and into the following summer. During these meetings, participants engaged in open-ended discussion and semi-structured process development. The teachers, with the assistance of the researchers, explored the nature of reflection and developed the process for teachers'

collaborative reflection that follows. The quotations included below come from teachers participating in this collaborative group.

The Nature of Reflection

The teachers agreed that reflection was important, not just to their professional development, but also in helping them maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives. They believed that their reflections were strengthened by collaborating with colleagues and saw multiple purposes that reflection serves, relating to their professional needs. They recognised that some of these needs might not even be fully realised at the time teachers engage in reflection, but may become conscious later. Overall, these teachers saw reflection as an organic activity in which they felt compelled to participate. They asserted that if they ignored the 'call' to reflect, they felt negative effects in their personal and professional lives:

> That is the reason that teaching is extremely difficult … You do not have the luxury of reflecting with adults as much as you really should. Therefore, at least for me, things are usually beyond where they need to be before I do the reflecting.

The teachers agreed that reflection often acts as a catalyst for professional growth. Therefore, these practitioners strongly recommended in-service time for groups of teachers to meet regularly to discuss their professional concerns and support one another's professional growth.

These teachers' beliefs that reflection is both necessary and valuable, coupled with their recommendation that it be collaborative, served as the basis for the process for collaborative reflection developed by the group, which follows. When designing the process, these teachers felt very strongly about how it should look and thus, they included what they saw as necessary requirements, expressed as 'shoulds' in their design.

Before Sessions Begin

Logistics and recruitment. A collaborative reflection group should consist of teachers working on a single campus. A general recruitment session should be held for the entire faculty, with faculty members free to try out the reflection process by attending one or two meetings before deciding whether to join the group. The teachers decided that, after these first two meetings, the group's membership should be closed so that participants may bond more closely within the group and so that the "group can keep going instead of catching people up".

Setting aside time for reflection includes preliminary logistical planning, such as designating a space and time for reflection. For example, the group recommended that meetings occur regularly during a semester, with each meeting lasting approximately one hour.

Facilitation. The teachers recommended that the reflection group have at least one facilitator, preferably an outsider from a university or other school district. With an

outside facilitator, the teachers reasoned, members may feel a deeper obligation to attend meetings, since the facilitator has made the effort to travel to the school to lead the meeting. In addition, an outside facilitator may help members to focus on issues larger than that day's events at the school.

Characteristics of a facilitator include trustworthiness, empathy, teaching experience, and training that supports facilitating reflective discussions. According to the process designers, the facilitator's role in the group includes making sure that individual members' needs drive the group and are being met during reflection, as well as ensuring a 'safe' environment, meaning that members need to feel that their discussion of professional issues will not make them vulnerable professionally or personally. The facilitator should allow topics for discussion to emerge authentically from group members rather than imposing them from an outsider's perspective.

One or more group members might later serve as facilitators. In this plan, the outside facilitator would serve as the group's initial leader and then become a trainer and advisor for other facilitators arising from inside the group. Insiders acting as groups' facilitators is an important step if teachers' reflection groups are to be self-sustaining. Such a shift in leadership also demonstrates and promotes the empowering notion that teachers can identify with and solve their own problems.

Procedures to Use During Reflective Group Sessions

Consensus about the ways that discussions will be conducted helps build an acceptable level of trust, motivation, and effectiveness. Agreement among group members should include commitment to (1) participate in the discussions; (2) be respectful and considerate toward other members and the facilitator; (3) respect the confidentiality of the group's discussions; (4) "[speak] as yourself—as individuals"; and (5) not bring up issues from the past unless they are pertinent to a present challenge. Group members may disagree with one another, but should strive to avoid becoming disagreeable.

