"TWO SHIPS PASS IN THE NIGHT":

TEAM AND NON-TEAM TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAMING

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"Two Ships Pass In The Night":

Team And Non-Team Teacher Perceptions of Middle School Teaming

By Frank Michael Ruggiero

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In recent decades, educators have looked toward the middle school model as an appropriate bridge for children transitioning from elementary school to high school and from childhood to adolescence. However, there continue to be questions surrounding its cornerstone practice of interdisciplinary teaming. Using a qualitative single-case study design, this dissertation was designed to explore how teachers experience the phenomenon of teaming as a feature of middle school reform efforts. It examined how *participation* or *non-participation* on a team affected members of a school community whose approach to teaming included some teachers but excluded others. The purpose of this research was to generate better understandings of teachers' lived experience to assist in efforts to improve the teaming model in middle schools.

Much of the existing research on middle school reform documents the positive outcomes of teaming but neglects its impact on the larger school community and focuses, instead, on smaller groups of teachers who are part of the teams. By privileging the viewpoints of an under studied population of non-team teachers whose voices are often unheard in the literature on teaming's normative benefits, this study was the first scholarly attempt to compare the experience of team teachers with that of non-team teachers. The significance of this research lay in its ability to explore unintended outcomes of this experience.

Both team and non-team teachers chosen through a combination of criterion and convenience sampling took part in semi-structured phenomenological interviews. Data

collection procedures also included the observation and analysis of school, district, and community documents. With multiple data sources and data collection methods, both methods triangulation and data triangulation were employed as strategies to improve the internal validity of this research.

Results from this research indicate that teacher experience with middle school interdisciplinary teaming varies according to their team or non-team status. Team status affected teachers' opportunities for professional growth, perceptions of instructional effectiveness, and sense of belonging and personal satisfaction. These findings have implications for both policy and practice. Educational policymakers need to understand how teaming affects all members of a school community, and practicing school leaders must be aware of the potential negative effects of teaming that remain under researched, discounted, or swept aside. Future research should be designed to add to the knowledge base of how middle school teaming affects all teachers in schools. In so doing, future research will provide support for school leaders charged with implementing or maintaining middle school reforms and, more specifically, designing and leading interdisciplinary teams in their middle schools.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation was designed to explore how teachers experience the phenomenon of

middle school interdisciplinary teaming. Specifically, it explored both team and non-team

teachers' perceptions of teaming and the extent to which positive outcomes outweigh any

negative consequences of teaming. It was based on a constructivist ontology that argues that

multiple realities exist and are constructed by individuals who experience a phenomenon of

interest from their own vantage point (Hatch, 2002; Krauss, 2005). By embracing the multiple

and diverse realities that people have in their minds, this dissertation privileged multiple

viewpoints of teaming. This constructivist approach was an attempt to offer a greater

understanding of the lived experiences of teachers whose school is engaged with teaming. The

purpose of this dissertation was to generate better understandings of these lived experiences to

assist in efforts to develop policies and practices that will contribute to improving the teaming

model in middle schools.

According to Haller and Kleine (2001), the practice of school administration consists of

establishing, maintaining, and changing programs that have prescribed effects on learners. The

authors distinguish these programs by the degree of administrator influence. There are many

programs over which school administrators have no control. They are administratively

immutable: they are outside of any administrative influence. These may be practices that are

mandated by the state or programs that are determined by school boards of education. There are

also programs over which school administrators exert a modest degree of influence. These are

administratively mutable in nature, but only to a small degree. Then there are programs that are

under substantial administrative control. These are the programs that school leaders create or

help to create in order to attain some educational objective. According to Haller and Kleine (2001), predicting the effects of these administratively mutable programs is the primary interest of administrative practitioners. Therefore, they reason that research in school administration should aim to create a methodologically sound literature of specific, administratively mutable, educational programs and their effects on learners.

Middle school teaming is one such administratively mutable program because it is one over which administrators exert considerable influence. It consists of organizational structures and programs that are designed to help middle schools increase student achievement and improve young adolescents' experience of the middle school years (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhull, 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mergendoller, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall, 2002; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). Interdisciplinary teaming in the middle school is a departure from the traditional departmental grouping of teachers. Ideally accomplished through common planning and preparation times, middle school teaming is a teaching model whereby teachers from different disciplines plan and prepare for, teach, and evaluate common students (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Main & Bryer, 2005; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002). School administrators organize middle school teaming in the belief that it will cause some positive change in students. This research was designed to add to the literature of the effects of a specific, administratively mutable, educational program.

Background & Statement of the Problem

Middle school proponents highlight a range of practices, or programmatic features, that effective middle schools incorporate to increase student achievement, improve teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships, and meet the developmental needs of young adolescents. The

most common include curricular integration or co-curricular experiences; specialized, or exploratory, programs; advisory or guidance programs for students; and interdisciplinary teaming (Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mergendoller, 1993; National Middle School Association, 1982, 2003; Russell, 1997; Tanner & Tanner, 2007; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). The quintessential middle school practice though that is common to all descriptions of the middle school model is interdisciplinary teaming. In fact, it has been called the "signature practice" of the middle school movement (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, & Melton, 1993, p. 49).

While the positive outcomes of teaming are well documented (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Felner, et al., 1997; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Trimble & Peterson, 1999; Walsh & Shay, 1993), few studies have attempted to document unintended negative outcomes and whether teaming leads to a set of circumstances that do no necessarily meet its proponents' expectations. School leaders seeking to improve student achievement and school performance must carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of interdisciplinary teaming, as well as its theoretical underpinnings, to anticipate practical problems associated with its application in their schools. The implementation of interdisciplinary teaming as a fundamental programming concept of education at the middle level often rests on generalizations about its general effectiveness, as well as its applicability to all settings. In a review of sixteen documents conducted to assess the effectiveness of interdisciplinary team teaching in its early days, Cotton (1982) stated that, "While interdisciplinary teaming is common practice at the middle school level, its viability as an instructional arrangement is generally assumed rather than investigated" (p. 1). She stressed the importance of reviewing the research on middle school teams and team teaching because

school administration must make well-informed decisions based on what is known, rather than what is assumed.

In the intervening years, research into middle school teaming has been replete with data confirming its benefits. Much of the research is based on the implementation of teaming as a means to achieve higher levels of teacher cooperation and collegiality, increased professional growth, and improved teacher morale, that will, in turn, translate to improved student outcomes in both academic achievement and emotional and social growth (Clark & Clark, 1993; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004). However, a great deal of the research is advocacy-based, written to promote teaming; and practitioner proponents then cite these advocacy-based studies as evidence of the benefits of the programmatic features of the middle school model (Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann & Valentine, 1998; Mertens & Flowers, 2004). This is problematic on several levels. First, the validity of any advocacy-based work is jeopardized and potentially biased, no matter how well intentioned. All researchers have a lens through which they analyze and interpret their data and findings; and no lens is free of bias (Yin, 2011). For example, many authors write for the National Middle School Association to advance the middle school reform agenda (Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann & Valentine, 1998). Their personal interest, or positionality, has the potential to bias their work (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Second, consumers of the research, including educational leaders in the field, may generalize research findings to the middle school movement at large without considering the importance of context and local variation (Mergendoller, 1993). Last, research tends to gloss over any potential negative effects of teaming because of its larger conceptual benefits (Kruse & Louis, 1997).

More specifically, much of the literature neglects teaming's impact on the larger school community (Kruse & Louis, 1997) and focuses, instead, on smaller groups of teachers who are part of the teams (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, Bickmore, & Hart, 2005; Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Flowers, et al., 1999; Gatewood, Cline, Green, & Harris, 1992; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Strahan & Hedt, 2009; Wallace, 2007). Furthermore, there has been an overemphasis on the rhetoric surrounding the rationale for middle grades reform (e.g., to meet the unique needs of early adolescents) and not enough emphasis placed on exploring the processes and results of the reforms being proposed (Mergendoller, 1993). While leaders must be aware of how teams can go wrong, disconfirming evidence of team benefits–or its side effects–are often discounted or swept aside.

Questions also remain regarding the applicability of teaming to all settings and the lived experiences of teachers in team settings. By capturing teacher experiences, this qualitative study sought to explore how teachers feel about middle school teaming. Qualitative research that delves into the complexities and subtleties of teachers' perceptions may provide readers with a context to which they may compare their own settings (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It may provide a slice of desperately needed "disconfirming evidence" that is needed for education practitioners to make an informed decision regarding how to best to implement interdisciplinary teaming in their schools, if at all.

Purpose & Research Questions

Interdisciplinary teaming is seemingly beneficial to all parties involved–teachers, students, administrators, families, etc. However, for some teachers, this practice, commonly referred to as "middle school teaming" or even more simply as "teaming," is also one that often provokes strong negative emotions among both team and non-team teachers (Doda & George,

1999; Kruse & Louis, 1997). Therefore, it could be argued that even school reforms that seem favorable to improving outcomes and almost universally accepted warrant continued study into their intended outcomes and certainly into their unintended ones.

This dissertation sought to qualitatively capture the real-life experience of teacher participants. It explored how team teachers experienced membership on a team at their school and how non-team teachers experienced exclusion from team membership. Then, by comparing and contrasting these experiences, this dissertation considered whether teaming, as a middle school programmatic feature, improved teachers' lives and those of their students or just detracted from good teaching. To do so, this qualitative dissertation focused on one main research question, with a number of subquestions:

1. How do middle school teachers experience the phenomenon of interdisciplinary teaming?

    a. What is the experience of team and non-team teachers in terms of collegiality, collaboration, and conflict?

    b. How do team teachers perceive non-team teachers, and how do non-team teachers perceive team teachers?

    c. How do team and non-team teachers perceive their own roles in teaming?

    d. What role do the formal leaders of the school play in the phenomenon of interdisciplinary teaming?

The fundamental purpose of answering these research questions was to generate better understandings of teachers' lived experience to assist in administrative efforts to improve the teaming model in middle schools. In implementing an administratively mutable program, such as middle school teaming, school leaders should not be reduced to making blind guesses regarding teaming's potential effects. Nor should they rely solely on their own experience and

their best judgment. They can improve their methods by examining their profession's past experience. That is what this dissertation sought to do: contribute to the verified knowledge base of whether middle school teaming positively affects select middle school teachers and their students.

Significance

Whether its value is proven by research or remains part of the rhetoric surrounding middle school reform efforts, middle school teaming is a significant factor in restructuring middle level education. However, the potential negative effects of teaming remain under researched. For both team and non-team teachers, practical problems may arise as a result of middle school teaming. The experience of teachers who participate in teams may be very different from the experience as it is intended. Teachers on the periphery of teaming remain excluded from being part of its potential benefits. The significance of this research lies in its ability to contribute not only to the research literature on teaming and its outcomes for teachers, but also in its ability to privilege the viewpoints of an under studied population of non-team teachers whose voices are often unheard in the literature on teaming's normative benefits (Kruse & Louis, 1997).

The second chapter of this dissertation reviews the literature base on middle school reform and the conceptual framework for this dissertation. The concepts that frame this dissertation were drawn from the extant literature on middle school reform theory, including, specifically, research on middle school interdisciplinary teams; organizational theory and research on teamwork on team processes; and research into schools as social systems. The chapter on methodology (Chapter 3) describes the research design, including a review of the qualitative research methods that were employed to collect, analyze, and interpret data for this dissertation. The data chapters discuss the findings of the research vis-à-vis the existing

literature on middle school teaming (Chapter 4), organizational theory (Chapter 5), and schools as social systems (Chapter 6). The last chapter (Chapter 7) summarizes the findings of this dissertation, including implications for practice and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Inherent in the research questions are issues related to organizational structure and restructuring, social situations in schools, and the need to compare the theoretically rational benefits of teams with the humanistic experience of its teacher participants. The concepts framing this study were drawn from literature on (1) middle school theory, (2) organizational theory, and (3) theories regarding the school as a social system and theories of human need.

The Middle School Theory

The past several decades have witnessed an extraordinary growth in middle school interest. Since the 1960s, an increasing number of educators have looked toward the middle school as an appropriate bridge for children transitioning from elementary school to high school and from childhood to adolescence (Beane, 2001; Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Tanner & Tanner, 2007). Middle schools were born from junior high schools but instead of the usual seventh through ninth grade configuration of the junior high, the middle school typically encompasses a sixth through eighth grade configuration. It does so by placing the ninth grade back into the high school where it had been before the emergence of the junior high school in the early twentieth century. While the grade configuration may vary, the middle school model reorganizes teachers, students, curricula, and instructional strategies to address the unique academic and social needs of early adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Flowers, et al., 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004).

Middle school teaming is part of a comprehensive middle school reform package designed to help middle schools increase student achievement and improve student's experience of the middle school years (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Flowers, et al., 1999; George &

Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mergendoller, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). School administrators design teacher teams whereby teachers from different disciplines plan and prepare for, teach, and evaluate the same common core group of students (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Main & Bryer, 2005; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002). In the way in which interdisciplinary teams are usually configured in middle schools, the language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies teachers all teach the same students and are able to discuss amongst themselves any student(s) because they all teach the same students.

Few middle school practitioners today realize their place in a model of schooling in which exploratory and related arts programs were emphasized as a means to complement the academic focus of their junior high school predecessors, according to Doda and George (1999). Structural changes in grade level and focus were initially envisioned as means to move from a uniquely departmental structure focusing on academics to one in which exploratory programs would be available to young adolescents that were then not available in elementary schools (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Waks, 2002). Exploration was to be central to middle level education, according to seminal reports such as *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools* (National Middle School Association, 1982) and *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). However, to some degree, the complementary nature between academic and related arts programs would become shortchanged after the publication of *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association, 1982) and *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*

(Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). Anfara and Brown (2000), Beane (1990) and Lawton (1987) report that exploratory programs tend to be unrelated to other areas of the curriculum and imbalanced by an academic emphasis. According to the revised *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), the middle school curriculum is and should be "grounded in rigorous public standards for what students should know and be able to do" (p. 23). In *Turning Points 2000*, Jackson and Davis (2000) refute any notion that the middle school concept is failing, while Dickinson (2001) has argued that the concept is valid but just suffering from "arrested development" (p. 4). Nevertheless, in a volume on middle school curriculum and instruction, Waks (2002) concluded that exploratory programs, which were once considered a central purpose of schools for adolescent learners, have become peripheral to the middle school curriculum, or eliminated entirely. Doda (2009) and others (Davis, 2001; Lounsbury, 2009) speculate that the reduction or elimination of exploratory programs and whole child activities are the result of the recent accountability movement in education.

The accountability movement in education has shaped the entire middle school reform movement and middle level practices, according to research (Dana, Delane, & George, 2010; Erb, 2003; Faulkner & Cook, 2006; George, 2008; Turner, 2009). There is evidence that core middle school practices have generally waned in recent decades and especially around the turn of the twenty-first century when high stakes testing gripped middle school education at the ground level (George, 2008). Students in grades 4-8 purportedly are among the most tested group of students in schools (Anderson, 2009; Turner, 2009)

Teachers report pressure from school administrators, policymakers, and the media to improve test scores (White, Sturtevant, & Dunlap, 2003) to the detriment of higher order thinking and problem solving (Anderson, 2009; Faulkner & Cook, 2006). While using a

narrative lens to present the experiences of new middle level teachers who learn to teach in an era of accountability, Turner (2010) found that participants universally expressed concern about the extent that high stakes testing conflicted with middle school philosophy. While all teaching used learning experiences that were developmentally aligned with middle level philosophy and the needs of young adolescents, teacher participants infused strategies to increase student test scores on standardized tests. The era of accountability and high stakes testing that has resulted in this infusion of test-taking strategies has eroded what some middle school teachers call the "Camelot era" of middle school education (Dana, et al., 2010, p. 151) during which such practices as teaming, exploratory programs, thematic curriculum, small group advisement, and block scheduling reigned supreme in middle level education, according to George and Alexander (2003). The benefits of middle school reform are the subject of the next section of this chapter.

Middle School Benefits

Research has increased into the middle school model's benefits. According to a National Middle School Association publication, these purportedly include increased student achievement, improved teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships, and stable student relationships with peers (Mertens & Flowers, 2004). Originally, characteristics of effective middle schools, according to *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association, 1982) included (a) educators who are knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents, (b) a balanced and responsive curriculum, (c) various organizational arrangements, (d) various instructional strategies, (e) exploratory programs, (f) advising and counseling programs, (g) an emphasis on continuous progress for students, (h) evaluation consistent with young adolescent needs, and (i) positive school climate.

For responsive middle level education to become successful, Clark and Clark (1993) made four suggestions: (a) Practitioners must build a knowledge base about both their clientele

and what is entailed in successful middle level practices (the research), (b) Organizational structures, programs, and practices must function in the way intended, (c) The needs of early adolescents must become the driving force for seeking appropriate programs, (d) Middle level education must be involved in the current educational reform. Research has also shown that the practices must be implemented properly (Felner, et al., 1997) and comprehensively (Epstein, 1990; Erb, 2005; Erb & Doda, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1993; National Middle School Association, 2010; Oakes, Quartz, Gong, Guiton, & Lipton, 1993; Stevenson & Erb, 1998). In the case of interdisciplinary teaming, schools may reap few benefits unless structural supports are put into place to make it work (Erb & Doda, 1989; Felner, et al., 1997; Kain, 1997a, 2001; Kasak & Uskali, 2005; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991; Mertens, et al., 2002). They may include the establishment of team leaders, common planning periods, and training of team members on how to use team planning effectively. However, data have also shown that schools that decide to emphasize departments and take the steps necessary to make them successful may be able to strengthen their programs just as much as schools that choose an interdisciplinary emphasis (Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991). There is other research that maintains the importance of academic departments (Erb & Doda, 1989).

Effectiveness of Middle School Reform

Many middle schools focus on the implementation of these hallmark middle school practices (Clark & Clark, 1993; Williamson & Johnston, 1998). Whether these efforts at the middle level support gains in student achievement is unclear because much of the research has been ambiguous and has had conflicting findings, according to Anfara and Lipka (2003). In other research, the link between middle level reform efforts and student achievement has been shown to be weak (Gulino & Valentine, 1999; Russell, 1997; Van Zandt & Totten, 1995). Whether middle school grade-level organization contributes to academic success has also been

questioned (Epstein, 1990). Odetola, Erickson, Bryan and Walker (1972) found that elementary schools with a single teacher staffing approach had a lower level of student alienation than middle schools with team teaching. This may be in part due to the lack of an additional transition year for students moving from 5th grade in the elementary school to 6th grade in the middle school, according to Alspaugh and Harting (1995). Other research also cites the challenges associated with the transition to middle schools, especially with regard to decreases in student motivation, self-esteem, and engagement that, in turn, may result in lower levels of student achievement (Anfara & Schmid, 2007; Chung, Elias, & Schneider, 1998; Eccles & et al., 1993; Eccles & Lord, 1991; Felner, et al., 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Warren & Muth, 1995).

Middle school features have the potential to enhance student achievement, but only to a limited degree. For example, in ten out of twenty-eight cases of relationships between middle level practices and student achievement, there was a small positive statistically significant relationship (Russell, 1997). In the study conducted by Lee and Smith (1993), middle school restructuring efforts were found to have a modest positive effect on both student achievement and engagement. And even though middle school advocates argue that the adoption of middle schools and middle school practices is especially helpful for lower achieving students, Bedard and Do (2005) found the opposite to be true. They found that moving to a middle school system decreases on-time high school completion by approximately 1 to 3 percent. Furthermore, whether middle school reform efforts benefit all students, especially lower achieving students, is questionable. Backes, Ralston, and Ingwalson (1999) noted that the students in their study who performed in the 25th percentile or below did not make two years of grade level gain during their middle school experience in any of the academic areas that the authors examined. These are sobering findings, particularly for proponents of middle school reform and restructuring. They

support Russell's (1997) discussion of her findings: that while middle level programming likely plays a role in improving student achievement, students' entering achievement levels are a far better predictor of student achievement.

Brown, Roney, and Anfara (2003) also disagree with claims that as schools implement more *Turning Points* recommendations, they show greater gains in student outcomes. Instead, they say that improving aspects of organizational health (e.g. academic focus, teacher affiliation, and resource support) more directly influences student performance. While necessary, the implementation of middle school features alone is insufficient in improving students' learning and attitudes, according to Cuban (1992). Midgley and Urdan (1992, p. 9), who call these structural changes "enabling mechanisms," report that middle school features may make it possible to provide but do not guarantee a developmentally appropriate learning environment for young adolescents. Middle school educators must move beyond initial organizational modifications in order to realize the vibrant middle schools that can provide for student achievement and success (Williamson & Johnston, 1999). Accordingly, reform must be comprehensive and integrative, according to Felner and colleagues (1997), whose research findings reveal patterns that make a strong case against attempting middle level restructuring "on the cheap" (p. 548). Other research provides compelling evidence that supportive administrative practices, in addition to high team functioning, lead to increased student outcomes (Trimble & Peterson, 1999). School leadership that provides time and organizational support for teachers to work in teams and for teams to work together is key to school restructuring efforts (Kain, 1997a, 2001). It becomes evident that more than programmatic features are necessary. According to Midgley and Urdan (1992, p. 9), middle school educators are "deluding themselves" if they think

that structural changes alone will automatically provide a more responsive environment for young adolescents.

Nevertheless, proponents champion the practices of the middle school movement. But, Williamson and Johnston (1998, 1999) go so far as to say that the unyielding advocates of middle school reform have inflicted the most damage on its sustainability because the implementation of programmatic features becomes the primary function instead of a means of restructuring to support middle level goals. Instead, the middle school practices should be a means to an end and not an end in themselves (Backes, et al., 1999). Further, the insistence on implementing these middle school practices has overlooked the need to match the program to the students', teachers' and community's needs. Therefore, based on situations in which programs have been implemented and did not function as intended, Clark and Clark (1993) propose that in many cases, middle schools are not living up to the promises of the "rhetoric" (p. 455).

While it is true that much of the research literature is replete with data confirming the virtues of the middle school model and teaming practices (Clark & Clark, 1993; Felner, et al., 1997; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Trimble & Peterson, 1999; Walsh & Shay, 1993), the decision to team is not categorically supported by all researchers (Anfara & Lipka, 2003; Anfara & Schmid, 2007; Backes, et al., 1999; Eccles & et al., 1993; Eccles & Lord, 1991; Epstein, 1990; Felner, et al., 1997; Gulino & Valentine, 1999; Lee & Smith, 1993; Odetola, et al., 1972; Russell, 1997; Van Zandt & Totten, 1995; Warren & Muth, 1995). The implementation of middle school features is not always sufficient to improve students' learning and experience of the middle years (Cuban, 1992). More than organizational modifications are necessary to realize the vibrant middle schools that can provide for student achievement and success (Williamson & Johnston, 1999).

Instead, organizational health may as much, if not more, influence on student performance (K. M. Brown, et al., 2003).

Organizational Theory

This study draws upon Bolman and Deal's (2008) multifaceted approach to organizational complexity. They put forth a multifaceted approach to organizational leadership in four perspectives, or frames, which help leaders to understand and manage organizations: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. While working in one frame may suffice for simple leadership issues, they suggest that the ability to work from multiple frames may be necessary for more complex issues. They also observe that the exclusive or excessive application of one or two frames to the neglect of the others may skew the understanding of an organization and may, in fact, be counterproductive to achieving goals. Instead, a blending of the frames is necessary to understanding the intricacies of an organization and to achieving organizational balance.

The balance between structural, human resource, political, and symbolic leadership is largely determined by organizational context (Bolman & Deal, 2008). If, for example, an organization lacks efficiency and rational procedures, a highly structural approach to leadership may be best suited to helping the organization to achieve its goals. However, if an organization lacks a strong positive culture and its participants feel demoralized and disenchanted because of a poor fit between their needs and those of the organization, a human resource approach to leadership may be the best starting point to initiate cultural change. If the organization is one in which issues of power and conflict are pervasive and hamper organizational success, a political approach to leadership recognizing the irrationality of the organization may be necessary to attaining the power to get things done. Finally, if the events that take place in an organization are loosely coupled to what they mean to organizational participants and if members perceive

events to have meaning other than their intended meaning, a symbolic approach to leadership may be the best starting point for making change. Nevertheless, employing a leadership style that embraces all four frames gives leaders an edge in dealing with organizational complexity; and striking the right balance between them, which may change as the organization changes over time, is a critical component to effective leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Effective management requires the skillful matching of multiple tools from all four leadership frames to individual situations. Since the decision to commit to teaming and how to support teaming are ones that are made by school leadership, the multi-frame approach to leadership and organizational change that they propose may provide an appropriate lens through which to analyze teaming structures in middle schools. Thus, organizational theory may be informative regarding what can go wrong in the application of theory to professional practice.

In traditional structural views, organizations such as schools are guided by goals and policies set by leadership at the top (Bolman & Deal, 2008). From an efficiency-oriented perspective, their leaders make rational decisions, set goals, and design the structures needed to achieve those goals; and their members are subordinates who carry out directives. However, while such an approach to organizational leadership and decision-making by school administrators may be sufficient in exacting minimal compliance from teachers and maintaining the status quo, a broader approach recognizing organizations as political arenas in which power and politics are central is crucial for organizational effectiveness, according to Bolman and Deal (2008). They assert that believing otherwise is naïve. Because schools are social organizations of diverse individuals (e.g., teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, nurses, custodians, etc.) and interest groups (e.g. academic departments, but also tenured vs. non-tenured employees) with varying values, beliefs, and perceptions of reality, school leadership cannot be free from politics

if that leadership hopes to coalesce the diversity of conflicting goals into a unifying vision with an accompanying strategy for success.

Teams: A Structural Approach

Generally, the formation of teams is a structural approach to help an organization achieve its established goals. However, structural approaches are often insufficient to bring about desired outcomes because of neglect for an organization's participants: teams, if not well structured, have the potential to malfunction and backfire (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In the case of schools, the implementation of middle school teaming is a means to achieve a specialized approach to adolescent learning and social and emotional development years (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mergendoller, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004), but the interplay between the teaming structure and teachers may lead to unintended and undesirable outcomes for both the school and its most important commodity–its people. For example, while teaming strives to foster inclusivity among students, the degree to which it is inclusive of all disciplines varies (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Erb & Doda, 1989; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, Powell, & Pollak, 1992; Smith, Pitkin, & Rettig, 1998). The question arises as to which disciplines are included and which are excluded; and the result has wide reaching implications. When team structure excludes some individuals, those who are excluded cannot translate the advantages of teams (including increased collaboration, consistency, and the sharing of ideas) into professional growth or gains in student achievement. Therefore, an analysis of teaming from an organizational theory perspective may be helpful in shedding light on the symbiotic relationship between an organization's goals and its participants.

From the structural perspective of organizations developed by Bolman and Deal (2008), teaming is a rational approach that should increase efficiency and enhance performance. However, the reality may be quite different, and teaming may not contribute to organizational efficiency and success in schools. Mismanaged teamwork can result in duplication and inconsistency between teams, unproductive conflict with negative outcomes, and the possible perpetuation of the status quo (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Therefore, structuring teams for effective and efficient collaboration is a primary concern.

There is another concern with structural adaptations. At the expense of individual needs, an approach to organizations that emphasizes only restructuring often results in confusion, opposition or confrontation, and, eventually, decreased effectiveness (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Rather, the type of multi-frame organizational thinking proposed by Bolman and Deal (2008) addresses more than goals and effects more than structural change in order to be successful. It seeks and embraces an alignment between organizational and individual needs, which is a powerful tool in building a symbiotic relationship between the two that leads to mutual benefit. This is because satisfaction of human needs motivates individuals (Maslow, 1954). Conversely, when these needs go unmet, individuals withdraw, under perform, and often retaliate. Theories of need and of the interaction between organizations and the people who work in them have suggested a powerful reason for organizations to serve human needs rather than the reverse: to stimulate motivation (Argyris, 1957, 1964; McGregor, 1960). The human resource frame provides a framework within which to work to foster motivation and achieve a good fit between people and organizations. From this human resource perspective described by Bolman and Deal (2008), the success of teamwork is also determined to a large extent by how people experience it. Simply put, not all teachers experience teaming as team members. Whereas practices of

inclusion have the potential to contribute to meeting individuals' needs, practices of exclusion and isolation may deter individuals from meeting their needs. In terms of both satisfaction and influence, the experience of teachers who are excluded from teaming may be very different from that of team teachers (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998).

Benefits of Teamwork

Just as teams are the hallmark of middle schools, professional collaboration and collegiality are supposed to be the "signature practice" of teams (Valentine, et al., 1993, p. 49). From a rational perspective of schools as organizations, teaming makes sense. Essentially an empowering bottom-up reform that decentralizes decision-making, teams allow for fluid teacher roles that should help its members to address a complex set of goals. Further, the diversity and collaboration embodied by teamwork should lead to a questioning attitude, a range of perspectives culminating in shared decision-making and improved solutions (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Decision-making.   Team decisions have the potential to be superior to those made by individuals. Multiple people working together bring greater knowledge and experience, greater variety for approaches to a problem, and increases the likelihood of consensus in the decision that is made (Maier, 1967). The collaborative efforts of teams in schools should be no exception. In the case of schools, teachers working in teams offer several advantages. Teams afford more teachers increased opportunities to participate in shared decision-making before decisions are made by the school as a whole, as might occur in full faculty meetings led by the principal (Kruse & Louis, 1997). In this way, joint decision-making on matters of curriculum, instruction, and testing improves the capacity of schools and their programs to improve the lives of students (Little, 1990). Erb (1987) documented shared decision-making as a difference between how teamed teachers function as opposed to those who are not so organized. Teamed teachers engage

in more frequent and in-depth professional discussions about issues of curriculum, instruction, students, and staff development. Furthermore, these discussions occur not only with each other but also with special educators, administrators, and parents.

Professional growth and support. The way in which organizations are structured bears heavily on the potential for teachers, who would otherwise typically experience isolation in their classrooms, to gain access to information about what goes on outside of their classroom (Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991). Specifically, the school environment can either promote or inhibit teachers' professional growth and their perceptions of their own performance capabilities. Through collaboration and continued contact with colleagues, participation in teams increases the likelihood that teachers gain access to information about what goes on outside of their classroom. Little (1982) found that in successful schools, teachers value the norms of collegiality and continuous professional improvement. These teachers pursued a greater range of professional interactions with both colleagues and administrators. Lee, Dedrick, and Smith (1991) also found that the strongest predictor of this teacher efficacy is a strong sense of community in schools, which concurs with other studies in the sociology of education (Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989). Environments in which human relationships are supportive are more likely to lead to higher levels of teachers' sense of self-efficacy. In this way, teams provide teachers emotional support in a way that is not typical of other teaching arrangements (Erb, 1987). According to Kruse and Louis (1997), professional communities emerging from teaming lead to an increased sense of teacher efficacy by expanding the number and quality of feedback mechanisms available to them. Although teaming may not be sufficient to cause collaboration, Arhar, Johnston, and Markle (1988) claim that the

cooperation and subsequent shared decision-making that teaming fosters are associated with a greater sense of power and control on the part of teachers.

The collegiality and collaboration of teaming have other benefits, as well. In a study on the relationship between teaming and teacher stress, Gatewood, Cline, Green, and Harris (1975) found that teaming was associated with slightly reduced teacher stress scores. Teaming was also associated with an enhanced sense of professionalism among teachers. They found that there was an increase in feelings of professionalism as a result of the teaming experience. Based on their review of the research on collaboration and teaming, Johnston, Markle, and Arhar (1988) concluded that collaboration is essential if teachers are to feel job satisfaction and experience continued professional growth.

Induction. The advantages of participation on an interdisciplinary team for team teachers in middle schools begin early (Little, 1990). Inclusion or exclusion from participation in a team affects more than just attempts at efficient work relationships and who gets to plan what, when, and how. For example, from the very beginning of her teaching career, a teacher's induction into a new school is highly influenced by a middle school's teaming practices. Bickmore, Bickmore, and Hart (2005) and Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) found that participants in middle school teams perceived the teams as an integral part of their induction process supporting new teachers' personal and professional needs. New teachers included both those in their first or second year of service or those new to a school. Bickmore and colleagues' (2005) research shows that teams contribute positively to teacher induction by providing emotional support through collegiality and camaraderie and by recognizing new teachers' competencies. Accessibility to other teachers teaching the same group of students assigned to that team was identified as a critical component to new teachers' ability to meet professional

needs with regard to student issues, including management and discipline. There were few negative perceptions of teams, and those responses that were negative were from teachers assigned to teams whose leaders were unwilling to take on leadership responsibilities (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005).

Instructional effectiveness. In terms of the actual work of teachers, teaming and the professional dialogue that it engenders have been identified as key strategies to improve teacher instructional effectiveness (Hargreaves, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Mills, et al., 1992; Powell & Mills, 1995). Kruse and Louis (1997) report that teams foster collaborative efforts that provide "intellectual assistance" to teachers, in which they are provided a place to try out new ideas, share exciting insights, and talk about issues in their practice (p. 264). Three teachers in a qualitative study on teacher change reported that the opportunity they were given to work in collaboration with colleagues had given them a chance to grow more than they thought they ever would have in isolation (Wasley, 1991).

The potential for synergistic creation is argued to be high in collaborative teamwork. For instance, in a case study of a middle school's first year of school restructuring that included interdisciplinary teacher teams, teachers reported "reinvigoration of their thinking" as a result of increased contact with their colleagues (Ehman, 1995, p. 6). Both Little (1990) and Kruse and Louis (1997) point to team structures that provide this opportunity.

To accomplish this in middle school teaming, teachers from several disciplines work together to plan, teach, and evaluate a common group of students (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Main & Bryer, 2005; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002). For team teachers to be afforded the opportunity to plan together, they must be afforded the time to meet together. The time afforded teachers to plan

collaboratively both within and between interdisciplinary grade level teams is the hallmark of middle school teaming. It is a time during which teachers have the opportunity to dialogue and share information laterally and is believed to be an essential prerequisite to effective teaming (Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2000, 2003; Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Huber, 1991; Louis, 1994; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Spies, 2001; Warren & Muth, 1995). Because of their study into the impact of common planning time on teacher efficacy, Warren and Payne (1997) endorsed it as the single most important factor in achieving successful interdisciplinary teams.

In sum, there is a range of professional dialogue, collaboration, and constructive conflict that ideally render teams successful. Little (1990) proposes that as teachers working in collaboration move from independence to true interdependence, the frequency and intensity and of teachers' interactions, prospects for conflict, and probability of mutual influence increases. With each shift along a continuum from what she summarizes as *story-swapping*, *sharing*, *helping*, to *joint work*, traditions of noninterference that are established in the teacher tradition are brought into tension with the prospect of teacher-to-teacher initiative on matters of curriculum and instruction (Little, 1990).

The Role of Leadership

Organizational research informs the structuring of teams in schools. Because middle school teaming is an administratively mutable program, the way in which its teams are designed is dependent on school leadership. Many administrative decisions need to be made, often with teacher input, prior to the implementation of teaming (Erb & Doda, 1989). Therefore, the role of school leadership is key to bringing about the proposed benefits of teaming and bears heavily on team success. If teaming is to be successful, leadership must consider the staffing of teams, team leadership, staff development opportunities, and the setting of team goals and expectations when

implementing teaming in their schools (Clark & Clark, 1994, 2006; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998).

Team design. Unintended outcomes of middle school teams may result from poor implementation practices, lack of oversight, or assumptions made by administrators. Teams must be designed for success. According to Katzenbach and Smith (1993), there is an unmistakable difference between people working in groups and people who are assigned to work in sharply focused teams. For them, teams must include a manageable number of people whose complementary skills and mutual accountability help them share a common approach to achieving goals. Because middle school teaming calls for representation from multiple subject areas, diversity in terms of expertise is usually automatic, but successful teams require more than diversity. As Spies (2001) discussed in a case study of high school interdisciplinary teaming, teachers chosen to work together must be willing, committed, compatible, capable, and collegial. However, educational policymakers and school leaders often take for granted that all middle school educators see the advantages of team organization and are adequately prepared to be part of it (Doda & George, 1999). To plan for this eventuality, leaders must refine the team member selection process. They must consider differences in teachers' personal teaching philosophies, teaching styles, and levels of preparedness for teamwork (Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, Bryer, & Grimbeek, 2004; Pounder, 1998). Effective leaders who value the improvement of performance and efficiency know this. They will carefully select teams because team composition will affect the teacher norms, ideologies, and identities through which effective teamwork will be mediated (Achinstein, 2002; Ball, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, et al., 2004). According to Erb and Doda (1989), a secret of successful teaming is the purposeful bringing together of people with

different backgrounds, perspectives, and subject matter specializations who can contribute to the growth of other team members and the overall strength of the team.

When any kind of group work is carried out, including that of middle school teaming, the development of teams should be focused on specific central tasks for the organization to remain adaptive and innovative (J. S. Brown & Duguid, 1991). Collaboration is not a fixed structure within schools and other organizations. Instead, collaboration needs to be modified over time and tailored to particular tasks and goals, which change over time. Further, collaboration requires complicated relationships that can be difficult to manage (Mintzberg, Dougherty, & Jorgensen, 1996). And just as the tasks and goals change, the parties involved in collaborative efforts must also be carefully selected and appropriate to the continually changing tasks and goals. Therefore, the success of teams potentially hinges upon the selection of team participants. Since team design is often at the discretion of leadership, the success of teams is dependent on the type of leadership exhibited and how leaders choose to structure those teams (Erb & Doda, 1989). However, the selection of team members too often becomes haphazard and leads to a situation in which the indiscriminate matching of individuals in teams leads to performance deficiencies and poor levels of work group effectiveness. Mismatched personalities in teams may clash and lead to conflict, which may or may not generate the professional dialogue and growth desired by administrators (Achinstein, 2002).

Team preparation. Teams must be prepared for success. Effective leadership that implements structures for team success is critical (Clark & Clark, 1994, 1996, 2006; Erb & Doda, 1989; Kain, 2001; Tonso, Jung, & Colombo, 2006; Trimble & Peterson, 1999; Turk, Wolff, Waterbury, & Zumalt, 2002). An effective pattern of roles and relationships with a focus on attaining common goals is of paramount importance according to Bolman and Deal (2008).

They note that authority, accountability, and clarity are all features of group work that allow it to function effectively and efficiently while trying to meet the common goal or goals. Fleming and Monda-Amaya (2001) also found categories of critical variables for team processes to be effective. They include team goals, team roles, team communication, team cohesion, team logistics, and team outcomes. Outcomes in terms of what is expected from the team process itself have also been considered a critical variable for team effectiveness (George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001). To counter the potential for inter-team isolation, structures and routines are necessary for teams to connect to other teams and to the school as a whole (Tonso, et al., 2006). Research also supports the need for common planning time for team teachers as well (Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 2000, 2003; Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Huber, 1991; Louis, 1994; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Spies, 2001; Warren & Muth, 1995).

However, more is necessary, according to research (Applebee, Adler, & Flihan, 2007; Sarason & Klaber, 1985; Tonso, et al., 2006). While Tonso and colleagues (2006) emphasized organizational structures in schools, they also found that it was necessary to consider teachers' areas of expertise, need, and interest. In their study of an urban middle school undergoing restructuring, teams lost teacher engagement, a focus on students, and communication both within the building and with the community and families without strong leadership. Structure and guidance provided by leadership promotes shared understandings that help to systematically connect teachers to school goals. The absence of strong leadership reduced teacher teams' capacity and success with students. Their findings confirm research into the importance of leadership in the effective design of teams (Erb & Doda, 1989; Pounder, 1998). Without leadership emphasizing the shared understandings that are necessary to connect teacher teams to

the wider school function, teacher teams' abilities to serve students are weakened (Applebee, et al., 2007; Sarason & Klaber, 1985; Tonso, et al., 2006).

Teacher preparation. Teachers also have diverse backgrounds and experiences that may not include preparation or training for the social and team processes of teaming. The literature on middle schools has been calling for middle level teacher preparation programs for years (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005, 2007; George & McEwin, 1978; Scales, 1993, 1994; Scales & McEwin, 1994, 1996; Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1967). However, states have been slow to make the commitment to implement and sustain specialized middle level certification programs (Lounsbury & Vars, 2003; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2001). According to the National Middle School Association (2001), teacher preparation institutions, as well as state departments of education and licensure agencies, have ignored the need for pre-service education programs that prepare teachers for teaching young adolescents. This is in large part due to states that do not implement specific licensure regulations for teaching at the middle level or that have regulations with wide overlapping grade levels. According to the NMSA (2001), the result is teachers who select options with the widest range of job possibilities instead of choosing to focus on specialized preparation for one developmental age group. As a result, most teachers in the nation do not receive special preparation at the pre-service level (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Oakes, et al., 1993) and many middle level teachers are insufficiently prepared to be successful in the often challenging task of teaching young adolescents (National Middle School Association, 2001).

While there continues to be considerable disagreement regarding the issue of whether middle level teachers need specialized professional preparation, there are those who argue that improving the pre-service preparation of middle level teachers is critical to improving middle

level learners' learning (Ference & McDowell, 2005; George & McEwin, 1978; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2001; Scales, 1993, 1994; Scales & McEwin, 1994, 1996). Sometimes, teachers who are placed in middle school teams are often done so with little or no training or guidance, according to Main and Bryer (2005). Yet, administrators and proponents of teaming then expect the types of positive collaborative relationships that are necessary for good team teaching. However, in many schools, little is done in pre-service preparation programs to prepare teachers for working in teams, and administrators often offer little in the way of in-service support. For example, in research on problems experienced by teachers who came from a high school to teach exploratory programs in middle schools, a teacher commented, "I was not trained for the middle school. I had no idea of what to expect from seventh graders. When I'm at the middle school I have to switch mentalities…" (Anfara & Brown, 2000, p. 64).

Main and Bryer (2005) report that undergraduate education programs rarely, if at all, prepare undergraduates entering the teaching field for teamwork. Little or no emphasis is placed on developing team membership, team process, or leadership skills. The main focus of teacher preparation is typically pedagogy and curriculum, and teachers may not easily adapt. The exception reported by Main, Bryer, and Grimbeek (2004) was among teachers with early childhood backgrounds who were less resistant to teaming than teachers from other backgrounds. Murata (2002) also found that high school trained teachers, in particular, found it difficult to buy into teaming because of their subject centered attitudes and pressures of accountability. Language teachers, who came from the high school to teach at the middle school have said, "High school teachers are not necessarily good at teaching middle school kids, may not want to teach middle school kids, and have no training to teach middle school kids" (Anfara & Brown,

2000, p. 64). Other research has shown that teachers with secondary certification have the lowest level of team practices (Mertens, et al., 2002).

The implication is that team preparation is left to principals whose schools implement teaming, and they may need to invest more time and energy in some teachers than in others. According to Main and Bryer (2005) though, for team members to understand the personal benefits from teaming they must receive training and support from building administration and teammates in order to commit and invest in the group process. Other research into the comprehensive nature of middle level reform confirms the need for strong administrative leadership that actively supports middle level classroom practices (Trimble & Peterson, 1999) and organizes professional development opportunities for teachers (Doda, 2009). Turk, Wolff, Waterbury, and Zumalt (2002) recommended specific actions for principals to undertake to support successful teaming. But this is often not the case. Computer and language teachers have made similar comments regarding the need for adequate training: "Somehow they need to give us better training…. If they want us to train the students, then why aren't we trained to do it?" (Anfara & Brown, 2000, p. 64).

In a position paper on the professional pre-service preparation of middle school teachers, the National Middle School Association outlines seven essential elements for middle level teacher preparation programs. These are (a) collaborative partnerships with practicing middle school faculty; (b) an emphasis on young adolescent development; (c) a thorough study of middle level philosophy and organization, (d) an understanding of the middle level curriculum, emphasizing interdisciplinary and integrative approaches, (e) a systematic study of planning, teaching and assessment in authentic settings, (f) early and continuing field experiences in

middle schools, and (g) experience with the unique collaborative role of middle level teachers (National Middle School Association, 2001).

There is some research showing that pre-service teacher education programs are changing. The number of states offering middle grades certificates or endorsements has been increasing since the 1980s (Ference & McDowell, 2005), and teacher licensure programs are gradually beginning to recognize the need for specialized training programs for middle level teachers (Lounsbury & Vars, 2003). Universities have started preparing students with specialized training for this middle level phase of schooling (de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005, 2007; Main & Bryer, 2005; Pendergast, Whitehead, de Jong, Newhouse-Maiden, & Bahr, 2007; Scales, 1994; Scales & McEwin, 1994), even though few have middle level departments, according to Lounsbury and Vars (2003). Little research has actually been carried out on how these middle-school trained teachers fare when mixed with teams of teachers with dissimilar, or even similar, training, according to Main and Bryer (2005). However, the initial research into these new teachers' induction into middle schools and into teams has proved that transition into the setting has been facilitated when new teachers are actively inducted into the program and when senior teachers mentor new team members (Main, et al., 2004). Teachers who have benefitted from middle level preparation programs recognize the importance of specific middle level training. One teacher said, "By spending a whole term just studying adolescents, it made you think about them in a whole new light. Then you could rethink your approach to education, starting with the adolescents, their developmental stage and their interests" (Bahr & Pendergast, 2010, p. 184)

Workgroup Effectiveness

According to Abelson and Woodman (1983), team effectiveness primarily relates to goal attainment but may also include team output meeting or exceeding organizational standards, group experience satisfying instead of hindering team members' needs, and team member ability

to work on future team tasks. For teams to be effective, they suggest that it is important to understand the criteria for effectiveness, the stages of development that teams go through, and the dynamics of group process in teams. For instance, interpersonal processes are a specific consideration in collaborative teams. They proposed that teacher teams must decide on group goals, establish roles and social relationships, and balance needs for process and content issues in group functioning.

Other research into workgroup enhancement is an approach to teacher work redesign, such as interdisciplinary teaming (Pounder, 1998). The purpose of workgroups is to improve the group's performance and outcomes of teacher teams, while also providing opportunities for interdependence and self-management. This body of research also suggests that it is important for teachers to develop the interpersonal skills that are necessary to work in teams.

Crow and Pounder (2000) found that the most serious hindrances in achieving healthy interpersonal processes were coordination problems, imbalance of member participation, and uneven commitment of members. A further criterion for effective middle school teaming is commitment from middle school educators who must be knowledgeable about and committed to the middle level concept as a means to enrich the lives of young adolescent students (Clark & Clark, 1993; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Oakes, et al., 1993). However, despite the growing research on the middle level movement and its effects, there is a shortage of theoretically grounded empirical research into the conditions, characteristics, and dynamics of group work that lead to team effectiveness, according to Conley, Fauske and Pounder (2004).

Middle school teaming requires that teachers move beyond dominant forms of privacy and begin to trust and cooperate with each other. However, uneven participation of team members is often problematic (Burnaford, 1993; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Erb & Doda, 1989;

Kruse & Louis, 1997; Oakes, et al., 1993). Member participation was found to be influenced by whether teachers (core or otherwise) were committed to teaming, whether a teacher taught a core subject area or an elective, and whether the teacher's subject area coalesced with the subject areas involved in curricular coordination through team efforts (Crow & Pounder, 2000). In other situations, teams function in an authoritarian manner in which some teachers are stifled by one or two veteran or strong teachers who remain uncommitted to collaboration (Oakes, et al., 1993). It also takes time for teacher commitment and participation to develop. Burnaford (1993) found that the intensity of teacher commitment varies for team members. While initial levels of commitment were low among some team members, they gradually, albeit slowly, increased as team members worked together.

Group effectiveness is also affected by the types of relationships team teachers have with one another. One of the benefits of teaming is the emotional support it provides colleagues who deal with the same students and issues. The ties between teachers are powerful forces in sustaining teachers in the face of professional stress, crisis, and difficulty, according to Hargreaves (2001). In close working relationships, the ties between teachers may stimulate professional engagement. However, he also noted that personal closeness and emotional support is of little use unless it promotes and does not hinder the type of professional dialogue and growth that improves the work of teaching. At the other extreme, deep personal friendships that result from teacher collaboration can be counterproductive (Erb & Doda, 1989). They are claimed to inhibit diversity, unpredictability, and the prospect for conflict that is necessary for innovation in schools (de Lima, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001). Good friends who are emotionally supportive may make poor professional colleagues because they may be reluctant to challenge each other when they disagree, thereby leading to "comfortable collaboration" (Hargreaves,

2001, p. 505). De Lima (2001) concluded that schools are in need of "friendly critics, not critical friends" (p. 115). Teachers need individuals from both within and from outside who do not feel the need to pretend they are friends in order to take a critical perspective of what is going on in schools. These individuals are less interested in friendship and more interested in engaging in the dialogue that promotes change in school, but in a friendly manner showing respect. In so doing, friendly critics promote dialogue, constructive criticism, divergent lines of thinking, and dynamic decision-making (de Lima, 2001).

Another inherent difficulty with teamwork is the potential for it to stray from its intended purpose of improving student outcomes through professional dialogue and growth (Cohen, 1981; Kruse & Louis, 1997). Teachers in teams take on many of the functions that were once accomplished either individually, by administration, or by clerical support staff. These include scheduling, curriculum development, and management of relationships with parents, etc. Little time is left to reflect on teaching and instructional strategies. Further, the ideals of a common planning and preparation time leave team teachers no time available for professional observation of colleagues. Collaborative efforts at reflecting on the teaching and learning process is limited to what teachers remember instead of in-class observations (Kruse & Louis, 1997). For example, the real professional development goals of teaming are minimized as teachers attend to tasks that are seemingly more pressing and can be accomplished from start to finish in one meeting period. Often, teacher collaboration appears contrived, inauthentic, and disconnected from the real work of teachers (Little, 1990). For instance, teachers became involved in field trip planning, form collection, and other organizational minutiae, or even discussion about what the professional development is supposed to be about. One teacher reported that "professional development really just means conversation" (Kruse & Louis, 1997, p. 276).

Collaboration, Collegiality and Conflict

The success of teamwork and the interpersonal processes of collaborative work within teams are other components that are worth exploring. From a rational perspective of teamwork, individuals work together to improve their practice both individually and collectively (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This is one of the goals of middle school teaming. Research shows that interpersonal and group dynamics bear heavily on team success in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Conley, et al., 2004; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Gunn & King, 2003; Hargreaves, 2001; B. Johnson, 2003; Little, 1982; Main & Bryer, 2005; Main, et al., 2004). For example, group work often gives rise to conflict. With collaboration comes increased opportunity for conflict. Conflict may be positive and generative, or it may be negative and stagnating, according to the research on conflict in teamwork (Achinstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005). Teachers may be forced to confront peers and their practices and perspectives with whom and with which they do not necessarily agree or admire. In this way, teaming is sometimes divisive and competitive (Hargreaves, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005; Wasley, 1991). However, conflict is inherent to social interaction, and organizations cannot function without it (Achinstein, 2002; de Lima, 2001; Oakes, et al., 1993). It is how conflict is addressed in a group that determines its effect. There is a difference between uncontrolled conflict and constructive conflict. The former makes change untenable, whereas the latter makes change possible (Oakes, et al., 1993). Constructive conflict may be inevitable in attempts at developing consensus, but it is necessary in order to flesh out "normative tensions and unproductive political arrangements that anchor the status quo" (Oakes, et al., 1993, p. 477).

Ideally, then, conflict has the potential to generate creativity and innovation in teamwork. Borrowing from research on group work in teams, any conflict that ensues in teacher teams could be the catalyst for positive school change, achieved through the questioning of established

teacher practices and deeply held assumptions (Achinstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001; Little, 1990;

Main & Bryer, 2005). Rethinking the role of conflict is vital:

> Examining, rather than overlooking, the role of conflict amid community is critical….
>
> Conflict generates opportunities to strengthen communities, for in the conflict lies an
>
> occasion to examine differences of beliefs, solicit alternative voices, bridge across
>
> differences to find common ground, and seek opportunities for change and growth.
>
> (Achinstein, 2002, p. 449)

From this perspective, continued research into teaming should embrace the potential for conflict,

which is neither the "antithesis of community" nor "aberrant" (Achinstein, 2002, p. 440).

