Collaborative Teaching Practices for a New Century: A Descriptive Case Study of Peer Coaching

Nance Maguire EdD

University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations

Digital USD Citation
https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/644

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@sandiego.edu.
COLLABORATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES FOR A NEW CENTURY

A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF PEER COACHING

Nance Maguire

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

University of San Diego

1998

Dissertation Committee

Mary M. Williams, Ed. D., Director
Mary W. Scherr, Ph. D.
Edward Kujawa, Ph. D.
ABSTRACT

COLLABORATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES FOR A NEW CENTURY

A Descriptive Case Study of Peer Coaching

No longer is it appropriate for educators to come together as a group to “learn” a new skill and return to their classrooms to practice it in isolation. In the past, staff development programs have focused on development of a singular skill with teachers practicing it in isolation. The teaching and learning process can better be developed through collaboration. In order for this to happen effective teachers must be able to create effective interactive relationships with their peers. Hence, the practice and art of teaching ceases to be an individual enterprise; becoming instead a collaborative enterprise. Peer coaching is one such collaborative teaching practice where greater learning means heightened reflection thus enabling educators to focus on the way they learn from their interactions with each other. This heightened reflection can assist in creating a positive cultural ethos that fosters further collaboration and collegiality.

A descriptive case study was conducted of voluntary pairs of teachers acting as peer coaches for one another in Excelsior Academy, a small private special education school in San Diego. The purpose of the study was to investigate the patterns that would explain coaching experiences and responses to discover the implications for how collaborative teaching practices such as peer coaching might affect the cultural ethos of this particular school. This investigation then might provide a greater understanding of the importance of collaboration among educators in such a setting as well as in similar educational environments.

The study uncovered five major themes within the peer coaching model

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
which served to focus attention on the framework of peer coaching at Excelsior Academy. These themes included: communication, empowerment, collegiality, discovery and collaboration. The effects of the peer coaching model on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy were varied and broad. Essentially, an effective system of communication within a resultant atmosphere of thoughtful collaboration and collegial bonding provided a structure for enhanced professional development. A sense of mutual empowerment involving supportive learning opportunities, constructive feedback and a positive change process was established. Additionally, the excitement and tone of staff motivation provided evidence of a continuous process of discovery where staff learned to reflect upon and refine their teaching and learning.

With growth come challenges and the Excelsior staff face the challenge of refinement of the peer coaching model. In order for the staff to engage in more meaningful coaching interactions, this study presents the following recommendations: a) provide indepth staff training in the areas of questioning and listening skills; b) promote further assessment opportunities through the development and study of self-assessment techniques; c) provide inservice trainings in the various types of analysis including summative and formative, critical and reflective, and deductive and inductive analyses; d) allow for acquisition of the skills necessary to challenge and refine a topic through the study of topic development; and e) reconceptualize and develop the teacher-as-researcher concept.

This peer coaching model is evidence that collaboration can be a highly effective approach to improving the way educators learn and ultimately on building not merely isolated instances of collaboration but a cultural ethos of collaboration. Through coaching and shared inquiry educators can manage their skills efficiently and effectively and learn new strategies that will create a climate of problem solving and reflection.
DEDICATION

To Frank whose love and support have been
my motivation and strength.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my colleagues at Excelsior Academy - I am especially appreciative of your courage to engage in meaningful collaboration knowing that it is the right thing to do for kids. Your appreciation of learning and love of teaching have drawn me like a magnet to the core of your craft.

To my dissertation committee - Only the kindest of words will express my gratitude for your assistance during this season of growth. Thank you for your time and attention, support and encouragement.