Structure of Collaborative Reflections

Beginning reflection sessions. At the beginning of each reflection meeting, a transition period—allowing a short time for 'venting' pent-up frustrations should be allotted to help teachers prepare, cognitively and emotionally, for reflection. Following the transition period, members should brainstorm challenges and issues they would like to discuss. Group members should propose the topics for reflection. Unlike the traditional expert-designed reflection activities, this process expects topic generation to be needs-based and emergent. This process "give's a lot of flexibility" to the group's reflections, since it helps to focus the discussion upon topics of immediate interest and concern. The group's reflections thus serve all teachers, from novice to experienced. After brainstorming, the facilitator should work with teachers to group together related topics and prioritise them. Brainstorming and prioritising of issues should take approximately 10–15 minutes, and the reflection that follows should be

"structured only in the fact that the facilitator will redirect [members] … if [they] are totally off on a tangent".

Facilitating during reflections. During discussion, the facilitator's tasks include: guiding the group back on topic if a member seems to have gone off on a tangential topic not of sufficient interest to other members; pointing out patterns among topics as they emerge; and asking follow-up or clarifying questions that may support members' understanding of the reflections in progress.

Closure. A closure activity at the end of a group meeting can clarify and/or summarise issues explored. The facilitator can ask for group agreement before moving into closure, or when time is limited, might simply suggest that it is time to begin to close the meeting. A 5-minute closure activity might include suggestions for ideas that participants may want to think about or topics that may be carried over to the next meeting. As with the rest of the collaborative reflection process, by initiating and leading the closure activity, the facilitator can help all participants to reach a natural pause before the meeting ends.

The teachers who designed this process saw natural breaks for reflection groups occurring at the end of each school semester. During each break, decisions must be made regarding the future of the group (e.g. should the group continue? Should the group be reopened to new membership?). These decisions should be agreed upon by all group members.

Outcomes of Collaborative Reflection

Collaborative reflection, as designed by these teachers, can provide participants with intrinsic rewards, as well as offer practical solutions to real-life classroom problems. By being part of a supportive and sympathetic group of colleagues helping identify and address professional practice-related issues and challenges, teachers may feel more energised and therefore can be more effective in their classroom practice. They may also develop and/or sustain more positive attitudes about the professional challenges they face.

Teachers are generally expected to account for their professional development time. Since the benefits of reflection are so personal and idiosyncratic, accountability practices used in schools today are inappropriate for use with reflection groups. Thus, group members will need to decide what kinds of evidence, both private and public, they want to provide in conjunction with collaborative reflection. Because the reflection process is so internal, evidence of individual professional learning will likely be in the form of a self-report.

Testing the Process

Interestingly, when the viability of the designers' 'shoulds' were tested with other

teachers, the linear nature of the process for teachers' collaborative reflection broke down slightly and some of the required elements were changed as teachers reflected.

Specifically, the process was tested with another group of teachers from the same elementary school. This second group met regularly for one semester. Each meeting included time for professional reflection, according to the previously described process, as well as time for reflection *about* the process. A final meeting was devoted entirely to discussion about the process, and all participants completed an open-ended questionnaire regarding their experiences as part of the group.

Linear Process Turns Holistic

One feature of the reflection process, as recommended by the first group of teachers, was a linear sequence of tasks: (1) brainstorming, listing, and grouping topics for discussion; (2) reflection; and (3) closure. The second group of teachers found that "when it's a bunch of people and you're reflecting out loud, it's hard to be linear". The second group wrestled with the process as designed and found their naturally emerging reflection processes to be more holistic—incorporating listing and prioritising topics, reflecting, and even problem solving concomitantly, rather than in sequence. Although the guidelines recommended with regard to the order of group activities did not work for this second group, they found the task structures to be helpful. As they struggled with the order of the designed process, they engaged in the tasks themselves, which propelled the group through effective reflections.