Conflict should not be ignored, nor should it be pathologized. Instead, conflict should be seen

and employed as a central component of the community, reform, and professional reflection that

structural reformists desire.

It is important for teams to effectively manage their decision-making so that the strengths

of group decision-making are not lost. According to Maier (1967), there are liabilities in group

decision-making. They include a social pressure for team conformity in which decisions made

are not necessarily the best but just accepted by everyone. Similarly, individual domination by

one or a few members of the group may occur thereby silencing other members. When conflict

arises, there may be a tendency for participants to want to win the argument and not necessarily

select the best solution.

Moderate levels of group conflict have been found to be productive for groups of

individuals working together to achieve task processes and outcomes. Conflict is often necessary

for the emergence of high joint "benefit," a stage at which true interdependence begins to form

(Little, 1990, p. 522). To contain conflict, teachers may only foray into arenas in which

agreement is most likely and that have only marginal significance for the lives of either students

or teachers. Such a practice leaves the most important areas for self reflection and critical

reflection untouched by the collaborative practice, which are the areas that are supposed to be the

ones that are most examined by teacher collaboration. The desire to avoid conflict can

undermine attempts at improving practice.

Hargreaves (2001) found that conflict was seen as a problem and not an opportunity. In

fact, to avoid conflict, teachers kept their distance and avoided the interaction and professional

dialogues that may have led to conflict. Teachers went to "great lengths" to hide their emotions,

feign politeness, and avoid professional interaction in order to avoid the type of professional

scrutiny that might threaten "ties that seem to bind their community" (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 523).

Although productive interpersonal conflict is one of the benefits of teamwork from a structural

perspective, attempts at generating positive forms of it can backfire and instead reinforce the

status quo or result in a stalemate.

Little (1990) warns against misguided expectations of collegiality. Advocates of

collegiality have imbued the concept of *teamwork* with a sense of virtue, which may not always

be the case. There is the expectation that any interaction that counters the isolation of teachers

will contribute to both professional growth and improvement in knowledge, skills, and judgment,

and to organizational commitment that will together enhance the collective capacity of teachers

in meeting organizational goals. Little (1990) distinguishes between collegiality that is primarily

individualistic and conservative and collegiality that is professional and transformative. The

former is defined primarily by a closeness of faculty members consisting of camaraderie,

sympathy, emotional support, and moral support. She calls it the "'ordinary reality' of sporadic

and informal exchange" (p. 513). It rests on teacher autonomy, with independent trial and error as the route to improvement and competence.

In a comparative case study analysis of how teachers in two middle schools managed conflict, Achinstein (2002) found that while teacher communities have the potential to promote organizational learning and change, they may also effectively squelch opportunities to strengthen and improve communities. Schools may assume an avoidant stance on managing conflict by rejecting transformative practices that might challenge and cause common practices and institutional norms to be reevaluated.

Relationships with the larger faculty is problematic for some team members. Teachers in teams tend to cite their teams as their primary form of identification within the larger school community (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Consequently, they have difficulty identifying with colleagues not on their team. As teams mature and begin to exert influence on the school community and on other teams as well, some begin to stand out and receive more attention or respect. Conflict between teams may arise (Ehman, 1995). Teachers on other teams may come to resent the strong influence that another team has, resulting in inter-team conflict that erodes a school-wide sense of purpose (Kruse & Louis, 1997). There is also a potential for problems of articulation between grade level teams (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Wasley, 1991). Wasley (1991) found that teachers not working in a specific grade level team were often not aware of what was going on in other teams and, as a result, teachers become somewhat resentful of what other teachers were doing in teams, especially when teachers were used to having equal status and responsibility within the school.

Conflict within teams may become equally problematic. For example, Wasley (1991) found that while teachers reported that the diversity of experience in their teaching teams did add

richness to their ability to teach their students, it also made for long working sessions as they attempted to reach consensus on instructional strategies, curricular decisions, or approaches with students. They frequently disagreed about methods, strategies, content, and outcomes. Sometimes, their group work ended in a stalemate, in which teachers could not agree. These disagreements, in turn, led to a situation in which the other team teachers had to play the role of mediators instead of contributing members. This phenomenon is not unusual. Other researchers, such as Main and Bryer (2005), have noted similar team difficulties in terms of differing personalities, teaching styles, and pedagogical beliefs.

Stagnation

In some contexts, greater teacher contact can advance the prospects for student success by transforming teachers' practices. Collegial interaction can be beneficial for teachers and students alike. However, the reverse is often possible. In lieu of close scrutiny and criticism that may bring about transformative change in practice and approach, teaming and collaboration may lead to stagnation (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990). Working in teams may afford individuals the opportunity to reinforce the ideologies that they already have and not necessarily change anyone's views. While greater contact between teachers is idealized as a way to advance the prospect for increasing student success, it may equally intensify norms unfavorable to children, according to Little (1990). This may take the form of "experience swapping," in which teachers seek mutual support, reassurance, and even sympathy for classroom practices, instructional failures, or the lack of student successes (Little, 1990, p. 524). Such norms perpetuate below average performance and marginal commitment levels (Little, 1990). Little (1990) argues that the most common configurations of teacher collaboration do more to bolster isolation than inhibit it. The individualistic culture is not altered but reinforced as a result of attempts at most collaborative efforts.

When teaming becomes no more than one of the many duties of middle school teachers, it is "a yawn at best and a disaster at worst," according to Kain (2001, p. 209). Such an occurrence is not uncommon. Williamson and Johnston (1999) report that in studies they conducted in four states in 1996 and 1997, little of substance changed after the initial implementation of middle school organizational structures like interdisciplinary teams and revised scheduling: "It was discovered that following an initial flurry of activity, past practice quickly resumed" (p. 13). As also observed by Lipman (1998) in her work on the efficacy of teacher collaboration to improve the educational experience of low-achieving African-Americans, well-intentioned team restructuring intended to bring about positive change may, in fact, lead teachers to validate well-established beliefs and/or instructional practices.

Research in organizational literature concurs (Mintzberg, et al., 1996). As team members are together too long, there is a reduced amount of communication with outside people; and the team begins to see only their own virtuous efforts as superior. However, if collaborative efforts are seen as temporary and people in organizations are moved around from time to time, stagnation could be overcome. In the case of schools, the perpetuation of well established teacher norms and uncritical adoption of preferred forms of teaching and learning without reflection could be overcome as well.

Schools as Social Systems

Extensive research has been done on schools as a social situation for students, but the school is also both a professional and social situation for teachers (Sarason & Klaber, 1985). Although research into the normative benefits of teaming for students persists, research into its effects on teachers is often lacking. The school is nonetheless a social situation in which different classes of personnel must work together to confront the decision-making process (Sarason & Klaber, 1985). Despite behavioral and programmatic regularities from school-to-

school, schools do differ in the ways in which humans in them, both individually and collectively, cope with the regularities and relate to each other. Gump (1980) found that interdependent members of groups in schools did not always reap the same benefits from the team structure imposed. Some teachers and some students do not prosper in reformed settings. This finding affects decisions to implement teaming in the middle schools. Not all teachers will necessarily benefit from the teaming structure.

Teaming does not always automatically give rise to the type of positive conflict that its proponents desire. After the introduction of teaming in a Brisbane, Australia, middle school, Main, Bryer, and Grimbeek (2004) studied how the teachers viewed their relationships with students and other teachers. There was consensus on the improvement of teacher-student relationships and the benefits for both groups. However, the researchers found that team dynamics had a range of effects from positive to negative on teacher-teacher relationships. Positive teacher-teacher relationships were only found when teaching philosophies of the team members were aligned or when the team members could establish working professional relationships despite their philosophical differences. However, problematic aspects of teacher-teacher relationships were frequently reported among the largest group of teacher participants when teaching philosophies differed or when the team members could not forge a working professional relationship. The researchers concluded that some teachers in the school seemed to have the traits and skills that have been identified as appropriate to middle school practice, while others did not.

As for middle school teams, teachers must also be invested in the reform (K. M. Brown, et al., 2003; Burnaford, 1993). Successful attempts at teaming involve teachers who feel that they have control over the team process and are not pressured by school administrators.

Teachers who are expected to carry out the reform efforts must understand why they are being asked to do so. Only in this way can the teaming reform positively influence the school and its teachers and students.

Sarason and Klaber (1985) contend that both policymakers and educational leaders from without and school leaders from within often have a similar aim of changing schools but do not have an adequate understanding of the complexity of schools as social entities. They neglect the interconnected nature of schools, which is problematic because reform of any interdependent unit of schooling has the potential to cause unintended consequences in other units (Gump, 1980). Reform of any school condition affects other conditions and necessitates mutually supportive reforms in organization and scheduling, curriculum development, teacher reeducation, and teachers' working conditions (Oakes, et al., 1993). Middle school practices especially are highly interdependent because middle level reforms are part of a comprehensive package of elements whose interdependence must be evident (Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010; Oakes, et al., 1993).

Human Needs

Attempts at school reform, including the middle school model, are not without drawbacks; and interdisciplinary teaming as the cornerstone of the middle school model is not exempt. In fact, it may not be the panacea that proponents espouse. The implementation of middle school teaming is a means to achieve a specialized approach to adolescent learning and social and emotional development (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mergendoller, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004), but the interplay between the teaming structure and teachers may lead to unintended and undesirable outcomes for both the school and its most

important commodity–its people. For a model of school reform geared toward meeting the human needs of its students, it often tends to neglect the needs of all the members of its other largest group: teachers. An investigation into the byproducts, or unintended outcomes, of middle school teaming may determine whether the proposed advantages of teaming outweigh its disadvantages. Whether teaming is a viable option for all schools and has a positive effect on all teachers warrants further research.

Isolation

Teamwork is often intended to counter isolation by stimulating a sense of belonging and even ownership in organizations. Many teachers report that membership on a team helps them feel more connected with their colleagues and provides a strong support network that helps to reduce feelings of isolation (Arhar, et al., 1988; Arhar, Johnston, & Markle, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Mills, et al., 1992). However, it may not always meet the belonging needs of all of an organization's participants. Collaboration can be exclusionary (Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Mills, et al., 1992; Mintzberg, et al., 1996; Smith, et al., 1998). While working together is hailed as a panacea for solving group problems, some individuals are inevitably left out. Mintzberg and colleagues (1996) cited large corporations that all work collaboratively with each other, but that leave out a majority of corporations that are much smaller. In terms of middle school teaming, collaborative efforts usually include all the big players, such as teachers of language arts (English), mathematics, science, and social studies (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). However, smaller players are left out: teachers of foreign languages, related arts, physical education, special education, etc. They tend to not get invited or be included.

Practices of inclusion may give rise to practices of exclusion that engender feelings of isolation, as well as animosity, between those who participate in teams and those who do not (Doda & George, 1999). The degree to which teachers are included or excluded deeply affects school outcomes and attempts at improving those outcomes. This finding has significant import for non-team teachers who are left to organize departmentally, if at all. When excluded, then, non-team teachers reap no benefit from interdisciplinary teams. They are excluded from knowledge about both students and school reforms to which team teachers have easy access. How non-team teachers will communicate with interdisciplinary team teachers is seen as the most fundamental question that might arise with the onset of teaming (Erb & Doda, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000). Additionally, the opportunity for the type of conflict that leads teachers to challenge firmly entrenched beliefs and teaching practices does not exist when non-team teachers have little to no opportunity for collaboration with other teachers. Moreover, non-team teachers isolated from common planning sessions have been found to have lower personal teacher efficacy and more negative perceptions of their work environment than team teachers who plan together (Warren & Muth, 1995; Warren & Payne, 1997). Consequently, they may feel that they are less efficacious in achieving school goals and improving student achievement.

The problem is simple. In a model for middle level education that espouses the value of teamwork to meet school goals, the decision to team does not necessarily include all teaching personnel (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). In many schools, teachers of exploratory, or nonacademic, subjects are excluded from teaming collaboration. This is, in part, due to the fact that they are engaged in teaching the team's students to afford the team teachers the time to meet (Erb & Doda, 1989). This often translates into a schedule in which teamed teachers teach

five class periods with two planning, or preparation, periods; whereas non-team teachers teach

six class periods with only one planning period. Doda and George (1999) reported that such

scheduling restrictions and limitations impair faculty relationships between the core and non-

core teachers. With a majority of middle schools in the nation that engage in the process of

teaming, teachers in special or exploratory areas of the curriculum find themselves more often

than not on the periphery of middle school practices, and especially interdisciplinary teams. One

exploratory teacher queried, "How would you feel being the 'peel' rather than the 'core' of an

apple?" (Doda & George, 1999, p. 32). While proponents of middle school reform value

exploratory programs of study that are just not possible at the elementary level, the teaming

model ironically tends to marginalize teachers of subject areas that provide the diversity that

proponents desire.

From micro political and organizational learning perspectives, Achinstein (2002)

Whereas practices of inclusion have the potential to contribute to meeting individuals'

need to feel valued and to self-actualize (Maslow & Frager, 1987), practices of exclusion and

isolation may deter individuals from meeting their needs. If, then, teams in middle schools

include some and exclude others, there is an increased likelihood for non-team teachers to

experience lower levels of job satisfaction and morale and decreased motivation to meet school

goals (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Often, decisions about team inclusion are made centrally. If

decisions on team inclusion are based upon what teachers are assigned to teach, for example,

those teachers effectively have neither control nor influence over membership in the group.

Feelings of job dissatisfaction and low morale because of separation and isolation due to

uniqueness of teaching field has been substantiated (Woods & Weasmer, 2004).

From micro political and organizational learning perspectives, Achinstein (2002)

analyzed collaborative reform initiatives and teacher professional communities in two California

middle schools to find that how teachers establish borders and manage competiting ideologies plays an essential role in organization structure and efforts at reform. Specifically, how teachers establish membership in their community affects perceptions of social justice and equity, and community ideologies shape how conflict and group membership is managed. As such, teaming practices can paradoxically heighten the very isolationist tendencies that they are intended to counter.

Kruse and Louis (1997) remark that the literature on interdisciplinary teaching teams in middle schools often focuses on the benefits of teaming for those within the smaller groups and who are part of teams and has neglected the impact of teaming on other conditions of the school. Their research on team teachers revealed that team teachers tended to focus on what was best for themselves and for their students, with less attention paid to the health and prosperity of the larger school community. Team teachers revealed that identification with their individual team undermined the faculty's ability to attend to the business of the whole school. Even though common time was set aside in the schools in the Kruse and Louis (1997) study, there was less time available for the whole faculty to meet to share and collaborate on issues of instruction, curriculum or other school goals. One teacher reported, "All our time is tied up in the team" (p. 273). Team teachers in the study also reported that they did not feel the strong connections to the full faculty that they once did. In fact, the isolation they felt was partially due to competitiveness between the teams, they noted. One teacher summarized, "Years ago, we had teacher isolation and then once we reorganized we had team isolation" (Kruse & Louis, 1997, p. 273).

Summary

In summary, the way in which a school is structured and organized, how the school functions as a social system, and how a school supports the needs of its people all affect the

implementation of teaming as a feature of middle school reform. In this chapter, research on

middle school theory was explored to show the potential benefits of interdisciplinary teaming as

a programmatic feature of the middle school model. According to the literature, the

implementation of middle school teaming has as intended outcomes teacher collaboration,

professional collegiality, teamwork, and professional growth and support. However, research on

organizational theory and on schools as social systems was also explored in this section to show

that the interplay between the teaming structure and teachers may lead to unintended and

undesirable outcomes. By analyzing middle school interdisciplinary teaming through both

organizational theory and theories regarding human need and schools as social systems, this

dissertation sought to highlight these unintended outcomes of teaming. To visually represent this

analysis, the following figure (see Figure **1** on page 49) was developed for the conceptual

framework for this dissertation. The middle school model incorporates a range of practices that

effective middle schools implement. This dissertation focused on the cornerstone practice of

interdisciplinary teaming. Organizational theory and social psychology may be thought of as a

lens through which teaming can be analyzed. When middle school teaming is implemented, it

may give rise to its intended outcomes. However, analyzing middle school teaming through a

lens through which outcomes are not always as intended, this dissertation sought to show that

teaming may also give rise to unintended outcomes, as well.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
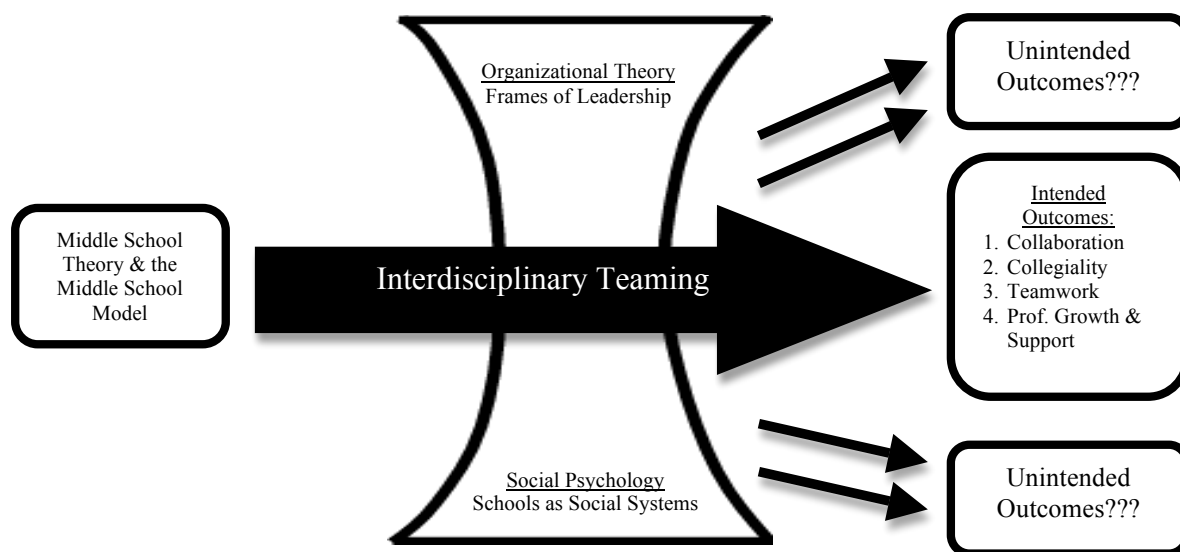
The goal of this study was to describe teachers' experience with middle school teams in their own words, captured from interviews, observations, and documentation of what took place in middle school teaming. The chapter on methodology (Chapter 3) outlines the qualitative analysis for the study, as well as a description of the methods of data collection and analysis that were employed.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology

Using qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011), this dissertation explored how teachers experienced the phenomenon of middle school interdisciplinary teaming. The research studied eleven public school teachers who have shared the same experience: a middle school approach to teaming that includes some teachers but excludes others. Because this study sought to understand teachers' perspectives of their own lived experiences, a qualitative phenomenological approach was well suited to this inquiry. The research privileged the perceptions of those teachers who were currently working in middle schools. However, as a researcher who believes that knowledge and understanding are inherently linked to context, my aim was also to describe the richness of the teaming experience in a specific setting. The research sought to describe the richness and complexity of the human (teacher) experience of middle school team and non-team teachers in one New Jersey middle school. Because this phenomenon was studied within a bounded system, a case study design was chosen as the research design. Since this research entailed a phenomenological approach, defining this inquiry as a phenomenological case study was appropriate.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research privileges what a phenomenon of interest means to an individual or to a group of individuals and must be carried out within the context of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Slavin, 2007; Yin, 2011). This requires that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings in order to understand how people make sense of and interpret phenomena of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This qualitative study included interviews as the primary research tool to provide data regarding teachers' own

perceptions of teaming and to present teachers' stories through their own voices. According to Patton (2002), interviews provide access to "what is in and on someone's mind" (p. 278). When multiple teachers were available to meet together with me, two-on-one interviews or focus group interviews were employed. Meeting with multiple teachers simultaneously supplements one-on-one interviews, giving participants the time to reflect on the topic and to listen to others' opinions before forming their own (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Brief follow-up interviews informed by data collected from previous interviews with teachers were requested to further explore teacher perceptions, as well as to seek disconfirming evidence regarding previously noted themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Such an inductive approach allowed for emergent themes to continually inform the concurrent processes of data collection and data analysis.

Phenomenological Approach

A phenomenological approach guided this research. This type of approach is meant to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspective (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Phenomenological inquiry is used to understand what individuals experience and how they experience and interpret their lives (Patton, 2002). It is the study of lived experiences with the assumption that there is a structure that can be defined (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In line with the phenomenological tradition described by Moustakas (1994) who asserts that the reality of an object is dependent on the subject, this qualitative study sought to be as faithful as possible to the lived experiences of its participants by using their own words to describe their experience. Arguably, the best understanding of a phenomenon of interest does not come from books and research on the subject. Instead, the best understanding comes from direct perceptions and observations (Moustakas, 1994). According to criteria set forth by Creswell (2007), a research inquiry calls for a phenomenological approach when it is important to understand individuals' common experiences in order to either develop

practices or policies or to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon. Developing a deeper understanding of how team and non-team teachers experience teaming based on their common experiences is important to the development of teaming practices for school leadership. It provides a primary justification for using a phenomenological approach to this research. In this dissertation, then, a primary method of data collection was "phenomenological interviews," (p. 104) as they are called by Marshall and Rossman (2006), whose primary advantage is their focus on the "deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals" (p. 105).

Case Study Design

Although case study research has classically been considered a "soft" form of research, it is actually challenging, according to Yin (2009, p. 2), who asserts that studying the richness and complexity of a phenomenon in a real-life context demands intensive efforts at triangulation. According to Yin (2009) and others (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002), case study research involves an analysis of more variables of interest than just data points. Because this research into teachers' perceptions of the teaming phenomenon investigated a variety of evidence, which is a case study's unique strength according to Yin (2009), a qualitative case study design was especially appropriate.

There were several reasons for designing this research as a case study. First, this research focused on teachers within a specific setting. According to Creswell (2007), Stake (1995), and Yin (2009), case study research focuses on a specific context. It explores a bounded system, or case, through in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information over a period of time in order to report a case description and case-based themes. This dissertation sought to provide a "rich, thick" description of teaming and identify themes that arise at a chosen site (Creswell, 2007, p. 209).

Second, case study research produces context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009). Such context-dependent knowledge is advantageous according to Flyvbjerg (2006), who asserts that it is only because of experience with the context-dependent knowledge that case study research provides that one can move from a simple understanding to an expert understanding of a phenomenon. He reasons that all experts operate on the basis of an intimate knowledge of thousands of concrete cases in their area of expertise: beginners become experts because of their experience with cases. A goal of this dissertation was to gain a detailed understanding of what teaming means to teachers in one bounded system.

Generalizability, at least in the probabilistic sense of the term, is not a goal of qualitative research using case study designs (Creswell, 2007; R. B. Johnson, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Slavin, 2007). In fact, qualitative research is often discounted because context-independent and theoretical knowledge is considered more important than the concrete, practical context-dependent knowledge offered by case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, the development of a nuanced view of reality may be more valuable than the search for universal truths and predictive theories, which gives rises to a third reason for adopting a case study design for this research. Research into interdisciplinary teaming is replete with data supporting its espoused benefits (Clark & Clark, 1993; Felner, et al., 1997; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Trimble & Peterson, 1999; Walsh & Shay, 1993), but these data are not enough. Instead, research that has explored a phenomenon and its complexities is what school leaders need. Case studies are of value in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigations (Stake, 2003). According to Eysenck (1976), "Sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look

carefully at individual cases–not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 422).

Finally, case study research is an effective strategy for studies focusing on programs, groups, or organizations, according to Marshall and Rossman (2006). They also acknowledge that an in-depth phenomenological interviewing approach, whose focus of inquiry is on individuals, is appropriate for studies of lived experiences. Because the present study dealt with teachers' perceptions and experience with a program (the phenomenon) within an organization (a specific case), a phenomenological case study combining a phenomenological approach and case study design was appropriate. The design deliberately incorporated the theoretical underpinnings of a phenomenological approach, which seeks to understand the essence of an experience, with the strengths of a case study. In fact, a case study may even be considered an in-depth inquiry into a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context when the "boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Research Design

This section of the chapter describes the research design employed for this dissertation. It explains the rationale for choosing Centerville Junior School as the site for this research and provides a brief background of the school. The section also reviews the sampling procedures and the process by which data were collected, analyzed, and triangulated. Figure **2** (on page 70) provides a timeline for these steps. Finally, this section addresses issues of researcher role; validity, rigor, and trustworthiness; and limitations.

Site Selection

The overarching goal of this study was to describe how all teachers (team and non-team) in a middle school experienced the phenomenon of interdisciplinary teaming. However, more specifically, it sought to understand how either *participation* or *non-participation* on a team

shaped how teachers experienced interdisciplinary teaming as a feature of middle school restructuring efforts. Therefore, it was necessary that the research be conducted in a school in which some teachers participated on teams (team teachers) and in which some teachers were excluded from the team structure (non-team teachers). Furthermore, given that teaming is considered by its proponents to be a quintessential feature of middle school restructuring efforts, it was also important that the site selected for this research be one in which teaming was purported to play a primary role in the school's success. One such school was the Centerville Junior School. It was a school that publicly extoled the benefits of teaming on the school district's website, by citing and linking directly to the *Turning Points*' website with the following citation: "The hallmark of an effective team is its ability to focus sustained attention on coordinating curriculum and improving teaching strategies in order to improve student learning" (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). According to the district website, there were several benefits to the teaming model:

> One of the teachers serves as a team leader and orchestrates daily team meetings/coordination of tests and other activities. In addition, this model enables the teachers to not only have a common planning period but also to coordinate interdisciplinary lessons. Centerville Junior School offers its students a variety of elective courses, which enhance its overall academic program. (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b)

Description of Centerville Junior School. Centerville Junior School was a middle school in New Jersey with an enrollment of approximately 540 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. These students were divided into six teams of about 90 students each, in which students benefited by being grouped with the same students and taught by the same language arts

(English), mathematics, science, and social studies teachers throughout the day (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). There was no specific mention of how students were assigned to the teams.

Each of the six teams had its own team name and was referenced on the "Teams" tab of the school's website. These 24 teachers were just more than half of the teaching faculty at Centerville Junior School. The remaining 22 faculty members taught a world language, physical education, special education, music, or art (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-a). There was no specific mention of the role of teachers of these exploratory subject areas (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-c). However, special education teachers were occasionally included on teams, if they taught a single grade level and were able to attend regularly scheduled team meetings (N.S., personal communication, October 16, 2012).

Purpose of teaming at Centerville Junior School. In a presentation to parents of incoming 5th graders, middle school team leaders at Centerville Junior School highlighted elements of the Centerville Junior School Model (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b). According to the presentation, the "hallmark of an effective team is its ability to focus sustained attention on coordinating *curriculum* and improving teacher *strategies* in order to improve *student* learning" [emphasis in original]. To do so, they claimed that Centerville Junior School provided an environment in which young adolescents negotiated difficult social, emotional, and intellectual changes in their lives.

According to the presentation to parents, the team model at Centerville Junior School was based on meeting the needs of students by developing cross-curricular lessons, maintaining heterogeneous student grouping, and forging meaningful relationships (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b). The relationships that the teams emphasized were many. Students engaged in

cooperative and collaborative learning in which they were able to work both independently and in group settings. Teams helped to forge stronger relationships between students and their teachers by ensuring that the same core subject teachers taught a group of students. The teams allowed for teachers to conduct effective advisory groups, share instructional procedures, and teach through techniques that emphasized objectives, assessing and monitoring for understanding, and a firm closure to each lesson. The team model at Centerville Junior School was also designed to support better relationships between teachers by pooling teacher strengths, allowing teachers to provide support for one another, meeting daily with other subject area teachers, and conducting cross-curriculum lessons. Finally, teams were to ensure effective and open channels of communication between teachers and parents (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b).

Team format at Centerville Junior School. At Centerville Junior School, the teams of language arts (English), mathematics, science, and social studies teachers were scheduled to meet daily for a full period. The meeting was supposed to last for a full class period, but it often lasted for no more than 30 minutes (N.S., personal communication, October 16, 2012). According to the presentation given to parents of incoming 5th grade students, the daily team meetings were focused on students' needs, planning, and curriculum improvements (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b). The teaching team was also charged with discussing student progress both academically and socially, coordinating testing schedules, and discussing other issues that contributed to their work with students (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). The teams also engaged in occasional team-based activities outside of the classroom (N.S., personal communication, October 16, 2012). For instance, there were two "team-building" days

scheduled for the 2012-2013 school year on November, 21, 2012 and June 19, 2013 (Centerville Public Schools, 2012a).

Teachers of language arts (English), mathematics, science, and social studies met daily to brainstorm about their students, organize parent meetings, develop cross-curricular programming, provide team-building opportunities for students, and provide time within which they would work together to foster a strong sense of teamwork (N.S., personal communication, October, 16, 2012). At least one meeting a week was reserved for a department planning session in which teachers of the same subject areas met to discuss curricular issues in their subject area(s). At least one other day a week was reserved for common curricular issues, issues of curricular integration, and issues surrounding the assessment and evaluation of middle level students. The teams and their team leaders designed the schedules for the other three meetings a week (N.S., personal communication, October, 16, 2012). During the other three meetings, team teachers might organize team events for their group of students, or they might organize and schedule meetings with parents of their students. Because teachers of the non-core subject areas were not included in the team meetings, coverage was occasionally provided for their classes so that they could attend a part of the team meetings during which meetings with parents were held. However, non-core subject teachers were not included in the team meetings on an every day basis.

Special education teachers were occasionally included on teams, and teachers of exploratory subject areas formed their own unofficial team. According to the principal, the school was just not big enough for all of the teachers to be included in the interdisciplinary team structure at Centerville Junior School (N.S., personal communication, October, 16, 2012). However, she reported that the teaming structure had improved dramatically since she took on

the principalship at Centerville Junior School. For example, teacher leader meetings were reserved for core subject area teachers in the past, but she has added meetings with special education teachers and teachers of specials and exploratory subject areas so as to have meetings with representatives from all subject areas. Nonetheless, she noted that teaming did have its drawbacks for teachers who were not part of the teams. They were not afforded the same common planning time as team teachers were. Special events and assemblies, although less frequently than in the past, were about two-thirds of the time pullouts from elective and special subject area classes. And she acknowledged that non-team teachers were never going to be quite equal (N.S., personal communication, October, 16, 2012).

Centerville Junior School was an ideal site for conducting this research because teachers of language arts (English), mathematics, science, and social studies participated in the teaming structure, while teachers of exploratory areas, or elective subjects, like art, music, world language, and physical education, did not. Furthermore, there was no official Board of Education policy on how teams were designed and on how teams established their goals and objectives, according to the principal (N.S., personal communication, October 16, 2012). Other than the school's website, there was no official policy on the purpose of the teaming model at Centerville Junior School; and no documents were found explaining the teaming philosophy at the school and in the district.

By interviewing teachers who participated on teams, it was possible to establish how teachers in this one middle school setting experienced the benefits of the teaming structure. By interviewing teachers who were excluded from teaming, it was possible to explore how non-team teachers experienced exclusion from the teaming structure. Then, by analyzing and comparing these experiences as reported by middle school teachers in their own words, this study contrasted

the experiences of inclusion vs. exclusion in middle school restructuring efforts at this one New Jersey middle school. Centerville Junior School was the only middle school in the district, also making it an ideal site for the current study.

Sampling

This was a small-scale qualitative study whose target population included both team and non-team teachers to gain the perspective of both groups. I used purposeful sampling strategies to recruit volunteers from the teaching staff. Purposeful sampling was important because this research required individuals who could purposefully inform an understanding of the problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). More specifically, a combination of criterion and convenience sampling was employed (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Criteria were established to select participants. For team teachers, these included membership on a team. For non-team teachers, the primary criterion for participation in this study was exclusion from membership on a team. Additional criteria for both inclusion and exclusion are detailed in a separate section.

      Criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Team teachers are typically defined as teachers of language arts (English), mathematics, science, or social studies; and they are the teachers typically included in interdisciplinary teams. Non-team teachers are defined as teachers of disciplines typically not included in interdisciplinary teams (e.g., teachers of world language, art, music, physical education, and health). Both team and non-team teachers were recruited for this study. For participation in interviews, team teachers were to have completed at least one full year of membership on a team in the school or at the middle school level so as to have at least one year of experience as part of a team. It was important that teacher participants have adequate experience with the phenomenon of interest in order to speak in-depth about the experience (Creswell, 2007). It was equally important that non-team teacher participants have adequate

experience as non-team teachers to speak in-depth about the experience of being excluded from team participation. For participation in interviews, non-team teachers were to have completed at least one full year of service in the school or at the middle school level so as to have at least one year of experience not on a team.

Team teachers of language arts (English), mathematics, science, or social studies with a range of experience were interviewed. Non-team teachers with a range of experience in world language, art, music, physical education, health, and other non-core disciplines were interviewed. The purpose for selecting teachers with a range of experience was to shed light on how teachers experienced teaming at different points in their career. For example, new, untenured teachers could provide informative information on the induction process for teachers in school with teaming. Veteran teachers' perspectives might highlight the effects of their team or non-team status in the long term. Teachers with a great deal of experience could provide contrasting experiences between the pre-teaming and post-teaming implementation.

Participant recruitment. I recruited participants for this study during the months of February and March of the 2012-2013 academic year. To gain access to the site, I requested permission from the school district's superintendent (see Appendix A) and provided a sample letter of approval (see Appendix B) that he could use or modify as he saw fit. Once I received his approval, I submitted my research protocol to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval, which I received in December 2012 (see Appendix H).

In January 2013, I contacted the middle school's principal (see Appendix C). With the approval of Centerville Junior School's principal, I presented the dissertation to the school staff at a faculty meeting on February 11, 2013. I shared the primary research questions with the teachers and explained the main elements of the research design. They were informed that the

study would last for the remainder of the 2012-2013 academic year and that they would be asked

to complete 45-minute one-on-one or group interviews that would be audio recorded with their

permission. They were also informed that there were neither costs associated with nor monetary

compensation for participating in the study. However, they were informed that they would

receive a gift card to a local café in exchange for their time and willingness to participate in this

study. I explained that the research was confidential and reviewed the provisions for protecting

the research. I answered questions the teachers had about the project. I remained after the

meeting ended to answer any individual questions the teachers had about the project.

Following the faculty meeting, a participant recruitment letter was distributed to teachers

in their school mailboxes (see Appendix D). By returning the Teacher Recruitment and Contact

Information Form (see Appendix E), teachers indicated their willingness to participate in the

study. The form required that teachers specifically indicate their status as a team or non-team

teacher, discipline(s) they taught, and their years of experience. It also requested their preferred

form of contact: e-mail, home phone, or cell phone.

Participant selection. Using a combination of the criterion and convenience sampling

described, teacher participants were to be selected from the middle school site, as described

above. I intended to interview at least 6 team teachers and at least 6 non-team teachers at the

school. At the same time, I intended to choose a sample of participants that was representative

of teachers of various grade levels and different disciplines. I also intended to choose teachers

with a range of experience so that I could facilitate comparisons between groups of teachers.

One of the purposes of criterion sampling in this inquiry was to work with information-rich cases

that might reveal major system weaknesses that might be addressed as areas requiring program

or system improvement (Patton, 2002). Then, from amongst those teachers meeting the criteria, convenience sampling was to be employed.

A total of 8 core team teachers returned the Teacher Recruitment & Contact Information Form expressing interest in participating in this dissertation. These included five 6th grade teachers, representing all four core subject areas; two 7th grade teachers, representing both language arts and science; and one 8th grade social studies teacher (see Table **1**). Because I intended to work with information-rich cases that would be representative of multiple grade levels, the 7th grade teachers Rachel and Laura and the 8th grade teacher Kory were chosen for participation in this study. The remaining three participants would be 6th grade teachers. Because this dissertation was also concerned with teacher leadership, both Nicole (language arts) and Olivia (science) were automatically chosen for the study. Then from the remaining three 6th grade teachers, Leslie (mathematics) was chosen because she might provide insight into how new hires experienced the teaming model at CJS.

Table 1

Summary of Team Teacher Recruitment

Subject	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
LA	*Nicole (17, 5) Betsy (5, 5)	Rachel (6, 6)	
Mathematics	Leslie (5, 1)		
Science	*Olivia (34, 5)	*Laura (9, 9)	
Social Studies	Dick (9, 2)		*Kory (10, 7)

Note 1. Numbers in parentheses indicate the experience, in years, the teacher had in total and at Centerville Junior School.

Note 2. An * indicates the teacher was a team leader.

A total of 5 non-core teachers returned the Teacher Recruitment & Contact Information Form expressing interest in participating in this dissertation. Because the design of this study originally called for 6 non-team teacher participants, all 5 volunteers (Sophia, Nora, Lana, Kerry, and Kaitlyn) were chosen for participation in this study. The 5 teacher volunteers represented the subject areas of world language, art, physical education, and special education (see Table **2**).

Table 2

Summary of Non-Team Teacher Recruitment

Subject	
World Language	*Sophia (13, 2) Nora (11, 2)
Art	Lana (17, 10)
Physical Education	Kerry (3, 1)
Special Education	*Kaitlyn (30, 5)

Note 3. Numbers in parentheses indicate the experience, in years, the teacher had in total and at Centerville Junior School.

Note 4. An * indicates the teacher was a team leader.

I contacted teachers (by phone and by e-mail) who were selected for this study and answered any questions they had. They were reminded that the study would last for the remainder of the 2012-2013 academic year and that they would be asked to complete 45-minute one-on-one or group interviews that would be audio recorded with their permission. They were also reminded that there were neither costs associated with nor monetary compensation for participating in the study. However, they were informed that they would receive a gift card to a local café in exchange for their time and willingness to participate in this study. I explained that the research was confidential and reviewed the provisions for protecting the research. Teachers

who remained interested in participating were given an informed consent form (see Appendix F).

All of the 11 teachers selected for participation agreed to participate, and we determined both a

time and place to meet for interviews.

Data Collection

As a case study, this project employed three primary data collection methods: individual

semi-structured interviews; semi-structured interviews with multiple participants or focus

groups; and document collection (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). The purpose of

this project was to understand something about how participants experienced a phenomenon of

interest (in this case, middle school interdisciplinary teaming). Its purpose was not to evaluate

the teaming model employed nor the individual participants and the leaders who administered

the program. Through the semi-structured interviews, teachers had the opportunity to talk about

and share their experiences, as well as their perceptions. Because documentary data can ground

research in the context of the phenomenon under investigation according to Merriam (1998),

document analysis was conducted to provide information about the context in which the study's

participants worked and about how teams were structured and functioned in the school. Shortly

after participants were recruited and selected, the process of data collection began in February

2013. Semi-structured interviews continued through April 2013.

The study began with semi-structured interviews with individual or multiple volunteer

participants. One initial interview was conducted with each participant or group of participants.

Participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix F). Interviews and group meetings

took place in a mutually agreed upon place, such as vacant classrooms or offices or at the public

library, and they were scheduled when it was convenient for the participants. Interviews were

semi-structured in nature, lasted approximately 45 minutes, and were audio recorded using a

digital audio recorder with the participants' permission. An interview protocol was followed

(see Appendix G). Questions sought to reveal what teachers have experienced with regard to teaming and how they felt about those experiences. Teachers were reminded that they could choose to not answer any question or questions and that they could request that the digital recorder be turned off at any time. A follow-up interview or unrecorded discussion was requested in some cases. The purpose for follow-up interviews was to follow up on themes of interest that emerged during the initial interview phase. Document analysis (described below) was used to strengthen the types of questions asked in interviews. The inductive approach to data collection and analysis started with interviews followed by follow-up interviews and discussions in order to confirm initial findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and to invite participants to participate in co-construction of meaning (Hatch, 2002).

During the data collection process, I collected various documents as sources of "objective" sources of data (Merriam, 1998, p. 126). These included meeting agendas, meeting minutes, team schedules and other documents generated in preparation for, during, and as a result of team meetings. I also obtained a copy of the school floor plan that showed team and room assignments (see Figure **3** on page 104). Such documentary data sources may provide descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new hypotheses, or offer a historical perspective, according to Merriam (1998). These institutional documents were examined to understand more about the context of the teaming model, to seek evidence of themes and patterns relating to how teaming was represented, and to compare teacher perceptions with how the institution represented teaming. In all data analysis and research reports, institutional names, teacher names, and other identifying information were changed or omitted.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Creswell (2009) describes a multi-step process of data analysis, whose purpose is to lead to a better understanding of text and image data. The process involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of data. This is a rather clinical definition emphasizing the phases of the analytic process. A less procedural description offered by Hatch (2002), and one that I favor for its emphasis on the end product of qualitative data analysis, is that data analysis is "a systematic search for meaning…a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others" (p. 148). While the present study into teachers' perceptions of middle school teaming did not disregard the accepted phases of the analytic process, it did aim to search for meaning and, more specifically, answer questions about team inclusion and exclusion.

I was amply aware of the dangers associated with an overreliance on prefigured codes during data analysis. However, a strategy suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2006), in which the researcher uses preliminary questions and the related literature to guide the analysis, was employed in the early stages of data analysis. They suggest that the earlier grounding and planning can inform categories by which the data may be initially coded and analyzed.

Most researchers seem to agree that data analysis is not and should not be seen as a distinct stage of the research process and separate from data collection (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994; Yin, 2006, 2009). In this study, code creation was not treated as a distinct antecedent to the ongoing coding and analysis of data. The analytic process should not be rigid, according to Coffey and Atkinson (1996). Instead, data analysis should be cyclical and reflexive.

In this study, the analytic process included opportunities for emergent themes to lead to new codes. Data analysis was generative and recursive. That is to say that as interviews and work with documents took place, they were accompanied by ongoing analysis. Hatch (2002) conceptualizes the general process of data analysis to be one of "asking questions of data" (p. 148). In the systematic search to find out what teaming means to the lived experience of teachers, I approached the data from a somewhat constructivist perspective (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). While analyzing the data, I sought to maintain an objective perspective, privileging each participant's individual viewpoints in an attempt to develop a more comprehensive understanding of all teachers' experiences with teaming.

Transcripts, memos, and other documents from the school district were coded. Initially, pre-existing, or *a priori* codes (Creswell, 2007), guided the coding process. This "start list" of codes, drawn from the extant literature and the conceptual framework, can be helpful, according to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 58); and in this study, it included codes such as *collaboration*, *support network*, *conflict*, and *isolation*, amongst others. Creswell (2007) is somewhat skeptical of prefigured codes because they may serve to limit data analysis, and he encourages openness to codes that emerge during analysis. Therefore, I allowed for emergent themes from the analysis of the data to lead to the creation of new codes. Also, because a qualitative approach privileges the ideas and viewpoints of its participants, in vivo codes, drawn from participants' exact words in interviews, were included (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In vivo codes, drawn from phrases repeated by multiple participants, often point to regularities in the setting (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The ongoing process of creating new codes led to the grouping and

regrouping of others. As I worked with the data and the code list, I organized the code list by creating subcategories.

Data from interviews were coded soon after they were collected. This was an important step, given the iterative nature of qualitative inquiry: data collection and data analysis are not mutually exclusive steps (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994; Yin, 2006, 2009). Data analysis has the potential to inform subsequent data collection. Once the data were coded and the codes grouped, the next step involved examining data for common patterns or themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2007). Over time the categorization and recategorization of codes began to reveal emergent themes in the data. Data analysis continued through August, 2013.

To facilitate the coding and analysis process, I used a qualitative software package called HyperRESEARCH to manage data throughout the study. This software was chosen for two reasons. First, it was cross-platform and compatible with both Windows and Macintosh operating systems. Second, it allowed me to create a zero-footprint installation on a USB flash drive, thereby allowing me to run the software on both my home desktop and portable laptop computers, without leaving any preference files or other files on either computer. While this option is cited as an important one if the software needs to be used on public computers without leaving any tracking information or files behind, I never used the software on public machines. However, it offered me the flexibility to work with my data outside of my home on my laptop computer.

Follow-up interviews informed by data collected from previous interviews and observations were requested with some interview participants to further explore teacher perceptions, to confirm data from original interviews, and to seek disconfirming evidence

regarding previously noted themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Also known as negative case

sampling, the process of seeking disconfirming evidence led me to search for examples that did

not confirm my expectations and explanations (Creswell, 2007; R. B. Johnson, 1997). They

were requested during and after the coding of interview transcript data. Such an inductive

approach allowed for emergent themes to continually inform the concurrent processes of data

collection and data analysis. These requests resulted in some e-mail correspondence, one face-

to-face discussion, and some telephone conversations.
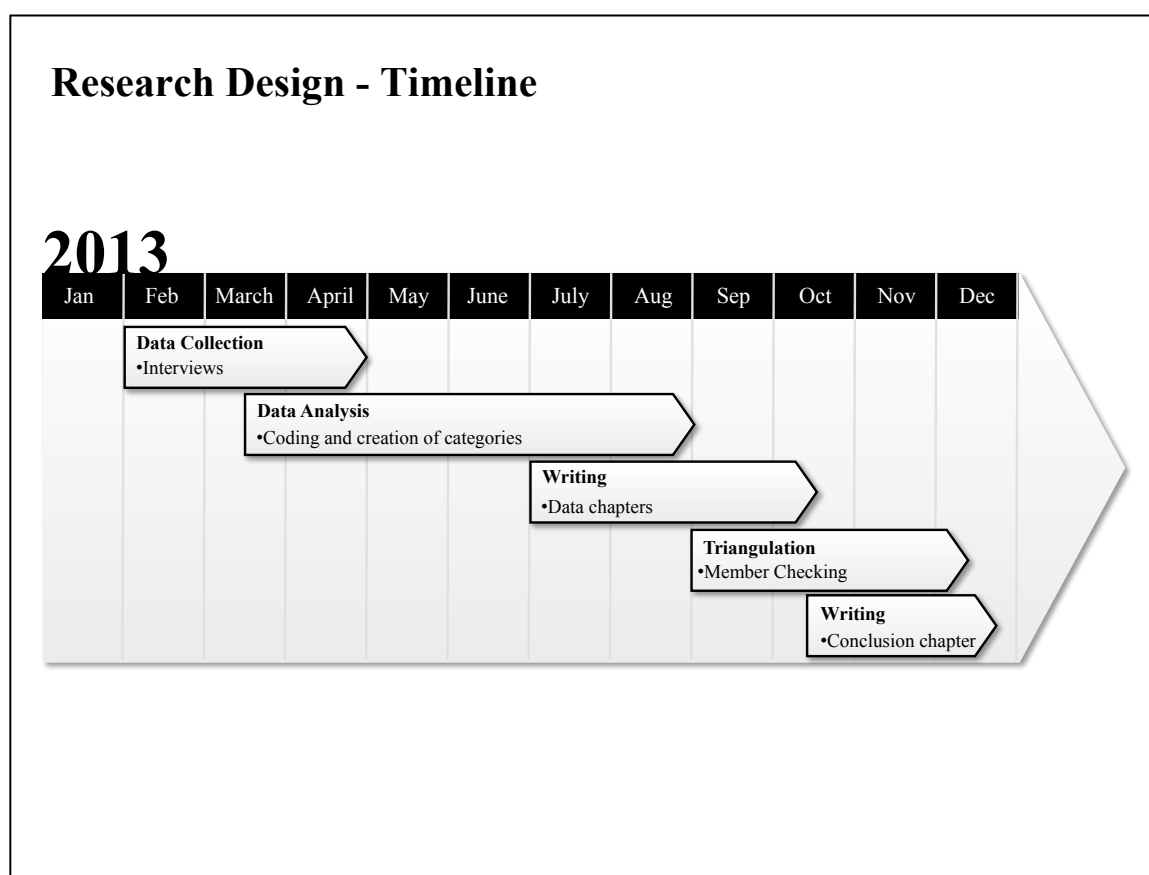

Figure 2

Research Design - Timeline

Pilot Study

To fulfill the requirements for a course on qualitative research methods, I conducted a

pilot study related to this research on teachers' perceptions of middle school interdisciplinary

teaming (Ruggiero, 2011). According to Yin (2009), one of the purposes of a pilot case study is to refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed. In addition, pilot studies and preliminary observations are important for generating research questions that are based on more than just library research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

With 9 participants, including team and non-team teachers, my pilot study was small (Ruggiero, 2011). However, it served several purposes. It was informative in how to (a) recruit participants, (b) collect qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, (c) identify and triangulate data sources, and (d) generate hypotheses about qualitative data. Convenience, access, and geographic proximity were the criteria used to select the case for the pilot study. These are acceptable criteria for a pilot case study because they may allow for a less structured and more prolonged relationship with the case than might otherwise occur in "real" cases (Yin, 2009). Data were collected primarily through one-on-one interviews, although direct observation of team meetings and an analysis of team documents complemented these interviews and served as a means of triangulation. Team teachers of language arts (English), mathematics, science, or social studies with a range of experience were interviewed. Non-team teachers with a range of experience of world language, art, music, physical education, health, and other non-core disciplines were also interviewed. Through interviews with team and non-team teachers from different disciplines, observations of team teacher meetings, and a review of documents associated with teaming, such as agendas and minutes from meetings, I aimed to identify preliminary patterns of how middle school teachers felt about teaming in their school. Interview transcripts, field notes, and institutional documents were analyzed and coded using HyperRESEARCH, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. I made three key assertions based on my interpretation of the data (Ruggiero, 2011).

Although the pilot study involved a small group of teachers, the findings did indicate that there is variation in how team and non-team teachers experience and feel about the teaming concept. Team and non-team teachers expressed different levels of frustration with the teaming model as it was implemented in their school, in terms of collegiality and collaboration. At the same time, however, they did express some similar feelings. Many teachers mentioned that they were unprepared for middle school teaching and teaming. The data also showed that teachers felt they had an insufficient knowledge of the theoretical and practical benefits of teaming, and they sensed a lack of coordinated effort to bring teachers on board (Ruggiero, 2011).

The pilot study served its purpose with regard to research questions, interviewing techniques, and overall data collection and analysis. Findings from the pilot study, as well as the experience gained with conducting all steps of qualitative research, provided valuable information relevant to the design of the current study. I used the results of the pilot study to focus the research questions for this dissertation. Use of the interview protocol helped to identify questions that did not yield the type of information for which I was searching, as well as to identify new questions to ask. With refined research questions and a revised interview protocol, this current study sought to use a larger sample size to corroborate and extend the findings obtained from the pilot study, as well as to dive deeper into teachers' experiences in terms of collegiality, collaboration, and conflict and into their perceptions of their own role in teaming.

Researcher Role

The desire to engage in this study was the result of my personal experience as a non-team world language teacher at the middle school level. First, middle school teaming is a practice about whose consequences I feel strongly. The practice of interdisciplinary teaming of core subject teachers is one that provokes strong emotions for my non-team teacher colleagues and myself. Second, as a middle school teacher, I have personal experiences that speak to the

research questions and hypotheses about what I would find. My lens as a non-team teacher had

the potential to influence the data that I collected so it was necessary that I approach this study

with an open mind and be sure that I did not just find the data I expected. As a qualitative

researcher, I took seriously the need to learn from the participants whom I interviewed and the

documents that I analyzed. This was not just because I sought disconfirming evidence but also

because I was interested in the degree to which included teachers really felt included and how

they perceived the teaming model of which they were a part. I was equally, if not more,

interested in the degree to which non-team teachers felt included (or excluded) and how they

perceived the teaming model of which their school was a part. As I embarked upon this

research, I sought to represent the teachers and their stories as transparently and as responsibly as

possible.

Validity, Rigor, Trustworthiness

There were several threats to validity in this inquiry: I am a practicing teacher and have

never been a member of an interdisciplinary teacher team. I have preconceived notions about the

usefulness of teams and tend to highlight their disadvantages over their advantages. These

notions have been the primary impetus for my interest in conducting this study. Further, I

embrace a constructivist paradigm and am therefore, myself, prone to the very interpretations of

reality that this study sought to privilege. Therefore, it was imperative that attempts be made to

safeguard the validity of the findings of this inquiry. To this end, five principal procedures were

employed to mitigate these threats.

