OBSERVATION IN A SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS:

PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

IN A 2ND - 12TH GRADE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

Josephine Salvador

A DISSERTATION

in

Educational and Organizational Leadership

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

2012

Supervisor of Dissertation:

Sharon M. Ravitch, Senior Lecturer

Dean, Graduate School of Education:

Andrew C. Porter, Dean and Professor

Dissertation Committee:

Sharon M. Ravitch, Senior Lecturer
Susan L. Lytle, Professor of Education
Dina Portnoy, Director of Alumni Programs, Knowles Science Teaching Foundation
DEDICATION

For David
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is not possible to personally name all the people who made this dissertation a reality. I take this opportunity to thank those that I can.

The brilliant teaching faculty in the Mid-Career program set the standard for excellence. I will forever consider my research a work in progress toward meeting that standard and am grateful for their guidance and example.

Thanks to my fellow travelers in Mid-Career Cohort Eight—all wonderful educators in their own right, even before embarking on this joint expedition. My life has been forever changed and enriched by working with all of you. Your students—graduate, high school, middle and elementary—are truly blessed by your compassion, dedication, and sense of humor. I also can’t see how any of us would have made it through without the wonderful support team of Mike Johanek, Jess Lundeen, and Martha Williams.

Thanks to the editors—Kara, Shannon, Faith, and especially Kathleen. Your patience and keen reading skills helped me find the right words. I credit you with the end product, but take full responsibility for any lingering errors.

A special thank you to the teachers who trusted me with their personal experiences observing their colleagues. I hope that I stayed true to your words, and that I created a narrative that will help teachers who want to learn from their peers.

A most heartfelt thanks to my stellar committee: Sharon, Susan, and Dina. Without your patient, positive guidance I could not have found my way through the thicket of my own
thoughts and research. Special appreciation goes to my committee chair, Sharon, for her
cheering, prodding, and generosity with her time.

My family—David, Stella, Pop Pop, Abuela, Blaine, Paige, Tyler, and Shaine—were
constant in their love and support. I couldn't have done this without you. I hope I made
you proud.

To Stella: mama's big book report is done. If it helps you and your classmates just a tiny
bit, I will be grateful and humbled.

To David: your support, love, cheering, and patience are what made this all possible. You
are the best partner and teacher that I could ever observe.
ABSTRACT

OBSERVATION IN A SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS:
PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING
IN A 2ND-12TH GRADE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

Josephine Salvador

What happens when teachers start to observe each other’s classes? How do teachers make meaning of observing and being observed? What effects, if any, does requiring peer observation have on the teaching community? This research explores these questions in a qualitative study of peer observation of teaching (POT) in the 2nd-12th grades of an independent day school in a city in the northeastern United States. Peer observation as a school-wide practice was part of a new academic initiative to review curriculum and pedagogy in grades two through twelve. Schön’s (1987) theory of reflective practice and Cochran-Smith & Lytle’s (2001) theory of inquiry stance frame the analysis of the data collected. This study is situated in the research on peer observation and leadership, mentoring, teacher learning, collaboration, and professional development. Surveys, interviews, reflective journals, and archival materials are analyzed to understand the effects of peer observation on the individual teachers. The findings of this study have implications for fostering teacher leadership and agency within a school community. Including POT as part of a comprehensive professional development program, created by and for teachers, can ground professional development in teacher reflection, shared conversation and inquiry into practice and privileges teacher input in
the review of curriculum and pedagogy. Supporting regular, consistent POT practice among teachers has the potential to shift a community—from one of teachers working as isolated islands to one characterized by supportive peer relationships and strong curricular cohesion and coherence.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ iv

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... vi

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. xiii

Chapter

1. Introduction to the Study: The Effects of POT on Teachers and Teaching .......... 1
   Research Questions and Their Significance ......................................................... 1
   Background and Context ....................................................................................... 3
   Review of Academic Program at the Study Site ............................................. 6
   Three Core Principles of Progressive Education ........................................... 8
   A New Vertical Academic Initiative: Lead Teachers and the
   Academic Cabinet .................................................................................................. 9
   A School without Walls ....................................................................................... 11
   Personal Interest and Motivations .................................................................... 12
   Negotiation of Roles as a Practitioner Researcher ......................................... 15
   Conceptual Framework ....................................................................................... 19
   Organization of the Study ................................................................................... 24

2. Literature Review ...................................................................................................... 26
   Introduction ........................................................................................................... 26
   Teacher Observation ............................................................................................. 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Relationships</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Leadership</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Mentoring (Co-mentoring)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Teaching Practices</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Learning</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Visions for Mentoring and Professional Development</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Research Design and Methodology</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Qualitative Study</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Sample</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Three Phases of Data Collection</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Data Collection</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Prompts</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memos</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Results: Presentation and Analysis of Data ........................................ 91

Introduction ....................................................................................... 91

Study Sample .................................................................................... 93

Finding 1: The P in POT ................................................................. 94

Peer in Terms of Positionality ......................................................... 98

Positionality with Regard to Social Connections ......................... 103

Positionality with Regard to Teaching Experience ..................... 105

Professional Identity: Subject Area and Vertical Location .......... 112

Professional Identity: Appointed Title ........................................... 121

Finding 2: POT as a First Step toward Transformational Review of

Curriculum and Pedagogy ............................................................... 127

What do observers see? The Tools ................................................. 129
List of Tables

Table
1. Appointed Division for Participants .................................................. 61
2. Gender of Interview Participants ....................................................... 62
3. Subject Areas Represented by Interview Participants ............................ 63
4. Degrees of Participants ....................................................................... 64
5a. Experience Teaching in Years ............................................................ 65
5b. Years Teaching – Survey Respondents ............................................... 65
6. Appointed Position at Study Site ......................................................... 67
7. Phases of Data Collection .................................................................... 68
8. Terms to Describe Peer ....................................................................... 100
9. What Participants See When Observing a Peer’s Class ....................... 129
CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Study:
The Effects of Peer Observation Teaching (POT)
on Teachers and Teaching

Research Questions and Their Significance

What happens when teachers engage in peer observation of teaching? What effects, if any, does peer observation have on the observing teacher and the teaching community? This qualitative study examines the effects of peer observation of teaching (POT) on teachers’ perceptions of their own practice, their pedagogy, and the development of peer relationships in an independent day school. Schön’s (1987) theory of reflective practice and Cochran-Smith & Lytle’s (2001) theory of inquiry stance frame the analysis of the data collected because the teachers are reflecting on teacher practice—their own as well as that of the colleagues they observe. Although not engaging in practitioner inquiry, the data in this study illustrate how the ten teachers in this study are learning from POT and establishing guidelines for POT in their context. The data analysis of this study is situated in the research on peer observation and leadership, mentoring, collaboration, and professional development as a means to understand possible effects and outcomes of POT on the teachers, their practice, and their community. The findings indicate that the teachers examine the complexities of engaging in POT with their colleagues. The implications for future practice and research center around expanding the POT context to include vertical or 2nd-12th grade school settings and highlighting the scholarship that privileges teacher experiences with peer observation.
This study took place at a time of change for the study site; peer observation of teaching was not the norm of practice for two of three school divisions—lower, middle, and high schools. Observations, infrequent and irregular at best, had been for evaluation purposes, and conducted almost exclusively by the teacher’s immediate supervisor, the lower, middle, or high school Division Director. The Head of School described the start of POT at the school as a “culture change” (Researcher Journal, 11/3/11).

POT was part of a new academic initiative at the study site, the Lead Teacher/Academic Cabinet. It was presented as a first step in creating a more cohesive, coherent academic program for students. Through an analysis of how teachers interpreted and described their experiences of POT, this study sought to understand if POT leads to reflection—individual or collective—and that reflection leads to inquiry—of pedagogy, of curriculum. An examination of practice—individual or collective—was at the heart of a critical review of pedagogy and curriculum. Any changes or improvements in curriculum and pedagogy that stemmed from these acts of inquiry, of reflection and of peer observation, had the potential to be long lasting.

This study sought to explore the teachers’ experiences of POT at this unique moment in the school’s history. Was it a “culture change” implying a large-scale shift in the community? Or were the changes more local, situated in individual teacher practices? Were POT and any outcomes of a regular practice of POT viewed as favorable, of benefit to the community of teachers and students? The goal of this qualitative study was to understand how peer observation of teaching affected teachers or more specifically, how the teachers themselves interpreted the effects of peer observation. In this study, POT is
defined as when “a colleague visits another’s actual or virtual classroom to observe, and gives supportive feedback” (Lublin, 2002, p. 5). The guiding research questions are as follows:

- How do teachers interpret the experience of peer observation of teaching?
- In what ways does POT influence teachers within a school?
- What is the range of ways that POT affects how a teacher perceives his or her practice?
- In what ways does peer observation influence teacher pedagogy?
- How does peer observation influence teacher relationships?

**Background and Context**

The study site is a co-educational, day, independent, non-denominational school located in a city in the northeastern United States. The research site for this study was the 2nd through 12th grades building, housing 600 students and 150 teachers, full and part-time. The preschool and grades K and 1, housed in a different building a few blocks away, were referenced in some of the data and data analysis but were not the locus of the POT practice and discussion.

Founded in 1896, Sunny School provided what was considered a progressive educational program for its time because of its course offering related to women’s rights and social service reform. According to the school’s archival history:

---

1 An independent school is defined by the state association of independent schools as “chartered by the [state] Board of Regents, individually governed by elected boards of trustees, and privately financed by tuitions, fees, and contributions” (state association web site).
Despite the strong sense in that time that a ‘woman’s place is in the home’ and the fact that many girls were not expected to go on to college, an impressive number of [Sunny School’s] alumnae had professional careers, engaged in settlement work and participated in volunteer efforts (study site web site).

A professed progressive identity continues today through the school’s mission and a pride for their work is expressed in the web site tagline, “a leader in progressive education” (study site web site). The web site has a section for scholarship around progressive philosophy, pedagogy, and curriculum, which includes journal articles, links to videos, and blog posts (study site web site). The term progressive was found in archival material data and the study participants used the term when discussing POT. Knowledge of the ways the school and study participants used this term in the context of POT was explored in the process of data analysis to deepen the understanding of how teachers were interpreting their experiences of POT within this particular school context.

In this study, the operational definition of POT is informed by Lublin’s (2005) description of POT as follows: “a colleague visits another’s actual or virtual classroom to observe, and gives supportive feedback” (p. 5). In this study POT is the intentional act of entering a peer’s teaching area to observe the class. Unlike Lublin, “supportive feedback” is not a required component of POT in this study but will be explored as part of how some teachers make sense of observing a colleague’s class and talk about it afterwards, either with their colleagues and/or for the purposes of this research. In this study context, a broad range of the length of time the observer stayed in the peer’s area—15 minutes to a full period—was acceptable although most of the study participants remained observing
for more than half or the entire class period. The data findings indicated that time in a particular class did not appear to be a factor in the meaning of POT.

This topic is of particular interest to me professionally because I am interested in the practice of peer observation and keen to understand how teachers make meaning of their experiences observing colleagues. Simply stated, how do teachers describe their experiences of POT? What does POT mean for a teacher? And how is each teacher, if at all, affected? This study first examined teacher experiences. It then considered how the teacher experiences shed light on the range of ways that regular POT impacts a teaching community. Data collection occurred at a time shortly after POT was announced as an expected part of professional practice at the study site. The data and findings reflected teachers' thoughts and experiences during this particular period of change for the faculty.

The school-wide (2nd through 12th grades) practice of peer observation of teaching was part of a broader academic initiative that can be mapped out in three steps—drafting of *Three Core Principles of Progressive Education at Sunny School*, the appointing of Lead Teachers, and the formation of the Academic Cabinet. Three key components of this three-part initiative are peer observation of teaching, peer leadership, and collaborative faculty engagement in regular review of curriculum and pedagogy. One teacher from each academic department was appointed Lead Teacher and was charged with initiating the practice of peer observation within each department. The information learned from direct observation served as the foundation for conversations about program and teaching practice. Each part of the initiative will be discussed in detail in this chapter.
Review of academic program at the study site.

This new academic initiative was not the first school-wide attempt to review curriculum and pedagogy at Sunny School. In my eight years at the study site, there had been two individuals formally charged with oversight of the academic program. The Lead Teacher/Academic Cabinet initiative, the context for POT in this study, was a second incarnation over the past eight years of the shift from one person leading review of program and pedagogy to a team of people sharing leadership responsibilities. Although the Lead Teacher role was “not a management position with supervisor implications” (Archival Document, 5/14/10), one important component of this new initiative was the role of faculty. The key was that the “new structure is intended to decentralize academic review and decision-making, more formally engaging faculty to lead the process” (Archival Document, 5/14/10).

When I arrived at the school eight years ago, there was an Academic Dean. She also was the High School Director and because of the demands of that position, little attention was given to the Academic Dean responsibilities, specifically the review of the content and pedagogy of the academic program through the three divisions—lower, middle, and high schools. Although innovative elements were incorporated throughout the school—new classes, collaborative projects, a yearlong curriculum mapping exercise, etc.—there lacked a cohesive, coherent, vertical academic program. In other words, a student moving from grade two to grade twelve might experience gaps in USA or World

---

2 Vertical refers to any program that runs across the three school divisions.
History, repetition of topics in science, or difficulty transitioning between two math textbooks because the pedagogy or content between divisions varied greatly.

Four years ago, the High School Director was relieved of the Academic Dean responsibilities, and an Associate Head of School for Academic Affairs was appointed to do the work of academic review. The first attempt at a vertical study of the academic program called for occasional departmental meetings, led by a volunteer teacher called a Point Person and paid a small stipend. Formal support in the form of monthly planning meetings with the Associate Head was in place but review of curriculum and pedagogy was largely influenced by the members of each department, and thus not consistent across the subject-specific departments. Department meeting agendas varied greatly—discussion of new collaborative projects, reporting out of interesting student work, etc.—as did the climate of the conversations. Some groups chatted politely while others quickly became embroiled in hostile arguments. Little progress was made toward structuring or understanding the vertical academic experience of the students.

In the fall of 2010, a new initiative to review the vertical academic program was launched—the Lead Teacher/Academics initiative (LT/AC). A key component to this initiative was POT. POT was not a common practice among teachers in the Middle and High School divisions. The Lower School teachers, as the data will indicate, observed each other’s classes regularly. POT was part of their regular practice. Although the study site is a school without walls separating classrooms or the corridor from the classrooms, there was no regular practice of POT among teachers throughout the school. This study took place at a time when the school leadership was requiring teachers to observe
colleagues as part of their regular practice. The context for this study, therefore, was the second incarnation of the vertical review of the academic program. POT was an integral part of the vertical review for one main reason: The teachers were better able to engage in a meaningful discussion of curriculum and pedagogy once they spent time in each other's classes, seeing firsthand what was taught and how it was taught.

**The three core principles of progressive education.**

The first step in the implementation of a broad academic initiative to vertically review pedagogy and curriculum took place in the spring of 2010. A series of all-school faculty meetings were dedicated to the process of creating the school's *Three Core Principles of Progressive Education*. The principles state the main tenets of school’s progressive pedagogy and curriculum development. In brief, the Three Core Principles are meant as guidelines for teachers as they create an academic program that is student-centered, based on experiential learning, and focused on goals of social action. As a member of this teaching community for nine years, this is the first all-school message from the school administration indicating clear instructional expectations about curriculum and pedagogy.

The process of drafting the principles was as important as the product. A small group of volunteer teachers attended prep meetings to discuss and practice how to lead their peers through the various steps of the process. This group engaged in the selection

---

3 "At Sunny School we believe that ... 1. Teaching and learning begin with the needs, interests, questions and diverse life experiences of the individual student, who works to create a meaningful understanding of self, community and the world; 2. Students learn by doing—by constructing knowledge; by collaborating with administrators, faculty and staff in the real work of the school; and by engaging as citizens to promote social justice and democracy within the school and the world beyond it; 3. Teachers and students work together to create a dynamic learning community grounded in cycles of inquiry and action and focused on the processes and the products of learning and living" (study site web site)
of texts for all teachers to read, in learning a series of meeting protocols for leading small
group discussions, and in redacting drafts of the final document.

**A new vertical academic initiative: Lead teachers and the academic cabinet.**

The drafting of the *Three Core Principles* was followed by appointment of Lead Teachers in eight subject areas—math, science, physical education, world languages, English, Social Studies, and the visual and performing arts. (At the conclusion of the first year of this initiative, the Head of School decided to add a Lead Teacher by dividing the Performing Arts Lead Teacher position into two Lead Teacher positions: Instrumental Music and Chorus/Theater.) The curriculum and professional development work of the Lead Teachers was based on peer leadership. They were expected to “embody and advance Sunny School’s *Three Core Principles* as they worked with their departmental colleagues to create a more cohesive academic program for grades two through twelve” (Archival Document, 5/14/10).

The first and main task of each Lead Teacher was peer observation. A Lead Teacher would be better able to facilitate Vertical Meetings for their 2nd through 12th grade colleagues, to create appropriate meeting agendas, and make recommendations for creating a more cohesive academic experience for students after spending time observing the teachers teach. Each Lead Teacher was, in essence, becoming an in-house expert of his/her subject as it is taught at the school. With regards to the focus of this study, POT, there were two changes in the first year of the LT/AC. In the fall, Lead Teachers began to encourage all members of their departments to observe each other’s classes. Later in that

---

4 Vertical refers to cross-divisional meetings, in this case, with 2nd through 12th grade teachers.
first year, the Academic Cabinet e-mailed all teachers requesting, "that each teacher visit at least one colleague's class within the department before the May Vertical Meetings" (Archival Document, 5/22/10). The LT/AC introduced POT as for everyone at the school. This study took place at a time when POT was first a requirement for Lead Teachers, and then became an expectation for teachers.

The Academic Cabinet was comprised of the eight Lead Teachers, four Division Directors, Director of Diversity, and Director of Library Resources. The Head of School described the Cabinet's purpose as "the recommending body for assessment practices, changes to curriculum, and related academic matters" (Archival Document, 5/14/10). The meeting agendas centered on the discussion of Vertical Meetings and ideas to promote and support the work of the Lead Teachers, that of vertical review of pedagogy, and curriculum.

Two examples of the Academic Cabinet support of Lead Teacher work were related to POT. As noted above, in the spring of the first year of the LT/AC, teachers received a request to observe a colleague's class. At the start of the second year of the LT/AC, the Academic Cabinet and the Head of School issued a statement expecting faculty to include peer observations as part of their regular practice.

At the core of the LT/AC initiative was teachers working with teachers. Teachers' observing each other's classes was the first step—a concrete, simple step—in reviewing curriculum and pedagogy—a far more nebulous, complicated process. With the LT/AC initiative, the academic review shifted from the one-person-administrator-in-charge to peers leading peers. It shifted from the act of deciding Vertical Meeting agendas apart
from practice to a process of creating agendas grounded in the observation and experiences of their actual departmental practice.

**A school without walls.**

The study site is a school without walls. In the Lower and Middle Schools, bookshelves of varying heights separate teaching areas or spaces\(^5\). The High School has sliding doors, often left open, between classroom areas. There is no separate corridor for passing between teaching areas. (And no bells to indicate start or end of class periods.) Adults and students pass through areas as they move from class to class. The building was designed for an “open-space, learning-centered program for pre-school through twelfth grade” (study site web site). Simply stated, the open classroom space was to facilitate dialogue across the curriculum.

Without walls, a teacher could conceivably observe a number of classes by simply walking around the floor. Indeed, this is what has happened in the Lower School. Observation for the purposes of this study was focused on what the peer teacher sees and notices while observing the class (Gosling, 2002), not what was picked up in, literally, passing. The act of observation was intentional, whether pre-arranged or not. POT had not been the regular practice for the Middle or High schools. As I observed and was revealed in interviews as part of a study of the Lower School math teachers that I conducted two years ago, Lower School teachers were more in the habit of peer observation, within and across departments and grade levels. Some teachers did venture to observe in the Middle and Lower Schools but observation had mostly happened within

\(^5\) *Area or space is the term used, instead of classroom, to refer to a teaching location.*
their same division. Lower School teachers also volunteered frequently in each other’s classes for various reasons. They helped a colleague with classroom management, monitored the behavior and performance of specific students, or helped lead a lesson in small groups.

Although the school communicated to teachers via email a statement about the goals of the two academic initiatives and although the school architecture allowed for easy access to classrooms, there was a lack of guidance for initiating or engaging in a regular practice of POT—the singular activity at the heart of the two initiatives. There was no description of protocols or structure or specific outcomes. At best, POT was loosely conceptualized by its own terms—peer, observation, and teaching. My role as an insider at the study site positioned me to see the lack of guidelines to engage in the new practice of POT. As a practitioner researcher, engaging in POT in my role as Lead Teacher, I was acutely aware of the lack of guidance for beginning a practice of POT with colleagues. This lack of information had an impact on the teachers’ interpretations of POT and will be discussed in the findings section of Chapter 4.

**Professional Interest and Motivations**

I am personally connected to the topic of POT because I see the possibilities for mentoring relationships that stem from the peer observation and, more important to me, the post-observation conversations. I have been most fortunate in my 25+ year career as an educator to benefit from the wisdom of mentors. My most valuable experiences of mentoring are working relationships that evolved from professional conversations about pedagogy and curriculum into personal friendships. Watching someone that I respect and
admire teach and then talking about practice—theirs and mine—has helped me become the educator that I am today. Furthermore, I believe that I continue to grow as an educator because observation, reflection and conversation are essential parts of my practice.

For many years, my model of a mentor was an older, more experienced person (usually with gray hair, wrinkles, and a lot of stories). My family culture places a high value on the wisdom of elders—both male and female—and I was raised in a family filled with wrinkles, long gray hair, and even longer wise tales. Stories were shared over meals or pinochle games. The thematic line that ran through the stories was a theme of people with people—friends helping friends, family supporting family. The idea of being connected to those around you—in work, in family, in neighborhood—was key. As a child, I was not often involved in the stories or storytelling, but my own parents were clear to bring the values of family and community into our nuclear family.

Although all the first and second-generation relatives advocated education as the path to success and the fulfillment of the American dream, not one family member was an educator in the formal role of teacher. I am the first teacher in a long line of mariners, seamen, and engineers—each having been trained as the “sea legs” of their father or other experienced elder, on land or shipboard. I was heading off to college alone, without any connections to family or community.

In college, I encountered my first teaching career mentor after declaring my major. She was integral in my growth as an educator—from graduate teaching assistant to classroom teacher. Later in my career, I believe that my teaching benefitted from visitors in my classes. Even as a new teacher, supervisors conducting an observation evaluation
were not intimidating because it meant someone was in the classroom to give me feedback. As the years passed, my teaching was infrequently evaluated and my classroom was visited even less. To fill my desire for mentor relationships, I would sit in the faculty lounge and take tea with the older teachers. (At one point in time, I had a regular tea group with teachers of ages very close to or already past retirement.)

Mentoring and observation were important to me because although I was confident about my content knowledge, I did not have a teaching philosophy to guide my practice. Like many independent schoolteachers, I did not have an education degree and little background in pedagogy. As a new teacher, I felt as if I were making it up as I went along. Positive teaching evaluations did little to further my development as a teacher. (I often wondered whether the fact that my evaluators were not fluent in my content area was the reason they did not provide much critical feedback.) When I met with other teachers and observed other classes, I learned about classroom management, scope and sequence, pacing, multimodality teaching, teaching students with backgrounds different from my own, etc. I learned the nuts and bolts—how to save lesson plans digitally and to keep an ongoing portfolio of examples of student work. The catalyst for my participation in professional conferences as a presenter was the professional conversations that occurred after a peer observed my class; a teacher conference, I surmised, would be the best opportunity for educational discourse about practice.

The switch to the current school, the study site, was absolutely wonderful. There were no walls! I could watch other teachers and they could easily watch me. Unfortunately, the latter hardly happened. I was thrilled when the school decided to
incorporate peer observation into the academic initiative because I believed that peer observation and the conversations that it fostered would create a fertile ground for relationship building and, more importantly, for mentoring through these relationships.

I am interested in POT because I view peer observation of teaching, the direct sharing of teaching practice, as a first step in the transformation of a teaching environment, from one of teachers working in isolation from one another to one in which teachers work together. I know this from my own experiences and I am a better educator for these experiences. I believe that “observing and being observed, giving and getting feedback about one’s work in the classroom, may be among the most powerful tools for instructional improvement and professional recognition” (Little & Bird, 1987, p. 122). In observing, reflecting about and questioning each other’s practices, the teachers and their knowledge of practice are at the center of their professional development (Lieberman & Miller, 2001). Ultimately, the teachers are co-creating “a scholarly tradition of their own” that can support their and future teachers’ practice and growth (Lieberman, 2009, p. 1879).

**Negotiation of Roles as a Practitioner Researcher**

For this study, I was a practitioner researcher with insider status at the study site. I was practitioner researcher at Sunny School because as one of the appointed Lead Teachers, I regularly observed my departmental colleagues teach. I also was an insider at the study site because of my more than five-year tenure at the school prior to the start of this research. My tenure and my participation in POT presented me with both advantages  

---

6 I, like all but one Lead Teacher participating in this study, share experiences of POT from the perspective of observing teacher not observed teacher.
and challenges as a practitioner researcher that I will address in this section and again in
Chapter 3.

In my role as insider, I am in a unique position at the school, one of three teachers
considered full-time administrators because we each supervised school-wide (3 year old
through 12th grade) programs. I was hired at the school nine years ago to establish a
specific school-community program. The broad purpose for this program, as introduced
to the community, was “to challenge the school community to reflect on our practice of
progressive education and to create an even more porous relationship between Sunny
School and the wider world” (study site web site). I report to the Head of School, my
direct supervisor, regularly about current projects.

My work process as administrator is collaborative. I work with teachers, students,
fellow administrators, and parents in order to integrate this initiative into as many
existing programs as possible. Because the school-community program is a preschool
through 12th-grade program, I work in all divisions. To support my work for integration
in a variety of school programs, my teaching duties vary from year to year. In my
opinion, my unique role of teacher-administrator is wonderful because it allows me to
work with teachers and students across the three school divisions, problem-solving or co-
creating innovative curricular and extra-curricular programs.

Shortly before the start of my research, I was appointed Lead Teacher for World
Languages and Chairperson of the Academic Cabinet. The official school announcement
about Lead Teachers included an explicit statement about the Lead Teacher as peer
without any supervisory authority. But the description also stated that teachers were
chosen for their expertise as master teachers and active participation in the research community of their subject area (Archival Document, 5/14/10). Lead teacher as peer teacher was not as simple as that. World Language Teachers asked me about ideas for classroom management, for field trips, for advice working with a difficult colleague, for textbook selection, etc. In my mind, they were looking to me for leadership. Similarly, I believed that the group of Lead Teachers was also looking to me for leadership when they consulted me for advice or as a sounding board for their ideas. For this reason, I arranged monthly Lead Teacher drop-in meetings to support their work. Although I am not the teacher with the most years of teaching experience, the Lead Teachers and senior level administrators looked to me for leadership when setting the discussion agendas for the Academic Cabinet meetings. In my three roles at the school, teachers and administrators looked to me more as a leader and less as a peer.

What had been an exciting role for me—a teacher-administrator—had sometimes been a confusing role for my teacher colleagues, and it was important to acknowledge this possible confusion in the context of POT. Was I a peer? Over the course of my tenure at the school, I taught in all three divisions—lower, middle, and high schools—and in two departments—World Languages and Civics. As a teacher, I had the same duties and responsibilities of all teachers at the school—planning a class, assessing student work, communicating appropriately with the child’s advisor and/or parents, etc.

Was I a supervisor? I was an administrator for the school-community initiative but I did not have a team of colleagues whose school-community work I supervised. But my work at the school had not been limited to this role. My first year at the school, I was
asked to lead the revision of the Middle School World Languages program, and to work with the other teachers in the department to revise their teaching practices in alignment with the program revisions. I am often asked to participate in a variety of administrative tasks across the three school divisions, including hiring and curriculum review, mentoring of new faculty, as well as assisting struggling teachers in a number of departments and divisions. Because my working style is collaborative, I conduct this work in as transparent a manner as possible, seeking input from colleagues and sharing my ideas as the work progresses.

I see myself as a teacher first, administrator second. Others, it was quite possible, saw me as administrator, then teacher. My positionality in the school—lead teacher, administrator, and peer—had a potential impact on my role as practitioner researcher in this community, and thus, on this study. My experiences observing colleagues teach at the study site afforded me a particular understanding of what the ten study participants were describing as they talked and wrote about their specific POT experiences. My prior knowledge of school terms, events, and issues facilitated my analysis. My relationships with teachers—and their knowledge of my work and of me—may have encouraged participation in the study because teachers were comfortable talking with me.

In response to my own ever-increasing interest in the topic of peer observation of teaching, I was studying how teachers interpreted the experience of POT. Some teachers were new to the practice of peer observation, others had experience observing their peers but not at the study site. This study was aided by the fact that peer observation of teaching became a required activity for teachers at the school; first, for the group of
newly appointed Lead Teachers (a role akin to the role of a department chair but without any official supervisory relationship to their colleagues) and over the course of the research, a required activity for all teachers at the school. The study began with an anonymous survey of the general attitudes about POT at the school. There were 56 teachers at the school, plus approximately five teacher-administrators. The distribution of the survey also provided the opportunity to inform the faculty of my study and to invite teachers to volunteer to participate in the research. Of the 56 teachers (plus teacher-administrator employees), 10 teachers volunteered to be participants, agreeing to one interview and at least one reflective journal entry after one or a series of peer observations. Over a period of approximately six months, I collected data in multiple forms: interviews, reflective journals, my researcher journal, memos, e-mails, and other archival information about POT at the school.