To my family and friends - You have been beacons of light who have provided me with guidance, love and safe havens during this arduous and stimulating journey.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE.................................1
COLLABORATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

Introduction.................................................................................................................1
Statement of the Issue....................................................................................................3
Challenges and Tasks.................................................................................................5
Staff Development Processes....................................................................................6
Shifting focus..............................................................................................................7
Collaborative Teaching Practices...............................................................................8
Peer Coaching.............................................................................................................9

Background and Significance of the Issue............................................................10
Traditional Approaches..........................................................................................10
Recent Attempts at Educational Reform...............................................................11
Continued Staff Development Reform.................................................................12
Collaborative Expectations of a Learning Organization.......................................13
Collaborative Expectations of Public Education..................................................15
Collaborative Expectations of Independent and Alternative Schools...............16
Collaboration with Excelsior Academy.................................................................18
Peer Coaching Model............................................................................................20

Importance of the Study..........................................................................................22
Purpose of the Study...................................................................................................24
Research Questions....................................................................................................24
Assumptions Related to the Study..........................................................................25
Limitations of the Study............................................................................................26
Terminology................................................................................................................26

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE..........................32
PERSPECTIVES ON COLLABORATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

Introduction................................................................................................................32
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

PEER COACHING AT EXCELSIOR ACADEMY

Overview

The Stage: Excelsior Academy

The Players: Excelsior Academy Staff

The Script: Collaborative Practices

The Dress Rehearsal: Peer Coaching Model

The Mystery: Three Research Questions
  Cultural Ethos
  Teaching and Learning
  Responses for Changes to the Peer Coaching Model

The Set: Five Themes
  Communication
  Empowerment
  Collegiality
  Discovery
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....155
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?

Introduction...................................................................................................................155

Summary of Study..........................................................................................................159
  Summary of Literature Review................................................................................160
  Summary of Methodology......................................................................................162
  Summary of Key Findings......................................................................................164
    Communication..................................................................................................166
    Empowerment....................................................................................................166
    Collegiality.........................................................................................................167
    Discovery.............................................................................................................167
    Collaboration........................................................................................................168
  Successes................................................................................................................170
  Challenges.............................................................................................................171
  Peer Coaching and Leadership.............................................................................173
  Leadership and Change........................................................................................175
  Discussion of the Findings....................................................................................176

Excelsior Before Peer Coaching.....................................................................................177

Peer Coaching Effects..................................................................................................179

Implications of Collaborative Work at Excelsior........................................................183

Recommendations........................................................................................................186
  Staff Suggestions and Researcher Recommendations.......................................187

Researcher Suggestions...............................................................................................192
  Staff Training.........................................................................................................192
  Integration of Cognitive Coaching and Peer Coaching......................................196
  Further Questioning and Observations.................................................................197
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Four Peer Coaching Assumptions</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2</td>
<td>Complementary Purposes</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.3</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Communities for Teacher Research</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Continuum of Services for Students with Special Needs</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Sequence of Events</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Linkage Matrix</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Excelsior Academy Vision and Mission</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2</td>
<td>Staff Backgrounds</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3</td>
<td>Effects on the Teaching and Learning Process</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4</td>
<td>Five Themes of Peer Coaching</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.5</td>
<td>Open-ended Questionnaire #2 - #5</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.6</td>
<td>Communication Indicators</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.7</td>
<td>Empowerment Indicators</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.8</td>
<td>Collegiality Indicators</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.9</td>
<td>Discovery Indicators</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.10</td>
<td>Collaboration Indicators</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.11</td>
<td>Staff Suggestions for Improvement</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1</td>
<td>Five Themes of Peer Coaching</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.2</td>
<td>Staff Suggestions for Improvement</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A  Research Procedures .................................................................................212
Appendix B  Consent Form .............................................................................................214
Appendix C  Open-Ended Questionnaire ........................................................................216
Appendix D  Suggested Questions .................................................................................218
Appendix E  Research Permission Form .........................................................................220
CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

COLLABORATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

- T. S. Eliot

Introduction

Collaboration is the tool of the future. By necessity corporate meetings, university research, organizational structurings, government councils, educational practices all involve collaboration on many levels. As the millennium creeps ever closer, organizations are searching for more effective practices and greater achievements through collaboration. In particular the nation’s educators must assess the ways in which they collaborate and the ways in which they teach future leaders to enter into collaborative exercises. Collaboration involves shared inquiry and team learning. According to Senge (1990, 4) those organizations that will “excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s
commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.” Educators excel at learning. The challenge now is for educators to practice collaboration and learn to learn together through problem solving and shared inquiry.