As a non-team teacher who has been excluded from teacher teams, I might be tempted to

only seek evidence that confirmed what I already believed. Therefore, both confirming and

disconfirming evidence were explored to help ensure thoroughness and minimize the possibility

of only confirming preconceived notions and hypotheses about the teaming model (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; R. B. Johnson, 1997).

Researcher reflexivity is especially important when researching from a constructivist perspective (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Reflexivity is a strategy used to maximize interpretive validity in qualitative research by engaging in critical self reflection about one's own potential biases and predisposition as they may affect the research process and conclusions (R. B. Johnson, 1997). As such, I fully self-disclosed what my assumptions and beliefs were regarding middle school teams. Through a process of bracketing (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002), I attempted to set aside my experiences as much as possible to be as objective as I could be regarding what I learned from my participants' stories and my analysis of documents.

Both methods triangulation and data triangulation were employed as strategies to improve the internal validity of this research. In case study research, internal validity deals with the problem of making inferences (Yin, 2009). It refers to the degree to which researchers are justified in making claims based on observed relationships (R. B. Johnson, 1997). Johnson distinguishes between methods and data triangulation practices: multiple methods does not mean multiple data sources, while multiple data sources does not mean multiple methods. The data collection process included multiple types of data collection procedures, including both interview and observational methods, to achieve methods triangulation. It also included multiple types of data sources to achieve data triangulation. These included multiple interviews with the interview method and the analysis of an array of institutional documents using the observational method, while collecting data at different times, different places, and with different people.

The nature of qualitative research demands rich detail in order to recreate for readers the experience of the study's subjects. This "thick, rich description" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128) was another means to establishing credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000), transferability (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998), and interpretive validity (R. B. Johnson, 1997). These refer to the accurate portrayal of meaning that participants attach to what is being studied. With vivid detail, this study sought to create for readers the sense that they have experienced or could experience teaming as the teacher participants did in their settings. In so doing, a purpose of this study was to enable readers to determine whether the findings could be transferred or applied to similar contexts or situations. In order to minimize my own interpretation of what participants said, data analysis privileged low inference descriptors such as verbatim using the participants' own words (R. B. Johnson, 1997). Using direct quotations, verbatim allowed this dissertation to provide not only description (of events, etc.) but also information regarding the participants' own interpretations and personal meanings of those events. Readers will be able to experience for themselves the participants' own perspectives.

Last, I conducted follow-up interviews and engaged in unrecorded follow-up discussions with teacher participants during the data coding and analysis process. These interviews and discussions provided a form of a member check for the themes that were emerging from the data (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Member checks are a useful way to give participants the opportunity to react to tentative findings generated during data analysis in qualitative research (Hatch, 2002) and to evaluate the accuracy and credibility of analyses, interpretations, and conclusions (Creswell, 2007). They are also useful from a constructivist perspective, providing participants the opportunity to give feedback and co construct meaning in partnership with the researcher (Hatch, 2002). By obtaining participant feedback to attempt to

confirm participants' viewpoints, areas of miscommunication may be clarified (R. B. Johnson, 1997). Therefore, during these interviews and discussions, I attempted to confirm my findings by asking participants if my findings were consistent with the opinions they expressed and the stories they recounted during the initial interview phase.

Limitations

Limitations are a part of all research studies. None are perfectly designed (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). There are factors that impact the validity of this study and that limit the transferability of its findings to other similar situations. Qualitative case study research must be situated within a specific context (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Yin, 2009). As with other qualitative research studies employing a case study design, this case study studied the teaming phenomenon in a particular context. While the context-dependent knowledge gained from this research has the potential to inform further research, it is nevertheless knowledge that is dependent on how the phenomenon was experienced in one context. This was a limitation of this dissertation.

This dissertation was not grounded in quantitative research methods and therefore did not have as a goal a large enough sample size to generalize its results to other populations and other contexts. Nevertheless, the sampling of this qualitative research must be considered as a limitation. First, the sample size was small and might have limited my findings or might have led to the production of inaccurate findings based on the limited data that I was able to collect. Second, cooperation is essential (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This might have been a controversial and emotional issue for some teachers, and the teachers who responded to the recruitment effort may not accurately represent the majority of teacher perspectives in this context. The findings from this dissertation depended largely on self-reported data from these teacher participants. While I was direct in my interviewing technique and clear about my

expectations of honesty, I interviewed teachers who might exhibit their own bias with regard to teacher teaming. Qualitative researchers acknowledge that interviews should only be considered "verbal reports" (Yin, 2009, p. 108). Moreover, while I was forthcoming with my stance on confidentiality and assured the teacher participants that research records would only include non-identifying information, it was possible that the interviews might not generate the type of data for which I was searching. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) note, interview participants may be uncomfortable sharing the type of data that a researcher hopes to explore, or they may be unaware of patterns and themes in their own lives.

As a matter of practicality, my status as a full-time teacher limited the data collection in this study. The sample of participants was limited to those teachers who were willing to meet with me before or after school or on weekends because I was teaching my own classes when my participants were teaching their classes. Consequently, I also deliberately chose to do away with direct observations and participant-observations as means of data collection. When discussing participant-observation, Yin (2009) notes that it is difficult for a researcher to be at the right place at the right time to either participate in or observe events. While participant-observation is considered integral to qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) and such observation of teachers working in teams may be beneficial to a better understanding of teaming, the non-team teachers who were the focus of this study, by virtue of their non-participation status, did not work together in teams. For these reasons, I relied on interviews and documents as the primary sources of data and developed a paper trail in order to triangulate findings.

Finally, as a practicing middle school teacher, I exhibit aspects of researcher bias, or positionality, that had the potential to influence my interpretation (R. B. Johnson, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Therefore, through a process of self-disclosure (Moustakas, 1994; Patton,

2002), I attempted to mitigate researcher bias by bracketing (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002) my experience for both myself as a researcher and for the reader. I also approached this project with an open mind, seeking examples of disconfirming evidence (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; R. B. Johnson, 1997). While measures, such as member checks, were taken to improve the validity of this study's findings, the potential for personal bias to affect the researcher's lens deserves mention.

Significance

Despite the limitations imposed by the research design, the professional working obligations of a practicing middle school teacher, and my positionality as a non-participating member in a team, this study was justified because so much of the existing literature on teaming focuses on the benefits of teaming for only a subset of the school's personnel. Much of the existing literature (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005; Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Flowers, et al., 1999; Gatewood, et al., 1992; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Strahan & Hedt, 2009; Wallace, 2007) neglects the impact that teaming has on the larger school community and, specifically, other members of the school community. Circumstances vary between schools; and what may work in one setting may not work in another. And it is precisely because of the potential for misguided attempts at implementing teaming and for unforeseen effects and undesired outcomes that middle school teaming should and must be studied.

This study is significant because it was the first scholarly attempt to compare the experience of team teachers with that of non-team teachers and, more specifically, to document the experience of teachers who were excluded from the teams. If advocates of the middle school model are to continue to champion interdisciplinary teaming as the cornerstone of their practice, they along with educational policymakers and school leaders should be cognizant of how

teaming affects all members of a school community. This dissertation study also sought to juxtapose the normative research on teaming's benefits for teachers who participate on teams with the real-life experience of teachers who are excluded from them.

While this qualitative research does not aim to generalize its findings to larger populations, its findings may be transferable to similar contexts (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Through team teachers' perspectives on teaming and through non-team teachers' own voices that often go unheard, or ignored, in the research on teaming, the present research might expose the advantages and disadvantages of interdisciplinary teaming so that school leaders may anticipate practical problems associated with its application in their schools.

Summary

This dissertation was designed to privilege the varied viewpoints and realities of teachers as they experienced middle school teaming within a specific context. Therefore, this study was defined as a phenomenological case study in order to understand the teaming phenomenon from the participants' perspective. The dissertation called for different methods of research. Data collection procedures included individual semi-structured interviews; semi-structured interviews with multiple participants or focus groups; and the observation and analysis of school and district documents. Multiple data sources included interviews with multiple people and the review of multiple types of district documents. These data were collected and analyzed during the 2012-2013 academic year at a middle school that emphasized interdisciplinary teaming as a key component of its educational program. Framed by the literature on the middle school model, organizational theory, and social psychology, this dissertation sought to draw transferable conclusions regarding the potential for unforeseen effects and undesired outcomes that middle school teaming might foster if school leadership ignores issues of organizational restructuring, participant preparation, and issues of compatibility.

The three data chapters of the dissertation (Chapters 4-6), in which teachers tell their stories, consider how both core team teachers and non-core teachers experienced the phenomenon of middle school teaming. Throughout the chapters, the teachers tell their stories in their own words portraying their lived experience of events and their interpretations of those events. The persistent use of direct quotations increases the likelihood that the stories presented remain faithful to the participants' intended meanings, as well as address issues of internal validity, rigor, and trustworthiness that often threaten qualitative research.

CHAPTER 4:

"A DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHY"

This first data chapter (Chapter 4) discusses teachers' perceptions of teaming at

Centerville Junior School and compares and contrasts their perceptions with the middle school

model. Beginning with a brief history of the implementation of teaming and the middle school

model at CJS, it introduces the teachers who participated in this study along with their

backgrounds, as well as a description of teaming as it is implemented at the school. The teacher

participants' perceptions of teaming at CJS are the focus of this chapter.

Teaming at Centerville Junior School

The goal of the study was to understand how *participation* or *non-participation* on a

middle school interdisciplinary team affects teachers' experience of the teaming phenomenon.

Centerville Junior School (CJS) was chosen as the site for this case study because some of its

teachers (core teachers) participated on interdisciplinary grade level teams, while other teachers

(non-core) were excluded from participation on these interdisciplinary teams. However, before

introducing the teachers who participated in this research, it is important to understand how CJS

became the school that it is today and how teaming was conceptualized and implemented at this

middle school. Several of the teacher participants were informative, and their perspective was

invaluable in providing insight into the background behind the middle school reform that took

place at CJS.

The building that now houses Centerville Junior School (CJS) opened as the original

Centerville High School in 1925. Up until that time, all of the community's students were

housed in another building in the town that was used for "high school, grammar and primary

education for more than a decade" (Centerville High School, 2008, p. viii). When the junior high

school and high school students moved to what is now CJS, the other location reverted to a K-6

elementary school. The CJS location remained the town's high school until 1958 when grades 11 and 12, followed by grades 9 and 10 in 1962, moved to a new Centerville High School on the other side of town (Centerville High School, 1997, 2008). This left grades 7 and 8 at the CJS location; and CJS became what the research literature would effectively consider a junior high school (sans grade 9) (George & Alexander, 2003; Tanner & Tanner, 2007).

CJS remained a traditional junior high school until the early 2000s when there were calls from school administrators for the school to begin to implement the cornerstone practice of the middle school model: interdisciplinary teaming. Participants in this study reported that there was a negative perception of the middle school amongst the town's residents and students' parents. According to the former superintendent, community members were very critical of the school and its teachers. He said that he was told, "There's a problem with the Junior school," when he was hired ("Parents hear of big changes for Jr. School," 2002, ¶ 10). However, he believed that there was a "really great Junior School staff" ("Parents hear of big changes for Jr. School," 2002, ¶ 10). He said, "The [junior school] teachers are doing their jobs well, but they need more support" ("Smith wants 'best model' for Jr. School," 2002, ¶ 4).

Under the leadership of the former superintendent and former assistant superintendent, a committee of parents, teachers, and board of education members undertook a study of the middle school model and identified high performing school districts in the state. The committee found that all but one of the school systems they identified had implemented the teaming model. Citing the commonalities between the 6th graders and the 7th and 8th graders referenced in *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), the group and the superintendent also recommended moving the 6th grade from the town's elementary schools to the junior school ("Parents hear of

big changes for Jr. School," 2002). However, this move would require several more years and that an addition be built to the junior school.

By the 2003-2004 school year, interdisciplinary teaming was phased in at CJS. The assistant superintendent advertised this new team teaching approach to the community as a "collaborative learning culture" that would be responsive to the needs of all students ("New Jr. School model will phase in this fall," 2002, ¶ 17). As part of the teaming model, the school district administration proposed two teams per grade. Under the direction of a team leader, each team would meet daily for 40 minutes to discuss its progress in the teaming model, individual students' needs, and the possibilities for team teaching between the subject areas. In addition to taking classes in the four core subject areas, students would be exposed to classes in computer applications, geography, band, orchestra, chorus, and music and art appreciation. They would also select a world language to study from amongst Spanish, French, Italian, and German.

Within a few years, the town's board of education would approve the required addition and renovations on the junior school in 2005 that would permit the move of grade 6 from the three elementary schools to the junior school. The addition included a new gymnasium, additional classrooms on the first and second floors, and a computer lab. Other classrooms were renovated, including the art and music rooms (Capone, 2008a). When CJS welcomed the 6th grade in 2008, the superintendent suggested that the unification of the three grades in one building would promote a "greater, stronger and better educational opportunity (Capone, 2008b, p. 21). The principal at CJS during the 6th grade transition saw the middle school model as it was taking shape at CJS as a way for the school to support the academic, social, and emotional development and achievement of all students. She suggested that older students in the 7th or 8th grade would serve as mentors and role models for their younger classmates. New art and music

rooms, along with a renovated stage, would offer afford students the opportunity to explore new fields of interest (Hartley, 2005). In September, 2008, the first 6th grade class was welcomed at CJS (Capone, 2008b). At the time of this study, three K-5 elementary schools fed into the community's 6-8 junior school (Zorechak, 2011).

Teacher participants in this study with several decades of experience in the district confirmed that teaming was brought into the junior school before the 6th grade was moved to CJS. Nevertheless, plans to implement teaming and to move grade 6 to the junior school had been talked about for years before then. Olivia, who had taught in the district for over 30 years and who had been on several committees before teaming was implemented, said that the junior school "wasn't working." She reported that, for many years, parents would choose to send their students to private schools only for their middle school years. She explained, "Sometimes they'd go back to the high school. They'd only be out for two years." According to Olivia, this was largely because CJS was "the black hole of Centerville" where "kids were lost in it, you know, lost in the academics of it, lost in the social…." She told about her own children's experience at the junior school:

> There was some bullying going on, you know, the kids who had matured would be
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> bullying the kids who hadn't matured. I know my son's 33, he had a horrible time at the
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> junior school, horrible. He would, they would like slink along, the kids that were scared
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> to death, they would slink along the walls, and other kids…. And I know even when my
>
> daughter went through, and she's much more open and bubbly. Uhm, there would be
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> kids that would just torment them in the hallways. Just in the hallways, they were
>
> tormented. It wasn't the cohesive team "we're taking care of you" kind of thing and
>
> "we're not going to let this happen." It was I guess... as you say, just the junior high.

Olivia said that the community and the school district were looking for "something to turn the school around" and make it a "more comfortable" and "supportive place for the students to go and be." Rachel, another team teacher, and Centerville resident, agreed that the grade level changes and the implementation of teaming was a "mixed effort to improve the school."

Nicole, a longtime resident of Centerville, confirmed that this was the perception of people in town before she started teaching. She said, "It was a scary place to think about." In the focus group interview, the special education teacher (Kaitlyn) with over 30 years experience echoed Nicole's thoughts, saying that she had heard "horror stories" for years. When the 6th grade students were transferred to the junior school, and she along with them, Kaitlyn was averse to the transfer: "Oh I said, 'Please don't send me there. I don't wanna go.'" As if to exaggerate the amount of time spent on making these changes, Nicole commented that discussions had been taking place for about 30 years before any real change occurred. These perceptions persisted until 2002 and the appointment of a superintendent who envisioned a new middle school whose philosophy would include a specialized approach to young adolescent learning with increased emphasis on exploratory subject areas, interdisciplinary grade level teams that would redefine the junior school curriculum, and the placement of grades 6, 7, and 8 in one middle school building.

These perceptions are in alignment with much of the research literature on middle school reform efforts. Junior high schools were failing to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of young adolescents, according to the literature (Beane, 2001; Eccles & et al., 1993; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Midgley & Urdan, 1992). Olivia's comment calling CJS the "black hole of Centerville" is analogous with traditional observations of the conventional junior high school. According to Silberman (1970, p. 324), "The junior high school, by almost unanimous

agreement, is the wasteland–one is tempted to say cesspool–of American education" (as cited in Beane, 2001, p. xv).[1]

When the Centerville school district investigated the option of implementing the middle school model at CJS, they were following the example of middle schools across the country. The implementation of the middle school model at CJS and the resultant shift from a uniquely departmental structure to a team approach is consistent with the growth in middle school interest found in the research literature (Beane, 2001; Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Lounsbury & Vars, 2003; Tanner & Tanner, 2007). Reorganizing the middle school curriculum and instructional strategies is supported by the research literature as a means to better address the unique academic and social needs of early adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Flowers, et al., 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). When Centerville district administrators showcased the new model as a means to provide students with greater breadth in terms of academic, as well as exploratory, programs that were not possible at the elementary schools, their efforts were supported by middle school literature (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mergendoller, 1993; National Middle School Association, 1982; Russell, 1997; Tanner & Tanner, 2007; Thompson & Homestead, 2004; Waks, 2002). It should be noted that most of the research cited predates the decision to reconfigure grade spans and instructional strategies at CJS.

Whereas some teacher participants mentioned the academic and affective benefits of the teaming model and the grade level shift in Centerville, another teacher emphasized that space

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[1] Multiple sources cite Silberman (1970, p. 324), including also Eccles et al. (1993, p. 553).

was an issue in the elementary schools and a primary reason for moving the 6th grade from the elementary schools to the junior school. The art teacher mentioned "spatial logistics." Lana's art classroom at CJS was formerly the boys' locker room until an addition to the middle school was constructed about 5 years ago. She was pleased about the art room she acquired as a result of the additions to CJS. She reported, "Every school got a piece of some little renovation or little extra classroom" at that time because "the elementaries were bursting at the seams… So that was a big part, there were other things too, but that was a big part: space."

The literature discusses the creation of middle schools as a means to solve the problem of overcrowding in either high schools or elementary schools (Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003). While it cannot be proven that overcrowding at the elementary schools in Centerville was a primary reason for restructuring the junior school, the transition occurred at a time when the elementary schools were overpopulated. When school administrators begin to consider new grade configurations and potential building renovations, advocates of middle school reform have an ideal opportunity to make a case for middle level restructuring (Beane, 2001). Although the 6th grade move and the building renovations it necessitated came after the inception of the teaming model, the two were part of a larger plan to bring middle school reform to Centerville ("Parents hear of big changes for Jr. School," 2002).

Teacher Participants

The teachers who participated in this study had diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise. Some taught for quite a long time, while others were rather new to the profession. Some had training and experience at the middle level, while most had trained as elementary teachers. Only three of the teachers spent the majority of their careers at the middle school level. The most experienced of the teachers spent the majority of their careers at the elementary level before coming to the middle school. These backgrounds, experiences, and preparation are not

unusual. Middle school teachers often come to the middle level without specific pre-service

preparation (Bryer & Main, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association,

2001; Oakes, et al., 1993). Therefore, before discussing the perceptions of the teachers in this

study, it is important to understand their professional background, training, and preparation for

teaching at the middle level.

The following discussion of the teachers' backgrounds is based entirely on the interview

data. All of the teachers were asked the same demographic questions about their background,

education, and experiences (see Appendix G for the interview protocol). Because teachers

answered these questions differently and with a variety of detail, some information may be

included for some teachers but excluded for others.

The Core subject team teachers. The core subject teachers of language arts (English),

mathematics, science, and social studies who participated in this study (see Table **3**) were part of

the interdisciplinary teams at CJS. Collaboration amongst these subject area teachers is the norm

when middle schools implement teaming according to the research literature (Clark & Clark,

1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis,

2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998), and these teachers figured prominently in the

teaming model in district documents (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-c).

Table 3

Summary of Core Subject Team Teachers

Teacher	Subject	Grade Levels	Pre-Service Ed. Training	Student Teaching	Total Years Exp.	Previous Teaching Yrs. Exp.	CJS Years Exp.	Team Years Exp.
Kory *	Social studies	8	-	middle	10	3 middle	7	6
Laura *	Science	7	science & general ed.	high	9	none	9	9
Leslie	Math	6	elem. ed. / MS math	elem. & middle	5	4 middle	1	6
Nicole *	English	6	elem. ed.	-	17	11 elem.	5	5
Olivia *	Science	6	elem. ed.	-	34	28 elem.	5	5
Rachel	English	7	liberal arts	-	6	none	6	5

Note 5. An * indicates the teacher was a team leader.

Note 6. A dash in the cell indicates that the data were not obtained or not reported.

Kory. Kory was an 8th grade social studies teacher and team leader at CJS. He earned his undergraduate degree in 2000 from a Pennsylvania university, worked in business for a year, and then completed his master's degree at another Pennsylvania university. Kory had been teaching at the middle school level for 10 years. His first teaching position was at a middle school in Maryland where he taught 8th grade social studies for three years. In 2006, Kory began teaching at CJS as a basic skills teacher. He revealed that he found that position "very frustrating" because he was not a member of any core subject team. Kory had been teaching 8th grade social studies at CJS for 7 years. During that time, he also taught peer leadership classes. Although all of Kory's teaching experience was at the middle level, his only experience with teaming was at CJS. Teaming did not exist at his previous middle school in Maryland.

Laura. Laura was a 7th grade science teacher and team leader at CJS. She majored in natural resource management; and animal science and education were her minors at a New

Jersey university. She used her education minor to earn K-12 certification in biology. She reported that she was not formally prepared for middle level instruction because her background was more specifically focused on environmental education instead of a specific level of instruction. She completed student teaching at a high school. Laura had been teaching at the middle level for 9 years, all at CJS. At CJS she has taught 7th grade life science because her certification was in biology. In addition to her core subject assignment, Laura has also taught classes on robotics, health, and sex and drug education.

Leslie. Leslie was a 6th grade mathematics teacher at CJS. She earned her undergraduate degree in elementary education with a "specialization in middle school math" at a university in Delaware. Although Leslie said that her major was in elementary education, she was the only teacher to report specific training for middle level instruction. Her pre-service training included two 8-week long placements in student teaching. One placement was in a 4th grade elementary classroom, and the other was in an 8th grade mathematics classroom. Leslie had been teaching middle school for a total of 5 years. She taught at another New Jersey middle school for four years before coming to CJS in 2012. In both positions, Leslie was part of a grade level team and she was able to compare and contrast the teaming experience between two different middle schools.

Nicole. Nicole was a 6th grade language arts teacher at CJS. She earned her undergraduate degree in elementary education and had been teaching for 17 years. Prior to teaching in Centerville, Nicole began her teaching career at other districts in New Jersey, where she taught at the elementary level for 6 years. After raising children for the next 12 years, she returned to teaching, in Centerville, in 2004. For the first 3 years in the district, she taught at the elementary level in the district, but then came to CJS when the 6th grade was moved from the

elementary schools to the junior school in 2008. Nicole reported that she did not have any specific training for teaching at the middle level. Although she earned graduate level credits towards a master's degree, she said that she has "nothing particular to the middle school."

   Olivia. Olivia was a 6th grade science teacher and team leader at CJS. Prior to coming to CJS in 2004, she was an elementary level teacher within the district. She reported that she was not formally prepared for middle level teaching. In her words, "my experience in middle school is I went to middle school." Olivia's educational background included a degree in elementary education with K-8 certification, which allowed her to teach at the elementary level for over 20 years. Since completing her undergraduate degree, she completed two master's degrees: one in elementary special education and another in educational technology. Since coming to teaching 33 years ago, Olivia has taught Pre-K, 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade, and 6th grade. She also taught special education at the elementary school. Olivia came to CJS when the 6th grade was moved in 2008. Since that time, she has been teaching science and has been part of the 6th grade team. She has also taught exploratory courses in business entrepreneurship, computer skills, and engineering.

   Rachel. Rachel was a language arts teacher at CJS. She graduated with a degree in liberal arts from a Pennsylvania university in 1990 and subsequently worked in marketing before pursuing a career in education as a teacher. She earned her master's degree in education with a K-8 certification in 1998 at a New Jersey university. Rachel has taught at the middle level for 6 years at CJS. For the first of those 6 years, she was an academic support teacher for 7th and 8th grade and was not part of the core grade level teams. Although she was part of the specials team when she was an academic support teacher, she said, "It was never really a team." For the next 3

years, she taught 7th grade language arts before teaching 8th grade language arts for one year. For the past year, she has been teaching as a language arts teacher at the 7th grade level.

The pre-service experience of the core subject teachers is consistent with the findings in the research literature (Bryer & Main, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2001). The veteran teachers (Olivia and Nicole) were not trained for middle level instruction. When the community was discussing transitioning to a middle school model with interdisciplinary teaming early in the 2000s, the central office administrators conceded that teachers would need to undergo a significant amount of training to gain "experience with the team-teaching approach" ("New Jr. School model will phase in this fall," 2002, ¶ 7). Interview data have shown that Olivia and Nicole participated in those training experiences and have acclimated well to teaching at the middle level, which supports research findings that teachers with elementary backgrounds are less resistant to teaming than teachers from other backgrounds (Main, et al., 2004). The present research neither supports nor disproves research findings that have shown that teachers with high school backgrounds are more resistant to middle school practices than those with elementary backgrounds (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Mertens, et al., 2002; Murata, 2002).

With states that have been slow to implement specialized middle level certification programs (Lounsbury & Vars, 2003; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2001), even teachers who were newer to the teaching profession than Olivia and Nicole (Kory, Laura, and Rachel) did not report significant pre-service preparation for middle school teaching. Although Kory did complete his student teaching at the middle level, Leslie was the only teacher with specific pre-service middle school training and preparation, including student teaching at the middle level. She reported that she had a strong induction experience, with positive and

supportive relationships with her team members. Her experience supports the initial research on

how middle level training facilitates new teachers' induction into middle schools and their teams

(Main, et al., 2004).

The Non-core subject teachers. Although they would express varying degrees of

participation in either the specials team or the special education team, the non-core subject

teachers in the areas of world language, art, physical education, and special education who

participated in this study (see Table **4**) were not part of the interdisciplinary grade level teams at

CJS. There was no specific mention of the role of teachers of these exploratory subject areas in

district documents (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b, n.d.-b, n.d.-c).

Table 4

Summary of Non-Core Subject Team Teachers

Teacher	Subject	Grade Levels	Pre-Service Ed. Training	Student Teaching	Total Years Exp.	Previous Teaching Yrs. Exp.	CJS Years Exp.	Team Years Exp.
Kaitlyn *	Special Ed.	6	special ed.	-	30	25 elem.	5	5
Kerry	Phys. Ed.	6-8	phys. ed. / health	-	3	2 high	1	1
Lana	Art	6-8	art history /studio art	middle	17	4 high 3-4 elem.	10	9
Nora	Spanish	6-8	Spanish / gen. ed.	-	11	5 elem.	2	2
Sophia *	Spanish	6-8	elem. ed. / Spanish	middle	13	11 elem.	2	2

Note 7. An * indicates the teacher was a team leader.

Note 8. A dash in the cell indicates that the data were not obtained or not reported.

Kaitlyn. Kaitlyn was a 6th grade special education teacher and the team leader of the

special education team at CJS. Her undergraduate degree was in speech pathology and

audiology, and she initially worked in that field in two other New Jersey school districts before

obtaining her certification in special education and coming to Centerville as a special education

teacher. She spent 25 years at the elementary level in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. When the 6th grade moved to CJS in 2008, she moved to the middle level and has been teaching there since. She said that she had her master's degree in "just general education, like from Marygrove" but that she had no real middle school preparation or experience.

Kerry. Kerry was a physical education and health teacher at CJS. She earned her undergraduate degree in science and criminology, but she returned to school to complete a degree in physical education and health. Kerry was a high school physical education teacher for two years in Centerville; and this was her first year at CJS. She reported that she had her K-12 teaching certification in physical education, and she did not have any specific middle school background or training. She said, "Usually, specials, we don't specialize in elementary, middle school, or high school."

Lana. Lana was the art teacher at CJS. She earned her degree in studio art and art history and did student teaching at the middle level for her undergraduate degree. Her teaching certification was "secondary," but her preparation had "more of a middle school thrust" because she student taught at the middle level. When she did not soon find a position as a teacher after completing her undergraduate education, she began working as a librarian. Lana had been teaching for 17 years. First, she taught at a New Jersey high school for four years before leaving to have a child. She returned to the teaching profession as a classroom aide and then as a part-time art teacher at the elementary level in Centerville. She has been teaching for the past 13 or 14 years in Centerville. For several years, she taught at both the elementary and middle level in Centerville, but for the past 10 years, she has taught only at CJS.

Nora. Nora was one of two Spanish teachers at CJS. She earned her undergraduate degree at a New Jersey university with a major in Spanish and a minor in education. She later

completed her master's degree at the University of Salamanca in Spain and earned additional graduate credits beyond the master's degree. Nora has taught for a total of 11 years. She began teaching at the middle level at another public middle school in New Jersey where she taught 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Subsequently, she taught Spanish at a Centerville elementary school for five years, and then she transferred to CJS where she has been teaching all levels of Spanish for the past 3 years.

Sophia. Sophia was one of two Spanish teachers at CJS. She was also the team leader for the non-core specials team. She earned her undergraduate degree in business administration and Spanish. Prior to entering the teaching profession, she worked in business. After raising children, she decided to teach at the elementary level and went through a traditional teacher certification program at a local New Jersey university. However, because she had a background in Spanish from her undergraduate program at time when, she felt, elementary schools were beginning to embrace language education, she decided to combine her skills in order to teach Spanish at the elementary level. "Ironically," she said, "I did student teaching in the middle school level…between a 6th and a 5th grade." However, Sophia reported that she was not originally prepared for middle school teaching and had little in the way of preparation for middle school teaming. Sophia said:

> Most of what I know about middle school teaming comes from my experience with my own children, I would say, because the team concept came into CJS before I arrived here. So I think they had a lot of training in the idea of teaming, but it predated my coming here.

Sophia has taught for a total of 13 years in Centerville. She began teaching, as she intended, at the elementary level. This is her second year at the middle school level at CJS, and she has taught all levels of Spanish at the school.

The pre-service experience of the non-core subject teachers is also consistent with the findings in the research literature (Bryer & Main, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2001). According to the interview data, non-core subject teachers were specifically trained in their content. In some cases, teacher participants did not complete their teaching certification until years after they graduated with their undergraduate degrees in their major areas of study. Although the present study does not support Anfara and Brown's (2000) findings about difficulties experienced by high school teachers who come to middle schools to teach exploratory programs, teachers who train to teach exploratory subject areas often don't know what to expect from middle school students and must "switch mentalities" (Anfara & Brown, 2000, p. 64).

Like the core subject teachers who taught at the elementary level before coming to CJS, the non-core subject teachers with experience at the elementary level before coming to the junior school (Nora, Sophia, Kaitlyn, and Lana) reported positive experiences and expressed that they were happier at the middle level than at the elementary level. Their experiences provide further evidence that teachers with elementary backgrounds are less resistant to the middle school experience than teachers from other backgrounds (Main, et al., 2004).

The implication of these findings is that teacher preparation for participation in middle school teams and in the middle school community is largely left to principals in schools in which teaming has been implemented (Main & Bryer, 2005). School leaders are left to exhibit

leadership that actively supports middle school practices (Trimble & Peterson, 1999) and organize professional development opportunities for teachers who need them (Doda, 2009).

Who is on the team? Who is not?

At CJS, the interdisciplinary teams consisted of teachers of language arts (English), mathematics, science, and social studies. There were two teams per grade level: 6A and 6B in grade 6; 7A and 7B in grade 7; and 8A and 8B in grade 8. The approximately 180 students per grade were divided between the A and B teams, yielding about 90 students per team. In this way, the team teachers taught all of the same 90 students, and students effectively "traveled" with their team. In their classes, students only had students from their half of the grade level. The language arts teacher said that this teaming model allowed for:

> A smaller feel, you know, smaller class sizes for those students but also a smaller feel and approach to the education. It allows for teachers to collaborate, it allows for close relationships between the teacher and the student, as well as the teacher and the parent. So that's kind of the approach that we have.

The core team teachers shared the same students, but there were exceptions. Sometimes ESL students were cross-teamed, in which case they had teachers from both the A and B teams.

Teachers of exploratory subject areas (world language, art, and music), physical education and health teachers, and special education teachers were not members of the core subject teams and did not attend team meetings. Herein referred to collectively as non-core teachers, these teachers did not teach all of the same students; and their classes were comprised of students from both teams. Other school personnel, such as the librarian and the school nurse, also did not participate in core subject teams and did not attend their meetings. At CJS, these non-core teachers and other staff members were part of what most teacher participants in this

study referred to as the "specials team" or, in the case of the special education teachers, the "special education team."

The perceptions of the teachers varied regarding the specials team. Core team teachers gave various rationales for the non-inclusion of non-core subject area or "specials" teachers. One core subject teacher who was formerly a non-core teacher and had a perspective on both inclusion in the team and exclusion from the team was Rachel. Rachel said, "Those specials kind of just have, you know, those teachers teach all of the students in terms of scheduling," and, "the core classes, those kids kind of stay with their team." However, having been an academic support teacher at CJS prior to taking her current position as a language arts teacher, she acknowledged that the specials team was "fragmented." She explained her experience with the specials team:

> Even though I was on that team, like, I never really felt I was really part of a team because they were all teaching something so very different from me. So, I never really felt when I was on what they call the specials team, it was never really a team…. I always felt like the team meetings that we did have as specials were not really helpful because I had nothing to do with French or health or gym or any of those things. It was just kind of this mish-mosh.

While Rachel noted that being a member of the specials team wasn't as beneficial as being a member of the core subject team, she presumed that specials team teachers had little interest in participating in the team structure. She said, "I think the last thing they would want is to be called into more team meetings."

Because the team teacher participants in this study generally felt that team participation was valuable, they suggested that the same must hold true for their non-core teacher colleagues.

Leslie suggested, "In an ideal world, it would be nice to have a special that was assigned to each team, but there's no way…." She said the creation of a specials team "helps to validate" the non-core subject teachers: "giving them the time to meet like you do the core teachers may help in some little way at least." However, the specials team meeting was not like that of the core subject teachers team meeting, in that they did not have a time period assigned during which to meet daily like the core subject teachers. Interview data revealed that the non-team teachers would meet "informally" during their common lunchtime, if at all; and special education teachers would meet before or after school. Leslie explained that it would be "unrealistic to think that every teacher who teaches a child is going to be able during the school day to get together at some point because where is that child then?" She acknowledged that to include every teacher on a team would require that time be allotted before or after the school day and that teachers be compensated. However, according to Kaitlyn, special education teachers did, in fact, meet voluntarily before or after school since they were not allotted team meeting time or a common preparation time during the day. Otherwise, as Laura acknowledged, "Most of their communication is happening via e-mail."

Non-core subject teachers had various perspectives on their exclusion from the team as well. Some recognized it as a function of the schedule and not a form of deliberate exclusion. For example, Sophia said that they could never share the same students because the non-core teachers taught all grade levels: "We don't run in the same circle…I teach across all the levels." She said that it wasn't so much a decision for "us not to meet with them so much as it's a decision to make a schedule that works." However, it was not just the non-core teachers who acknowledged the schedule as the principal reason why non-core subject teachers could not participate in core subject teams. Olivia said it was because "they're teaching when we're not

teaching and vice versa." Rachel called it a "function of the schedule…when they have their classes, you know, we have our time for prep, so that's just the way it works." Kory said that the students "have to have Spanish then so we could have team." Laura said, "It's really schedule driven. It's all schedule driven."

Other non-core subject teachers spoke more negatively about their exclusion from the team. The art teacher Lana said, "We are thrown together…. We're the specials team." The Spanish teacher Nora expressed the exclusion from the team as follows: "It's just, it's so separate, you know? … There's a group over here…and then there's 'specials.'"

The organization of teachers and students on grade level teams reported by this study's participants is consistent with district documents: "Each student benefits by being taught and overseen by the same language arts, math, social studies and science teachers" (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b, ¶ 2). These subjects are considered "core content classes" whose teachers work collaboratively so that "no child falls through the cracks" (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b, slide 10). However, while espousing the benefits of the model, the same document touts "coordination with all teachers" (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b, slide 10), when, in fact, non-core teachers were not included in the teams and not mentioned in the document "Who Are the Teams" (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-c).

The exclusion of non-core subject teachers is common and documented in the research literature on the middle school model. When interdisciplinary teaming is implemented, the majority of middle schools include the core subject teachers of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies; and they exclude the teachers of exploratory subject areas (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). The exclusion of teachers of exploratory

subject areas is ironic because a large focus of middle school reform efforts was to better integrate exploratory and academic programs in a way that was not possible at the elementary level (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Waks, 2002). At CJS, there was therefore some evidence to support claims (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Beane, 1990; Lawton, 1987; Waks, 2002) that the complementary nature between academic and exploratory programs has diminished since the implementation of middle school features and, especially, interdisciplinary teaming.

Teacher leadership. Each core team had a team leader who received a stipend. Teachers typically volunteered for the team leader position, but sometimes the principal invited teachers to take the position. This would happen when no one stepped up to the position or when a vacancy occurred (when someone would leave mid-year or wished to step down).

Both the specials and special educations team also had team leaders. Like with the core teams, teachers typically volunteered for the team leader position, but sometimes the principal invited teachers to take the position. However, unlike their core team leader counterparts, the non-core team leaders did not receive a stipend.

Team leadership responsibilities. Of the six core team teachers who participated in this study, four were team leaders (Kory, Laura, Olivia, and Nicole). None of the team leaders conveyed that they were unwilling or uninterested in fulfilling the responsibilities required of team leader, although some implied that other team leaders were persuaded by the principal to take on the role. Nicole shared that she liked being team leader.

All of the core team leaders talked about their responsibilities. Nicole said, "It's not easy…it's time-consuming." She reported that her biggest responsibility was "fielding all the calls from the parents and making sure [she] disseminated the information to everybody who

needed it." They shared that the team leaders also met regularly with the principal and/or assistant principal in a "team leader meeting" every month. For Laura, the team leader position often boiled down to "clerical" responsibilities. She said, "I do a lot of the clerical stuff for the team in organizing the meetings."

Leaders as liaisons. All of the team leaders mentioned their role as liaison–or messenger–between their teams and the non-core subject teachers who did not participate on their grade level teams. Teachers who were members also saw their team leader in this role. Leslie said that her team leader was "responsible for reaching out to the specials." Yet, the team leaders found it difficult to maintain contact with the non-core teachers. They attributed the difficulty to different causes. Kory said that it was an issue of "proximity." Kory taught his classes on the second floor in room 214 (see Figure **3** on page 104 for a floor plan). Kory seemed to rely on face-to-face communication. Whereas he was able to easily contact the Spanish teacher who was next door in room 213, he implied that it was more difficult to contact the French teacher because "the French teacher downstairs is at the end of the hallway." According to the floor plan of CJS, the French teacher taught her classes on the first floor in room 103. On the other hand, Olivia, Nicole, and Laura attributed the difficulty to the teaching schedule. Olivia said that maintaining communication with the non-core teachers was "very difficult…'cause they're teaching when we're teaching and vice versa." As a result, Olivia said, "You know, I'll e-mail them. I've sent a phone call, see them in the hallway, go down to their room if I feel a need to…." Laura said:

> If I need to talk to or work with one of those teachers, I need to either go and interrupt
>
> their class, or I need to hope they're going to be there before school or hope they're going

to be there after school when I don't have any more students for extra help. Otherwise, I

have e-mail conversations with them.

The contact between the core and non-core teachers was consequently "not anything consistent,"

according to Olivia. Kory implied that team leaders fell short of fulfilling their obligations as

liaisons to the non-core teachers. He admitted, "Most team leaders could make a better effort in,

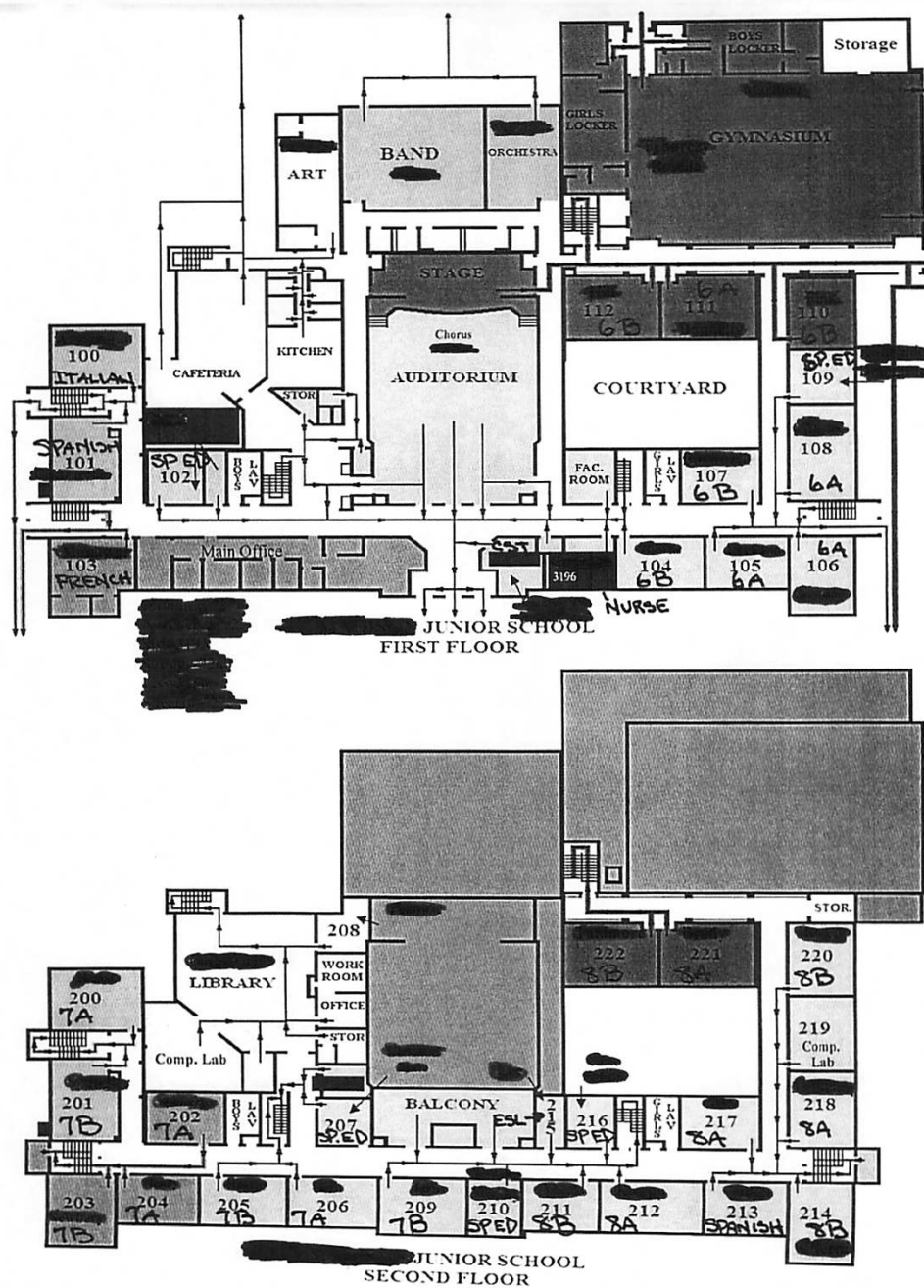you know, kind of like disseminating information…but it also puts a lot of work on [us]."

Figure 3

Centerville Junior School floor plan

Leadership challenges. The role of team leader entailed other difficulties. The team

leaders often found themselves in awkward positions for which they felt were either under

prepared or unable to address. More than one team leader mentioned that it was difficult to walk

the line between the roles of team leader and content supervisor. Nicole adamantly stated, "I'm

not the supervisor. I'm not going to tell another teacher how to do something in her class…

That's not my job." Kaitlyn painted a similar picture. "It's very hard for me," she said, "because

I'm not their supervisor…. They do have a supervisor, so I'm sort of in limbo." Kory also

questioned, "What is my role as team leader? Like I'm not an administrator… Like, what is my

expectation here? I'm not evaluating colleagues. It's not my job." Laura did not consider

herself "any more important than another member of the team." She said, "We're all equally as

important… I don't really say I'm the boss… No, I'm not the boss. We're in this together."

Sophia and Kaitlyn were team leaders of the non-core specials team and the special

education team. In her role as team leader of the specials team, Sophia felt that the non-core

subject teachers were included at CJS: "We do have a voice when we go the team leader

meetings." When, for example, the teams were planning a new program to reward students who

showed academic improvement, they initially only planned to consider student performance in

their four core subject areas. However, on behalf of the non-core teachers in her role as specials

team leader, Sophia successfully argued that they should not distinguish between academic

achievement in core subject classes and academic achievement in non-core subject classes.

Unlike the core team leaders who each cited parent contact as a responsibility of their role as

team leader, neither Sophia nor Kaitlyn implied that parent contact was one of their primary

roles. Kaitlyn said, "My experience isn't really contacting with the parents." She and Sophia

relied heavily on the core teams' leaders contact with parents for meeting parents for afternoon

and evening conferences. Kaitlyn continued speaking about her role as a liaison between herself and her special education colleagues: "It's more giving the information to the special ed. teachers."

At CJS, the principal appointed 6 different team leaders, one for each of the core grade level teams, as well as team leaders for the specials and special education teachers. Although teaming is essentially a collegial endeavor, the establishment of leadership roles at CJS is consistent with literature on successful teamwork (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001). Team leaders play an important role as facilitators, team representatives, and liaisons between the team members, other teachers, administrators, and parents (Erb & Doda, 1989). When team leaders mentioned contact with parents, they were ensuring the effective and open channels of communication between teachers and parents that are portrayed by district documents summarizing the purposes of teaming (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b) and that are discussed in the research literature as a means to improve teacher-parent relationships (Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mergendoller, 1993; Russell, 1997; Tanner & Tanner, 2007; Thompson & Homestead, 2004).

While the specific issues pertaining to communication between core and non-core teachers are addressed in a later section, it is important to note here how the team leaders viewed and attempted to fulfill their liaison responsibilities between the groups of teachers. The descriptions of their roles as team leaders are consistent with the lists of team leadership duties found in the literature on teaming (Erb & Doda, 1989; Kain, 1997b; Merenbloom & National Middle School Association, 1986; Porod, 1993; Whitford & Kyle, 1984). Kain (1997b) draws a distinction between team leadership that is visionary and empowers team members and team leadership that is bureaucratic and focuses on duties and conducting school business. In the

former, the role is associated with the team's purpose; in the latter, it is characterized by the duties of a clerkship. Just as Laura remarked, the role of middle school team leader was generally perceived to be one of clerical responsibility in Centerville according to interview data, researcher observations, the school principal (N.S., personal communication, October 16, 2012), and how the school was portrayed to community residents (Zorechak, 2011).

Teaching schedule. The teachers in this study described what their teaching schedule was like. Whether teachers taught a core team subject (such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) or a non-core subject greatly affected their teaching schedule both in terms of the number of classes they taught as well as which classes they taught. It also affected their opportunities for common planning and preparation time. While all teachers were entitled to one personal preparation period per day, only team teachers of the core subject areas (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) were entitled to common planning time with other teachers. Non-core teachers were left to use their personal time to meet with colleagues or not meet at all. The following sections summarize the teacher participants' schedules.

Core teachers. Teachers who were part of the teams taught five classes per day. In the current study, these included Nicole, Olivia, Laura, Leslie, Kory, and Rachel. They were assigned four 1-hour classes per day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. In addition, team teachers taught a 45-minute cycle/exploratory class (see Figure **4** on page 109 for MTThF schedule). On Wednesdays, their classes only met for 45 minutes, and an extra period was added to the day during which advisories took place with students (see Figure **5** on page 110 for W schedule). However, Kory was the only core team teacher who talked about advisories as part of his teaching schedule. He described it as a "team-building hour." He reported that some

of his 8th grade teacher colleagues saw the advisory period as a "little bit too elementary" for the 8th grade students. He conceded, "I think it works for 6th grade," but that some of the "kids look at it as almost a relaxing time." The non-core teachers, who were also assigned advisories, perceived the advisory period differently than their core team teacher colleagues (described later).

CENTERVILLE JUNIOR SCHOOL TIME SCHEDULE 2013-2014
MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY

Staff Reports	7:45	
Doors Open for Pupils	7:50	
Tardy Bell*	7:55	

GRADE 6

Period 1/Attendance	7:55-8:54	(59 minutes)
Period 2	8:57-9:56	(59 minutes)
Locker		
Period 3	10:00-10:40	(40 minutes)
Announcements	10:40-10:44	(4 minutes)
Locker		
Period 4 Lunch	10:47-11:12	(25 minutes)
Locker		
Period 5	11:16-12:15	(59 minutes)
Period 6	12:18-12:58	(40 minutes)
Locker		
Period 7	1:02-2:00	(58 minutes)
Period 8	2:03-2:43	(40 minutes)

GRADE 7

Period 1/Attendance	7:55-8:54	(59 minutes)
Period 2	8:57-9:37	(40 minutes)
Locker		
Period 3	9:41-10:40	(59 minutes)
Announcements	10:40-10:44	(4 minutes)
Period 4	10:47-11:27	(40 minutes)
Locker		
Period 5	11:31-12:30	(59 minutes)
Locker		
Period 6 Lunch	12:33-12:58	(25 minutes)
Locker		
Period 7	1:02- 2:00	(58 minutes)
Period 8	2:03 -2:43	(40 minutes)

GRADE 8

Period 1/Attendance	7:55-8:35	(40 minutes)
Period 2	8:38-9:37	(59 minutes)
Locker		
Period 3	9:41-10:40	(59 minutes)
Announcements	10:40-10:44	(4 minutes)
Period 4	10:47-11:27	(40 minutes)
Locker		
Period 5 Lunch	11:30-11:55	(25 minutes)
Locker		
Period 6	11:59-12:58	(59 minutes)
Period 7	1:01- 1:41	(40 minutes)
Locker		
Period 8	1:45 -2:43	(58 minutes)

*Please note: Mondays and Thursdays are "A" days, Tuesdays and Fridays are "B" days. Wednesday has its own schedule due to advisory. The schedule is the same every week; there is no change in A, B or Wednesday schedules due to Holidays or snow days.

Figure 4

Centerville Junior School time schedule (MTThF)

CENTERVILLE JUNIOR SCHOOL TIME SCHEDULE 2013-2014
WEDNESDAY

Staff Reports	7:45	
Doors Open for Pupils	7:50	
Tardy Bell*	7:55	

GRADE 6

Period 1/Attendance	7:55-8:39	(44 minutes)
Period 2	8:42-9:26	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Advisory	9:30-10:14	(44 minutes)
Announcements	10:14-10:20	(6 minutes)
Period 3	10:23-11:07	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Period 4 Lunch	11:10-11:35	(25 minutes)
Locker		
Period 5	11:39-12:22	(43 minutes)
Period 6	12:25-1:09	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Period 7	1:13-1:56	(43 minutes)
Period 8	1:59-2:43	(44 minutes)

GRADE 7

Period 1/Attendance	7:55-8:39	(44 minutes)
Period 2	8:42-9:26	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Advisory	9:30-10:14	(45 minutes)
Announcements	10:14-10:20	(6 minutes)
Period 3	10:23-11:07	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Period 4	11:11-11:54	(43 minutes)
Period 5	11:57-12:41	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Period 6 Lunch	12:44-1:09	(25 minutes)
Locker		
Period 7	1:13-1:56	(43 minutes)
Period 8	1:59-2:43	(44 minutes)

GRADE 8

Period 1/Attendance	7:55-8:39	(44 minutes)
Period 2	8:42-9:26	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Advisory	9:30-10:14	(45 minutes)
Announcements	10:14-10:20	(6 minutes)
Locker		
Period 3	10:24-11:07	(43 minutes)
Period 4	11:10-11:54	(44 minutes)
Locker		
Period 5 Lunch	11:57-12:22	(25 minutes)
Locker		
Period 6	12:26-1:09	(43 minutes)
Period 7	1:12-1:56	(44 minutes)
Period 8	1:59-2:43	(44 minutes)

Figure 5

Centerville Junior School time schedule (Wednesday)

The core team teachers mentioned the variety in cycle/exploratory classes. The 7th grade English teacher Rachel taught a public speaking class. The 7th grade science teacher Laura taught a robotics class. The 8th grade social studies teachers Kory taught a peer leadership class. However, Rachel reported that the cycle classes were flexible with the needs of the school schedule when, for example, her public speaking class became a NJASK test preparation cycle three days a week.[2] When her cycle class became a test preparation cycle, Rachel said that she focused on "test taking skills and how to strengthen writing, you know, trying to give those kids a leg up."

