**Using Action Research in the Educational Doctorate as Signature Pedagogy and Capstone Experience to Develop Stewards of Practice**

Summary

*There is movement to redefine and refocus the Educational Doctorate to improve its effectiveness in producing stewards of practice, that is leaders who take action on the challenges in their schools. The Ed.D. in Leadership and Innovation at Arizona State University has chosen Action Research as its signature pedagogy to help students develop the habits of the mind, heart, and hand they need to be effective leaders. This paper describes the program and provides*

*I Poems developed from students' dissertation proposals to reveal the challenges leaders face in their workplaces and the actions they take in response to those challenges.*

The education doctorate (Ed.D.) has been plagued by a lack of its own identity and for many, is seen as nothing more than a Ph.D. light (Golde, 2006; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2005). According to Levine (2005) Ed.D. programs fail to prepare school leaders who understand real problems and have the ability to take action and make effective and lasting change. To him students enrolled in Ed.D. programs receive an outdated, watered-down curriculum with low standards and expectations. The views of Murphy and Vriesenga (2005) align with this because they believe Ed.D, students ,fail to make an impact or make things better for the students and teachers in our schools. Evans (2007) suggests these doctoral candidates fail to turn theory into practice, change practice, or critique and challenge the status quo.

In contrast, Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, and Garabedian (2006) propose that, with reflective thought, these challenges can be overcome. Ed.D. students can become scholarly and influential leaders and the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) and its university affiliates are working to make this a reality. This group has and continues to convene to re-envision, re-define, and reclaim the Ed.D. as a distinct professional degree for the next generation of school leaders (Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, 2010; Perry & Imig, 2008). To accomplish this, the consortium articulated a set of desired qualities and skills Ed.D. students should gain from their university experience and from these worked backward to determine the knowledge and skills necessary to develop these qualities. According to CPED, Ed.D. graduates should become stewards of practice, that is individuals committed to high standards and prepared to take on the challenges of teaching and leadership (Shulman, 2005; 2007). Ed.D. graduates should be able to identify problems of practice; blend their practical wisdom with professional knowledge gained in coursework; conduct research that is rigorous, ethical, and transparent; and make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, schools, and communities (Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, 2010). Students acquire these qualities and abilities when they are immersed in programs with signature pedagogy, an inquiry focus, laboratories of practice, and a strong capstone experience. These features nurture stewardship, and signature pedagogy is key.

Lee Shulman (2005, 2007) defines *signature pedagogy* as “the characteristic forms of teaching and learning… that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions” (p. 52). Signature pedagogy is built on an apprenticeship model that immerses novices in real-world settings so they have hands-on experiences that allow them to gain insight into their profession’s implicit rules, values, and norms (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008). Signature pedagogy respects the practical wisdom students bring to the learning experience but it also extends it with the wisdom of the field. Examples of signature pedagogy include student teaching in education, the bedside rounds of novice physicians, and the case dialogue method used in law school (Golde, 2006; Golde & Walker 2006). Signature pedagogy requires complex thinking and public displays of what is learned.

**Action Research as Signature Pedagogy and Capstone**

The Ed.D. program in Leadership and Innovation at Arizona State University uses action research as one of its signature pedagogy but its use hit a bumpy start. We admitted our first cohort in the fall of 2006 and, as with many new programs, there were challenges. A survey of the first Cohort indicated that students were learning theory and methods, but not in a way that was connecting to their real world needs. Given this dissatisfaction, an interim director was appointed and under his guidance we became members of CPED and used their principles, design concepts, and the ideal of stewardship to refine our mission, goals, and pedagogy. Our Mission became to prepare educators as scholarly and influential practitioners. We adjusted our program to focus on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students would need to resolve problems of practice and improve local situations. To do this we created a vision that our graduates would be scholarly and influential practitioners and set the following goals to realize our vision. These goals are provided in Table 1.

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We made action research our signature pedagogy because we believe it helps students gain these qualities. Like Pine (2009) we believe action research is a conceptual and philosophical framework that becomes ingrained in one’s mind and heart. Educators conducting action research do not impose innovations. They listen to the voices of those around them, build on local knowledge, and encourage change from the inside out (Stringer, 2007).

Performing action research also gives Ed.D. students an opportunity to be a key part of the process and have their own voices heard. The notion of being an outsider-within is captured by Collins (1990) who notes that one’s location in an organization offers a unique vantage point. Insiders occupy a complex set of roles and relationships that can foster organizational learning and lead to change (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2005). However, this will only happen if researchers have an opportunity to express their views. The use of “I” and “we” statements are common in qualitative research and they are common and important in action research (Plano, Clark, & Creswell, 2010).