**Conceptual Framework**

Peer observation of teaching was one of the specific duties for Lead Teachers (Appendix A), and as such, POT was the starting point for the Lead Teacher’s responsibility of directing his or her peers through subject-specific review of curriculum and pedagogy for two main reasons. One, the Lead Teachers would be well served familiarizing themselves with the actual course content and methodology of the academic program before making any suggestions for changes to either. The second, and perhaps more important reason was that POT required being in another teacher’s classrooms, and this facilitated getting to know each other, another LT responsibility. Getting to know colleagues was both process and product of POT. Whether or not familiarity among
conversations fostered POT, or vice versa, depended on how each teacher understood their experiences observing their peers.

Conversations that occurred at the study site in the context of POT for all teachers—either before or after an observation—centered on teachers’ talking about their practice and course content. Because this study examined the teacher reflection of practice, the conceptual framework for this study draws on theories of reflective practice and collective inquiry. The effects of peer observation of teaching were framed by my understanding of the theory of inquiry as stance. The analysis of the findings (Chapter 4) and discussion of implications for future practice (Chapter 5) is through the lens of inquiry as stance because I see the teachers collectively examining their choices about pedagogy and curriculum in conjunction with scholarship of teaching methods and course content.

This inquiry into teacher’s experiences of POT is mine alone as researcher. The teachers were not engaged in an inquiry of their practice of POT, and were not exposed to the theory of inquiry as stance as part of the methodology of this study. Keeping in mind that the study site was an independent school and that most decisions about course content and pedagogy are often left to the individual teacher’s discretion, I wondered throughout my analysis if, when teachers thought about their decisions about content and practice, did their own personal philosophy and motivations inform their decisions? Or did they see their decisions in relation to their peer’s practice and curriculum? Or were they thinking about the practice and curriculum of peers beyond school or in the research
from higher education? What was privileged in their decision-making about content and pedagogy after observing a peer teach?

Discussing what he considers an increased emphasis on reflective practice since the publication of his *Schoolteacher* in 1975, Lortie (2002) comments, “introspection works most effectively when associated with interaction and among peers who can also personify different types of teaching and provide examples of alternative practices” (p. viii). Reflective practice is described by Schön (1987) as “a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become […] more skillful” (p. 31). Thinking about one’s practice and engaging in conversation with peers doing the same has the potential for greater impact on each teacher’s practice. POT, as seen in this study, is a catalyst for the teacher-to-teacher conversations about practices and curriculum. What teachers take away from observations and conversations has an impact on their choices.

Lortie’s and Schön’s work framed the proposed outcomes of peer observation of teacher: reflection, impact on teacher practice, curriculum, and relationships. This study sought to understand what teachers engaging in POT considered outcomes of their POT experiences. Did a teacher inspired by POT to reflect on his own practice interpret changes as part of the meaning of POT? Were any impacts on practice and teacher relationships, associated to POT by a particular teacher, considered part of the meaning that teacher constructs of his POT experiences? Did the teacher assign any particular value to POT if he viewed as valuable any resulting changes to his or her practice?

When teachers observed each other teaching, as in this study, Lortie’s and Schön’s ideas come together in a type of double reflection; the observing teacher
reflected on his or her colleagues’ practice and his or her own practice. Furthermore, the observed teacher may become more keenly aware of his or her own knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1987) as a result of the other teacher’s presence. The observing teacher may be engaging in a dual reflection: thinking about what he or she is observing and how this relates to his or her own practice. The conversations and/or actions between the two teachers post-observation can provide opportunities for further examination and understanding of each other’s practice. A new language of shared practice may nurture the resulting collaborative relationship (Little & Bird, 1987).

The Lead Teacher duty of “staying current in the field” mandated that the subject-specific review of curriculum and pedagogy expand their focus beyond what this particular group of teachers was doing in their respective classrooms (Appendix A). Recent scholarship around issues of curriculum and pedagogy must be part of the Lead Teachers’ review. Reflecting on one’s knowledge and practice and examining the knowledge and theory from outside the immediate school setting transforms a teacher’s knowledge-in-action into knowledge-of-practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). The theory of inquiry stance framed this research because of the two main duties of Lead Teachers—peer observation and review of the current scholarship. Teachers were privileging both classroom experiences and scholarly research. In this study, POT created the opportunity for an individual teacher’s concept of classroom experience to broaden to include both that of the individual teacher’s practice and the practice of peer teacher she observed.
I believe that underlying the laundry list of Lead Teacher duties, and therefore the Lead Teacher/Academic Cabinet initiative, was an example of how to implement the concept of professional development based on teachers' developing an inquiry stance of teaching. At the research site, there was now a peer-led formal structure through which teachers placed their practitioner knowledge alongside the scholarship by outside researchers in order to reflect on, and subsequently, develop their practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). In Vertical Meetings, teachers would move beyond “reporting out” about how (pedagogy) and what (curriculum) they do in their classes to engage in conversations about the why and to what end of these pedagogical and curricular choices. The potential for the discussion of is what we planned for actually what students experience is on the horizon—and this inquiry may well be the catalyst for further inquiry motivating more POT and so on. This study has the potential to reveal an inquiry stance developing in expanding circles—from a pair of teachers within a department, to all the teachers within the department, or to other teacher groups within the school. Peer-facilitated teacher meetings can become the place where knowledge-in-practice intersects with knowledge-for-practice.

With this new academic initiative, this study site was creating a means to expand teacher agency from within his or her classroom to the school-wide practices, in the process, redesigning the decision-making process at the school. Assuming an inquiry stance through peer-led conversations, teachers could engage in “earning, evolving, and holding the vision for the 2nd -12th grade curriculum” (Archival Document, 4/7/10). In the future, this responsibility may well expand to all members of the department, not just the
Lead Teacher. This study examined the first step of this new venture, peer observation of teaching.

Organization of the Study

This research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the study of the effects of POT on teachers and included the research questions and their significance, the background and context of the study, my professional interest and motivations, negotiation of roles as a practitioner researcher, the conceptual framework, and the organization of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature associated with this study. It includes research in the areas of teacher observation, peer observation of teaching, teacher relationships, teacher leadership, mentoring, collaborative mentoring, collaborative teaching practices, teacher learning, and new visions for mentoring and professional development.

Chapter 3 discusses in detail the research design and methodology of the study. The chapter includes the rationale for a qualitative study, methods of data collection, participant selection and data analysis, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions, and the role of the researcher focusing in more detail on my positionality at the study site.

Chapter 4 consists of the findings of the study and includes a brief review of the data sample, and the four findings of the study. The first finding focused on how teachers problematize and operationalize the peer in POT, incorporating various types of positionality within the study site. The second finding analyzes the "shopping" that occurred while a teacher was observing a colleague and the lack of transformational
change as a result of POT. The third finding considers how individual acts of POT were organized into personalized professional development plans for each individual teacher. The fourth finding examines the metaphors individual teachers invoked to describe the totality of aspects of their experiences with POT.

The final chapter presents a summary of the study and discussion of the implications for future practice at the study site and for future research. The chapter includes recommendations for professional development opportunities around issues of peer relationships, teacher leadership, and teacher learning in the context of POT. Future research into POT and the related topics of peer relationships, teacher leadership, and teacher learning in the 2nd through 12th grade independent school context has the potential to further the understanding of the effects of POT across the teachers in one teaching community and create an opportunity for practitioner inquiry into POT.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This study focuses on how teachers in a particular school context interpret the experience of peer observation of teaching as seen through the conceptual framework of Schönb’s (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner and Cochran-Smith & Lytle’s (2001) theory of inquiry as stance. What teachers learn from reflections, observations, and conversations that stem from POT has an impact on their teaching choices (Lortie, 2002). POT is a possible catalyst for teacher-to-teacher connections about practice.

The purpose of this literature review is to position the way teachers interpret their POT experiences within three main research topics—teacher observation, teacher relationships, and teacher learning. These three areas of research explore possible outcomes of POT for teachers. Teacher learning is at the heart of my study—what teachers learn about their colleagues, about practice and, potentially, about themselves. Teacher learning could be a direct and indirect outcome of POT. Teachers can learn from watching their peers (direct) or can learn from the relationship that developed as a result of POT (indirect).

The topic of teacher observation explores the act of peer observation. The research studying teacher relationships reviews scholarship about teacher leadership, mentoring, collaborative (co-) mentoring, and collaborative teaching practices. The third section of this literature review explores teacher learning. The final section of this
literature review discusses new visions for mentoring and professional development, an area of research mentioned in prior sections of this chapter. The scholarship in these four areas will provide a context for analysis of the teachers' experiences and interpretations of the effects of peer observation on their practice and their relationships.

The research for this dissertation is related to the study of school efforts to engage more teachers—beyond the appointed department chair—in leading professional development and creating their own professional environments. The role of a teacher is expanding beyond his or her classroom. Peers are stepping into the role of classroom observer, a role that is often reserved for department chairs or evaluating supervisors. The role of the teacher in developing collaborative learning communities inspires and informs this research (Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckingham, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; McLaughlin, Talbert, & Bascia, 1990). Teachers are exercising more agency in creating teaching environments within their schools—participating in peer mentoring, leading teacher and department chair positions, etc. The specific focus of my research questions—interpretations and effects of POT—connects to this research because it focuses on various new roles for teachers at the study site—the specific roles connected to how a teacher makes meaning of his or her experience observing their peers teach. For this study, the teacher can assume many roles—observer, leader, mentor, mentee, collaborator—or any combination of roles. This study seeks to add to the body of literature dedicated to understanding the roles teachers see themselves assuming within a community and the research of peer observation of teaching by examining how teachers interpret the effects of peer observation on their
practice and relationships within the context of a 2nd through 12th grade independent school.

Teacher Observation

Peer observation of teaching (POT).

Observation is used as a means of professional development and evaluation in a variety of settings, including the fields of medicine, business, and education (Copland, 2010; MacKinnon, 2001; Pololi, Knight, Dennnis, & Frankel, 2002; Zellers, Howard & Barcic, 2008). Regular observations and post-observation feedback are part of both a method of professional training and a process for evaluation of teachers, doctors, etc. At least one practice and the associated term for structured observational practice and feedback has been borrowed from the medical field and developed for implementation in educational settings. Rounding, or instructional rounds, seeks to replicate the cycle of observation and feedback among teachers, emphasizing the role of teachers in the process (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). POT is at the core of instructional rounding and the various professional development decisions that stem from the conversations and feedback rounding engenders. Teacher reflections of one's own practice and that of his or her peer's practice is at the center of the discussions. This study delved into the reflections post POT when there was a less-structured form in place—teachers were not placed in teams of observers but rather, chose to engage in POT because they saw the value of doing so. What values teachers attribute to POT become part of how teachers make meaning of POT.
Collective reflection, teachers sharing their thoughts after observing peers teach, is an essential part of conversations associated to POT, either before or after observations. Giving a colleague feedback—positive or critical—could be part of the conversation. MacKinnon (2001) and Copland (2010) have studied the tension that arises during feedback sessions. Both of these researchers point out the conflicting dual purposes of observation in the educational setting; the observer typically acts as both developer and assessor. Copland (2010) sees the source of tension stemming from the difference in expectations of feedback in the part of the mentor and the novice teacher. Of note in his research is the discussion of how to reduce the tension in group feedback sessions, pointing out that novices need to understand why and how to give and receive feedback among their peers. MacKinnon (2001) provides a structure for the observer and the novice teacher to work together in debriefing the observation process—pre and post. Bell (2001) studies the practice of a “supportive triad,” in which observation and feedback are shared by the teacher, a colleague he selects, and an education developer. The feedback that MacKinnon and Copland and Bell discuss occurs within a particular structure and protocol of POT. This study explored the situation of teachers not being assigned any particular “supportive” grouping or feedback process. How and why (or why not) teachers provide feedback to peers was part of the discussion of this study and will add to the research about teacher feedback, specifically looking at the situation in which teachers have almost total control over feedback decisions post POT.

Much research about POT focuses on programs at post-secondary school institutions. Teachers are observed by a single peer or form an observation group. The
shift from observation only by a supervisor following a particular protocol to a more broad approach of observation, incorporating peer teachers is prevalent. The impacts of observations are noted in practice, on collegial relationships, and can even identity development. Although structures and procedures of these programs may vary (Bell, 2001; Copland, 2010; MacKinnon, 2001; Peel, 2005), they share a common goal: developing good practice (Donnelly, 2007). This study seeks to broaden the data and research of POT to include 2nd-12th grade school settings.

The examples of POT in higher education above look at the practice of observation between novice teacher and experienced teacher as part of teacher training. Observation is at the heart of the process but the idea of peer is debatable, or at least, confusing. This study seeks to add to the scholarship of reciprocal peer observation in which the novice teacher is observing experienced teachers or two experienced teachers are observing each other. A new teacher required to participate in a university training program, Peel (2005) examined her own process of identity development through POT. The process of understanding the experience in the training program, her practitioner action research, resulted in her concluding that peer observation of teaching contributed to her constructing meaning of her teaching practice as well as that of her colleagues, but observation alone does not influence teacher practice. It is the “continuous process of transforming and constructing personal meaning” (p. 494) that contributes most to teacher development. This study seeks to explore teacher development—personal or professional—as a possible result of teachers reflecting on their POT experiences. This act of reflection in which the teachers in this study engage has the potential to be the
same for constructing personal meaning as Peel proposes. Peel’s experience with POT expands a period of time; the teachers in this study are discussing their POT experiences within the context of two fairly new academic initiatives. Entering the second year, although teachers may not have the time to arrive at a reflective moment that reveals a connection between observation and identity development, this scholarship helps to consider the possible outcomes—current or future—for the teachers at the study site.

Observation is also a key component of professional development programs that are created over a period of time by and for the teachers in a specific school context; its development is more organic, coming from within rather than from a workshop presented by an outside consultant. Observation is part of a set of tools used to examine student performance, one’s own practice, and that of colleagues’. Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) recognize this part of the new paradigm of professional learning communities. The local impact POT has on practice, teacher relationships and the student academic experience, is the focus of this study. Recreating a school’s professional development program is a logical outcome on a broader scale, that of department or school.

Little’s research (1990) helps to further the actual dialogue among colleagues, from storytelling, offering advice or sharing ideas, to one of “joint work” in which together teachers examine their teaching practices and student outcomes (p. 512). The possibilities for joint work are varied—peers acting as consultants to strategize about particular problems, classroom curriculum collaborations, etc. A POT practice that is
directed by the teachers involved, such as in this study, opens up a broad range of outcomes depending on what the peers see as valid or possible.

The effects of POT as part of professional development programs have been studied in the higher education setting (Donnelly, 2007; Weller, 2009). Both Donnelly and Weller examine the learning process for teachers as a result of engaging in POT over a period of time. Weller (2009) problematizes the term peer, positing that how a teacher defines the term peer influences the outcomes of peer observation. Her research talks about the need for peers to have different perspectives with regards to teaching practices in order to see any positive change in practice. Donnelly (2007) focuses on the climate of POT, concluding that the key to POT success of an environment that “is approving of dialogue, encouraging of open debate, and supportive of risk-taking in teaching” (p. 117). Donnelly’s focus connects to Lortie’s (2002) comments about effective introspection. This study seeks to add to the scholarship of teachers reflecting on their own practice and engaging in transformational conversations with colleagues as a result of, or at least, after POT.

Weller (2009) and Donnelly (2007) draw on the models of POT developed by Gosling (2002). Gosling problematizes each term of POT—peer, observation, and teaching—in order to understand why certain POT models succeed and why others fail. The “peer review model” is that which most approximated the POT in this study; it is characterized by a lack of supervisory evaluation, and invites participation by all staff, with dual purpose of “engagement and discussion about teaching and self and mutual reflection” (p. 5). This model of POT does not guarantee anything—reflection or change
in teaching practices, etc. Gosling points out complacency as one reason for the lack of any effect of POT on teachers or teaching. Gosling’s context is required POT. The possibility for a lack of will to change is quite possible in any instance of teacher professional development, POT included. This complacency would be evident in how a teacher interprets his or her experience observing a colleague. If the teacher does not see POT as worth the effort, it is quite logical that the teacher’s practices will not be affected.

An example of POT as a practice for k-12 schools is Lesson Study, popular in Japan. An approach that combines curriculum and teacher professional development in one program has teams of teachers observe a particular lesson as each member of the team teaches it. Changes to the lesson—either the curriculum or the pedagogy—happen over the series of observations and post-observation discussions. Classes are often videotaped for extended analysis. This approach to school reform entrusts teachers with the “primary responsibility for the improvement of classroom practice,” and is a subject of growing scholarship (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 110). Lesson Study provides another version of POT to consider alongside this study. This study places peer collaboration and post-observation discussion to improve (change) curriculum at the center of the teaching practice. In the context of Lesson Study, POT is a community practice whose value is based on its role in curriculum and pedagogical development, not based on individual teacher interpretation. This study seeks to understand if teachers, acting as individual observers, would arrive at a similar conclusion about the value of POT.

The body of research of teacher observation reveals various protocols and outcomes that have not been conceptualized at the study site. (At the latter, there is a lack
of specific guidance of how to structure POT with a colleague and lack of explicit outcomes.) The data analysis of this study benefits from the background knowledge of such protocols and results as a means to understand what is present and what could be added to the practice of POT at the study site.

Teacher Relationships

Research around teacher working relationships provides context for this study because POT requires teachers to work together. The type of relationship that exists between the teachers affects whom a teacher decides to observe and how that observation is arranged and any interactions post-POT. This study seeks to add to the research of relationships in the context of POT.

Lortie (2002) points out the “collegial norms” that exist among Five Towns teachers, and how these “encourage both individualism and sharing of technical knowledge” (p. 195). For Five Towns teachers, the degree to which a teacher collaborates or cooperates with another teacher is voluntary and often predicated on whether or not the teachers are friends. Although talking about or sharing specifics of practice is voluntary, Lortie points out that the social norm of being a “good colleague” (p. 194) requires that teachers respond to a colleague’s request for help without pushing any particular opinions onto that person; the invitation to help is not an invitation for dialogue about practice or philosophy. When do teachers influence each other’s practice? What is missing from Lortie’s work is a study of teachers in each other’s classes to see the teaching, not just offer a helping hand. How does the presence in the classroom impact the relationship and/or teaching and vice versa?
Hoerr (1996) offers a practical perspective of building teachers’ learning and leading capacities and of creating teaching collaborative learning communities. He proposes that it is all too much work for one person to accomplish. His advice that teachers would do well to see themselves as part of a hockey team and not figure skaters is an apt metaphor for collaborative teacher relationships.

Beattie’s (2002) focus on the leadership of a high school draws attention to the hierarchical nature of mentor relationships; the mentor is the experienced educational leader. But Beattie’s argument is that leaders need to “create structures and frameworks for collaborative meaning-making and shared vision-building” (p. 219). This idea of structures that support collaboration lends itself to the discussion of environments that enable teacher relationships.

What happens between teachers may not be completely dictated by the daily schedule or other organizational structures. Bruckerhoff’s (1991) study of teacher collegiality examines the informal activities in a school and how these can affect teacher relationships. The analysis of how teachers organize themselves socially contributes to the understanding of how much teacher relationships are a factor in POT. This study seeks to add to the scholarship of teacher relationships exploring the impact of POT on them and whether or not teachers see meaning and value in the practice of POT in terms of what POT does for their collegial connections.

Collaborative relationships may imply an easy process. But how is the collaborative relationship affected by disagreements? Achinstein (2002) argues in favor of welcoming conflict as an entry point for double loop learning, for an opportunity to
look at the operational norms (Argyris & Schön, 1978). A change in a teacher’s practice brought about by an examination of the issues of practice by teachers could result from a conflict of ideas. Teachers engaging in dialogue to understand their teaching differences could well result in changes in the practice of one or both teachers involved. This dissertation examined whether the teacher relationships that result from or encourage classroom observations create a trusting collaborative “collegial norm” that influences changes in teacher practices.

Teacher relationships are an integral part of understanding POT in this study. This study seeks to analyze and understand how relationships are a part of POT, specifically how they are associated with a teacher’s reflection of practice. The parameters for being a good colleague may be broadened in such a way that good colleagues are expected to share opinions of practice and, in essence, supporting each other’s growth and development in the process.

**Teacher leadership.**

Teacher relationships in a community are varied. Although all teachers can be considered peers if no one teacher has a supervisory role in relation to another and does not evaluate his or her colleague’s teaching or classroom in any official capacity, relationships may not be considered peer-to-peer. Within subject-specific academic departments there may be veteran and new teachers. There may be formal or informal mentor-teacher connections, and there may be a department chair with certain leadership duties. The research around academic departments, specifically that which pertains to the
structure, teacher relationships, and collaborative practices offers another perspective for understanding the environment for peer observation.

Research shows that the effects of mentoring as a collaborative approach to school reform are mitigated by the specific teaching and learning environments (Beattie, 2002; Blase & Blase, 2006; Chappuis, Chappuis, & Stiggins, 2009; Little, 1990; Zellers, Howard, & Barcic, 2008). Support from supervisors (principals, division heads, etc.) is essential in terms of creating specific teacher teams or groupings that provide mutual support to its members, and in terms of maintaining an environment where teacher learning is the norm. Mentor teachers and school leaders that support both the processes and hoped-for outcomes of POT are essential.

The myriad roles of the department chair in secondary and post-secondary school settings have been the subject of much research, starting perhaps with the Koch’s (1930) list of job duties learned from a survey of department chairs. Research through the decades has revealed that department chairs assume the role of instructional leaders (Anderson, 1987), of supervisors (Hipps, 1965), of strategic planners (Ramaswami, 2005), of professional developers (Tirozzi, 2001), and of overall managers (Verchota, 1971). Some of these modern duties were present in Koch’s 1930 list.

In light of the growing list of departmental leadership responsibilities, there has been an increased focus on the ability of the department chair to build the leadership capacities of teachers (Bezzina, 2006; Bowman, 2002; Siskin, 1997). Bowman (2002) sees the powerful role of the department chair as managing conversation so that teachers are engaging in an exchange of ideas and in investigation of new possibilities. Promoting
and maintaining professional learning communities decentralizes leadership and supports teacher collaboration, in essence distributing instructional leadership among departmental peers. To this idea of sharing leadership, Siskin (1997) now considers any ideas for reform as a shared and co-created vision among teachers.

This dissertation moves beyond the department chair of the aforementioned studies to a new role for teachers, that of lead teacher. The lead teacher is not a department chair; the role is differentiated by its focus on instructional leadership, leaving aside the administrative minutiae tasks in favor of a new leadership role either connected to a specific department or the wider-school context (Feiler, Heritage, & Gallimore, 2000; Hart, 1994). Clearly, the research is not referring to teachers taking turns facilitating the monthly department meeting, but rather sustained opportunities to grow as a leader among colleagues. Creating a clearly defined structure and purpose for this new teacher leader role (for example, to focus on student learning) requires commitment and ongoing support from the school leadership. Teachers developing peer leadership skills, teachers understanding and welcoming peer leaders, and schools that support teachers’ professional growth and development are all processes that require time. The consistent practice of POT and teachers regularly talking about what they are seeing in each other’s classes provides a structure for peer-to-peer leadership over time.

Harrison and Killion’s work (2007) lists 10 roles for teacher leaders, including resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist data coach, and mentor.

---

1 The terms lead teacher and teacher leader are used interchangeably in this proposal, following what appears to be the practice of the literature reviewed thus far of not distinguishing between the two phrases. Throughout this proposal Lead Teacher is used to refer to teachers in the appointed role at the site school.
One byproduct of the sum of these individual roles is the lead teacher’s ability to “build the entire school’s capacity to improve” (p. 74). Feiler et al.’s (2000) research of a UCLA lab school describes the particulars of a lead teacher program. Their advice for creating and maintaining a successful lead teacher program is to recognize that developing teacher leaders is a “continual process of experimentation and fine-tuning” (p. 69) that requires support from school leadership, and must be focused on improving student learning.

Feiler et al.’s (2009) recommendation that lead teachers use the majority of their release time from their own classes with their colleagues or in their colleagues’ classes with the goal of developing “a first-hand, school wide view of their curriculum area” (p. 68) mirrors one of the main goals and tasks of POT at the study site. How does this “school wide view,” gleaned from peer observation by lead teachers, impact the teaching community? Would peer observation, and the possible outcome of collaborative teacher relationships, be an example of “leading from the classroom”? (Lytle, Portnoy, Waff, & Buckley, 2009, p. 34).

Lieberman (1986; 1988) and Lieberman and Friedrich (2007) add considerable scholarship to the discussion of new roles for teachers that have the ability to ultimately “[change] the teaching profession profoundly” (Lieberman, 1988, p. 7). Collaborative work that gives teachers “greater autonomy, responsibility, status” (Lieberman, 1988, p. 4) reforms the idea of school reform, focusing on teacher development as a path to whole school reform and ultimately, improved student achievement. Little (1988) ties together POT and teacher leadership in her research on school culture: “A school’s culture is conducive to leadership by teachers when teachers are in one another’s classrooms for
purposes of seeing, learning from, commenting on, and planning for one another’s work
with students” (p. 87).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) conclude that there are a number of “qualitative studies that describe dimensions of teacher leadership practice, teacher leadership characteristics, and conditions that promote and challenge teacher leadership” (p. 255). They point out the comparable lack of research about two specific aspects of teacher leadership: how it develops and its effect (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). York-Barr and Duke (2004) also propose a conceptual framework for future research that puts teacher leaders in a “learning orientation” (p. 289), something that is analogous to the position of the Lead Teachers at the study site given their focus on POT as a way of learning about pedagogy and curriculum.

Research on teacher leadership highlights the idea that creating new roles and responsibilities for teachers that focus on creating communities has a wealth of advantages. Creating an environment in which learning and collaboration are common practices benefits teachers and student learning. For all the advantages, however, changing teacher roles is not without difficulty for the teachers as well as the community (Clark, 1994; Wasley, 1991; 1994). Starting first with her own mixed experiences of leadership, Wasley (1991; 1994) documents cases of teachers assuming leadership roles in their schools. Through rich descriptions of the teachers’ experiences, Wasley recounts how teacher leaders communicate the skills they need in order to do their tasks effectively. These skills include trust building, process management, and confidence building in others. This skills list informs the understanding of teacher leaders in
relationships with their peers, as trust and confidence are factors important to collaborative relationships.

**Mentoring.**

Mentoring in educational settings has been the focus of research about teacher relationships. Often, the scholarship about mentors begins with a discussion of the *Odyssey*’s character of Mentor (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Awaya, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum, & Wakukawa, 2003; Zellers, Howard, & Barcic, 2008). Zellers et al. (2008) question whether the guiding role of mentor today can be traced back to what some call an inept tutor, or rather to the strong character of Athena. Even in the literary antecedent, the efficacy of a mentor may well depend more on the interpretation done by the mentees than on the intention of the mentor.

Mentors have been assigned different roles, some of which were included in the discussion of lead teachers. Zellers et al. (2008) distinguishes between the various roles of a mentor—coach, sponsor, role model, counselor—and the principle tasks related to each—guiding, challenging, modeling, opening doors, etc. In her doctoral dissertation about mentoring relationships with student-teachers, Bieler (2004) distills the research of mentors into the following four pairs of mentor role-mentee need: 1) mentee “having deficits that mentors’ role is to remediate,” 2) mentees “as performers of their knowledge and skills and mentors as coaches,” 3) mentees “as psychologically needy and mentors as helpers or counselors,” and 4) mentees “as uncritical perpetuators of the status quo, while mentors work to disrupt this perpetuation and promote school reform” (p. 35).
Awaya et al. (2003) proposes that mentoring is not a role but rather a relationship. Both Zellers (2008) and Awaya et al. (2003) discuss the importance of building a relationship over time, based on trust, respect, and commitment. Lytle et al. (1994) discuss how teachers’ mutually opening up their practice to each other over time contributes to the development and sustaining of an inquiring community. Within that larger community, such as the study site school, could nested mentoring relationships exist within a department or a pair or teachers that are sustained by making practice public?

Feiman-Nemser (1993, 1996, 2001) has contributed to the scholarship about mentoring new teachers, examining the conditions within the school environment that support mentoring. The author identifies three perspectives of mentoring for new teachers—mentor as local guide, as educational companion, and as agent of change. In her review of mentoring research, no matter what the perspective, it is important that mentoring be part of a teaching community that favors collaboration and inquiry (1996). Little’s (1990) review of “the mentor phenomenon” also discusses the conditions that help or hinder mentoring practices, claiming that more often than not, the benefits of mentoring are limited by organizational circumstances. She concludes offering the following optimism: “The promise of the mentor role rests in its ability to attract those teachers whose professional record is highly regarded and who thus are able to secure the admiration and acceptance of other teachers (p. 342).”

Blasé and Blasé (2006) argue that formal roles, such as lead teachers or mentors as discussed in this dissertation, do not provide sustainable changes in teacher practice or
the school environment. Their research proposes that “peer consultants” emerge naturally, and it is necessary to recognize these emergent leaders. These self-designated leaders will comprise the model of “teachers bringing out the best in teachers” (p. xi).

This study explored whether the relationships that emerge or exist in connection to POT are mentoring relationships. If they are, there exists the possibility that the emphasis on the peer in POT highlights the idea that a mentor need not always be the veteran teacher and there can be mentoring for both parties.