An 8th grade teacher, like Kory, described the 8th grade schedule. He taught four hour-long social studies classes per day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. These classes were reduced to 44 minutes on Wednesday to allow for the morning advisory period. His other teaching period was a 40-minute cycle class called "Peer Leadership." He described it as an "elective course on peer connections" in which student leaders conduct "outreaches to younger students in the building." Teachers in the 8th grade met in their teams during period 7. He summarized his 8th grade Monday-Tuesday-Thursday-Friday and his Wednesday schedule on paper (see Table **5**):

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[2] NJASK (New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge) is the state test for students in grades 3 through 8 in New Jersey. The test measures student achievement in English language arts and mathematics in grade 3 through 8, as well as in science in grades 4 and 8 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2013).

Table 5

Example 8th Grade Teacher Schedule

Period	Assignment	Length on MTThF	Length on W
1	Preparation	40 minutes	44 minutes
2	Class (social studies)	59 minutes	44 minutes
	Advisory	NA	45 minutes
3	Class (social studies)	59 minutes	43 minutes
4	Cycle class (Peer Leadership)	40 minutes	44 minutes
5	Lunch	25 minutes	25 minutes
6	Class (social studies)	59 minutes	43 minutes
7	Team time	40 minutes	44 minutes
8	Class (social studies)	58 minutes	44 minutes

Rachel reported that the 7th grade schedule was similar. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, she taught four core language arts classes per day. Each one was an hour long. One period was an honors class and the other three were called "standard level classes." Her other teaching period was her cycle class, which was "more of an elective," she explained. She went on to say that the school administration tried to align the cycle classes to teaching disciplines. Rachel's cycle class was typically a class on public speaking designed specifically for 7th grade students because she was a language arts teacher. Just like in the other grades, her hour-long core language arts classes were reduced to 44 minutes to allow for an advisory period on Wednesday mornings. Rachel's cycle class changed during the 3rd marking

period when she taught a testing preparation course entitled "Cycle NJASK."[3] Rachel's cycle

class was designed for those students who were considered partially proficient and for those who

earned a low proficient score and, in Rachel's words, came "really, really close to not passing."

The 6th grade math teacher Leslie also described the 6th grade teacher schedule in much

the same way as her 7th and 8th grade colleagues. She taught four math classes per day, which

were a mix of honors and what she described as "on level courses," on Monday, Tuesday,

Thursday, and Friday. These were 60-minute classes. She, too, taught a cycle class but did not

specify the course's content. Teachers in the 6th grade met in their teams during period 3. Leslie

said, "We all have off third period while the kids go to specials: band, music, art, foreign

language…and the 6th graders, for example, are attending their special classes, that's when the

team would normally meet."

Teachers also reported that each grade level ran on a different schedule, thereby

rendering bells to signal the change of classes unnecessary and intrusive. The elimination of

bells was part of the district's restructuring in 2008 when the 6th grade moved to the CJS

(Capone, 2008a). Kory described the philosophy of eliminating bells. He said, "Bells are not a

natural part of our life. We shouldn't have bells. We don't run on bells." The morning bell

would ring at 7:55 to signal the start of the day and at 2:43 to signal the end of the school day.

Non-core teachers. Teachers who were not part of the core grade level teams taught 6

classes per day. In the current study, these included Lana, Sophia, Nora, Kerry, and Kaitlyn.

They were generally assigned five 40-minute classes per day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays,

and Fridays. Although not part of the core grade level teams, non-core teachers were also

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[3] NJASK (New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge) is the state test for students in grades 3 through 8 in New Jersey. Students score advanced proficient, proficient, or partially proficient (New Jersey Department of Education, 2013).

assigned an advisory group of students on Wednesdays, like their core team colleagues. The art teacher Lana described it as "sort of a character ed. small group thing where you do kind of lame activities." Nevertheless, she described the advisories as "fun…to get to know a smaller group of [kids]…they're cute, and it's fun." Unlike their core team colleagues, the non-core teachers did not teach cycle/exploratory classes.

The art teacher Lana had the least traditional schedule and therefore went into more detail than her colleagues. She described it as a "great schedule." She said, "It's really four full days a week, but Wednesdays, it's light." She described Wednesday as a "light day" because she only taught one class, two study halls, and advisory. Her afternoons were "kind of free." On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, she taught six 40-minute classes. Lana noted that she had more different classes to prepare for than her core team teacher colleagues because "you know, they're repeating…and I'm not." She continued, "I can count on two hands the number of different classes I have," and while snapping her fingers vigorously, she added, "So there's a lot of getting stuff out and cleaning up, and mentally…." Lana also taught semester-long courses, and in this way, she taught half the student body in the fall and other half in the spring. Class sizes ranged from 16 to 28.

The other non-core teachers (Kerry, Sophia, and Nora) had the same teaching schedule as Lana on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. They taught six 40-minute classes on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. They did not report that Wednesdays were very different nor did they mention any responsibilities for an advisory group.

Individual teacher planning and preparation. All team teachers were assigned one free preparation period per day, as required by their contract. During this preparation period, teachers were free to do whatever they needed or wanted to do. Team teachers reported that they

used this time to make copies, prepare their lessons, or work with other teachers. Because the teams in which the core team teachers met were interdisciplinary, they sometimes used their preparation time to work with their counterpart teacher on the other team. For example, Rachel, who was on the 7A team, reported that she sometimes used her preparation time to work with the language arts teacher who was on the 7B team. While the use of this time for this purpose was not required by contract, it was what some of the teachers did.

Some team teachers revealed that the preparation period was really a time during which they could do whatever they need to get done, from going to the bank to going to "pick up lunch." Such a use of their preparation period meant that collaboration with colleagues, opportunities for professional growth, and professional support between teachers could occur during their team time. The implication is that core team teachers experienced more latitude in the use of their personal preparation time than, for example, teachers who were not afforded daily team time.

All non-core subject teachers were also assigned one free preparation period per day, as required by their contract. During their preparation period, teachers were free to do whatever they needed or wanted to do. Kerry said, "Usually during my prep, I get stuff done." However, when speaking about collaboration with colleagues, Nora qualified: "Really, we have our prep, which usually is our own thing." Without a common planning time with others who taught non-core subjects, she found herself trying to assist the new French teacher "during meetings or prep or whatever." When speaking about the core subject teachers' team meeting, Nora said, "They get an extra prep." In addition to the lack of a common team planning time, Sophia noted that non-core teachers were not necessarily assigned a common preparation period either. It was coincidental that she and Nora shared the same preparation period.

Team time. Common planning time, or "team time," is one of the structural supports that are put into place to make middle school teaming work (Erb & Doda, 1989; Felner, et al., 1997; Kain, 1997, 2001; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991; Mertens, et al., 2002). It is a time during which teachers have the opportunity to dialogue and share information laterally and is believed to be an essential prerequisite to effective teaming according to research (Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 2000, 2003; Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Huber, 1991; Kain, 1997a, 2001; Kasak & Uskali, 2005; Louis, 1994; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Spies, 2001; Warren & Muth, 1995). Warren and Payne (1997) claim that the implementation of common planning time is the single most important factor in achieving successful interdisciplinary teams. CJS advertised that the middle school model at the school enabled teachers to have this common planning period (Zorechak, 2011). The school website informed parents that the "teaching team meets daily to discuss student progress both academically and socially, to coordinate testing schedules and to discuss other issues that contribute to their work with students" (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). However, not all teachers were afforded team time, which has implications for teachers' sense of efficacy and their perceptions of their work environment (Warren & Muth, 1995; Warren & Payne, 1997).

Core teachers. Core team teachers were assigned a team period once per day. Each team in the school was scheduled a time during which they typically met independently. For example, the 6th grade teams met during the 3rd period of the day; the 7th grade teams met during the 4th period of the day; and the 8th grade teams met during the 7th period of the day. In order for core team teachers to meet during their team period and be entitled to their own individual preparation period, the core team's students attended elective classes, (such as art, music, physical education, and world language classes) during these two periods.

According to their contract and school policy, core teachers were assigned this 40-minute team time on a daily basis. Theoretically, they met as a team every day during this assigned time (N.S., personal communication, October 16, 2012). However, the reality was different. Leslie said that the 6th grade team of which she was a part was loosely structured:

> So we'll decide the first meeting of the week, we'll talk about other things that need to be discussed and pick another meeting time, so it's not it's March 1, here's our calendar for the month, here are the dates and times. If we need to meet twice a week, we'll meet twice a week, if we need 4 times a week that week, then we meet 4 times that week…

While talking about the flexibility in their meeting schedule, Leslie said, "It kind of varies, but there is time in our schedule where we all have off so that we can definitely schedule meetings." For her 6th grade team, that was during 3rd period. The 6th grade teams met individually or jointly. The team time was dedicated to discussing student concerns, calling parents, and having conferences with parents. However, the focus of the team time to which they were entitled seemed to change as part of this "flexibility." The purpose became less clear. On one hand, "team time is usually dedicated to specific issues that are on an agenda that come down from administration." On the other hand, the teachers might not formally meet. These other days when they did not formally meet were dedicated to preparation, contacting parents individually, preparing lessons, etc. It became more of preparation period to be used at individual teachers' discretion: "team time is usually spent for getting done what you need, and then during your prep time, if you want to go chat with one of your coworkers…run out and get lunch, whatever you need." At most, however, the team met only four times a week because "usually team meetings don't take place on Friday" unless "something came up Wednesday

night or Thursday." Leslie reported that her team would even occasionally go on a "coffee run" in lieu of attending a team meeting on Fridays.

When asked if the teams met everyday as they were theoretically supposed to, Kory responded, "The honest answer is that we really don't meet every day." He went on to explain the breakdown of a typical week's meetings. One of the team meetings might be used for regular education teachers to meet with an in-class support teacher. Another day might be used for meeting jointly with the other grade level team. He stressed that the team meeting time really became a time during which the language arts, math, science, and social studies teachers were available to meet with parents. He said that he and other teachers liked that it was part of their day "because it makes it easier…than meeting before or after school." Nevertheless, he said that they were not meeting as a full team every day because "it is hard in the afternoon" because they were "sandwiched between two core periods." As his team's leader, he even sometimes asked if the other teachers preferred to meet for only the first 20 minutes or the last 20 minutes of the period. That was how he liked to "handle it." He said:

> I think it's a lot more, you know, realistic. It gives people the sense that there's some
>
> break in the afternoon because what happens is we have that prep in the morning and it's
>
> just so quick and it's so fast and you get in and then we're on…I know that [the principal]
>
> and [assistant principal] know that that's true. We don't advertise, no body advertises the
>
> fact that we do that…

The 6th grade team leader Olivia also confirmed that her team did not meet daily: "We have a team time to meet daily. Not that we do meet daily, but we meet two times a week. I'd say definitely more if we need to." Laura confirmed that her 7th grade team did not meet every

day either. She also expressed frustration with the designated daily team time and called it a "time constraint at times":

> I think that there is this pressure to meet more often than sometimes I deem is necessary. And it definitely becomes challenging because as you know, as teachers, we have a ridiculous amount of responsibilities, and sometimes that team time maybe could be devoted to something else, and I feel bad also because I'm the one who's saying "Ok, let's meet as a team because I've been told we need to meet as a team." So my other teachers on the team are like, "Well, do we really need to meet now?" "Yes, bring grading with you. If we finish early, you can work on grading. Or I will get you out as soon as possible."

Team time served other purposes that supported student achievement and benefited students. The core team teachers used their team time to choose students of the month (both a male and female) on each of their teams. They also used team time to plan events for the students. The 6th grade teachers planned special events for Halloween and winter break, and they coordinated their lesson plans with those themes. In fact, the 6th grade teachers decided on a "group costume," according to Leslie. She admitted that it was not necessarily educational, but "it is fun for the day" and built the team relationship: "You're working together; you're doing something fun." The 7th grade teachers planned events that coordinated to their curriculum. They did a lot of cross-curricular work, according to Rachel, who said that a lot of her language arts curriculum was driven by what was done in social studies in the 7th grade. To that end, the 7th grade teams have worked together to plan a "Greek Day" for the students during which they "pull out all the stops."

Non-core teachers. Unlike core subject teachers, non-core team teachers were not assigned a team period once per day. Instead, they relied on speaking and working with their non-core or core colleagues either before or after school or when, and if, they shared common preparation periods with those individuals. The non-core teachers had various opinions of what constituted team membership and team meetings. Most of them sarcastically referred to themselves as part of a "specials" team. The following paragraphs summarize these teachers' perceptions.

Sophia said, "I'm not technically part of a team." She explained, "We don't run in the same circle, as far as the schedule goes. We're not part of the 6th grade or 7th grade or an 8th grade team." She explained further, "It wouldn't work because I teach across all those levels." Sophia considered herself to be part of the "special area teachers' team." She said that they met as a group "from time to time."

Lana said, "We're specials. That's the word I keep forgetting. We're called 'specials.' That's our team. We're the specials team. We are thrown together." As far as collaborative work, Lana said, "There's a team of misfits. We don't fit in anywhere else… Okay, so world language, PE, me, and the music teachers are all on a *team* [emphasis in original]." She reported that the specials team had "occasional meetings because [they] don't fit in anywhere else kinda thing."

Kerry hesitated when she said, "We're classified…I guess…as a special team." Initially, she reported that they have a specials meeting once per month to "kind of discuss what's going on in our fields, how we can relate to each other." When asked, however, if that was built into the school day, she qualified her answer: "We basically meet during our lunch. I mean, it usually happens once a month." Meetings during the day for other non-core teachers were impossible

for special education teachers. Kaitlyn reported that they usually have their meetings after school "because none of us have a common prep together, the nine of us, so we meet after school."

Speaking about collaboration with her colleagues, Nora said, "We'll have articulation meetings where we meet with the high school language teachers and all the other language teachers here… and we're in the same kind of circle, our own kind of team." She contrasted the non-core experience with the core teacher experience: "But as far as, you know, having, I mean they get to have a chunk of time. And they get to go through every student and so on…"

Whereas the core subject teachers were generally in agreement about their participation in a team, the non-core subject teachers were not. The core subject teachers met as a team several times per week, shared a common purpose, and all talked about similar tasks with which the teams were charged. According to the interview data, the core teams were fulfilling many of the purposes of teams, according to the research literature: improved instructional effectiveness (Clark & Clark, 1994; Hargreaves, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Mills, et al., 1992; Powell & Mills, 1995), improved teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships (Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mertens & Flowers, 2004); and increased opportunities for developing and planning interdisciplinary lessons with colleagues (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000). However, the non-core teachers were not afforded a time during which they could meet daily and, possibly as a consequence, did not talk about common goals or tasks. The varying perspectives of what constituted participation in a team show that teachers who are excluded from team and consequently not provided a daily time during which to meet as a team do have a different

experience from that of team teachers as discussed in the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998).

Perceptions of the Middle School Model at Centerville Junior School

All of the teachers who participated in this dissertation were asked the question *What do you know about the premise behind middle school teaming?* Several of the teachers began their answers by giving their impression of the theoretical background of teaming. All of the teachers' responses invariably segued into a discussion of the normative benefits of teaming for middle school students. Nine of the eleven teachers specifically mentioned the way in which teaming helped students and teachers become better connected. Leslie said that the teachers got to know the students as "individuals." Teachers used words like "personalized" (Nora) "complete picture" (Kory), and "supportive" (Olivia). In Nicole's words, teaming allowed for "close relationships between the teacher and the student, as well as the teacher and the parent."

Teachers said that they benefitted from teaching the same group of students. Kory said that it was particularly helpful from a planning standpoint. He added that teaching the same group of students was also helpful when he needed to reach out to parents because he had a better sense of how the students were performing in their other academic areas. Laura emphasized that teaming helped teachers address issues that existed beyond their own classrooms. She noted that teaching the same group of students was beneficial because they could "more easily pinpoint problems that might be widespread and really work together to address the issue across multiple levels." Rachel highlighted the student perspective, saying, "The students feel like they're part of a team."

Whether teachers taught a core or non-core exploratory or special education class, there was consistency among teachers on how teaming improved relationships between students. For example, the art teacher Lana said that she assumed that "the child gets to know the teacher

better, you know, a smaller group of teachers better… No one's gonna slip through the cracks." The Spanish teacher Nora said, "It's a lot more personalized for the students, the teachers, and their parents." The only difference of note was that core team teachers talked about teaching the "same students" whereas non-core teachers talked about the core teachers who taught the "same students." The Spanish teachers talked about how *they* experienced teaming. For example, one of the Spanish teachers (Nora) responded, "*They* are able to mix up the students, deal with specific concerns, because *they* are teaching half the kids instead of teaching all of them. A lot more personalized for and with the students, teachers, and parents" [emphasis added]. The other Spanish teacher (Sophia) responded, "*They* work together during the day, these two teams, and then, from the teacher perspective, the teachers see the same students so *they* can meet and collaborate and do what is best for the students *they* see" [emphasis added].

The art teacher Lana did not speak about teaching the same students as any of her colleagues. Instead, she mentioned her daughter's experience during the first year of teaming at CJS. When Lana did talk about teaming, she contrasted her experience as an art teacher to what she perceived it might be if she taught a core subject:

> If I were coming in as a math teacher or whatever, I would be so much more comfortable in a team with four people…. Like I have my little, *little* [emphasis in original] group to bounce things off…and camaraderie. I think that it would be much better…. As a newcomer, I think it would be great.

The student-teacher and teacher-parent relationships that teaming fostered according to the teachers in the present study are acknowledged as primary benefits of middle school reform and the teaming model in the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mergendoller, 1993; Russell, 1997; Tanner & Tanner, 2007;

Thompson & Homestead, 2004). Teaming fosters a specialized approach to adolescent learning that supports "relationships," "connections," and personalized attention that are critical to middle learners in their adolescence (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mergendoller, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). However, while teaming strives to foster relationships, connections, and inclusivity amongst students, the degree to which all members of a school community are included varies according to the literature (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Smith, et al., 1998) and in practice. Nora, Sophia, and Lana referenced the core teachers and the students' experience in their core subject colleagues' classes but not in their own classes, which shows that teachers who are excluded are disconnected from the advantages of teams for themselves and for their students.

By dividing classes into two teams of students, core teachers expressed that it was easier to assess, evaluate, and support their team of students. With a core group of students on which to focus their attention, team teachers cited many benefits of the teaming model for students. Kory explained:

> We're able to have more of a complete picture of the student, and I don't think that would be as possible if we were all split around. And even here, I think it's still a small school, so, maybe… if we didn't have teams here, we could still manage, [but] I don't think it would be as strong. When I say, "manage," you know, manage in terms of getting to know the whole child. But I think in a school that's larger, not having teams would be incredibly difficult to really know anything about [students]. If I see patterns in my class,

it's so much easier to talk to another teacher… so I think [teams] are brought about, you

know, in order for educators to get a more clear picture of the whole student."

Other teachers held the same opinion, saying that working with their colleagues was

critical to student success. If teachers saw a problem with a student in their classes, they could

go to other people "to discuss the student's progress," according to Leslie. "Problems are

identified earlier on, preventing them from becoming huge throughout the school year," she said.

Although not a core teacher, Kaitlyn also thought that the teaming model helped students

succeed academically and socially:

> It's a better approach than having middle school kids not being followed…. They're
>
> really closely followed. And I don't think there's [sic] many slip-ups. I don't think many
>
> kids fall through the cracks this way. And without the team model, I think you can easily
>
> lose kids. I mean, we know who's doing homework, who's doing well on tests, who, you
>
> know, needs to stay after school for extra help, but without the team model, you'd be
>
> isolated. I don't think we'd really know anything.

A number of teachers said that teaming at the middle school provided an appropriate

"transition" for students coming from the elementary schools. Talking with each other during

the group interview, Nicole and Olivia explained the student perspective:

> NICOLE: I think it makes it more manageable for the kids, as well…because it's such a
>
> big school. It seems so big coming from the elementary school. It's smaller. More
>
> manageable.
>
> OLIVIA: It seems like a family. It's more intimate.
>
> NICOLE: Yeah, yeah. They know who [sic] they can go to. They have a go-to person,
>
> whether it be the team leader or the advisor…

OLIVIA: It definitely helps with the transition from the elementary school where you have basically the one teacher that's the mother hen and now you go to this place…

NICOLE: Right! I'm definitely going to agree with what she [Kaitlyn] said before. It's just easier to follow the kids and the ones who are having trouble or who need to be cheered on or whatever.

Sophia, a non-core teacher, also mentioned a "transition," but she did not speak about her students. Instead, Sophia described her personal experience as a mother of children who attended another New Jersey middle school with teaming. She explained, "I thought it was a nice transition from the elementary school. I knew that my children were part of a team and there would be discussions about them whenever necessary…."

The transition to which Nicole, Olivia, and Sophia referred was especially important for incoming 6th graders who went from a class of about 60 students in their elementary schools to a class of about 180 students at the junior school. Rachel said that the middle school helped these students to transition to a larger school by creating "a smaller feeling learning community…and a smaller feel and approach to the education."

These perspectives of the middle school as a transition time for middle school students during which teachers can provide academic and emotional support are in alignment with the literature. In the research literature, the middle school is considered an appropriate bridge for children transitioning from elementary school to high school and from childhood to adolescence (Beane, 2001; Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Tanner & Tanner, 2007). As the teachers noted, students transitioned from being part of a small group of students in grade 5 to a larger group of students in grade 6 at the junior school. The research literature documents that this transition to middle school comes at a developmentally challenging stage in the life of

the young adolescent (Eccles & et al., 1993; Eccles & Lord, 1991; Eccles, et al., 1993; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010).

However, when discussing the middle school and the teaming structure as supports for students in transition, several issues are worthy of mention. Although a formal discussion of the validity of the middle school and a 5-3-4 grade configuration is outside the scope of the present study, the difficulties encountered by students transitioning between elementary and middle schools that is reported in the research literature (Alspaugh, 1998; Alspaugh & Harting, 1995; Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, & Splittgerber, 2000; Anfara & Schmid, 2007; Chung, et al., 1998; Eccles & et al., 1993; Eccles & Lord, 1991; Eccles, et al., 1993; Elias, 2002; Elias, Gara, & Ubriaco, 1985; Elias, et al., 1992; Maehr & Anderman, 1993) should give us pause. Middle schools give rise to an additional year of transition for students moving from the 5th grade in the elementary school to the 6th grade in the middle school that does not occur in a traditional 8-4 grade configuration. Research into middle school reform efforts has been clear. Middle school features must be implemented properly and comprehensively (Epstein, 1990; Erb, 2005; Erb & Doda, 1989; Felner, et al., 1997; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kain, 1997a, 2001; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991; Mertens, et al., 2002; National Middle School Association, 2010) if they are to be successful in overcoming academic, emotional, and social distresses to which the transition to middle school has given rise. Once middle school features are implemented, the link between their implementation and their success in supporting gains in student achievement is often weak or unclear (Epstein, 1990; Gulino & Valentine, 1999; Midgley & Urdan, 1992; Odetola, et al., 1972; Russell, 1997; Van Zandt & Totten, 1995).

Summary

This chapter has provided a picture of what CJS was like as a middle school that has implemented interdisciplinary teaming. The first half of the chapter described the teacher participants' backgrounds. As a result, this chapter supported the constructivist ontology that this dissertation embraces, privileging multiple viewpoints and realities that exist as a result of individuals who experience a phenomenon from their own vantage point (Hatch, 2002; Krauss, 2005). The second half of the chapter described how CJS was transformed into a modern middle school with a grades 6-8 configuration, as well as how interdisciplinary teaming became the organizing feature of the school that it is today. Since teaming is an organizational structure that is meant to improve the overall effectiveness of the school as an educational organization, the next chapter will describe how teams were created, managed, and experienced at CJS.

CHAPTER 5:

"IT'S A FUNCTION OF THE SCHEDULE"

Consistent with the framework proposed in Chapter 2, the second and third data chapters analyze interdisciplinary teaming through both organizational theory and theories regarding human need and schools as social systems. Chapter 5 presents the organizational aspects of the teaming model at CJS, including issues of teamwork; leadership; workgroup effectiveness; and collaboration, collegiality, and conflict.

Benefits of Teamwork

The decision to have teams of people work together is a structural adaptation that should increase efficiency and improve organizational performance (Bolman & Deal, 2008). From a rational perspective, teamwork makes sense, especially in teaching, because it allows teachers to work together for common goals: improved decision-making, increased opportunities for professional growth and support, supportive induction practices for new teachers, and instructional effectiveness that is superior to that which can achieved individually. However, as Bolman and Deal (2008) note, mismanaged or poorly designed teams can result in duplication, inconsistency, unproductive conflict, and perpetuation of the status quo. This section of the chapter discusses the teacher participants' perceptions of the benefits of teamwork.

Professional Growth

The teachers who participated in this study mentioned professional growth opportunities in various venues: during team meetings, through whole day in-service staff development, and when provided, release time for workshops. Regardless of when, where, or how teachers grow professionally, continuous professional improvement is valued and pursued by teachers in successful schools according to research (Little, 1982). This section will address whether team

organization fostered teacher interest in professional growth or contributed to efforts at providing teachers opportunities to grow professionally at CJS.

Team time. Teaming provides teachers a professional community within which they may grow professionally (Erb, 1987; Kruse & Louis, 1997). The majority of core team teachers in this study only experienced teaming as it was implemented at CJS. However, Leslie contrasted her experience with teaming at her previous district with her current experience. In her previous district, team goals and activities were very "predetermined," she said. Calendars and agendas were made up to a month in advance. The team members would watch a "PD 360 video, read an article, or something along those lines" once per month. The teams met every day. Each week, team meetings included "your one day of professional development, your one day of this, your one day of that, so it was very structured," according to Leslie. She said that she thought the team leaders "appreciated the direction." In contrast, teaming was more "loosely structured" at CJS: "If we need to meet twice a week, we'll meet twice a week. If we need four times a week that week, then we meet four times that week." She never mentioned professional development as part of their daily team meetings when she described team meetings at CJS:

> Team 6B will meet twice a week to discuss student concerns, more if necessary, more if we need to call parents in and have conferences. The other days are dedicated to preparation, either contacting the parents on your own if you see a problem with an individual student who's doing well in the other classes…

Whereas teams in her previous school district met every day, teams at CJS met with less frequency, and Leslie said, "There's always time during our meetings." In this way, teams were responsive to the day-to-day happenings at the school. She said, "If something happens during

the school day and you need to meet about it the next school day, it's nice to know you don't have to make modifications to a calendar."

According to Leslie, core team teachers gained access to what went on, especially with students, outside of their own classroom. Her comments support findings that teaming diminishes isolationist tendencies of teachers and helps teachers to gain access to information about what goes on in the larger school community (Lee, et al., 1991). However, her comments also show that teams do not necessarily automatically provide professional growth opportunities, at least within the context of team meetings. Although Leslie felt that her team was "flexible," the team largely based its activities on daily or weekly happenings. They were highly attentive to what was occurring in the school. Meetings were scheduled as necessary. But that flexibility may also be a limitation. At least at CJS, the real professional development goals of teaming seemed to become lost in the minutiae of what could be accomplished within one or two meeting periods, as found in the research literature (Little, 1990). Teams–and the team time they provide–may not sustain the long-term professional growth of their members as middle school teaming proponents contend.

Aside from the daily team meetings, Kory mentioned that team leaders are tapped at least once yearly to attend workshops on team leadership. He described these workshops: "It's not really training on being a team leader or being a part of a team. It's more options for team leaders through different workshops…and we kind of bring the information back type of thing." Team leaders met with the principal on a regular basis, and they were subsequently charged with disseminating information to the teams. However, he did not share any details regarding how the workshops he attended contributed to his professional growth or that of his colleagues. He questioned his role as team leader and said, "I'm not an administrator."

The research literature shows that school environments can promote or inhibit professional growth. Collaboration and participation in teams increases the likelihood that teachers grow professionally as a result of exposure to more than just what occurs in their own classrooms (Lee, et al., 1991). The interview data from the present study, however, do not directly support this research. Whether professional growth opportunities provided to a team's leader has any bearing on the professional growth of its members was not clear. However, when the team structure excludes some individuals, such as non-core subject or special education teachers, it is worthwhile to investigate whether those who are excluded can translate the advantages of teams into professional growth in any way. Therefore the discussion of professional growth turns to issues of inclusion and exclusion in school wide opportunities for professional growth.

Professional development opportunities for everyone? One of the team teachers (Laura) elucidated the process by which teachers at CJS experienced professional development "district-wide." With previous superintendents, the teachers were provided a "menu of different mini-seminars," and teachers registered in advance for workshops based on their interest. Alternatively, teachers were assigned professional development opportunities based on teaching discipline: "this subject will go here, and this subject will go here." The art teacher Lana questioned whether these workshops were suitable for or applicable to teachers of all subject areas. She said, "It's pretty hard to find something that would be relevant to my needs" and mentioned "a lot [of workshops on] reading strategies…and middle school teacher 'things'" that she felt did not apply to her teaching. While a number of the workshops were general enough for her to generate some benefit, some were also too subject-specific in the eyes of this non-core teacher. Alternatively, she may also have felt that some of the workshops on "middle school

teacher 'things'" were not applicable since she was not part of the core subject grade level teams and did not really feel part of the middle school feeling that teaming is thought to generate.

There were other conflicting perspectives on whether non-core teachers experienced opportunities for growth in the same way as core teachers. With the current superintendent, teachers have not had access to the same menu of options, according to Laura. She said, "It's mostly been: this is what everybody is doing," but she maintained, "When the menu was there I think that the opportunities were there regardless of whether you were core or non-core." Rachel also felt that teaching discipline did not affect teachers' opportunities. She reported that the curriculum supervisors in the district were "extremely supportive" of teachers who sought out professional development opportunities. To her knowledge, these opportunities were not limited to core subject teachers. She mentioned, "Even when I was on academic support, I was still able to go to some really awesome training things." Seemingly, then, both core and non-core teachers were afforded the same opportunities for professional growth, according to core team teachers. However, the Spanish teacher Nora wasn't convinced that she was provided the same opportunities as her core teacher colleagues: "There's a lot more workshops and so on for, you know, core subjects…." Lana was also not sure if the non-core teachers were provided all the same opportunities and conceded, "I'm probably out of the loop."

It is difficult to know whether these were real or perceived differences because non-core teachers were divided on the issue. Although Nora and Lana's perception was one of exclusion, Kerry and Sophia saw it differently. When she was asked whether she was excluded from professional development opportunities, Kerry laughed and said, "Not yet." She continued, "If there are, I'm not really aware of it," but she also admitted that her perspective was different. She replied, "If it's good for them, why would I want to go into something that I really don't

have interest in?" Sophia simply stated, "I don't have a problem with professional development that we've had."

From a structural perspective of schools as organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008), teaming is a structural approach to improve teacher performance that, in turn, improves organizational efficiency and success. However, the benefit of teaming to the professional growth and support of teachers depends upon how teams are implemented. At CJS, non-core and special education teachers were excluded from the core grade level teams. If the team time that was provided to teams provided core subject teachers opportunities for professional growth, non-core teachers were exempt. However, the interview data are unclear as to how much team time contributed to opportunities for professional growth and therefore to what degree the non-core teachers were really excluded.

Schools are organizations and the way in which they are managed affects organizational efficiency and success. From a human resource perspective (Bolman & Deal, 2008), the success of teams is largely determined by how people experience them and whether there is an alignment between organizational needs and individual needs. A symbiotic relationship between organizational and individual needs may lead to mutual benefit in terms of motivation (Maslow, 1954). In the present study, Kerry and Sophia reported a positive experience with regard to the professional development at their schools. As a structural adaptation, teaming did not have a negative effect on their experience. However, while Lana and Nora did not report a negative experience per se, they did allude to an experience that was quite different from that of their core team colleagues. They felt excluded from professional collaboration and growth opportunities that would occur during common team planning time and perceived that they were left out of other opportunities, which is consistent with the research literature. In terms of feelings of

satisfaction and influence, non-team teachers who are excluded from the teaming structure may have a very different experience from that of team teachers, according to the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998). Perceived inequities between teachers that result from the way in which schools are structured have the potential to affect school outcomes and attempts at improving those outcomes.

Support Network for Induction

The collaboration engendered by teaming is supposed to lead to increased levels of professional collegiality that will, in turn, help individuals who work together to improve their practice both individually and collectively (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Collegiality between teachers may serve several purposes. According to Little (1982), teachers who value collegiality also value professional growth in successful schools. Collegiality and camaraderie amongst teachers contribute positively to new teacher induction by providing emotional support (Bickmore, et al., 2005).

Leslie was one of the teachers who described collegiality between colleagues as a "support system" between colleagues and within her team. She called her team a "core group" to whom she could go with any concerns she had as a new math teacher and as a new teacher at CJS. She attributed this to the frequency with which she met with her team and said, "I'm forced to communicate and talk with them on a regular basis, so I've become comfortable." As the newest person to the teaching profession and the newest team teacher who participated in this study, it was not surprising that Leslie spoke of the benefits of teaming to the new teacher induction process. She said, "My team members…they've made me feel very welcome as a new member."

Leslie was part of a 6th grade team and Olivia, who also participated in this study, was its team leader. Olivia shared her impressions of supporting a new teacher in the community: "We

just kind of took her under our wing, showed her the ropes for everything that goes on, you know. If she has any questions, she knows she can come to us…. We just explained everything." While not required, the 6th grade teams generally organized a "before-school get-together," according to Olivia. It was a time during which the teachers would socialize and build bonds that they hoped would eventually support their teaching work during the school year. Olivia also said it provided a first introduction to new teachers on the 6th grade team so that they could adapt to the new school and begin to take advantage of the automatic support network provided by teams. Speaking about the benefit of the August meeting for new teachers, Olivia said, "You know, just anybody that's new, we let them know we're here for you if you have any questions. Come to us…."

Other team leaders like Nicole, Kory, and Laura also spoke more generally about how teams provide a support network to new teachers. At first, Laura described her impressions of the supportive nature of teaming by recounting her personal experience when she was new to CJS:

> When I first started teaching in Centerville, right out of college, I didn't know anybody. Coming to the school, I didn't know anyone. I didn't know anything. I'm nervous. And I had a really amazing team leader and I had a really amazing team, and they made me feel comfortable.

Now, as a team leader, Laura considered providing a support network a primary purpose of the teams. She said she referred to any newly hired group of teachers as a "pledge class" because she felt that new teachers were first closest to the people with whom they had their first training. Then, teams provided the next most important support network for new teachers. She saw it as her duty to assist new team members:

I've always had somebody new, and I've always made sure that not only they know what they should be doing in their classroom, but the culture of Centerville, you know, "Oh, you're expected to do this on this day. You need to make sure that if you have this duty, you're here at this hour, you're doing these things…." So, just trying to help those initiated people come in, understand, feel supported….

Findings from this study, then, support previous research on the benefits of teaming to the new teacher induction process (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005; Little, 1990). Inclusion on a team gives new teachers much more than a group of teachers with whom to work on a daily basis. It may provide a desperately needed support network that they might not otherwise have. As Nicole described teaming, "It's very supportive." New teachers appreciated the opportunity to work with other teachers who teach the same group of students. Rachel, who had been a non-core teacher and not part of team when she began her career in Centerville, said that it was "really, really nice" to have an automatic support when she was part of a team. Laura also appreciated the support that her team provided and contrasted her middle school teaching experience to her pre-service student teaching at a high school:

I think that by having this group of people that I can talk to and I can work with and understand, and they understand me, it's good. And it allows me to kind of open up more to other teachers too because I have that supporting network so close to me. I didn't necessarily have that when I student taught [in a high school].

At a high school, the only support network was provided by her science department and, more specifically, other biology teachers: "I felt like I had a really great relationship with my cooperating teacher…and a really great relationship with the other biology teachers…but outside of that little biology niche, nobody really talked to each other."

Non-core subject teachers who were not part of the teams at CJS did not all share the same experiences. Some of them felt supported by the teaming model as it was implemented at CJS. Others did not. This was the case with the two Spanish teachers, Sophia and Nora. Sophia, who was the new specials team leader and a recent transplant from the elementary school, said that she generally liked the team model. She laughed and said she was "one of a kind, not part of a team" at the elementary school. Referring to the team structure, she said, "I feel it's very supportive. I like it. I like it a lot." However, as the specials team leader, she emphasized the contact she had with the other team leaders at the weekly team leader meeting with the principal: "I feel like the team leaders are very professional. I can go to any one of them at any time if I have a concern about a student and they're supportive." When asked whether language teachers generally felt the same, she responded somewhat differently:

> The grass is always greener, right, with what we don't have? I, yeah, I mean, I, I, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about it, but I imagine that it would be nice and it would be another network, another support.

Seemingly, the role one plays within the teaming model (i.e., leader or member) plays a role in one's perception of teaming's benefit to teachers.

On the other hand, Nora was indifferent to the team model. She didn't seem to sense its benefit for the "specials." When asked about the support network provided to new faculty, such as language teachers, Nora said that she tried her best to help "during meetings or prep or whatever" but she did not mention any support network. Instead, she explained what she, individually, could provide:

I've tried my best to sort of help her assimilate and show, you know, what things we do, what things we don't do, what's helpful, what's not helpful, that type of thing. But, I mean, that's really kind of the extent of it.

Nora said that a new language teacher would not feel lonely "within the languages, but within other teams," and her voice trailed off. She continued, "Only because, again, it's just, it's so separate, you know? … There's a group over here and there's the specials."

Common Planning Time and Instructional Effectiveness

The collaboration engendered by middle school teamwork has been seen as a hallmark principle of middle school interdisciplinary teaming, with individual teachers working together to improve their instructional effectiveness, both individually and collectively. In the present study, the interview data from the core subject team teachers seemed to confirm the extant research. The teachers perceived that their practice was greatly improved either as a primary or, at least, a secondary result of the team model.

Teachers said that their lessons often improved when they had opportunities to discuss their plans with another colleague. And because team teachers generally taught in the same vicinity within the school building, they additionally would touch base with each other in the hallway during student passing and ask things like, "How'd your honors class go?" Based on these discussions, they may have "tweaked" their upcoming lessons or even adjusted their teaching for the remainder of the day.

Whether they met two, three, or four times a week, core team teachers had the opportunity to converse with their teammates about students who were struggling in their academic classes. Meeting together also afforded them the time to discuss classroom management issues. Rachel said, "I do like to be open and to share, and I think it helps me as a teacher to be better at what I do." Other teachers concurred and mentioned their personal need to

be part of some sort of team. Laura said, "I need that collaboration," because she liked to problem solve and talk about things with her colleagues.

Most of the teachers interviewed in this study attributed this improvement to their ability to work together during a common planning period, or "team time." This common planning period is requisite for middle school teams to work effectively (Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 2000, 2003; Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Huber, 1991; Louis, 1994; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Spies, 2001; Warren & Muth, 1995; Warren & Payne, 1997). In addition, the core subject teachers shared the exact same schedule within the grade levels. While the former was required by their contract, the preparation time could be used however they wished. Many teachers reported using their personal preparation time to not only make copies and grade papers, but also to work with their counterparts.

As its name implies, middle school interdisciplinary teaming intentionally groups teachers of various subject areas to benefit students' educational experience. Every team teacher interviewed for this study spoke of the interdisciplinary or "cross-curricular" activities and lessons they developed for students as a direct result of working together during a common team planning time. The 6th grade math teacher Leslie offered her work with her team leader Olivia as an example. In the spring, they worked together to talk about and use common terminologies in each other's classes (e.g. circle graphs, percentages, etc.). When students were surprised to see science being discussed in her math class, she saw an instructional moment to show how math and science are often used together in the "real world." She told students, "In the real world, it's not like that. You use many subject areas to complete a problem."

The 7th grade language arts teacher Rachel mentioned her cross-curricular work with the social studies teacher on her team. When the 7th grade social studies curriculum focused on

ancient civilizations, the language arts teachers on both teams selected readings for the students that were associated with ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, etc. The 6th grade science teacher Olivia also mentioned developing lessons with the language arts, science, and social studies teachers.

Leslie had an interesting perspective on team time since she had previously worked in a school district in which teachers were required to use their personal preparation time to work in interdisciplinary teams. She said that teachers were very resistant to the teaming model in her former school because it took away from their own planning time and forced them to do more work at home. "In order for it to be successful," individual planning time must be provided for everyone, according to Leslie. Separate team time was both important and required. She said:

> So, I think it team time definitely has to be built into the day somehow…or otherwise you
> wind up like some teachers who are not on the core team. You don't have that
> automatic…. You have to go out of your way on your own time to build those
> relationships and to collaborate and that's when it suffers.

Leslie's perception was that the teachers were always willing to work together either within or across the disciplines, but she did say it was because they had separate time to meet as a team together and their own preparation time: "Teachers don't resent the teaming. They actually appreciate it." However, it is difficult to know whether these teachers would be so willing to collaborate if time were not provided during the school day. For example, collaboration occurred automatically within the grade level teams from what core team teachers reported. However, whether the core teacher teams collaborated across the grade levels was less clear. Common planning time was only allotted for teams within their grade levels. The 6th grade teachers were assigned "team time" during period 3; the 7th grade teachers during period 4;

and the 8th grade teachers during period 7. None of the core subject teachers reported that they worked with other grade level teachers. Some, like Rachel and Laura, mentioned working with the other 7th grade language arts and science teachers when team time became a department meeting. So, the way in which CJS implemented the team model still ensured time for departmental collaboration by grade level in the four core subject areas. It did not ensure time for collaboration across the grade levels.

The way in which teaming was implemented at CJS also did nothing for collaboration between core and non-core subject teachers. It was clear that the core team teachers experienced little to no collaboration with their non-core subject teacher colleagues who were not part of the teaming model. Every core team teacher who participated in this study reported that it was difficult to collaborate with these colleagues. Rachel implied that a lot of it had to do with the core team teachers' willingness to reach out to work with non-core teachers. She said, "I think that there are some core teachers that kind of work to include them [the non-core teachers] in the process and then others, maybe not so much." When talking specifically about collaboration with academic support teachers, she said:

> It was absolutely me who initiated it with some teachers. It varied by teacher, and I think probably the same thing is still true. So, for example, I make sure I involve our academic support teacher. I send her all of the lesson plans. I talk to her at least once a day. We'll compare notes about students or she'll let me know if she's having a particular problem with one student, so we talk pretty frequently. But I don't think that there are, I do know, say, for example, that there are teachers who don't send her anything, so I don't think they're using her as a resource. I think it depends. That's one of the things that's probably dependent on the teacher. I don't tap in, I probably should. But I'm not

actively involved in whatever our music teacher or health teacher or even art for that matter on a frequent basis. I, I, I…mostly from a non-core perspective, I work pretty closely with the academic support person but not the others.

Team teachers attributed the difficulty to various factors. Some teachers mentioned that the school layout was problematic (see Figure **3** on page 104 for a floor plan). Kory, who taught in room 214, said that he would only sometimes "collaborate" with the Spanish teacher in room 213 during passing in the hall: "We'll talk because of our proximity." He did not have the opportunity to speak with the Italian teacher who taught in room 100 because "she's all the way at the end downstairs in the back hallway." He continued, "I wouldn't see any of them if it wasn't for chaperoning for an event or at lunch." In addition to Kory, Olivia cited distance as a reason for the difficulty collaborating. She and the other teachers in the 6th grade teams taught on the first floor in rooms 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, and 112. She said, "It's easy to forget, and we're always so busy, you know, it's hard, and they're far away in the building."

To combat the difficulty of school layout, two of the team teachers mentioned using e-mail to initiate and maintain contact between themselves and the non-core subject teachers, while others mentioned seeing their colleagues in the hallway. Teachers indicated that the team leader would e-mail the non-core teachers and request input when they had a parent conference during team time. Sometimes, non-core teachers would attend the parent conference during team time, but someone needed to arrange for another teacher to cover their class. The language arts teacher Rachel called it a "hiccup" and "a small inconvenience." But, whereas Rachel said, "We can get coverage," implying that the team teachers took responsibility, not everyone saw it like that. The 8th grade team leader said that it was more the responsibility of the non-core teacher being invited to get coverage and therefore, "Most of the time they won't come." He said he

would try to speak at some point with the Spanish or the Mandarin teacher, for example, and "she'll give me a couple of quick things and I'll speak on her behalf and say these are her concerns, you know, something like that."

Non-core teachers also said that the onus was on them. The Spanish teacher Nora said that she needed to find coverage for her class if she wanted to attend a team meeting with a parent. The other Spanish teacher Sophia also highlighted the practical implication of leaving her class to attend a team meeting:

> Well the frustration is that when there is a parent meeting, uhm, I, it's very difficult for me to attend. Uhm, my administration is great and will offer coverage, but it's, it's, it's difficult. It's like being absent. You have to leave a sub plan and so on. So, it's not easy to attend parent meetings.

The art teacher Lana agreed, saying "I don't want to do that because it's more work for me! And a logistical nightmare…. What are you going to do? Have a sheet for them to…a busywork thing…?"

Referring to the contact between herself and non-core teachers, the 6th grade team leader Olivia said, "it's not anything consistent." Laura said that she did not really have contact with the non-core teachers because "the core teachers have a particular schedule, and then the non-core teachers tend to be teaching whenever I'm off." She would rely on trying to find the teachers in the school building if she needed to talk to them, but she had to either interrupt teachers' classes or find time before or after school when she and the other teacher would be available.

Seemingly, then, proximity and school design and school layout are important factors to the success of the middle school model and interdisciplinary teaming (George & Alexander,

2003). However, the lack of common planning time was the most common and salient reason given for the lack of collaboration and why core team teachers do not collaborate with non-core teachers and vice versa. Common time was not provided during the school day for the core team teachers to meet with the non-core teachers. According to the extant research, the lack of common planning time is a frequent problem. Teachers of exploratory subjects are often excluded from collaboration in a team setting (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). The scheduling of students with non-core subject area teachers while team teachers meet and collaborate at CJS support Erb and Doda's (1989) contention that non-core team teachers are engaged in teaching the team's students to afford the team teachers time to meet.

Team teachers were aware this difficulty. Laura understood and valued the importance of interdisciplinary work, calling it a "really cool" opportunity. Laura, for one, appreciated the scheduling and time issues involved:

> The way the schedule's set up is that the particular grade levels at least have some opportunity to collaborate with each other, but typically when we have our team meeting time, they're teaching our students. So we don't get much of an opportunity to cross-team with the specials areas…. They're doing their thing and we're doing our thing, and two ships pass in the night.

Laura noted that because of the way in which the team structure excluded the non-core teachers, her teammates did not "get much of an opportunity to cross-team with the specials."

Any collaborative efforts between the team and non-team teachers was not "really integrated into the regular classroom," due to the schedule according to Leslie. She indicated that her interaction with non-core teachers was limited because the non-core teachers teach the

periods when she and her team members were off and vice versa. Otherwise, "you're asked to put up your own time, either before school or after school in order for it to work." The non-team teachers recognized the lack of common time with their core subject colleagues as a difficulty, as well. Non-core teachers were also reluctant to meet outside the confines of the regular school day. The art teacher Lana said, "You know, just the logistics of getting together to meet… Forget it. It would be after school. And who wants to do that!" She called the scheduling and the lack of common time a "deterrent" to collaboration between the core team and non-core teachers. The Spanish teacher Sophia, who seemed more open to seeking out and meeting her core team teacher colleagues before or after school, said that collaboration was difficult because "it's not really built into our schedule. Rarely…if I'm here in early in the morning, I can go into one of the core teachers and ask a question or speak with them."

In addition to the lack of common planning time for the core team and non-team teachers, common time was not provided during the school day for the non-core team teachers to meet with each other. The non-team teachers indicated that they met informally during their common lunchtime. However, lunch periods lasted for only 25 minutes for teachers and students according to the school time schedules (see Figure **4** on page 109 and Figure **5** on page 110). They were also able to meet with whomever was free during the personal preparation period, but as the Spanish teacher Sophia reported, "It's not as though we have a common prep." If she or her non-core colleagues shared a common preparation time, it was through sheer happenstance. They were not entitled to a common personal preparation period. Therefore, even though the non-core teachers were part of a specials team, they were unable to meet daily with each other. In fact, Sophia was keenly aware that the core subject teachers were entitled to time during

which they were supposed to, but did not necessarily, meet every day; whereas she and her colleagues actually spent time discussing issues about once a month during their lunchtime.

However, because the core team teachers were entitled to time to meet together, the non-core teachers seemed to sense that non-participation on a team excluded them from much more. The other Spanish teacher Nora discussed her perception of the lack of common planning time and all that it entailed, as well:

> They get that special time, they get certain times a year where they get to do, you know, conferences, or they get to make schedules or grade exams or whatever it is. Whereas we don't, you know? We don't really meet. We don't get any of that.

The art teacher also contrasted her experience to her perception of the team teachers' experience. She noted, "We have occasional meetings because we don't fit in anywhere else," whereas if "the English and social studies [teachers] want to whip something up, they have a time during the day together." She said that if she wanted to have that kind of time to plan with colleagues she would have to give up her preparation period, whereas the core team teachers did not have to.

Core team teachers were also asked to contrast their experience with that of their non-core teacher colleagues. Some were aware of an inequity between the two experiences. Kory knew that the non-core teachers had to meet during lunch "'cause that's the only time they have together, and it's only once, maybe once every two weeks. It's a lot less…." He was also aware of the difficulties involved when teachers did not have common time with any of the people around them. He said, "Those guys are in the dark…but it's the unfortunate reality." Laura was also aware. When asked if she knew if the specials team was able to meet regularly, she replied, "No! Not at all! There is no specials team meeting period! Most of their communication is

happening via e-mail or maybe when their team leader will pop in….” Other core team teachers were unaware. When asked if they knew if the specials team had a common planning time like they do, both Nicole and Kaitlyn said, “I don't know.”

Teaming brings about the type of collaboration that helps many core team teachers feel more successful. Research confirms that the lack of collaboration does leave non-team teachers who are isolated or excluded from a common team time feeling less efficacious in achieving school goals and improving student achievement (Warren & Muth, 1995; Warren & Payne, 1997). While the non-core teachers at CJS did not expressly indicate that they felt less efficacious, they did make it clear that the lack of common time affected their teaching practice and relationships with colleagues. It is therefore also important to address how collaboration with colleagues provides support and affects morale, which is the subject of the next section.

Teamwork/Collaboration & Morale, etc.

Instructional improvement notwithstanding, collaboration, or any common time together, also provides teachers emotional and moral support (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989). Rachel mentioned her personal satisfaction and enjoyment that she experienced when she collaborated with colleagues: “On a personal level, I just feel better…I feel like it kind of pushes me to be a better teacher.” Collaboration and common time together created a personal cohesion that the teachers might not otherwise experience. All of the team teachers noted the professional and personal support they experienced as a result of working with other team teachers. Leslie said, “If I know my team is meeting, I almost look forward to the meeting. I get to catch up with them, see what's going on.”