Traditionally, educators have been socialized to practice in isolation. The education of our nation’s children has been an undertaking that teachers have been expected to perform alone. There have been few and limited opportunities for them to work as partners exchanging ideas, sharing feelings, and reflecting upon best practices. Therefore education has become an exercise in isolation with teachers teaching alone and children learning primarily alone. This isolation has served to deprive educators of the stimulation of working with peers, to inhibit teacher growth and learning, and to inhibit innovation by fostering cautious approaches to change. Research provides evidence that educators grow more responsively through exchanges of ideas with one another (Marzano, 1992; Ross and Regan, 1993; Schlechty, 1990). When isolation becomes an inhibiting factor, professional growth opportunities diminish. As opportunities for professional growth diminish, this loss will affect student achievement as teachers will have fewer skills, strategies and knowledge to pass on to their students.

Past views of professional growth for educators bypassed the importance of collaboration and suggested that teachers as well as students
be supervised and evaluated as individuals who performed their tasks in isolation (Garman, 1986; Holland, 1988; Smyth, 1988). Current reforms that focus on the professional development of teachers suggest that professional development cannot merely be experienced as an annual supervisory evaluation. Rather professional development must be an ongoing discovery in practice where teachers engage in a process of partnership and reflection in work that is complex and critical (Smyth, 1991). Such inquiry focuses on student achievement through recollection and reflection within a collaborative model. This learning process in which teaching professionals engage could be a process of interaction and revitalization where “greater contact among teachers should be expected to advance the prospects of student success (Robbins, 1991, 11).” This collaborative learning not only allows for recollection and reflection but can set the stage for the generation of new ideas within the context of collaboration.

Statement of the Issue

In schools of the twentieth century, the teacher who has been viewed as most competent has displayed traits of self-sufficiency, confidence, and independence. Asking questions and being uncertain are primarily seen as showing one’s inexperience. Teachers have not been
encouraged to ask critical questions, talk about failures or express their frustrations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). In other words, the professional myth about teachers has been that good teachers are able to find answers to their own questions and rarely have questions they cannot answer. Current research is beginning to reveal that teachers may be competent, self-sufficient and confident; however, they have also learned to ask critical questions, reach out for alternative perspectives, and challenge traditional approaches to teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Lytle, 1991). For those teachers who practice inquiry as part of the teaching and learning process, the regular routines of schools typically provide little time for teachers to dialogue, reflect and share ideas with colleagues.

The culture of most schools has been highly individualistic with near isolation of the teachers in a setting devoid of rich and interactive dialogue about their ideas and reflections. Without peer teacher collaboration, teachers are unable to effectively address problems that must be solved together. Without collaborative problem-solving, advances teaching and learning will be stymied. Focusing schools on effective collaborative problem-solving and on interdependent communities of interactive individuals bound by a purpose of self-renewal can be an important component of the education process (Costa & Garmston, 1994).
Challenges and Tasks

Collaborative practices that help to build collaborative organizations of the future bring with them a host of challenges for educators. Collaborative teaching practices will require research designs and measures that are valued by the participants and are adaptable to the needs of the staff. When undertaking collaborative tasks, Richardson (1994) points out that educators will need to adjust the way they view themselves and each other - as participants and experts. All of the participants have expertise about content and theories of practice as well as about past experiences and reflections of teaching practices. One of the most difficult challenges may be the challenge of presenting alternative premises and practices in nonthreatening and nonjudgmental ways by presenting current research and theories to be considered. Most importantly, educators will need to enter into the practice of ongoing assessment of themselves, of each other, and of their learning organizations in order to determine how these areas affect student learning. The results of these assessment studies will provide educators with substantial data to design collaborative teaching practices tailored to their particular settings. These tasks and challenges are discussed under the assumption that change must take place within the educational system in order for collaboration to be effective.
Staff Development Processes