**Collaborative mentoring (co-mentoring).**

Recent research about mentoring is focusing on its evolution. First person reflections on mentoring experiences highlight the shift from hierarchical dyads to co-mentoring relationships in which each teacher in the relationship assumes the role of guide, coach, counselor, or role model. Kochan and Trimble (2000) and Jipson and Paley (2000) each describe a personal collaborative relationship that passed through and back various phases over the course of many years. Mullen (2000) argues that mentoring promotes “the development of new synergistic relationships and organizational structures” (p. 4). What is missing in this discussion is an examination of how mentoring relationship can connect to the practice of POT. A teacher that interprets his or her role as mentor or mentee when observing a colleague’s class could well be communicating a particular value of POT for that teacher: POT enables a learning connection.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) propose that mentoring in the new millennium is mentoring in an “age of postmodern professionalism” (p. 52). The walls separating
school and home are becoming more porous. The student population is becoming more
diverse. The context and content of knowledge and learning is endless and ever
developing given the World Wide Web. The change in the student population and the
often-mentioned focus of “educating for twenty-first century skills” lead to the logical
conclusion that new teacher training and ongoing professional development programs
must also evolve. All of these changes would require an evolution in the mentoring
model as well. The authors see mentoring as a means of building “strong professional
cultures of teaching,” as a means to addressing “the needs of all teachers”—not just
novice teachers—and, lastly, as having the potential to “recreate the profession” (pp. 54-
55). Teachers with stronger agency to make decisions about practice, more leadership
responsibilities, and more challenges in the classroom could conceivably benefit from
including POT in the menu of professional development opportunities.

Hanson (2010) examined how a mentoring relationship affects the mentor,
specifically the kind of relationship the mentor experienced. Huebner (2009) expands on
this by joining the “individual knowledge” from one teacher reflecting on new ideas and
connecting them to her own practice with “interdependent knowledge” gained from
discussing how each teacher applied (or not) the new ideas in his classroom. Huebner’s
research relies on Coburn’s idea of “sense making” as what pulls the two bodies of
knowledge together, influencing the individuals in new ways (2001). This dissertation
explores the potential for peer observation fostering the practice of joining ideas from
different teachers to create a wealth of information that mentors and mentees can access
through POT-related activities and conversations.
Schultz (2008) has contributed to the scholarship of collaborative mentoring through her study of mentoring that is informed by listening. Modeling an inquiry stance, Schultz and colleagues listened to the teachers recovering their lives and livelihoods post-tsunami, and in the process, modeled for these teachers how to mentor their colleagues in their home schools. The role of expert became a shared one, a similar phenomenon in a mutual mentoring relationship. If after observing a peer’s class, the teachers create a conversational relationship in which they listen to each other’s reflections on practice, these teachers are engaging in a co-mentoring professional relationship. An examination of what teachers do post-POT—reflect, talk, act, change—would shed light on how teachers make meaning of POT and add to the scholarship of environments and relationships conducive to co-mentoring.

**Collaborative teaching practices.**

Research about teaching relationships, mentoring, increased teacher agency all refer to the possible shift in the teaching profession: from teachers working in isolation, behind closed doors with little impact on each other’s practice to teachers working together, collaborating on a variety of substantive issues of practice (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Levine & Marcus, 2009; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). An examination of the studies about collaboration provides a possible background for understanding how teachers collaborate with each other and what meaning they ascribe to collaborations.

Lavié (2006) examines five discourses of teacher collaboration to determine which has been the most effective in encouraging sustainable changes in teacher practice. He argues that teacher collaboration that includes a critical review of why a school or
teachers do what they do leads to more sustainable changes in teaching practice. Little (1990) examines collegiality among teachers. She studies how collegiality and school structures influences collaboration that is “joint work.”

A focus on collaboration in this dissertation will benefit from an examination of research of teacher learning communities, also known as professional learning communities, because teacher learning communities present teachers with opportunities for sharing knowledge. McLaughlin, Talbert and Bascia’s (1990) discussion of “purposeful communities” focused, in part, on subject specific departments. The authors examine the influence that department units, and the collaborative activities within them, exercise over various teaching decisions. An awareness of nested collaborating relationships—within subject-specific departments or particular school divisions (lower, middle, or high school)—can help analyze how teachers work together post-POT.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) researched school-wide teacher learning communities. They define these as schools in which teachers “work collaboratively to reflect on their practice, examine evidence about the relationship between practice and student outcomes, and make changes that improve teaching and learning for the particular students in their classes” (p. 4). Reflecting on and sharing “knowledge for practice” signals a shift in the conversations among peers from simply talking at one another during teacher meetings to an inquiry stance, in which teachers are collectively studying their own practices while simultaneously examining the scholarship around teacher practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). Observation-based peer mentoring is grounded in a particular context, the classroom and the students, of each teacher. Individual and
collective conversations over the course time could lead to the development of collaborative mentoring relationships and more opportunities for POT that could foster further collaborations and so on.

The literature about teacher relationships reviewed above helps to inform the data analysis of this study. The data will show that the teachers in this study attribute to POT a number of effects on their collegial relationships as well as potential future changes to relationships as a result of sustained engagement with colleagues via regular peer observation.

Teacher Learning

Lortie (1975) first wrote about the “apprenticeship of observation” as often more powerful than teacher training in teacher education schools. This was due to a general lack of common language with which to describe and analyze practice. In the preface to the 2002 edition of this same book, however, Lortie highlights two recent trends in teaching, the increased attention to professional development, “activity focused on helping experienced as well as beginning teachers strengthen their teaching capabilities” and to “reflective practice [...] the process in which teachers think longer and harder about what they do” (p. viii). These comments situate Lortie’s seminal work and the focus of this research of teacher learning as an integral part of professional development (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Drago-Severson, 2004; Kolb, 2002; Lieberman, 2009; Little, 2002, 2007; Whitford & Wood, 2010).

Ball and Cohen (1999) envision a new form of professional development, one that locates inquiry in practice, that structures “learning in and from practice” (p. 10). Their
suggestions to use student work, teacher notes, or videotapes of classroom lessons focus teacher study on their own practice as well as on their peer’s practice. Elmore and Burney (2007) in the same collection of essays entitled “Teaching as a Learning Profession” (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2007), discuss New York City Superintendent Anthony Alvarado’s plan to improve student learning by “investing in teacher learning” (p. 263).

As noted above in this review of literature, for professional development to be more effective, it needs to shift from the single-afternoon-workshop to thoughtful, well-developed programs that are grounded in teacher practice and implemented over a period of time. The learning process should be supported by a commitment to the time. Lieberman (2009), in her research of seven examples in which teachers study their own practice, points out the importance of “knowing how teachers learn, the conditions under which learning occurs, and how knowledge is developed and finds its way into a teacher’s repertoire” (p. 1876).

Little (2007) focuses on the “systematic investigation of practice” (p. 218) as a way for teachers to problematize their practice is a logical potential outcome of teachers’ talking about their experiences of POT.

Accounts of teacher experience punctuate teachers’ talk with one another in a range of workplace contexts […] whether in the form of passing references or extended narratives, form a pervasive feature of professional interaction […] with significance for professional learning and instructional decision-making (p. 217).

Little proposes the idea that “attending closely to [teacher] experience enhances potential for learning and instructional improvement” (p. 237). Teacher inquiry into their
experiences in the classroom is a potential source for teaching learning, and changes in teacher practice that improve student learning outcomes. POT is one way teachers can interrogate their own experiences in a class with a colleague that was present for some of those same experiences.

At the heart of POT is the potential for learning—learning about a colleague’s practice by observing it, about one’s own practice by reflecting upon it, about institutional practices talking with colleagues post-POT, etc. The possibilities for what is learned are endless—teachers can learn new teaching strategies, something about themselves, and more. The data analysis of this study benefits from an understanding of the research about the potential for learning from POT.

New Visions for Mentoring and for Professional Development

“Current research suggests that providing intensive, content-rich, and collegial learning opportunities for teachers can improve both teaching and student learning” (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 52). Observation-based peer mentoring can provide such opportunities. The content of the classroom observation can become the focus of teacher reflection and post-POT discussion, thus creating a time and a space for teachers to work together. It is logical to see that the observations have the potential to become reciprocal and the conversations will continue engendering further observations, and so on.

This dissertation examines the changes in teacher practice that result from collaborative behaviors among peers. At the heart of the conversations is a reflection of individual and group practices informed by peer observation. Peer mentoring is presented
as an example of "new synergistic relationships and organizational structures" (Mullen, 2000, p. 4) that support the development of teacher learning communities.

Conclusion

The focus of this study, how teachers make meaning of their experience observing their peers teach, is situated in the rich research of peer observation, teacher relationships and teacher learning. When teachers engage in reflective dialogue about practice, a variety of outcomes, for the individuals as well as the community, are possible. These outcomes, as well as possible protocols for POT, provided a backdrop to examine how the teachers in this study view their experiences. Teachers examined their own practice alongside that of their colleague, considering the similarities and differences in pedagogy and curriculum. The differences presented an opportunity for learning guided by the teachers' individual or collaborative questioning and/or conversation. Changes to a teacher's practice (or both teachers' practices) could result in the co-creation of a new pedagogical strategy. It is logical to see how a relationship will develop between these colleagues, one that may maintain a purely professional focus or one that adds a more personal dimension.

The three bodies of literature—teacher observation, teacher relationships, and teacher learning—were presented in this order to emphasize the concept of a possible series of outcomes of POT. After a teacher observed a colleague, both teachers could begin to reflect on their own practice and perhaps develop a new collaborative working relationship. Ensuing conversations between the two could include exploration of teacher
research from outside their school and these conversations could produce changes in each teacher's practice.

When a teacher begins to examine her own practice, the focus is rather narrow—one person's pedagogy and curriculum. Observing a colleague teach expands the focus of the study of practice and curriculum to include another teacher's ideas. Comparing and contrasting ideas of practice presents the possibility of widening the teacher focus of practice to beyond their classroom to the department. It is conceivable that a teacher continues to expand the scope of investigation, looking to teaching practices of colleagues in other departments, in other schools or to research about teaching practices. The reflection, supported now by teacher-to-teacher connections, approaches a metacognitive act of learning more about one's own practice perhaps including learning how one learns about practice.

Although the data will show that phenomena related to POT and discussed in the literature, such as the development of mentor relationships or practice of teacher inquiry, did not occur in this study, an understanding of a variety of outcomes helps to frame the data analysis and findings in addition to the implications for future practice and research.
CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers interpret their experience with POT and what effects, if any, POT had on teacher practice and peer relationships. This exploration of how teachers make meaning of observing their colleagues provided data about the nature of teacher relationships, teacher practice, and teacher collaboration within the independent 2nd - 12th grade study site context. Teachers that participated in this study explored what POT meant to them—through the survey, the interview, the writing prompts, or a combination of these—at a unique time in the history of the study site. The data was collected shortly after the implementation of two academic initiatives, one of which subsequently asked all teachers to observe at least one colleague's class. The practice of peer observation was, therefore, part of the 2nd - 12th grade teaching community, not just an activity of a subset of teachers engaging in POT in the school.

The study addressed one main research question: How do teachers interpret the experience of POT? Under this comprehensive question, the study analyzed data pertaining to the four additional study questions: a) In what ways does POT influence teachers within a school?; b) What is the range of ways that POT affects how a teacher perceives his or her practice?; c) In what ways does peer observation influence teacher pedagogy?, and d) How does peer observation influence teacher relationships?

52
This chapter presents the details of the research design and methodology with specific subsections dedicated to the rationale for a qualitative study, participant selection and the research sample, data collection phases, methods, analysis, my role as practitioner researcher, and the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study. The survey and interview protocols and writing prompts are discussed in the chapter and are included in the appendices.

The data collection period of this qualitative study transpired over a period of eight months at a time of institutional change at the study site. Data collection began in the spring of 2011; shortly after the Academic Cabinet announced the expectation that all teachers engage in at least one act of POT. This study did not focus on the reasons why teachers did not participate or the rate of POT participation, but rather, on the experiences of the teachers that engaged in POT and volunteered to share their thoughts about those experiences.

As discussed in the Background and Context section of Chapter 1, the study site is an independent, co-ed, non-denominational school located in a city in the Northeastern part of the United States, and has approximately 500 students and 60 teachers. POT is part of two academic initiatives at the study site—the Lead Teachers and the Academic Cabinet. Lead Teacher duties (Appendix A) included regular observation of all classes in their academic department, grades two through twelve. Toward the end of the first year of the initiatives, in April, all teachers were requested to observe at least one colleague’s class. Many participants in this study referenced observing more than one teacher and more than one class.
Rationale for Qualitative Study

This study was qualitative, employing inquiry strategies from the fields of ethnography and case studies. The units of analysis were the teachers engaging in the practice of POT at the study site. An inductive approach to theory building allowed for a social constructivist interpretation of data, “leading [the research] toward a complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Semi-structured survey and interview questions, and open-ended writing prompts allowed participants to reflect on, and then share with the researcher, the multiple and varied interpretations of their experiences. Exploration of ideas, contexts, and events benefited from the flexibility of “emerging approaches” that are a hallmark of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009, p. 17).

This research topic was best suited for qualitative methods based on the five intellectual goals that Maxwell (1995) defines as: 1) understanding the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, experiences, and action in which they are involved; 2) understanding the particular context within which participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions; 3) identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generating new “grounded” theories about the latter; 4) understanding the process by which events and actions take place; and 5) developing causal explanations (pp. 22-23).

This study strove to understand the meaning teachers attribute to peer observation, and how they experienced and understood what they perceived happening before, during, and/or after the act of observation. It was important to understand how teachers viewed
the influence of the local contexts of classroom, department, or school on their experiences of POT. The "inherent openness and flexibility" of qualitative research, "its inductive approach," allowed for modifications in the ongoing data collection and analysis (p. 22).

Although Maxwell (1995) advises researchers that "data collection strategies will probably go through a period of focusing and revision" (p. 93), it was important to begin with data collection methods that were best suited to qualitative research. Observations, interviews, and writing prompts were key components of the data collected in order to concentrate on the teachers' "way of understanding what their experiences and activities mean to them" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 12). Data coding was an ongoing process so as to "facilitate comparison between things" and support the development of broad themes that, in turn, developed and supported theories about the phenomena related to peer observation (Maxwell, 1995, p. 97). Emic and etic codes were identified and used as guides for ongoing data analysis.

Examining each teacher as a case study supported this research because it enabled a prolonged, in-depth focus on individuals' behaviors and their acts of meaning making. Interviews and writing prompts afforded multiple semi-guided opportunities for the teacher reflection. Different phases of data collection, each with a different instrument, were designed to encourage deep thinking on the part of each participant. The participatory philosophical quality of case studies facilitated a partnership between researcher and participant. I also engaged in POT in the study site in my role as Lead Teacher. As a researcher with insider status in both the study site and the research, I made
the choice to regularly discuss the focus of my study with the participants, inviting participant collaboration with the specific aspects of the evolving research design—interview questions, journaling prompts, data analysis, etc. (Creswell, 2009).

Participant Selection

Maxwell (2005) presents four goals of purposeful selection: “achieve typicality of the setting, individuals, or activities… adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population… deliberately examine cases that are critical for the research theories… and establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals” (pp. 89-90). The study sample achieved “purposeful selection” as outlined by Maxwell for a variety of reasons. The invitation to participate was extended to all members of the community in person and digital format and the representative nature of the teachers that responded (discussed in detail later in this chapter) captures the diversity of the study site community. As POT is encouraged of all faculty at the site, there is a certain level of “typicality of the setting, individuals, or activities” (p. 90). Even if some teachers at the school are not observing their colleagues, it is not out of the ordinary for a teacher to do so. I was able to complete Maxwell’s description of purposeful selection with one exception—that of examining “cases that are critical for the research theories” (p.90). I was unable to ascertain if there were more “critical cases” at the study site because I did not require participation. The teachers that did participate, however, provided rich descriptions of their experiences.

When this study was first envisioned, only Lead Teachers were officially observing their peers and, for this reason, the initial research design of this study called
for only Lead Teachers to be invited to participate. After the study had been introduced to
the Lead Teachers, and shortly before the first phase of data collection had begun, all
teachers in the school were asked to observe their colleagues in the classroom. This
meant that all teachers at the study site were able to volunteer for the study due to their
participation in POT, and I revised the study design to include an invitation to all teachers
to participate.

The optimal participant selection was a teacher engaging in POT at the study site
and volunteering to talk about their experiences—Lead Teachers and non-Lead Teachers
alike. Four Lead Teachers and six non-Lead Teachers volunteered to participate in the
interview, representing 18% of the teaching faculty. Some of these observations were
pre-arranged or not; they may or may not have had a particular focus. How the
observations were arranged and what the teachers considered outcomes of the
observations was part of the data collected.

Keeping in mind "feasibility of access and data collection" (Maxwell, 2005, p.
90), the invitation to participate was offered to all teachers and administrators in the
school—approximately 56 people. I interpreted any teacher that self-selected for
participation an indication that the individual had the time to participate and was
interested in exploring their experiences with POT. (Most all administrators had some
teaching responsibility at one time or another at the study site.) The optimal possible
participant selection consisted of a diversity that would mirror the diversity within the
teaching community—teachers, teacher-administrators, and administrators. The research
sample succeeded in reflecting this diversity of teaching employees at the study site.
I distributed consent forms to all teachers that volunteered to participate in the interview using the IRB social sciences consent form as a model. Participation in this study was voluntary, open to all members of the teaching community and without any compensation; participants were informed of the possibility of exiting the study at any time. The following section describes the research sample in greater detail, and illustrates how the study sample achieved representative diversity with regards to school division, subject area, degree, years of teaching experience, and appointed position at the study site.

**Research sample.**

The research sample consists of teachers, teacher-administrators, and one full-time administrator at one school. The school has approximately 56 teachers—full and part-time—and 500 students in grades two through twelve. At the time of this study, and throughout the major part of the data collection period, there were eight departments: Math, Science, Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Physical Education, Visual, and Performing Arts, and World Languages\(^1\). A description of the study participants and how this sample compared to and was representative of the entire teaching faculty at the study site serves as the backdrop for the presentation of findings and analysis in Chapter 4.

The study sample was comprised of two distinct participant groups—anonymous respondents that completed the online or print survey\(^2\) and de-identified individuals that

---

1 Toward the end of the data collection period, Visual and Performing Arts was split into two departments. I share this information for purposes of accuracy with respect to participant representation at the study site.

2 The three phases of data collection—including a timeline and the specific instruments used in each phase—will be explained in the Data Collection section of this chapter.
completed an interview and/or writing prompt. It was not possible to say with 100% certainty the exact sample size for this study because participants may have volunteered for an interview and did not inform me that they completed the anonymous survey. What was known was that 40% of the teaching faculty—comprised of both part time and full-time employees—completed the survey, and 10 individuals volunteered for the interview. Fifty percent (50%) of the interview participants completed a response to the writing prompt. My researcher journal also contained reflections and observation notes from multiple conversations about POT in which I participated or at which I was present in an observer role. Impressions of the data, thoughts about emerging theories, and miscellaneous notions about the study recorded in my journal were often later developed in researcher memos written at various points throughout the study. These ideas were woven into the data analysis, findings and implications for future research, and policy and practice.

Interview participants were not anonymous to me, the researcher, but have been de-identified for the purpose of confidentiality. All interview participants were full-time employees at the study site and volunteered to participate in the study. They responded to the invitation for participation extended at the three divisional faculty meetings (lower, middle, and upper schools) when I announced my study and distributed the paper version of the survey, at a Lead Teacher meeting, and via email to the Lead Teachers in the 2nd -

---

3 Not all interview participants completed the writing prompt portion of the data collection. Since each writing response was from an interview participant, the term “interview participants” will include writing prompt participants unless otherwise indicated in this study.

4 The researcher journal began, before the start of this study, as a journal for reflections and notes associated with my role as Lead Teacher.
12th grade community (Appendix B). All teachers and administrative staff received an email with a link to the digital version of the survey (Appendix C). The latter was sent to ensure that absentees from any of the aforementioned meetings could participate in the survey collection and learn of the opportunity to join the research.

Participant selection was random because it was limited to teachers volunteering to participate in the study via anonymous survey, interview, and journal writing. Only teachers volunteering for the interview were invited to respond to the journal writing in an effort to mediate issues of process validity through triangulation (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). I scheduled interviews a few weeks in advance so as to give teachers time to consider their experiences with POT, and the writing prompts were distributed after the interview and collected after the summer break. Data from two distinct instruments and the time gap between each instrument provided teachers with time to consider their POT experiences before sharing them in the study.

While this sample size of interview participants was relatively small (n=10), the study participants' represented an 18% participation rate among the teaching faculty and illustrated a “representativeness or typicality” of the study setting (Maxwell, 2005, p. 89). There was a fairly even distribution of participation across the 2nd-12th grades span (Table 1). The Upper School division is slightly largely in student population so this participant distribution mirrored that phenomenon. To avoid falsely limiting the teaching portrait of the participants, teaching experience in kindergarten, 1st grade, and higher education was included in this descriptive table in spite of the context for this study of 2nd

---

5 Study participants refer to all interview participants.
-12th grades, the context for the Lead Teacher and Academic Cabinet initiatives.

Recognizing the lack of overwhelming majority of a particular teaching division among the study participants enables findings based on the data to be generalized across the teaching faculty at the study site and not concentrated in one teacher group—lower, middle, or high schools.

Table 1.

**Appointed Division for Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Division</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower (K-4)*</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (5-8)*</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper (9-12)*</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Ed/Adult Ed</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Most study participants have taught various grades within the division. This was a common characteristic for all study participants with more than five years of teaching experience.

There is slightly higher rate of participation in the study by male teachers (Table 2). The gender ratio of the study was reflective of the study site gender ratio where more teachers are male in the 2nd through 12th grade.
Table 2.

*Gender of Interview Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants represented all but one subject department: physical education (Table 3). Knowing that a few study participants were also coaches, it was possible to consider their familiarity with athletics at the study site as a way to consider physical education staff part of the study because the physical education department supervises all coaching staff. A few of the study participants, under half, reported teaching a few of the subject areas listed in the table, thus emphasizing the idea that some teacher participants shared their thoughts and ideas gleaned from a variety of subject-specific teaching and observation experiences. To use the parlance of schools, it was not possible to say if a participant was speaking solely with her “math teacher hat on” or her “math and coach hats on.” For the purposes of this study, it did not matter which subject “hat” the study participant wore during the interview or when responding to the writing prompt. What mattered was how they viewed POT. For the objectives of purposeful selection, it was relevant to know that there was a range of subject area teachers participating so that the findings are not limited, for example, to “what math teachers at the study site thought about POT.”
Table 3.

Subject Areas Represented by Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers, Elementary Education (all subjects), English, Health, Math, Performing and Visual Arts, Science, Social Studies, World Languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a range of college degrees similar to that across the study site population. It is common for teachers in independent schools to have advanced degrees—MA, Ed.D, etc. Independent schools do not require teachers to be certified in their subject area and employment opportunities include the phrase "an advanced degree in the subject area preferred" for most positions. One study participant was currently enrolled in an advanced degree program and referenced his interest in talking about teaching with colleagues at the study site as a reason for volunteering to participate in the study.

Another teacher participant completed a medical degree and referenced her experience with observation in that field. The breadth of experiences with POT at the study site and other educational settings enabled participants to interpret POT in all its possible forms and interpretations, not just those of the study site. The questions on the data instruments were designed to be open-ended to allow for all POT reflections to enter.
Table 4.

*Degrees of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB, BA, BSN, RN</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D./A.B.D.</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average teaching tenure for teachers at the study site was anecdotally reported as seven years⁶. Specific data about all teachers at the school is not public information⁷ so it is not possible to determine whether seven years is the median or the mean tenure for teachers at the school. The entire study sample of interview participants and survey respondents, showing specific years of teaching experience per participant, appeared to skew towards six or more years teaching and beyond (Table 5a). Teaching for more years did not guarantee better responses to the various protocols—survey, interview, or writing prompts—but it would be logical to consider that more years of teaching experience indicates two possibilities for the data. One, the participants drew from deep wells of experience in schools, perhaps spanning more than one institution, subject area, and grade level. They may also have held any number of teacher leadership positions, such as mentoring, department leadership, committee leadership, etc. Two, the common image of

---

⁶ There is no official record average tenure. This is based on informal conversations I’ve had over the years.

⁷ Years teaching at the study is publicly recognized in five-year increments at an end-of-year appreciation luncheon for faculty and staff. Teachers are presented with gift—a bonus check. The greater five-year increment, the larger the amount of the gift check.
POT—that of a novice teacher observing a veteran teacher—was not the dominant dynamic in the experiences of POT at the study site. Indeed, the interview and writing prompts served to triangulate this conclusion, illustrating experienced teachers observing novice teachers.

Table 5a.

*Experience Teaching in Years—Interview Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 + years</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5b.

*Experience Teaching in Years—Survey Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 + years</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One survey respondent left this question blank.

The study sample of interview participants can be divided into two subgroups: participants who were Lead Teachers and those who were not. As the Background and
Context section described, this study took place and aimed to understand how teachers were interpreting POT at the particular time of Lead Teacher and Academic Cabinet initiatives. POT was first announced to the study site as one of the Lead Teacher responsibilities (Appendix A). Toward the end of the first year of the Lead Teacher initiative, all teachers were expected to engage in POT, at least once within a month time period. The study sample, therefore, included appointed Lead Teachers and non-Lead Teachers. There was not a one-to-one ratio among interview participants but fairly close to it. What is not known was how many survey respondents were Lead Teachers. The conclusion that can be reached analyzing the size of the study sample was twofold. Based on the information in Table 6, not only Lead Teachers were engaging in and interested in talking about POT. Based on the total number of survey respondents, the rate of teacher participation in POT was a high 40%. It was also possible that more than 40% are engaging in POT but did not choose to complete the survey. Reasons why a person would choose not to participate was beyond the scope of this study, and therefore no relationship—causal or otherwise—between non-participation and POT was assumed or included in the data, analysis, or findings.
Table 6.

*Appointed Position at Study Site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead Teacher</td>
<td>40%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Lead Teacher</td>
<td>60%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>20%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One Lead Teacher in the study sample is also an administrator.

A note about administrators participating in the study must be made (Table 6). POT in this study was clearly defined as peer-to-peer. There were repeated mentions, declarations, and clarifications that the Lead Teacher did not have a supervisory role and thus, were observing in the role of peer, not in the capacity of supervisor. The invitation to participate in this study did not exclude anyone from participating based on his or her current role. The two participants that do have supervisory responsibilities chose to participate and, as the data indicated, spoke from their past experiences with POT.

All of the above data describing the study participants supported the assertion that the study sample was representative of the study site because it mirrored fairly closely the overall population in terms of gender, subject area, degree, appointed division and position, and years teaching. Such a representative sample allows for internal generalizability of the data analysis and findings across all three school divisions—lower, middle, and high schools—as well as across subject areas and teacher tenure. Indeed, the applicability of the study findings and analysis may have extended to other teachers and
administrators at the study site, beyond the study sample of n=10, because the number of survey respondents was more than 10. The external generalizability, specifically applicability of the findings to other teaching communities, will be discussed in Chapter 5 (Maxwell, 2005).

Data Collection

Overview of three phases of data collection.

I collected data for this study over a period of seven months, starting in the spring of 2011. The data collection occurred in three phases as outlined in Table 7. The school community learned of the study and the opportunity to participate in phase I.

Participation in this phase was anonymous. In phases II and III the bulk of data was collected via interviews and writing prompts with volunteer teachers. POT was ongoing throughout the three phases, as indicated by all of the teacher participants. For most of the teachers, the practice of POT began prior to the requirement by the new academic initiatives at the study site.

Table 7.

Three Phases of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Early May 2011</td>
<td>• Announce and briefly describe study to school community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Distribute paper and digital survey.</td>
<td>• Surveys were placed in mailbox or completed online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Invite participation in interview.</td>
<td>• Research Journal notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Notes taken in Researcher Journal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continues...
Three Phases of Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Late May -</td>
<td>• Participants volunteered.</td>
<td>• Interviews were recorded and transcribed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 2011</td>
<td>• Ten interviews conducted.</td>
<td>• Three Lead Teachers agreed to complete writing prompts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing Prompts emailed to Lead Teachers.</td>
<td>• Research Journal notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Notes taken in Researcher Journal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>• Invitation to complete writing prompts emailed all non-Lead Teacher interview participants, Notes taken in Researcher Journal.</td>
<td>• Two more participants agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• All but one writing prompt was received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Research Journal notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase I.

All teachers at the study site were informed of the study via a short in-person presentation I made at a divisional faculty meeting—lower, middle, and high schools—and which, at that time, were invited to participate in an anonymous survey (Appendix B) distributed at that meeting and an interview. The three meetings occurred within a period of seven days, following the divisional schedule; so all teachers were made aware of the study at roughly the same time. I did not collect any surveys or secure any interview volunteers at the meetings for two main reasons. One, I was allotted a relatively short amount of time to make the announcement (approximately 10 minutes), and two, I informed the community of the confidentiality of their participation and said that interested individuals should contact me outside the meeting. Shortly after these
meetings, teachers started placing completed surveys in my school mailbox and completing the on-line version. (The paper and on-line surveys were identical in questions; the one difference was that the on-line version required the respondent to add a comment after each question.)

Throughout all three data phases I kept a research journal. In the journal I recorded observation notes about conversations or school-wide communications associated with POT at the study site. These notes were often the catalyst for memos in which I contemplated possible theoretical connections to the data, sketched out ideas for findings, and recorded my experience as practitioner researcher. More information about the researcher journal will be presented in a later section in this chapter.

Phase II.

During this second phase of the data collection, paper and digital surveys were completed, and teachers talked to me in person or emailed about wanting to participate in an interview. Interviews were scheduled for late May and June, depending on each participant’s preference and availability. I conducted all but one interview at the study site in an enclosed office space or after school hours when students and other teachers were not present. The final interview was off-site because that teacher left to take another job. All interviews were recorded, and I sent the audio recordings for transcription by someone contracted for this purpose. The transcriber did not live in the Northeastern part of the United States and signed a confidentiality agreement.