Team time also afforded teachers the opportunity for synergistic creation, which is another benefit of collaborating with colleagues (Ehman, 1995; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990). Rachel talked about “thriving on other people's energy.” She said that any teacher in her

team might throw out an idea during a team meeting and then "it just grows." The collaboration that she had with her counterpart language arts teacher on the other 7th grade team sometimes even spilled over into holiday or summer breaks, when they would meet, or at least e-mail, to recreate previous units or plan new ones. She believed that "when you're paired with people that kind of feed off the same energy, it benefits the students a lot."

Teachers also said that they benefitted from teaching the same group of students. One teacher (Kory) said that it was particularly helpful from a planning standpoint. He added that teaching the same group of students was also helpful when he needed to reach out to parents because he had a better sense of how the students were performing in their other academic areas. The emotional support provided by collaboration was also helpful in dealing the same group of students who may have had similar issues. Collaboration and collegiality between teachers are formidable allies during difficult times (Hargreaves, 2001).

According to interview data, these benefits of teamwork varied. The frequency with which teams at CJS met was reported to be different between teams, according to one of the team teachers. According to the interview data, team time was critical for common planning, collaboration, and providing a supportive induction network for new teachers. However, subsets of teachers (the non-core and special education teachers) did not participate on teams and found it difficult to support each other. Whether teaming supports professional growth depends on how the teams are conceptualized by school leaders. At CJS, teams provided little in terms of professional growth opportunities. These are issues over which school administrators exert influence; and therefore, the discussion now turns to the role of leadership in the middle school teaming model.

The Role of Leadership

Because school administrators exert a great deal of influence on how the teams are implemented in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Mintzberg, et al., 1996) and within the middle school setting (Clark & Clark, 1994, 2006; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998), teaming may be considered administratively mutable. Programs are designated as administratively mutable by educational researchers if they are under administrative control (Haller & Kleine, 2001). With regard to teaming, administrative control extends to the design, staffing, leadership, goal setting, and training of the teams. By interviewing teachers in a middle school in which teaming is a central focus (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b), this dissertation attempted to elucidate the role leadership plays in the phenomenon of teaming through the perspectives of both core team and non-core teachers.

Team Design

There were two teams per grade level at CJS: 6A and 6B in grade 6; 7A and 7B in grade 7; and 8A and 8B in grade 8. Each team was comprised of a language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies teacher (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-c). Two teachers who participated in this research (Kory and Rachel) confirmed that there have consistently been two teams per grade level with one teacher from each subject area per team. Core team teachers who were part of these teams reported that the school administrators (the principal and/or assistant principal) selected the teachers for the teams. However, the teachers were not sure how the administrators made these team assignments. Although new to CJS, Leslie was aware that her team members have served on different teams in the past and didn't know if the "moving around" was their choice.

Leslie noted that team assignments depended on the grade level one was assigned to teach. A change in grade level would require a change in team, but she did not specify whether teachers would potentially "loop" with the students in those instances and, for example, move from 6A to 7A or 8A; or instead move from 6A to 7B or 8B. Rachel was the only teacher in this study who experienced a change in grade level within the middle school (7th grade to 8th grade and then back to 7th grade). Although she had completed nearly 10 years of teaching in the school, she did not clarify. Teachers did not mention grade level changes; but Leslie, Rachel, and Kory did discuss changes in team assignment. They described (a) the role teachers played and, specifically, the degree to which they had influence on their team assignment; (b) how they perceived the rationale behind changes in team assignment and issues of "balance" and consistency; and (c) how these changes affected team success.

Teacher voice and team assignment. Whether teachers had a voice in their team assignment was an issue for a number of the core teachers. Leslie felt that it was important for teachers to "have some say in who they worked with" because teams may not always function in the way in which they are intended. She alluded to issues of unequal participation, differences in teaching philosophy, and lack of commitment to the teaming effort. "I have been on teams in the past where there's the one team member who is constantly negative or is constantly going against the group, and it makes things very difficult," she explained. Leslie mentioned a survey as a means for teachers to "see what teachers would work nicely," but it was unclear if she was alluding to her previous experience in another district or her current knowledge of teaming at CJS. Nevertheless, she thought that surveys had been administered to "make the teachers feel like their voices were being heard, but then what administration wanted to happen happened anyway…. It was just for show. Like, 'Oh yeah, we want your opinion, but we really didn't pay

any attention to your opinion.'" She recognized the futility of surveys for teachers to express their preferences in terms of team design.

Rachel also questioned the degree to which teachers had influence over their teaching or team assignment. When asked, she hesitated and said, "No, no… No… Well, no…and yes." She repeated, "No and yes," and continued, "I think there have been, there's been movement…and all this is confidential, but there is…," and the digital voice recorder was turned off before she would explain further.

According to the research literature on teaming, the staffing of teams is a primary concern for school leaders who choose to implement teaming (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998). The teachers in the present study revealed that the school leaders who were charged with designing the teams sometimes made changes to the teams from year to year, which is consistent with research on teams and collaboration. Collaboration requires complicated relationships that are difficult to manage, and it is necessary to carefully select the parties involved in collaborative efforts (Mintzberg, et al., 1996). Since the success of teams is dependent on leadership and how leaders structure teams (Erb & Doda, 1989), it is not unusual for leaders to restructure teams as time goes on to increase the likelihood for "balance."

"Balance". Teachers strived to understand how the principal structured the teams at CJS, offering many opinions. Two teachers (Rachel and Kory) mentioned "balance." Rachel suggested that the administrators "try to balance personality types" because they recognized that team effectiveness largely depended on how the teams were designed. She said that how well teams worked together entirely hinged on the people who made up those teams. By identifying "who's in the job" and the "make-up of the personalities" as primary components of workgroup

effectiveness, Rachel effectively addressed the role of leadership as the decisive factor in the successful implementation of teaming. She said that it was the school administrators who made the decisions about team assignments. She described her perception of how the principal and assistant principal designed the teams. "They try to balance personality types," she said. She mentioned the importance of roles within the teams and described the characteristics of the team leader in her own 7th grade team. Rachel also mentioned the need to entrust the team leader role to someone who was "extremely bright," "routine driven," and "very structure driven." She said that her team leader "has her stuff together." In contrast, Rachel saw herself as a better team *member* than team *leader*: "I tend to be much looser in terms of, you know, approach." By describing how school leaders designed teams and selected their leadership based on teachers' strengths, Rachel was defending leadership decisions that have been made so that no one would ever say, "Oh, you're on the good team," or "Oh, I'm not on the good team."

Rachel was not the only team teacher who spoke at length about how teachers perceived how the principal and assistant principal designed the teams. Kory also acknowledged the purposeful and intentional bringing together of different teachers. He said, "I think [the principal] really tries to keep the teams balanced…. She has her own perceptions of who's high energy, who's not high energy; and she likes to balance those individuals." However, he described the need to balance from a different viewpoint, emphasizing the students: "So I think she's trying to create structured teams that she thinks would be fair and in the best interest of the kids."

This school's administrators' perceived efforts to carefully select teachers with complementary skills are supported by the research literature that has shown that school leaders must take great care to design teams of teachers that work well together. Team composition

affects the teacher norms, ideologies, and identity through which effective teamwork is mediated (Achinstein, 2002; Ball, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, et al., 2004). The types of relationships that result in professional dialogue are often stifled by mismatched personalities that lead to conflict, according to Achinstein (2002). On the contrary, research on the selection of teachers for teams shows that teachers with complementary backgrounds, perspective, and subject matter specializations can contribute to the strength of teams (Erb & Doda, 1989). Whether leadership efforts to blend teacher personalities results in team success is the question to which the discussion now turns.

Team success. Whether the principal was structuring teams for success is worthy of discussion. A comparison of two teachers' experiences with teams, along with their conception of the ideal experience, will show the effect of school leadership on teacher perceptions of middle school teaming.

While discussing her perception of the ideal teaming experience, Laura mentioned the importance of diversity within the teams. She said, "The ideal teaming experience would be a group of individuals that aren't necessarily like-minded. I really do like to work with people that have strong personalities that are not always going to agree with me." She emphasized the desire for professional relationships that embrace constructive conflict. Laura compared the ideal experience with reality and described her overall experience with the team model at CJS as positive, mentioning both student and teacher benefits. She explained, "The teaming in the 7th grade is very strong. We really like each other. And we really work hard to get along, to get things done, to do what's best for the kids, but enjoy ourselves at the same time." However, Laura qualified her reply: "At least, I've been lucky. I've had a very positive experience." She recognized that not all teachers had the same positive experience and explained, "I have a

member of my team this year who was on a different team last year at a different grade level, and that particular individual was incredibly unhappy." She continued to explain, "And I know there are other grade levels out there; it doesn't come as easily. And, so, I think I have more of a positive spin on it than perhaps other people who even in the junior school who've experienced the team model."

Rachel never answered the question about what the ideal teaming experience would be like for her. However, she did explain what she liked about working with other teachers:

I really dig collaboration, like, I really, I thrive on other people's energy, I find that it, like, what I really like is one of us will throw out an idea and then it just grows. And you don't remember whose idea it began with, just this seed idea becomes so big and so wonderful by the time you're planning, whether it's a lesson or a unit, it's just so great, I just really work well off of that energy.

Rachel emphasized a desire for strong collaborative relationships that benefit teachers and, in turn, their students: "I get a lot of satisfaction and enjoyment out of teaching when I'm able to collaborate. So, on a personal level I feel better. I feel like it kind of pushes me to be a better teacher." When she taught in the 7th grade and was part of a 7th grade team, Rachel experienced these collaborative relationships and said she felt "fortunate" because "there's a really collaborative approach." When working collaboratively, Rachel felt that the team teachers provided the students a stronger and more connected education than if they worked independently. She explained, "It feels good when you realize the kids will make connections, like, 'Oh my gosh, we're doing this in social studies, too!' It's like it dawns on the kids. The kids kind of think it's an accident, but it's *no* accident" [emphasis in original].

Rachel contrasted her 7th grade team experience with her experience when she taught in the 8th grade and was part of an 8th grade team for one year:

> Our 8th grade mix of personalities–and I think it's good and not good–and it's probably the reason I wanted to desperately come back to 7th, is our 8th grade teachers operate in that space of that they don't like to share so much, they don't really collaborate a lot….
>
> My perception is there's not a tremendous amount of sharing.

When she was assigned to an 8th grade team, she described the 8th grade teachers as "protective" and "serious." Although Rachel requested the transfer to 8th grade, she theorized that the principal had other reasons that prompted her to approve the transfer: "She [the principal] was kind of hoping that if I went up there that I would change some of that…but it didn't work." Her experience was such that she "begged to go back." Throughout the interview, Rachel maintained that her experiences were different because they were "dependent on people's personalities" and "who's in the job."

These teachers' experiences with different teams reflect the importance of meticulous team design. School leaders must carefully select the teachers for teams because team composition affects the effectiveness of teams (Achinstein, 2002; Ball, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, et al., 2004). Laura's remarks allude to the importance of diversity and constructive conflict between team members and support the research literature. Change is possible when the way in which people interact generates conflict that is productive (Oakes, et al., 1993). When leaders select teachers that generate constructive conflict in this way, team teachers may question their practices, seek opportunities for change and growth, and learn to compromise (Achinstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005). However, successful teams require more than diversity.

Not all teachers benefit from their team experience, and it may be due to leadership decisions. As found in the research literature, teachers chosen to work together must be willing, committed, and compatible (Spies, 2001). According to Laura and Rachel, the 7th grade teams met these criteria. However, Rachel had quite a different experience in an 8th grade team. In her experience, the teachers were less committed, less likely to share, and lacked "dynamo" personalities. It is impossible to say with certainty if the mix of 8th grade teachers or Rachel's introduction to the team caused the team members to exhibit these behaviors, but the principal kept the "lineup" the same from year to year, according to Rachel. Nevertheless, by identifying team member composition as a primary factor in workgroup effectiveness and emphasizing that how well teams worked together was entirely dependent on the people who made up those teams–"It's not the team model. It is just who it is"–Rachel implied that school leaders are responsible if teams are not successful or if team members experience difficulty in their interpersonal relationships. The implication that team success depends upon how leaders design and structure teams is consistent with the research literature on teaming (Erb & Doda, 1989).

Team design seemed to be an evolving process at CJS, especially in the 8th grade. To be sure, the principal made changes from year to year as a means to improve team effectiveness. Teachers validated the need for "balanced" teams that led to "collaboration" and "collegiality." Yet, Kory questioned the changes despite his belief that the principal was trying to do what was in the best interest of students. He queried, "But…I don't know…. Why should there be so much fluctuation with [team structure] if it's truly balanced?"

Team consistency. Teachers who were part of teams did not always understand how their principal designed teams and why she made changes from year to year. Two teachers (Leslie and Kory) mentioned the principal's changes to teams at CJS. In her experience (in

another school), Leslie said that teams were often "broken up to kind of spread the wealth, to spread the strong teachers around." But Leslie noted this as a deficiency to leadership style because teams became weak when strong teachers were reassigned simply because the team was working well. She explained, "Team members will be taken to go to other teams, a different grade level, to build the other teams." She laughed and said, "Then, you have two teams that might not work, so I don't get it…. But I find that happens frequently." As a new teacher at CJS, she had not yet experienced first-hand a great deal of change in team assignments, but she said, "I know a lot of my team members have said they have worked on multiple teams while in the building."

With 10 years of experience at CJS, Kory mentioned a lack of consistency from year-to-year because of changes to the 8th grade teams. He said, "For the most part, we've had the same group [of teachers] here, and they don't keep the teams the same." He explained:

I've never been on a team that's been the same; we've always been switched. You know, like the science teacher on my team. I know I have six years that I'm on a team in the school and I've alternated: I've had Cathy, Mary, Cathy, Mary, Cathy, Mary.

Kory conceded that school leaders "try to balance personality and stuff like that," but he questioned this rationale:

When they're creating their teams, they place so much emphasis on that, but it's not necessary. I mean it's necessary, but I feel like we have combinations that work and so why not keep those combinations for more than one year? … I feel like I have a combination now that is great, and that I want to stay with that combination.

He called what he witnessed at CJS a "constant shuffle" that has hindered the teachers' personal and professional "rapport." Kory cited the impact on interdisciplinary planning that has become

difficult because he has been required to work with different teachers from year to year. He mentioned having to work on a joint project with a different language arts teacher from year to year, as well as having to work with a different science teacher. Kory explained the difficulty:

> We're constantly changing. We don't even have a constant variable where we can say, "Remember last year, when we did this because you were on my team…." It's hard going back to previous experiences or relating different situations to different things because we've all had different kids. We don't know who had who….

Although Kory fully supported the need to carefully design teams for success, he questioned the need to "constantly change" when the teachers remained the same. He thought it was a "weakness" in the team structure. He, too, was asked about his perception of the ideal teaming experience. Kory replied, "The ideal thing would be not to be broken up every year and have a team where we have at least the same members for two years in a row."

Consistent with the research literature, administrators must modify teams to try to improve team effectiveness. They must refine the team member selection process and consider differences in teachers' teaching philosophies and teaching styles (Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, et al., 2004; Pounder, 1998). However, the interview data showed that teachers sometimes question the wisdom of team design, especially when the team composition changes frequently. The teachers in the present study revealed that their principal has made changes they did not understand. While their principal struggled to design successful teams, she was creating an unnecessary "lack of consistency," according to Kory. He perceived this as a weakness in team design and, potentially, a weakness in leadership. This is problematic because research has shown that successful attempts at teaming must involve teachers who are invested in the reform

effort and feel they have some influence over the team process (K. M. Brown, et al., 2003; Burnaford, 1993). Accordingly, teachers must understand what they are expected to do and why.

Team exclusion. Issues of leadership with regard to teams also extend to those teachers who are potentially excluded from teaming because of what they teach. However, whereas district documents were silent on the roles of special education teachers and of non-core subject teachers of exploratory subject areas at CJS (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b, n.d.-c), every core team teacher who participated in this study (Kory, Laura, Nicole, Olivia, and Rachel) mentioned that these teachers of exploratory subject areas were effectively excluded from direct participation in their teams. Since the experience of teachers who are excluded from teaming may be very different from that of team teachers according to the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998), a discussion of both core and non-core teachers' perceptions follows.

Core teacher observations. Core team teachers were acutely conscious of the status accorded non-core subject teachers. Some were more vocal than others. Some minimized the effects of exclusion, while others expressed a greater appreciation for inequities that existed between the core teams and the non-core and special education teams. Nevertheless, they were all aware that non-core subject teachers did not participate in the grade level team structure at CJS.

Rachel observed about the specials, "Those are not teamed. Those specials kind of just have, you know… those teachers touch all of the students in terms of scheduling." Rachel said there was "sensitivity" in the role of exploratory subject areas, but said it was "a function of the schedule." Leslie elaborated on the practical scheduling difficulty inherent in the team model. Leslie thought it was "unrealistic to think that every … teacher who teaches a child is going to be

able during the school day to get together at some point," and questioned, "because where is that child then?"

Other teachers ascribed to a larger implication for the exclusion of teachers of non-core subjects. Kory, for one, recognized the inequity of non-core teachers who felt "not included." He probably demonstrated the greatest degree of "sensitivity" when contrasting core and non-core teachers' experiences. "When you're not on a team," he said, "You don't have that sense of camaraderie." "They all kind of created that group for them, but," he conceded, "it's still not a pure group." He explained, "It's kind of hard to sort of unite everyone who's so different." At the same time, however, he called the creation of a specials team a way to build "camaraderie." In a similar fashion, Leslie said, "They form their own team…so they have someone to talk to. They have something." Leslie said that the creation of a specials team helps to "validate the special teachers or the non-core teachers slightly." However, she differentiated the specials team from her core team: "They're not part of a team."

Laura also qualified the non-core teachers' status: "I think it's name… I don't know that it's really a team. I know they've tried to make it as much of a team as possible," but she laughed and continued, "but it's such a potpourri of different subjects." They do not have "interaction" with the core subject teams and Laura declared very emphatically, "There is *no* specials team meeting period" [emphasis in original]. As a result, despite efforts to make the core and non-core subject teams equitable, Laura recognized a stark difference: "I don't necessarily see them coming together and really melding as a team would. I really see my team melding. I see other teams melding together. And I don't see the specials team melding."

Non-core teacher observations. The core subject teachers explicitly distinguished their team role from that of their non-core teacher colleagues. However, the non-core teachers were

much less vocal in terms of distinguishing themselves from their core team teacher colleagues. Sophia, who was the specials team leader, explained the teaming structure for non-core teachers at CJS. She said, "So we're part of a," and then hesitated before continuing, "We're part of a special team." She explained, "We don't run in the same circle as far as a schedule goes… We're not part of 6th grade or 7th grade or an 8th grade team." Another teacher didn't seem to perceive much of a difference between herself and the core subject teachers. The physical education teacher Kerry nonchalantly said, "We're just not considered a core team."

However, Lana and Nora distinguished themselves somewhat from Sophia and Kerry. The decision to exclude them from the core teaming structure was much more than a "function of the schedule," as one team teacher (Rachel) said. Lana said that the team design "privileges certain subject areas and certain people." While the creation of special education and specials teams is an attempt to integrate all subject areas into the teaming model according to the research literature (Erb & Doda, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000), Lana and Nora had a different impression. Lana said, "We're in the same group because we're music, we're specials. That's the word I keep forgetting." She continued sardonically, "We're called 'specials.' That's our team. We're the specials team. We are thrown together." The decision to not include teachers of exploratory subject areas in the core subject teams left teachers like Nora saying, "Languages/specials generally aren't really included or viewed as important as other subjects."

The research literature shows that the degree to which teaming is inclusive of all discipline varies (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Smith, et al., 1998). At CJS, teachers of the core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies were assigned to interdisciplinary grade level teams; and smaller players were not (teachers of foreign languages,

related arts, physical education, special education, etc.). The way in which teaming was implemented at CJS was consistent with much of the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). When the core grade level teachers were afforded time to meet daily, their students attended other classes, such as physical education and health, or exploratory subject area classes, such as world language, music, and art. The literature on teaming documents this approach to scheduling in which non-core subject teachers engage in teaching the team's students to afford the team teachers the time to meet (Erb & Doda, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000).

At CJS, teachers of special education and of exploratory subject areas were part of their own special education and specials teams, but they were not included in the core grade level teams that were afforded time to meet daily. The creation of special teams for the non-core subject teachers is consistent with seminal literature on the middle school model, such as *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), that describes attempts to integrate all subject areas into the teaming model. But these Band-Aid approaches do not address the issue in either theory or practice. Non-team teachers are not part of the interdisciplinary grade level teams and, as such, often do not share common planning time, space, or any of the other myriad of benefits espoused by the teaming model to which core subject teachers automatically have access.

Team Leadership and Preparing Teams for Success

Once school leaders have committed to implementing teaming their middle schools and considered staffing of teams, they must consider team leadership and staff development opportunities for both members and leaders (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998). Therefore, the present study sought to also reveal teachers' perceptions of team leadership. All of the core team

teachers were asked about their impressions of team leadership. Four of the six core team teachers (Nicole, Olivia, Laura, and Kory) were serving as team leaders when this research was conducted at CJS. During the interviews, they talked about the role of the school's leaders with regard to team leader selection; how they made sense of their roles and responsibilities as team leaders; and preparation for undertaking the role as their teams' leaders.

With each of the 6 grade level teams comprised of a language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies teacher, there were 6 team leaders at CJS (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-c). The team leader orchestrated daily team meetings and the coordination of tests and other activities, according to district documents (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b).

The teachers who were team leaders were asked if it was a position for which they volunteered. Kory, Laura, and Olivia said that the principal contacted teachers and selected team leaders either personally or by e-mail. Kory said that although teachers must technically "apply" for the position, the principal generally had a "perception of who she wants" and made the selection. Kory explained the process: "You apply, but she kind of approaches people…and people have been approached…." In Olivia's words, "You put in for it," but Nicole said, "No, they ask you, or you ask them," as if it were the same thing.

Teachers who served as team leaders received a stipend of about $2,000 as an "incentive" because "it's often a position that people don't want," according to Kory. Rachel's response substantiated Kory's observations. When she was asked if she had ever been a team leader, she revealed that "she [the principal] approached me…, and I said, 'No.'" She explained that she "wouldn't feel good about [her] ability to do a good job."

Laura also described the difficult team leader selection process and its consequences for those who eventually became team leaders. "The people who are team leaders tend to be team

leaders for a while," and she indicated that it was because "most people don't want to take on the responsibility." According to Laura, teachers have been reluctant to accept the position in other grade levels. One of the 8th grade team leaders was planning to take a leave of absence for the following year, and she described her 8th grade teacher colleagues' reluctance to accept the position: "Some of the 8th grade teachers have been team leaders in the past but don't want to do it again. So I don't know if anyone's going to step forward and say, 'Hey, I'll do it!'" Laura also said that two 6th grade teachers co-led their team in the past because "neither one of them had enough time to 100 percent devote to the position, so they kind of split the job." The prevailing perception amongst teachers was, in the words of Laura, "Wow, you do so much work as a team leader." She agreed with her colleagues: "It's stressful… You have to be cut from a particular cloth."

Although teaming is essentially a collegial endeavor, school leaders must make decisions regarding team leadership because the establishment of roles within teams is critical to team success according to the research literature (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001). Team leaders play an important role as facilitators, team representatives, and liaisons between the team members, other teachers, administrators, and parents (Erb & Doda, 1989). At CJS, it was the principal who made decisions regarding team leadership. However, leadership reluctance is a complex problem for school leaders for several reasons. First, when teaming is implemented, teachers must be willing and committed, according to Spies (2001). At CJS, it seemed that teachers did not volunteer to serve as team leader, despite monetary compensation. The principal had to recruit and persuade some individuals to fulfill the role, according to the interview data. Team leaders remained in the position "for a while," according to Laura, but it was unclear if they were committed to their role within the team model. The principal could

continually recruit them, or, as Laura's observations imply, team leaders may feel trapped once they take on the role because of others' reluctance or uncompromising refusal to lead.

Second, teachers must be capable (Spies, 2001). While a comprehensive inquiry into the pre- or in-service preparation of all of CJS teachers is beyond the scope of this study, the research literature shows that most teachers in middle schools have not received special preparation for middle school teaching (Bryer & Main, 2005; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury & Vars, 2003; Mertens, et al., 2002; Oakes, et al., 1993). Of the team teachers who participated in this study, only Leslie revealed specific middle level preparation and certification, and she was in her first year in the district and the most junior of the participants. Of those serving as team leaders, two (Olivia and Nicole) trained as elementary teachers and taught at the elementary level before coming to CJS. Neither Kory nor Laura mentioned specific middle level certification. Although Kaitlyn was not part of the core subject teams, she said that she had "no real middle school experience other than…" and her voice trailed off. Olivia quickly completed her sentence: "Other than you went to middle school."

In the current study, teachers who were reluctant to accept or refused the position of team leader may have felt they were not adequately prepared to do so, as seen in Rachel's decision to decline the principal's offer when she changed grade levels. As a team leader, Kory questioned, "What is my role as team leader?" He expressed that it has been "frustrating" because he felt "like there's not one set expectation."

None of the teachers who were serving as team leaders mentioned specific training programs for them as leaders, as suggested by the research literature (Kain, 1997b; Merenbloom & National Middle School Association, 1986; Porod, 1993; Whitford & Kyle, 1984). Kory said that the professional development opportunities to which they were given access had little to do

with leadership. Instead, they attended workshops on various topics and were expected to

disseminate the information to their team members. Although not a team leader, Leslie had

spoken about opportunities for professional growth and noted that in her previous school district,

there had been a "lot of training opportunities for how to work as a team," but she said, "Uhm,

here, it's very, uhm, loosely structured."

Kory recounted a conversation that he had with the principal about the team leadership

selection process. He said:

> Two years ago, someone stepped down…. People have been approached, and they're
>
> like, "No, I don't want it," and there's really only four possible people. You have limited
>
> choices. And when this one vacancy opened, I went down and I said, "Well, what about
>
> this person?" because she was like, "What am I gonna do, I don't have another," and it
>
> was like, you know, almost a struggle: "Oh, I don't know…." And I'm like, "She'll be
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> fine. Give it to her." … We have some people who are, I think, very "Type A"
>
> organized and will write the best team leader agendas you can ever possibly imagine, and
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> I'm not that person, and I'm very open about it. I'll tell her, "I'm not that person, and if
>
> that's what you want, send me packing," and she's like, "No, no, no, be quiet. Stay." I
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> think that if she feels you're good with parents, and I think she thinks that's the most
>
> important thing, and again I'm speculating, but I think that's something she holds high
>
> value to, and she's not worried about minutes and things like that. Whereas … a different
>
> leader might have a different perception.

Kory's remarks demonstrate the complexity of team leader selection. Vacancies occur because

teachers "step down." Individuals may decide that they do not want the added responsibilities of

team leadership. When vacancies occurred, the principal struggled to fill the position, possibly

because she needed to consider the implications of her choice, which is consistent with the literature. Teachers' areas of expertise, need, and interest must be considered when restructuring occurs in schools (Tonso, et al., 2006). School leaders must carefully consider whether the individuals they tap for the position are willing and capable. Once teachers (like Kory) have been persuaded to serve as team leader, they may coerce them to remain in that position indefinitely, which substantiates Laura's belief that individuals are team leaders "for a while."

Comprehensive middle school reform shows that professional development opportunities should be organized for teachers who work in teams (Doda, 2009). The research literature contends that most educational leaders often take for granted that all middle school teachers are committed to and, more importantly, prepared to be part of team reform efforts (Doda & George, 1999).

Leadership Philosophy and the Goals of Teaming

Olivia and Nicole, who had taught at the elementary level in Centerville before coming to CJS six years ago, referred to the influence of school leadership. They were speaking about the background of the middle school reform in Centerville and the implementation of teaming that predated the 5th grade shift from the elementary to the middle level. CJS was called "the black hole of Centerville," according to Olivia. "They were really looking for something to turn the school around," she said. When the team structure was first implemented at the school, the principal at the time "turned the school around." Nicole credited the improvement to the principal "and the teaming… It was a combination. A new principal…an unbelievable person." Olivia quickly continued, "With a different philosophy." For these teachers, the role of leadership was critical to restructuring efforts that included the implementation of teaming and the change in grade span in the schools. Findings like these show that teaming is an

administratively mutable program (Haller & Kleine, 2001), at least in the eyes of the teacher participants in this current study.

Several of the core and non-core teachers talked about their current principal's approach to teaming at CJS. According to Kory, the principal was a supporter of teaming. She has "always fought for teaming," he said. However, "by showing the merit of teaming," he thought she fought for teaming to "fight for jobs through the whole spending cuts and, you know, things like that." He was not alone. Other teachers implied that the principal was a supporter of teaming for the purpose of maintaining teaching positions at CJS. Kaitlyn said:

> I think our principal has fought hard to keep it because it's expensive and I think they want to get rid of it because you need to have that common planning time, and you need to have, you know, a team, a period free for parent-teacher conferences. So she has fought hard to keep teams because they want to get rid of it because they can get rid of teachers then.

Olivia noted a potential outcome of the teaming structure's elimination: "They could have teachers teaching more periods per day instead of having the meetings." She continued:

> But on the other hand, because she fights so hard for us, we had best have those agendas…. and we had better have our meetings, and when she, you know, if anybody comes to visit, the higher up administrators, we had best be having our meetings when we're supposed to have our meetings.

Perceptions of the purposes of teaming amongst teachers have become blurred with the purposes in the research literature. According to the literature, teaming improves teacher cooperation and collegiality, increases professional growth, and improves teacher morale (Clark & Clark, 1993; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee &

Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Walsh & Shay, 1993). According to the interview data, some teachers perceived that teaming existed to preserve jobs, counter spending cuts, and maintain an allure for central school administrators. Their perception of the purpose of teaming runs counter to the literature.

Team Design and Special Education

Interview data showed that the special education students in each grade level were assigned to one of the grade level's two teams. According to Kory, "One team always has all the special ed. students, and one team doesn't have any of the special ed. students." This was problematic at CJS, and, "It comes up every year," he said. "They try to rotate so that all of the teachers have special ed. at some point, but teaming has made it difficult in the resource rooms." He explained that students who are in resource room settings did not always have the same four core language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies teachers, as regular education students do. Teachers who are on the team with special education students have "a lot of paperwork in that area, and that's a whole other issue," Kory said.

Student effects. Kaitlyn, who was a special education teacher, explained how she understood the decision to include special education students on only one team. "It would be easier to manage the students and it would be easier to provide the services on one team, especially with limited teachers," she said. However, she identified inherent problems in this model whereby special education students are isolated on just one of the two grade level teams. By isolating these students on one team, they were easily identified as special education students. She commented, "I like how you're not supposed to be able to identify the classified kids and they travel around in a pack for years." She laughed and said, "There they are…." Laura confirmed this conspicuous disadvantage for students. At CJS, there were approximately 180

students per grade level, with about 90 per team. According to Laura, approximately 30 students or one-third of any given team were classified as special education students.

Nicole mentioned that it was as unfair to the non-special education team as it was to the special education team. She mentioned her experience with her daughter who did not qualify for special education services. She was relieved when she found out that her daughter was part of classes with special education students. She said that her daughter, as well as other students, benefitted from a more heterogeneous arrangement: "I think it's a great experience for the kids to be in the same class." She mentioned the benefit of a second teacher in the classroom: "I knew there was somebody else who was going to help her."

However, Kaitlyn said it would be better to "spread it across two teams…because you wouldn't be able to track the kids, the kids wouldn't be easily identified." But the way in which CJS was structured has prevented this. She said, "It creates so many problems, [and there is] not enough personnel…. And they don't want to hire anyone else." Olivia called it a "numbers and financial thing."

The teams not assigned special education students had the "504 kids," according to Olivia. Olivia was referring to students who are protected by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a federal statute that protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability in any institution that accepts financial assistance from any federal department or agency ("Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973," 1973).[4] Olivia also said, "We have, basically, if there are ESL [English as a second language] kids, we have the ESL kids. We have

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[4] As applied to school districts, the Section 504 regulations require that a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) be provided to each qualified student with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under Section 504, FAPE consists of the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met.

all, you know, the other students…and I don't have a second person in the room." As a result, it was "easier to allow children to fall through the cracks." She explained:

> It's just the four of us trying to make sure we're catching everybody. And then, we, on our own, need to try to deal with guidance and child study team if we see issues. And sometimes I don't think we're met with, uhm, as much graciousness as perhaps we would be… from the child study team.

With regard to student assignment to teams, the design of teams at CJS is neither supported by the research literature nor consistent with the intent of teaming at its outset in Centerville. One of the primary tenets of the middle school model is a focus on the whole child and on the academic, social, and emotional development of *all* students (Jackson & Davis, 2000). A former assistant superintendent in Centerville lauded middle school teaming because it would establish a collaborative learning culture that would be responsive to the needs of all students, from special education to advanced students ("New Jr. School model will phase in this fall," 2002). She said that the implementation of teaming at CJS would not lead to a "tracked school," in which students would be segregated by ability level ("Parents hear of big changes for Jr. School," 2002, ¶ 21). In the present study, Nicole believed that the integration of students of all ability levels was helpful and, in fact, advantageous to the academic progress and emotional growth of all students. However, middle school restructuring has resulted in the isolation of an entire class of students (i.e., special education) and the segregation of others (i.e. ESL students and students protected by Section 504). At CJS, students were, in effect, segregated by ability level. The interview data in this study have been clear in that school leaders were responsible for team design, from teachers' instructional and team assignments to the manner in which students were assigned to teams.

Teacher effects. This decision design impacts teachers, as well. Kaitlyn said that it has helped the special education teachers "find an identity… Otherwise you just sort of become a department unto your own and no one really knows what you do." She felt that the special education established relationships with the core subject teachers with whom they work in ICR settings. She gave an example:

> I do back to school night with Nicole, and we show them the class, and we do the presentation together, and our names are on the door now, so I think it has helped to give the special ed. department a better place in the building.

On the downside, according to Kaitlyn, there are some regular education teachers who are less than welcoming with regard to special education teachers and students. "Some people don't want to do the special ed. team," she said, "And there's nothing worse than being in a place where, you know, they don't want the kids and they don't want you." Nicole continued and said, "And then you're just relegated to walk around the room." Kaitlyn laughed and said, "I'll punch the papers, holes in the papers. 'You need that stapled?'"

The structure bred inequities for other teachers, as well. Laura and Rachel were on the same 7th grade team that was not assigned special education students. Laura noted that because the way in which her team was designed without special education students, she and her colleagues never have an opportunity to work with special education teachers either. This was Rachel's complaint too: "I'm not on the inclusion team." She had been told that the special education students would "rotate, if not every year, every couple of years." However, she has never taught special education students on her team. She theorized why those students were never assigned to her team: "I think the reason why–unofficially–is that our team leader–because, like I said, she's very black and white–I think that the concern is that she would be less

flexible, and so they haven't given us special ed. for that reason." This was an inequitable practice, according to Rachel, for more than one reason. First, she held that her colleague in language arts on the other team might "welcome a break from it." Second, she said she would welcome the opportunity to teach special education students because "it would make me a better teacher to have that experience. Third, she indicated that they've changed the special education responsibilities in both the 6th and 8th grades, but not in the 7th grade.

From an organizational perspective, teaming at CJS has been implemented at CJS in a way that was "easy to manage" both students and teachers. However, the implementation and management of middle school features is insufficient to bring about the desired results of the middle school model, according to the research literature (Cuban, 1992; Midgley & Urdan, 1992; Williamson & Johnston, 1999). Nicole, Kaitlyn, and Olivia referred to the financial implications of teaming and the assignment of both teachers and students. According to their remarks, teachers and students were assigned in a way that was meant to be cost-effective, which is not supported by the research literature. Felner and colleagues (1997) made a strong case against attempting middle level restructuring "on the cheap" (p. 548). Teaming seemed to be maintained for purposes other than which it was intended, which is problematic according to the literature (Backes, et al., 1999). This is not to say that teams did not have their place at CJS. But when the implementation of middle school features, such as interdisciplinary teaming, becomes the goal instead of a means of restructuring to support middle level goals; when school leaders implement middle school features but overlook the needs of students and teachers; and when high team functioning is expected without supportive administrative practices, middle schools are not functioning as intended and, indeed, do not live up to the promises of the "rhetoric" (Clark & Clark, 1993, p. 455).

Many factors may be at play when teams are not functioning as originally intended and not realizing the success as envisioned by middle school proponents. Because teamwork is not always as successful as it could be, the last two sections of this chapter include a discussion of workgroup effectiveness and of the collegiality and conflict experienced by this study's teacher participants.

Workgroup Effectiveness

When teams of people work together, there are criteria by which their teamwork can be evaluated to establish their effectiveness. Team effectiveness is always related to goal attainment in the organizational sciences according to the literature (Abelson & Woodman, 1983; Bolman & Deal, 2008). However, there are other criteria that determine if teams are effective. Teams are effective if they meet or exceed organizational standards for quality; satisfy more than frustrate members' personal needs; and increase or at least maintain their ability to work collaboratively on future tasks (Abelson & Woodman, 1983). To this end, research suggests that it is important that teachers develop the interpersonal skills that are necessary to work in teams (Pounder, 1999). Several of the teachers who participated in this study described their impressions of how well they worked (or did not work) together in teams and why (or why not).

Although mentioned by many of the core teachers (Kory, Nicole, and Olivia), there was one teacher (Rachel) who continually said that how well teams worked together was entirely dependent on the people who made up those teams. In fact, Rachel said on at least four separate occasions during the course of her interview that her experience on teams, whether positive or negative, was not a "function of the team model." Instead, she identified "who's in the job" and the "make-up of the personalities" that primarily determined how well the team members worked together. When talking about how well team members collaborated, Rachel was careful to not judge her colleagues, saying teachers had "different approaches and different styles." Rachel

attributed her positive experience in the 7th grade team to high levels of collaboration, enthusiasm, sharing, interdependence, and openness amongst the 7th grade team members. When she had a negative experience in the 8th grade team, she attributed it to the teachers' personalities and a deficiency in interdependence and commitment and in collaboration and sharing. Rachel theorized that differences between the teams could be the result of the grade level and differences in the team's goals and their approach to achieving those goals. "They're all very serious in terms of the team," she said. She sensed that they were "done dressing up…we're getting you ready for college."

By recognizing that teams could have different goals, Rachel did not identify goal attainment (Abelson & Woodman, 1983; Bolman & Deal, 2008) as either the basis of her experience or the criterion by which her teams should be judged effective or ineffective. She never questioned whether they met their goals, the school's goals, or the students' needs. Instead she questioned how well individuals worked together and why, which supports research on the obstacles to achieving interpersonal processes (Crow & Pounder, 2000; Pounder, 1999).

Some participants (Kory, Olivia, and Nicole) said that teachers were not always committed to participation in the team. Kory said, "Some might enjoy being in a bubble." During the group interview, Olivia said, "Teams are great if…everyone pulls their own weight." She recounted the following experience:

> I can't imagine what it would be like if there were someone that was not doing what they should be doing or, or, not being part, well, not being part of the team. It would make it more difficult. I did have a year when the language arts teacher, she was, she was really late to meetings and, uhm, brought her own work to meetings kind of thing. So, I guess I

have experienced that. You need to have people that want to be there, are willing to be

there, and are, have bought into it. They want to do the best they can do.

Later in the group interview, Nicole echoed a similar sentiment: "I could see it [teaming] go

wrong if there are people on the team who don't buy into it…."

Remarks like these from Kory, Olivia, and Nicole support the literature on the effects of

team member commitment and participation on team efforts (Clark & Clark, 1993; Crow &

Pounder, 2000; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Oakes, et al., 1993). This research confirms that

reluctance to commitment can be problematic, especially at the onset of teaming (Erb & Doda,

1989). However, the present study did not provide any data on those specific individuals who

were not committed to teaming and therefore could not substantiate that the intensity of teacher

commitment increased as team members worked together (Burnaford, 1993). Since there were

no data on these uncommitted individuals' pre-service preparation for working in teams, this

study also did not confirm any research on the effects of pre-service preparation on commitment

to teaming (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Main & Bryer, 2005; Main, et al., 2004; Mertens, et al.,

2002; Murata, 2002).

The other factor that contributed to issues in teamwork resulted from a lack of

collaboration and sharing amongst team members. Rachel referred to her language arts'

colleagues when she spoke positively about the teaming experience. When Rachel was in the 7th

grade team, she had a "really collaborative approach" with her cohort. She said, "We pretty

much do everything. We're joined at the hip. We do all of our planning together. We check in

with each other during the middle of the day." Rachel felt energized to work at home on the

weekends and over vacations because she had a colleague with whom to work closely: "We meet

over Christmas break…we're e-mailing all weekend long plans back and forth and ideas back

and forth." When asked if she thought this was the direct result of being on a team, Rachel

sighed and said, "It happens either way." In fact, Rachel partially attributed this collaborative

work to the subject matter she taught and specifically contrasted language arts teachers'

collaboration to that of math teachers: "They [math teachers], you know, they've got really easy

tests that they can grade, and they're done, and there's just not as much…."

When Rachel was in the 8th grade team, her experience was different. She indicated that

she felt that there wasn't a "tremendous amount of sharing." She mentioned that her language

arts counterpart on the other team had used a "secret PowerPoint." She said, "There are a lot of

teachers that are very protective… 'This is my lesson plan and I'm going to make sure I don't

even save it to the network 'cause I like to have it private on my computer.'" Other teachers,

such as Nicole and Kaitlyn, also recognized sharing as an issue. While Kaitlyn was not formally

part of the 6th grade team because she was a special education teacher, she worked all day with

6th grade teachers. She said, "If you're not willing to share your ideas and your lesson plans and

all, people get territorial, so I could see where it could go wrong." She also mentioned the effect

on the special education teachers. She said:

> There's [sic] all kinds of problems within the special ed. department because there are
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> teams that work well together and there are teams that don't work at all. And there are
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> people who don't want certain people in their room and people who don't do what they
>
> should do, and I wouldn't want them in my room.

Rachel also mentioned a disparity in teacher input when she was in the 8th grade. When

the 8th grade teachers were asked for ideas for parent newsletters, "It's always the same people

responding," she said. The imbalance in teacher involvement is linked to the notion of teacher

commitment. Not all teams and not all team members function in the same way. Rachel

recognized that. She admitted, "There are teachers that are that way." She said, "I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that at all." Recognizing the inherent difference in individuals, she explained, "That's not necessarily the team. It could be the people."

This type of uneven participation amongst team members is known to be problematic (Burnaford, 1993; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Erb & Doda, 1989; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Oakes, et al., 1993). Crow and Pounder (2000) explain that team member participation is partially influenced by whether teachers are committed to teaming (previously discussed). Teachers who are knowledgeable about and committed to the middle level concept contribute to effective middle school teaming (Clark & Clark, 1993; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Oakes, et al., 1993). However, the present study falls short of explaining specific core teachers' lack of commitment and the imbalance in team member participation because none of the core teachers who were interviewed identified themselves as uncommitted or unwilling to commit to equal participation.

In addition to commitment and willingness to participate, other research into teaming showed that teachers must also be collegial and compatible (Spies, 2001). While a formal discussion of collegiality is reserved for the next section, it is appropriate to discuss how relationships between teachers affect group effectiveness. At CJS, teachers generally spoke very positively about their relationships with their colleagues. Nicole said, "We like each other," and Leslie said, "Everyone seems to get along." Yet, Olivia specified that "teams were great if you get along." Purposes of teaming include emotional support (Erb, 1987) and a reduction of feelings of isolation for teachers (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Mills, et al., 1992). However, of concern is what happens when teachers don't get along. While a discussion for the potential for conflict is also reserved for the next section, it should be noted

here that the quality and type (professional and/or personal) of relationships between teachers is not indicative of team effectiveness (de Lima, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001).

Sometimes teams are more effective if team members do not "get along." According to Laura, the ideal teaming experience included "a group of individuals that aren't necessarily like-minded." She referred to a type of professional collegiality in which teachers feel comfortable to "present their point validly" even if they disagreed. She saw this type of collegiality as a benefit of teamwork. For her, it was a process through which teams must work to "get to the other side…to benefit everybody." Rachel also experienced diverse points of view when she worked with the 8th grade teachers. When she tried to organize an interdisciplinary unit on the Holocaust with the social studies teacher, she said got "backlash" from the other teachers. Rachel was unsure if it the team was intentionally designed by the principal to function in this way, and she conceded that "it [the personality mix] might work better that way…maybe that is why [the principal] keeps the lineup the same for the 8th grade."

The types of relationships between Laura and her 7th grade teammates and between Rachel and her 8th grade teammates are explained by the literature on group effectiveness. Laura made "getting along" a secondary priority. Her team members were comfortable to confront each other, thereby limiting what Hargreaves (2001) calls "comfortable collaboration" (p. 505). Research might say that these individuals were less interested in developing friendships and more interested in taking a critical perspective of their colleagues and of what goes on in the school to promote change and dynamic decision-making (de Lima, 2001).

Team Teachers' Responsibilities

The effectiveness of teams is often hampered by other factors. Two of the core team teachers who participated in this study (Laura and Kory) mentioned taking on additional responsibilities as team leaders. Laura said it was "stressful" and talked about all the "clerical

stuff for the team in organizing the meetings." She described what she thought it was like before she became a team leader:

> I would never want to be a team leader. I can't believe how much time they're devoting to this. I can't believe how much prep time they're losing for parent calls or sending out e-mails to parents, setting up meetings with parents to try and get them in to discuss their child.

She also said that she found daily team meetings to be a "time constraint at times" because of all the other responsibilities that she and her team members had. Laura said she found herself inundated by some of these leadership responsibilities before she even officially took on the team leader position three years ago because she had a team leader "who was really awesome at delegating responsibility." Laura's description of team leader responsibilities matched that of others who were also team leaders (Kory, Olivia, and Nicole) who also talked about the same duties.

Participants mentioned other responsibilities that were assigned by school administrators. Kory added that team members would frequently approach him with their "frustrations." Seeking direction, he said he asked the principal, "What do you want me to do? Like, what is my expectation here?" He said that he left those meetings with the sense that she was "looking for the leader of the team to be the cheerleader." The special education team leader (Kaitlyn) also said:

> She [the principal] relies on the team leaders to do things that she wants everyone to do but she sort of makes you guys the example…like workshops. She wanted people to do these workshops, so she would target a team leader: "Oh, you'll do a workshop, right?" … I think she uses you that way.

The teachers also spoke of other tasks undertaken during team time, including planning and organization of field trips, photocopying, and grading. Kory observed, "Everyone gets absorbed in their bubbles and grades and copies and their own stuff." For this reason, he said he tried to exhibit flexibility when scheduling team meetings by meeting as a full team for half of the allotted time. He said, "It gives people the sense that there's some break in the afternoon." Laura made a similar observation. When she was asked what she disliked about teaming, she said, "It definitely becomes challenging because, as you know, as teachers, we have a ridiculous amount of responsibilities, and sometimes that team time maybe could be devoted to something else." She has also occasionally encountered resistance to meeting, and she said she has handled it by conceding some of the meeting time: "Bring grading with you. If we finish early, you can work on grading. Or I will get you out as soon as possible."

Olivia and Nicole briefly talked about their experience with the child study team and what they must do with regard to special education students on their team. Olivia said, "Maybe we need to invite the child study team people into whole grade meetings." Nicole responded, "We do try to invite them more. We had trouble with a girl today and I said, 'Let's call her down.' It didn't work." Nicole laughed and said, "She was like a deer in headlights, and I'm like, 'This is your job,' so I ended up doing it."

While some of these additional responsibilities could be attributed to the role of team leader, teachers were describing functions that could be accomplished by administration, guidance, or other staff members, thereby supporting research on how teams often stray from their intended purposes of improving student outcomes through professional growth and dialogue (Cohen, 1981; Kruse & Louis, 1997). Team management and contact with parents often becomes the primary focus of team members, as with the team leaders at CJS. Team time

often becomes mismanaged and used for a variety of purposes other than those for which it is intended. Finally, team time is often devoted to dealing with issues because other staff members remain aloof or simply delegate their responsibilities to others.

As previously mentioned, teams are a structural change made to provide opportunities for professional growth and support (Clark & Clark, 1993; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004). However, the common planning and preparation time afforded by middle school teaming often do not lead to professional observation and growth by colleagues (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Only one teacher mentioned the use of team time used to observe colleagues to improve teacher practice. However, it was when Rachel was new to the district in her previous role as an academic support teacher and not part of the core grade level team structure. She said:

> I was able to go in and observe…if there was a math lesson I wanted to see, if I wanted to see how the math teacher was teaching it so I'm sure I'm using the same terminology and the same approach as she was. So there is opportunity for new teachers to go in and observe.

She then shifted her focus to how these opportunities become rare for new teachers:

> One of the difficulties is once you're on the job, I think you kind of hit the job running so your ability to take time out and observe for large chunks of time isn't probably what a new teacher might want, so, you know, you might get a day of, or scattered through a couple of weeks the equivalent of a day, to go observe.

Professional development becomes shortchanged for the daily responsibilities held by individual teachers and by the teams. These observations and the lack of specific references to the use of common team time for professional growth demonstrate that the real professional

goals of teaming are often minimized as teachers attend to more pressing tasks or tasks that can be accomplished individually (Kruse & Louis, 1997).

Non-core Teachers

Because the non-core and special education teachers were effectively excluded from the grade level teams at CJS, interview data from these teachers did not speak directly to any specific issues of workgroup effectiveness. While they were part of their own specials and special education teams, they only rarely met together and therefore could not validly speak to how teams work together. For example, Nora said she could not imagine what the experience would be like to work with colleagues as the core team teachers did because she has never had the opportunity to "collaborate as a whole." Teachers who do not work together do not experience the stages of development that teams go through nor do they experience the dynamics of group process in teams that are considered important by Abelson and Woodman (1983). There is no need for non-core teachers who do not regularly meet together to decide on group goals and establish roles and relationships (Abelson & Woodman, 1983).

Whereas uneven participation of team members is often problematic within teams (Burnaford, 1993; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Erb & Doda, 1989; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Oakes, et al., 1993), the only element of uneven participation observed amongst the non-core teachers was the role of team leader held by Sophia on the specials team and Kaitlyn on the special education team. Finally, although the relationships teachers have with one another often affect levels of group effectiveness (de Lima, 2001; Erb & Doda, 1989; Hargreaves, 2001), the relationships between non-core teachers were limited. When they talked about their interactions with one another, three of the five non-core teachers (Kaitlyn, Kerry, and Lana) described the contact they had at faculty meetings organized by the principal. They did not talk at any length about what occurred during their team meetings held either during lunch or after school.

At CJS, the non-core teachers did not reveal any issues of workgroup effectiveness amongst themselves. However, one non-core teacher (Sophia) did allude to issues of commitment and participation while describing her perceptions of how well teachers in general worked together. Like Rachel, who had said that teamwork was dependent on the people working in those teams, Sophia said that collaboration amongst teachers was dependent on the teachers working together. When she was asked if she thought that participation in a grade level team would provide an automatic opportunity for collaboration, Sophia said, "No, I think it always depends on the people." Her perspective showed that the issue of teamwork is larger than the issue of middle school teaming.

How well teams work together is often dependent more generally on how well people work together (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Group work amongst teachers is an issue because collaboration between individuals requires complicated relationships that are difficult to manage (Mintzberg, et al., 1996). Collegial relationships between teachers do not always translate into productive collaboration (de Lima, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). And group work and collaboration of any sort often give rise to conflict. The next section will address issues of collegiality and conflict that are inherent in collaboration between individuals.

Collegiality and Conflict

Most of the teachers who participated in this study spoke positively about the teaming model and the collegiality they experienced with their colleagues. Team teachers, especially, were outspoken about the group dynamics that resulted in a positive workplace experience and in collaboration that improved their practice. Referring to her team, Nicole said, "We like each other. We get along." Other teachers referred to "collegial" or "professional" relationships with their team colleagues. Kory said that the team "really does build a strong sense of cohesiveness." Speaking about the holiday activities that her team organized, Leslie said, "It's

things like that that kind of build morale and teamwork." Non-core teachers in the specials team mentioned a positive workplace experience as well. For example, the special education teacher Kaitlyn said, "The team model has helped me as a special ed. teacher because I wouldn't have an identity other than a special ed. teacher…. So I think it has helped the special ed. department find an identity." The specials team leader Sophia also said she felt she generally had good relationships with the other teams and their leaders.