Over the last two decades collaborative teaching practices have been woven into the staff development processes in many schools and educational systems. A common emphasis over the years has focused attention on the innovation of educational practices. The goals of this approach to staff development have been to assist educators in examining their classroom practices, to consider alternative theories and to experiment with differing practices. For many reasons innovation or change has become a pariah among educators who are comfortable with the status quo. Fullan (1993) relates the results of many studies where staff development programs have induced change by persuading teachers to experiment with varying instructional practices only to find little or no change in classroom environment or in student learning activities. Substantive changes in teaching strategies proved to be elusive. Further the results suggested little evidence of peer collaboration where educators were engaged in meaningful dialogue regarding classroom practices and learning activities. Fullan proposes new ways of looking at the teaching and learning process through a practice of collaborative inquiry. This proposal would seem to shift the focus of staff development programs from lectures with the sage on stage to collegial connections with the guide.
Implicit in this shift of focus is the belief that work faced by educators must change significantly in order for meaningful learning to take place, and in order for the field of education to contribute to the collaborative practices of future generations. Consequently, the shift must move from educators engaged in autonomy and caution to educators immersed in a spirit of inquiry and continuous learning. For this to occur there must develop a deep appreciation of the relationship between learning organizations and those who sustain them. The locus of control, then, must rest within the process of collaboration. Educators must learn more about communication and cooperation and more about their own teaching and learning practices.

As teachers begin to focus more on their own teaching and as interactions with their peers increase, they are given the opportunity to break the isolation and tap the craft knowledge of others (Robbins, 1991). Further interactions with peers may create a cultural ethos that shapes the content of what they choose to learn and the techniques of how they choose to teach. In turn these interactions may ultimately affect the entire school climate, creating an atmosphere of trust and collegiality.
Collaborative Teaching Practices

Collaborative teaching practices, as presented by Donaldson and Sanderson (1996) have two fundamental components: 1) a respectful relationship among the collaborators and 2) a productivity that helps the collaborators in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. A collaborative relationship is based upon three guiding elements. The basic element of a collaborative relationship is a commitment to work together. When professionals experience a common commitment, the sum of their joint efforts is greater than the efforts of any one individual. Another guiding element in collaborative relationships is the understanding of one another's expertise, talents and styles. Such relationships must be strong enough to overcome individual differences of style and sensitivities to territorial domains. Hence, educators in collaborative relationships should be able to recognize how their expertise and talents can best be merged to compensate for differences in styles. Finally, a combination of respect and trust are essential in sustaining collaborative work. Respect for one another's opinions, trust in each other's motives and judgment pave the way for commitment and understanding to flourish in collaborative relationships.
Peer Coaching

Peer coaching is based upon research findings that indicate teachers may form relationships that build a shared knowledge base that advances not only the teacher but the learning process that contributes to the success of students (Gottesman & Jennings 1994). These relationships form naturally as teachers seek informal sharing and support. Peer coaching provides a structure for collaborative professional development and for improving the cultural ethos of the school where teachers may feel less isolated and more collaborative. Staff members coaching each other can establish a community of learners with an emphasis on collegial, rather than hierarchical support. The role of the teacher as peer coach is to provide assistance to others in the context of a supportive, helping relationship. Peer coaching models assist supervisory personnel in separating the managerial roles from the roles that support teacher development. As teachers become more analytical with their classroom practices, they increase the role that executive control plays in their decision-making exercises. Most importantly, according to Joyce, Weil and Showers (1992, 389), the function of peer coaching "provides interchange with another adult human being over a difficult process." Hence, a relationship formed from peer coaching may result in mutual reflection, perception-checking, sharing of feelings, and the search for solutions to
issues and concerns.

**Background and Significance of the Issue**

**Traditional Approaches**

Historically, the cultural contexts of schools suggest that teachers ought to practice in isolation. The design of the physical plant has fostered a separate but quasi-equal status among teachers where much of the same events occur in isolation and with very little interactive dialogue. The assignment of classes has reinforced this concept of teachers working with little contact or support. Every teacher has traditionally been assigned a class of students to work with in a particular classroom. By the end of the school year the teachers emerge from their classrooms less connected and somewhat tentative about the identity of the teacher in the next classroom. Another factor that may have fostered isolationism in schools is the practices of staff development trainers and technical assistance providers who have worked with teachers individually. These service providers have maintained expectations that educators would be practicing their newly taught skills alone in their own classrooms. Consequently, educators have been trained in isolation and have been expected to implement their new strategies and skills in that same atmosphere of isolation.
Recent Attempts at Educational Reform

During the last few decades of educational progress there have been attempts to improve collegiality and collaboration in schools through staff development programs. The traditional approaches to staff development assumed that teachers could spend a weekend learning a new strategy, return to their school on Monday, and implement the strategy effectively, alone. However, isolation and limited opportunities for interaction failed to support this method of dissemination. Upon review this failure to connect was attributed to lack of motivation and flawed efforts among the teachers rather than of a flaw in the design of the staff development model (Joyce & Showers, 1980). In short the cultural ethos of schools historically has relied less on collaboration and collegiality and more on isolation and individualism.