Still thinking that only Lead Teachers—and a significant amount of Lead Teachers would complete the writing prompts—I emailed the prompts to the four Lead
Teachers that I interviewed. Three responded affirmatively while one teacher replied to the writing prompts in June. As I was reviewing the data collected thus far, and the research design overall, I decided to include all interview participants in the writing prompts. The teachers were already dismissed for summer break so I waited until the start of the school year to email an invitation to all non-Lead Teacher interview participants.

The combination of Lead Teachers and non-Lead Teachers was the best choice for study participants because they represent two categories of teachers in the school community—those that were in the first group of teachers required to observe their peers and those that initially were not. Whether or not each group interpreted the experience of POT—its meaning and any impact on practice and relationships—proved to be informative for the study in that data could be analyzed across sub groups.

**Phase III.**

I emailed the invitation to complete the writing prompts to the non-Lead Teacher interview participants. Two agreed to respond to the writing prompts. I received all but one expected writing prompt. I reached out in person and via email to the last study participant, but was unable to collect this piece of data.

**Methods of data collection.**

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) note that ethnography entails studying “people as they go about their everyday lives” (p. 1). Peer observation was part of the participants’ weekly or daily routine. This study investigated how teachers interpreted the new routine of POT, and how it affected, or not, the teacher’s daily practice and peer relationships. The goal was to gather data that was situated in the everyday teacher
interactions around activities related to peer observation or that resulted from POT. The data collected provided the breadth and depth of participants’ “perspectives and interpretations of their world” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8). The three broad categories of data collection were the conversations, thoughts or other activities before observation, what happened during the actual observation, and the interactions and communication after the observation. Since POT was an ongoing activity at the school among the teachers, the method of data collection was also ongoing (survey, interview, writing prompt). Additionally, my research journal and memo creation were ongoing. Analysis was able to “reach across” these multiple data sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8) and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Surveys, interviews, the researcher’s journal, participants’ responses to writing prompts, and school documents were analyzed to understand how teachers made meaning of the practice of POT at the study site, any influential effects of peer observation on the individual teachers as well as any effects on the larger teaching faculty. The data collection methods consisted of a survey, interviews, participant responses to writing prompts, public and private documents, and the researcher journal. Each will be discussed in detail below.

Survey.

A survey (Appendix D) was distributed to the full faculty in their division meetings—lower, middle, and high schools. A digital version was also made available to teachers via an all-school email; this email ensured that any teacher not present at the meeting was made aware of the study and had the opportunity to participate. The
anonymous survey consists of two sections: questions about teacher working relationships and questions about attitudes regarding peer observation of teaching. All questions provided a space for comments; most teachers wrote comments on the paper survey. All teachers completing the digital version were required to submit a comment in order to advance to the next question. The goal of the survey was to understand the overall faculty attitudes about peer observation, sharing of practice, and peer relationships in the context of POT. The questions sought a read of school climate given the recent activity of peer observation of teaching (Creswell, 2009). The digital survey, emailed a week after the in-person short presentation, also served as a reminder to complete the survey and of the invitation to participate in an interview. Two participants specifically mentioned the digital survey as reminding them to contact me about participation. Another study participant initially responded to the survey email asking if administrators could complete the survey; after completing the survey, she volunteered for the interview. Survey responses informed the creation of the interview protocols and writing prompts because they gave me an idea of what teachers were thinking about when they reflected on POT.

**Interview.**

Glesne (2006) describes an interview as an “opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see” (p. 81). I considered interviews one way to understand how each participant was making meaning of the peer observations of teaching.
It was important to interview study participants to understand as much as possible about the event central to my research—peer observation of teaching—for which I was not present. Listening to the teacher reconstruct what happened before, during, and after the observation, noticing which elements he or she chose to highlight, provided insights into what peer observation meant to each of them (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Open-ended questions with follow-ups were prepared to create space and time for a teacher to share her reflections and to reflect in the moment of the interview (Appendix E).

As Maxwell (2005) states, “triangulation of observations and interviews can provide a more complete and accurate account than either could alone” (p. 94). The interview gave me a window into the world of POT of the participant; I learned about conversations between the participant and his colleagues, about what he did before and after the observation, what he did when in the classroom, and many other details that the teachers thought to mention.

Ten study participants volunteered for the interview. As described in the Phases of Data Collection section, interviews were scheduled for the end of the school year and were conducted in an enclosed office space or after school hours. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for emerging themes using “organizational,” “substantive,” and “theoretical” categories (Maxwell, 2005). The main goal of the interview was to learn about each teacher’s experiences with peer observation and any impact the teacher perceived POT exerted on the perception of her own practice, on her actual teacher practice, and on her relationships with colleagues. The interview data informed the organization of the study findings into a before-, during-, and after- period.
of POT. Upon reflection of the interview data, I realized that I chose to structure the interview with before-, during-, and after- questions in order to help teachers organize their thoughts and reflections around POT, and to create a coherent set of questions for the participant to follow. This etic perspective was based on my outsider thinking as a researcher and also my insider status as practitioner in the community; I, myself, was trying to organize my thoughts about POT to make sense of what it meant for me, my practice, and the community. The organization of questions did not limit the teacher participants in the interview as they spoke about a variety of topics related to this before-during-after and not. The interview protocol also included time and a particular question about “additional comments.” It is important to acknowledge this outsider structure of questioning and to balance it with my own experiences trying to organize my reflections about POT in order to mediate issues of bias (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

Writing prompts.

As shared above, the researcher’s journal served many purposes in this study. It was a place to collect and organize my thoughts as both participant in the study, in the role of Lead Teacher/peer observer, and administrator at the school. Many journal reflections became seeds for analytic memos (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

Given the value that I place on journaling, I distributed journals to each of the Lead Teachers at the start of the Lead Teacher initiative. In addition to sharing my thoughts about the value of reflection through writing, I informally shared my research interests with the Lead Teachers at the time when this study was in its very early stages of formation. When I announced the study formally to the Lead Teachers, I referenced
my journal writing and expressed the hope that they would consider sharing some of their reflections with me. This did not happen.

I realized that it would not be wise to ask study participants to maintain a journal of their POT experiences and related thoughts given the lack of expressed participation in journal writing by Lead Teachers. I then decided to develop writing prompts for all study participants. Initially, I planned to send two sets of writing prompts. I reduced this to one set (Appendix F) due to the fact that teacher participants delayed in completing the first set. The study participants that agreed to complete the prompts apologized profusely when they saw me and attributed the delay to a busy schedule. Knowing that these individuals were very interested in the topic—as each had said to me on a number of occasions—I trusted that the pace of their days was truly the reason for the delay. Given the time allotted for this phase of the study, there was not enough time remaining to distribute a second writing prompt.

Five study participants completed responses to the writing prompts. Again, this was not a required part of participation so teachers self-identified themselves as volunteers for this part of data collection. The three questions—shorter than I had initially envisioned due to low rate or response and previous responses to journal writing referenced above—were open-ended so the participants could give any context, examples, or response that they wanted to give. The responses ranged from very short, two-sentence responses to each question to much longer, detailed discussions of the objective parts of an observation (who, what, where, when, and why) to what can best be
described as a pondering of the possibilities of POT based on what that particular respondent had already experienced and/or hoped to see happen as a result of POT.

The writing prompts served various purposes including a version of focused-coding (Emerson et al., 1995), asking about themes discovered from survey responses, interviews, and my researcher journal entries. Writing prompts triangulated the data so as to reduce the risk that my perspective, as practitioner researcher within the study site, exercised on the data analysis (Maxwell, 2005). I was ever mindful of the possibility that my thoughts about POT were not exerting an influence on the data analysis and triangulated the data so as to mitigate this possibility.

*Memos.*

Analytic memos were of great import because of my role as participant researcher. I heeded Maxwell’s (1995) advice to “regularly write memos while you are doing data analysis; memos not only capture your analytic thinking about your data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (p. 96). I worked with two different categories of journal entries in my mind—one as Chair of the Academic Cabinet, a role that directly supports the Lead Teachers in their work with colleagues, and two, as a peer observer—but rarely did I write a journal entry from one perspective. I wrote as a practitioner researcher, acknowledging that curiosities, worries, frustrations and joys were, at times, associated with one particular role. These journal ideas became opportunities for further exploration of both my role as researcher and my role as peer observer, and I was as faithful to journal writing as time permitted.
Memos were a source for data and a way of identifying and dealing with validity threats. Writing (and revisiting) a researcher identity memo and memos that explored my relationships with the study participants afforded me the time and space to explore the threats and, more importantly, ways to mitigate and acknowledge them throughout my research (Maxwell, 1995). I often completed “member checks” about my own journal reflections, meaning that I would talk with study participants or others in the community in my role as teacher-administrator about various things I commented on in my journal. I was able to check my own thinking about POT about a variety of topics so as to avoid attributing more import or influence to what I thought was important. These member checks also encouraged my reflecting on my observations and POT at the study site. I learned that, for some study participants, my initiating conversations about POT with them encouraged them to do the same with me and with their colleagues.

*Documents—public and private.*

Archival documents were a rich source of data. The data collected from these sources helped to triangulate ideas and impressions about POT that were collected in other sources. The archival material served as a common backdrop for the study participants’ interpretation of POT at the study site. They provided historical and real-time information about the study site and the two academic initiatives and expectations for POT, and served to “raise questions about […] hunches and thereby shape new directions for observations and interviews” (Glesne, 2006, p. 65).
Public.

Data consisted of school documents, digital and paper, that described the practice and current context for peer observation of teaching, specifically information about the Academic Cabinet and Lead Teachers. Public documents explained the rationale for POT, including the school’s goals, contextual issues per school division, and possible processes to facilitate peer observation of teaching.

Private.

Private documents collected for this study consisted of communications about peer observation of teaching at the research site. These included emails and comments shared with me. I also considered my researcher journal a private document because it was not shared with anyone. All communications and journal entries were de-identified and comments were transcribed in my researcher journal. Private documents shed light on an individual’s experiences with peer observation of teaching, and served to triangulate data collected from other sources.

Researcher journal.

As a participant researcher, I maintained a journal of my experiences related to POT, my role as practitioner researcher at the study site and my relationships with colleagues in the context of both of these. Entries were a source for more in-depth memos that explored effects that I perceived on my teaching as well as effects that I perceived on my relationships with my colleagues.

I wrote frequently, sometimes long entries, sometimes just a few sentences or questions that came to mind. I wrote about conversations with study participants.
regarding POT. As I am a Lead Teacher and Chair of the Academic Cabinet, it was part of the natural course of my job responsibilities to discuss POT and other topics related to these two roles. Because I made the study public at the school, meaning that everyone was informed via in-person short presentation or email, non-study participant teachers at the school also talked with me about POT, and thoughts from those conversations were also recorded in the researcher journal. Journal entries served as a place to explore my positionality as participant and researcher in this study. The journal was also a space to identify specific threats to validity and consider ways to mitigate these threats.

My goal for the researcher's journal was to follow Emerson et al.'s (2005) guides for "participating-in-order-to-write," trying to include initial impressions (using all of the five senses), key incidents, and openness to what group members consider significant. As my thoughts about POT were a key piece of data about my experience observing my colleagues, I used ongoing "open coding" to "name, distinguish, and identify the conceptual import and significance of particular observations" (Emerson et al., 1995, p.151). Emerging themes helped to craft the questions for interviews and writing prompts, and in Phase III, became a place for experimenting with ideas of trends that could lead to study findings.

As this study sought to understand how teachers interacted with each other in the context of POT, it was not feasible to follow all the participants in order to observe them talking to and interacting with their colleagues in the course of their regular day. Nor was it feasible to ask them to write about each conversation. (The open-ended questions of the interview allowed teachers the space and time to talk freely about their experiences with
POT at the school, and some did reference conversations with colleagues about peer observation.) I was, however, able to record my thoughts and responses when study participants recounted to me conversations they had with other teachers about POT.

My research journal was open-ended; I did not have a set series of questions that I referred to regularly. I did write after every observation or cluster of observations. I also wrote after Academic Cabinet or Lead Teacher meetings. As I wrote, I reread prior journal entries and considered possible data trends, future interview questions, and writing prompts. The common threads that tied together all the data instruments for this study was open-ended questions and the identification of emerging codes and themes that informed future data collection methods (Creswell, 2009). These threads started with my own reflective practice as a Lead Teacher and peer observer at the school, prior to the start of this study.

The data collected from surveys, interviews, writing prompt responses, public and private documents, memos, and my researcher journal provided this study with rich data sources for examining how teachers at the study site are viewing POT in the particular context of the two academic initiatives. The instruments inquired about teacher practice, teacher relationships, and overall teacher experiences in order to identify any effects of POT on these elements of a teacher's life at school. The three phases of data collection allowed time for reflection in between each method, specifically for the participants that completed interviews and responses to writing prompts. The multiple methods provided the opportunity for the inclusion of multiple perspectives so as to avoid an undue bias from any one of the data sources. This effort to triangulate the data contributed to my
efforts to raise the level of validity of the study findings (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

**Data management.**

I am the principal researcher for this study and as such I was responsible for all data collection, storage, and analysis. Attention to the issues of data management ensured for “high-quality, accessible data,” “documentation of just what analyses have been carried out,” and “retention of data and associated analyses after the study is complete” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 45). Decisions about how to keep track of all the data were important to the process of data analysis. I kept a log of actions for conducting this study including dates and specific details about information distributed and collected. All study materials were housed in my home office; there was a combination of digital and paper files that were kept in secure file cabinets on my computer and in the office. I was the only person with access to this information. All digital files were backed up with a combination of external hard drives and cloud locations, updated as technology options became available throughout the course of the study. When data instruments were at the study site they were kept in my locked desk area. I completed photocopying and distribution of materials to study participants.

All data collected were stored on my personal computer and kept in my home office. Research journals, interviews, and responses to writing prompts were locked in my personal desk cabinet when at the study site. Interview recordings were made on my personal digital recorder and digital files were transferred to my personal computer at my home office.
All participants have been de-identified to ensure the highest level of confidentiality. Once a participant signed the consent form, he or she was assigned a pseudonym and all references to the participants' contributions employed their pseudonym during all phases of data collection and analysis. After this study is deposited with the University, all original documents, data and analyses will be destroyed at my home.

Data Analysis Approach

The lens of social anthropology guided ongoing data collection and analysis. Attention to how participants described their normal day-to-day routines, any unusual events and the "individuals' perspectives and interpretations" of these events in the context of POT provided rich data. As stated above, the continuous reading and analyzing of this rich data informed the next data collection method—the survey informed the interview, the interview informed writing prompts, etc. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8).

I reviewed data as it was collected, listening to the interviews as I read the transcripts and printing reports of the digital surveys. Based on my review of the literature and my experiences with POT as a Lead Teacher, I created an initial list of etic codes (Appendix G) that were more descriptive in nature to use for the first rounds of data reading (Maxwell, 2005). While reading, emic codes—"participants' own concepts" (p. 98)—began to emerge and informed the process of refining the terms and the definitions into a second list of codes (Appendix H). These codes began to resemble more theoretical categories because they were beginning to tell the story of what was happening for the participants engaging in POT. The third and final list of codes
(Appendix I) was determined after Phase III of data collection, when data collection was completed. The final list, a combination of etic and emic codes, was reviewed by members of my dissertation committee and used from that point forward. The above description should not be read as a rigid order of steps for coding; my process for coding was best described as recursive and iterative throughout, including the stage of redacting the findings section of this research.

All data was coded with the final codes list using Atlas.ti software. A report was printed for each individual code, for pairs of codes and for the two main “families” of data—Lead Teachers and non-Lead Teachers, the latter to begin the process of looking for trends across subgroups of participants and the data overall. Memos were written throughout the process of printing, reading, and organizing these reports.

**Limitations**

The study has the following limitations:

Participants in this study were limited to those who volunteered to do so. As evidenced by the interview data, all participants also expressed a general interest in and were supportive of the practice of POT. It should not be assumed that a teacher did not volunteer to participate in the study because s/he was opposed to POT; other factors may have prohibited their participation such as time for participation or time to engage in POT at the study site or simple lack of strong interest in the subject. Investigating the reasons for a teacher’s non-participation in POT could inform school policy to support teachers’ future participation. That topic was outside the scope of this study but could be a logical future focus of study.
The study focused on the research questions posed. It did not explore the effects of POT on the study site as an entirety, but rather on the individual teachers. There may be school conditions (structural or social) beyond those offered by the participants that contribute to an individual teacher's experience and interpretation of the meaning of POT. Open-ended interviews, surveys, and journal prompt protocols that encouraged rich responses from participants and the triangulation of combined data sources have a solid foundation upon which the study findings are based.

Delimitations

The delimitations used in this study were informed by my desire to understand how teachers interpret POT in the context of their reflective practice and inquiry stance. I am interested in learning about the range of effects POT has on teacher practices, pedagogy, and collegial relationships. In order to delve deeply into the experiences and ideas of the teacher participants, I limited interview participation to 10, with subjects varying in age, years teaching, grade level, and subject area. The 10 participants represented a rich range of teaching experiences—at the study site and in other educational settings. The small sample size made it possible for data analysis to include a review for any trends within and across participant groups—Lead Teachers or non-Lead Teachers, veteran or new teachers, etc.

In order to place these individual teacher experiences into the broader school context, I distributed to all teachers an anonymous survey in digital and paper formats about POT. The survey consisted of a series of open-ended questions to gain a general understanding of the teaching community's attitudes and beliefs about POT. The
response rate of 40% provided an interesting backdrop to comments about the teaching environment made by the study participants.

Finally, delimitation for this study also took the form of an additional method of data collection, designed after an initial review of data. Interview participants were asked to submit written reflections after observing a colleague. All but two interviewees complied with this request, thus providing me with more opportunities to understand what POT meant for teachers in this study.

Assumptions

This study included the following assumptions: (a) The 10 teachers in this study described their experiences of POT in the interview and the reflective writings completely and accurately; (b) the questions used in the survey, interview, and reflective writing prompts prompted participants to explore deeply and richly the interpretations of their experiences of POT; (c) the goal of triangulated data was met with fidelity by the above mentioned sources plus the archival material and my research journal; (d) the interpretation of data collected was accurate and thus provided a rich understanding of the meaning and effects of POT for the study participants.

These assumptions influenced the research methods in two specific ways. Data collection instruments, specifically the interview and survey protocols and writing prompts, included follow-up and open-ended questions to give participants the opportunity to explicate their answers with examples or additional related ideas. Second, data analysis incorporated emic and etic coding so that the analysis and findings
remained closely connected to the words of the study participants. The analysis relied on the words of the participants rather than on my words as researcher.

Role of Researcher and Issues of Validity

As practitioner researcher, my insider status was forever present in my mind. In my dual role as teacher and administrator, discussed in detail in Chapter 1, I was aware that my administrator status was often present in the minds of the teachers at the school, whether study participants or non-study participants. With the goal of mitigating the possible influence on the data that an administrator asking questions about teacher practice at the study site could have, I stressed my role as practitioner researcher at the school, starting with my direct supervisor. I discussed my research topic and plans with my supervisor, secured his approval and support, and kept him updated throughout the course of the study. I was very explicit about the voluntary nature of participation, that there was no compensation—monetary or any other kind—and that individuals could exit the study at any time. I also was clear about not sharing any of the data collected with the senior leadership team at the study site; my supervisor has expressed an interest in learning about my research findings and I have agreed to work with him to find a format that maintains the confidentiality of the participants and presents the implications for future practice of POT at the school. This research is grounded in the roots of practitioner action research because of my passion to address the new practice of POT with my colleagues in a systematic way (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

As described in Chapter 1, I have been a teacher and administrator at the study site for eight years. I have collaborated with many of the teachers at school on a variety
of co-curricular programs. I believe that my tenure and work with the teachers has afforded me a level of comfort and credibility as a dedicated professional in the community. I believe positive relationships with colleagues facilitated the collection of rich data. Teachers were comfortable talking with me because they knew me. Teachers could also discuss their experiences without having to pause to provide background information about colleagues—i.e., their department, division, years teaching, etc. I was also able to include data in my researcher’s journal and subsequent memos and data analysis because of my being part of the teaching community, i.e., the specifics around the genesis of the two academic initiatives and the lack of specific instructions for or outcomes of POT.

But these relationships may have also presented threats to the validity of this research—some of which I may not have been aware. The various criteria of trustworthiness—validity of outcome, process, democratic, catalytic, and dialogic—as outlined by Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (2007), served as constant reminders to adhere to the research design I created, specifically but not only keeping up with my research journal, memos, and member checks.

Triangulation was also an important part of negotiating my role of practitioner researcher to attempt to mitigate threats to validity. All data sources were read with the multiple sets of codes. I read for trends within data sources and then analyzed for similar trends across all the data sources.

Glesne (2006) describes the participant observer’s role as involving “a way of being present in everyday settings that enhances […] awareness and curiosity about the
interactions” happening around him or her (p. 70). I am very much connected to the people and the practices in the community, having helped develop some initiatives over the years. In the role of researcher, I started my research with two goals, informed by Glesne: one, “to suspend […] personal judgment and concerns,” and two, to nurture my “determination to understand the issues at hand from the participant’s perspective” (p. 70). As a member of the community for almost nine years, I was clearly given to preconceived notions of teachers’ reactions to a school initiative and I constantly pushed back on this inclination—mostly through triangulation of the data collected as outline above.

Summary and Conclusion

Peer observation of teaching is a new practice for some teachers at the study site, and, for all teachers, the expectation that they engage in POT is a new directive from the Head of School. This qualitative study was designed to analyze what meaning is ascribed to POT, and how the practice of peer observation influenced, or not, teachers’ practice and their collegial relationships.

All components of the design—purposeful selection of the research sample, selection and development of data instruments and phases of collection, the data analysis, and the direct efforts to mitigate threats to the validity of the study—were crafted to let the responses of the teachers speak for themselves. I considered my role as practitioner researcher—a member of the school community and active in the practice of POT—a way to engage in inquiry with my colleagues, and a means by which the community could make meaning of observing each other teach.
The next chapter of this dissertation—Presentation and Analysis of the Data—consists of the results of this collective inquiry over the course of eight months.
CHAPTER 4
Results: Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

This qualitative study sought to understand how teachers make meaning of POT in a 2\textsuperscript{nd} through 12\textsuperscript{th} grade independent school. It focused specifically on the range of ways teachers describe POT impacting a teacher’s perception of her own practice, influencing teacher pedagogy, and teacher relationships. The conceptual framework for data analysis was based on Schön’s (1987) theory of reflective practice and Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (2001) theory of inquiry as stance. The data collection process focused on what teachers think about when they are observing a peer’s class, and what they say about the experience. The specific research questions for this study were as follows:

- \textit{How do teachers interpret the experience of peer observation of teaching?}
- \textit{In what ways does POT influence teachers within a school?}
- \textit{What is the range of ways that POT affects how a teacher perceives his or her practice?}
- \textit{In what ways does peer observation influence teacher pedagogy?}
- \textit{How does peer observation influence teacher relationships?}

The data analysis focused on the responses of the study participants—on surveys, in interviews, in writing prompts, and in the researcher’s journal. Their words—the ideas, emotions, and experiences they described—and the words of the related documents including public and private archival material were coded and analyzed for themes and
patterns that related to how teachers interpret the act of entering into a peer’s teaching space to observe the teaching. The data analysis was grounded in the context of POT as a new expectation for teachers, and not POT as a common, established practice at the study site.

This chapter is divided into five sections; the first briefly re-introduces the study sample. Each major finding is presented in the remaining four sections. The data reveal that the teacher participants understand POT as a complex, individualized experience whose meaning is derived from much more than what the observer sees his colleague doing in class. The observer notices curriculum, tasks, interactions between students and teachers, and classroom environment in its totality. Moreover, my analysis of the data indicated that the experience of POT includes what exists outside the timeframe of the observation. The school context, the teaching community, teacher relationships, and a teacher’s own practice influence a teacher’s experience of POT. The data reveal that POT is not one discrete professional activity of watching a peer teach for a specific period of time, but rather a combination of professional activities, reflections, and thoughts that is not time-bound to the time the observer sits in the class observing.

The research around POT discusses various events outside the time period of the observation, specifically activities prior to and post POT. Before the observation, for example, teachers discuss the purpose and/or procedures for the observation, and after the observation, the same group meets to debrief. The research provides insight into the procedural aspects and teacher experiences of POT. My data analysis indicated the lack of a clear, common conceptualization of POT that would address any pre or post-POT
activities. The lack of the guidance creates the opportunity, the space, in which teachers can interpret their experiences with POT against their own sense of expectations, protocols, or outcomes. My role as practitioner researcher allowed me to see the absence of clear structures and protocols and how a teacher's interpretation of POT provided the guidance they needed.

**Study Sample**

The study sample of teacher participants was described and analyzed in detail in Chapter 3. The entire study sample—comprised of participants of phase one (anonymous survey) and phases two and three (interview and journal writing)—is the result of “purposeful selection” for “representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 89). To briefly review, the teachers participating in this study constitute a range of appointed division, years teaching, subject areas, gender, and education level that is representative of the study site. The teachers are assigned to all three school divisions; there is not predominance of lower, middle, or high schools. The teachers have a range of years teaching—from first year to 20+ years—and are members of a cross-section of subject areas. As is typical of the school, the teacher participants also attained an MA or higher degree. When relevant to the data analysis, specific characteristics about each participant—a lower school, a first year, or a Math teacher, etc.—will be included in the presentation of data.

The presentation and data analysis draws on the multiple sources of study data and a variety of collection methods for the purposes of triangulation (Maxwell, 2002). Coding and themes were read within (all interviews, all surveys, etc.) as well as across
data sets. The four findings comprise the analysis of the teachers' experiences of POT, and strive to lead the reader through an exploration of how teachers making meaning of POT including any impacts on pedagogy, self-perception of teacher practice, and teacher relationships. The findings presented in Chapter 4 will serve as an argument in favor of and foundation upon which I build the implications for future practice and further study of Chapter 5.

Finding 1: The P in POT

"The relationship piece is huge."
— Hilary, Personal Communication, 6/8/11

The first finding consists of an analysis of the participants' comments about "peer" of POT, and indicated a lack of shared understanding among the teachers of issues related to the peer dynamics in the context of POT at the study site. The data show that how teachers interpret the role of peer in terms of different aspects of positionality is an integral part of how they interpret the experience of observing their colleagues teach.

The teachers in this study attributed different roles to the peer in the context of POT. The analysis of the teacher's interpretation of the term peer is grounded in the discussion of peer in POT in higher education. Gosling's (2002) work revealed that no matter the peer's role in the school—department member or professional developer from a central office—the "social relationship of power and authority will clearly impact on the interaction" (p. 1). Peers, in this research, may have the same teaching role at the study site but the way the teachers understand the purpose of POT had an impact on how teachers understand the role of peer. MacKinnon's (2001) research into observational feedback also made reference to power and authority. She stated the need to create a
"balance of power" between the observing and observed teachers so as to improve the learning from the feedback, and to help the observed teacher “to retain their sense of ownership and identity since they are not expected to adhere to one 'right way' of teaching” (p. 2). Bell (2001), like Gosling and MacKinnon, studied peer observation in higher education settings and her work stresses the role of peer as collaborative learner in order for POT to serve the purpose of “supportive reflective practice” for teachers. This study took place within a 2nd-12th grade school context, and as such, this finding offers a new dimension about the role of peer to the body of scholarship about POT.

According to Gosling (2002), the role of the peer is also determined by the specific model in which the peer operates. POT as described by the archival material (Archival Document, 4/7/10) appeared to be closest to the “peer review model.” This model is characterized by a lack of supervisory evaluation and participation by all staff. The purpose of the observation is to “engagement in discussion about teaching and self and mutual reflection,” and the relationship between the peers is one of equality (p. 5). The POT program at the study site did indicate a non-supervisory element to observation and all teaching faculty were requested to participate. There was a lack of explicit guidance, however, about individual reflection and/or conversations with colleagues about teaching, and a lack of clarity about the “equality” of peer. This finding examines how teachers respond to this lack of clarity and how their consideration of peer is part of a teacher’s sense-making of POT.

The background and context in Chapter 1 stated that the community’s prior experience with observations of teaching consisted mostly of the teacher’s immediate
supervisor observing for the purpose of evaluations\(^1\). The process after these observations differed from supervisor to supervisor and from division to division. It had ranged from a brief follow-up to a more detailed professional growth and development plan and sometimes included written notification that contract renewal was in jeopardy. As these are private exchanges between supervisor and teacher, there was no public information about the process after an observation for evaluation, and this perceived lack of clarity and information on the part of the teachers had been a source of confusion over the course of my tenure at the school. This data finding will show how the confusion, questions and/or concern about classroom observations by supervisors for the purposes of evaluation appeared to be transferred to the peer of POT in the LT/AC initiative.

It is not a surprise to learn that peer relationships are a factor of POT affecting both the quantity and overall experience of POT. Past research has explored the effects of teacher relationships on how teachers share their practice, on how they view mentoring opportunities, and on how teachers deal with differences of professional opinion (Achinstein, 2002; Beattie, 2002; Bruckerhoff, 1991). Achinstein (2002) focused on the importance of embracing conflict or difference of opinion as catalyst for learning. Beattie (2002) studied learning communities of high schools and the need for the teacher leaders to maintain relationships among peers, and Bruckerhoff (1991) deduced different types of collegiality and what these meant for peer relationships. As this research proves, peers matter and peer relationships have an influence on teacher behaviors and learning in

\(^1\) As noted earlier, the lower school faculty describe themselves as involved in a regular practice of POT. This description was confirmed by the data from a study I completed in 2010.
general. This finding explores teacher relationships as part of how teachers define the role of peer in POT.