After several meetings with the group, Martha—a participant in both the first and the second group—observed, "Reflection does not always follow a pattern or set agenda. .... You can't always predict where it's heading ... Our reflections flow from one area to another and it's OK". The following example illustrates this integrated nature of the second group's process. At the beginning of one meeting, Julia mentioned an incident involving an 'out-of-control child and parent'. The facilitator asked for clarification, attempting to turn Julia's specific example into a broader topic, to which all group members could relate. As Julia began explaining, Martha expressed her understanding of situations similar to Julia's experience. Sancho then began reflecting on lessons that students seemed to be learning from their parents and how these were manifested in the classroom. After some reflecting, Martha pulled the group back to the list of topics by pointing out one item—'parental involvement'. The group then continued to reflect on the impact some parents have on their children. They also included broader reflections about parents' expectations and parental involvement. These broad reflections become more specific as the conversation turned to communication with parents, specifically with regard to yearly school 'open house' activities. The group then developed a proposal for assigning the task of making phone calls to invite the parents to volunteer, who would receive stipends for this additional work. Thus, discussion of Julia's narrower topic turned into a broader reflection on other topics that emerged, ending with authentic problem solving and proposal of a solution. All of the task structures originally envisioned for the reflection process are present in this discussion, in the

order designed, but not as discrete steps. In fact, after discussing this set of topics, the group returned to brainstorming further topics for reflection.

Transitions during reflection. Reflecting group members moved fluidly from one task to another. These transitions occurred in different ways:

- Adding a topic to the list followed by an example, which resulted in reflection on both the topic and example;
- Explaining why a topic should be afforded a high priority, which resulted in others allowing the reflection to begin immediately to satisfy individual needs;
- Adding a topic involving issues that others did not fully understand, which caused requests for an explanation that in turn triggered reflection; and
- Reviewing the list of topics from the beginning of the session, which reminded others of a particular topic earlier identified for the group's reflection.

Although the teachers in the second group were familiar with the recommended reflection process and its linear nature, they found it more comfortable to shift among the various tasks in a more fluid manner.

Topics for reflection. Topics for reflection were provided by group members, and every topic contributed was considered for discussion during the reflection meeting. Each topic was often connected to multiple others, making topics difficult to talk about separately. For example, when the group suggested 'administration', 'workload', and 'morale' for their list of topics, they found it was difficult to talk about one without referencing the others.

Support Among Group Members

The members of this reflection group were very supportive of one another. They understood that members required varying amounts of time to reflect during different meetings. For example, during one meeting Sancho dominated the group's reflections about student behaviour and parent involvement. The other group members acknowledged this, supposing that it was important for him to reflect at length on that day. However, Martha noted during the same meeting that "Susan gets [time to reflect] next week".

In addition to allowing others' needs to be addressed during reflections, these teachers supported one another throughout the meetings in a variety of ways, including helping each other communicate their thoughts clearly, encouraging one another to 'vent' and/or reflect on a particular topic, and empathising with one another in response to events related to their teaching. The support was a direct result of the collaborative nature of these teachers' reflections. If the teachers had been reflecting internally, they would have missed valuable alternative perspectives, would not have been able to work systematically through their problems with colleagues, and might not have tried to set aside time to reflect on their practice at all.

The Role of the Facilitator

According to the linear process developed by the first set of teachers, it was the facilitator's job to begin the reflection portion of the meeting by eliciting possible discussion topics from group members. At times during their reflections, the group stalled. When faced with halts in conversation, the facilitator—one of the original three university researchers—consciously intervened by relating the last comment made to other topics on the brainstormed list, or by mentioning other identified topics, encouraging reflection to resume among members.

Another responsibility for the facilitator was to make sure that all group members' needs were addressed. For example, when Susan mentioned that she was having trouble getting organised, no one picked up on her statement as an explicit request for help. The facilitator was able to motivate other members to share information with Susan that was helpful to her. The facilitator also needed to make sure that all group members were able to participate to the extent that they wanted. For example, Susan sometimes preferred to listen more than contribute, even though the facilitator provided opportunities for Susan to reflect if she chose to do so. Sometimes Susan used the given opportunity, other times she declined. In making sure that reflection time was available to all participating members, the facilitator created opportunities for more hesitant group members to contribute.