In the words of Michael Fullan (1993), “To restructure is not to reculture.” Over the past two decades many attempts have been made to restructure education and educational practices. Many staff development programs have been aimed at increased autonomy for staff, greater flexibility in scheduling, more innovations in teaching practices, increased responsiveness to student needs, and support of staff efforts through more effective use of resources. The preceding five goals have in common the
need for collaboration. Often staff members are presented with an agenda and expected to follow through on its implementation. One of the ways they are expected to complete this implementation is through collaboration. In a 1992 study completed on the New Futures Initiative to restructure urban schools in the United States, the basic policies and practices of the schools were found to be unchanged with little, if any, collaboration taking place. "Teachers were uncertain about how best to use increased opportunities for collaboration....simply providing time to meet...was no guarantee that teachers would know how to work together" in ways likely to result in more effective learning (Wehlage, Smith and Lipman, 1992, 76). Hence, Fullan's words ring true. Changing organizational structures is not the same as changing values, philosophies, beliefs, skills, and habits. Collaboration efforts require more changes in how agenda items are implemented and fewer changes in the content of those items.

Continued Staff Development Reform

In the late 1970s and early 1980s studies were conducted to examine the effects on classroom practices of staff development programs using a teacher training model (Richardson, 1994). A compelling hypothesis set forth by Richardson suggests that the training model was
unable to sustain teacher interest and motivation. Rather than examining individual thought processes and classroom practices of the educators involved, the training model put forth the assumption that the teachers were exhibiting deficits in their teaching practices. Consequently, the teacher training model may have been viewed by teachers as a punitive or judgmental, evaluative model as opposed to a teaching and learning model. With this assumption in mind, schools could experience more effective change from the examination of teacher motivations and how they affect classroom practices as opposed to the evaluation of teacher skills. Within a collaborative teaching model, individuals are more apt to experience stimulation and growth due to the supportive and growth-inducing environment. When fears of reprisals and judgment are removed, educators may feel freer to experiment with and explore new strategies and innovations.

Collaborative Expectations of a Learning Organization

According to Senge (1990), in order to survive and develop, learning organizations require a holistic view and a visionary approach. This holistic view responds to widespread interactions and continuous teaching and learning as individuals attempt to collaboratively create an effective learning environment for students. Creating a learning environment, says
Brown (1995), involves engaging staff members in an ongoing process of vision setting, mental modeling and strategic planning. With a vision created and shared by all, staff are more apt to use it to guide their decisions and inform their professional actions. Using mental models to form expectations and determine appropriate actions, allows staff members opportunities to determine if their mental models correlate with the guiding vision. According to Joyce, Wolf, and Calhoun (1993), in creating a strategic plan, all staff members must become students of school improvement. When a staff involved in the teaching and learning process come together to produce a meaningful and productive learning environment for students, collaboration must take place. In schools where educators quest for continuous improvement, collaboration is linked with opportunities for productive change and for lifelong learning.

Learning organizations that provide meaningful education demand that staff members seek each other out for assistance. This assistance arrives in various forms - finances, time, ideas, materials, support and other resources. Self-sufficiency, an important trait from the past, is no longer the primary characteristic needed in learning organizations. Today and in the future learning organizations require interdependence and collaboration - a sign of intelligence and strength. Developing a culture and climate that empowers staff and encourages them to use their talents and insights collaboratively is an important goal for educators and
schools. Focusing on a broad network of ideas and strategies together in collaborative practices will enable educators to develop and create effective learning environments for children.