The majority of survey respondents—80%—disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *It does not matter which of my peers observe my class* (Survey, 5/11/11). Given the opportunity to explain this answer, respondents indicated a number of factors related to peer relationships—similar or different teaching philosophies or styles, confusion about stated or unstated purpose of POT, and level of trust between peer observer and teacher. Trust was an often-repeated key element in the peer relationship, such as in the statement, “I think [POT] is most effective if it is a peer who you trust and respect,” and “I prefer people I trust and have my best interest at heart over those people I don’t trust” (Survey, 5/11/11). One teacher described why he thought trust played an important role in peer dynamics of POT saying:

There’s that feeling of ‘I want someone to see me at my best,’ and professionally speaking, of course we want people to see us at our best. But we have to get past that. [...] You have to be willing to fail. The hard part is being willing to fail in front of a colleague and that takes a huge leap of faith. It takes a huge environment of trust. (Santiago, Personal Communication, 6/6/11)

Santiago’s comments described a fear or anxiety about being observed because the observer might see the observed teacher make mistakes. If there was a lack of a trusting relationship between the observed teacher and the observer, the fear stemmed from not knowing if the peer would help a colleague improve practice or just evaluate that practice as ineffective. Finding 1 explores the trends among participant responses in how teachers define peer relationships in the context of POT in the absence of a common understanding of the role of the peer in POT.
Although the model for POT at the study site bears similarities with other peer observation models, because of a lack of assessment or evaluation by the peer observer (Gosling, 2022), there are no guidelines for the role of the peer. There is a lack of school-wide discussion or dissemination of a written description about the protocol or procedures for entering a peer’s class as have been delineated by other well-established POT models. What are the peers expected to do or not to do? The majority of the teachers engaging in POT do not meet together pre or post observation to set an agenda or goals for the observation as other models do (Bell, 2001; Elmore, 2009; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). The data in this first finding show that study participants created their own definitions of peer using positionality—how teachers see themselves in relation to their colleagues, their school, and their supervisors—based on teaching experience, position in the k-12 school, and/or appointed title. This finding analyzes the data to understand how peer positionality was an influential factor in peer relationships, and consequently, was part of a teachers’ interpretation of POT.

**Peer in terms of positionality.**

In Chapters 1 and 3, I discussed my roles of practitioner researcher at the study site. To recap briefly my insider/outsider status, I am part of the study in my role of Lead Teacher and in this role, I regularly observe colleagues within my subject department. I have an administrative role separate from the Lead Teacher position but I do not supervise any teachers nor do I conduct any observations for the purposes of evaluation. In the context of this exploration of how teachers make meaning of their experiences of POT, I saw myself as the researcher. When I was observing classes, it was quite possible
that teachers saw me as an administrator. As Maxwell (2002) has stated, the relationships that I have with participants are “complex and changing” (p. 83). Positionality, therefore, was a factor in POT for me. I was negotiating my various roles and positionality within the context of this study, and the data reveal that the teacher participants were undergoing a parallel experience (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). In the data, we see teachers reflecting on, considering, and debating for themselves what are the issues of peer in the context of POT. The data revealed that peer was defined in terms of the teachers’ interpretations of positionality.

To understand how the teacher participants viewed peers in POT, the analysis began with a review of the words they use for peer (Table 7). As is evident, some terms had positive, supportive connotations (buddy, mentor, team member, collaborator, etc.) and others were more negative in tone (intruder, threat, intimidating figure, etc.) Other terms seemed to be neutral (observer, colleague, another student, participant, invisible, etc.)
Table 8.

Terms to Describe Peer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer, visitor, colleague, buddy, “checking” on someone*, observer, learner, researcher, intrude [intruder], witness, threat, threatening, team member, department member, teacher, supervisor, finger pointer, part of a community of learners, more experienced, evaluator, expert, another student, sponge, participant, invisible, friend, collaborator, mentor, assistant teacher, intimidating figure, photographer, note taker, new teacher, veteran teacher, cooperating teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Study participant asked for data to enclose “checking” in quotation marks.

The terms above indicate the many ways teachers defined peer in the context of POT. The terms above were used across all the data sources. “Peer” was, not surprisingly, the most commonly used term appearing across all data sources by all study participants. The one-word definitions implied what the observer would do (or not do) when in the class; each term implied an activity associated with observing. Because there was a lack of pattern of usage of each term, my analysis concluded that teachers were searching for ways to understand or define peer. My analysis resulted in finding 1, capturing my understanding of how the study participants’ various forms of positionality shaped the definitions of peer and the various terms used above (Table 8) to refer to the observing teacher.
As I noted in Chapter 1, the school leadership loosely conceptualized POT for the teachers. There was a lack of guidance of how to initiate and conduct peer observations, and a lack of specific instruction as to what was expected after observing a peer’s class. The various terms used to indicate the role of the observing teacher indicated to me the search for clarity of the peer in POT.

The literature of teacher relationships and mentoring reviewed for this study were the backdrop for this finding. Bieler’s (2004) work to organize mentor-mentee relationships contributes to the analysis of this finding because mentors observe their mentees regularly. Bieler focused on dialogic mentoring relationships. Although not all teachers in this study identified the peer as a mentor, Bieler’s work informed the idea of peer relationships in this finding because observation was common to participants in both studies. Bieler’s study distinguishes between four types of mentor-mentee relationships that are based on what purpose the mentor serves—to provide expertise, to coach the mentee about their content “knowledge and skills,” to act as emotional support, or to disrupt the “status quo” practices of the mentee. Feiman-Nemser’s research about mentors (2001) attributes one of three perspectives to a mentor; she can be a local guide, an educational companion, or agent for change. Bieler has identified the different types of mentors by the purpose they serve and Feimen-Nemser has implied specific behaviors according to a perspective. The list in Table 8 is a list of terms that the teachers substitute for peer when talking about POT. The terms do not have an explicit purpose or a particular perspective assigned. One Lead Teacher described the confusion around the term peer in the following way:
This dynamic makes my job both easier and harder—easier because I can
tell a teacher that my visit to his/her class is not evaluative and harder
because my purpose (to learn what’s going on in the curriculum and to
facilitate discussion) seems just vague enough to arouse either suspicion or
a sense that the visit doesn’t mean much. (Bill, Personal Communication,
(5/25/11)

The dynamic referred to by Bill was the confusion around the term peer. The
analysis that follows for this finding will address how teachers define peer. Data analysis
of the aspects of positionality, presented in the next sections of this finding, indicated the
nature and purpose of the peer relationships as they were played out in the context of
POT.

This finding focuses on the P—peer in POT—for the study participants. The
archival material about Lead Teachers offers the definition of peers as “not a
management position with supervisory implications” (Archival Document, 5/14/11).
There is no discussion with Lead Teachers, to my knowledge as participant researcher,
about what peer for POT is. Nor is there language to define peer for POT when all
teachers at the study site are requested to observe a colleague’s class. In the absence of an
officially stated definition of peer, the teacher participants demonstrated how they are
problematizing peer as part of their interpretation of POT experiences; teachers bring to
the forefront issues of positionality as a way to define peer in the context of POT.

When I juxtapose the list of terms teachers used to describe their colleagues in
this study (Table 8) alongside the terms I read when reviewing the scholarship about
teacher relationships, I see something curious: The lists are similar. The major difference
between the teachers in the study and the researchers is that the researchers use the terms

2 Italics are my emphasis.
in a discussion of what teachers do as mentor, as collaborator, etc. Although the teachers had not discussed with nor defined for each other what peer, buddy, threat, colleague, etc. meant. I believe the data indicated that they are using the terms—mentor, collaborator—as the researchers do, to refer to what they, in the role of observing teacher, did while observing.

When I first read the terms (Table 8), I initially concluded that they delineated either a positive, supportive role for the observer or a more evaluative or perhaps suspicious role for the observing teacher. The terms mentor, collaborator, learner, team member, and friend connote a helping role and as such is seen as friendly and non-threatening. The terms threat, intruder, evaluator, intimidating figure imply an antagonistic role for the observer. These roles—helper or antagonist—were simplistic and created a false binary, but were appropriate for an initial reading of the transcripts, surveys, and responses to writing prompts. Further analysis yielded a more systematic definition of peer in POT that was consistent across the data that was based on various aspects of positionality.

Positionality with regard to social connections.

A few teacher participants did comment on how being friends or interacting socially outside school affected their professional connections. Social relationships can result from a variety of activities. Bruckerhoff (1991) examined how teachers position themselves socially in a school. Teachers that meet to socialize during the school day or outside of school, that have similar social backgrounds, and/or that have worked in the same department or area of the school for a number of years are able to draw on that
knowledge of their colleague when engaging in a joint activity, such as POT. Eduardo, for example, spoke about his social connections:

It has to do with our relationships... that you have outside work. Like, for instance, the people that I’m very close to in the school are the people that I can take a walk with them, or I can talk to them, or I can call them on their cell phones and have a little chat about anything. (Personal Communication, 5/26/11)

Eduardo was making a connection between his social relationships and his comfort level to talk about “anything.” Anything surely included teaching. Gail echoed this sentiment saying about her colleagues, “socially we were together also, we really connected. We went to, you know, XX’s sons’ weddings...” (Gail, Personal Communication, 6/27/11). Santiago added to this data, “Are you being visited by a colleague or are you being visited by a buddy?” and “you want to [observe] because you’ve really developed a great relationship with your colleagues and you’re honest to goodnessly [sic] curious about what someone’s doing that day” (Personal Communication, 6/6/11). Here, we read how a teacher’s social connections—inside or outside school—influence their peer relationships, and thus, how these teachers define peer as friend. Across the quotations, I detected a theme of friendship.

“Having a great relationship” and being “very close to” defined the peer as friend or buddy. I inferred from Eduardo’s comments that friends are seen as supportive and positive. A peer that is a friend observing you would result in a positive experience. If a social connection is absent from peer, perhaps for a “department member” or “part of a community of learners” (Table 8), does that mean that these conversations and
observations would be different? Finding 1 explores how teachers used positionality to
define peer in the absence of a social connection with the peer observing their classes.

The concept of positionality was a factor in a teacher’s experience of POT. Teachers did not talk solely about observing teaching; they talked about the role of peer in the experience. The data analysis revealed the variety of ways teachers interpreted issues of positionality, and supports the theory that positionality is based on teacher experience and teacher identity (MacDonald & Glover, 1997). This study adds to MacDonald and Glover’s work the data analysis of teacher positionality within a vertical, k-12 school setting and of positionality of peers with appointed titles.

**Positionality with regard to years of teaching experience.**

Perhaps the most studied aspect of positionality relates to experienced and novice teachers in the context of mentoring (Awaya et al., 2003; Bieler, 2004; Zellers, 2008). The researchers cited here viewed observation as a mentoring activity in which the novice teacher learns his craft by watching a more experienced colleague teach. 3 No study participant mentioned the school’s official program in their comments in this study.

Indeed, one new teacher talked about her positionality of new teacher, saying, “I think I’ve always sort of been in a position where it has been older people that have been observing, so it’s been more anxiety” (Lily, Personal Communication, 6/15/11). Another teacher, an educator with more than 20 years experience, recalled. “I felt nervous when some of the older teachers were watching me” (Gail, Personal Communication, 6/27/11).

---

3 There is a mentoring program for all faculty new to the study site—regardless of their years of teaching experience. Among the activities is a regular observation of each other’s classes for the express purpose of helping the new-to-Sunny-School teacher learn. The program pairs a new teacher with a “seasoned Sunny School teacher” for observation and “the opportunity to […] get feedback from [said teacher]” (study site website).
These comments illustrated the teachers’ awareness of their status as new teachers and the emotional effects being now caused. These teachers were peers but they perceived a difference in status in the community and a different level of comfort with colleagues based on their position as new teacher. The study focused on how a teacher interpreted their experience of POT, and these quotes illustrated that a recognition of status dynamics at the study site was part of the interpretation. Although the implicit focus of POT is on teaching, it is clear above and in the following sections of this finding that teachers are focusing on the peer too. This finding addresses the research questions about a teacher’s interpretation of POT as well as any effects on teacher relationships.

Positionality is not static; some aspects can change or the way teachers feel about their positionality can change. The teacher spoke of a change saying, “I don’t think I would be as nervous if someone were watching because I’ve been on the flipside of that. I know you’re not judging the person, you’re just observing the class” (Lily, Personal Communication, 6/15/11). Lily was reflecting back to how she felt as a new teacher and comparing it to how she feels as an experienced teacher now, as she engaged in POT at the site. Stating the obvious, the positionality did not change for these new teachers; during the course of the data collection period, they were still new teachers. The change was in how much influence their positionality, with regard to their years of teaching experience, exerted on their experience of POT.

We can make a parallel statement about the changing nature of positionality with regard to social relationships over time. Teachers remained in their same teaching positions throughout the school year but the choices about with whom they socialized
during free time or after hours could have changed. And there was clear evidence in the data the POT fostered peer relationships, such as “I have found, I think universally that, the relationship has felt closer after I’ve visited a class” (Bill, Personal Communication, 5/25/11) and “I think that the fact that we were willing to support each other with observations and suggestions and sharing ideas, that made us even stronger as a group, both professionally and created a social group too out of it” (Gabriel, Personal Communication, 6/30/11). A teacher was aware of the social connection and, like teaching experience, considered those aspects of positionality when reflecting on their experiences observing colleagues.

It was logical to flip this idea of new teachers-more-nervous-about-POT, and think that teachers with more years of teaching experience would not be nervous when observed. To extend this thinking, one could imagine that an experienced teacher would not care about or be interested in observing teachers with less experience. The detailed information about the study sample presented in Chapter 3 revealed that this was probably not the case given the descriptive statistics of the sample. The teaching experience of the study sample skewed toward six or more years, with 40% of interview participants and of survey respondents self-reporting as teaching for 16 or more years. Statistically speaking, there were more experienced teachers engaging in POT participating in this study. At the study site, there were more experienced teachers than new teachers; it was statistically possible and probable that the observing teacher had more years teaching experience than the colleague they were observing.

The data collected from surveys, interviews, and responses to the writing prompts
asserted that teachers with more teaching experience saw benefits to observing a
colleague—without distinguishing between observing a new or veteran teacher. A teacher
with 16+ years experience agreed that POT was a helpful tool for his teaching practice,
and said in the survey, “I do think there are plenty of brilliant minds here…” A teacher
self-identifying as teaching for 11-15 years strongly agreed that POT was a helpful tool,
saying:

I always learn from watching my peers teach whether it is a new
idea/technique to use in my own practice, or to remind me of a teaching
tool that I have forgotten, or as a reflection of my own teaching practice
(Survey, 5/11/11).

In interviews, the teachers with 11 plus years of teaching experience shared a
variety of advantages that resulted from POT. Malena emphasized “learning every day
[...] how I can do new things in my classes” (Personal Communication, 6/20/11).
Santiago expressed enthusiasm for observation because of an interest in what a colleague
was doing as, “You see something amazing on the wall or amazing on the Smartboard or
you’re caught up in a fantastic conversation that you just have to hear the end of. And if
you have a free period, there’s not much better to do” (Personal Communication, 6/6/11).

In responses to the writing prompts (Appendix F), four experienced teachers
shared specific ideas they learned from a younger teacher. One talked about “borrowing
textbooks,” (George, Journal, 6/10/11). Malena mentioned learning about a new online
recording program. Treplad commented about how observing a younger teacher helped
him learn more about himself, saying “the experience clearly caused me to self-evaluate,
rather than evaluate the person I observed” (Personal Communication, 6/16/11). And a
fourth teacher added, “I have learned a lot from sitting in on classes” (Bill, Personal
Communication, 5/25/11). These responses all spoke to the idea of learning from younger teachers. As the researcher, I knew that the observed teachers were younger because these were the responses of a teacher with 44, 22, 23, and 11 years of teaching experience, respectively.

Reading across the above quotations from teachers with 11+ years teaching, we see that experienced teachers valued observing their colleagues and did not consider an observation of a new teacher less valid than observing a veteran teacher. This data analysis supported the scholarship around mentoring (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000), collaborative mentoring or co-mentoring (Schultz, 2008) and mentoring relationships (Hanson, 2010; Huebner, 2009) that examines the mentor’s experiences in the mentor-mentee relationships. The mentor, often the experienced teacher, is not the only expert in the mentor-mentee pair; mentors are also learning from their mentees. The two are combining their teacher knowledge and skills.

If the veteran teachers believe they can learn from observing their peers—be it a new or experienced teacher, as the data above indicated and research concurred—what do the new teachers say? The new teachers, above, described initially being nervous when observed by a veteran teacher. Does the emotional factor of this aspect of positionality act as an impediment to observing? One new teacher shared, “And I knew, you know, that observing anyone, not just a master teacher or a veteran teacher, anyone would help me tremendously” (Hilary, Personal Communication, 6/8/11), and Gail recalled being a new teacher saying, “I love the idea of peer observations. Both, I loved it when I was a teacher and I love it now as an administrator. Back when I was teaching, everything I
learned about teaching was from my peer teachers, who at that time, they were actually more like mentor teachers. I mean we were peers” (Personal Communication, 6/27/11). Gail’s multiple use of the phrase “peer teachers” stressed the image of peers working together, as equals, even though she acknowledged the mentor/mentee veteran/new positionality. When this same participant said, “We are all great resources for each other and everybody brings something a little bit different to the table” she was again emphasizing the idea that new and veteran teachers are peers in that they both have knowledge to share. She is aware of the dynamic of positionality but continued to value equally the experiences of all teachers. These three teachers represented the voices of “new” teachers in the study sample, either because they were in their first years of teaching or because they were remembering what it felt like to be new to teaching. They recognized their status as new in relation to their peers and yet were clear to point out that being new did not impact how much they learned from a peer and, more importantly, how they contributed to their colleagues’ learning. Even though peers—with few years or many years teaching experience—“are all great resources,” identifying who that peer was based on this aspect of positionality was part of their interpretation of the experience of POT.

As always, there were exceptions. Originally, one participant was wary of observing a more experienced teacher recalling her days as a student at the study site. But after one observation, her opinion changed and she shared, “there’s been a couple times where you appreciate someone completely differently after seeing them in class or after seeing them work with the kids. It’s like oh, you actually know a lot” (Lily, Personal
Communication, 6/15/11). This realization was important to the data analysis for this finding for two reasons: one, it indicated that at least one new teacher did not view all experienced teachers as the same type of teacher. This may have been an outlier comment but it was necessary to notice comments that fell outside this finding analysis. Lily’s statement was also important because it indicated an effect of POT on relationships—a teacher’s opinion of a peer’s professional expertise was elevated after the observation. Positionality based on years teaching became less of a factor for this observing teacher once she was in the room observing.

A number of study participants referenced years of experience using phrases like “new” or “novice” teacher and “veteran” teacher or “experienced” teacher, indicating the teacher’s awareness of his positionality as teaching experience. Although the “relationship piece is huge” (Hilary, Personal Communication, 6/8/11) and was clearly a factor in how teachers operationalized the P in POT, the aspect of positionality concerning years of teaching experience was not insurmountable and did not impede regular engagement with POT. The data revealed that the teachers decided that the value of what a new teacher and a veteran teacher offered, or rather that the observing teacher could learn from being in their classes, was equitable. Each participant expressed some form of the following opinion, “We are all great resources for each other and everybody brings something a little bit different to the table” (Gail, Personal Communication, 6/27/11). Specific data about what people learn from their peers will be presented in finding number two.

This finding explores how teachers considered different aspects of positionality to
define the role of peer when there was a social connection of peer as “buddy” or friend and when there was a lack of this social connection. This first section examined the data around teachers’ perception of positionality based on years of teaching experience. The analysis illustrated how positionality, based on length of time teaching either at the study site or length of time teaching overall did not communicate any special level of expertise or a better teacher to observe; the new and veteran teachers were peers in that they each had something to “bring to the table.” The data also supported the mentoring research that purports that veteran teachers learn and benefit from observation as much as the new teacher. This exploration of positionality as the way teachers define peer in POT will continue with a focus on a teacher’s position with the k-12 structure of the school.

**Positionality with regard to professional identity: Subject area and vertical location.**

Another aspect of positionality is based on a teacher’s professional identity within the school setting. The literature reviewed for this study included how teachers self-identify as a specific subject area teacher (MacDonald & Glover, 1997; Siskin, 1994) and by particular aspects of their local context (Little, 1990). Local contexts are defined in this study as social and professional norms of behavior and structure in the teacher’s school. One local context particular to the study site that was mentioned by the study participants was a teacher’s position within the vertical structure of the school, specifically whether she was a lower, middle, or high school teacher. The teachers exhibited an awareness of their own positionality in the local contexts—department and division—as well as that of their peers. This may have been the teachers’ reflecting the fact that the announcement about the new academic initiatives stressed the vertical nature
of the review of curriculum and pedagogy, but the teachers were viewing the vertical position as part of their interpretation of peer relationships.

The data revealed that the teachers attributed similar concerns and fears about teachers in another school division. The teachers were nervous about the motives for observation or the actions post observation of an observing teacher from a different division. As noted earlier in the discussion of this finding, in the absence of a social relationship, teachers were exploring what peer meant in this practice of POT. It was not uncommon for teachers to maintain the majority of their social relationships within their division and not have strong social connections with teachers in another division. This section of the discussion of positionality explores how professional identity based on subject area and vertical location factors into a teacher’s experiences of POT.

Participants identified themselves by subject area: “I’m talking so much about art,” (Hilary, Personal Communication, 6/8/11), “maybe because I’m a Spanish teacher,” (Malena, Personal Communication, 6/20/11), and “from a theater standpoint,” (Treplad, Personal Communication, 6/16/11). As discussed in Chapter 3, the research sample represented all subject areas within the school and this study did not focus on a particular group of teachers interpreting POT, for example how Science teachers view POT. Teachers in the study affirmed the research that subject area is one aspect of a teacher’s professional identity.

Unique to teacher identity in this study was particular to their local context, specifically how they saw themselves in the vertical structure of the school and in relation to appointed titles. These two aspects of positionality were not unique to the study site
but rather are common to many independent schools. The study site was a three year-olds through 12th grade program, and one that represented various titular positions, such as Lead Teachers. Teacher comments showed an awareness of positionality based on these aspects of their local context. They supported the analysis for finding 1 that teachers considered positionality as a way to understand the nature and purpose of the peer relationship between observing and observed teacher.

Hargreaves and Dawe’s (1990) exploration of peer dynamics when teachers are collaborating resulted in their identifying two types of relationships; teachers were engaged in authentic joint work or were connected by a sense of contrived collegiality. Their research relates to this aspect of positionality in that the authors and I recognized the barriers among teachers based on professional identity of department and division. The Lead Teacher initiative was akin to the peer-coaching model they discuss, and the data analysis for this finding supported the theory that teachers were entering a new way of thinking when they entered another teacher’s classroom or division. How teachers defined peer based on positionality was a means of assessing whether the relationship was authentically peer-to-peer, akin to the idea of “joint work,” or something else. Upon analyzing the data, I concluded that the idea of peer as something else was a catalyst for the teachers’ exploring various aspects of positionality when asked about peer observation.

The study site was a k-12 school. Activities for k-12 teachers were referred to as vertical activities. One aspect of professional identity prevalent in the data analysis was the division level (lower, middle, or high school) in which a teacher taught—in essence,
their vertical position. Peer relationships were defined, in part, by how teachers viewed themselves in relation to their peers in different divisions. In a very simple, perhaps benign form, this positionality communicated a heightened awareness of position; as Eduardo stated, “I think we are very conscious of, I don’t know if it’s conscious, but we are guarded a little bit” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11). Bill made a clear reference to how he spoke mostly with those folks in his divisions, prior to the Lead Teacher/Academic Cabinet initiatives, “in my division because those conversations were happening anyway, but outside my division, I have more conversations with people because of the Lead Teacher thing” (Personal Communication, 5/25/11). Conversations could have been pleasant, even if there was a “guarded” quality, but a pleasant conversation was not guaranteed. Referencing the vertical again, Bill conjectured what some of his colleagues were thinking about POT in the new Lead Teacher initiative saying, “am I going to be attacked for what I do? In this grand vertical design, I’m not doing what I’m supposed to do” (Personal Communication, 5/25/11). The teachers’ comments here, in reference to their vertical position in the school, provided an overview of the range of responses to this aspect of positionality—from feeling guarded to fear of attack—that became the ways that teachers problematized the role of peer with respect to position within the vertical structure.

The perception of vertical positionality was profound for teachers; all interview participants spoke to it. One teacher commented that “even though there’s lots of

---

4 As described in the study sample section in Chapter 3, there are a number of teachers that taught, at the study site or before, in multiple divisions. With one exception, Santiago, teachers did not reference this aspect of crossing between divisions or teaching in multiple divisions.
friendliness in the school, there is little trust or understanding between divisions when it comes to pedagogy or curricular issues” (Bill, Personal Communication, 5/25/11), and this division between the divisions was underscored with the example “it’s like IBM in Pakistan and IBM in London” (Treplad, Personal Communication, 6/16/11) when talking about the similarities between two different school buildings. Eduardo, quoted above, revisited the idea of vertical positionality and shared this reflection: “so it was basically about blaming each other about the competence of the kids. In whatever subject. It was about, it was a war among divisions. [...] probably it is an exaggeration, but honestly, sometimes it felt like it was war among divisions. But now, it doesn’t feel like a war among divisions, it feels like a department working together” (Eduardo, Personal Communication, 5/26/11). Across these comments we can see teachers were very aware that the divisions were separated and teacher relationships were affected by this separation. Eduardo’s final comment above, however, implied optimism for the power of POT to break down the various barriers of the vertical structure.

Within the vertical structure of the school there was a hierarchy that located teachers of older students on the top of the status ladder. One teacher aptly identified the basis for the status as stereotypes, elaborating, “how teachers of the very little kids are glorified babysitters and teaches of older kids using textbooks” (Santiago, Personal Communication, 6/6/11). Gail appeared to give a reason for the incorrect assumptions about teacher work in other divisions saying, “because when you don’t know what’s going on around you, you question and wonder. I think teachers sometimes have a tendency to think they’re working harder than other people” (Personal Communication,
The hierarchy communicated, for some, that high school teachers were doing the real work in the school. Confirming any reality of this claim was outside the scope of this research; what mattered for this data analysis, however, was that teachers were considering their positionality within the vertical structure of the school using this information—whether the information was based on stereotype or truth.

The hierarchy of status influenced who was engaging in POT and whom they were observing. In one department, a teacher identified “the tendency to ‘visit up’ [...] to see older classes so as to know what a teacher is preparing her or his students to do” (Santiago, Personal Communication, 6/6/11). While another talked about observing down or students in younger grades saying, “how it’s good for the school, because you see this has informed me of what students will be coming into my upper school course with” (George, Personal Communication, 5/26/11). These quotes indicated that the data was mixed with regards to how positionality of this type affects POT. Vertical position, then, may not be the reason for “war” or for being “guarded,” but vertical positions conveyed a sense of local or divisional knowledge that a peer in another division would not know.

The elevated status of high school teachers was communicated in their perceived ability to dictate curriculum and pedagogy for the teachers lower down in the hierarchy as reflected in two statements by Bill:

I think there’s always the fear that the older division, because it’s the end point, gets to dictate or will maybe get to dictate to the other groups, because as soon as you get into this kind of thing, moving backwards, and everything. That seems like a threat to people. (Personal Communication, 5/25/11)

Further, Bill stated:
...even though nobody ever says this in a public meeting, I think they say it all the time behind the scenes, is okay, we’re getting a sense now of what happens in every grade, so when are we going to fix all the other grades that don’t do the things that I know need to be done. And the flipside of that is, am I going to be attacked for what I do? In this grand vertical design, I’m not doing what I’m supposed to do (Personal Communication, 5/25/11).

As these comments indicated, even if the observer were called a peer, his positionality within the vertical structure would enable him to act like a supervisor and mandate changes in another teacher’s practice or curriculum. Bill’s first comment indicates the apprehension, on the part of lower or middle school teachers, that the high school teacher observers would begin to list specific changes that the lower or middle school teachers needed to make in curriculum and pedagogy based on what they observed. Later in the interview, his comments reveal that many teachers were concerned about a peer observation resulting in an obligation to change individual teaching practices. Bill’s comments highlight the assumption made by many teachers at the study site: If the observing teacher was from another division, POT would lead to the observing teacher’s dictating curricular changes to the observed teacher. Further analysis reveals that the teachers apprehensive about having to change their own practice post POT were the same teachers that expressed the desire to change or “fix all the other grades” post POT. Without clear guidance about the role of peer in POT, teachers made assumptions about what teachers would do based on difference of positionality between observed and observing teacher.

To provide context to the separation of divisions, it is important to know that the lower, middle, and high schools were separate in that the leadership and budgets acted
independently of one another. As part of the same school, there was a certain amount of coordination that was required to share one city building, such as school calendar and daily schedule. Interdivisional projects, meetings, and plans were few and limited in scope, so teachers did not have regular meeting times or conversations across the division until the Lead Teacher/Academic Cabinet initiative. Teachers were then required to attend vertical meetings and participate in a review of curriculum and pedagogy as facilitated by the Lead Teacher. This study of POT took place at the time of this shift.

When a teacher talked about one teacher entering another’s classroom saying, “anything that then goes into that space is interpreted as threat, or at least potentially interpreted that way” (Bill, Personal Communication, 5/25/11), I saw the parallel with that of entering into another division had the potential to be seen as a threat or threatening.

As always, there are exceptions to a conclusion, but this exception does not invalidate this section of the data analysis; it actually supports it. Not all teachers expressed a feeling of threat or attack when entering another division.

I have noticed I feel certain teachers are more comfortable having me come in than others. [...] I think they’re the teachers who are already extending themselves [...] beyond their own classrooms to the larger world and so they just look at my visit as another part of that (George, Personal Communication, 5/26/11).