Performing action research allows our students to blend their practical experience and professional knowledge to make things better for everyone (Hinchey, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Action research is infused throughout our program. It is taught in our core courses (12 hours) and research courses (9 hours) and it is supported in Leader-Scholar Communities (6 hours). Leader-Scholar Communities are comprised of a chair, 4-5 students, and a committee member who together to help each student plan, write, and defend his or her proposal and dissertation. Students begin doing action research cycle their first semester. They select a problem to solve at their worksite, explain why it is of importance to their participants and themselves, investigate the literature for viable solutions, take action, collect and analyze data, reflect on what they learned, and consider their next steps. We use action research as signature pedagogy to help our students become stewards of practice and benchmarks along the way ensure students are working toward stewardship. At the end of each semester students share their current cycle in a poster, panel, or roundtable at a public forum we call Research Day. The action research dissertation is the capstone experience.

We use action research as signature pedagogy but we realize there are concerns about the quality of teacher research in general, and the validity and sustainability of action research dissertations (Bradbury Huang, 2010; Greenwood, 2009). Action research dissertations hold promise; but, as Herr and Anderson (2005) note, they are “the new kid on the block…” (p. 1). There has been little research on action research as signature pedagogy and even less research on action research proposals and dissertations in Ed.D. programs. Even though our faculty believes action research is transforming our students into stewards of practice, we are only beginning to collect evidence to support this claim.

To begin to understand if our beliefs were correct we constructed *I Poems* from a sample of dissertation proposals written by our third cohort (Piston, 1947; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003). We chose proposals because they are written and defended at the end of the second year in our three-year program. They occur after most coursework has been completed and a cycle or two of action research has been conducted and presented at Research Day. Proposal time is an important time because it shows a student has landed on a local problem in need of solving, developed an intervention and is ready to lead a change, and developed tools to collect data to prove their effectiveness. Anxiety, motivation, and enthusiasm run high at proposal time and written products are evidence of hard work and thought. Unfortunately few studies have looked at this crucial time. Given this, we decided to look at proposals written by our students to understand the challenges that spark their action research and the actions they planned in response.

Our investigation has begun to reveal the complexities, realities, and hope of action research as signature pedagogy in our Ed.D. program. Understanding this could be of interest to others program developers, administrators, faculty, and students interested in action research.

**Method of the Study**

**Participants**

At the time of this study eighteen students in our third cohort had just defended their proposals. These students worked full-time as teachers (elementary, middle, high school, community college, college), principals (elementary, middle, and high school), and district administrators as well as in various other positions (e.g., Director of Human Resources, Department of Education employees).

**Data Source**

We constructed I Poems from six proposals written by students in our third cohort. We believe these proposals are a representative sample of those written in our program. Proposals are defended at the end of the second year and they are typically 20-30 pages in length. Proposal guidelines specify that they should contain the following parts but there is room for adjustments based on contexts.

*Introduction: Leadership Context and Purpose of the Action* – The introduction explains the context in detail. It begins with the challenge driving the action, explains the student’s responsibility, authority, and role in the setting, and states the research questions.

*Review of Supporting Scholarship* – This section identifies and explains the theoretical lenses used to understand the challenge and the proposed action.

*Methods -* The methods section contains a detailed explanation of the setting, participants, plan of action, data collection tools and procedures, and analytical plan.

**Analysis**

**I Poems.** We created I Poems to understand the challenges students’ targeted and the actions they took in response. I Poems stem from the *Listening Guide* method designed by Carol Gilligan (1982) as she investigated the identity and moral development of women. Using a series of sequential listenings and questions the *Listening Guide* allows a researcher to come closer and closer to a participant’s experience. To accomplish this they focus on identity and voice. They interrogate the data to understand who is speaking, to whom, in what order, and why. Important to this procedure is uncovering each individual’s narrative in terms of the context (where they are) and plot (what is happening, when, with whom, and why). Repeated images, metaphors, and themes are noted along with contrapuntal examples and tensions. I Poems are constructed once a narrative is formed (Debold, 1990; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003). We found I poems a valid analysis strategy for action research proposals because our students have an insider perspective. They work with others in their local settings to make things better so “I” and “we” statements are common in their work (Plano, Clark, & Creswell, 2010).