A final role for the facilitator was as commentator, considering and remarking on the reflections of the group. For example, the facilitator sometimes noticed and commented upon connections between two topics that had been discussed at different times during a session:

> You started out saying that [administrators] don't walk in your shoes. They don't know what you're dealing with on an everyday basis … Yet, at the same time, you're [saying that the administration] could do incentives … If they don't know what's going on with you [teachers], why would they put these things in place?

Unlike group members who are involved in their own reflections in the moment, the facilitator may be better able to review and connect disparate viewpoints. By pointing out relevant connections during this group's process, the facilitator helped members to focus and communicate their ideas more effectively. The facilitator also helped to provide continuity from one meeting to the next through reminders about what was discussed and/or topics targeted for reflection during the previous meeting. Typically, this role of 'continuity-keeper' led to ongoing or deeper reflection on the topics mentioned.

Leadership Among Group Members

Much discussion occurred within the first teacher group about shifting leadership within a collaborative group. The first group of teachers considered the facilitator as the sole leader in the group. Thus, they recommended that any shift in leadership should occur in a somewhat formal manner, with group members asked to approve any leadership changes. During the testing of the process with the second group, though, many opportunities arose for members to take a more active part in the

leadership of the group. As the teachers recognised leadership opportunities, they assumed some of the leadership functions in the group, such as asking for a change in topic or pointing out that a discussion had veered off topic. Taking on some of these functions seemed natural for the teachers, and no formal shift of leadership from the facilitator to the teachers ever occurred. Rather, the teachers and facilitator worked together as a team, ensuring that the meetings ran smoothly and the reflections were productive for all involved.

Because of Martha's experience in both groups, creating the process with the first group and seeing it used and adapted to the needs of the second group, she felt comfortable taking the helm and helping the group reflect. Sometimes she initiated the reflections. At other times, she worked to keep the group reflecting productively. Sancho also served a leadership function in the group. He would often take the initiative in grouping similar topics together to facilitate richer reflections. Furthermore, Sancho would notice when the group had wandered into a discussion area that did not seem sufficiently related to the previous topic. He would then question the group, often bringing up connections among topics that had not been examined explicitly before.

Problem Solving and Taking Action

Much of the teachers' reflection time was spent discussing problems facing their classroom practice. It was clear that they wanted to see their problems solved and that they felt responsible for doing something about them. From the first meeting, Martha expressed a desire to take action, saying, "It's good to reflect, … but where do you go from there? Maybe we can come up with something to alleviate some of the stuff that's bothering us". The rest of the teachers joined Martha in wanting to 'do something'.

This desire to take action to solve their problems was not specifically addressed by the initial group of teachers who designed reflection process. This second group acknowledged that each teacher had a different idea about what constituted taking action and a different comfort zone for animating that action. Despite the differences, these teachers searched for solutions to problems raised in their reflection meetings. Yet, in those instances in which they did design a solution to an identified problem, the group as a whole did not generally enact the plan. For example, as mentioned previously, the group proposed helping teachers cope with the chore of calling all of their students' parents with a reminder about the school's upcoming open house by offering a few teachers a stipend for contacting parents, relieving other teachers of this responsibility. The group agreed that the school's administration should hear this solution, but the plan was never implemented beyond discussion at the reflection meeting. At times, the group began planning to take action, but typically individual teachers were the ones who actually did so.

Negotiating plans for taking action. When the teachers reflected about solving problems, they often identified factors constraining their taking action to solve problems. These factors impacted their reflections greatly and ranged from not having enough

time, to not having local administrative support, to not having enough district funding. Other factors that emerged from problem solving reflections were more systemic level, such as the structure of public education and the financial needs of families in the community.

As the teachers thought about constraints to action, they also evaluated their own personal desires and commitments to taking action. These personal desires included not wanting to "be the one to carry the burden," but fearing that inaction "[would] be interpreted that I only care about my little classroom." A fear of negative evaluations by administrators was also common among group members.