The lack of threat, in this teacher’s opinion, stemmed from two connected circumstances. One, the already existing practice of these teachers observing and being observed in contexts outside of school, and two, a friendly relationship between George and the teachers he referenced. As stated already, when there was a friendship between peers, the teachers did not examine different aspects of positionality to decide what role
the peer would play in the observation.

Divisional identity also appeared in comments about who was engaging in POT as indicated in the following two statements:

And also, it has become part of our routine also, in the lower school…well, how was your vertical? What did you guys talk about? So there is a lot of sharing on that too. So, little by little, it’s becoming part of our talk. (Eduardo, Personal Communication, 5/26/11)

A teacher in the same division shared this same type of observation saying:

I remember more middle school and high school teachers expressing minor consternation [about POT] whereas the lower school people didn’t seem to have that same level of concern. (Treplad, Personal Communication, 6/16/11)

These comments indicated that there was a bit of pride in divisional identity in that one division was engaging in more POT than others divisions.

Across the quotes for the presentation of positionality based on vertical position, I saw two trends in the data. One, there appeared to be a lack unity among the three divisions. The data indicated that teachers were aware of the separations between divisions and ascribed certain behaviors to the teachers of other divisions. The connections, or lack thereof, between the two school buildings—“IBM in London and IBM in Pakistan”—could have, perhaps, also described the divisional disconnects of the 2nd through 12th grade that is housed in the same school building. The second data trend pertained to what teachers in one division assumed about teachers in another—they all assumed that the teachers in the other division would demand changes be made to their classes post-POT. The teachers of younger grades assumed that the high school teachers would “dictate” curriculum and pedagogy in the lower, and the teachers of high school
assumed that the teachers in the younger grades were planning “attacks” post-POT.

The first section of the discussion of finding 1 illustrated how teachers defined the peer by considering positionality based on social connections, years of teaching experience, and divisional identity. If the observing teacher was not a friend already, teachers began to consider whether that person could be a “buddy” or, based on how many years the person had been teaching or in what division they taught, would they be more “threat” or “evaluator.” Divisional identity, however, was only one type of identity directly connected to the local context. The next part of the discussion of positionality considers positionality with respect to specific titular roles in the study site.

**Positionality with regard to professional identity: Appointed title.**

Administrative titles were common and varied at the study site (Appendix J). The term “appointed” referred to positions or titles that were conferred upon a teacher by the Head of School without an application and interview process, and they were subsequently announced to all members of the school community. Although all such appointments were officially made and announced by the Head of School, there was often an implied reference to a committee of senior-level administrators that participated in the appointment decision, such as in the case of the Lead Teacher appointments (Archival Document, 5/14/10).

Although many of the titular positions (Appendix J) did consist of a supervisory relationship with faculty, not all do. The Lead Teacher was an example of an appointed title that did not include supervisory responsibilities. Supervision in the context of the study questions referred to evaluating, assessing and/or requiring changes to curriculum,
or pedagogy. The Lead Teachers were “charged with promoting curricular and pedagogical coherence across the divisions within specific subject areas,” but it was clearly stated, “though the decision-making about curriculum ultimately rests with the Division Director, the Lead Teachers will be a great asset to moving our curricular work forward” (Archival Document, 4/27/10). The email description for the Lead Teacher program that accompanied the Lead Teacher job description, emailed only to Lead Teachers (Appendix K), offered more explanation about the parameters of the role with the following:

While the Vertical program over the past three years has served to bring teachers from different divisions together across subject areas to talk about their work and plan interdivisional projects, The Lead Teacher program will go further by vesting the Lead Teachers with significant responsibility and oversight for the program by subject area and across divisional lines, in partnership with the Division Directors and Lead Teacher Supervisor (Archival Document 4/7/10).

This finding analyzes the data pertaining to how teachers interpreted what peer means when they reflect on their experiences of POT. As seen above and in the background and context section of Chapter 1, multiple official school communications offered descriptions of the Lead Teacher role. The data show that teachers explored, for themselves, the concept of peer as part of their sense making of POT. I have discussed positionality in terms of social connections, years of teaching experience, and location in the vertical structure of the school. This section examines how teachers viewed their position relative to appointed positions in the community, specifically the Lead Teacher. The data in this section will also reveal that the vast majority of comments about peer relationships in the context of the Lead Teacher initiative were from Lead Teachers.
The analysis of data around positionality with respect to appointed title also began with a review of the variety of terms that teachers used to reference the observing teacher (Table 8). As stated previously in this chapter, some terms conjured up negative images and others, positive experiences, while others viewed the observer in a neutral position. The study participants considered the positionality of Lead Teacher as a way to define the role of the peer in POT. Relevant to this aspect of positionality was the clarity with respect to appointed positions that did have a supervisory responsibility: observation signified evaluation for most all study participants. Even when a school communication stated, “This is not a management position with supervisory implications” (Archival Document, 5/12/10) the positionality and relationship between the Lead Teachers and observed teachers was murky. How was a peer a peer if that peer has an appointed title? The data revealed that positionality with respect to appointed titles influenced whether the person was viewed as a “buddy” or “threat.”

George, a Lead Teacher, commented, “when you’re going peer to peer, equal to equal, then it’s a collegial relationship” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11) and Treplad, another Lead Teacher, clarified what is peer in POT for him saying, “peer observation in its purest form […] because it is peer to peer […] is not being a supervisor” (Personal Communication, 6/16/11). George, also an experienced teacher, made multiple references to peers as equals. The idea of seeing teachers as equal teachers, because peers are equals as he stated above, connects to his additional comments related to the opinion that the Lead Teacher is not “equal to equal.”

I thought it [POT] ought to be universal not just Lead Teacher. And I think I would take it out of the Lead Teacher description, but make it part of our
teaching professional development. [...] This would also put the departments on an equal footing; everybody's doing it. (Personal Communication, 5/26/11)

George acknowledged in this quote that Lead Teachers were not considered equal peers in the context of POT. He, however, was committed to the possibility and the benefits of revising the Lead Teacher role to be equal to that of a teacher, and added, “The idea of making the visitations something for everybody—that levels the playing field in the sense that it doesn’t set up one teacher above another. This can strike, I think, a better sense of equity” (George, Personal Communication, 5/26/11). George went on to say that he explored the idea of returning the Lead Teacher stipend because he did not think he should be compensated for observing his colleagues when his colleagues were not being paid to engage in POT.

The statements above reference the need to clarify the role of peer observer so that POT would not be construed to be an evaluating observation. The data showed that the Lead Teachers felt the onus of clarifying the role most acutely. Other data showed, however, how being a Lead Teacher made POT easier because teachers did not deny an observation. Again, the data set reveals comments by Lead Teachers about this aspect of positionality.

The Lead Teacher thing [...] there's [sic] just conversations that happen that probably wouldn't happen. Especially, not so much in my division because those conversations were happening anyway, but outside my division, I have more conversations with people because of the lead teacher thing. (Bill, Personal Communication, 5/25/11)

Also from Bill:

If it was somebody I didn’t know very well or hadn’t spent a lot of time in their division, I almost universally just felt closer to people. And I think
that was mutual too just because, you know, conversations felt easier after that. (Personal Communication, 5/25/11)

Bill’s comments illustrated how the positionality based on an appointed title can also help with POT because teachers know that the Lead Teacher is expected to engage in POT, regardless of how the teacher feels about it.

Positionality as it pertained to an appointed titled position of Lead Teacher presented challenges for the Lead Teachers as the data show above. Were they peers? What kind of peers? The statements above, all from Lead Teachers, indicated how they were problematizing the type of peer they wanted to be known as—an “equal,” “on the same playing field.” As the data indicated for positionality, non-Lead Teachers were more concerned with how their peers viewed Lead Teacher positionality. Lead Teachers, as the data in the previous section showed, based their concept of peer on a teacher’s position in the vertical school structure. This difference in emphasis of positionality was the one major notable difference in the data from the subset of Lead Teachers and the subset of non-Lead Teachers.

Teachers were clearly aware of where they stand in relation to their peers regarding a number of factors—social connections, vertical position, title, and years of teaching experience, and this awareness factored into a teacher’s interpretation of POT. The data reveal that teachers were defining peer incorporating the factors explored in this finding. Positionality appeared to indicate what the observing teacher would do during or after POT in a more detailed fashion than the terms indicated in Table 8. All teacher participants, however, appeared to put aside their thoughts of positionality of experience when in the classroom observing. I use the phrase “put aside” to mean that the dynamics
of peer relationships operationalized through an examination of positionality before the teacher entered the classroom to observe became less of a factor of POT when the teacher was sitting in class observing. The observing teacher’s focus turned to the teaching and other classroom dynamics that will be explored in finding number three.

Positionality based on social connections, years experience teaching, appointed title and vertical identity was a teacher’s focus before they entered their colleague’s class. Perhaps positionality was the symbolic threshold of the classroom space. Once passed, it was literally and figuratively “behind” the observing teaching. As Gosling (2002) describes in his discussion of the peer review model, observing teachers are considered equals because neither teacher has a supervisory responsibility over the other. The data presented in the discussion of this first finding indicate that the teachers’ interpretations of their experiences with POT include an examination of the peer dynamics through various lenses of positionality.

In the absence of a social relationship, teachers outlined the type of relationship they had with the colleague. The study indicates that once teachers engaged in POT, they began to develop and define the peer relationships as a relationship among equals, with various teachers describing being “closer” to colleagues. This finding supports the research about positive teacher relationships that result from teacher activities centered on practice (Beattie, 2002). As positionality became less of a concern for teachers engaging in POT, the teachers turned their focus to the teaching and curriculum they were observing. Finding 2 will examine how teachers interpreted what happened during their observations.
Finding 2: POT as A First Step toward Transformational Review of Curriculum and Pedagogy

“...I’m very happy that I don’t have to go reinvent a wheel.”
— George, Personal Communication, 5/26/11

Finding 2 concluded that although the participants in this study spoke in favorable terms about their experiences and potential outcomes from observing colleagues teach, POT was not described in terms of a transformative professional experience. While in a peer’s class, the observers tended to focus on what resonated or differed from their own teaching practice. The data show the potential for transformative outcomes based on future changes in the community but not necessarily in individual teacher practice.

Finding 2 two explores how teachers interpret their experiences with POT while they are in the act of observation—it captures real-time thinking and sense making. This section of data analysis addresses the research question of potential impact of the observation on their practice. This finding is grounded in Schön’s (1987) theory of reflective practice; the comments made by teachers about what they were thinking during POT are akin to Schön’s “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action.” The observing teacher is in the class (reflection-in-action) but, as most teachers reported, they are not in the activities of the class, and thus have the opportunity to conduct a “systematic investigation of practice” (Little, 2007, p. 218) in real time (reflection-on-action). Simply stated, teachers are engaged in an internal volley of thoughts about their practice and that of their colleague’s during an observation.

This second finding, therefore, extends the theory of reflective practice to consider what I am calling a dual reflection: The teacher is reflecting on what she sees at the same time that she is thinking about what she does in her own classes. Courneya,
Pratt, and Collins’ (2008) study concluded that observing teachers do have a “tendency to look for themselves (or their practices)” when evaluating a peer’s effectiveness as a teacher (p. 69). Their work is informative to this particular finding although this model of POT is explicit about the lack of evaluation. To borrow a phrase from Emily Style’s (1988) work on curriculum as “window and mirror,” a teacher’s reflection during observation both reflects and reveals her own practice (Style, 1988). The data analysis for this finding indicated that most teachers noticed, and often looked for, elements of pedagogy and curriculum that are associated with their own teaching.

Finding 2 considers transformative change as discussed by Little (2003) and Peel (2005). Little (2003) describes transformational as seeing one’s own practice—pedagogy, interactions with students, etc.—in a different way. Peel (2005) considers POT transformational when it leads to a process of reflection that includes questioning one’s own and society’s practices. Absent from the data in this study were indications that observing teachers were questioning their own practices or that of the greater community of teachers as they acquired new ideas about practice from their peers. The teachers commented about incorporating new practices but did not indicate that they questioned why they wanted to change their practice, or saw their practice “in a different way.” The teachers were, in a way, shopping for ideas, open to whatever resonated with their own practice.
What do observers see? The tools.

The first step of analysis was to unpack the term *observation*. When Eduardo says “I saw myself there” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11), what did he see? The data collected provided the following inventory (Table 9).

Table 9.

*What Participants See When Observing a Peer’s Class*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideas, general pedagogy, curriculum units, task, interactions between students and teacher, interactions among students, teaching tricks, new strategies, curriculum connections, new things to try, assumptions, classroom management techniques, all aspects of teaching, implementation of progressive education theories in a classroom, structure group work, structure of the conversation, structure of the unit, student skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list above consists of the terms that teachers used when asked what they see, what they notice, and what they learn from POT. The terms are found across the data sources without any particular pattern for usage, meaning teachers with many years and with few years of experience see similar elements in their colleagues’ classes. They consider POT an opportunity to shop for a variety of teaching tools to add to their own practice.

The list of items above can be organized into three categories of tools of practice that a teacher observes when in a colleague’s class. The tools were added to, enriched, or
affirmed the observing teacher’s own practice. The list indicated that observing teachers notice a variety of classroom elements related to what is taught and how it’s being taught. No teacher indicated noticing all of the above all of the time but, as the data will show in this section, observing teachers have flexible lenses and their focus varies during the length of the class as well as across multiple observations.

Adding to practice refers to new teaching strategies or information about students or curriculum across the vertical program that teachers assimilated into their own repertoires. Malena talked about her specific search for ways to teach identity saying, “I’m thinking a little bit on how to teach the languages and how to improve the students’ knowing more about [Latino] identity and how can I do that in my classes—how our other colleagues are working on this” (Personal Communication, 6/20/11). She also mentioned looking for “something that would be good for my classes to record without spending a lot of money” (Personal Communication, 6/20/11). Santiago talked about multiple moments during observations in which he said to himself, “I’d never seen it done that way before, I found it really interesting” (Santiago, Personal Communication, 6/6/11). Malena’s search “for a point of intersection in our classes, maybe because I have a really strong background in multi-disciplinary design of classes” (Personal Communication, 6/20/11) also referred to piece of curriculum from another class that she could add to her classes. These three teachers identified a new teaching tool or curricular topic that was added to their own practice.

George and Eduardo, two experienced teachers, talked about adding to their knowledge of the students and curriculum in the 2nd through 12th grade program as a
result of their observations. George said, “now I am fully armed with knowledge of what... the XX graders I get in [course] next year have had” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11), and Eduardo added that POT provides “you [with] a sense, developmentally of where everyone is. It gives you a sense of where these kids are coming from and where they’re going” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11). All of the statements above indicated that the teacher took something—either a teaching tool or knowledge of curriculum—from the class they observed and brought it directly into their own classes.

Enriching a teacher’s practice referred to recognizing a common pedagogical practice between observing and observed teacher but that was different in some way. George talked about a current work to create a course for a particular topic, and how observing a class enriched his own research.

Friday morning, I’m going to XX’s class. I couldn’t have picked a better day. These XX graders who are doing their projects as a culmination of the XX unit, and they developed these games. And see I don’t know if you know, part of my teaching this year is to develop a course on XX. [...] (Personal Communication, 5/26/11)

George, an experienced teacher, was already deep in the development of the new course, and yet he recognized enthusiastically the topic and how his colleague was approaching it in a way that would complement his own planning. The projects he saw enriched his thoughts about future possible projects. Similarly, Santiago was looking at what the students were doing in class saying, “I’m looking at the task the teacher has selected (Personal Communication, 6/6/11). Both George and Santiago are experienced teachers and Lead Teachers; it was logical to assume that each had a wealth of ideas and
strategies based on their years teaching, and yet each talked about how what they saw in an observation enriched their own practice.

Affirming a teacher's practice referred to those elements of the observed class that affirmed some aspect of the observing teacher's pedagogical knowledge or practice. It could have been something that the teachers had in common or that the teachers did differently. Daniel and Bill referred to the similar need for structure in the class. Eduardo observed a high school class and reported:

Even though they are young adults and all of that, they still need all the same things the little kids need, all that support and nurturing and that kind of understanding. They all are seeking the same things, doesn't matter what grade they are. And it was, for me, refreshing to see that in the high school kids. They were exactly the same. They were asked to be quiet and settle down, you know the same things you do with the little ones. At the same time, that empathy, that connection was there too, between teacher and students. (Personal Communication, 5/26/11)

Bill shared his observation of younger students, saying:

I actually found the most interesting things... the things that are done with the youngest kids are so much more applicable to the older kids than I think most people think. Concepts, organizations of things, the kinds of the things they’re wrestling with, even some of the kinds of prompts and structures that the teachers are giving are totally relevant to the oldest kids. (Personal, Communication, 5/25/11)

What Bill and Daniel saw in each class, specifically about classroom management and teacher-student interactions, affirmed what they believed about, and alluded to what they did, in their own classes.

The three categories of teaching tools or knowledge about practice that an observing teacher saw in a colleague's class—adding to, enriching, and affirming tools—were not static, inflexible. For example, a “curriculum unit” could have been an addition
for one observing teacher (meaning something not already present in his curriculum) or it could have been affirming because the observing teacher teaches the same unit in his own classes. Some of the similarities between classroom management needs for elementary and high school students that Bill noticed may well have been an addition to or considered enriching to his practice. Malena demonstrated the overlapping quality of these three categories:

I was making a comparison from the use of the music in my classes and her classes. I try to learn from the colleagues, so I see... oh I never tried this, I should try this or things like that. Always looking for a different way to learn from the colleagues and to share ideas and think if we can do something together. (Personal Communication, 6/20/11)

Malena’s use of music in class was affirmed when she observed her colleague also using music. She added to and enriched her own use of music when she watched a colleague incorporate music in a way Malena had not before considered. Malena, Bill, Daniel, George and Santiago each identified a connection between a colleague’s classes and their own teaching, and each example supports the assertion that teachers saw what was related to their own practice when engaging in POT.

**What do observers see? The environment.**

The classroom environment—the milieu in which the teachers and students engage with the curriculum, pedagogy and each other—was not a specific teaching tool that an observer took from a colleague, but it was something that teachers noticed when observing a colleague’s class. The observer reflected on and subsequently evaluated the classroom environment as a means of affirming his own teaching practices.
What constituted environment was a little bit different for each observer. Gabriel looked “around the room [to] get a ratio of students who are really participating and engaged and students who are not” and at “how the students interact with the teacher” (Personal Communication, 6/30/11). Treplad echoed this idea of environment when he described looking for “the way the kids are relating to each other and to the teacher, how the learning is going on” (Personal Communication, 6/16/11). Santiago was more general, stating he watched for, “a deeper environment, a more interesting, engaging environment” and shifted the focus from student engagement to a more global view of the class saying, “you want to observe the beast in its home environment” (Santiago, Personal Communication, 6/6/11). Lily was more direct and succinct in how she looked for environment, talking about it as the “culture of learning” (Lily, Personal Communication, 6/15/11). All of these participants were talking about the milieu that existed in the class—the environment in which all the additional enriching or affirming tools were used. These comments about environment, and those above about teaching tools and knowledge support the assertion that teachers see their own practice when observing a colleague. POT, then, encourages reflection on a teacher’s perception of her own practice. Adding something to practice indicated that the teacher noticed something missing from her practice. Enriching practice implied that a teacher identified a need for innovation in her teaching. Affirmation of a part of practice was the means by which a teacher was encouraged to maintain a particular element of her practice.

Teacher comments about classroom environment constituted one of the few examples in the data in which a teacher expressed a judgment or evaluation of a
colleague's practice in the context of POT. The study site expressly removed the task of evaluation from the practice of POT for Lead Teachers and non-Lead Teachers. The judgment about environment of a colleague's class, as in the data to follow here, was presented in juxtaposition to the observing teacher's practice.

Treplad compared the environment in his own class with that of the class he observed:

At first, I sincerely thought about trying to emulate how the teacher I observed interacted with her kids. I'm focused and I strongly encourage the kids to do their work, but I also try and create an environment where we are hopefully having fun together as we learn about our subject. I don’t mean to imply that the XX class is not potentially fun (the kids appear to be happy), but I cannot be as strict in the way I work with my students—it doesn’t fit me personally or professionally. (Personal Communication, 6/16/11)

Malena compared specific teaching pedagogies saying:

When new teachers came to the school... you find something [sic] have a really traditional methodology, and you think, how can I say something without, you know... hurting my [sic] feelings to my colleague. Or how can I show that we are working in one way, which is different... and things like that. (Personal Communication, 6/20/11)

Both Treplad and Malena expressed a degree of respect for their colleagues adding, “I don’t mean to imply that the XX class is not potentially fun (the kids appear to be happy),’ and “how can I say something without [...] hurting [...] feelings,” but both also evaluated a colleague’s practice. Malena commented about the teacher’s specific teaching methodology, and how it was not consistent with the way “we are working,” and Treplad noticed the “strict” environment of the classroom and how this differed from his. The importance of these two statements is that both observing teachers' reflected on their own practice when making critical comments about their colleagues, and their evaluation
of a peer’s practice indicated a perception of their own practice. These examples of critical judgment by the teachers supported the research that asserts that teachers view the effectiveness of their colleague’s teaching by comparing it to their own (Courneya, Pratt, & Collins, 2008).

Changes to practice, not transformation of practice.

The second part of finding 2 considers the overall effect of the changes to a teacher’s practice as an outcome of POT. As presented above, a teacher’s perception of his own practice—what might be lacking or needing innovation or what could be an affirmation of his pedagogy or curriculum—guides what a teacher saw when observing a colleague’s class. The subsequent changes to the observing teacher practices consisted of adding to or enriching her practice. Neither what the teacher saw during the observation nor what she took back to her own classroom inspired a transformational change to the observer’s practice.

The teachers spoke animatedly and, at times, in rich detail about specific teaching tools or tricks they added to their toolkit, and these tools constituted changes to the teaching practice of the observing teachers. There was no mention, however, of internal changes—the way teachers think about the practices beyond “new” or “interesting”—or that POT had inspired a deep reflection into why the observer did what he did in his own classes. With a possible exception. Bill explained what he was thinking while sitting in a colleague’s class in the following way:

I am trying to think two things. I’m trying to think, okay how is the experience that I’m witnessing in this moment illustrative of something that’s happening with second graders, or whatever the grade. Because I’m constantly trying to put together the puzzle, in my mind of, okay what is
the second through twelfth experience? So I'm trying to pull from this, again, something that's illustrative of a larger—oh okay they experience this, this, and this. And then, the other thing that I'm trying to do is understand what are the assumptions and practices of this individual teacher that are really interesting and useful and somebody else might want to hear about, or that I can use. (Bill, Personal Communication, 5/25/11)

This part of the data analysis is grounded in the research about transformational professional development. Bill's comment here alluded to what could become a transformational discussion among colleagues about practice. Considering a teacher's beliefs about teaching—their "assumptions"—is a step toward looking deeply at practice, not just at the teaching tools that are the manifestation of a teacher's beliefs about his practice. Bill, like his colleagues in this study, spoke almost exclusively about his colleagues' teaching tools and not what informs his colleague's practice.

Also absent from the data was any suggestion that the teachers were developing an inquiry stance about their practice as a result of or part of the practice of POT (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). There were a few instances of teachers meeting to talk about teacher practice (or hoping to do so) in the context of POT, such as Treplad and Bill shared:

I'm afraid we did not meet to discuss the class or the observation. I had to return to teach my own class immediately after (I observed during a "free" period) and though we both had a desire to reconnect to discuss, time got away from me and I did not organize a follow-up conversation. (Treplad, Personal Communication, 6/16/11)

I always follow up the visit with a conversation or an email and often both. I try to tell all the teachers something I noticed about their lesson and something I noticed about their students. Whenever possible, I try to connect that observation to something I've observed in someone else's classroom with the hope of sparking conversation about what we're doing
across the curriculum rather than just in a particular grade. (Bill, Personal Communication, 5/25/11)

With the exception of Bill’s comment about trying to “understand what are the assumptions and practices of this individual teacher” (Personal Communication, 5/25/11), however, there was no action taken either by an individual teacher nor group of teachers to discuss their practice in the context of research about teaching practice or to question either of the bodies of knowledge—the locale of the teachers or the scholarship.

One former teacher offered a reason why conversations post POT had yet to happen saying teachers needed time for “not just peer observation but also time for […] peers to meet, too, because I think if you don’t have time to deconstruct…” (Gabriel, Personal Communication, 6/30/11). Gabriel saw the need to process the experiences of POT with colleagues. I viewed these conversations as potential opportunities for teachers to begin to develop an inquiry stance about teaching. The Lead Teachers, given their explicit responsibility to “act as bridges to the world’s best knowledge and practices within their disciplines” (Archival Document, 5/14/11) could facilitate a conversation about local practices and research about those practices, but mention of that type of conversation was absent from the data.

I used the phrase “reinventing the wheel” at the head of this finding to refer to what teachers saw and took from their POT experiences because teachers talked about this very result of POT when interpreting their experience of observing their peers’ classes. These comments addressed the research question about changes in teacher practice as an outcome of POT. This finding concluded that the teachers were “reinventing,” but not yet inventing this metaphoric wheel of practice and curriculum.
My analysis indicated that two instances are in the initial stages of developing an inquiry as stance as the practice of POT. One, Bill, a Lead Teacher facilitating departmental conversations, mentions his questions as a result of POT about the "assumptions" that teachers are bringing to their practice. And two, teachers in the study talk about the potential benefits of POT as making "the [academic] program more cohesive and comprehensive" (Lily, Personal Communication, 6/15/11) by "bring[ing] the students' learning closer together between the subjects and hav[ing] more cross-curricular interaction" (Gabriel, Personal Communication, 6/30/11). Teachers working collaboratively to create program or to align current programs will begin to examine each other's practice.

As Little and Bird (1987) point out, these collaborations "may be among the most powerful tools for instructional improvement and professional recognition" (p.122). POT was helping to create a professional environment that had the potential for teachers to design "a scholarly tradition of their own" that would support their practice and professional development (Lieberman, 2009, p. 1879). POT has the potential to be a vehicle for data collection for collaborative practitioner research into teaching practices at the study site. Indeed, the teachers are already collecting data from observations in the form of different teaching ideas even if the teachers have not explicitly recognized that they are collecting data. Finding 2 explored the range of different teaching ideas, or data, collected by the teachers and how these impacted the observing teacher's practice.

The next finding explores how what teachers see and subsequently take from their various observations serve a deeper individual purpose than just adding new tricks to a
teaching toolkit; the observations are the basis for developing a plan for professional growth and development.

Finding 3: POT as an Individual Professional Development Plan

“There’s a reason we don’t have walls.”
—Eduardo, Personal Communication, 5/26/11

The majority of participants in the study valued POT as a means for learning. The data reveal that learning in the context of POT at the study site constituted a form of professional development—aiding in both individual growth and the development of academic curriculum. The professional development stemming from POT is grounded in teachers’ practice and occurs over a period of time (not just a one-shot workshop), and as such, confirms the scholarship about effective professional development strategies. The last section of the finding examines future collaboration as an actualized or hoped-for outcome of POT, thus adding a collaborative element to the professional development plan for the individual teacher.

This study sought to understand how teachers make meaning of POT. The data reveal that POT was not a single act but rather, a combination of experiences that, together, made up the meaning of the POT experience. Finding number 1 demonstrated how positionality was a factor in the understanding peer relationships that existed outside the classroom and how the P—peer of POT—was problematized before a teacher observes her colleague. Finding number 2 analyzed how teachers focused on elements related to their own practice when observing a colleague, and how this intentional focus had the potential to be, but did not yet achieve, a transformational act of curricular and
pedagogical development. This finding, number 3, examines the potential effects of POT after an observation.

Finding 3 is grounded in the research about effective professional development programs (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lieberman, 2009; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Little & Bird, 1987). This finding considered the data in the context of research about effective professional development plans that are grounded in actual teacher practice at the school site, learning, co-mentoring, and the development of teacher learning communities. This finding regarded the myriad, individual lessons about pedagogy and curriculum as one extended unit to continue the metaphor of lessons. The individual observed classes, therefore, were considered in the aggregate. At the core of the review of pedagogy and curriculum and the resulting professional development of POT was learning. The outcome of POT, therefore, was viewed as a series of individualized professional development plans. Teachers were directing their learning, or professional development, by identifying needs in their own practice, and then searching for what they needed in a peer’s class. Although the teachers were not engaging in practitioner inquiry they were examining practice guided by their own questions, and curiosities (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

The lessons from POT.

In the discussion of finding 3, the list of what teachers saw when they observe a peer’s class (Table 9) can be viewed as a list of lessons learned about pedagogy and practice via POT. Indeed, some teachers were very clear about the expected goal of learning explicitly stating, “I try to learn from my colleagues” (Malena, Personal...
Communication, 6/20/11). Whether it was a way to integrate technology, incorporate music, or learn the curriculum and pedagogy of other grade levels, the learning was predominantly tailored to the specific classes the observer was currently teaching. As one participant stated, “[POT] has informed me of what students will be coming into my […] course with” (George, Personal Connection, 5/26/11). These comments showed how the teachers were seeking professional knowledge related to their subject area in their local context—their class, their department, their division, and their school. The benefit of learning associated with POT was directly connected to the individual teacher’s current practice and curriculum. I inferred from the data that modifications to the teaching tools and ideas learned from the colleague’s class was minimal, and the changes to the observing teacher’s practice, as stated in finding number 2, were in the form of additions or enrichments.