Core Team Teachers

There seemed to be high levels of collegiality within the teams. However, some core team teachers mentioned either the existence of or the potential for conflict within teams. Leslie, who was extremely supportive of the collegiality fostered by teaming, mentioned that conflict within a team might arise "if there's a member of the team that doesn't fit in or that doesn't have the same beliefs or educational philosophy or styles as the other teachers." Fortunately, she did not report that experience at CJS but said that she had been on teams in the past "where there's the one team member who is constantly negative or is constantly going against the group, and it makes things very difficult." She noted that conflict could be problematic for teamwork in these instances because "it causes a lot of tension and it can add more stress to an already stressful job."

A number of reasons have been given for conflict within teams that has the potential to derail collegial team relationships. Diversity in teams may make it difficult for their members to agree on instructional strategies and make curricular decisions, as Leslie noted regarding educational philosophies. Teachers frequently disagree about instructional content and the instructional strategies that are most effective in delivering that content (Wasley, 1991). Different personalities, teaching styles, and instructional philosophies often make it difficult for teachers to work together (Main & Bryer, 2005).

Leslie suggested the importance of teacher input when school leaders design teams. She suggested that school administrators provide "some sort of survey" when developing the teams. However, whether teacher preference in their team placement makes a difference is questionable, as well. Rachel's experience with two different grade level teams provided an example. She had spent several years teaching in the 7th grade and reported a strong sense of collegiality there. Regarding her 7th grade team experience, she said, "Because of the team and the make-up of the personalities that I'm with, it really works well…." For the 2010-2011 school year, however, she transferred to teaching 8th grade language arts. As a parent whose daughter had just completed 8th grade, she had felt "completely underwhelmed" by her daughter's experience in the 8th grade, especially in the language arts program. She requested permission from the principal to make some suggestions regarding new literature for the 8th grade program, and Rachel was moved to the 8th grade for the 2011-2012 school year. She anticipated the same type of collegial relationships and positive personalities in the 8th grade team that she had experienced in the 7th grade team. She found that not all teams work as well together.

Rachel said that the 8th grade "persona" was different. There were not a lot of "dynamo personalities." She recounted the difference between the grade levels teams:

They're all very serious in terms of the team, which is probably good 'cause they [the 8th grade students] all go to the high school…but in 6th and 7th grade, we, as teachers, we dress up…it's just very energetic…. Like one of our teachers was kicking off the sci-fi unit, and I walked past her room, and she was in full princess Leah outfit, the buns and all…. And we tend to all approach things that way, but once you get to the 8th grade, that kind of all stops. And I think that [the principal] was kind of hoping that if I went up there, that would change some of that, but it didn't work.

Rachel also reported some conflict with her language arts counterpart on the other 8th grade team when she taught 8th grade. She said:

> They're all really great teachers, but my partner would have this secret PowerPoint that she didn't tell me about it. And we had planned together all week, and I was like, "What is that all about?" It was weird. It was a weird dynamic.

Rachel talked more generally about the lack of collaboration as well. She said, "Our 8th grade teachers operate in that space of that they don't like to share so much, they don't really collaborate a lot…my perception is that there's not a tremendous amount of sharing." Rachel also talked about difficulties organizing a special assembly for the 8th grade students who were studying the Holocaust in both language arts and social studies. She encountered resistance from the math teachers and said, "I feel like I'm hitting a brick wall here." She felt that this type of conflict inhibited productive collaboration within her team, and Rachel requested a transfer back to the 7th grade after just one year in 8th grade.

Conflict within grade level teams was not the only type of conflict that teachers talked about. While he described a general collegiality among the teaching staff, Kory implied that there had been conflict between the grade level teams themselves. He sensed that there was sometimes a lack of respect between the teams. He said:

> I've always felt that we were kind of, and there's been a common feeling up here, and it hasn't continued as much since I've spoke [sic] up, but we were kind of pooh-poohed against the 6th grade when you have the song and the dance and the pony show every single day.

He felt the need to differentiate the purpose of the teams, saying that there is a difference between 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students: "Each grade is very different developmentally." And yet,

at times, there was the perception that there was one "preferred method" for the teams and one "preferred pedagogy for the middle school model and what we should embody our lessons to be…." He called it "almost some sort of negative resentment, not towards those teachers down there, but the perception of what teams should be." Kory was not alone. Another team teacher who had been at the school for the duration of teaming at CJS said that there had been some rivalry between the teams. When Kaitlyn mentioned team tee shirts, Olivia quickly replied, "But we really don't do much to pit team against team. When we were first there, we did, and they thought that wasn't the greatest."

Perceptions like these confirm that relationships for teachers with the larger faculty become challenging when teachers cite teams as their primary form of identification within a school (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Some teams begin to stand out, receive more attention, or seemingly become preferred for how they do things. Conflict between teams may erupt and feelings of resentment arise (Ehman, 1995). Kory sensed this resentment. He also felt that the teams had to be different in order to meet the needs of three different grade levels of students, saying, "Developmentally, middle schools are just very different grade to grade." Such a differentiation of team purpose becomes an articulation issue between the grade levels, which is supported by research (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Wasley, 1991).

Whether the collegiality about which these teachers spoke is transformative and makes a difference in the school community should be explored. Previous research into teachers' professional relations cautions that not all teamwork and collegiality leads to professional growth and improvement in individual and organizational performance (Little, 1990). The teachers in this study may primarily be speaking about collegiality that consists of emotional and moral support. Comments like "We have a small group and everyone seems to get along" (math

teacher Leslie) and "We get along" (language arts teacher Nicole) imply that teachers may be experiencing collegiality as it refers to what Little (1990, p. 513) calls the "ordinary reality" of people working closely together. This kind of collegiality is conservative and may lack the synergy that teamwork is expected to foster (Achinstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005). Few of the teachers reported any type of conflict and most perceived the virtues of collegiality.

Only one team teacher (Laura) spoke positively about the potential for conflict. This is not to say that she did not strongly value strong collegiality between team members that middle school teaming allows. She had done her student teaching at a high school and preferred the collegiality of her middle school teaching experience. She recounted the following:

Seeing that lack of collegiality, seeing that lack of teaming at the high school has always made me kind of think, "Do I really want to move up to the high school?" And I do prefer what is being taught and the level of student maturity, or perceived student maturity, but I want to able to talk to people and collaborate with people and say, "Hey I did this really cool thing. Here, why don't you try it?" Or, "I see you're doing something awesome. Let me try it in my room."

And for Laura, the ideal teaming experience included "a group of individuals that aren't necessarily like-minded." She said that she valued professional disagreement:

I really do like to work with people that have strong personalities that are not always going to agree with me. I'd rather work with somebody that's going to be able to present her point validly. I might not always agree with them. We might not always get along. But ultimately, we're trying to do what's best for the students.

In fact, Laura seemed to perceive that conflict was a necessary outcome of collegial relationships and that, without it, her team would not be as productive or successful.

According to research, the collaborative efforts of those in teams can lead to conflict (Hargreaves, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005; Wasley, 1991). However, conflict is not always negative, as Laura noted. It has the potential to generate creativity and innovation in teamwork. When it is constructive, conflict makes change possible (Oakes, et al., 1993). When teachers confront their peers, as well as practices and perspectives, with which they do not necessarily agree, conflict can be the catalyst for positive school change (Achinstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005).

Non-Core Teachers

Non-core teachers in the specials team mentioned a positive workplace experience as well. For example, the special education teacher Kaitlyn said, "The team model has helped me as a special ed. teacher because I wouldn't have an identity other than a special ed. teacher…. So I think it has helped the special ed. department find an identity." The specials team leader Sophia also said she felt she generally had good relationships with the other teams and their leaders.

Largely because of the schedule and their inability to meet together formally, the non-core teachers who made up the specials team did not talk much about collegiality amongst themselves. They reported that their time to collaborate was limited to occasional meetings during their lunchtime. Unless she used her personal preparation period, Nora said that they did not have any other time to meet: "We definitely don't get separate non-core team time. Then again when on earth would it be?" The art teacher Lana said, "We have occasional meetings because we don't fit in anywhere else kinda thing." Lana was aware that she had fewer opportunities to collaborate with her non-core teacher colleagues, and she expressed that the

times when she did meet with her colleagues were not that useful to her. One of the Spanish

teachers reported that the Italian teacher collaborated with the music and social studies teachers

to "do something with opera…across the curriculum," but she was unable to provide any

specifics on how or when they collaborated.

The absence of common time for non-core team teachers found in this research is in line

with previous findings regarding the lack of team collaboration for non-core subject area

teachers. Teachers of exploratory or non-core subject areas are usually excluded from

collaboration in team settings because they are usually engaged in teaching the core team

teachers' students so that the core team teachers can meet in their teams (Erb & Doda, 1989).

The non-core teachers are therefore excluded from the collegiality and constructive conflict that

the team model provides core subject teachers.

Although she was somewhat unsure, one of the non-core teachers (Lana) expressed that

she believed the team model provided collegiality for the core teachers to which she did not have

access. She said, "I assume that it's a booster for them…I just assume there's more

camaraderie." She also said:

> I think it leads…I do think it leads to collegiality. Well, I'm saying that without really
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> knowing. I guess I assume as the outsider, it's like, "Whoa, they're really discussing
>
> things!" I don't know that. I assume that…I just assume it's kind of rich and fruitful.
>
> But I don't know that.

Nevertheless, when asked whether she thought participation on a team would bring about

increased collaboration and collegiality between non-core teachers if they had time to meet

together, she said, "No, I think it always depends on the people."

Core and Non-Core Teachers

In addition to being unable to collaborate with each other, non-core teachers were also unable to collaborate with core teachers at CJS because of a lack of common planning time in the schedule. Again, this was because teachers of non-core subject areas would be engaged in teaching the team teachers' students when the team teachers would meet together. Sophia, and others, reported that time was not built into her schedule to meet and collaborate with core subject teachers. The Spanish teacher Nora said that she hasn't had much experience talking or collaborating with "different pieces of the team…since languages and specials generally really aren't included or viewed as important as other subjects."

Since core and non-core teachers lacked the time to establish collegial relationships with each other in a team setting, as the core teachers were able to, one might expect there to have been a high level of conflict between the core and non-core teachers as a result of the team model. However, when asked directly, two core teachers (Leslie and Rachel) and two non-core teachers (Sophia and Kerry) explicitly said that they didn't sense any conflict generated by the teaming model. For example, Leslie said, "I feel very comfortable reaching out to the non-core teachers if I need something, and I believe they will help. So, I don't think there's any tension." Rachel said, "I feel I have a very collegial relationship with all those teachers, at least I do anyway." When asked if the exclusion of non-core subject teachers from the team resulted in conflict, the physical education teacher Kerry said, "No, it's definitely not a problem."

However some of the team teachers alluded to the potential for conflict between themselves and the non-core subject teachers. Since there is no formal structure to easily allow core and non-core teachers to collaborate and establish collegial relationships, Nicole said that she thought it might sometimes lead to animosity or hard feelings. Kory referred to the exclusion of non-core teachers from team meetings as a both a "concern" and a "sore point."

Summary

This chapter has provided a picture of CJS as an organization and discussed organizational features of the school. The formation of teams is a structural approach to help organizations achieve their established goals and improve organizational efficiency. This chapter discussed the benefits of teamwork for the teacher participants in this study, namely, professional growth, the support network that it provides for the induction of new teaching staff members, common planning and preparation time that should enhance instructional effectiveness, and improvement of teacher moral. Because teaming is an administratively mutable program and dependent on how teams are designed and implemented, the chapter also discussed the role of leadership, in terms of both school leadership and team leadership. Finally, the chapter discussed the effectiveness of teamwork from the perspective of the teachers who participated in this study.

Since teams require that groups of individuals work together and forge relationships in a social environment, the next chapter will describe how this study's teacher participants perceived relationships with other teachers and the degree to which these relationships supported their individual and professional needs.

CHAPTER 6:

"I'M ON MY OWN…THAT'S DEFINITELY HOW I FEEL"

The interdisciplinary teaming of middle school teachers is, to a large degree, designed to foster relationships between individuals that should help them prosper both individually and collectively. A great deal of research has been conducted on the effects of schools as social situations for students, but schools are also social situations for their teachers (Sarason & Klaber, 1985). The team structure and interdependent individuals in middle schools may not always result in its intended outcomes for teachers (Gump, 1980). Some teachers may benefit from the teaming structure, while others might not. This third data chapter (Chapter 6) considers the perceptions of teachers regarding how they felt their middle school and the teaming model helped to meet both their professional and social needs. To this end, the chapter will explore teachers' feelings of inequity and exclusion that led to feelings of isolation. It will also discuss the practices that they felt were, in part, the cause of inequities between each other, as well as between the teams within the school.

Inequity and Exclusion

The implementation of teaming has, to some degree, stratified the teachers at CJS, in which non-core subject teachers felt they were less important and perceived as less valuable than their core team teacher colleagues. This was often due to their exclusion from the core team structure at their school. Several of the non-core subject teachers, and even some core team teachers, made remarks to this effect when asked how they thought core team teachers felt about non-core teachers.

While there was one non-core Spanish teacher (Sophia) in her second year at CJS who very politely said, "They're very respectful," and nothing more regarding the core team teachers, her colleagues on the specials team did not share that opinion. From a professional standpoint,

the other Spanish teacher Nora remarked, "Languages/specials generally aren't really included or viewed as important as other subjects." Later in the interview, she transitioned from talking about the importance of her teaching discipline to what she felt were other perceptions held by the teaching staff. At one point, Nora said, "I feel like people don't think that we work as hard as everybody else does." Finally, Nora talked about her emotional reaction to the inequity that she perceived. At first, she maintained a positive perspective:

> My personality's very different. I don't have to, you know, I don't have to be accepted by everyone as long as I'm coming in and I feel good about what I'm doing and I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, I feel accomplished.

And yet, while she said earlier that she felt accomplished, she later added, "Have I felt as less of a teacher before? Yes. Absolutely!" Nevertheless, she admitted that it's a "personal type thing" that might affect some individuals more than others.

The art teacher was even more direct. When asked how she thought the core team teachers felt about the specials team, Lana laughed and said, "Fluff! I think they're a little condescending at times." She tempered her opinion, saying, "I mean they're, they're respectful, they're polite…but I think they think, you know, that they're better than we are. I do. There's an underlying assumption there." She explained that it was not only because of teaching discipline but also because the teachers of the core subjects were included in something from which the specials teachers were excluded. The core team teachers were "bigger, maybe because of what they teach," according to Lana because "they know we're not meeting. We're not in the forefront, you know, in the team meetings…. I think it tends to privilege certain subject areas and certain people then."

When asked the same question about core team teachers' perceptions, the physical education teacher Kerry speculated, "I'm sure they probably think, like, oh, 'They get away with getting by easy.'" She mentioned a "hierarchy" of teachers and asked herself rhetorically, "Do I think they're different, or do they think they're in a hierarchy or higher state?" She answered, "I'm sure that happens." But she said that she had to find comfort in the inequity she sensed by reframing the situation: "I think about it saying, 'You know, you get paid the same, and you could've went [sic] for phys. ed. You could've went [sic] for a special.'" With this perspective, she was able to say, "As far as hierarchy, yes, I could see that, but I mean, it happens rare [sic] here [at CJS]. I wouldn't say it's a problem."

Three of the five non-core teachers (Nora, Lana, and Kerry) provided mixed reviews of teaming and its effect on their status as teachers in the school. Membership on a team has been reported to help teachers feel included and more connected with colleagues (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Mills, et al., 1992) and thereby establish a perception of equity amongst teachers. However, teaming cannot meet the belonging needs of all teachers if subsets of teachers are excluded from the teaming process, as was the case at CJS. Nora's remarks, especially, validated exploratory teachers' feelings as the "'peel' rather than the 'core' of an apple" (Doda & George, 1999, p. 32). Since practices of inclusion often give rise to practices of exclusion, I will discuss how teachers at CJS felt excluded as a result of teaming.

There were several sources that contributed to feelings of exclusion, according to Lana. While telling about a recent meeting with the school principal regarding her goals for the upcoming year, Lana said, "You know, it's written all over the administrators' faces and their decisions. You know who's important here." Lana had been having difficulty dealing with some students and asked for insight and suggestions. She said that the principal responded:

> Well, we can always get you into one of those team meetings where if a student's being
>
> discussed or parents being called in…. We can get you coverage. Don't worry about it.
>
> If you get wind of…well go to the meeting.

However, Lana said the likelihood of that actually happening was slim. She also that the

decision to include some teachers on a grade level core team and exclude others such as herself

made parents less interested in their children's performance in other areas. Lana said that

attending a parent meeting with the team teachers "would be a very valuable thing, but I doubt

how many parents could care if the art teacher…. They don't want to talk to me." She said that

she reluctantly accepted her place: "They [the parents] don't want to hear that their child is

getting, you know, whatever grade in art. It's low priority. And I can kind of see why."

Both Lana and Kerry alluded to the attention accorded the core subjects of language arts

and mathematics because of standardized testing. Lana said that "test scores and all of that, like

a lot of it at our faculty meetings" emphasized the importance of the core subjects and devalued

the non-core subjects: "You know, a lot of times, things don't pertain to me, but there's not the

reversal. They're not going to sit through things that don't pertain to them. That's where the

condescension comes in. The cores are more important." Kerry also attributed some of the

inequity she felt to testing: "I understand certain subject areas, they're tested, so naturally there's

a certain…emphasis there. Of course, phys. ed., we're not the science, we're not the math…"

Lana's perception about her principal's emphasis on the core subjects may well have

reflected the principal's true beliefs. It would also not be surprising if parents were indeed less

interested in their children's performance in art or physical education. Both Lana and Kerry said

that the non-core areas were not as important and sensed that they, as teachers, might not be

either. These perceptions may, in part, be the result of accountability systems designed to

improve teaching and learning-but only in specific areas. Researchers have expressed concern over an imbalance in academic emphasis (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Beane, 1990; Lawton, 1987). Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, there has been growing concern over the place of exploratory subject areas, including the arts and languages, in a complete curriculum in America's schools (Meyer, 2005). Although NCLB includes the arts as part of a core curriculum ("No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001," 2002), states are beginning to emphasize only a few tested subjects at the expense of other components of a comprehensive education (Dana, et al., 2010; Erb, 2003; Turner, 2010). Teachers' instructional practices in tested subject areas has also begun to change, emphasizing test-taking strategies to the detriment of higher order thinking and problem solving (Anderson, 2009; Faulkner & Cook, 2006; White, et al., 2003). While exploratory subject areas were a central focus of the original middle school reform efforts (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; National Middle School Association, 1982; Waks, 2002), they have become peripheral or eliminated entirely (Waks, 2002). Jackson and Davis (2000) report that exploratory subjects are sometimes seen as less important than other subject areas.

Kaitlyn said that special education teachers and the special education team were also on the periphery of things at CJS, despite their role as inclusion teachers and de facto members of the grade level teams with which they worked. In the group interview with core team teachers, she said, "Some people don't want to do the special ed. team, and there's nothing worse than being in a place where, you know, they don't want the kids and they don't want you." The language arts teacher Nicole quipped, "You're just relegated to walking around the room." After

a brief pause, Kaitlyn laughed and responded, "I'll punch the papers, holes in the papers. 'You need that stapled?'"

Remarks like these showing that some teachers felt excluded or felt less important than other teachers were byproducts of the teaming model as it was implemented at CJS. While outside influences, such as standardized testing, may have exacerbated the inequity the teachers sensed, not all core subject areas are tested. Therefore, testing cannot entirely explain the perceptions of the teachers in this study. However, taken together, teaming and testing have had an effect on CJS teachers. Teaming seems to have led to unintended outcomes at the middle level that conflict with middle school reform efforts. This finding supports other research on middle school reform. Some teachers do not prosper in reformed middle school settings and find themselves on the periphery of middle school practices that marginalize certain teachers simply because of what they teach (Gump, 1980). Middle school reform can heighten the isolationist tendencies of traditional departmental organization that teaming is intended to counter (Achinstein, 2002). Teachers in certain departments (non-core subject areas) may feel marginalized, excluded, and devalued as a result of the teaming model.

The divide and inequity to which Kaitlyn (non-core) and Nicole (core) referred are known issues in the teaming model. Detrimental effects on teacher relationships have been substantiated by prior research (Main, et al., 2004). People who are supposed to work together often have difficulties forging a working professional relationship because their teaching philosophies differ or because they simply do not have the traits and skills that have been identified as appropriate to middle school level teaching.

Team Inequity

Inequity between the teams was also reported when teachers who participated this study talked about team identity. When the two core teachers Nicole and Olivia and the one non-core

special education teacher Kaitlyn mentioned how they "identify" with their team during the group interview, they mentioned the same type of friction as the specials team teachers mentioned regarding their relationship with the core team teachers. Nicole said, "We're being pitted against each another." Kaitlyn followed up with her impressions and implied that the teams become "competitive" because of the school administration. She said that teachers felt as if administrators say things such as, "Oh, well, that team did that, how come you're not doing something that's like…?" She continued, "And they…usually want everyone to be higher achievers and have this higher level of excitement all the time, but you don't do it at the expense of saying to other teams, 'Oh, they're doing that? How come you're not doing that?'" Nicole quickly replied, "Right! Well that's special for that team. This team is doing something else special. We don't all have to be doing what that team is doing…. What's the point? What's the identity? We all have our own identity."

The value of "identity" for these teachers is supported by the literature. Teachers do tend to cite their teams as their primary form of identification (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Consequently, some teams resent that other teams receive attention. Team teachers who sensed inequity at CJS because of team affiliation or because of pressure from administrators reflects the need for teachers to be invested in school reform (K. M. Brown, et al., 2003; Burnaford, 1993). Prior research into middle school teams showed that successful teaming requires teachers who feel they have control and are not coerced by school administrators.

Other Practices of Inequity

In terms of the actual work of teaching, teachers who participated in this study mentioned other inequities that existed at CJS. Both core and non-core teachers expressed an awareness of these practical and important differences between the core team and the non-core teams,

therefore indicating that teachers were consciously aware of a difference, or inequity, amongst the faculty.

Team leadership. Teachers of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies made up the core grade level teams. The members of the core grade level teams at CJS were chosen by the school administration. One teacher from amongst the four core teachers served as team leader. According to this study's participants who were team leaders (Kory, Laura, Nicole, and Olivia), the team leaders had several additional responsibilities. They all mentioned increased parent contact and preparation for team meetings, but Kory also specifically mentioned that their responsibilities included additional meetings with the school administration, before- and after-school preparation for activities, and their role as liaison between the principal and team teachers and between the various teams. From her vantage point as a team member, Leslie also said that team leaders were also responsible for "reaching out to the specials, foreign language…."

According to the 6th grade team leader Nicole, it was a position for which teachers generally volunteered. When no one volunteered for the position, the principal was known to ask one of the four team members to step up. Nicole said, "They ask you, or you ask them." However, Kory, who was the team leader for his 8th grade team, clarified and said, "It's often a position that people don't want…. It's not a position where there are a lot of people applying." Rachel confirmed that sometimes there was a shortage of interest in the position, and she was asked if she would "volunteer" for the position two years ago when she transferred to the 8th grade.

Kory noted that team leaders were paid a stipend at CJS for the additional responsibilities they had. He reported that the stipend was just under $2,000 and was paid in two installments.

He explained that the stipend was considered an "incentive" for teachers to apply for team leadership because oftentimes teachers were reluctant to take on the position's additional responsibilities. Nevertheless, there have been times when the stipend did not serve as enough of an incentive for teachers. For example, Rachel said that when the principal asked her to volunteer for the team leader position, she refused, despite the stipend.

At CJS, the non-core subject area teachers were part of a specials team, and the special education teachers were part of a special education team. Like the core grade level teams, each of these had its own team leader. Both the specials team leader (Sophia) and the special education team leader (Kaitlyn) participated in the present study. However, neither came directly to this position of leadership, and both were new to the position.

Sophia accepted the position mid-year after two other individuals had already been team leader. Lana was the participant who shared the history of the position. The first specials team leader had been the French teacher, but she resigned earlier in the year. Her replacement was another specials teacher, but she stepped down when she became pregnant. After the French teacher resigned, "they were trying to fill it and then Marissa [pseudonym] filled it and now she's pregnant and they're trying to fill it again. Yeah… Two recent openings there, but not for me." She did not explain further why she was uninterested in the position. However, Sophia became team leader, and she did confirm her newness to team leadership when she revealed that she had only been to two team leader meetings with the principal (when the interviews were conducted for this study in the middle of the school year). Kaitlyn disclosed that she had not volunteered for the position to which she was also new:

This is my first year as team leader and I sort of got it by default because the one lady

retired, who had been team leader. And the second person they asked didn't want it, so, I

got it. I was like, "Sure, I'll do it."

Although Sophia and Kaitlyn did not explicitly express any reluctance to assume the position,

both were new to it.

However, unlike the core grade level teams, the specials and special education teams

leaders were not paid a stipend for any additional work that they performed in that role. While

Sophia did not mention that she did not receive the same stipend as the core team leaders,

Kaitlyn did. One of the specials team members (Nora) revealed that she was unwilling to

assume the team leader position. She explained her decision as both a matter of compensation

and equity:

Our team leader doesn't get paid…. I mean, you know, you have to draw a line, you

know? What's the difference? What's the difference, you know? You're dealing, you're

dealing with more students but you're still doing extra work and so, but I don't do that.

Some of the core team teachers were also aware that while their core team leaders were paid a

stipend for their additional responsibilities, the non-core team leaders were not. This inequity

has even been formalized by the teachers contract, according to Laura, who said:

It even manifested itself in our contract because the 6 core team leaders get a salary. But

the other team leaders don't. So it kind of shows, "Hey, those core subjects teams are

more important necessarily than the non-core subject teams."

Exclusion from the grade level core teams had practical (financial) implications for non-

core subject teachers and their leaders. While scheduling issues may often preclude non-core

teachers from participating in the grade level teams (Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989),

the teaming model at CJS resulted in a system whereby non-core team leaders were not entitled to the same benefits as their core team leader colleagues.

The interview data in the present study do not specifically confirm lower levels of job satisfaction and morale found in other research (Warren & Muth, 1995; Warren & Payne, 1997; Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Both non-core team leaders Sophia (specials team) and Kaitlyn (special education team) reported that they felt the system was working well for them; and neither reported any aversion to their leadership responsibilities. However, Lana and Nora's reluctance as team members to take on additional responsibilities as a team leader implied decreased motivation to meet school goals, which was found in the literature (Woods & Weasmer, 2004).

Teaching workload. Several of the non-team teachers spoke of the difference in workload, in terms of the number of classes they taught, how often they were able to meet, and how much time they were allotted to prepare for their classes (preparation periods). Nora, Kerry, and Lana all mentioned that they taught six classes per day whereas the core teachers taught five classes. Nora and Kerry said they taught an "extra" class, and Lana said she taught more "different classes" than the core teachers. This happened at CJS because the core teachers used one of their class periods to meet as a team and therefore taught only five classes per day. Non-core teachers were left to teach an extra period when the team teachers did not teach in order to afford them the time to meet. Nora said that she viewed team time as an extra preparation period to which she was not entitled: "We don't really do that... They get an extra prep." She explained that it was unfair, especially when the language teachers taught all grade levels and taught more students than the core teachers. Kerry perceived that non-core teachers had "more

contact time with the students than the core teachers," and said, "So, there can be inequity in that, as well."

This study also found other inequitable practices that may, at first, seem minor but were serious threats to middle school teachers' needs. As previously mentioned, non-core teachers were not allotted time to meet together during the school day. Four of the five non-core teachers (Kerry, Lana, Nora, and Sophia) mentioned that if they chose to meet, they had to do so during their lunch period. (There was one core teacher–Kory–who mentioned that the non-core teachers met during their lunch.) However, core team teachers were allotted team time during the day. One core team teacher stressed the importance of that time. Leslie said that team time must be "built into your day" because she saw what happened when it was not in her previous school district. "Teachers always ate during their team meetings, which is fine," Leslie said, "but what if you wanna go out and grab lunch one day? … It wasn't always convenient." Because of the way teaming was implemented at CJS, only a subset (non-core teachers) used their lunch as a meeting time. When asked if they were required to do so, Lana asked, "Do you mean contractually? … I guess we agree to do it… I don't think the cores do it over lunch."

As previously mentioned, contact with parents was a primary purpose of the team model at CJS (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). Teachers of 6th grade language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies and/or their team leaders presented the team model to the parents of incoming 5th grade students every spring during an orientation program. According to their program, the team model supported relationships between teachers, allowed teachers to provide support for each other, and provided them time to meet together daily (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). Without being asked directly, the 6th grade leaders conversed about this 5th grade orientation program. Olivia asked, "Is foreign language there at all?" Nicole replied with

one word: "Nope." Then, Olivia spoke briefly about the program and tried to recall whether there were representatives from non-core subject areas:

> So we do a 5th grade orientation. So Nicole and I are only there to present to the parents, but special ed., they'll mention special ed., guidance is there, maybe they'll mention special ed. I don't know that they… Art's not there…

Seemingly, then, core subject teachers were present at this orientation and core subjects were mentioned, but other non-core areas were not and non-core subjects were "mentioned," if at all.

The literature on teaming confirms what happened at CJS. Interdisciplinary teaming usually does not include all teaching personnel (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). Other literature on collaborative work also confirms the exclusionary nature of collaboration. Despite its generally accepted positive connotations, it raises the question, "Who's left out?" (Mintzberg, et al., 1996, p. 68). In business, small corporations or ones that are obscure tend to be left out of large corporations' collaborative efforts. Mintzberg and colleagues (1996) warn that these exclusionary practices can leave out the most creative people and "lock everybody into an immovable network" (p. 70). This is exactly what happened at CJS. Teachers were excluded from the core subject grade level teams and stuck. It was difficult, if not impossible, for them to contribute. They taught more periods per day than the core teachers. They potentially taught more students, or at least more groups of students. And they had neither control nor influence over membership in the team.

Isolation

Teachers of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies were, by virtue of the core subjects that they taught, included in the interdisciplinary team model at CJS. Teachers of exploratory subject areas or of special education were not included and formed their own

specials or special education teams to counter their isolation from the teams. The importance of inclusion cannot be understated. Inclusion in a team has been reported to help teachers feel more connected with colleagues and provide an emotional and professional support network that helps to counter feelings of isolation (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Mills, et al., 1992). However, the degree to which teaming includes all disciplines and teachers varies greatly (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Smith, et al., 1998). Consequently, the degree to which teaming addresses isolation is a function of how it is implemented.

Teachers who participated in this study mentioned the importance of inclusion. Leslie, who spoke at great length about how teaming was important for her, said participation in a team did "help" the non-core subject teachers "in some little way at least." Teams countered isolation and provided validation, according to Leslie. She said, "I think it helps to validate the special teachers or the non-core teachers…saying, 'You are part of a team, it's not the core teams, but you are part of a team, there are people you can go to….'" Laura also mentioned, "Connection is very important" and the reason for which non-core subject teachers needed to participate in a team. Feelings of connection between individuals took on great importance at CJS. Laura said half jokingly, "The office staff got upset about not being part of a team and so they created their own team called Black Sheep because they weren't part of any team." As the leader of the special education team, Kaitlyn talked about the process by which the teams designed and selected team tee shirts for the students: "And we have team tee shirts. We all get tee shirts. A kid designs it and they vote on the design and the colors and all." She was very excited about team identification, and when she said, "It's a big deal," it was unclear whether she was referring only to students or to teachers, as well.

Nevertheless, exclusionary practices and the perception that non-core subject teachers were not part of the team model persisted at CJS, according to both core and non-core subject teachers. Most of the core subject teachers talked about team time and mentioned that the non-core subject teachers were invited but did not regularly attend. Kory said that non-core teachers sometimes did not attend and would "complain, rightfully" because "they don't know who's having meetings when because they're not really on anyone's team." A non-core teacher like Sophia reported that it was "very difficult to attend" meetings. For her, "it's like being absent. You have to leave a sub plan and so on, so, it's not easy to attend parent meetings."

Whether membership on a specials or special education team was really beneficial was also questioned by some. Kory said that non-core teachers who were part of the specials team must feel "not included… When you're not on a team, you don't have that sense of camaraderie from anyone really. You're kind of the lone wolf out there, so, in that type of situation, it can be very difficult." As a former academic support teacher who had not always been part of the teaming structure, Rachel substantiated the loneliness and difficulty that non-core teachers experienced. She loved the collaboration that she experienced once she became a language arts teacher and a team member and said, "I think you have the opportunity to bounce ideas off of other people and get feedback versus when you're not on a core team, you're kind of working in isolation."

Even Leslie, who had spoken about the virtues of being part of a "specials team," contradicted what she had said earlier: "They're not part of a team… I'm not sure they see the benefits of it." Despite their membership on a specials team, she said "It can be very lonely" for the specials teachers when "you think you need to fix every problem on your own and you don't realize it's a problem seen throughout the day by four or five different teachers." She said,

"They're kind of on their own." Seemingly, then, the specials team did not carry the same status as the core teams in the eyes of the core teachers. Laura admitted, "I think it's name… I don't know that it's really a team. I know they've tried to make it as much of a team as possible," but she laughed and continued, "but it's such a potpourri of different subjects."

Non-core teachers also mentioned isolation, despite their inclusion on a specials team. When asked if she ever felt excluded, Nora replied, "Always. As a language teacher, yes." Describing the specials team in relation to the core subject team, she said, "It's just very, very separate. Very different." Nora was not alone in her recognition of the specials team as either less of a team, a team on the periphery, or not a team at all. The art teacher (Lana) said, "I'm not on a team…that suits me fine." However, the teaming structure made her feel "left out some of the time" at her place of work, and she said, "I'm on my own. That's definitely how I feel." She gave an example about why she felt isolated and talked about field trips that the team teachers organized for their students: "I'm out of the loop on why they're going, where they're going and how and who is going. There's [sic] just times when I'm just totally out of the loop."

The isolation that Lana mentioned did not go unnoticed by the team teachers. Laura, who had recognized that the non-core teachers were not part of the same type of team as the core teachers, reasoned:

> I'd imagine that there is some level of isolation. The number of teachers that are core teachers far outnumber the number of teachers that are non-core teachers, and when the non-core teachers are not teaching, they are probably focusing really hard on their particular discipline because there's nobody else to share the load with them. You know, I'm lucky; I teach science 7, there's another science 7 teacher. We collaborate. We talk about stuff. These other non-core teachers, they don't have that opportunity necessarily.

They could be very specific in their discipline, if they're an orchestra teacher or a band

teacher. So they can't go to somebody and say, "Hey I'll plan this particular lesson, and

you plan this lesson." So, I'd imagine it's hard and a little isolating.

Other team teachers emphasized the emotional component. When asked what they thought it

must be like to not be part of the teaming structure at CJS, Nicole simply said, "Lonely." Olivia

laughed and continued, "Yeah, I was gonna say that. You'd feel unloved and unwanted." Nicole

picked up where Olivia left off: "'Cause I like being part of a team, you know, it's just me, who I

am in life, but I think it could be lonely. I'd feel out of it."

The isolation of non-core teachers notwithstanding, core teachers who were part of the

teams were not exempt from feelings of isolation. As a special education teacher, Kaitlyn was

the leader of the special education team but worked primarily with 6th grade teachers on the first

floor. She referenced "the other problem with the teaming," and said:

The only people you see are the people on your team. So you don't really see the other

people… I don't see any 8th grade teacher, I mean, other than "Hello, how are you?" but

other than that, you're just really with your team.

When speaking about the potential for conflict within teams, Lana mentioned that even team

teachers might experience feelings of isolation and exclusion. "If you're on a team that isn't as

collaborative, that even isolates its own members, it can be very demoralizing, and it can be a

rough spot." She recounted the experience of a former team member who had changed grade

levels: "The teacher that I was talking about earlier had it really rough last year and felt very

isolated. So, I've seen what happens when it's not working right."

The perceptions of the teachers in this study extend previous research. Practices of

inclusion go hand-in-hand with practices of exclusion that lead to feelings of isolation and even

animosity between those who participate in teams and those who do not (Doda & George, 1999). When non-core subject teachers are not included in the core team structure, they are necessarily excluded and isolated from the same experience to which their core teacher colleagues have automatic access. Ironically, proponents of the middle school model value teachers of non-core subject areas and stress the value of exploratory subject areas that are just not possible at the elementary level (Clark & Clark, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Waks, 2002). However, as so often happens, the team model marginalizes some teachers by excluding them from team membership. It provides an unfortunate answer to the question "Who's left out?" (Mintzberg, et al., 1996, p. 68).

By including some teachers while excluding others, school leaders jeopardize the self-actualization that teams are purported to support (Maslow & Frager, 1987). Feelings of isolation because of teaching field, like those reported by some of the non-core subject teachers in the present study, have been substantiated (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Isolation leads to an issue of communication, which is one of the fundamental questions that must be considered when teaming is implemented and some teachers not included (Erb & Doda, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000). When isolated, non-core teachers are excluded from the type of constructive conflict that challenges teachers to grow both personally and professionally. In turn, teachers may suffer with lower levels of personal efficacy and experience their work environment more negatively than their core team colleagues (Warren & Muth, 1995; Warren & Payne, 1997).

The isolation within teams reported by teachers in this study is also detrimental, according to research. Because of teacher identification with their individual teams, team teachers tend to lose their connections to the full faculty (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Isolationist

tendencies foster an isolationist focus on what is best for oneself and one's own students with little regard for the school community as a whole.

Summary

Because schools are organizations in which people work together and, in so doing, develop relationships, this chapter has provided a picture of CJS as a social situation for its people. Teams are, in part, designed to contribute to and improve interpersonal relationships that should, in turn, lead to increased organizational effectiveness and success. Therefore, this chapter explored how this study's teacher participants perceived the role of teaming in their relationships with other people. It discussed feelings of inequity that existed between core team and non-core non-team teachers. The chapter also highlighted the sense of exclusion experienced by non-team teachers as a result of non-participation in a team. Finally, it addressed teachers' perceptions of the practices that contributed to feelings of exclusion and even of isolation.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to qualitatively capture the real-life experience of teacher participants so as to explore how select teachers experienced *participation* or *non-participation* on middle school interdisciplinary teams. This dissertation was grounded in the extant literature on middle school reform and middle school interdisciplinary teaming, organizational theory and research on teamwork, and research into schools as social systems. By portraying teachers' perceptions in their own words, the three data chapters (Chapters 4-6) reviewed how both core team and non-core non-team teachers experienced the phenomenon of middle school teaming. Chapter 7 explains and summarizes the data. The first section of this chapter summarizes the findings of this dissertation in light of the dissertation's conceptual framework. The second section of this chapter revisits and attempts to answer this study's main research question and subquestions. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of this dissertation, as well as implications for practice, policy and future research.

Middle School Reform at Centerville Junior School

The middle school reform model is purported to be a specialized approach to middle level learning that reorganizes teachers, students, curricula, and instructional strategies to address the unique academic and social needs of early adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Flowers, et al., 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 2009; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; National Middle School Association, 2003; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). Historically, middle level education had been unsuccessful in addressing the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of young adolescents according to the literature (Beane, 2001; Eccles & et al., 1993; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Midgley & Urdan, 1992). Reporting that the junior school "wasn't working," a teacher participant in this research (Olivia) revealed that this

was the reality at CJS, as well. CJS middle school students were "lost" both academically and socially, bullied by other students, and scared in "the black hole of Centerville." Documents showed that the middle school model and interdisciplinary teaming were originally envisioned to create a responsive collaborative learning culture at Centerville Junior School ("New Jr. School model will phase in this fall," 2002) that would improve educational opportunities for the community's middle level students (Capone, 2008b) that were not possible at Centerville elementary schools (Capone, 2008a). Supported by seminal literature on middle school benefits (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 1982, 2001), the inception of teaming at a reformed CJS in the early 2000s was hailed as a way to create a collaborative learning culture that would be "responsive to the needs of all…students" ("New Jr. School model will phase in this fall," 2002, ¶ 17). Teachers, too, perceived that teaming would "turn the school around," according to one team teacher participant (Olivia). Middle school reform and the teaming model was going to make CJS a more "supportive place for the students." Another team teacher participant (Rachel) revealed that many teachers, parents, and other community members believed that changes in the grade level configuration, middle school teams, and the middle school approach were going to "improve the school" for students. However, for students–and for teachers–the promises that glittered were not always gold.

Intended and Unintended Outcomes for Students

All of the teachers who participated in this current research mentioned specific ways in which teaming helped students. They referred to improved teacher-student relationships that were more "personalized," "supportive," and "better connected." Core team teachers explained how they benefitted from teaching the same core group of students. Core team teachers indicated that teaching the same group of students provided them a "complete picture" that made

it easier for them to assess, evaluate, and support their team of students. Improved teacher-student relationships that teaming fosters are acknowledged as a primary benefit (and an intended outcome) of the teaming model by the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mergendoller, 1993; Russell, 1997; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). Kory specifically mentioned how the teaming structure helped his team of teachers have a "more complete picture of the student." Leslie said that working closely with colleagues was critical to student success. Nicole and Olivia discussed how the creation of a small team of students helped with the middle school transition, especially for incoming 6th graders because it was "easier to follow the kids." Core team teachers described how the teaming model, whereby grade level classes are divided into smaller teams of students, contributed to student success. They described how they could work together to discuss student progress and to identify problems and implement solutions early on. They found the teaming model to be an appropriate approach to providing academic, emotional, and social support to students at a time when children experience a huge transition from the elementary schools to middle school (Beane, 2001; Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Tanner & Tanner, 2007).

However, middle school teams and, in fact, the middle school concept are not universally accepted (Alspaugh & Harting, 1995; Anfara & Lipka, 2003; Anfara & Schmid, 2007; Backes, et al., 1999; Bedard & Do, 2005; Eccles & et al., 1993; Eccles & Lord, 1991; Epstein, 1990; Felner, et al., 1997; Gulino & Valentine, 1999; Lee & Smith, 1993; Odetola, et al., 1972; Russell, 1997; Van Zandt & Totten, 1995; Warren & Muth, 1995). Middle schools result in an additional year of transition for students when they move from the 5th grade in the elementary school to the 6th grade in the middle school. Middle school transition is the subject of a great deal of research

because middle school comes at a developmentally challenging stage in the life of young

adolescents (Eccles & et al., 1993; Eccles & Lord, 1991; Eccles, et al., 1993; Jackson & Davis,

2000; National Middle School Association, 2010). The difficulties associated with this

additional year of transition are documented in the research literature on middle school reform

and adolescent development (Alspaugh, 1998; Alspaugh & Harting, 1995; Anderman & Maehr,

1994; Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Anderson, et al., 2000; Anfara & Schmid, 2007; Chung, et

al., 1998; Eccles & et al., 1993; Eccles & Lord, 1991; Eccles, et al., 1993; Elias, 2002; Elias, et

al., 1985; Elias, et al., 1992; Maehr & Anderman, 1993). And some of the core teachers, as well

as the non-core teachers, mentioned, specifically, some emotional and social issues that the team

structure engendered. They discussed the exclusivity brought about by teaming. Students were

often separated from their longtime friends whom they had known since elementary school, with

lunch being the only time during which they had any interaction with those friends. They would

be able to have interaction with classmates on the other team, as well as "make new friends"

during their "specials" classes, according to Nicole. But this did not always play out as Nicole

envisioned. The art teacher Lana mentioned her own daughter's experiences, especially in the

6th grade: "It didn't happen… It was a tough year."

But the downside of the teaming structure was larger than just the disrupted student

interaction at CJS. Kory mentioned that the team structure occasionally resulted in team rivalry

that was not necessarily productive. Although he was primarily referring to the teacher

experience with regard to providing the optimal educational experience for middle school

students, the implication was clear: the student experience and how students benefited from the

teaming model were highly dependent on the team to which they were assigned and how well the

team's members worked together. As a parent whose daughter attended CJS, Rachel felt that her

daughter was shortchanged because of the composition of the 8th grade team of teachers who provided a less than "dynamo" experience for their students. While speaking about issues of team design, Rachel said that administrators tried to "balance personalities" so that children would never feel that they were not on the "good team."

Team identification also led to contests for students to design the best team tee shirts, which was a "big deal," according to Kaitlyn (special education team leader). The teams were generically known as 6A, 6B, 7A, 7B, 8A, and 8B; but Olivia, Nicole, and Kaitlyn conversed at length about the selection of names for the teams during the group interview and identified that a great deal of thought went into voting on the best team names, which resulted in some competition between the teams. Though tempered in recent years by the current administrative team, team identification had, in fact, led to unhealthy competition between students, as well as their teachers, according to Olivia. Issues with teacher collegiality will be addressed in subsequent sections on organizational reform and the school as a social situation for teachers.

Non-core teachers in the areas of world language, art, music, physical education, and special education echoed a similar sentiment with regard to the benefits of teaming for students. Teaching a smaller group of the same students allowed for students and teachers to get to know each other more intimately with fewer students who "slip through the cracks." However, non-core teachers provided a slightly different perspective. They saw teaming as a benefit primarily experienced through other teachers. Although they, too, mentioned that teaming improved teacher-student relationships, they talked about how "they" [the core team teachers] taught the same students and how "they" experienced the benefits of teaming. By referencing the student experience in core teachers' classes and not their own classes, non-core subject teachers experienced teaming differently. They saw teaming as fostering relationships for other teachers

and not for themselves. While teaming fostered inclusivity and a closeness for those who participated in teams, it did little for other members of the school community, who sensed they were disconnected from the advantages of teams for themselves and their students.

The division between team teachers of core subject areas and teachers of non-core subject areas is in stark contrast to the former superintendent's intended middle school philosophy with increased emphasis on exploratory subject areas ("New Jr. School model will phase in this fall," 2002). The disconnect between team and non-team teachers is discussed by the research literature on teaming (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Smith, et al., 1998) and is the subject of the next section discussing both team and non-teachers' perceptions of participation and non-participation on interdisciplinary grade level teams.

Intended and Unintended Outcomes for Teachers

According to middle school research, the quintessential middle school practice that is common to all descriptions of the middle school model is interdisciplinary teaming. Much of the research is based on the implementation of teaming as a means to achieve higher levels of teacher cooperation and collegiality, increased professional growth, and improved teacher morale, that will, in turn, translate to improved student outcomes in both academic achievement and emotional and social growth (Clark & Clark, 1993; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004). However, teamwork at CJS included some teachers and excluded others. In a practice that was consistent with what is found in much of the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998), CJS's interdisciplinary teams consisted of teachers of the core subject areas of language

arts (English), mathematics, science, and social studies and excluded teachers of exploratory

subject areas, physical education and health, and special education.

As discussed earlier in the section on how students benefit from the team model, the

teachers who participated on the teams felt that the team structure contributed to their efforts to

improve the middle school experience for their students. They expressed varying degrees of

indifference about the exclusion of non-core subject teachers. Some minimized the effects of

exclusion (e.g., Leslie and Rachel). Although they recognized the shortcomings of the teaming

structure and the disadvantages for non-core subject teachers, core team teachers either said or

implied that their non-core subject teacher colleagues might not want to be involved in the team

structure or gleaned some benefit from participation in a "specials team." Others (e.g., Kory,

Laura, Nicole, and Olivia) expressed concern and empathized with the teachers who were

excluded from the teaming model. These latter teachers were all team leaders who were often

charged with acting as liaisons and were possibly more in tune with the degree to which their

colleagues were "out of the loop." The non-core subject teachers also expressed varying degrees

of indifference. Some minimized the decision to include some teachers while excluding others

(e.g., Kaitlyn, Kerry, and Sophia). Others held that teaming was generally beneficial to teachers

and their students except for them (Lana and Nora). However, it should be noted that both

Sophia and Kaitlyn were team leaders and much more involved in the team structure than their

non-core subject teacher colleagues. Teacher leadership roles, like that of team leader, may have

the potential to affect teachers' perceptions.

One of the goals of this study was to understand how *participation* or *non-participation*

on a middle school interdisciplinary team affected teachers' experience of the teaming

phenomenon and explore whether teaming led to a set of circumstances that stratified teachers by

creating inequitable practices between those who participated on teams and those who did not.

Teaming was purported to play a primary role in the success of the reformed CJS, according to

district documents (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). The core subject teachers were featured

on the district website (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-c); the 6th grade teachers presented the

middle school and team model to incoming 5th grade students and their parents (Centerville

Public Schools, 2012b); and the principal spoke at length about the role of the core subject

teachers in the team model (N.S., personal communication, October 16, 2012). However, little

or no mention was made of the role of the teachers of exploratory, or non-core, subject areas,

who were excluded from the teaming model at CJS. Despite the former superintendent's claims

that there would be increased emphasis on exploratory subject areas, inequitable practices began

when teaming was implemented at CJS with interdisciplinary grade level teams consisting only

of teachers of the core subject areas of language arts (English), mathematics, science, and social

studies. The non-core subject area teachers who participated in this study (Kaitlyn, Kerry, Lana,

Nora, and Sophia) reported a lower degree of affiliation with the team model at their school. On

the whole, they reported a less clear understanding of the purpose of teams and had a vague

understanding of the day-to-day responsibilities of the core team teachers. For instance, Sophia

reported that her understanding of middle school teaming came from her experience with her

own children at the school they attended. Kerry lacked a clear grasp of the meaning of

interdisciplinary teams and at times confused it with the notion of two teachers co-teaching the

same group of students in her physical education class.

Inequities in planning and preparation. While formal discussions of the structural

flaws that arose from the implementation of teaming and their implications for CJS as a social

system are reserved for the next section of this chapter, it is important to note here the

differences between what the core team teacher participants and the non-core teacher participants reported when they described their teaching obligations, responsibilities, course load, room assignments, etc. Whether teachers taught a core team subject or a non-core exploratory subject affected their teaching. Core team teachers benefitted from the team model in various ways. As publicized by the district website and district documents, core team teachers worked together during a common planning and preparation period to develop interdisciplinary lessons for a common group of students. In this way, core team teachers were responsible for "coordinating *curriculum* and improving teacher *strategies* in order to improve *student* learning [emphasis in original] (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b). They also met to discuss student progress both academically and socially, coordinate testing schedules, and discuss other student, curricular, and administrative issues. Common planning and preparation time for teachers who are assigned to work in teams is considered an essential prerequisite to effective teaming according to research (Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 2000, 2003; Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Huber, 1991; Louis, 1994; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Spies, 2001; Warren & Muth, 1995). The core team teachers in this research (Kory, Laura, Leslie, Nicole, Olivia, and Rachel) all reported that they did, in fact, meet several times per week.

However, team time was neither perfect nor equitable for everyone. Because they were automatically entitled to common planning time, team teachers like Leslie reported that they would sometimes use their personal preparation time for their own personal obligations because they could adequately finish their planning either during their team time or during the time their team was assigned to meet. Although their teams were assigned a 40-minute common planning team time on a daily basis, three of the core team teacher leaders (Kory, Laura, and Olivia) and Leslie reported that their teams did not always meet on a daily basis. They also reported that

team time was generally "loosely structured," despite daily agendas because neither weekly nor monthly calendars existed. In this way, teams did not always meet as expected, and the purpose of teams became unclear.

While teams were entitled to a 40-minute meeting per day, they did not always meet. Kory said that teachers on his team occasionally used team time to make copies and prepare lessons. Another team leader (Laura) felt that meeting everyday was unnecessary and would allow teachers on her team to exercise professional judgment in how to best utilize the period. This was important because some team teachers, like Rachel, felt that team time locked them into only working interdisciplinarily with teachers of the other subject areas. She felt that she had to use her personal preparation time to seek out other individuals with whom to work, such as their counterpart on the other team(s) who taught the same subject.