We adapted the *Listening Guide* method to analyze six dissertation proposals. Instead of interviews we used dissertation proposals as the students’ narratives. We read each proposal to understand the story being told, its context, the individual “I”, and all other characters who were present. We then went through each proposal, selected all sentences with the first person “I” and pasted these into a new document. Next, we placed each “I” phrase on its own line, cut excess lines, and constructed a poem-like narrative that spoke to their challenges and the actions they took in response.

**Results**

I Poems provide a unique way for us to present the challenges that sparked students’ actions and the actions they took in response. From our analysis we pose that students’ actions focused on teachers -- developing collaborative learning spaces, developing cultures of inquiry, increasing teachers’ capacity to plan instruction; and students -- inspiring students to read and retaining commuter students.

In the first I Poem (Appendix A) an art teacher perceives that his school is a controlling environment for teachers. He wants to take action and change this into a collaborative environment where teachers can exercise their creativity and become a transformative learning organization. To carry out his vision he talks with the teachers at his school and from this they decide they need ways to integrate the arts into the curriculum through professional development and work with mentors. This student wanted work with teachers and create a collaborative and creative learning space and to do this, he relied on the notion of Ba, or transformative space with a “here and now” quality. The action he planned involved three spaces (public/social, private/social and public/individual spaces) in which teachers could work to integrate art into the curriculum. As an action researcher he wanted to understand the effects of these actions with data. So he developed surveys and set up time and space for semi-structured interviews, on-line conversations, focus groups, and observations. This student wanted teachers to incorporate the arts into their lives and his action was to inquire, lead, collaborate, and learn with teachers.

The second I Poem (Appendix B) was based on the proposal of a principal who, through personal experience, understood the potential benefits of action research and wanted to help the teachers at his school gain this same insight. This student wanted teachers to grow professionally in the context of their own classrooms by inquiring about their day-to-day activities. To do this he plans to work with teachers in their Professional Learning Communities. As an action researcher he wants to understand the effect of this work by collecting data from surveys, interviews, transcripts, journals, and other artifacts. This student strives to make things better at his school by helping teachers understand the benefits of action research in their classrooms. His action provides teachers with professional development so they will have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to carry out action research on their own.

The third I poem (Appendix C) is from the work of a second grade teacher who wants to help her students gain a love for literacy. To do this she plans to devote more class time to reading, teach comprehension strategies, listen to students read, engage students in meaningful dialogue, and model her own passion for literacy. As an action researcher this student wants to prove her effectiveness through traditional reading measures and qualitative measures. She wants to delve deep and understand what her students think and feel about literacy. Ultimately, her goal is to use this insight to help her students to gain a love for literacy and her action was to incorporate instructional strategies to help her students develop this love.

The fourth I Poem (Appendix D) comes from a proposal written by the Director of a Community Education Department working in a district with a high Hispanic population (85%) and children living in poverty (92% free or reduced lunch). This student was living in a state where Hispanic parents feared deportation and lived under constant fear. Given her role and her belief in the power of parental knowledge and involvement, this Director wants to help teachers and parents collaborate. Her innovation Academic Parent-Teacher Teams is designed to do this because it educates teachers to work with parents and teaches parents how to work with their child/children so assessment scores will rise. As an action researcher this student will collect data using surveys, interviews, and observations. Her dream is to have students in her district learn and pass mandated tests and her action involves parents and teachers working cooperatively to achieve these important goals.

The fifth I Poem explains an Academic Advisor's concerns for recruiting and retaining commuter students in his college because in his context commuter students have a higher drop out rate than traditional students. He envisions a plan to remedy this and call it Sky Leaders. He creates a program that brings faculty and peer support for his first year commuter students. He plans to form mentoring teams and build peer leader mentors to support commuter students in academics as well as provide opportunities for social engagement, He is hoping that this innovation encourages the commuter students to stay in school. As an action researcher, his role will be a full participant-observer, facilitator and boundary-broker (Wenger, 1998) between the mentors and students. He plans on providing training and assistance to each mentoring team. As an action researcher he wants to understand the effects of Sky Leaders so he will collect data using observations, interviews, and surveys. He vision provides support to commuter students who might otherwise drop out of school.