Finding number 3 will examine the lessons not individually, but rather in the aggregate. Eduardo reinforced the idea of looking at the whole of the experience of POT, parts as one whole, saying that POT “becomes less only curriculum. It becomes more finding new ways in which we communicate things to students […] like how can we become more aware […] that teaching is not a science. It’s an art” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11). Eduardo was describing how the focus of an observing teacher would move onto other broader topics after a series of peer observations or time reflecting about a particular observation. He was also explaining how teachers learn specific tools about curriculum before they consider a teacher’s practice, or what he
referred to as “art.” Finding 3 examines how observing teachers developed their “art” after observing multiple classes.

A new teacher, recently graduated from a teacher education program in which observation was the bulk of her final year of study, shared her thoughts after a particular observation in the following way:

I was, like, okay why is this person not doing the things that we learned were the best ways of teaching X, Y, Z. [...] but now after observing a lot of classes, and seeing a classroom in a greater context of [study site] and the developmental trajectory of students, all the other ingredients put together, makes me see things in a bigger perspective. (Hilary, Personal Communication, 6/8/11)

She was making a clear reference to her prior experience, in graduate school, considering observations in the aggregate. She was also making the commentary that a series of observations provided a view of the “trajectory” of development of practice; she was watching the development of a teacher’s art. Gabriel added to the concept of learning the art of teaching instead of adding discrete teaching tools when he shared, “I guess how to learn to do my role better” (Personal Communication, 6/30/11). He was learning how to be a teacher.

POT as a way to become a teacher was echoed by Gail, another experienced teacher. Her comment reminded me that the role of the teacher was not limited to teaching in the classroom. Gail, an experienced teacher, thought about her early years teaching, observing colleagues, saying, “I also learned from her how to work with parents” (Gail, Personal Communication, 6/27/11). A teacher’s responsibilities, described here, expanded beyond teaching. These quotes illustrated the idea that lessons learned from colleagues via engaging in POT were not limited to teaching tools and tricks but
were lessons that supported teacher growth and development for all teacher responsibilities. Eduardo, Hilary, Gabriel, and Gail were perfecting their art by seeing another teacher’s art of teaching in action. Their comments indicated that POT was a window into the big picture—of being a teacher, not just teaching.

**From Lessons to an Individualized Professional Development Plan**

Viewed as one series of peer observations, the discrete lessons gained from POT created individualized professional development (PD) plans. The teachers in this study were interested in learning. The observing teacher saw himself as a student or as one participant described, “when I was sitting there as an observer, I was so much, such a better student. I wanted to learn” (Hilary, Personal Communication, 6/8/11). Another participant gleefully shouted, “When I visited X’s class, he let me do the lab! I got to be a participant” (George, Personal Connection, 5/26/11). And yet another described the opportunity for professional development matter-of-factly saying, “There’s a reason we don’t have walls” (Eduardo, Personal Communication, 5/26/11). The interview transcripts indicated an eagerness and excitement for learning as well as a bit of sarcasm when I imagined *Isn’t it obvious?* as a possible rejoinder to Eduard’s comment about the lack of walls.

The openness of the architecture was designed for integrating curriculum by providing easy access to colleagues’ classes; no walls between teaching spaces would facilitate observation. The architecture was designed to facilitate POT for curriculum and professional development, but peer observation without guidance for participating teachers did not guarantee programmatic development. Indeed the LT/AC initiatives were
created with the express purpose of “reviewing and strengthening our program, particularly the vertical integration of our pedagogy and curricula within disciplines” (Archival Document, 5/14/10). This finding examines the teachers’ words to see how PD for teachers was an outcome of POT and thus contributed to program development.

Analyzing the responses of individual teachers, not across the responses of all teachers, I organized the data into a tailored professional development plan for the individual teacher based on the expressed foci of her POT and what she described learning from her colleagues. The plans outlined in this section are not intended to be linear but, in the words of Gabriel, a “menu of professional development opportunities” that evolved over time. Gabriel continued his thoughts about connecting POT to PD adding, “there should be a reflective piece because then the PD supervisor can say, after each menu item has been tried, what’s inspiring that person more” (Personal Communication, 6/30/11). POT and reflection about POT as part of a teacher’s PD expresses the core of this finding, that teachers guided their own PD after reflection about their and their colleagues’ art of teaching.

Lily, a new teacher at the study site, had a specific PD goal for POT. She expressed an interest in learning about the school’s teaching philosophy saying that she was “observing [...] for teaching methods that do the best at using progressive philosophies.” The next step of her PD plan was to “tak[e] things that stood out well in the classes I observed or in the conversation about a class that I’ve had and almost put [...] my spin on it.” Her PD plan extended to include learning by observation how the school’s philosophy informed other teacher duties, for example advising. She said she
“went to [division director] and said I really want to be with someone I can learn from, who really values the advising system” (Personal Communication, 6/15/11). Lily’s PD plan highlighted keeping a journal for reflections on teaching. She highlighted entries that were “bullet points from that day,” that would carry her thinking to the next observation. She also wrote reflections in response to “questions, like ‘That doesn’t make sense?’ or ‘How do you actually do that?’” (Lily, Personal Communication, 6/15/11). These questions were Lily’s questions and she used POT to help craft her PD plan.

Santiago, a more experienced teacher, was following a plan for professional development that was directly connected to his role as Lead Teacher, explaining, “my first job as a Lead Teacher: building my own expertise; my first task is building the expertise of the team.” He was very clear that his PD was connected to the PD of his department members. Perhaps because Santiago is an experienced educator with many years at the study site and a recent graduate of an educational leadership program, his PD plan was about learning via POT. I deduced that this was for two specific reasons to Santiago’s experiences at the school. One, Santiago reported observing his colleagues regularly before the LT/AC initiative. He expressed a bit of pride talking about it when saying, “And one of [the LT/AC initiative and POT] is changing the culture of the school into a place, which I believe we have to some degree in the lower school, where, if you have time, why not see what they’re doing next door?” He had seen the benefits of learning via POT as well as on the faculty as a whole across a division (Personal Communication, 6/6/11).
The second reason he viewed POT as a positive learning tool was because Santiago talked about looking for a “surprise” when observing a colleague and for classes in which “students were engaged.” He is most interested, as shared in finding number 2, of seeing something new to add to his practice, instead of something that tweaks or affirms what he already does. To explain this comment, Santiago described one particular class he observed with another colleague from his same department, one in which students were engaged in “free-form exploration,” saying, “XX and I sat in there, and just had our minds collectively blown. It was spectacular.”

Santiago’s PD plan incorporating POT was also well suited to his learning style. He said, “I’m incapable of sitting still. If I have a mound of papers to evaluate and there’s something cool going on next door, that’s a no-brainer. I’m going next door. Maybe I’ll bring a couple of them with me, but I think that’s a much better use of my time.” This was a great example of a teacher’s learning grounded in his or her own learning style; Santiago was a self-described kinesthetic learner, and the idea of moving from class to class to for POT was very appealing to him.

Santiago’s PD plans also include interdepartmental observation, when he shared the following anecdote:

But anyway, having XX, somebody from outside my discipline notice something I did that I thought only a XX teacher would notice […] to think that I’m only going to learn from XX teachers is a bit shortsighted. The obvious people you’re going to get […] feedback from are XX and XX teachers, but all of us are writers, in one form or another, and all of us solve problems in one form or another, all of us investigate. And, I think, to put blinders on yourself and think that only the [same department] teachers are going to give me anything valuable is ridiculous. And I wouldn’t have thought that before this process. This process opened my eyes to that. (Personal Communication, 6/6/11)
He had not yet observed a colleague in another subject area but clearly indicated in this comment that he planned to do so. Santiago’s PD plan was about building “expertise” with new ideas. His future plan of interdepartmental observation, not just interdivisional observation, appeared to be quite ahead of his colleagues in terms of thinking outside the box of his own department. This was logical given his admitted long practice with POT at the study site.

Eduardo was an experienced teacher currently enrolled in a graduate program for educational leadership and, like Santiago, had a practice of POT prior to the LT/AC initiative. He also experienced POT in multiple school settings. As with Lily and Santiago, Eduardo’s PD plan developed in a way that suited his interests, stating:

I’m always curious about what other people are doing; that’s one thing. The other thing is also I believe in integrating the curriculum, so it’s very helpful for me to see what other people are doing, what the skills they’re working on or what content they’re exploring. So that in a way, I try to match whatever I do in my class. (Personal Communication, 5/26/11)

Eduardo’s main interest, as evidenced in this quotation, was curriculum development. In his case, the PD plan for curriculum development also catered to his learning preferences as he said, “I get bored easily when I read manuals and resources for teachers. [...] So for me [POT is] like an open book, a living book, in which I can literally see a teacher in action.” Eduardo shared his experiences observing teachers in all three divisions—lower, middle, and high schools—and learned from noticing similarities between the students at each level declaring, “it was, for me, refreshing to see that in the high school kids. [...] They were asked to be quiet and settle down, you know the same things you do with the little ones. At the same time, that empathy, that connection was
there too, between teacher and students.” This quote represented his learning about older students and an affirmation of his own classroom management style.

One can see how Eduardo’s series of observations—seeing teachers across divisions a few times—was connected to a particular PD goal, that of learning about a the 2nd - 12th grade program for his subject area by observing classes in all divisions. Eduardo viewed POT as a way to “map out the curriculum […] I don’t think we have to map out how exactly what each grade will do.” He continued to point out that mapping did not just refer to the academic program but also to include “a sense, developmentally of where everyone is. […]” with the grand goal of giving each teacher the “sense […] we are doing all this together” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11). His comments clearly referred to a PD goal he had hoped to accomplish via POT.

The PD plans reflected in the quotes above are not intended to be linear. The PD plans that stemmed from POT outlined a recursive and generative process. Analyzing across the responses of Lily, Santiago, and Eduardo, it was evident that observations encouraged more observations for the three, but in different ways. For Lily, it was to see another example of theory in action. For Santiago, to continue the search for new, mind-blowing ideas, and for Eduardo, to continue crafting a flexible curriculum map. The essential and salient aspect of the PD plans described above was that they were all grounded in a teacher’s questions and curiosities about his own practice. Eduardo described POT as research and teachers “become kind of researchers on what we do. […] I mean we could go to a library and read everything we encourage or we could also be more, you know, practice in a way and just see” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11).
This description of POT and the PD plans as active learning resonated with the school’s core principles of learning: “learning by doing” in a “community grounded in cycles of inquiry and action.” Rather than learning by conducting research in the library, as Eduardo points out, teachers are conducting research in each other’s classrooms. They are engaging with one another in the act of PD. An important aspect of this PD is that the teachers are leading the design and focus of the professional growth plan; the teachers are deciding who to observe and why they want to observe that particular class or teacher. The teachers may not yet be engaging in teacher inquiry but my analysis indicates that the teachers’ comments about future collaborations would be an opportunity to undertake practitioner research. The next section of this finding examines the collaborative outcomes of POT—either actualized or hoped for—by the teachers.

**A Collaborative Professional Development Plan Grounded in Learning**

The purposes of POT for Lead Teachers were clearly defined—get to know the curriculum and the faculty and to better facilitate the Vertical Meetings (Archival Document, 4/27/10). One Lead Teacher described the purposes of getting to know the curriculum and pedagogy as becoming an “expert” of the program for each subject area (Santiago, Personal Communication, 6/6/11). Lead Teachers were expected to learn by doing—by observing colleagues, by staying current in the research field related to their subject areas, and by facilitating Vertical Meetings that develop pedagogy and curriculum.

Considering the specific educational philosophy of the study site, the teachers’ learning would parallel the students’ educational experiences in that learning was not an
acquisition of information. The information acquired—teaching tools and information about students and program—as mentioned in many quotes across findings 1, 2 and 3 to be sure, was an important part of the learning process. As described in the background and context section of this study, the progressive pedagogy associated with the LT/AC initiative was guided by core principles. The LT/AC initiative was built on the foundation of the collaborative work to draft the core guidelines of learning by doing, project-based learning, and connection to a real world context and social justice aim. POT enabled the LT/AC initiative to embody a progressive approach to professional development. In the words of a Lead Teacher, “everybody gets to know what everybody is doing. You experience so much more vividly when you go see it rather than hear somebody talk about it.” Teachers observing teachers was the best way to share teaching practices, according to George, a Lead Teacher.

After almost an entire year of observing, George emphatically stated: “I think [POT] ought to be universal not just lead teacher. And I think I would take it out of the lead teacher description, but make it part of our teaching professional development” (George, Personal Communication, 5/26/11). All teachers, not just Lead Teachers, engaging in POT as a form of professional development that was based on learning by doing—by observing, by engaging in a lab activity, by creating relationships with colleagues, and as the next section of this finding discusses, by planning future collaborations. The metaphors created by the study participants mapped out a PD plan that would allow them to do what George was suggesting. The teachers in this study interpreted POT as a form of learning. Over time, as George, Santiago, and Eduardo—
teachers with the most experience observing colleagues—shared, POT would become a method of designing one’s own PD.

Collaboration from POT.

A number of participants commented about POT as a means by which to collaborate with colleagues. Malena indicated that collaboration was her main motivation for engaging in POT because:

I really like to teach, like, in the multi-disciplinary way, so I always use theater or music or different things, so I needed to talk with other colleagues to find out what they were doing and try to design my classes, for the design of my classes. (Personal Communication, 6/20/11)

But talking about possible collaborations was not her practice, as she explained later, “because if we are talking about building together, the idea is that you go and you visit a colleague” (Personal Communication, 6/20/11). Her words echoed George’s idea of a more “vivid” understanding “when you go see it rather than hear somebody talk about it” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11).

Bill recalled his experiences at a former school with collaboration and POT serving as both means and ends saying, “We all visited each other quite frequently, we all worked together on common projects at times, designing them. We had certain kinds of structures where we were even working together on grading a certain thing.” This past positive experience with both collaboration and POT led him to conclude, “we need to create a better culture of [POT], but we can’t do it just by requiring more visiting. There has to be a clear and, at least, safe enough purpose, outcome, etc.” (Personal Communication, 5/25/11). Here, Bill acknowledged that relationships based on a common purpose define “peer” as (safe) collaborator (finding 1), and that teachers
engage in POT looking for what they need for their own practice (finding 2). For Bill and Malena, POT was for a purpose—the purpose of developing curriculum.

Two other participants, veteran teachers with POT experience in other educational settings, talked about collaboration stemming from observing colleagues’ classes as part of PD. Eduardo commented in an earlier finding about creating a type of curriculum “map” in the vertical meetings because “I feel like that’s part of the whole teaching experience too, you know, working with different people, it’s part of working in a school” (Personal Communication, 5/26/11). Malena shared that although POT was not required or “part of the institution,” she and her colleagues “were doing [sic] because we have some kind of, you know, talking with our colleagues, ‘Oh, look at what you’re doing. I really like this. Let’s do this” (Personal Communication, 6/20/11).

Bill, Malena, Eduardo, and Santiago all had prior positive experience with POT before the LT/AC initiative at the study site and at other schools. Their comments about future collaboration as a result of POT, therefore, was based on their direct knowledge of this phenomenon. When Bill, Eduardo, and Malena talked about collaborating on curriculum creation and mapping it, it was because they had already successfully completed these acts. The data collection of this study occurred at the beginning of the Lead Teacher/Academic Cabinet initiatives, within the first two years. The implication for future practice at the study site will speak more to this aspect of finding number 3, future collaboration.

The quote at the head of the data analysis of finding number 3, “There’s a reason we don’t have walls,” (Eduardo, Personal Communication, 5/26/11) was initially
interpreted as a focus on the architectural design. Indeed, as was described in the background and context of this study in Chapter 1, the architectural design was to facilitate inter-disciplinary, cross-divisional (in other words, collaborative) curriculum development. The vision was for curriculum to result from the teachers’ unencumbered ability see each other’s classes. The data in this study, however, indicated that architecture did not create curriculum. POT created curriculum because POT provided the “content-rich, and collegial learning opportunities for teachers” (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

There was another reading of this quote, however, that stemmed from this finding of POT as professional development. The collaborations specified in this section by Malena, Bill, and Eduardo were most likely thoughtful examples of professional collaboration, but these discrete collaborations were not the ultimate goal of POT. Treplad defined the ultimate goal in terms of a school-wide collaboration: “[POT’s] ultimate goal is creating a community of teachers who are collaboratively creating a community of learners” (Personal Communication, 6/16/11). The collaboration here implied a unified k-12 academic experience for the students. I interpret the notion of a unity, of seeking to unify many elements—in this case curriculum and pedagogy—into one entity as a way that the school could make sense of the academic experience for the students.

This finding focused on a close reading of an individual teacher’s experiences and interpretations of POT, and resulted in the potential for tailored professional development plans based on a teacher’s estimation of her needs. The data analysis concludes that the
teachers were connecting their individual observations into one PD experience. As noted in Chapter 2, Darling-Hammond & Richardson (2009) argue that the most effective model for PD are programs grounded in a teacher's practice and guided by a teacher's questions. POT at this school, therefore, had the potential to provide the most meaningful PD, and the teacher participants concurred with this research. The collaborative nature of POT—teachers visiting each other's classes and engaging in conversations about practice and future collaborative projects—argues that the most effective model for PD consists of programs that focus on individual practice.

This third finding viewed an individual teacher's observations in the aggregate and my analysis produced a structure for PD. The next finding will also mine the data of each teacher in order to examine the metaphors teachers used to organize the individual observations into one cohesive experience of POT.

Finding 4: Making Meaning through Metaphor

The majority of study participants used a specific metaphor to interpret their experiences of POT. My analysis of the data indicate that the teachers used metaphors to conceptualize the practice of POT—the protocols, structures, the role of peer, and possible outcomes—that was not provided by the design of the two academic initiatives. In finding 3, my analysis yielded a way to view the POT experiences as one series of observations and not individual POT events. Finding 4 adheres more closely to the words of the participants; the metaphor is the exact description of aggregate of POT experiences by the individual teachers. My analysis consists, in large part, of an exploration of what
purposes the metaphors serve, beyond that of organizing the separate classroom observations into one package per teacher participant.

I believe that the metaphors presented in this finding are an expression of a teacher’s reflecting on her “knowledge-of-action” about POT (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). The teachers are describing POT in a way that reveals their considering all the parts of POT as well as their motivations and the possible outcomes of observing their peers. They are making sense of POT by thinking about their experiences in their colleagues’ classrooms. Although the data reveal that teachers have not yet created a conceptualization of “knowledge-of-practice” because they have not considered their pedagogical knowledge in conjunction with the scholarship about classroom pedagogy, this theory of reflection informs the development of this finding (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001).

The “active” or “passive” metaphor delineated the observer’s role in the peer’s class, clarifying his behavior and purpose of visit. The metaphor also served to widen the focus of an observer, from the teacher in the class to the class as a whole.

This study has explored how teachers, in a specific school context, interpret their experiences of POT. Finding number 1 examined how teachers problematized peer in POT. Finding number 2 analyzed how a teacher’s practice is perceived and/or impacted in the context of POT, and finding number 3 analyzed how what each teacher looks for and learns constitutes an individualized professional development plan. The three findings illustrate how teachers interpret the experience of POT by dividing the act into three separate parts: what are the peer relationships before POT, what is the focus during
POT, and what do they learn and where do their learnings lead them after POT. In a sense, the study participants were also deconstructing POT into its separate parts—P, O, and T. This fourth finding examines how the teachers reassembled the pieces using a metaphor that provided clear definitions of the role, behaviors, and focus of the observer.\footnote{This finding is focused on the experience of the observing teacher. Whether or not the observed teacher is fulfilling or "playing along" with the role assigned by the metaphor is outside the scope of this study because the vast majority of the study participants spoke almost exclusively about their experiences in the role of observing teacher and not teacher being observed.}

The data analysis for this finding affirms Schön's (1987) theory of reflective practice as a source for a teacher's professional knowledge. The particular context for this study—reflection from POT—adds to this theory an example of double reflection, that of a teacher reflecting on her own practice and the practice of her colleague while watching the colleague teach. The various data collection sources—survey, interview, writing prompt—was a means by which participants could reflect on teaching practice at the study site, both their own and that of their colleagues as they observed it to be. The metaphors described below demonstrate how teachers made sense of the many parts of their POT experience.

The metaphors did more than conjure a pleasant, familiar image of POT by teachers that enjoy observing their colleagues in great part because, according to one teacher, "there's not much better to do" (Santiago, Personal Communication, 6/6/11). The metaphors clustered in two distinct groups. One group I considered more "active" because the observing teacher exerted effort and attention—in essence was more "active" in order to bring about the positive potential outcomes of POT. I named the
second group of metaphors “passive” because the observing teachers described a positive experience characterized by their more relaxed, laid-back role. The metaphors in both groups accomplished two specific purposes. First, the metaphors defined how the observer would act while in the classroom of a colleague. The observer would look at the class like a visitor to a “museum” or a “student.” The second purpose of the metaphor was to shift the focus of POT from examining solely the peer’s teaching to looking at the class as a whole—the student behavior, classroom environment, activities, etc.

**P+O+T**

The metaphor helped the observer make sense of all that was “going on” (Eduardo, Personal Communication, 5/26/11) in the classroom. The parts of each metaphor outlined various elements of POT, such as the observer’s active learning stance, role in the room, and attitude toward the peer or POT in general. The metaphor was constructed within the specific context of the study site, that which did not provide specific instruction or guidance about how to engage in POT and what to do after observing a peer’s class. This finding asserts that teachers used metaphors to interpret the totality of their experiences of POT. The participants offered the metaphor as a concluding or summarizing tool to their comments.

One participant described the popular metaphor of teacher as artist, and engaging in POT as seeing art. He declared:

…if you’re an artist, you have to go to the museum and you have to be looking around all the artists and things like that. So that’s the way I see it. It’s an art, in which you have to see other artists, in this case teachers, to have an idea of what is going on. (Eduardo, Personal Communication, 5/26/11)
Seeing POT as a visit to an art museum allows the visitor flexibility over what
gallery or part of the class to attend to. In Eduardo’s case, the museum visit created the
opportunity for him to watch the entirety of the classroom experience to determine what
was “going on.” The purpose of POT was clear when he said, “It’s not like we buy a
curriculum.” Eduardo talked about “integrating the curriculum” as “match[ing] whatever
I do in my class” to “what other people are doing, what the skills they’re working on or
what content they’re exploring.”

This metaphor placed Eduardo in the museum as an active observer assuming a
learning posture. The observer was active because of what he did and what he did not do.
He was trying to see all that he could during the class period, and he chose not to “begin
writing or taking notes” so as not to “be more threatening.” Not taking notes was an act
of respect for the teacher. The active role of the observer was emphasized when he used
another metaphor to describe POT in his comments. He equated a teacher’s practice to a
manual of teaching and a teacher engaged in POT as a “kind of researcher.” Self-describing himself as someone who “gets bored easily when [reading] manuals and
resources for teachers, and they’re badly written and they don’t make sense” (Eduardo,
Personal Communication, 5/26/11). The teacher, it can be deduced, was for him the best
resource for learning about teaching; he or she helps the observer to make sense of
teaching. Eduardo’s metaphor connected him to the teacher; he was not a passive, distant
museum visitor. In order to integrate curriculum, he anticipated “meeting and talking and
visiting and reflecting together” with his colleagues as a result of POT.
Another active and vivid metaphor is that of the experience of POT as swimming. This example underscored how a metaphor created a clear connection between observer and observed teacher.

You know, I'm from Patagonia—Patagonia, Argentina. I'm always going to talk about breaking the ice. Because this is Patagonia. Even if you want to swim sometimes you need to breaking [sic] the ice. So this is the first moment, but after that, you can arrive at this Patagonia, to a wonderful lake, and you can swim, and you can share and build so many things. (Malena, Personal Communication, 6/20/11)

Malena and Eduardo’s comments revealed how the teacher’s personality or identity was part of the metaphor thus underscoring the connection between colleagues. For Eduardo, POT was a way to see a “manual of teaching.” For Malena, two specific aspects of Malena’s identity—origin and hobby—informed the way she interpreted POT. The metaphor of Patagonia led the observer from the moment of entry into the class—into the icy, not-inviting waters—through a period of settling in to later in the visit, when POT was a “wonderful” experience in which people are free to “share and build.” I also interpreted the statement “this is Patagonia” as a reference to the study site, as a nod to the positionality dynamics at play in peer relationships that were discovered in finding 1. Patagonia, as described by Chileans, is “exotic, remote, vast, infinitely beautiful, wild and untamable.” Malena might have also been referring to the unpredictable, diverse nature of peer dynamics at the study site as explored in finding 1.

Other active metaphors talked about the observer as student, “such a better student” (Hilary, Personal Communication, 6/8/11), “I love being a student” (Gabriel, 6 Chile: The Official Travel Guide to Chile: Patagonia. Retrieved from http://www.chile.travel/en/where-to-go/patagonia.html
Personal Communication, 6/30/11) and “he let me do the lab! I got to be a participant” (George, Personal Communication, 5/26/11). Another gave the observer the part of “your own kind of cheering team” because POT was “great support for people” (Gail, Personal Communication, 6/27/11). In each of these active metaphors, the observer has a clear, positive role, which implies a positive POT experience for the observed teacher.

The second group of metaphors was more passive. Lily portrayed POT as a bridge she’s “trying to make now” between theory and practice. Remembering that Lily expressed a desire to learn progressive teaching, she stated, “Okay, it’s very clear cut in this book, but in reality, you know, you have twelve kids that are not following by the book. How do you mesh the two?” (Lily, Personal Communication, 6/15/11). She was eager to learn and to observe but was clear about observing and then reflecting in her journal. Treplad also discussed a more passive metaphor, that of teacher as “a bit of an actor,” describing “a lot of teaching, a lot of motivating your kids to focus is doing it in a way that’s visually appealing and exciting and attractive” (Treplad, Personal Communication, 6/16/11). It was interesting to see that the role of the observer is to be part of the audience, like a student.

What is common to these metaphors—active and passive—is the role of the observer. It was clear what the observing teacher was supposed to do when in a colleague’s class. Moreover, the metaphor determined how the observer was connected to the peer teaching the class. As a museumgoer, you were respectful of the artist’s work, not taking notes and making time to meet after to discuss the art. As a swimmer, you knew it would take some time to adjust to the water temperature but you just kept
swimming until everyone—observer and observed—felt more comfortable. As a student and an audience member, the observer knew what behaviors to display during the observation, the posture—literally and figuratively—to assume. The observer, as designed by the metaphor, was perceived as less of a “threat” because the role of the observer was familiar—student, audience member, etc. Like finding 1, finding 4 provided answers to the study question about effects of POT on teacher relationships because the metaphor helped teachers understand how peer dynamics are operationalized in the school and perhaps navigate them successfully for POT.

Why metaphors?

Metaphors provided the structure to the practice of POT that, in its first year of implementation at the study site, was vague or a “threat” (Table 8). There were neither specific how-tos nor requirements to meet before or after observing a peer’s class. Originally, the Lead Teachers were the only officially appointed members of the teaching community to observe classes for the express purposes of “learning the program” and “getting to know the faculty” (Archival Document, 5/6/10). When all teachers in the community were asked to observe classes, there was no specific stated goal or requirement post-observation, just general language about preparing for a conversation at a future vertical meeting (Archival Document, 5/22/11).

The metaphor provided a familiar face to POT, and it defined the roles and behavior of the observer—museum visitor or swimmer rather than “intruder” (Table 8). The metaphor also enabled the observer to determine success or a level of quality to the observation because he or she knew what successful swimming looked like, what a
student was supposed to experience during a class, etc. The actual outcomes of the
observation reported by the teachers—collaboration, getting to know a colleague beyond
“playing basketball once at the teacher-alumni basketball game” (Treplad, Personal
Communication, 6/16/11), adding to or enriching one’s curriculum—were positive. The
visit, therefore, was successful and could be discussed in terms of positive changes to
practice and community.

The main result of the use of metaphor was the connections between the teachers
involved in POT; the observer was not a distant, invisible, presence in the class. He or
she was connected to his peer as a respected artist, an appealing actor, etc. The metaphor
outlined the bond between observer teacher and observed teachers clearly defining the
positionality of the peer. Trust was established—the “wonderful lake” of trust—and
teachers could then consider how to “share and build so many things.” Describing POT
with a metaphor was one way teachers made POT safe.

A metaphor was a way teachers interpreted their experience of POT. Metaphors
enable the observers to organize the parts of this activity. With a metaphor, the observer
had a clearer sense of her identity as observer in the class, her connection to the peer
teacher and possible outcomes of the experience. Does he inspect each element of the
class—student, task, and relationships—as if looking at artwork in a museum? Does she
brace herself for a cold, uncomfortable entry and hope, after a time or a number of visits,
POT becomes easier and more collaborative? Or does he sit back and watch the theater of
it all? Whatever the observer role, what is clear is that the observer is a peer. The
metaphor connected the observer and the observed.
Of note to this data analysis was that the data around metaphors was collected after the participants experienced a series of classroom observations either at the study site or other professional educational setting. The insertion of metaphor into the data was a decision of the participant. The interview questions were open-ended; there were no questions inquiring about metaphors or specifically encouraging metaphor. For this reason, this use of metaphor as an organizing construct was part of the teacher's reflection of practice. Although many participants identified specific parts of the class they observed—"task," "how students engage with each other," etc.—the metaphor was part of the comments that looked at the whole of their experience with POT.

I found the use of metaphors compelling in this data because a metaphor did not require my interpretation. As a researcher, I was able to let a teacher’s individual voice rise above my interpretation of their words. The individual teacher voice was the analysis, or more aptly the final word, of how the teacher made sense of POT. Teachers were affirming Schön’s theory that professional knowledge of practice, of experiences, comes from a teacher’s reflective practice. The teachers in this study used metaphor to summarize their reflections and this study concludes with their concluding statements.

Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative data—the words—of the study participants. Data was collected from an anonymous survey, interviews, and journals, and coded for emerging themes and trends. The themes and trends were analyzed predominantly
through the theoretical lenses of reflective practice (Schön's, 1987) and inquiry as stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001) to explore how teachers experience and interpret POT.