**Collaborative Expectations of Public Education**

Goodlad (1994) says that traditional models of education in the past have focused on child development and student learning. Schlechty (1990) says that most educational leaders still assume the need to foster civic republicanism and morality; and to americanize the immigrant child in order to standardize students to fit the industrial way of life in this country. Still another more recent assumption of the role of public education has been for educators to remediate the ills of American society. The corporate world today is asking public education to address the student in a community context, thus requiring collaborative efforts. These varied demands have served only to create confusion among educational leaders.

It is important to note that the collaborative course demanded by today’s corporate world is a more realistic look at the roles and responsibilities of our future leaders. The type of collaboration needed is a healthy collaboration between agencies and schools and universities and businesses with an important goal in mind - the development of future
leaders with effective collaboration skills. To ask schools to shrug off the hard-earned individuality characterized by the pioneer spirit is, says Goodlad, a demanding responsibility. However, he continues, there are new frontiers that involve relationships, diversity, appreciation, collaboration and self-renewal. Public school education is looked upon by society as the answer to building better partnerships in the twenty-first century. Obviously public education alone cannot meet such a daunting task. It is an unrealistic expectation to assume public education is the answer to the woes of society. Collaboration must take place within and among varying institutions in society in order for the students' needs to be addressed within a community context.

Collaborative Expectations of Independent and Alternative Schools

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1995 proposed a different model for schools where the size of the school is small enough for everyone to know everyone else by name (Boyer, 1995). Sergiovanni (1995) relates in his writings that schools need to be communities of learning whose staff and students are bonded to one another by mutual commitments and personal relationships. Learning communities, he explains, are communities where people feel as if they belong and where they can be responsible for themselves and others. At
the University of Chicago at Illinois, Walberg (1994) explains, a Small Schools Workshop has been developed to help public schools in Chicago plan and implement the downsizing of public schools. Rivera (1994) argues for the stabilization of neighborhood schools where families and schools return to the practice of sustaining long-term relationships and community activities over a period of years.

Independent schools are those schools found outside the realm of public education. Various types of schools, such as parochial schools, alternative schools, private schools and nonpublic schools, fall within the category of independent schools. Aside from the fact they are smaller schools, these independent schools share several common collaborative traits which go a long way in meeting the expectations that parents have for their children's education.

Primarily, these types of schools are designed to foster collaborative relationships. Sergiovanni (1995) found three distinguishing traits common among independent schools. 1) The collaborative relationships begin with staff involvement in the design of the program and continue through to the bonding relationships established between home and school. 2) The development of a community of learners for both students and staff was found to be a resultant factor. Both students and staff find themselves in these types of schools by choice. This preferential outlook leads them to desire greater outcomes. For greater outcomes to be achieved, they realize
the need to engage in continuous and meaningful learning. 3) A shared vision and common philosophy is another prevalent trait among independent schools. Oftentimes they will have a formal, written philosophy that all staff and students understand and use as their guide. Collaboratively speaking, this shared philosophy allows for greater consistency of program and structure and stronger communal relationships. Collaborative teaching practices are found to flourish in these smaller, more unified schools and could serve as models for public educators who are attempting to make big smaller and attempting to create learning communities once again.

Collaboration within Excelsior Academy

Historically, collaboration among Excelsior Academy educators began with the opening of the school in 1989. The student body was composed of six learning-disabled students with six very different styles of learning and with students of different ages. The staff consisted of one director and one teacher both of whom were responsible for the daily education of the six students. Out of necessity and somewhat naturally, a collaborative effort was created when director and teacher shared the teaching responsibilities throughout the day. Collaboration and shared inquiry were essential tools which provided a vehicle for the two educators to
accomplish such a daunting task. As the student body and the staff size grew, the school population has not reached more than 72 students and 25 staff members. Maintaining such a small community enabled the staff to continue collaborative efforts in more structured ways. Most importantly, over the years they continued to hold regularly scheduled meetings on a weekly basis to discuss relevant issues and to problem-solve. From a staff development perspective, they experimented with observations and videoetapings, and with cognitive coaching and constructive feedback.