Many teachers in the group emphasised their explicit desire *not* to take action. Julia stated directly that she did not want the responsibility for solving the problems that emerged during the group's reflections, saying, "For my reflection I don't intend, or I don't want, to then become an element of action". Sancho echoed this sentiment, commenting that he felt powerless to take action due to the many constraints the group identified. The teachers also mentioned that the size of the task in taking action often felt daunting. Martha, on the other hand, had a strong desire to act on the problems that emerged. She explained to the group, "If we can problem-solve here and then share [with the rest of the faculty], then we're doing something good". The rest of the teachers agreed with the idea that sharing their ideas with other faculty was a form of taking action, one that they felt they could more realistically accomplish.

During one meeting, the group reflected on the administration's practice of announcing the state achievement test scores to the school's faculty and staff, indexing them by teachers' names. As a result, the teachers in the school all knew whose students scored lowest. The teachers perceived this practice as a commentary on their teaching abilities, although they recognised that the test scores should not be used as the sole measure of their professional acumen. Martha pushed the group a little by encouraging them to create a plan, which she would later enact on her own: "We need to … figure out a way to come up with some kind of a plan that improves the working conditions and … I will be the one to submit it". In doing so, Martha offered to express the group's opinions to the administration via a school-wide task force, of which she was a member: "So then what would you want me to tell them about this? That they need to talk to you guys individually …? Or just to leave the names out and put the grade levels?" The group felt empowered to take action through Martha's role in the task force and, in this instance, developed a plan to alleviate this particular problem in the future, which Martha enacted. While the ability to take action in this manner was very satisfying to the group members, this was the only such plan to be put into effect during the semester.

Rewards for Participation

These teachers acknowledged experiencing multiple rewards as a result of their participation in the collaborative reflection group. One reward was learning. Susan said that she learned more about the school by asking questions. Martha also learned more about the school by "listening to the concerns of a new teacher and of another

teacher who has a completely different type of kids and grade level and problems". In both cases, the teachers gained knowledge that might not have been available to them had they not engaged in reflection with their colleagues.

Participating in this reflection group also helped the teachers learn more about themselves. For example, Susan felt positive effects personally more than professionally: "It helped me to realise things about myself—how I act in certain situations, how I deal with certain people, when and why I will … speak up". Similarly, Martha reflected, "I found that I had more courage than I previously thought—that I am a doer, a defender, and advocate for what I believe is right". Through engagement in collaborative reflection, these teachers felt they gained a deeper understanding of themselves professionally and personally.

Another reward for group members was the release of stress and the expression of emotions. According to Martha, "It's good to put [these thoughts] out there, because we really sometimes don't get a chance to do it". She also appreciated the reward of having time to 'slow down'. She said:

> The whole reason I like doing these reflection groups is that it actually gives me time to slow down … I never have time to (a) reflect with peers and (b) to slow down and just take a deep breath.

Finding out that they were not alone in their feelings was another powerful reward for group members. For Martha this meant knowing that "others were feeling as I was, no matter the age or experience in the field". Sancho felt that "those who participated are a more cohesive group, which is definitely a positive result". Sancho also appreciated the validation that "the problems I'm having aren't just my own. Other people are experiencing the same things".

Refinement and Transfer of the Process

The second group felt the process of teachers' collaborative reflection that they used would easily transfer to other schools. According to Sancho, for example: "Specific issues may be different, but global issues will be the same … It would definitely work". Although the group believed that transfer was possible, they recognised some challenges that might need to be addressed and offered some suggestions to improve the process.

Challenges to collaborative reflection groups. The biggest challenge that these teachers saw to participating in the collaborative reflection group was finding time to meet together. The faculty of this school found themselves involved in after-school activities daily. As Sancho explained: "we were at the mercy of the people who schedule … our after-school time. It has nothing to do with us not being able to make the time". Because these teachers recognised the value of reflecting together, they expressed the desire that collaborative reflection supplant other meetings that they perceived as being less valuable to them personally, to their students' learning, and to their own professional development.