On the other hand, non-core subject teachers were not entitled to common planning or preparation time with their colleagues at CJS, which is noted in the research literature on middle school teams (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Smith, Pitkin, & Rettig, 1998). Instead, they were left to use their one personal preparation period per day if they desired and chose to work with other teachers during the school day. As a result, they relied on speaking and working with colleagues either before or after school or when, and if, they shared common preparation periods with those individuals. Consequently, non-core teachers often found themselves meeting some of their professional obligations during their personal preparation time. By contrast, their core team teacher colleagues were able to do the following during team time: plan interdisciplinary lessons, work with and assist new teachers, communicate important information, and discuss other student, curricular, and administrative issues. In the eyes of some of the non-core teachers, like

Nora, the core team teachers were entitled to "an extra prep" during which to work individually or with colleagues on those days when the team did not meet together.

At CJS, the non-core subject teachers referred to participation on a "specials" team, if at all, when discussing their affiliation. However, they generally referred to participation on the specials team as a poor substitute for participation on the grade level interdisciplinary teams. Lana was the most sarcastic, saying it was a team of "misfits" because they didn't "fit in anywhere else." Team teachers also recognized the futility of the specials team, especially those who had served as both core and non-core subject teachers during their tenure at CJS (Kory, who had been a basic skills teacher for one year; and Rachel, who had been an academic support teacher for one year).

Without common planning and preparation time, the specials and special education teams were largely useless to the non-core subject teachers. These teachers reported that they worked with each other "from time to time" or during their lunch (of some 25 minutes), or before or after school. They never had a "chunk of time" like the core team teachers, as Nora called it, to either work professionally with each other or their core team teacher colleagues for the good of their middle school students. The interview data showed that non-core teachers did not talk about common goals or tasks, lacked a clear understanding of the purpose of teams and the benefit of teamwork (especially for themselves), and had various perspectives of what their core team teacher colleagues actually accomplished in teams. The data supported the extant research reporting that non-team teachers have a significantly different experience from their team teacher colleagues (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998). In a model of interdisciplinary teaming in which common planning and preparation time is a structural support put into place to make middle school teaming work, the non-core subject teachers were

conspicuously excluded–from the teams and from all that teamwork had to offer (which will be addressed in a later section on the structural flaws of teaming at CJS).

Inequities in course load and teaching assignment. Teachers who were part of the teams taught four subject classes and one cycle/exploratory subject class per day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. The exploratory subject area often coincided with their primary area of teaching or was related to another interest they had and felt they could offer to the educational experience of the students. On Wednesdays, they taught those same classes, as well as a 44-minute advisory class, which consisted of a subsection of their team of students. In total, they taught, at most, six different groups of students, but from one grade level.

Teachers who were not part of the teams had different schedules and taught, on average, six subject classes per day. They, too, were assigned a 44-minute advisory period on Wednesdays. Unlike their core team teacher colleagues, non-core teachers never had opportunities to teach a cycle/exploratory subject course and share other knowledge they might have. And they taught at least seven different groups of students, from all the grade levels. As such, they often prepared more different lessons than their core team teacher colleagues and rarely repeated. The Spanish teachers both taught all three grade levels of Spanish, for example. And as Lana reported, "I can count on two hands the number of different classes I have."

Inequities in team leadership. According to the research literature on middle school reform, schools may reap few benefits from the implementation of interdisciplinary teaming unless structural supports are put into place to make it work (Erb & Doda, 1989; Felner, et al., 1997; Kain, 1997a, 2001; Kasak & Uskali, 2005; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991; Mertens, et al., 2002). Among these required structural supports is the appointment of team leaders who function as facilitators, team representatives, and liaisons between the team members, other

teachers, administrators, and parents (Erb & Doda, 1989). At CJS, each of the six grade level interdisciplinary teams (6A, 6B, 7A, 7B, 8A, and 8B) had a team leader who either volunteered for the position or was selected by the principal. Four of the six team leaders at CJS volunteered to participate in this study: Nicole and Olivia from the 6th grade, Laura from the 7th grade, and Kory from the 8th grade. The specials and special education teams also had team leaders. Both of these team leaders participated in this study: Sophia from the specials team and Kaitlyn from the special education team.

The interview data revealed that the team leaders did not have the same obligations, did not fulfill the same roles, and were not entitled to the same benefits. Moreover, the difference in status manifested itself in the teachers' contract with the school district, according to participants in this research. Team leaders of the core grade level interdisciplinary teams (Nicole and Olivia from the 6th grade, Laura from the 7th grade, and Kory from the 8th grade) received a stipend for their role as team leader. Non-core team leaders (Sophia and Kaitlyn) did not receive this stipend.

There were also team leader obligations that were expected of the core team leaders but not of the specials and special education team leaders. For instance, the principal met periodically with the team leaders after the school day ended. However, only the core grade level team leaders were required to stay for the duration of those meetings. This was because the specials and special education team leaders did not receive a stipend for their role as team leader. In exchange, they were excused from this otherwise required team leader responsibility.

The core grade level team leaders (Kory, Laura, Nicole, and Olivia) served as primary liaisons with parents, whereas the specials and special education team leaders (Sophia and Kaitlyn) did not. In addition to their responsibilities for organizing team meetings that occurred

daily or at some other frequency deemed necessary by the team, the core team leaders reported

that they were primarily responsible for organizing contact with parents. Nicole, for one,

reported that parent contact and communication with her colleagues was "time-consuming."

They scheduled meetings with parents during the school day during their team's meeting time,

and they also contacted parents and arranged for afternoon and evening meetings during parent-

teacher conferences at the school at least twice a year. Furthermore, in their role as liaison to

teachers of exploratory subject areas and of special education, they were responsible for

disseminating information about these meetings to their non-core teacher colleagues. These

were obligations that were not required of the specials and special education team leaders.

Neither Sophia nor Kaitlyn mentioned parent contact as a primary responsibility in their roles as

team leader. They relied heavily on the core teams and the core team leaders for contacting

parents. They were generally the recipients of information from the core grade level team

leaders.

Team members also provided a unique perspective of the role of team leader. While

there were only two core team teachers who were not team leaders who participated in this

research (Leslie and Rachel), both reported that they perceived their team leader's primary

responsibility to be that of liaison between their teams and the non-core subject teachers who did

not participate on their grade level teams. Leslie said it was her team leader who was

"responsible for reaching out to the specials." At the same time, they recognized that the role of

team leadership required time, energy, and a great deal of organization. Rachel said that it was a

position that would be "too much" for her. Nevertheless, they perceived that they were members

of a team that was led by a team leader who had a specific role and responsibilities, including

contact with parents, contact with the school administration, and contact with the non-core

subject teachers. Participation on a team gave them the sense that they were part of a team of teachers that worked together and was guided by a leader.

Unlike Leslie and Rachel, the non-core teachers who participated in this study who were not team leaders (Kerry, Lana, and Nora) did not say very much about the role of their team leader (Sophia). In fact, Nora referred to the importance of the core team leaders as a contact person. She referred to the core team leaders, saying, "They have the meetings with the parent and team leader and all of that." While her perception of the importance of the core team leader could be attributed to the fact that she would have no students in common with Sophia (both Spanish teachers), it could also be attributed to the fact that non-participation on a grade level interdisciplinary team (and participation on a specials team) did not provide exploratory subject area teachers the same experience as their core team teacher colleagues. This is further evidenced by non-core teacher remarks in the interview data. Sophia admitted, "I'm not technically part of a team," and Nora said, "I'm not so much part of it." Although rather new to CJS, Kerry was not sure how many teams existed in each grade at the school; and Lana said, "We don't fit it." Non-core subject teachers were without team leaders who played a significant role as facilitators of meetings, team representatives, and liaisons between the team members, other teachers, administrators, and parents. They were part of a system in which the lack of a strong leadership role left them unequal to the core subject teachers.

Summary of Teacher Perceptions of Middle School Reform

This first part of the conclusion chapter has discussed middle school reform and teaming's intended outcomes for students and teachers. The data in this dissertation concurs with the research literature on middle school reform. The implementation of the middle school model and its signature practices (i.e., interdisciplinary teaming) is not always sufficient to bring about the type of improvement desired in middle school students' experience of the middle years

(Cuban, 1992). The interview data also support the assertion in the research literature that practices of inclusion and of exclusion affect how teachers perceive the phenomenon of middle school teaming. The data show that teachers' experience of middle school teaming varied according to the subjects they taught and to participation or non-participation on an interdisciplinary grade level team.

Other organizational aspects may have as much or even more an impact on student performance, achievement, and success (K. M. Brown, et al., 2003; Williamson & Johnston, 1999), as well as on teachers' experiences with teaming because structural adaptations have the potential to malfunction and backfire (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The next section addresses and summarizes teachers' perceptions of the teaming model as an organizational reform at CJS.

Organizational Reform at Centerville Junior School

This study drew upon Bolman and Deal's (2008) multifaceted approach to organizational leadership. From an efficiency-oriented perspective of schools as organizations that are guided by policies and goals, the implementation of teams is a structural approach that should help a school to achieve its goals. Teams of people working together offer their members opportunities that are superior to those that are available when individuals work alone. However, structural changes alone can be counterproductive and neglect the organizational complexity of schools as political and social arenas in which decisions made at the top to improve organizational performance often affect an organization's members in ways other than originally intended. Interdisciplinary teaming in middle schools has as intended outcomes improved decision-making, increased opportunities for professional growth and support, supportive induction practices, and instructional effectiveness that is superior to that which can be achieved alone. However, teaming may lead to a set of circumstances, or unintended outcomes, that do not necessarily meet its proponents' expectations. This section of this chapter discusses some of the

ramifications of structural change from the perspective of both team and non-team teachers at CJS.

Professional Growth Opportunities

Working together in teams, core subject teachers were supposed to have increased opportunities for professional growth, but the interview data showed that they were somewhat divided on the issue. When asked about opportunities for professional development, the core team teachers at CJS did not specify any opportunities to which they were exposed that were particular to their team status. Laura spoke much more about the process by which teachers at CJS experienced within-district professional development district-wide. Rachel mentioned that curriculum supervisors were "extremely supportive" of teachers pursuing professional development opportunities. Seemingly, then, teachers were encouraged to attend workshops and conferences that were of personal interest or directly related to the subjects they taught.

Only Leslie really described the use of the team structure as a means for teachers to grow professionally. As part of the teaming model whereby teachers met daily to pool their strengths, professional development might be encouraged and even required for teachers working together in teams, according to Leslie. However, she contrasted the team experience in her previous district to her experience in Centerville. Before coming to CJS, Leslie was accustomed to "predetermined" team goals, activities, and professional development. She found that teaming was "loosely structured" at CJS. As it was with her colleagues' descriptions of the teaming experience, professional development was conspicuously absent from her description of teaming at CJS. Instead, core team teachers' conversations dwelled on the daily obligations and responsibilities of teams: student concerns, parent contact, and sometimes cross-curricular lessons. Team leaders like Kory, Laura, Nicole, and Olivia focused on their primary role as liaisons between the core subject teacher teams and the specials and special education teachers.

In a reformed model of middle school instruction in which teams of teachers work together, teaming should contribute to efforts at providing teachers opportunities to grow professionally. However, interview data showed that teams did not automatically provide these types of opportunities within the context of team meetings or within the school day. The professional development goals of teaming became lost in the day-to-day details of what could be accomplished within shorter time spans. Findings from this study support other research on the persistence of weak collegial relations that perpetuate the status quo in teaching (Little, 1990). After the initial implementation of teaming and enthusiastic efforts at preparing and training teachers and school leaders, the teaming model may quickly revert to and, in fact, bolster past individualistic and non-transformative teaching practices, as discussed in the extant research on teaming (Kain, 2001; Williamson & Johnston, 1999).

The collegiality and collaboration of teaming may be enough to provide teachers emotional support (Erb, 1987), a greater sense of power and control (Arhar, et al., 1988), reduced teacher stress (Gatewood & Mills, 1975), and increased feelings of job satisfaction (Johnston, et al., 1988). However, unless intentionally designed to do otherwise, teacher collaboration through teaming may be insufficient to result in high rates of professional growth that lead to curricular innovation or in teachers who confront patterns of practices that have accumulated over time. The implication is that teaming alone may be insufficient to bring about the type of professional growth that may transform instructional practices.

If the positive effect of the teaming structure on the professional growth of those who participate on teams is tenuous, it is nonexistent for those non-core subject teachers who did not participate on teams. District-wide professional development opportunities at CJS were available for teachers based on their teaching discipline or personal interests, according to the

interview data. However, non-core subject teachers questioned the applicability of these opportunities to teachers of all subject areas. It was their perception that participation on a team afforded core subject teachers far more relevant professional development opportunities. In fact, some non-core teachers felt that the entire middle school program was geared toward the core subject teachers. When discussing how she felt excluded from the whole school program, the art teacher Lana said, "You know who's important here!" Core subject team teachers did not see it this way. They felt that opportunities for professional growth were available "whether you were core or non-core," in the words of Laura, the 7th grade team leader. Rachel also felt that teaching discipline did not affect teachers' opportunities. However, non-core subject teachers had a different perspective, which supports the research literature on the experience of those teachers who are excluded from the team (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998).

This dissertation has shown that the benefit of the teaming model to the professional growth and support of teachers is highly dependent upon how teams are implemented. Non-core teachers were excluded from the teaming structure that might have provided teachers opportunities for professional growth. Although the core subject team teachers did not report much in the way of professional growth directly related to teaming and did not perceive team participation as exclusionary in terms of professional growth and support, it was the perception of non-core subject teachers that non-participation on a team resulted in unequal opportunity. These perceived inequities persisted in terms of support opportunities for new teachers, which is the subject to which this section now turns.

Support Network for New Teachers

The advantages of participation on an interdisciplinary team for team teachers begin early according to the extant literature on middle school reforms that include interdisciplinary teams

(Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005; Little, 1990). Findings from this dissertation support this research on induction for new teachers at the middle level. Every core team teacher who participated in this study mentioned the positive benefits associated with participation on a team. Whether new to the district and a recent benefit of the team participation (like Leslie), at a mid-point in their career and able to reminisce about their early years at CJS and their current perspective as team members (like Laura, Kory, and Rachel), or winding down in their teaching years and reporting their supportive role for new teachers at CJS (Nicole and Olivia), core subject team teachers spoke positively about teaming for new teachers. Core team teachers reported that the collegiality and camaraderie fostered by the team experience provided an emotional and professional support network. A teacher like Laura whose pre-service preparation included high school student teaching was able to contrast her middle school induction experience with her high school teaching experience, reporting that the participation on a team afforded her a support network that was not available at the high school.

The non-core subject teachers were divided on this issue. Two teachers (Lana and Nora) highlighted the lack of support that they sensed when they were new to CJS, as well as a lack of support for new non-core subject teachers who were just beginning at CJS. Nora, for one, never mentioned any type of support network in place for herself or for other language teachers. As a Spanish teacher in a department of several language teachers, Nora emphasized that non-core subject teachers primarily provided support very individually within their own department. The art teacher Lana felt that it was up to the individual; and the support one found was highly dependent on a new teacher's personality. The physical education teacher Kerry also portrayed the support network one encountered to be dependent on the degree to which one extended herself to network with other teachers at the building.

Other non-core teachers held that the teaming structure was beneficial for all teaching staff. Two of these teachers who were also team leaders of the specials and special education teams (Sophia and Kaitlyn) reported a perspective that was similar to that of the core subject teachers (four of whom were team leaders themselves). Sophia and Kaitlyn felt that the induction benefits of teaming extended to those who did not participate on the grade level teams. However, these two teachers were also the team leaders of the specials and special education teams and emphasized the potential contact they had with the grade level team leaders at a weekly meeting with the principal and/or assistant principal of CJS. Sophia said that she did not focus on her exclusion from participation on the teams and said that her non-core teacher colleagues who were not the team leader might desire team participation. The interview data indicated that status–and contact with other teachers and a regular or semi-regular basis–did affect teacher perception of the teaming structure. Kerry, Lana, and Nora sensed that the core team teachers had a support network to which they as non-core teachers did not belong or, at least, did not have easy access to. The specials and special education team teachers Sophia and Kaitlyn did not mention it as an inequitable practice.

Structural Supports for Teaming

In addition to differences in professional growth opportunities, there were even more glaring differences between the core subject team teachers of the grade level interdisciplinary teams and the non-core subject teachers of the specials and special education teams. When modifications are made in an organization's structure to bring about improvements in efficiency, performance, or productivity, structural supports must also be put into place to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The implementation of teaming at middle schools is no exception. The collaboration engendered by teaming at middle schools can only occur if teams of teachers are afforded the opportunity to work together to improve their

instructional effectiveness, both individually and collectively. Common planning is typically one of the structural supports put into place to make the middle school teaming structure work according to the literature (Erb & Doda, 1989; Flowers, et al., 2000, 2003; Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Huber, 1991; Louis, 1994; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Spies, 2001; Warren & Muth, 1995). Common planning, or "team time," was a feature of the middle school teaming model at CJS. However, there were several issues associated with the way in which common planning time was available to groups of teachers at CJS: (a) core subject team teachers and non-core subject teachers were never assigned common planning time during which to meet with each other, (b) core subject team teachers were isolated by their grade level, and (c) non-core subject teachers on the specials and special education teams were not assigned common planning time during which to meet.

Collaboration between core and non-core teachers. In the present study, core subject team teachers all spoke highly of the time they shared with their colleagues. They reported that they felt that their practice was either somewhat or significantly improved as a result of working together with other teachers; and they attributed the ability to work together to a common planning and preparation period. They mentioned the variety of ways in which teamwork improved their instructional effectiveness: "cross-curricular" activities and lessons, the opportunity to compare their teaching experiences with those of their colleagues, support for new colleagues and new teachers, the sharing of materials and ideas, etc.

However, collaboration with the non-core teachers who did not participate on the grade level interdisciplinary teams and who did not share the common planning and preparation period with team teachers was minimal or non-existent. Every core team teacher who participated in this study reported that it was difficult or impossible to collaborate with these colleagues. Non-

core subject teachers confirmed these difficulties associated with attempts at collaborating with their team teacher colleagues. Core team subject teachers and non-core subject teachers alike said it was a "function of the schedule" and school design and school layout (see Figure **3** on page 104).

Opinions were mixed on how problematic these issues were for teachers' daily practice. Some core teachers minimized the importance of meeting with their non-core colleagues. One core subject teacher (Rachel) even called it a "hiccup" of the schedule. Some core teachers, like Rachel, believed that there was a lack of willingness on the part of her non-core teacher colleagues. Others who were in positions of team leadership (Kory, Laura, Nicole and Olivia) were more sympathetic. They reported that they did the best they could in their leadership roles to maintain the lines of communication with their non-core colleagues, but they ultimately blamed the schedule and school layout. Nevertheless, the fact remained that non-core subject teachers were "out of the loop" because they were not afforded time to meet with the core subject teachers, confirming that the lack of common planning time is a frequent problem for non-core subject teachers (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998).

Non-core subject teachers could meet with the core teachers during a parent meeting if they desired, but only if they found coverage for their own classes that they were teaching when the meeting occurred. Responsibility for finding coverage lay mostly with the non-team teachers, according to the interview data. Core team teachers and team leaders felt that the non-core subject teachers were responsible for finding the time and coverage for their classes. The non-core teachers felt similarly and therefore felt that it was too difficult for them to attend meetings with parents. So, whereas some core teachers perceived a lack of willingness on the

part of non-core teachers, the non-core teachers sensed an inequitable distribution of responsibilities that was a "function of the schedule."

Collaboration among non-core teachers. Interview data and documents reviewed during this study showed that common planning time was only available to core subject teachers who participated on grade level interdisciplinary teams, despite claims from the school website to the contrary (Centerville Public Schools, n.d.-b). Findings from this dissertation confirm what is reported in the extant research on the effects of teaming. The lack of common planning time is a frequent problem for teachers of exploratory subject areas who are often excluded from collaboration in a team setting (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). Interview data and a review of school schedules and other school documents at CJS also revealed that students were deliberately scheduled to be with non-core subject teachers so that team teachers were able to meet and collaborate during a common planning preparation and planning period known as team time, which had implications for non-core subject teachers' perceptions of their instructional effectiveness.

There was some resentment on the part of some of the non-core teachers. Kaitlyn said that she and her special education team were left to meet before or after school, if at all. Lana considered herself and her colleagues "misfits" who didn't "fit in anywhere else." And Sophia perceived that the "grass was greener" for other teachers. These were teachers who might otherwise have taken advantage of common planning and preparation time but who were not able to simply because of the subject matter that they taught. In addition, they were not able to meet with each other unless they used their common lunchtime or met before or after school. Whereas common planning time was built into the school day for core subject team teachers and part of

their daily responsibilities, it was perceived as less important for teachers of other subject areas. The implication was that it was not necessary for non-core subject teachers to have the time to meet with colleagues, which is simply not true. Teamwork is beneficial for all individuals within an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

  Inter-team collaboration. Common planning time, though beneficial to the core team subject teachers, had its disadvantages as well, according to participants in this dissertation. The focus of the teaming model has so often been what is good for a team of teachers and their students. However, little attention is paid to the larger school community and all of the teachers and all of the students. This dissertation confirmed previous findings: common time for teachers leads to less time available for the whole faculty to collaborate on some of the same issues that are discussed within the teams (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Teachers at CJS reported inter-team isolation. Rachel, who was the only teacher to have participated on teams of more than one grade level during her time at CJS, said that she was unable to collaborate with language arts teachers in other grade levels because her planning time was limited to class periods during which only teachers of her grade level were free. The inability to collaborate and bring about change in other grade levels was one of the reasons she expressed a desire to change grade levels at one point. Core subject team teachers (e.g., Laura, science; Rachel, language arts) also often found it difficult to collaborate with their counterparts on the other grade level teams. As found in the extant literature on the drawbacks of teaming (Little, 1990), the team structure at CJS did little to improve collaboration with teachers of the same subject areas and, in fact, inhibited it. Findings from this dissertation, then, confirm that while middle school reform efforts aimed at improving the educational experience of young adolescents privileged interdisciplinary teamwork between teachers, it precluded a departmental emphasis, efforts at vertical articulation

between the grade levels, and any collaboration with individuals other than those with whom one was assigned to work as part of a interdisciplinary team. The importance of academic departments and efforts at strengthening their programs may have suffered at CJS because of the interdisciplinary team emphasis. With the value of academic departments reported in the extant literature on responsive practices in middle schools (Erb & Doda, 1989; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991), the overall school program at CJS might have been improved simply by valuing collaborative work between *all* teachers. School leadership that provides the time and organizational support for all teachers to work in teams and for teams to work together with other teams is important in school restructuring efforts (Kain, 1997a).

Collaboration and morale. While teaming may have fallen short of its intended outcomes in terms of providing the professional growth opportunities envisioned by the middle school teaming model, the interview data from this research supported claims that teaming and teacher collaboration provided the emotional and moral support described in the extant literature (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989). All of the core team teachers reported a positive experience with the teamwork and collaboration engendered by the teaming structure as it was implemented at CJS. They felt that the teams provided personal support that they might not have had if they did not meet to work together as a team. Core team teachers reported that they looked forward to seeing their colleagues at team meetings. Rachel said that it just made her "feel better." Laura said that she would not be the teacher she is today if not for the teams of which she was a part through the years. These positive perceptions are not to be minimized because support between teachers is a powerful force in sustaining teachers during the challenging times of stress and difficulty (Hargreaves, 1998).

These are hopeful findings for the implementation of teaming. However, teamwork and collaboration may have unintended outcomes, as well. Collaboration that is comfortable and overly based on personal closeness or emotional support has the potential to derail attempts at transforming professional practice (de Lima, 2001; Erb & Doda, 1989; Hargreaves, 2001). It has the potential to have effects that are opposite of those that are intended. Potential unintended outcomes must be carefully considered in the implementation and design of teams. For instance, the practices of inclusion that create teams of teachers have the potential to exclude others and lead to feelings of job dissatisfaction and low levels of morale because of separation and isolation due to uniqueness of teaching field (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Findings from this dissertation do not entirely confirm these claims. At CJS, non-core subject teachers were excluded from the interdisciplinary teams. They expressed varying levels of frustration with assignment to the specials and special education teams. However, none of the non-core teachers expressed specific dissatisfaction with their job or low levels of morale. Therefore, it could be said that the unintended outcomes of teaming vary as well.

It is impossible to know whether these would be the circumstances at CJS if teaming were not in place. It is equally impossible to know whether these core and non-core teachers would have had the same experience if the teaming structure had not been in place at CJS. All of the teachers spoke highly of the professionalism that existed at CJS. Since this study privileges a constructivist ontology that argues that individuals who experience a phenomenon of interest construct their realities, it is equally possible that individual personalities contributed to the core teachers' positive perception of teaming and to the non-core teachers' mixed feelings about teaming. Except for one, all of the teachers had good things to say about the school administrators' role in the teaming model, despite occasional frustrations with the model itself.

Because school administrators have a great deal of influence over the implementation and design of teams at their schools, this section now turns to a discussion of the role of leadership.

Leadership

Teachers described the role of leadership in the structuring and restructuring of teams at CJS. Although they were generally supportive of their administrators, they often questioned the wisdom of some of the decisions made at the top that influenced their ability to successfully perform their jobs as teachers. One teacher (Leslie) felt that teachers had little voice over the role they played in the team model and, specifically, their team affiliation. Interview data showed that this was not always the case. At CJS, teachers have had influence over their team and grade level assignment. Rachel was able to successfully influence her transition to the 8th grade and then her transition back to the 7th grade when she was unhappy in the 8th grade. Leslie also sensed that administrative decisions were made to restructure teams that were often detrimental to the success of teams, saying that successful teams are often broken up so that their members can be reassigned to improve the performance of less successful teams. However, with little experience at CJS compared to her team colleagues, she may have been generalizing from her past experiences with teaming prior to teaching at CJS.

But Leslie was not alone in questioning the wisdom of the decisions made by the principal with regard to teachers' assignments to teams. Other teachers, too, questioned the seemingly constant shuffling and reshuffling of staff members. Teachers expressed that they understood why administrators tried to "balance personality types," but one teacher (Kory) expressed that efforts to "balance personality types" were not always particularly successful. It led to a lack of consistency and an inability to forge long-lasting working relationships that would be beneficial to instructional effectiveness, teacher professional growth, and teacher camaraderie. However, team composition and the movement of teachers was only revealed to be

a shortcoming in leadership design by an 8th grade teacher (Kory). Other team teachers in the 6th grade (Nicole and Olivia) and in the 7th grade (Laura) did not report any disappointment with the role of leadership in team design in their teams. However, a colleague (Rachel) who had worked in both 7th and 8th grade teams only expressed disappointment with team composition when she worked in the 8th grade. During that one year, she was unhappy with the composition of the 8th grade teams. She believed that the principal hoped that her placement in the 8th grade would be a positive change for the 8th grade teams. According to Rachel, it was not; and she quickly returned to the 7th grade team of which she had been a part. This suggests that school leaders may be unable to overcome teams that are dysfunctional simply by moving people around. The implication is that more is needed for teams to be successful, which confirms that teams must be designed and prepared for success (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993) and is the subject of the following section.

Leadership and team preparation. A second implication is that teachers must be prepared to be part of teams and teamwork (Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, et al., 2004; Pounder, 1998; Spies, 2001). Teachers had different perceptions of team success. Kory and Rachel focused on the need for relationships in which people got along and worked well together. Rachel emphasized that team success and teacher experience with teaming was dependent on the people who made up the teams and not a "function of the team model" itself. On the other hand, Laura emphasized the need for professional relationships that embrace constructive conflict. She valued disagreement and divergent thinking. Whereas Rachel never mentioned attainment of team or school goals as a criterion for evaluating her experience with teaming, Laura said her team was successful as long as everyone worked hard to "get things

done" and "do what's best for the kids." Findings from this dissertation show that teachers had varying expectations of the team experience.

Teacher leadership within the teams is also an issue for leadership, according to the literature (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Erb & Doda, 1989; Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001) and as revealed by this dissertation. Four of the six team teachers recruited for this dissertation were team leaders. Additionally, two of the five non-core subject teachers were the leaders of their specials and special education teams. None of the six team leaders mentioned any specific training or preparation for this position. Instead, they expressed varying degrees of frustration with this position for which they were chosen. Two team leaders (Laura and Kory) said that it was a position that most teachers didn't want to take on. This could be because they did not understand their roles as leaders of the teams. They enumerated a list of team leadership duties, which confirmed that team leadership is often seen as a position of clerical leadership (Erb & Doda, 1989; Kain, 1997b; Merenbloom & National Middle School Association, 1986; Porod, 1993; Whitford & Kyle, 1984). All of them mentioned that it was a position that individuals often fell into or were requested to fill by the school principal. Once again, as in the case of all team reform efforts, individuals must be invested in and committed to their new roles, including that of team leader. Without the appropriate guidance and leadership by school leaders, team leadership was described as bureaucratic and managerial and never as visionary and empowering. This is a powerful distinction drawn by Kain (1997b) in the research literature on team leadership and teacher collaboration.

To summarize, whether teachers who work in teams experience the transformative experience described in the literature on teamwork (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990) is as dependent on how well teachers are prepared to work together in groups

as how well they are matched in terms of personalities and teaching philosophies and styles. Preparing teachers to work together in teams and carefully designing these teams can be the difference between collegial relationships that have the power to promote change (de Lima, 2001) and "comfortable collaboration" (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 505) that often sustains the status quo.

These ongoing changes to team composition reflect the administration's attempts to carefully select the parties involved in collaborative efforts (Mintzberg, et al., 1996). The fact that the administrative team at CJS was often restructuring teams according to the interview data shows that the staffing of teams was, as suggested by existing research on teaming, a primary concern for these school leaders (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998). Nevertheless, results from this dissertation indicate, then, that leadership decisions play a role in teachers' perceptions of team success in terms of instructional effectiveness, teacher collaboration and camaraderie, and how teams made teachers feel about where they worked. Some teachers perceived that their teams were less successful than they should or could have been because of decisions made at the top. These perceptions also confirm previous research (K. M. Brown, et al., 2003; Burnaford, 1993) that asserts that the teaming model must involve teachers who are invested in the model and who feel they have influence over and comprehension of the team process.

Leadership and exclusion. Leadership decisions also affected non-core subject teachers who were not part of the grade level interdisciplinary teams. At CJS, teachers were keenly aware of the distinction between core subject teachers and non-core subject teachers. Every core team teacher who participated in this study mentioned the exclusion of non-core subject teachers, often calling them "specials" or "electives." Perceptions varied, but team teachers generally felt

the exclusion of non-core teachers from their team structure was a "function of the schedule." The way in which teaming excluded teachers of exploratory and non-core subject areas is consistent with much of the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). To combat the exclusion, non-core subject teachers were members of specials and special education teams at CJS. School leaders appointed team leaders for the non-core subject areas to fulfill roles as facilitators, teacher representatives, and liaisons between teachers, the core teams, administrators and parents, as described the literature on teaming (Erb & Doda, 1989). These team leaders were invited to attend monthly team leader meetings with the principal and assistant principal. However, interview data showed that non-core subject area teachers still sensed a divide between themselves and their core subject teacher colleagues. Non-core team leaders did not fulfill the same responsibilities as their core team leaders colleagues. While these attempts by leadership to mitigate exclusionary practices are consistent with the literature on middle school reform (Jackson & Davis, 2000), they were not enough to overcome other structural deficiencies (e.g., lack of common planning time between teachers and between teams) generated by middle school teaming.

The way in which teaming was implemented at CJS also resulted in segregationist practices for students, as well. Despite protests from teachers at CJS, this research found that special education students were isolated to one team per grade level, while students protected by Section 504 regulations were isolated to the other. This is problematic on several levels. First, the design of teams at CJS resulted in the isolation of students, which runs contrary to the premise of middle school reform (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Second, it left one group of teachers always charged with teaching special education students (the "inclusion team") and another

group always charged with teaching 504-students. Team structuring left teachers to again question the wisdom of leadership decisions. They were not convinced that decisions were being made in the best interest of the students and teachers. Instead, they believed that teaming was implemented in a way that was "easy to manage" and cost-effective. The research on teaming cautions against such practices that detract from the intended purposes of teaming (Clark & Clark, 1993; Felner, et al., 1997). At CJS, however, teaming became the goal instead of a means to support middle level goals. Findings from this dissertation, then, show that middle schools and the teaming model may not always function as intended by their strongest proponents.

Workgroup Effectiveness

Interview data from this dissertation also suggest that several factors affect team and workgroup effectiveness. Several of these have already been mentioned, including the implementation of structural supports to support the teaming model; the role of leadership in preparing teachers and teams to work together; and the ability, skills, interests, and personalities of team members. Other factors contribute to success in the implementation of teams. Teachers (Kory, Olivia, and Nicole) reported that their colleagues were not always committed to participation on the team. They were also aware that teams existed in which members did not contribute equally. These findings support previous research on the most serious hindrances to achieving effective teamwork (Burnaford, 1993; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Erb & Doda, 1989; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Oakes, et al., 1993).

Previous research on workgroup effectiveness also reports that teachers must move beyond dominant forms of privacy that have persisted in the teaching profession and learn to cooperate, share, and collaborate with each other (Burnaford, 1993; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Erb & Doda, 1989; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Oakes, et al., 1993). Findings from this dissertation were inconclusive in this regard. Some teachers were very happy about the collaboration within their

teams (Leslie, Nicole, Olivia) while others expressed that problems existed (Rachel) or the potential for problems existed (Kory and Laura).

In the literature on teamwork and teaming, member participation is reported to be highly influenced by whether teachers are committed to teaming (Crow & Pounder, 2000) and whether teachers are committed to the middle school concept as a whole (Clark & Clark, 1993; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Oakes, et al., 1993). These are issues of preparation for the middle school experience, both during pre-service teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development programs. The former is an issue that has been recognized for years by the literature on middle school (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; de Jong & Chadbourne, 2005, 2007; George & McEwin, 1978; Scales, 1993, 1994; Scales & McEwin, 1994, 1996; Van Til, et al., 1967). Because few of the team teachers who participated in this study had specific pre-service preparation for middle school teaching, this dissertation cannot confirm that pre-service preparation programs avert issues of participation and commitment to teaming. However, data from this study do support other research on the adaptability of elementary teachers who are often less resistant to teaming than teachers from other backgrounds (Main, et al., 2004), including, specifically, high school trained teachers (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Main & Bryer, 2005; Mertens, et al., 2002; Murata, 2002). In this study, teachers with early childhood backgrounds (Leslie, Nicole, and Olivia) reported the fewest issues of unbalanced participation and commitment in their teams. They also reported the most collaboration among this study's participants. (Sophia, who was a non-core subject teacher, also had a background in elementary education; and she was one of the non-core teachers who spoke most positively about the team structure at CJS).

Preparation for teamwork is then left to school leaders and in-service professional development programs, according to the literature on teaming, teamwork, and middle school reform (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Doda, 2009; Main & Bryer, 2005; Trimble & Peterson, 1999; Turk, et al., 2002). However, interview data from this dissertation showed a paucity of preparation for working in teams. Professional development opportunities for team teachers did not focus on teamwork, and opportunities for team leaders did not focus on team leadership. These are sobering findings considering that there is a need for middle school administrative leadership to actively support teachers who are inadequately prepared for middle level teaching (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Main & Bryer, 2005; National Middle School Association, 2001; Oakes, et al., 1993).

Other issues also often hinder workgroup effectiveness. Among these is the potential for teamwork to stray from its intended purpose of improving student outcomes through professional dialogue and growth (Cohen, 1981; Kruse & Louis, 1997). Interview data showed that teams did not always meet daily as they could; teachers often used team time for accomplishing individual tasks instead of for working together; and real professional dialogue and growth was limited to that which could be accomplished within one or two class periods. Team leaders referred to administrative or "clerical" responsibilities that were "stressful." Kory was often at a loss for what his role was as team leader. Kaitlyn (special education team leader), Nicole, and Olivia expressed that they were often expected to take on roles that were previously accomplished by administration, guidance, or by other support staff. The role of team leader evolved from its intended purpose at CJS. Despite all the benefits of teaming (common students, common preparation and planning, common teaching spaces within the building), teaming did not always give rise to the type of effective teamwork that was originally intended. Findings from this

dissertation confirmed that teams are often mismanaged and used for a variety of purposes other than those for which they were intended (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990).

Collegiality and Conflict

There was a general sense of professionalism and collegiality reported by the core team teachers who participated in this study. With few exceptions, core team teachers reported that collegiality was high within the teams. They reported that they got along well with each other: people were friendly, polite, and professional. However, they were well aware that the potential for conflict could be disastrous for teamwork. They cited examples such as negativity among team members, unequal participation of team members, lack of trust, and a reluctance to share materials and collaborate with teammates. The interview data from this dissertation confirm that collaboration does not always give rise to the type of transformative collegiality that its proponents desire (Achinstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005). First, teachers who perceive that their collaboration is overly friendly may establish collegial relationships that consist only of emotional and moral support. These relationships may lack the type of professional dialogue that is able to transform practice and make a real difference in teachers' lives and the lives of their students (Little, 1990). These types of collegial relationships are comfortable relationships that are primarily individualistic and conservative (de Lima, 2001; Erb & Doda, 1989; Hargreaves, 2001).

Second, the potential for conflict is high whenever individuals work together with others, but organizations cannot function without it. This is because conflict may generate creativity and innovation in teamwork that is just not possible when individuals work alone (Achinstein, 2002; de Lima, 2001; Oakes, et al., 1993). However, teachers who consider conflict as a threat to their collegial relationships may perceive that conflict is only counterproductive (Hargreaves, 2001). Teachers at CJS who mentioned conflict felt that it bred resentment and distrust when

teaming should embrace the potential for conflict (Achinstein, 2002). They may have been unable, unwilling, or untrained to perceive the virtues of conflict within collegial relationships. They may have avoided interpersonal conflict that would threaten the "ties that seem to bind their community" (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 523). As a result, those teachers who spoke positively about "collegiality" may have been avoiding confrontation with their peers and with practices and perspectives with whom and with which they did not agree. By avoiding instead of embracing conflict, the teaming model at CJS may have had less than optimal significance for the lives of either students or teachers because the most important areas of self reflection and critical reflection remained untouched by the collaborative practice. Consequently, conflict can undermine attempts at improvement when it is perceived as negative or aberrant (Little, 1990).

Inter-team collegiality was also reported to be somewhat of an issue at CJS by some of the core team teachers who felt that relationships with the larger faculty were problematic. Some team teachers mentioned conflict between teacher teams that sometimes led to a lack of respect and "negative resentment" between teaching staff members. These interview data confirm that teachers who cite their teams as their primary form of identification with a larger school community may have difficulty identifying with colleagues not on their team (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Conflict between teams is common (Ehman, 1995), especially when teachers on one team or teams come to resent the influence, respect, or working relationships that another team has. While such inter-team conflict may erode a school wide sense of purpose according to the research literature (Kruse & Louis, 1997), data from this dissertation do not prove this to be an issue at CJS.

Non-core subject teachers who did not participate on the interdisciplinary grade level teams described similar positive experiences with their workplace environment. Moreover, they

did not report conflict that would impair collaboration and teamwork. However, their time to collaborate was limited or non-existent, according to the interview data. The formation of collegial relationships and any type of conflict between non-core teachers was necessarily limited. Furthermore, the way in which teaming was structured at CJS inhibited the potential for constructive conflict that was provided to the core subject team teachers who were afforded time to meet daily. As a result, non-core teachers did not mention collegial relationships amongst themselves that would contribute to professional growth and improvement in knowledge and skills. Once again, they experienced exclusion from the benefits of the teaming structure because they were not part of the core subject teams and not afforded time during which to meet with each other. These findings confirm the effects of the lack of team collaboration time for non-core subject teachers who are usually engaged in teaching the core team teachers' students (Erb & Doda, 1989) so that the core team teachers can meet in their teams.

Despite the lack of common planning time for non-core teachers and the lack of time for core and non-core teachers to meet with each other at CJS, there was relatively little to no conflict reported between the core and non-core teachers as a result of the teaming model. Instead, non-core teachers mentioned feelings of inequity and exclusion that led to feelings of isolation from their colleagues, which will be addressed in the section on the effects of teaming on the social system at CJS.

Summary of Teacher Perceptions of Organizational Reform

It is impossible to know whether these teachers would have had the same experience with middle school reform if the teaming structure had not been in place at CJS. They all spoke highly of the professionalism that existed at CJS. Since this study privileged a constructivist ontology that argues the individuals who experience a phenomenon of interest construct their realities, it is equally possible that individual personalities contributed to the core teachers'

positive perception of teaming with regard to new teacher induction. Nevertheless, whether entirely reality, entirely personal perception, or somewhere in between, teaming was neither an organizational failure nor a magic bullet for organizational success.

The Social System at Centerville Junior School

This dissertation was also designed to explore whether a reformed middle school setting with interdisciplinary teaming as its cornerstone practice affected the social system at a school and whether it helped to meet both teachers' professional and social needs. In addition to being a social situation for students, schools are also social situations for teachers because various classes of personnel must work together (Sarason & Klaber, 1985). This is especially true in middle schools that implement the teaming structure in which people with different backgrounds, perspectives, and subject matter specializations come together to contribute to the growth of other team members and the overall strength of the team and the school (Erb & Doda, 1989). Although schools may differ, their teachers must develop, maintain, and navigate both individually and collectively interpersonal relationships that have bearing on both their personal and professional needs. However, interdependent members of groups in schools do not always reap the same benefits from the team structure in schools (Gump, 1980). Therefore, this section of the chapter will discuss how teachers at CJS felt the social situation at their school helped to meet their professional and social needs.

Inequity & Exclusion

Team membership has been shown to help teachers feel included and connected with their colleagues (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Mills, et al., 1992) and help establish a perception of equity amongst teachers. Findings from this research show this to be the case amongst core team teachers at CJS who reported collegial relationships that they perceived to provide emotional and personal support and to help them improve their instructional

effectiveness and the lives of their students. However, the implementation of teaming at CJS resulted in non-core subject teachers who felt they were less important and less valuable than their core team teacher colleagues. Feeling that colleagues considered her "less of a teacher" and "fluff," a non-core teacher explained that she sensed that her colleagues felt the non-core subject teachers did not work as hard as everyone else. Non-core teachers sensed that the team structure tended to "privilege" certain subject areas and the people who taught them. While the non-core subject teachers were divided on the extent to which this stratification of teachers hampered their professional practice and their contribution to the school community as a whole, they nonetheless were aware that there was a striking difference between teachers of core and non-core subjects.

These findings substantiate previous research that indicates that the experience of teachers who are excluded from teaming may be very different from that of teachers who are included in teaming (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998). If membership on a team is to help teachers feel included and perceive a sense of equity (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Mills, et al., 1992), exclusion from the team has the potential to result in outcomes that conflict with middle school reform efforts to bring teachers of different backgrounds, perspectives, and subject matter specializations together to contribute to the growth of teachers and the overall strength of the school (Erb & Doda, 1989).

There were several sources for the feelings of exclusion at CJS. Non-core teachers reported that it had to do with the way in which school leadership privileged the core teachers and the teams. However, they also sensed that recent accountability movements in education and standardized testing in the core subject areas of language arts and mathematics contributed to increased emphasis on the core subject areas (Dana, et al., 2010; Erb, 2003; Faulkner & Cook, 2006; George, 2008; Meyer, 2005; Turner, 2010). The de-emphasis of exploratory subject areas

and other whole child activities in a complete curriculum in America's middle schools has been a concern for years, according to previous research (Davis, 2001; Doda, 2009; Lounsbury, 2009; Waks, 2002). If exploratory subject areas are peripheral or seen as less important (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Waks, 2002), it is not surprising, then, that teachers of these subjects felt excluded from the complete school program at CJS. This finding supports early claims (Gump, 1980) that some teachers do not prosper in reformed middle school settings, especially those on the periphery of middle school teaming practices (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Smith, et al., 1998).

Taken together, the way in which teaming is implemented in middle schools and the accountability movement in education may tend to privilege, or include, some teachers and thereby contribute to feelings of exclusion amongst other teachers. However, while the outside influence of standardized testing may exacerbate the inequity between the subject areas, it cannot entirely explain the exclusion of non-core subject teachers. Nor can it entirely explain the de-emphasis on exploratory subject areas and whole child activities that were, initially, important aspects of the middle school movement (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; George & Alexander, 2003; Waks, 2002). In fact, if test scores and academic achievement hamper the middle school model's goals of ensuring a complete curriculum that values exploratory and related arts subject areas, then teams should be structured to combat these external pressures. The restructuring of teams and other recommendations for practice are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Feelings of inequity were not limited to the non-core subject teachers, however. Core subject teachers also sensed inequity between the teams that made up the team structure at CJS, largely as a result of identification with their teams. Teachers who tend to cite their teams as

their primary form of identification within the larger school community often have difficulty

identifying with colleagues on other teams (Kruse & Louis, 1997). Team identification has been

found to be problematic in schools with interdisciplinary teams, resulting in conflict (Ehman,

1995) and isolation from others within the school (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Wasley, 1991).

Isolation of both core and non-core teachers will be addressed separately in a later section.

Inequitable Practices

The inequities that existed at CJS were more than symbolic. They also manifested

themselves in the actual work of teachers, according to teachers who participated in this study.

Team leadership was one area in which team leaders (Kory, Laura, Nicole, and Olivia) felt that

additional responsibilities were not always ones that all teaching staff members were willing to

accept. While teachers ideally volunteered for the position, the principal sometimes had to

persuade teachers to take on the role. Kory, Laura, and Nicole reported that the school

administrators often had difficulty filling these team leadership positions, despite a stipend of

about $2,000 as an "incentive." The team leaders' perception was accurate, at least according to

interview data from the two core team teachers who participated in this study who were not team

leaders. Both Leslie and Rachel attributed a great deal of responsibility to their team leaders;

and Rachel revealed that it was a role for which she would never apply.

The specials and special education teams also had team leaders (Sophia and Kaitlyn,

respectively). Sophia accepted the position mid-year after two other individuals had already

been team leader that year; and Kaitlyn disclosed that she came to the position "by default" when

the principal's first choice refused to accept it. Moreover, the inequities between core and non-

core teachers persisted in this leadership, as well. Formalized by the teachers' contract, neither

Sophia nor Kaitlyn received the stipend for any additional work that they performed in their roles

as non-core team leaders. The role of team leader was also structurally different for core and

non-core team leaders. The core team leaders were facilitators and organizers for a team of teachers that met daily or several times a week. They were liaisons between their team members and the school administrators and were required to meet weekly with the principal and/or assistant principal. They organized parent-teacher conferences that were held during team time during the school day and contacted parents on behalf of their team members to organize conferences after school several times per year. On the other hand, the non-core team leaders were leaders of teams that were not required to meet because they were never afforded the time to do so by the schedule. Consequently, the non-core team leaders facilitated very little and instead struggled to fulfill a role as liaison between the other non-core teachers and the core teacher teams, as well as between the non-core teachers and the school administrators when they were not required to attend the team leader meetings with administrators. The teaming model at CJS resulted in a system whereby non-core team leaders did not fulfill the same role and were not entitled to the same benefits as their core team leader colleagues.

Inequity in the work of teachers was not limited to that of team leaders. Core team teachers taught four subject classes and one cycle class per day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Core teachers taught fewer subject classes because they were scheduled to have common planning, or team time, daily. On Wednesdays, they taught an additional advisory period with the same group of students every week. Interview data from non-core teachers showed that non-core teachers taught at least six of their subject classes per day, as well as an additional advisory period on Wednesdays. They perceived that they taught "extra" classes and more "different classes" than their core team teachers. The non-core teachers were engaged in teaching the core team teachers' students while the teams met. The reality is that non-core teachers taught more classes to afford core teachers the time to meet. Common planning time

was reserved uniquely for the core subject team teachers. Some of the teachers felt that it had to be built into the school day in order for it to work as intended and be beneficial. However, non-core teachers were forced to meet before or after school as the specials and special education teams. If they met, it was something that they just agreed to do.

The stratification of teachers was even visible to parents. Interview data showed that daytime parent conferences were scheduled with team teachers. Non-core teachers would be "invited" but only rarely attended. The implication of this structure, as perceived by one of the non-core teachers (Lana), is that parents will consider non-core classes "low priority" in their children's academic program. However, the de-emphasis of non-core subjects begins for parents as early as 5th grade. A presentation to parents of incoming 5th graders (Centerville Public Schools, 2012b) advertised that the team model provided teachers the time to meet and work together daily. However, interview data showed that the reality was quite different. Team leaders in the 6th grade (Nicole and Olivia) said that core subject team teachers were often present at the orientation, but non-core subject teachers were not and possibly only "mentioned." Findings from this research show that the teaming structure at CJS perpetuates an increased emphasis on the core subject areas as focal points of the middle school curriculum while other subject areas–and their teachers–are relegated to second-class status.

Isolation

The way in which teaming was structured at CJS also led to isolation. Previous research has shown that team membership does not always reduce feelings of isolation and does not always meet the belonging needs of all of an organization's participants because collaboration can be exclusionary (Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Mills, et al., 1992; Mintzberg, et al., 1996; Smith, et al., 1998). As reported in the literature, isolation manifested itself in two ways at CJS. Both core and non-core teachers experienced isolation.

In middle schools, collaboration usually includes teachers of the core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies; and teachers of foreign languages, related arts, physical education, and special education are left out (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Ehman, 1995; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). As result, non-core subject teachers reaped far fewer benefits from the team structure than their core subject teacher colleagues. The ways in which non-core teachers miss out are discussed throughout this conclusion: lack of common planning time, little to no opportunities for professional growth and development; few opportunities for constructive conflict that can transform practice, etc. However, the non-core teachers sensed that they were isolated from their colleagues as a result of teaming. In Nora's words, they were "very separate…very different." Lana felt that she was on her own and "out of the loop." The specials team of which she was a part was a "team of misfits" who "don't fit in anywhere else." In addition, they were physically isolated, teaching at opposite ends of the buildings and different floors, while the core subject team teachers generally taught in classrooms that were in the same hallway, if not directly next to each other (see Figure **3** on page 104).

While a symbiotic relationship between organizational and individual needs may improve motivation (Maslow, 1954) and self-actualization (Maslow & Frager, 1987) amongst the organization's members, the non-core teachers gave no indication that exclusion or isolation hindered their attempts at improving instructional effectiveness, fulfilling their sense of job satisfaction, or meeting their individual needs. They did not report emotional detachment either or low morale that was reported in the literature (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). For the non-team teachers, there was an overwhelming sense of being undervalued as a result of exclusion and isolation. The inclusion in a team that helps to counter feelings of isolation through emotional

and professional support reported in the literature (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Mills, et al., 1992) was not present amongst the non-core teacher participants in this study. However, these findings do not minimize the importance of inclusion on a team when teaming is implemented. All the core team teachers who participated in this study reflected on how team membership (and experiences with teamwork and collaboration) had a positive influence on their sense of personal and professional satisfaction and their sense of emotional well-being. Teachers like Kory and Rachel, who had experienced non-participation on teams as non-core teachers and subsequently participation on the 8th and 7th grade teams, both indicated that they much preferred being a part of the team structure. These findings support claims that inclusion on teams is a powerful variable in supporting the personal and professional lives of teachers. As a result, the question is not whether teaming counters feelings of isolation and inequity. Instead, the question is whether teaming benefits all members of the school community or just those smaller groups of teachers who part of the teams. Up until now, much of the literature on teaming has neglected teaming's impact on the larger school community (Kruse & Louis, 1997) and focused, instead, on smaller groups of teachers who are part of the teams (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005; Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Flowers, et al., 1999; Gatewood, et al., 1992; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Strahan & Hedt, 2009; Wallace, 2007). Findings from this dissertation show that more emphasis needs to be placed on the experience of all members of a teaching staff when decisions are made regarding the implementation, design, or maintenance of teams at the middle school level.