The sixth I Poem voices a seventh grade reading teacher's thoughts on collaborative planning, professional relationships, and the challenge he sees with these in his context. Although he and his team have the same students and plan and work together, he feels that his team is not as productive as it might be. He plans to use ideas in the literature to increase his teams’ capacity to collaborate and plan cooperatively. To do this he will take on three roles: learning team member, facilitator, and researcher. As an action researcher he wants to understand the effects of his innovation so he will collect data using journals, transcriptions of meetings, interviews, other artifacts, and a survey. This teacher envisions a more effective team and he is going to work with them to become a productive professional learning team.

**Conclusions**

It is unlikely that one investigation or group of individuals will end the debate surrounding the education doctorate and action research. The debate continues and is needed because it challenges faculty in Ed.D. programs to strive to produce scholarly and influential practitioners who can lead and implement change. More investigation of action research as signature pedagogy is needed, but we hope that our analysis of proposals can be used to move the discussion forward. We hope our findings are informative for faculty members, program developers, administrators, and students interested in action research and the Ed.D.

With this hope, we offer suggestions. First, it is important that action research in Ed.D. programs are used to develop stewards of practice. Our analysis shows that our students are becoming stewards because they are taking on the challenges and tensions in their workplaces. Our students are striving to make things better. They are using their practical wisdom and blending this with the professional knowledge they are learning through signature pedagogy in core courses to help teachers develop professionally and work effectively with children in their schools. Our students are implementing and developing professional development, motivating children, and creating learning spaces. They are taking action and developing habits of mind and hand.

Second, it is important to realize that the actions students plan to take are personally and professionally meaningful to them. They are striving for equity and social justice, listening to the voices of those around them, and changing their leadership styles. Through action research our students are developing habits of heart.

Third, it is imperative students doing action research be allowed to include their voice. I statements reveal commitments, actions, and emotions and a study without them would be missing a key part. The voices in insiders matter and they teach the reality of school life. Academics can learn from the voices of those in the field because they turn theory into practice and ground theory in reality (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

This analysis of proposals shows that action research can be used as signature pedagogy to create school leaders who are stewards of practice with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to identify educational problems, design solutions, and lead change. We believe that the Ed.D. and action research are a good fit and that groups like CPED, which is working to define and distinguish the Ed.D. from the Ph.D., have articulated a meaningful vision for higher education and practitioner research.

It should be noted that the proposals used in this paper were developed into action research projects and became the dissertations of the six students who have since graduated with the Ed.D. in Innovation and Leadership. Proposals were part of the development of stewardship.

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Table 1:

*ASU’s Program Goals*

**Lead**

* Render visions and plans for the future
* Act as agents of change in the service of others
* Maximize the contributions of all participants
* Anticipate responses to shifting educational circumstances

**Uphold access and excellence**

* Maintain high and positive expectations for learning
* Ensure equitable opportunities to meet and surpass rigorous academic standards
* Respond to the strengths and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners

**Collaborate**

* Build professional development communities of practice
* Partner with others inside and outside education to address mutual concerns
* Honor multiple perspectives

**Apply ideas and information**

* Direct scholarship wisely to problems of practice
* Examine the professional and research literature of education critically
* Employ information technology strategically
* Embrace systems as a perspective for interpreting local situations

**Apply systematic inquiry**

* Adopt action research as a stance for resolving local issues and for developing professionally
* Initiate cumulative action research that results in principled data-based decisions
* Apply theoretical frames, methodologies, and methods strategically

Appendix A

**SUPPORTING AND FOSTERING COLLABORATION WITHIN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AROUND THE PEDAGOGY OF ARTS INTEGRATION**

*If schools desire to move away from a “top-down” and controlled teacher learning environment, only heightened by current accountability measures, then schools must convert into transformative learning organizations (Schlechty, 2009; Friehs, 2003). As such, the need for effective teaching practices coupled with collaborative and creative learning space is imperative for this transformation (Zederayko & Ward, 1999; Inos & Quigley, 1995).*

I prescribed to the idea that creating a three dimensional form is not necessarily about creating interesting positive space - the tangible sculpture - rather it is about creating interesting negative space.

I am attempting to craft other types of “invisible” spaces - collaborative learning spaces.

As a social artist, I desire to help and be of service to teachers by developing spaces for creative collaboration, built by an intentional design of participation and engagement.

As an action researcher, I approach this study as a means to inquire *with* teachers to expand arts integration learning and personal professional development.

I exist to inquire, lead, collaborate, and most importantly, to learn.

I will intervene to develop a Dialoguing Ba (a public/social space for reflecting and sharing experiences), a Systemizing Ba (a private/social space for collective interactions of existing knowledge with outside information), and an Originating Ba (a public/individual space for face-to-face interactions to share feelings, emotions or to observe).