Another challenge these teachers identified concerned personality clashes that

might arise during the course of collaborative reflection. Within this group's meetings, overt conflicts did not surface, but differences were mentioned during teachers' individual reports on their experiences. Susan, for instance, wrote that, in the future, she would consider closely the general personalities of the teachers in a group before becoming a member:

> I think the combination of me being a shy little first-year teacher just didn't mix well with the other strong, opinionated personalities in the rest of the group. I was intimidated!

Susan's feelings might be related to the recruitment methods used in forming this group. The researchers presented the idea of collaborative reflection and an invitation to participate to all teachers in the school, whereupon Susan volunteered for the group. Meanwhile, Martha, who had been a member of the original reflection group, independently conducted her own recruitment effort, approaching colleagues whom she believed would especially enjoy reflecting collaboratively. Sancho, for example, was aware that his recruitment might have affected the composition of the group:

> You did get a certain select group when you asked Martha to ask who else wanted to do it. So it's going to be people she has a sphere of influence with, but also she's knowing what you're wanting and she's narrowing down the pickings, too.

Susan identified the final challenge. She held a unique perspective on the group since she was in her first year of teaching. Like the personality issues, her different perspective did not seem to affect the meetings, but came through in her comments as she looked back on her personal experience, saying, "I am a first-year teacher, and I wanted to improve my lessons, my management, my organisation, everything—but the group was not at all what I had envisioned". The global issues (i.e. related to teaching in general) that dominated the reflection were apparently not as valuable to a first-year teacher as to a veteran. Susan explained, "I would definitely not recommend it to a first-year teacher because they have too much on their plates already, and also there are just some things you don't want [or need] to know yet". This novice teacher's perspective was missing from the initial reflection group that developed the collaborative reflection process. Perhaps separate groups could be organised for novice teachers and experienced teachers. Or, at least, first-year teachers could be made aware that they might grow less 'naïve' through their experiences as part of a collaborative reflection group with veteran educators. These first-year teachers could then consider whether such a group would best serve their needs.

Suggestions for future collaborative reflection groups. Sancho offered some other suggestions to improve group meetings and make them more worthwhile to members. He was initially concerned that taking action in response to reflection topics would consume too much time and effort from his already busy schedule, or that taking action might affect his performance evaluations. However, by the end of the meetings, Sancho was saying, "If there were any way that we could know that what we're saying is going to the people who need to hear it, that would definitely be

helpful". Sancho may have had a change of heart regarding the need to take action, or he might have been asking for a mechanism to be built into the group's process that would allow action to be taken anonymously and without his having to expend personal time. He also felt that the group could "limit the focus of each session a bit more". Sancho saw a problem in that "each week [group members came up] with new problems that [they] hadn't thought about the week before, plus the whole venting part comes in and it takes precedence over everything else". It seemed that Sancho, in the end, might have been happier with the more fixed, linear process as originally designed, although within group meetings he reflected as holistically as the other members and did not express a need or desire to simplify or limit the conversation. This preference could be traced to his personal discomfort with anything that felt disorderly.

Overall, though, these teachers reported that their participation in the collaborative reflection group was a positive experience. While each individual teacher's experience had unique aspects, what they all shared was the opinion that similar collaborative reflection groups should be made available to teachers at other schools.

Although the second group did not use the collaborative reflection process in exactly the manner recommended by the first group, their experience was generally successful. The nature of this teacher-developed reflection procedure allows for considerable flexibility and consideration of a variety of different perspectives, and it provides authentic activities that are helpful to teachers as professionals on a just-in-time basis. As these teachers described it, the process of collaborative reflection is "valuable and would be beneficial to any teachers". By offering their recommendations about the process here, we hope to encourage teachers and those who assist them in professional development to engage in similarly worthwhile reflection.

Acknowledgements

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