The findings indicate that teachers examined each part of POT—the P, the O, and the T—as a way of making meaning of their experiences. An analysis of how teachers make sense of POT reveals what the teachers value about, struggle with, and hope to be the results of POT. This information, the result of my practitioner inquiry, has the potential to inform a clearer conceptualization of POT at the study site. Findings 1, 2, and 3 were presented in a particular order so as to underscore the way that the teachers ordered or organized the different parts of their POT experience. Finding 1 presented the teachers’ first experience of POT, that which occurred even before entering a peer’s class. The teacher has reflected on his relationship with teacher he is about to observe—from a variety of aspects of positionality. Via the discussion of finding 1, the study participants acknowledged that individual classrooms were not immune to the peer dynamics of the study site.

Prior to entering a colleague’s class for observation, the teachers had also reflected on their own teaching practice as finding 2 showed. During the observation, the teacher was seeing connections to her own practice. This act of shopping resulted in changes to practice in the form of additions or modifications to her teaching tool kit but the changes did not approach the level of transformational change. A growing interest for future collaborations, however, appeared to have the potential for transforming a teachers’ pedagogy and curriculum.
Finding 3 continued the examination of the possible changes to a teacher practice after POT by grouping the separate observations into one series of classroom observations. My analysis revealed the potential of this series of observations to become individualized professional development plans for the teachers.

The before-during-after of POT, as seen in findings 1, 2 and 3, was then organized into a metaphor, the fourth finding, which further defined and clarified the role of the observing teacher in the classroom. The metaphor addresses the uncertainty of relationships, protocols and outcomes of POT that resulted from the loose conceptualization of peer observation at the study site by providing definition, predictability, and ultimately, a safe space for collaborative learning.

This qualitative study examined the experiences of teachers engaging in a regular practice of POT in order to understand how teachers make sense of teacher observation. One goal of the study was to understand the range of effects on teacher relationships, a teacher’s sense of her own practice and her actual practice. The four findings revealed that teachers recognize that peer observation involves much more thought and action than simply walking into a colleague’s teaching area even in a school without walls.
CHAPTER 5

Summary, Research Implications,
and Future Directions

Review of Purpose of the Study

This study sought to understand if POT could lead to reflection—individual or collective—and if that reflection could lead to an inquiry as stance. I grounded my research in Schön’s (1987) theory of reflective practice as the source for professional knowledge because I considered the development of professional knowledge from reflection as one outcome of POT. I also framed this study in Cochran-Smith & Lytle’s (2001) theory of inquiry as stance because I believed that the teachers’ reflections, in the context of the LT/AC initiative, provided the base upon which teachers could become researchers of their own practice as well as that of the broader educational research community. I wondered if the teachers would begin to question deeply their pedagogical and curricular choices, moving beyond questions related to an individual teacher’s day-to-day practice—such as what is the best way to structure group work or to make an online voice recording—to a collective inquiry into teaching practice such as why do we teach what we teach at this school and why do we teach it in the way that we do?

My research centered on the following questions:

- How do teachers interpret the experience of peer observation of teaching (POT)?

- In what ways does POT influence teachers within a school?
• What is the range of ways that POT affects how a teacher perceives his or her practice?
• In what ways does peer observation influence teacher pedagogy?
• How does peer observation influence teacher relationships?

Findings

Chapter 4 presented the analysis of the teachers’ words. The data collected via survey comments, interviews, and journal responses provided insight into how teachers at the study site were interpreting their experiences of POT, and what they viewed as the social, pedagogic, and curricular phenomena associated with observing their colleagues teach. Each finding is briefly revisited in this section.

In the first finding I analyzed the trends in how teachers problematized, and then operationalized peer in the context of POT, and argued that teachers’ interpretation of POT included a review of the peer dynamics on their school. Teachers considered various aspects of positionality—social connection, years experience teaching, location within the vertical structure of the school, and appointed title—when deciphering the role of peer in the observation. The finding revealed that the focus of POT was as much on the relationship between peers as it was on the peer’s teaching practices. The data revealed a lack of engagement around peer dynamics of power and authority as researched by Gosling (2002) and MacKinnon (2001), and peers as collaborators (Bell, 2001).

The data indicated a lack of common understanding of the role of peer in POT. Teachers, individually, renamed the peer “buddy,” “intruder,” “expert” (Table 8), and relied on their own private reflections regarding specific aspects of positionality to make
the peer more "buddy" and less "intruder." In the absence of a social relationship between colleagues, the teachers considered the peer's years of teaching experience, position within the school's vertical structure, and whether or not the person held an appointed titular position. POT was a catalyst for teachers to formulate a system of peer dynamics in order to move beyond the P of POT and move on to the observation of teaching.

Finding 2 considered possible effects of POT on the observing teacher's practice. The data showed that a teacher's perception of her own practice—what was missing or what needed improvement—guided the focus of the observation, affirming the research of Courneya, Pratt, and Collins (2008) around how teachers evaluate their peer's effectiveness. Teachers reported that they took various tools and strategies, as well as affirmation of their own practice from the observations. Any changes that occurred as a result of POT, however, did not constitute transformational changes to practice or philosophy of teaching in the form of seeing practices in a new way (Little, 2003) or questioning one's practices or that of the broader teaching community (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Peel, 2005).

Teachers cited specific learning take-aways as reasons for engaging in POT. Some teachers were interested in observing a specific teaching tool or information such as new ways to study identity with students, or the curriculum of the class prior to theirs. Others were curious about student interactions or the "tasks." Teachers in the study were quite positive about the opportunity to improve their own practice, but improvement came almost exclusively from adding to or enriching practice. There was a lack of data,
however, to conclude that POT acted as a catalyst for interrogating one’s own practice or juxtaposing an individual’s practice alongside that of the broader teaching community. One teacher mentioned looking for a teacher’s “assumptions” about practice but that did not appear to happen in this first cycle of the LT/AC initiative. Finding 2 revealed that teachers were not yet asking deep questions about practice—why do you teach what you teach in the way that you teach it?

The third finding examined a teacher’s experiences observing classes not as individual observations but in the aggregate. When a single teacher’s comments were analyzed, POT became the means by which to create an individualized professional development plan grounded in the teacher’s practice and questions about her practice. The data analysis affirmed the scholarship on new visions for effective professional development programs that are based in the local context of teacher practice and guided by teacher questions about their own practice (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Data analysis provided three specific professional plans that were guided by an individual teacher’s purpose for engaging in POT, by the teacher’s preference of learning style, and teacher’s simple enthusiasm for learning from colleagues. The teachers were developing their individual art of teaching, seeing their colleagues as resources of knowledge, and organically creating their own plans for professional learning and development of practice.

The fourth finding explored the metaphors offered by teachers as a description of their experiences with POT. Teachers made sense of the individual elements of observation—the role of the peer, and the observation of teaching—by thinking of them
in terms of an active or passive metaphor. The metaphors provided clarity around the
definitions of the role, behaviors, and focus of the observer.

When the observing teacher saw himself as gallery visitor, swimmer in Patagonia,
researcher of teaching practices, or bridge between practice and theory, he understood
clearly what he was to do in the class while observing and the specific connection he had
to his colleague. The metaphors provided a sense of predictability that in turn, created a
trusting or non-threatening atmosphere.

The findings presented a rich picture of how teachers interpret POT, and the
results of my study generated the following ideas for future practice and research.

Implications for Future Practice at the Study Site

The data analysis yielded various themes in the teachers’ responses to questions
about POT. In this section, I identify three major themes and articulate implications for
practice at the study site based on each theme. The overarching recommendation for the
study site is for more guidance, or discussion among teachers about, how to enact the
LT/AC initiative vision of creating a more cohesive vertical academic program via POT.

In light of the loosely conceptualized practice of POT within the two new
academic initiatives, there was a great amount of freedom and flexibility for Lead
Teachers, teachers, and departments to design their own steps for engaging in POT and
thus, achieving the principle goal of the new academic initiatives. With the freedom,
however, came uncertainty as teachers grappled with how POT would be different from
supervisory observations. Providing a road map or examples of other school settings with
a practice of POT, such as these implications from the study, do not imply a curtailing of
teacher's freedom or ability to be involved in curriculum conversations. At the very start of this school-wide work, teachers would benefit from purposeful, vision-based conversations about moving the work of academic review forward and why POT has been named an integral part of the review.

Dynamics of peer relationships.

Peer relationships were significant to the teachers in this study. The LT/AC initiative explicitly envisioned a structure "intended to decentralize academic review and decision-making, more formally engaging faculty to lead the process" (Archival Document, 5/14/10). This "process" required that teachers work together—observing classes and discussing curriculum and pedagogy. There appeared to be an assumption that teachers would engage in POT and ensuing curricular conversations without the need for any particular guidance of how to do so. As the data showed, teachers were grappling with peer dynamics of positionality before they entered each other's rooms, and this was an element of our teacher's interpretation of their experiences of POT. It is logical to consider that teachers hesitating to approach peers for reasons of POT would be equally hesitant to approach peers to discuss teacher practice and other curricular matters. The study site would do well supporting the teachers' exploration of peer dynamics at the study site.

I propose allocating resources for community building to help teachers develop working relationships. First and foremost, dedicate time—after school and during the school day—for teachers to meet with the agenda of building personal connections. Create a series of team building exercises that start within departments and then build
across departments and the divisions. Once the lines of communication have been established—in other words, teachers are talking with each other, not at each other—it would behoove teachers to engage in research and discussion of scholarship around peer dynamics and peer collaboration. The literature review in this study contains excellent examples that school leaders and teachers can consult to expand their thinking about joint work and collegiality (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) and sharing observational feedback after POT (MacKinnon, 2001).

Once teachers have established, or are on the path to establishing authentic collegial working relationships, the LT/AC should offer suggestions for arranging and structuring peer observations. For example, teachers could choose triads and this trio of peers would observe each other and meet regularly over a period of time—a semester or a year—as is suggested by the practice of Lesson Study in Japan or instructional rounds (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). Begin with small cross-divisional peers within a department and consider moving to interdepartmental peer groups. Meeting in the same small group for a period of time would allow teachers to ground conversations in the practice of the triad of teachers, allowing for comparisons across classes based on knowing each other’s classes. Lastly, consider the possibilities afforded by mentoring via POT and encourage teachers to read about constructive mentoring configurations (Feiman-Nemsler, 1993, 1996).

The role of the Lead Teacher is new for the community. (At the time of data collection the LT/AC initiative was in the second year of its first three-year cycle.) Because it was an appointed position, there was no opportunity to review the job
description before it was made public. The third recommendation that I make to address peer dynamics at the study site is for the teachers—Lead Teachers and non-Lead Teachers—to engage in a review of the job responsibilities of the Lead Teacher role. Consider what specific Lead Teacher tasks have supported POT and the review of the academic program, and what job responsibilities need to be modified. Removing the specific teacher from critique of the role of Lead Teacher would enable colleagues to address peer dynamics related to this appointed position and not the specific individual. The end of the first Lead Teacher cycle is approaching, and there exists the possibility that different teachers will assume the roles of Lead Teachers. A review, now, would allow changes to develop the role for the next Lead Teacher.

**Transformative goals for POT.**

The teachers in this study were interested in POT because of the potential for learning observing colleagues afforded. Lead Teachers were aware of their role—"to learn the program" (Archival Document, 5/22/11)—but were also keen to acquire new teaching knowledge for their own classes. Adding or modifying teaching tools, however, has not led to questions about one's own practice or that of the broader teaching community beyond the school; POT, therefore, has not moved beyond the questions of what are we teaching and how are we teaching it? Engaging in conversations with transformative goals would move the teachers to questions of why are we teaching what we are teaching and why are we teaching it this way?

In order to help teachers engage in such a critical conversation about curriculum and pedagogy, there needs to be a conceptual framework for the teachers. The school’s
core principles are the most logical starting point, but it was unclear to me if those principles are the common ground for curriculum design for all teachers. The data revealed very few comments about the core principles and to the school’s progressive pedagogy; this may indicate that teachers are operating with different belief systems or “assumptions” about practice (Bill, Personal Communication, 5/25/11).

In addition to a conceptual framework, specific supports for POT should be made available for teacher review. I suggest conversations about protocols for conducting a class observation (what to look for, etc.), for discussing the observations afterward, and for organizing dialogue across all the observations within one department. As stated above, the examples of Lesson Study and instructional rounds (City & Elmore, 2009) need not be prescribed as the required way to observe but, rather, can be a starting place where the teachers can create their own observation protocol.

Teacher learning.

Teacher learning was a dominant theme in the teachers’ reflections of POT. As said before, teachers saw the learning connected to their own practice. This third implication for practice at the study site is to envision POT as a way to unite the teachers as a teaching learning community. Cochran-Smith & Lytle’s (1999) theories of teaching learning could guide an exploration of teacher’s knowledge at the study site. Providing meeting time with protocols for teachers to think about knowledge for, in, and of practice would organize their discussion of practice. Teachers, Lead Teachers, and non-Lead Teachers, could facilitate these meetings. Simply providing teachers with examples of
research about how educators engage in learning about practice together is a way to inspire their thinking about the purposes and benefits of POT.

As I stated in the Conceptual Framework section of Chapter 1, I did not present or discuss the theory of inquiry as stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001) with the teachers over the course of this study. Teachers could be inspired by learning about practitioner inquiry and may well begin to see POT as a means of individual or collective inquiry into teaching practices at the study site.

**Implications for Future Research**

The data analysis and findings prompted specific suggestions for future research that are organized into two main categories. Additional studies of teacher discourse about teacher practice and program development in the 2nd through 12th grade school context can provide a new perspective on teacher relationships across the different school divisions. The second category identified for future research—lead teachers/teacher leaders—focuses on peer-to-peer teacher leadership. Both of these areas of research can be opportunities for teachers to engage in practitioner research.

**Research into K-12 programs.**

Currently the research about POT is focused on educators in higher education (Bell, 2001; MacKinnon, 2001; Peel, 2005). Teachers in independent K-12 schools can offer much insight to the process of POT and reflexive practice in their local context. The K-12 perspective grounded in the experience of the teachers contributes two specific issues to the post-POT conversations: how knowledge of child development impacts
curriculum and pedagogy, and how teachers collaborate to coordinate the academic program across the three school divisions—lower, middle, and high schools.

K-12 schools provide students an educational program that spans the principle stages of cognitive, affective, and socio-emotional development. Teachers’ decisions about pedagogy and curriculum, as evidenced by teachers in this study, are informed by knowledge about the ages and stages of child development. The teacher comments also indicated that curriculum decisions are additionally influenced by information about the particular students in the class. Curriculum is not static; how teachers update their curricula would be part of this K-12 research.

Teacher practitioner research about the collaborative process for creating curriculum would be a valuable addition to this area of research. Teachers can document the process of information sharing post-POT, specifically how sharing information learned from observations informs curriculum design.

**Lead teachers/teacher leaders.**

The Lead Teachers were selected from the school faculty, and were vested with the authority to lead their peers through a review of 2nd through 12th grade curriculum and pedagogy. How to design and facilitate the critical review were decisions for each Lead Teacher. The scholarship around the benefits of promoting and supporting teacher leadership within school communities (Lieberman, 1986, 2007) would be expanded by investigation into the Lead Teachers’ experiences.

Practitioner research about the peer leadership across multiple school divisions would contribute to the scholarship about teacher leaders. If the Lead Teachers pursue
POT across academic subjects, this would add another dimension to the study. Moreover, the Lead Teachers' efforts to facilitate peer learning within and across departments, specifically how they work with their colleagues to design learning opportunities, would add to the research about peer leadership.

Conclusion

This study explored the ways teachers interpreted POT and the range of impacts of POT on their perception of practice, actual teaching practices, and teacher relationships. The data, collected via survey, interview, writing prompt, and my researcher journal, consisted of the teachers’ reflections about teaching and teacher observation at a unique time at the study site, the first three-year cycle of the LT/AC initiative. The data analysis yielded four findings that addressed the four research questions, revealing that POT was a catalyst for teacher reflection about peer dynamics, teaching practices, peer learning, and professional development.

Despite the lack of clear protocols and guidelines for initiating and conducting POT, the teachers in this study enthusiastically participated in a regular practice of POT, and clearly articulated the different facets of their experience. The close reading of the different descriptions of how teachers defined peer, what they noticed in a class and what were the effects (actual or hoped for) on their practice revealed trends in how the teachers interpreted their overall POT experience. As noted at the start of this research, this study took place shortly after POT was required of all teachers. The implications for future practice and research are an opportunity for teachers to participate in the development of the future practice of POT at the study site. Teachers can help to clearly conceptualize
POT, designing guidelines for peer conversation about practice grounded in the actual practice that is observed at the school.

As a practitioner researcher, I was an insider to both the practice and discussion of POT. The relationships that I established over the course of my tenure at the school afforded me a particularly intimate view into the POT experiences of the teachers. The openness and the assumed honesty with which the teachers shared their reflections conveyed the greatest validity to the research findings. All study participants communicated a commitment to the practice of peer observation, and an optimism for the potential benefits to their individual practice and the school community. The findings in this study advocate for teachers to engage in practitioner research using what they see and learn from POT as data. POT, therefore, has the ability to unify the academic program and the teaching community across the three school divisions.

Epilogue

I first thought about conducting a study of POT when Sunny School presented the two academic initiatives to the teaching faculty. The research questions, design, and methodology evolved over the course of the first year of the implementation of the initiatives. Data collection occurred during the second year of the required practice of POT. What has happened since data collection concluded?

From conversations with LTs, there are departments in which all teachers are engaged in POT and there are other departments in which the teachers that first started observing colleagues are still the only teachers observing colleagues. I have noticed that the departments with high levels of participation in POT are also engaging in thought-
provoking conversations about practice and curriculum. Those departments with fewer teachers practicing POT appear to be engaging less enthusiastically in conversations about practice and curriculum. As I reflect on the original vision for the LT/AC initiatives, I recognize that the stated purpose of POT was to vertically coordinate the curriculum. What I learned from this study is that teachers focused on curriculum and pedagogy when observing a colleague’s class. There was a lack of guidance for how to engage in conversations about, let alone question, a colleague’s teaching practice.

What occurs to me now is that there is a lack of a habit or culture of questioning teacher practice at Sunny School. As noticed in the AC meeting agendas, there is a tendency to “report out.” Teachers share what they are teaching in class but there is a lack of engagement among colleagues to question together why is X being taught and how was the decision to teach X made. I believe that the LT/AC initiatives and the practice of POT can help create a protocol and space for teachers to question practice together. POT, as seen in this data and in the research, has the ability to establish trusting professional relationships. That trust can help establish a safe space for interrogating practice at Sunny School. Teachers could design practitioner research into pedagogy based on their POT experiences. POT would then shift from a shopping trip for new teaching ideas into an act of data collection that teachers would review together to better understand their practice.

**Personal Reflection**

I had two very specific purposes in mind when I decided to study the practice of peer observation of teaching in the context of the LT/AC initiative. I wanted to understand how teachers interpreted their experience observing their peer’s teaching so
that I could support the development of an all-school, vertical conversation about pedagogy and curriculum in my role as Lead Teacher and Chair of the Academic Cabinet, and address some of the conversations about POT happening at my school, specifically the conversations taking place behind closed doors. The general theme of those conversations was that POT would not work because teachers would not engage in meaningful dialogue with each other on matters of curriculum and pedagogy because any recommendations for programmatic change, which would stem from this dialogue, would threaten the autonomy that an independent school culture often grants its teachers. All this was said knowing that many lower school teachers were observing each other’s classes regularly, co-creating curriculum and discussing methodological choices for their students. In my hybrid role of administrator-teacher, I never had the invitation to one of these conversations and not many people took me up on the offer to talk about POT. (I pieced together the critical argument above based on comments about POT dropped at various moments.)

I chose not to focus on the multi-headed beast of stereotypical problems at independent schools that are alluded to above—lack of teacher accountability, teacher autonomy, a fractious relationship between faculty and admin—because I knew that I was not the only educator at the school voicing support for POT and for engaging in thoughtful curricular and pedagogical discussions cross-divisionally and interdepartmentally. These voices, however, appeared to be silenced or drowned out by fear or whatever motivated the pessimism around POT. This dissertation, above all else, was a way to provide the space for those quiet voices to speak and to be heard.
APPENDIX A

Lead Teacher Duties

- Learning, evolving, and holding the vision for the 2nd - 12th grade curriculum and discussing any significant potential changes with Division Directors and Lead Teacher Supervisor;
- Conducting regular observations of classes;
- Mentoring new teachers in the subject area;
- Leading the vertical meetings in the subject area;
- Staying current with the field; knowing the major organizations, research, textbooks, standards, etc.;
- Serving as a resource to faculty members
- Participating in hiring of faculty members in the subject area

(Personal Communication, 4/7/10)
APPENDIX B

Email to Lead Teachers about Participation in the Study

Friday, January 07, 2011 5:31 PM

Dear [Lead Teachers],

...

This email is about a different topic: my current research topic for grad school—peer observation of teaching. I'm very much interested in what happens when peer teachers observe each other. Even though we are a school without walls, I'm keen to learn about what changes for individuals and the teaching community when peers observe each other teaching.

I'd greatly appreciate Lead Teacher participation in my study because you (we) are on the forefront of this activity at Calhoun. I will also invite faculty members that are interested in this topic to participate.

So what would you have to do to participate? Nothing specific with regards to your observing teachers (or class visits). Do them as you are/would normally do them.

Participation in the study, in brief, means allowing me to learn about your experiences. I'm planning to do this in two ways—asking you to reflect in "written form" as responses to short writing prompts or post-observation "forms" that I'll send around once a month or so, and an approximate one-hour interview of you, when convenient. I might also offer a "focus group" conversation—one in which folks talk with each other (not just me) about peer observation. Again, at a convenient time.

I'll keep this email brief, because it's Friday, and will check in with you again via email or in person. I hope you consider participating. I think our experiences at [Sunny School] could contribute greatly to the scholarship of teacher research around teaching communities—for us and for others.

Have a great weekend!
APPENDIX C

Email to all Teachers Regarding Survey

Monday, May 16, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

Thanks to the folks that have completed the survey. If you are inclined to do the survey, here’s a link to the on-line version on SurveyMonkey. The online and paper versions are the same.

Your responses, as on paper, are anonymous.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3ZMQVK6

If you have any questions about my study, just ask. If you’re interested in this topic, I’ve been reading some interesting articles and books. Happy to share!
APPENDIX D

Survey Protocol

This survey seeks to get a general idea of teachers’ attitudes and ideas about peer observation of teaching. Peer observation of teaching, for the purposes of this survey, is defined as observing a colleague’s teaching for a period of time. This is not observation by a supervisor.

The observations can be planned or spontaneous. Although there is no required amount of time for observation, this survey is focused on the intentional act of “stopping and observing.”

Please consider all your teaching environments when completing this survey. The survey will take about 10 minutes.

A. This part asks questions about discussing teacher practice with colleagues.

What topics related to teaching do you share or discuss with your teaching colleagues?

When and how does/did this happen—formal or informal meetings? During or after school day?

What are your top reasons for sharing your practice with colleagues?

What facilitates your sharing? What inhibits your sharing?

B. This part surveys your attitudes about peer observation of teaching. Consider all the schools or educational organizations in which you have taught.

1. I consider peer observation of teaching a helpful tool for my teaching practice.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

2. I notice a change in my teaching after observing a peer’s teaching.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

3. I notice a change in my teaching after a peer observes me.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

4. It does not matter which of my peers observe my classes.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree
C. Any additional comments:

D. How long have you been teaching? (Consider all schools for this question.)
   1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  16+ years

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Name (optional): _______________________________
APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

My Research Questions:

1. How do teachers interpret the act of peer observation of teaching (POT) within a school?
2. What is the range of ways that POT informs how a teacher perceives his/her practice?
3. In what ways does POT contribute to a teacher's perceptions of pedagogy and curriculum?
4. How does POT influence teacher relationships?

Interview Protocol—

1. What were your initial thoughts and reactions to the idea of class visits?
   a. Did you discuss the idea with colleagues—either in your department or within the school community?
   b. How were the visits arranged?
2. How often or how many classes have you visited?
3. Please describe the experience of visiting/observing colleagues' classes.
   a. Sitting there/interactions with students or teacher in the class
   b. What was going through your mind
4. Do you notice anything different after observing your colleagues?
   a. ...about your working relationship with the person you observed?
   b. ...about your curriculum or your teaching/pedagogy?
   c. ...about anything else?
5. Were your initial thoughts and reactions to the idea of observations/visits changed after actually visiting & observing? How? Why?
6. What, in your opinion, does this mean for a school?
APPENDIX F

Writing Prompts for Study Participants

Suggestions for writing prompts post-class visits:

1) What was it like observing X class? (or observing X's class?)

2) What happened, if anything, after the observation? (i.e. Did the two of you meet to talk about it? Were any new plans generated? etc.)

3) Is there anything that the visit inspired you to think about? Either immediately after the visit(s) or later? (i.e. about this particular class, colleague, department, etc.)
# APPENDIX G

**First List of Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Significance of POT</td>
<td>descriptions of the meaning of POT; descriptions of how participant experiences POT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Metaphor</td>
<td>descriptions of significance of POT in terms of metaphor Community of teachers; descriptions of teachers as a cohesive community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Perceptions of own practice</td>
<td>descriptions of participant's own practice (inside and outside of classroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Inquiry stance—individual teacher</td>
<td>descriptions of inquiry stance as individual teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Inquiry community</td>
<td>descriptions of teachers as an inquiry community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Influence on teacher pedagogy</td>
<td>descriptions of POT influence on teaching practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Professional Development</td>
<td>descriptions of POT associated to professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher relationships</td>
<td>descriptions of teacher relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Teacher Leadership</td>
<td>descriptions of teacher leadership, teacher agency among peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teaching community</td>
<td>descriptions of connection among teachers (more than one-on-one)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX H

## Second List of Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Significance/experiences of POT</td>
<td>describes what POT means for individual; the &quot;take-away&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. POT experience described in metaphor</td>
<td>descriptions of significance of POT in terms of metaphor Community of teachers; descriptions of teachers as a cohesive community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reasons/Purpose for POT</td>
<td>describes individual motivation(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perceptions of own Practice</td>
<td>descriptions of participant's own practice (inside and outside of classroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inquiry stance—individual teacher</td>
<td>describes individual teacher engaging in inquiry practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inquiry community</td>
<td>descriptions of teachers as an inquiry community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Examples of collaboration from/ with POT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Influence on teacher pedagogy</td>
<td>descriptions of POT influence on teaching practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Professional Development</td>
<td>descriptions of POT associated to professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teacher Learning</td>
<td>describes learning experiences connected to POT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teacher relationships</td>
<td>describes one-on-one teacher relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Teacher Leadership</td>
<td>describes teacher agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Community of teachers</td>
<td>describes a group of teachers connected by similar purpose, practice or value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Third (Final) List of Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Significance/experiences of POT</td>
<td>describes what POT means for individual; the “take-away”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. POT experience described in metaphor</td>
<td>describes POT using a metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reasons/Purpose for POT</td>
<td>describes individual reasons, purposes or motivations for observing colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reflections of own practice</td>
<td>describes how person describes his/her own practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inquiry stance (individual)</td>
<td>describes an educator critically questioning his/her own pedagogy, curriculum, and theory and purposes of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inquiry community</td>
<td>describes collective of educators critically examining practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Examples of collaboration from/ with POT</td>
<td>describes experiences collaborating with colleagues pre or post POT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Influence on teacher pedagogy</td>
<td>describes of POT influence pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Professional Development</td>
<td>describes formal school-wide PD programs at schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teacher Learning</td>
<td>describes learning experiences connected to POT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teacher relationships</td>
<td>describes one-on-one teacher relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Teacher Leadership</td>
<td>describes teacher agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Community of teachers</td>
<td>describes a group of teachers connected by similar purpose, practice or value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J

A Partial list of Administrative Titles at Study Site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade/Division</th>
<th>Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12 Titles</td>
<td>Head of School*, Director of Enrollment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Equity and Diversity Initiatives*,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director of School &amp; Society Initiative*,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Community Service Learning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director of Library Resources*, Lead Teacher*, Chairperson of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Cabinet*, School Nurse, Athletic Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division-specific Titles</td>
<td>Division Director*, Assistant to Division Director, Grade Dean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Titles with an asterisk are included in the presentation of this study. The individual is part of the research or is mentioned because it provides context for the study.
APPENDIX K

Description of Lead Teachers Sent to Lead Teachers

From: XXXX
Sent: Wed 07-Apr-10
To: XXXX
Cc: XXXX

Subject: Lead Teacher!

Attachments:
10 roles for teacher leaders.pdf (1MB) Lead Teachers at XXXX (33KB)

Dear Colleagues,

I know you have each spoken with your Division Directors about taking on the role of Lead Teacher next year, with the intention of creating a stronger and more cohesive program across our divisions in alignment with our Three Core Values. While the Vertical program over the past three years has served to bring teachers from different divisions together across subject areas to talk about their work and plan interdivisional projects, the Lead Teacher program will go further by vesting the Lead Teachers with significant responsibility and oversight for the program by subject area and across divisional lines, in partnership with the Division Directors and Lead Teacher Supervisor.

I've attached the job description we have developed for the Lead Teachers, as well as an article that effectively summarizes the key values and responsibilities of Lead Teachers.

I would be happy to speak with you further about the program, the vision for it, the specific responsibilities, and the compensation.

I think this is a really exciting next step for our program!

Thanks!

XXXX
REFERENCES


Hanson, S. G. (2010). What mentors learn about teaching. Educational Leadership, 67(8), 76-80.