I will collect and analyze data to gain perspectives about the process of teachers learning about arts integration practices within the knowledge construction model.

I am confident that the varying types of data I collect and analyze will lend themselves to valid, trustworthy, outcomes and findings that will answer the research questions I pose.

I am also confident that I will be able to, via triangulation, come to some valid and dependable conclusions about the intervention I develop in which teacher participants involved in this study are engaged.

I am hopeful this study will carry with it a solution for teachers in my district.

I am hopeful this study will impact classrooms.

Appendix B

**Collaborative Practitioner Inquiry:**

**Providing Leadership and Action Research for Teacher Professional Development**

*Throughout my career as a classroom teacher and principal, it has been my belief that there is always more we educators can learn about our practice and ourselves via a culture of inquiry.*

I believe exploring one’s intellectual curiosity is the hallmark of learning.

I am finishing my fourth year as principal of a large, suburban high school. Seven years ago, I completed my first classroom action research project as a participant. I found action research to be rewarding and gained the conviction to encourage classroom action research.

I want the teachers at my school to bring individualization and relevance to their professional growth by learning from their day-to-day activities and within the context of their classrooms.

I propose that the best way to achieve this kind of professional development is through practitioner research and professional learning communities (PLCs).

I will combine collaborative professional development with self-directed, individualized professional development in practitioner inquiry.

I believe these will complement each other if guided by me as an instructional leader.

The members of the Action Research Professional Learning Community I will work with professionals who have varying degrees of training and experience with action research.

I will email professional literature regarding practitioner inquiry, action research, professional learning communities, and embedded professional development to all teachers.

I will present fifteen hours of professional development in action research to a cohort of teachers that choose to receive the training.

I will introduce and explain the concept of collaborative practitioner inquiry and how developing models of inquiry can be used as embedded professional development.

I will collect surveys, interviews, transcripts, journals and other artifacts.

As a member check, I will ask each interviewee to review my transcriptions and provide a written response to its contents.

I will record my observations and reflections in a research journal that will serve as a way to record the impact of my action research innovation.

I will conduct an integrative analysis to construct assertions that answer my research question following guidelines by Erickson (1986) and Smith (1997).

I will conceptualize key linkages across data sources by examining both descriptive statistics and coded spreadsheets.

I will use an inductive analytic approach to determine and test patterns of data in order to formulate assertions.

I will list the assertions relative to my research question and systematically examine each assertion across the data sources to record the descriptive statistics and codes that support or refute them.

Appendix C

**The Contribution of Scaffolded Self-Selected Reading to a Third-Grade Class' Reading Motivation and Acheivement**

*Of all the subjects I teach, I feel reading is the most important.*

I am committed to inspiring students to become motivated to love literacy but when it comes to independent reading my students are not engaged.

I need to devote more time to reading because when my students tell me what they did over the weekend, it is not about a great book they have read.

I have come to realize that I need to motivate my students to read. I need to provide time for my students to read and have meaningful talk, or dialogue, about their reading with each other and with me.

I will verify students are reading independent level books.

I will model sustained silent reading.

I will confer with students one at a time about their reading.

I will model effective and ineffective dialogues, and the students will role-play effective ways to dialogue.

I will prompt students to talk about the comprehension strategies they are using.

I will have students read aloud to me, and I will take notes about their oral reading.

I will collect data (Oral Reading Record, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, surveys, observations, interviews, and field notes) on this innovation.

I will integrate qualitative data with quantitative data to form assertions.

Appendix D

**Academic Parent-Teacher Teams: A New Model**

**of School Parent Involvement Focused on Academic Achievement**

*A parent made drawing that shows one mother’s dreams for her four children. The word éxito means success. The picture demonstrates that even though the mother was of minority descent and lived in an impoverished neighborhood she still had high aspirations for her four children. These aspirations include a pilot of Air force One, a language teacher abroad, a naval officer, and an Olympic skier.*

I believe all children deserve a successful educational experience that includes teachers and parents skillfully collaborating to guide their steps as they develop into assertive learners and critical problem solvers. The problem is that only some parents have the knowledge of what actions to take to help their children succeed. Educating all parents with this knowledge and providing a strong supportive infrastructure is my goal.

I seek to develop a stronger parent involvement program. This conviction guides my professional and educational compass.