Summary of Teacher Perceptions of the Social System

This section has summarized how CJS was a social system for teachers. It has explored teachers' relationships with colleagues and whether interdependent individuals and the team

structure in middle schools resulted in their intended outcomes for teachers. Findings from this dissertation show that the teaming structure in middle schools is highly dependent on teachers' team or non-team status. The next section of this conclusion chapter will briefly address the research questions, after which the discussion will turn to implications for policy, practice, and future research.

Addressing the Research Questions

This qualitative dissertation focused on one main research question, with a number of subquestions. The primary focus of this dissertation was to provide answers to the question *How do middle school teachers experience the phenomenon of interdisciplinary teaming?* While the previous sections of this chapter addressed the findings from this dissertation in light of the current research on middle school reform and the interdisciplinary teaming model, this section serves as an abbreviated conclusion to this dissertation by detailing the findings specific to each subquestion.

    a.   What is the experience of team and non-team teachers in terms of collegiality, collaboration, and conflict?

All of the teachers reported that they felt that they had professional relationships with their colleagues. However, these professional relationships may have been weak collegial relationships that did little more than perpetuate the status quo of individualistic and non-transformative teaching (Kain, 2001; Little, 1990; Williamson & Johnston, 1999). Core team teachers revealed little evidence that working in teams led to professional growth amongst the teams; and non-core team teachers had few to no opportunities to develop collegial relationships that might lead to professional growth opportunities in the specials and special education teams.

Nevertheless, the teachers who perceived collegial relationships with their colleagues seemed to be experiencing a heightened sense of emotional support (Erb, 1987) and increased feelings of job satisfaction (Johnston, et al., 1988). Team teachers generally attributed their positive experience to their teamwork with colleagues. They felt that the collaboration engendered by teaming was beneficial to both themselves and their students. In terms of teacher benefit, team teachers felt that it fostered a camaraderie that provided an emotional and professional support network, especially for new teachers, which supported previous research on the advantages of team participation for team teachers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005; Little, 1990).

However, findings from this study show that collaboration between the teams was less fruitful. Opportunities for the whole faculty to collaborate were in short supply and often only available during occasional faculty meetings that might be dedicated to issues of horizontal and vertical articulation between the teams. The team structure emphasized collaboration between the teachers of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies that were assigned to meet together. The way in which teaming was structured at CJS occasionally allowed for a grade level team to meet the other grade level team, but it did little to encourage either departmental collaboration between teachers of the same subject areas and or collaboration with individuals other than those with whom one was assigned to work as part of a team.

Non-core teachers experienced collaboration differently. They were less likely to experience the advantages of team participation because they felt that they had little to no opportunity to collaborate. They were not members of teams of teachers who were afforded time to build collegial relationships and develop the type of camaraderie reported by the core team teachers. The practice of excluding teachers at CJS supports previous research into the

difficulties that teachers of exploratory subject areas experience when they are excluded from collaboration in a team setting (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998). Consequently, non-core teachers shared that their collaboration was limited to interactions they had in passing, unless they chose to meet before or after the school day or to collaborate "during lunch."

Neither the core team teachers nor the non-core teachers reported significant levels of collaboration with the other group. Attributing this deficiency to the schedule, core team teachers reported that it was difficult or impossible to collaborate with non-team colleagues because they lacked common space and common time within which to work with their colleagues. Non-core teachers felt that it was difficult for the same reasons; and some reported that it was just not worth the effort.

Despite its shortcomings, the collaboration brought about by the team structure supported teachers at CJS, according to interview data. Findings from this dissertation show that teachers experienced collaboration as a form of emotional and moral support, as described by the research literature (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989). Although collaboration that is overly based on personal closeness or emotional support has the potential to derail transformational teaching practices (de Lima, 2001; Erb & Doda, 1989; Hargreaves, 2001), support between teachers is a powerful force in an emotional practice of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998). Whether the collaboration they experienced transformed their practice was of secondary importance, at least in terms of how they made sense of collaboration.

The teachers who participated in this study had a general sense of harmony at CJS. Teachers were professional, carried out their instructional duties, and collaborated when (or if) they could. Some team teachers mentioned conflict between the teams that sometimes led to

resentment between the teams. They attributed this to various factors, including a need for there

to be differentiation between the goals and outcomes of teams for different grade levels.

However, the collegial relationships that existed between teachers at CJS effectively squelched

conflict. Consequently, there was little opportunity for conflict to generate the creativity and

innovation in teamwork that is reported in the literature (Achinstein, 2002; de Lima, 2001;

Oakes, et al., 1993).

Conflict was not a concern for non-core teachers. With little to no opportunity for non-

core teachers to collaborate with colleagues, there was less likelihood that conflict could impair

their work with each other. However, the area in which non-core teachers experienced conflict

was in how they sensed inequity and isolation from their colleagues. This is the subject of the

second subquestion.

b. How do team teachers perceive non-team teachers, and how do non-team teachers

   perceive team teachers?

Team teachers were generally empathetic for their non-core teacher colleagues. They

realized the inequities and exclusion that existed between the two groups of teachers. Members

of the core teams (Leslie and Rachel) tended to minimize the effect of exclusion. They gave no

indication that the exclusion was their fault. Instead, they attributed the exclusion of non-core

teachers to the schedule. When it came to the non-core teachers, team members effectively

minimized the need for the collaboration to which they were entitled as members of a team. The

team leaders (Kory, Laura, Nicole, and Olivia), on the other hand, were more sympathetic,

recognizing that the non-core teachers worked in isolation as a result of teaching discipline.

Several recognized the potential for loneliness as part of the specials team. All of the core team

teachers also referred to the non-core subject teachers as "specials" or part of the "specials

team." They were aware that participation on the specials and special education teams was not the same as participation on their core grade level interdisciplinary team. They were mostly aware that the non-core teachers did not meet in teams, did not share the same students, and did not have the same opportunities to coalesce with teachers of other core subject areas. However, they did not necessarily perceive that this had resulted in a stratification of teachers at the school.

Although they politely described their core team teacher colleagues as "respectful" and "helpful," the non-core teachers were often envious of the benefits of teaming that were afforded to core team teachers. These included the common planning time that was necessary for teachers to collaborate with and develop collegial relationships with other teachers (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1997; Doda & George, 1999; Erb & Doda, 1989; Gallagher-Polite, 2001; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Smith, Pitkin, & Rettig, 1998). Since they were not sure whether teams met daily as was intended by the schedule, non-core teachers also felt that the core team teachers were entitled to an additional preparation period as a result of daily team time. Non-core teachers felt that core teachers had additional time to prepare lessons and materials and collaborate with colleagues. (In fact, they often did have additional time for preparation, according to core team teachers who reported that their teams only met several times per week, but not every day.)

Consequently, non-core teachers did differentiate between themselves and the core team teachers. Non-participation in the interdisciplinary core teams left some of the non-core teachers feeling that they were less important to the middle school educational program. Non-core subject teachers reported that they felt "out of the loop" and "unaware" of what went on in team meetings. They had to speculate that the teams were "fruitful" with regard to benefitting teachers and their students. They felt "very different."

An art teacher like Lana and a Spanish teacher like Nora largely attributed their deficiencies to the subject they taught at the school. Their perceptions that their disciplines were less integral to the educational program has been shown in the current literature on accountability movements in education (Davis, 2001; Doda, 2009; Lounsbury, 2009; Waks, 2002) and, more specifically, standardized testing in the core subject areas of language arts and mathematics (Dana, et al., 2010; Erb, 2003; Faulkner & Cook, 2006; Meyer, 2005; Turner, 2010). The de-emphasis of exploratory subject areas in the middle school curriculum affected teachers differently. Some felt that they were "less of a teacher." Nora said she had always felt different because she chose to teach Spanish. But others seemed less affected. To differentiate between the core subject and physical education teachers made perfect sense to Kerry.

The ways in which the core and non-core teachers experienced varying levels of collegiality, collaboration, and conflict affected how each group of teachers perceived the other. Participation or non-participation on a team, combined with how the core and non-core teachers perceived each other, also affected how they perceived their own roles in teaming, which is the subject of the next subquestion.

c.   How do team and non-team teachers perceive their own roles in teaming?

Team teachers feel that teaming was beneficial to students. Their role was to oversee and develop close teacher-student relationships with the same core group of students so that they could better plan for, assess, and support their students. They believed that the teaming structure enabled them to develop and implement interdisciplinary lessons for their students that improved the student's overall educational experience. By working with the same set of students, the teachers who worked together on the team sensed they had a "complete picture," according to the team leader Kory, of students' academic, social, and emotional growth. In these ways, their

perceptions of their roles were consistent with the benefits of teaming reported in the research literature (Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mergendoller, 1993; Russell, 1997; Tanner & Tanner, 2007; Thompson & Homestead, 2004).

Core team teachers did not see their role as being limited to meeting students' needs. They also mentioned the role of teaming in the induction of new teaching staff members at CJS. Both new teachers who were benefiting from the support of veteran teachers (e.g., Leslie), as well as veteran teachers who felt it was their place to take new teachers "under their wing," (Nicole and Olivia), felt that providing emotional support to new teachers was part of their role as team members. The way in which they saw their roles in this regard was consistent with research on team camaraderie and emotional support (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005; Little, 1990).

Despite the collaboration and collegiality that they promoted to be instrumental in improving their instructional effectiveness, the core teachers never reported that their role in teaming included work with the non-core subject teachers. They mostly mentioned collaboration with these latter colleagues as idealistic and unrealistic. The teaming structure as it was implemented at CJS fostered a divide in the professional work of teachers, even if they perceived collegial relationships among the staff. Core team teachers were, then, off the hook from establishing working relationships with teachers of non-core subject areas (and sometimes even teachers of other core subject areas if they did not meet with them during "team time"). The organizational structure limited their role within the larger school community and effectively bred "team isolation" (Kruse & Louis, 1997, p. 273).

Non-core teachers were less vocal about their role in teaming. For example, they often described the benefits of teaming for students through the students' contact with their core team

teachers and not themselves. However, they rarely engaged in discussions with the core teachers about students whom they taught. Non-core teachers revealed that they often could not attend meetings with parents because core team teachers arranged to meet with parents when they were engaged in teaching the team's students during team time. They also expressed that they were less aware of what was going on in the school community at large because their opportunities to formally meet with their colleagues were limited to weekly or biweekly faculty meetings organized by school administrators. Taken together, these differences between the core teachers and themselves led them to feel excluded from the team concept.

      d.   What role do the formal leaders of the school play in the phenomenon of interdisciplinary teaming?

Findings from this dissertation indicate that middle school teachers feel that formal school leaders play a significant role in the implementation, design, and maintenance of interdisciplinary teaming. From the teachers (Kaitlyn, Nicole, and Olivia) who revered the former school principal who was instrumental in the transformation of the junior school to the teachers who were concerned about the current principal's approach, interview data showed that school leaders set the tone for how teams work and how they are perceived in their buildings. At CJS, the principal made decisions regarding the composition of team members, according to interview data. Teachers perceived that she attempted to select teachers with complementary skills and personalities to work together, which is consistent with the literature on teaming (Achinstein, 2002; Ball, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, et al., 2004).

School leaders are responsible for preparing teachers to work together in teams, especially in light of the fact that few teachers are specifically trained for middle school teaching and the teaming model (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003;

George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998). The principal at CJS was also responsible for the selection and preparation of team leaders. According to the research on teams (Spies, 2001), schools leaders must carefully choose team leaders who are committed and capable. At CJS, the principal often struggled to find teachers to fill this role and often relied on input from other team leaders to make these selections, according to interview data. When teachers were reluctant to accept the position of team leader, the principal was often left to persuade team members to take on the role of team leader.

According to the literature on teaming and teamwork (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998), school leaders must also ensure that team leaders are adequately prepared for their roles through professional development. However, none of the teachers who were serving as team leaders at the time of this current study reported any specific training for the position of team leader. Evidence for the lack of leadership preparation was found in the interview data when a team leader queried, "What is my role here?"

Findings from this dissertation showed that the school leaders' most important responsibility was to make the schedule. According to interview participants, the principal assigned teachers to grade levels and teams. They also assigned the students to those teams. At CJS, the team teachers generally taught all of the same students. However, the students were divided in such a way that all the special education students in each grade level were assigned to one of the grade level's two teams, while students with 504 plans were assigned to the other team. Teachers perceived that these students were scheduled in this manner because it was easy to organize and manage.

Although the team structure at CJS effectively excluded non-core subject teachers from participation in interdisciplinary teams, the existence of the specials and special education teams was a leadership decision. Unfortunately, findings from this dissertation show that these teams were little more than terms used to describe and conveniently group teachers of non-core subject areas because they were never afforded the time to meet as their core team counterparts were.

At the time of this study, the principal selected team leaders for these specials and special education teams. Once again, unfortunately, findings from this dissertation showed that the specials and special education team leaders (Sophia and Kaitlyn) fulfilled different responsibilities than their core team leader colleagues and did not receive the same compensation for the accepting the position.

In addition to designing the teams, formal school leaders are also responsible for providing direction and guidance, especially with regard to the content of the team meetings and the establishment of team goals (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998). Core team teachers revealed that the principal influenced team agendas. At a weekly meeting with the core team leaders, the principal reviewed the work of the teams and disseminated information that she felt was pertinent to the teams.

Teams were scheduled to meet daily for a full period (46 minutes). However, team leaders and team members alike said that the teams rarely met five times per week. Team leaders said that they tried to expedite team meetings so that their team members would be afforded additional preparation time. According to team leaders, the principal was aware that teams did not always meet daily. As a result of this type of leadership flexibility, non-core teachers' claims that team teachers were entitled to additional preparation time were accurate.

Implications for Policy

Much of this dissertation focused on the ways in which non-core subject teachers'
experiences with teaming differed from core subject teachers' experiences. Findings from this
research highlighted inequities that existed between the two groups of teachers. These are
unfortunate findings given the importance that was to be accorded specialized or exploratory
subject areas when middle school reforms were initially conceived (Carnegie Council on
Adolescent Development, 1989; Clark & Clark, 1994; George & Alexander, 2003; Jackson &
Davis, 2000; Mergendoller, 1993; National Middle School Association, 1982; Russell, 1997;
Tanner & Tanner, 2007; Thompson & Homestead, 2004). Exploratory and related arts programs
were not available in elementary schools (Clark & Clark, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; George
& Alexander, 2003; Waks, 2002); and middle schools were envisioned as an appropriate level in
which these programs would complement the academic focus of the former junior high schools
(Doda & George, 1999). Interview data supported research (Anfara & Brown, 2000; Beane,
1990; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lawton, 1987; Waks, 2002) and showed that non-core teachers
believed that their subject areas were unrelated to other areas of the curriculum and imbalanced
by the emphasis on the academic, or team, subjects.

To combat the exclusion of whole groups of non-core subject teachers, educational policy
must be redefined, especially at the middle level, to emphasize non-core subject areas.
Exploratory and related arts classes must be accorded the respect and importance to which they
were initially entitled in the early days of reformed middle school. Even though NCLB includes
"the arts" as part of a core curriculum ("No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001," 2002),
non-core subjects will continue to be neglected as long as states only emphasize a few tested
subjects (Dana, et al., 2010; Erb, 2003; Turner, 2010). A return to a "complete curriculum"
(Meyer, 2005) that emphasizes non-core subject areas, including the arts and languages, is what

is needed if the middle school model is going to fulfill the rhetoric surrounding the rationale for middle grades reform. The next edition of *Turning Points* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) may no longer need to report that exploratory subjects are seen as less important than other subject areas.

Policy reform at the national and state level may be the catalyst that is necessary to support the inclusion of *all* teachers in the middle school of teaming. When all teachers participate in the teaming model, teams may be better equipped to support the induction (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Bickmore, et al., 2005; Little, 1990), instructional effectiveness (Ehman, 1995; Hargreaves, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990; Mills, et al., 1992; Powell & Mills, 1995; Wasley, 1991), professional growth (Erb, 1987; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1982), and emotional and social needs (Arhar, et al., 1988, 1989; Erb, 1987; Erb & Doda, 1989; Maslow, 1954; Mills, et al., 1992) of all teachers. When all teachers are included in the teaming model and all teachers are afforded time to collaborate and plan together, teams may fulfill claims of being interdisciplinary.

Implications for Practice

Literature on middle school teaming is clear on the normative benefits of teaming. Teaming is part of a comprehensive package of middle school reform practices that must be implemented properly and comprehensively (Epstein, 1990; Erb, 2005; Erb & Doda, 1989; Felner, et al., 1997; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010; Oakes, et al., 1993; Stevenson & Erb, 1998). The implementation of middle school practices is insufficient (Cuban, 1992). Supportive administrative practices are critical to high team functioning and increased student outcomes (Trimble & Peterson, 1999), and, therefore, the conclusion turns to a discussion of the implications of this dissertation's findings on practice.

The implementation of middle school teaming is largely a structural issue for schools as organizations. Findings from this dissertation confirm that school leadership must carefully

consider the staffing of teams, team leadership, staff development opportunities, and the setting

of team goals and expectations when implementing teaming in their schools in order for those

teams to be successful (Clark & Clark, 1994; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003;

George & Anderson, 1989; Kain, 2001; Pounder, 1998).

This dissertation showed that many of the complications associated with teaming arise

from the way in which teachers are scheduled at a middle school. Consequently, school

restructuring efforts must include school leaders who provide time for teachers to work in teams

and for teams to work together (Kain, 1997a, 2001). School leaders must also schedule teachers

in such a way that all teachers can actively participate in the middle school teaming model. All

teachers should have opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues. Just as common

planning time is an organizational support that is needed for core grade level teams (Erb & Doda,

1989; Flowers, et al., 2000, 2003; Flowers, et al., 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Huber, 1991;

Louis, 1994; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Mertens, et al., 2002; Spies, 2001; Warren & Muth,

1995), common planning time is equally necessary for all teachers. A middle school model that

is inclusionary of all a school's teachers increase the likelihood that *all* teachers benefit from the

teaming model.

Once teachers are afforded time during the school day to meet, school leadership must

ensure that all teachers have the same obligation to meet. For example, if teachers are assigned a

daily time during which to meet, school leaders must require that the teachers meet at least once

daily. Interview data from this dissertation showed that some teachers perceived that teams that

did otherwise was a misuse of daily team time. In so doing, all teachers might experience the

same benefits of the teaming model.

The research base on middle school teaming also calls for school leaders to design teams of teachers with complementary personalities and skills (Erb & Doda, 1989; Main, et al., 2004; Pounder, 1998). However, this dissertation showed that school leaders must ensure continuity in the team structure so that teams of teachers can learn and grow together. It confirmed that teachers must feel invested in the team process (K. M. Brown, et al., 2003; Burnaford, 1993). Although school leaders must continually refine the team member selection process, interview data showed that teachers sometimes question the wisdom of yearly changes to team composition. As a result, they may perceive constant change in team composition as a weakness in leadership. School leaders must insist that teachers who are expected to work together have the opportunity to learn and grow together.

Findings from this dissertation also confirm research on teacher preparation for middle level teaching (Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2001): middle school teachers have diverse backgrounds that may not include preparation or training for participation in teams. As a result, middle school leaders must consider that most middle school teachers in the nation have not received specialized preparation at the pre-service level for middle level. They must consider teacher and team preparation when implementing and maintaining teams at the middle level. To this end, they must prepare teachers to work in teams. Furthermore, team preparation is not something that is only done at the outset of teaming in a middle school. Rather, teacher and team training is and must be an ongoing process for teachers who are expected to work together in the team structure. In order for team members to understand the personal and professional benefits from teaming, they must receive ongoing training and support from building administration and teammates in order to commit to and invest in the group process (Main & Bryer, 2005).

In the same manner, middle school leaders must consider team leadership because the establishment of roles is critical to team success (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Team leaders play an important role as facilitators and liaisons (Erb & Doda, 1989). Therefore, school leaders must carefully select individuals for this role who are capable and committed. This was problematic at CJS because team members were reluctant to take on this responsibility. Those who did questioned their role. Some struggled with communication. Others found it difficult to avoid fulfilling a supervisory role. Interview data from this research support the need for school leaders to establish the purpose and goals of team leadership. In so doing, they may maximize the potential of the team leadership position and change it from one that is primarily bureaucratic to one that is transformative (Kain, 1997b)

Implications and Recommendations for Centerville Junior School

Centerville teachers perceived that middle school reform efforts, along with the inception of interdisciplinary teaming, "turned the school around." And to some degree, these reforms probably did so. However, this dissertation sought to elucidate some of the unintended outcomes of the new "philosophy" that made its way into CJS in the early 2000s. This section first summarizes some of the major contradictions that existed between what middle school teaming is designed to achieve and what occurred at this particular location. Second, it makes some suggestions for administrators that might make teaming more effective or, at least, more palatable for all CJS teachers.

School administrators implemented teaming in a way that was "easy to manage" both teachers and students at CJS. In a practice that was consistent with what is found in a great deal of research on middle school teams (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Doda & George, 1999; Hackmann, et al., 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mills, et al., 1992; Smith, et al., 1998), school leaders segregated CJS teachers based on teaching discipline. Teachers of core subject areas

were included in teaming practices, and teachers of non-core subject areas were effectively excluded. The exclusion of non-core teachers from the teams afforded core teachers the time to meet and collaborate. With regard to student assignment to teams, teaming also resulted in segregationist practices for students that are neither supported by the research literature nor consistent with the intent of teaming (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 1982). Special education students and their teachers were isolated to one team per grade level, while students protected by Section 504 regulations were isolated to the other. This dissertation showed that school leaders who are charged with implementing middle school features often do so to fulfill requirements and expectations and overlook the needs of both teachers and students.

CJS teachers were ill-prepared for teaming at their school. The majority of teachers who participated in this research did not have specific pre-service preparation for middle level teaching, and school administrators did little to offset this deficiency. Although asked about the objective of teaming, neither core team teachers nor non-core teachers were able to clearly articulate it. Interview data showed that teachers inevitably turned to the rhetoric of teaming (Clark & Clark, 1993; Mergendoller, 1993; Wasley, 1991) to support the existence of teams at CJS. Core team teachers enumerated many positive outcomes of teaming, especially for students; and non-core teachers theorized about what they believed teams were accomplishing. School administrators provided neither initial training for elementary trained teachers who transferred to middle level teaching nor ongoing training for teachers who had been at the middle level for several years. These are not surprising findings since teachers at CJS participated in a model of teaming without any formal documents to justify its existence.

Core team teachers perceived improved professional and emotional support, along with increased feelings of job satisfaction, as a result of their participation in the teams. However, data from this current research also showed that the team structure did little to bolster the type of professional growth and development that teamwork is designed to achieve (Erb, 1987; Johnston, et al., 1988; Lee, et al., 1991; Strahan & Hedt, 2009). Core team teachers reported little in the way of professional growth. Non-core teachers found it difficult to establish collegial relationships and sensed that they were excluded from growth opportunities even if they did not quite know what those opportunities were. Furthermore, the team structure at CJS provided little more than weak collegial relationships that did not lead to meaningful collaboration between all teaching staff members at the school. In fact, teaming tended to perpetuate the status quo by deemphasizing the role of positive constructive conflict in transforming middle level teaching (Achinstein, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001; Little, 1990; Main & Bryer, 2005; Oakes, et al., 1993). The way in which school leaders administered teams at CJS consequently often served to inhibit transformative collaboration at CJS and, instead, sometimes led to individualistic tendencies, as well as team isolation for core team teachers and teacher isolation for non-core teachers (Achinstein, 2002; Ehman, 1995; Gunn & King, 2003; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Little, 1990). The emphasis on teams also precluded departmental collaboration amongst both core and non-core teachers.

Designing teams, setting goals and expectations, preparing teachers for teamwork, and providing structures that foster the successful execution of middle school teaming are all questions for school leadership. Data from the interviews in the current study revealed this to be true when teachers identified the process by which teachers and students were assigned to teams, described the place of teams in the middle school concept and the role of teams in their

professional growth and relationships, and explained the collaborative work of teachers in the middle school model. Teachers consistently mentioned the role of leadership, which suggests that teachers perceived school leadership to be a central force in the implementation of middle school teaming. This dissertation showed that middle school teaming is a phenomenon over which school administrators exert great influence and was a middle school practice over which leadership fell short in Centerville Junior School. Therefore, this dissertation also supports previous research indicating that the implementation of teaming is insufficient to bring about the desired results of the middle school model according to the research literature (Cuban, 1992; Midgley & Urdan, 1992; Williamson & Johnston, 1999).

Findings from this dissertation suggest that school administrators in Centerville must begin by defining the objectives of teaming at CJS. Teams cannot succeed without a comprehensive plan that outlines the goals and expectations of the team model. In so doing, school leaders at CJS would be better equipped to prepare incoming and veteran teachers alike for working together to meet their professional needs and to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. They would also be better equipped to consider the staffing of teams and the assignment of students. At CJS, school leaders should provide sufficient and ongoing training and preparation for teachers, as well as sufficient time for the teachers to learn and grow together. The careful assignment of teachers to teams is useless if the teachers do not have the time to adapt and prosper in a reformed setting.

Team teacher participants and especially team leaders expressed concern over the selection and appointment of team leaders at CJS. If the objectives of teaming were adequately articulated at the district and school level for CJS, school leaders would be better prepared to select, train, and support team leaders. Of the eight team leaders at CJS (two per grade and one

each for the specials and special education teams), six expressed interest in participating in this current research. None of the six revealed any specific background, training, or preparation for the roles they undertook. If the roles of team leaders are to be more than administrative, the school leaders at CJS must ensure that team leaders are prepared to be the visionary leaders who can facilitate meaningful collaboration described in the literature on effective team leadership (Kain, 1997b; Porod, 1993).

Along with the assignment of teachers to teams, a purposeful assignment of students to teams that is consistent with the spirit and intent of middle school reform is crucial for school leaders at CJS. This dissertation revealed that students were largely assigned to grade level teams in a way that was "easy to manage," i.e., special needs students were rigidly segregated in the teams. Such a practice detracts from the intended purpose of interdisciplinary teams (Clark & Clark, 1993; Felner, et al., 1997) and should be replaced by one that integrates all students and all teachers.

Data from this dissertation also showed that the experience of middle school teachers varied according to participation or non-participation on an interdisciplinary grade level team. Some literature on middle school teaming attempts to address this issue. For example, Jackson and Davis (2000) suggest the creation of special teams of teachers of exploratory subject areas or the creation of rotating team assignments. Although school leaders have attempted to mitigate the effects of non-exclusion for non-core subject teachers at CJS, they have not done enough to ensure that these teachers feel adequately included in the middle school program. Supports must be put into place during any organizational restructuring efforts to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved (Bolman & Deal, 2008). By adopting a multi-frame approach to school leadership that recognizes the importance of the structural, political, human and symbolic

ramifications of organizational restructuring, school leaders at CJS need to recognize the contributions of non-core teachers and include them in the daily responsibilities of the teaming model. Time for common planning, professional support and development, and interdisciplinary collaboration must be job-embedded for all teachers at CJS if all teachers are expected to experience the outcomes that will, in turn, lead to positive student outcomes.

Last, teaming at CJS might be considered more effective if school leaders determine how to gauge the success of the program. Core team teachers had little more than anecdotal stories to support the need for and benefit of teams, and non-core teachers were largely unaware of what teaming was accomplishing. By measuring student outcomes (e.g., improvement in student academic success, especially of those students who experience an initial decline after their transition from 5th to 6th grade), school leaders might increase teacher buy-in and community support and no longer use teaming as a means to maintain teaching positions at their school.

Implications for Future Research

In Chapter 2, this dissertation included a comprehensive review of the extant literature on middle school reform and its cornerstone practice of interdisciplinary teaming. It referenced seminal historical documents including *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools* (National Middle School Association, 1982), *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), as well as a plethora of other literature on middle level practices and middle school teaming (Clark & Clark, 1994; Dickinson, 2001; Dickinson & Erb, 1997; Erb & Doda, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; Merenbloom & National Middle School Association, 1986; National Middle School Association, 2001). However, the majority of this literature base is more than a decade old, focuses on the positive outcomes of middle school teaming and other middle school reform efforts, and neglects

the effects on the larger school community and school personnel who are not part of the teams. The completion of this dissertation has several implications for future research.

First, more research is needed that examines the role of the middle school model in this new century. Middle schools are under increased scrutiny, given the increasingly academic demands of the recent accountability movement in education areas (Dana, et al., 2010; Erb, 2003; Faulkner & Cook, 2006; George, 2008; Meyer, 2005; Turner, 2010). Current research documenting the successes–and shortcomings–of middle level reform is crucial if the middle school is to remain a viable avenue for addressing the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of young adolescents.

Second, research into the shortcomings of middle level reform is warranted if policymakers and practitioners are challenged with making middle schools successful. To that end, one of the goals of this dissertation was to privilege multiple viewpoints of middle school teaming by embracing the multiple and diverse realities that people have. The positive outcomes of teaming are well documented, but I attempted to document unintended, or negative, outcomes of the teaming model in one New Jersey middle school by comparing and contrasting how participation or non-participation on an interdisciplinary team affected teachers' experience with the middle school teaming model.

In terms of research design, my sample was small and limited to the teachers at one New Jersey middle school. Future studies might investigate teaming at a multitude of middle schools. This dissertation also employed a single case study design that focused on one bounded system (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Future research designs might employ a multiple case study design (Yin, 2009) and explore how teaming is experienced across a larger school district with two or more middle schools. They might also employ a comparative

case study design (Yin, 2009) and compare how teaming is experienced in similar middle

schools from two or more similar school districts. These research endeavors would be beneficial

in an attempt to extend this current study's findings.

This dissertation also emphasized teachers' experience with the teaming model.

However, one of the subquestions sought to explore the role of formal leaders from the

perspective of teachers in the creation, design, and maintenance of interdisciplinary teams.

Future qualitative studies might emphasize the role of school leaders by interviewing middle

school principals to investigate how they experience the phenomenon of interdisciplinary

teaming from a leadership perspective. Just as teachers do not receive special preparation at the

pre-service level for the challenging task of teaching young adolescents (Jackson & Davis, 2000;

National Middle School Association, 2001), it would be useful to identify how many middle

school administrators feel adequately prepared for the challenges of overseeing middle school

reform efforts geared at improving the educational experience of young adolescents. Just as

many educators may see middle level teaching as a stepping stone to the their ultimate goal of

either elementary or secondary teaching (National Middle School Association, 2001), many

middle level administrators may see their roles as preparation for taking on other more

challenging administrative roles. Exploring the perceptions of school leaders may extend the

current study's findings from middle school teachers to middle school leaders.

This dissertation also explicated different viewpoints of team teachers from the three

grade levels at CJS. Five of the core team teachers who returned the Teacher Recruitment &

Contact Information Form were 6th grade teachers, while only two 7th grade teachers and one 8th

grade teacher expressed interest in participating in this research. Interestingly, the 8th grade

teacher chosen to participate in this study expressed concerns that the teaming model was not

universally appropriate for all grade levels because the grade levels were different "developmentally" and had, or should have, different purposes. With a larger sample, it would be useful to juxtapose the perceptions of teachers of the three middle school grade levels to attempt to identify whether interest in and commitment to the team model wanes as teachers begin to teach students who are preparing for transition to the high school level.

Challenges for future research include the difficulty to recruit larger samples of teachers from one or more middle schools or from one or more school districts. Furthermore, teachers who choose to participate in these research studies are volunteering to do so; and self-selection (Slavin, 2007) has the potential to skew results in future research designs, as well as in the research design of the current study. Therefore, the discussion now turns to a brief review of the limitations of the current study.

Limitations

This qualitative dissertation examined middle school teachers' perceptions of middle school interdisciplinary teaming as a programmatic feature of their middle school. As a case study of the teaming phenomenon localized to a particular context, the knowledge gained from this research is dependent on how teaming was experienced in one context. It is not possible to generalize the findings of this study, given its focus on issues specific to teaming at CJS and reliance on data reported from a small sample of teachers.

The findings of this dissertation were based on information that interview participants were willing or even able to provide. Although I was clear about my expectations of honesty and openness regarding their perceptions of teaming at CJS, teachers may have been reluctant to share the data I hoped to explore, or they may have exhibited their own bias with regard to the teaming phenomenon at their school. While the use of participants' own words obtained through interviews was intended to minimize my own interpretation of what participants said (R. B.

Johnson, 1997), the interviews were nevertheless "verbal reports" (Yin, 2009, p. 108) and subject to problems of bias, poor recall, or inaccurate articulation. The teacher participants may have been unaware of patterns, themes, and other issues related to the teaming phenomenon in their own lives (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The findings of this dissertation were also limited by the composition of the teacher sample chosen to participate in this study. Although criteria for inclusion designated that teachers have at least one full year of experience at a school with interdisciplinary teams, the teachers selected for this study had relatively limited experience with the teaming phenomenon. This was a limitation that arose from a single case study design that focused on one bounded system (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) and a small sample of teachers at just one New Jersey middle school. With the exception of Leslie who was in her first year at CJS, core team teachers at CJS had at most nine years and as few as five years of experience with teaming; and only Leslie experienced teaming in another school district (see Table **3** on page 89). Non-core teachers had equally limited exposure to teaming, with four of the five participants with at most five years and as few as several months of experience with teaming (see Table **4** on page 93).

My status as a full-time teacher limited the data collection in this study to those participants who were willing to meet with me before or after the school day or on weekends. Teachers who might have otherwise chosen to participate in this research may have excluded themselves because of this limitation that was brought to their attention early in the recruitment process at CJS. Issues of cooperation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) and self-selection bias (Slavin, 2007) may have skewed the findings and limited this dissertation's ability to accurately represent the majority of teachers in this case study's context. And although most teachers were

willing to respond to follow-up questions via e-mails, phone calls, and even text messages to further explore teacher perceptions (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994), data collection was essentially limited to one interview with each of the teacher participants early in the data collection process. The logistics of arranging for follow-up interviews may have limited opportunities for substantial in-depth follow-up on topics and themes previously discussed.

Finally, my positionality as a practicing middle school teacher had the potential to influence my interpretation of all findings from this dissertation (R. B. Johnson, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Although I self-disclosed what my assumptions and beliefs were regarding middle school teams as threats to validity in this inquiry, I am subject to the same constructivist interpretations of reality that this study sought to privilege.

Conclusion

This dissertation has traced the evolution of junior high schools to present day middle schools and has juxtaposed the normative benefits of middle school teaming with its outcomes–both positive and negative–as perceived by teachers who experienced the teaming phenomenon at their middle school. By exploring how either *participation* or *non-participation* on a team shaped how teachers experienced interdisciplinary teaming as a feature of middle school restructuring efforts, this inquiry compared the experience of both core and non-core subject teachers at one New Jersey middle school. Results from this research indicate that teacher experience with middle school interdisciplinary teaming varies based on their status as team or non-team members. Teachers sensed that team status affected their opportunities for professional growth and collaboration, perceptions of instructional effectiveness, and feelings of belonging and personal and professional satisfaction.

This dissertation was designed to contribute to the research literature on teaming and its outcomes. While the purpose of much of the existing research on middle school reform has been to document the positive outcomes of teaming (Clark & Clark, 1993, 1994; Felner, et al., 1997; Flowers, et al., 1999; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Lee & Smith, 1993; Mertens & Flowers, 2004; Trimble & Peterson, 1999; Walsh & Shay, 1993), the significance of this current research lay in its ability to explore unintended outcomes of this experience. Findings from this research revealed that core subject teachers who participated on grade level interdisciplinary teams felt that the team structure was generally beneficial for their students and for their own instructional practice, professional growth, and personal satisfaction. Non-core subject teachers who did not participate on these teams felt that the team structure was beneficial to students, but there was disagreement about whether the team structure was beneficial to their own instructional practice, professional growth and personal satisfaction.

Since middle school teaming is an administratively mutable educational program (Haller & Kleine, 2001) over which educational administrators have significant influence, this dissertation sought to generate a better understanding of teachers' experience to assist in efforts to improve the teaming model in middle schools. Educational policymakers and practicing school leaders alike must be cognizant of how teaming affects all members of a school community and aware of the potential negative effects of teaming that remain under researched, discounted, or swept aside.

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APPENDIX A:

DISTRICT RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

[Name of superintendent], Superintendent
[Name of school district]
[Address]
[Address]

Dear [Name of superintendent]:

I am a student in the graduate program in educational administration and supervision in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers. The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to contact [name of principal] and the teaching staff at [name of middle school] for their participation in my dissertation research. The purpose of my research is to develop a better understanding of middle school teaming. More specifically, I wish to explore how middle school teachers feel about teaming in their school. Using a qualitative case study research design, my goal is to capture the real-life experience of teacher participants in order to improve the teaming model.

The design of this study requires me to conduct 30-45 minute interviews with team and non-team teachers. The interviews would be recorded using an audio recorder. Teachers could choose to not answer any question or questions with which they feel uncomfortable. Teacher participation will also be voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time. This research will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Confidential means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as position and years of experience. Participants' names and the name of the school(s) in which they teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.
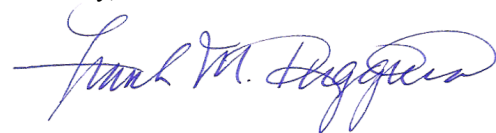
With your permission, I would like to contact [name of principal] and arrange to forward a request for participation letter to teachers at the [name of middle school]. I have included a copy of these letters for your review. As a token of my appreciation for your school's participation in this research, I would be happy to provide you with a summary of the study's findings upon completion of this project.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, please contact me by phone at (908) 451-3367 or by e-mail (fruggier@eden.rutgers.edu) or my advisor Dr. Catherine Lugg at (732) 932-7696 (ext. 8220) or by e-mail (catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu). If teachers have any questions about their rights as a research subject, they may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

> Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
> Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
> 3 Rutgers Plaza
> New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
> Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104 / Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

To begin my research, I would need a letter of approval of which I am providing a sample that you may use or modify as you see fit. I hope you will consider my request. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Frank M. Ruggiero
151 Leeds Court
Madison, NJ 07940

APPENDIX B:

SAMPLE APPROVAL LETTER PROVIDED TO DISTRICT

[Date]

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to give approval for Frank Ruggiero, a student at the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, to conduct his dissertation research at the [name of middle school] in [name of town], New Jersey. He will complete his research during the 2012-2013 academic school year.

Mr. Ruggiero will be researching how middle school teachers feel about teaming in their school. The purpose of his research is to develop a better understanding of teacher teams in order to improve the interdisciplinary teaming model.

I understand that Mr. Ruggiero will be using qualitative research methods that will include interviews with teachers that will be audio recorded and will also include observational notes of school documents, including meeting agendas and minutes, and other institutional documents associated with teaming at [name of middle school]. He has informed me that the all research associated with his project will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Teacher and institutional pseudonyms will be used.

Teachers will elect to participate voluntarily and may choose to not answer any question or questions with which they feel uncomfortable. They will have the right to withdraw at any time.

Sincerely,

[Name of superintendent]
Superintendent

APPENDIX C:

SCHOOL RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

[Name of principal], Principal
[Name of middle school]
[Address]
[Address]

Dear [name of principal]:

I am a student in the graduate program in educational administration and supervision in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers. The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to contact the teaching staff at [name of middle school] for their participation in my dissertation research. I have received approval from your superintendent to contact you for this request.

The purpose of my research is to develop a better understanding of middle school teaming. More specifically, I wish to explore how middle school teachers feel about teaming in their school. Using a qualitative case study research design, my goal is to capture the real-life experience of teacher participants in order to improve the teaming model. The design of this study requires me to conduct 30-45 minute interviews with team and non-team teachers. The interviews would be recorded using an audio recorder. Teachers may choose to not answer any question or questions with which they feel uncomfortable. Teacher participation will also be voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time.
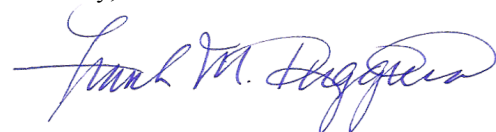
This research will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Confidential means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as position and years of experience. Participants' names and the name of the school(s) in which they teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, please contact me by phone at (908) 451-3367 or by e-mail (fruggier@eden.rutgers.edu) or my advisor Dr. Catherine Lugg at (732) 932-7696 (ext. 8220) or by e-mail (catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu). If teachers have any questions about their rights as a research subject, they may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

> Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
> Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
> 3 Rutgers Plaza
> New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
> Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104 / Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

With your permission, teacher recruitment at [name of middle school here] will occur by forwarding all teachers a request for participation letter. I have included a copy of this letter for your review. Please contact me at your earliest convenience to inform me of your decision. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Frank M. Ruggiero
Ed.D. Student
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

APPENDIX D:

TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

Dear Teacher:

I am a student in the graduate program in educational administration and supervision in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers. The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in my dissertation research. I have received approval from your superintendent and principal to contact you for this request.

The purpose of my research is to develop a better understanding of middle school teaming. The design of this study requires me to conduct 30-45 minute interviews with team and non-team teachers. The interviews would be recorded using a digital audio recorder. You may choose to not answer any question or questions with which you feel uncomfortable. Your participation will also be voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

This research will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Confidential means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as your position and years of experience. Your name and the name of the school(s) in which you teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.
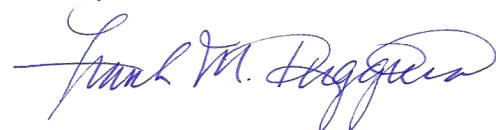
If you have any questions about the study procedures, please contact me by phone at (908) 451-3367 or by e-mail (fruggier@eden.rutgers.edu) or my advisor Dr. Catherine Lugg at (732) 932-7696 (ext. 8220) or by e-mail (catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

> Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
> Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
> 3 Rutgers Plaza
> New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
> Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104 / Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

If you are interested in participating, please complete the attached form with your name and contact information (so that I may contact you), the subject(s) you teach, your team/non-team status, and the number of years of experience you have with teaming. For this small-scale study, I will select a sample that is representative of team and non-team teachers, the different disciplines, and years of experience.

I hope you will consider my request, and I look forward to your participation in my research. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Frank M. Ruggiero
Ed.D. Student
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

APPENDIX E:

TEACHER RECRUITMENT & CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

Title of Study
Middle School Teacher Perceptions of Middle School Teaming

Contact Information

Principal Investigator
Frank M. Ruggiero
151 Leeds Court
Madison, NJ 07940
Tel: (908) 451-3367
Email: fruggier@eden.rutgers.edu

Additional Contact Person
Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D.
19 Graduate School of Education
10 Seminary Place
Rutgers, The State University of NJ
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Tel: (732) 932-7496 x8220
Email: catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu

☐ I am interested in being interviewed in the above-named research study related to middle school teaming.

☐ I would agree to the use of a digital audio recorder for the interview process. (Please note that the purpose of recording your responses is to ensure accuracy and avoid misrepresentation. However, you do not have to agree to be recorded to participate in this study.)

☐ (if applicable) I would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview, if necessary. (Please note that the purpose of a follow-up interview would only be to confirm my understanding of your earlier responses and/or to request additional information.)

_____   ☐ Team Teacher   ☐ Non-team Teacher
(Your Name)

_____
(E-mail address)   ☐ *Cell* ☐ *Home* *(Number I may contact you at)*

_____   _____   _____
(Subjects You Teach)   *(Grade Levels)*   *(Years Experience)*

Please return this form to the principal investigator named above no later than [date].

Thank you.

APPENDIX F:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study
Middle School Teacher Perceptions of Middle School Teaming

Contact Information

Principal Investigator	**Additional Contact Person**
Frank M. Ruggiero	Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D.
151 Leeds Court	19 Graduate School of Education
Madison, NJ 07940	10 Seminary Place
Tel: (908) 451-3367	Rutgers, The State University of NJ
Email: fruggier@eden.rutgers.edu	New Brunswick, NJ 08901
	Tel: (732) 932-7496 x8220
	Email: catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu

Introduction
You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, you should know enough about its purpose, the possible risks and benefits of being in the study, and what you will have to do if you decide to participate. If there is something you do not understand, you should ask me. You should be satisfied with the answers before you agree to participate in the study.

Background/Purpose
The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of middle schools teams. More specifically, this study will explore how middle school teachers feel about interdisciplinary teaming in their school.

Description
Participation in this study will involve one or more of the following:
- Interviews of approximately 45 minutes about your personal experiences with teaming. These interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. If you feel uncomfortable with any question, you do not have to answer it. If at any time you would like me to turn off the audio recorder, I will.
- Review of documents generated in preparation for, during, and as a result of team meetings
- Follow-up interviews of no more than 45 minutes

Cost & Compensation
There are no costs associated with participating in this study. There is no monetary compensation for participating in this study. However, those who participate in this study will receive a small gift card to a local establishment (café, etc.).

Alternatives to participation
Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose whether or not to participate. You may choose to withdraw at any time during the study without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer questions with which you are uncomfortable.

Risks
The risks associated with this study are minimal, however you may experience embarrassment or discomfort with a specific question. If you feel uncomfortable during any part of an interview,

you may choose to not answer that question. Should you require counseling due to participation in this study, you will be referred to the Psychological Clinic of the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Benefits

Participation in this study may not benefit you directly. However, some people enjoy talking about and sharing experiences. Your participation may indirectly improve middle school teacher experiences by helping us to better understand what works and what could be improved.

Confidentiality

This research is confidential. This means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as your position and years of experience. Your name and the name of the school in which you teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes, and you will not be identified by name. The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in a secure location during this project. Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be stored on my password-protected computer. The Institutional Review Board at Rutgers and I are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results presented, the information will remain confidential.

Contact

If you have any questions at any time about the research or the procedures, you may contact me or the faculty advisor for this project. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

> Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
> Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
> 3 Rutgers Plaza
> New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
> Tel: 732-932-0150 x 2104
> Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Participation & Freedom to Withdraw

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to participate. You may decide to withdraw at any time without penalty to you.
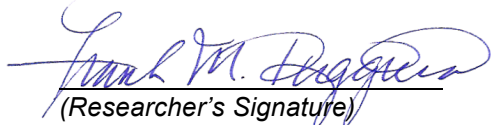
Consent to Participate

Sign below if you agree to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

_____	_____	_____
(Participant's Signature)	*(Printed Name)*	*(Date)*
_____	Frank M. Ruggiero	1 November 2012
(Researcher's Signature)	*(Printed Name)*	*(Date)*

Consent to Audio Record

Sign below if you agree to the use of an audio recorder for the interview process.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *(Participant's Signature)* | *(Printed Name)* | *(Date)* |

APPENDIX G:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction
- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to discuss your perceptions of middle school teaming in your school. I understand that you are very busy, and so I greatly appreciate the time you're taking to contribute to this research project. The purpose of this interview is for you to share your experiences. The purpose is not to evaluate the teaming model nor the individual participants and the leaders who administer the program. When the audio recording is transcribed, your name, other staff members' names, administrators' names, the name of the school, and the names of teams will be changed to pseudonyms. The only information that will be retained in the transcripts will relate to your team status (team or non-team), teaching discipline, and length of your experience with the teaming phenomenon. All research will remain confidential and destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Demographic Information: Background, Education, and Experience
- Please tell me about your educational background, including any preparation for middle school teaching.
- For how long have you been a teacher and for how long at the middle level?
- For how long have you been at your current position in this middle school?
- What subjects do you currently teach? What subjects have you taught in the past? (and at what level if need be).

Perception of MS Work Environment & of Teaming
Now I'm going to ask you for your thoughts on teaming. Please remember that this information will be kept confidential, so please answer as honestly and as openly as you can

Relation to Research Question	Interview Questions for TEAM Teachers	Interview Questions for NON-TEAM Teachers
1 General Teaming	What do you know about the premise behind MS teaming?	
1 General Teaming	What would the ideal teaming experience be like?	
1 General Teaming	Please tell me about how teaming is implemented in your school.	
1 General Teaming	Please tell me about what you like about teaming in your school? What do you dislike?	
1 General Teaming	How does the teaming structure make you feel about where you work?	

Relation to Research Question	Interview Questions for TEAM Teachers	Interview Questions for NON-TEAM Teachers
1a Collaboration, Collegiality, Conflict	What is your communication like with other <u>team</u> teachers? What is the experience like?	Team teachers meet and interact with other team teachers. What interactions or communication do you have with your <u>non-team</u> teacher colleagues? Do you ever get a chance to work with them? If so, what is the experience like?
1a Collaboration, Collegiality, Conflict	As a team teacher, you have the opportunity to meet and interact with other team teachers. What interactions or communication do you have with <u>non-team</u> teachers? Do you ever get a chance to work with <u>non-team</u> teachers? If so, what is the experience like?	As a non-team teacher, what interactions or communication do you have with <u>team</u> teachers? Do you ever get a chance to work with <u>team</u> teachers? If so, what is the experience like?
1a Collaboration, Collegiality, Conflict	Does the communication you have with <u>non-team</u> teachers lead to collaboration? Does it lead to increased collegiality? Does it lead to conflict?	Does the communication you have with <u>team</u> teachers lead to collaboration? Does it lead to increased collegiality? Does it lead to conflict?
1a Collaboration, Collegiality, Conflict	So, imagine that I'm a new teacher at your school and <u>assigned to your team</u>. What opportunities will I have to collaborate and work with other teachers? How do I become part of the school community?	So, imagine that I'm a new teacher at your school and <u>not assigned</u> to a team. What opportunities will I have to collaborate and work with other teachers? How do I become part of the school community?
1a Collaboration, Collegiality, Conflict	Have you ever been a "team leader"? What was the experience like?	Have you ever been placed in a position of "teacher leadership" (leading a curricular change, a change in the student code of conduct, etc.)? What was the experience like?
1a Collaboration, Collegiality, Conflict	Can you describe any difficulties you may have experienced as a result of the teaming model as it is implemented in your school?	
1b perceptions of the others	Can you imagine what it's like to <u>not be on a team</u>? What do you think the collaboration is like?	Can you imagine what it's like to <u>be on a team</u>? What do you think the collaboration is like?

Relation to Research Question	Interview Questions for TEAM Teachers	Interview Questions for NON-TEAM Teachers
1b perceptions of the others	How do you think non-team teachers feel about teams?	How do you think team teachers feel about teams?
1b perceptions of the others	How do you think non-team teachers feel about team teachers?	How do you think team teachers feel about non-team teachers?
1c perceptions of themselves	How do you see your role in teaming?	What is your role in the teaming model? What is it like not being on a team?
1c perceptions of themselves	How do you think teaming impacts teachers' work? How do you think it affects their self-esteem?	
1d Leadership Role	Were you here before teaming was implemented? What was teaching like? What teachers did you work with, and what was the experience like?	
1d Leadership Role	Are there any training opportunities or professional development opportunities in place for you, as a team teacher?	Are there any training opportunities or professional development opportunities in place for you, as a non-team teacher?
1d Leadership Role	How do you make sense of the decision to include some teachers on a team and exclude others?	

Closing
- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Thank you for your contribution to this research project. Your honest responses will be invaluable in developing an understanding of how teachers feel about interdisciplinary teaming in middle schools. Thank you again for your involvement.

APPENDIX H:

IRB APPROVAL

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

December 12, 2012   **P.I. Name:** Ruggiero
                                                              Protocol #: E13-323

Frank M. Ruggiero
151 Leeds Ct
Madison NJ 07940

Dear Frank Ruggiero:

Notice of Exemption from IRB Review

Protocol Title: "Middle School Teacher Perceptions of Middle School Teaming"

The project identified above has been approved for exemption under one of the six categories noted in 45 CFR 46, and as noted below:

Exemption Date: 12/4/2012   **Exempt Category:**   1
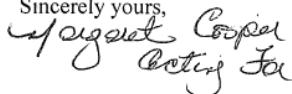
This exemption is based on the following assumptions:

▪ **This Approval** - The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted.

▪ **Reporting** – ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;

▪ **Modifications** – Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;

▪ **Consent Form (s)** – Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;

Additional Notes: None

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

The Federalwide Assurance (FWA) number for Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Sincerely yours,

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
gibel@grants.rutgers.edu

cc: Catherine A. Lugg