I currently serve as the Director of the Community Education Department. My work and passion are focused on meaningfully connecting parents and teachers to improve student learning in a unique setting. Our district is composed of 5% African American, 5% Native American, 5% White, and 85% Hispanic students. Our district has a 40% to 45% mobility rate, a 7% absenteeism rate, and suspends or expels an average of 8% of students each year. Of considerable importance to my context is the issue of immigration. Since 2007, Maricopa County Sheriff, Joe Arpaio, has used his power and resources to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants. Families in my school district live under constant fear of being targeted. Parental involvement in school for district families translates into leaving the safety of their own homes and taking the significant risk of being arrested. These challenges faced by community members in my district are the social backdrop upon which my action research study is set.

I created Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTTT) and am personally responsible for developing professional development to all participating staff and working with parents as teachers work with them. To ensure success of this program I will participate in many of the parent-teacher team meetings and will be available to clarify any questions or concerns that arise.

To prove the effectiveness of APTTT I will personally interview, observe and survey parents, teachers, and students.

Appendix E

**Leveraging Faculty And Peer Leaders To Promote Commuter Student Co-Curricular Engagement: A Collegiate Retention Intervention Study**

*I intend to make an immediate positive difference within my college —a goal that is particularly appropriate to the action research (Stringer, 1999) tradition.*

I am responsible for recruiting and retaining students in our college.

For my action research I will focus on our commuter student population.

I will establish a sustainable approach I call Sky Leaders.

I want to know how and if the Sky Leaders program impacts first year commuter students’ decisions to get involved with academically purposeful activities and ultimately re-enroll in classes at ASU.

I will recruit four faculty mentors and four students to serve as peer leader mentors for four first year commuter student participants and create the Sky Leaders program.

I will operate as a boundary-broker (Wenger, 1998) between the Sky Leaders program mentors and ancillary campus co-curricular engagement officers.

I will assist with the academic and social engagement within each mentoring team.

I will provide training for the faculty and student peer leader mentors.

I will seek to determine if the Sky Leaders program impacts the following: students’ initial and subsequent institutional goals and commitments, institutional experiences (with an emphasis on co-curricular engagement), academic and social integration, and re-enrollment decisions.

I will also seek to gauge the effectiveness of each of the program’s components.

I will use a quasi-experimental, mixed methods approach to investigate the effectiveness of the Sky Leaders program.

I intend to collect evidence from a variety of sources in a variety of ways, which will enable me to triangulate data to support my assertions.

I will observe, interview and survey the mentor and mentee participants using an observational protocol.

I will be acting as a full participant-observer within the study.

Appendix F

**The Contribution of Professional Development to a Middle School Team's Collaboration AND INSTRUCTIONAL Planning**

*When I entered my first classroom with my name above the door I realized the struggle classroom management could be.  But through discussions with co-workers and trying new things I was able to learn how to manage my classroom.*
In my experience as a teacher, I have come to realize the importance of teachers collaborating to overcome challenges and obstacles.
I am working in my sixth year as the Reading teacher for the 7B Team at Horizon West Middle School, a school where teams of teachers follow the D3 process - we plan and work together and have the same students the entire year.

The D3 process is promising, but I believe it lacks structure so I am seeking to promote stronger professional relationships among team members.
I will be using Anne Jolly’s (2004) Facilitator’s Guide to Professional Learning Teams to develop a professional learning team that can meet achievement goals.
I will use this guide because I have grown as a teacher because of situated learning and a community of practice.  I have learned more on the job from colleagues than from the teacher preparation that preceded my career.

These ideas and Jolly's Guide fuel my study’s action. I will provide professional development opportunities to develop our Team's capacities to collaborate and plan instruction.
During this study I will take on three roles: learning team member, facilitator, and researcher.  The responsibilities I will have vary for each role.

As a learning team member, I will seek to gain professional knowledge in accordance with the learning plan set by the Team.  As a Team member I will seek to improve my level of collaboration with others and my instructional planning.
As a facilitator, I will work to keep our Team focused on: student achievement, increasing collegiality and collaboration during team meetings, and adjusting the professional learning team process.   I will lead Team meetings and present tools and processes to facilitate collective learning and instructional planning.

As a researcher, I will observe the process, collect and analyze data, then report findings and implications.
My data will consist of: research journal entries, artifacts, meeting transcriptions, interviews, and a survey.
I will integrate these data sources to identify patterns of interaction, track changes, and eventually make assertions, or warranted responses to my research questions (Erikson, 1986).