As the staff members grew together and studied more sophisticated methods of communication and collaboration, they began to sense a need for more structure in their efforts and more meaning in their practices. Organized implementation of a collaborative culture became a focus of the staff development program. Several specific models of collaborative teaching practices were implemented (Joyce & Showers, 1980; Showers, 1984; Robbins, 1991; Joyce & Weil, 1992; Marzano, 1992; Costa & Garmston, 1994) at various stages, practiced for six to nine months, evaluated and discussed. No one particular model was favored over other models. What the faculty at Excelsior discovered was that current research trends continually presented them with models which fit one of two different molds. Either the model was designed for a public school involving regular education students or the model was tailor-made to be used in a very specific setting at a certain grade level. Excelsior staff
began to study the models from a different perspective. They wanted to
discover if they could put together a model for Excelsior that would be
appropriate for their staff, their size, their student population, and their
specific needs.

Staff attempts to tailor-make an appropriate collaborative teaching
model were met with a degree of new learning. Something the Excelsior
staff learned was that a change to one part of the system can produce
unpredictable changes in other parts of the system. Many of these changes
created positive effects on the system as a whole. For example, the values
and philosophy found in the collaborative teaching practices were values
and philosophy that influenced the vision and mission later created for the
entire school. In addition, the relationships formed through the
collaborative teaching models positively affected the community
relationships at many levels and in many ways. Even the new staff who
came later were to be affected by the long-term practice of collaboration
by the Excelsior staff.

Peer Coaching Model

After several years of study and research, the current peer coaching
model at Excelsior was established in the fall of 1996. To this date the
model continues to undergo adjustments and evaluation. The core of this
model is based on four (Figure 1.1) assumptions:

Figure 1.1

1. Considerable knowledge and talent exists among educators.

2. Educators can and do assist each other through problem solving together and by sharing their expertise.

3. Educators who work collaboratively find more meaning and significance in their work than those who work in isolation.

4. As educators progressively engage in collaborative efforts, they experience increased collegiality and empowerment.

Peer coaching at Excelsior has been shown to be effective in assisting educators to practice reflective thinking and strategic teaching. It is also particularly effective in reducing feelings of isolation and instilling a practice of shared inquiry. Bringing together collective study coupled with individual action allows the peer coaching model to adapt to the needs of a fast-paced society. The reorientation of a culture of collegial problem solving engages educators in the amelioration of the teaching and learning process. Recent literature on teacher renewal and professional growth (Ponticell, 1994) suggests that educators need meaningful support to recapture their sense of purpose, rebuild their self confidence and examine
their classroom practices. The peer coaching model investigated for this study has provided evidence to support this tenet. The "practice of public teaching" as suggested by Showers (1984), has renewed Excelsior educators' interest in their own teaching. They have acquired a reflective approach towards their own teaching and learning as they have developed a mature professional identity.

Collaborative processes can become a tool for sharing insights and suggestions about how to make the journey of self-discovery a successful one. Buddhism teaches that the journey is in its taking, not just in where it leads. Through the process of exploration and collaboration, educators can discover more completely who they are as professionals and who they are as human beings. This in turn enhances their ability to grow as lifelong learners. In the words of the poet T. S. Eliot in Four Quartets:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Importance of the Study

The cultural ethos of schools as places of isolation needs to be reexamined in light of the complexities presented to teachers today about
the possible effects of collaboration on teacher relationships. The concept that "we-are-smarter-than-me" is one possible collegial approach to the advancement of reflection and renewal among our teachers today. In the 1980s educators began to see that collegiality and collaboration might have a positive influence on the way teachers teach and on the climate of individual schools. Now as we draw the decade of the 90s to a close, we come to understand better how teachers learn new behaviors and put them into practice, and we see that the synergistic exchange of ideas plays an important role. Peer coaching studies show that teachers who enter into peer coaching relationships practice new skills and strategies more frequently than did those teachers who remained in isolation (Showers, 1984). Within the realm of professional development today we find that with initial trainings collaborative practices result in ways in which educators are able to gain control over their own teaching and over their own development as professionals as well as to influence the cultural ethos of their particular educational settings (DeBolt 1992). The importance of this study then is to investigate the effects of collaborative teaching on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy so to better understand the importance of collaboration among educators.
Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the factors at Excelsior Academy that have contributed to achieving and sustaining a collaborative cultural ethos among educators who are involved in a peer coaching model. The correlative purpose is to gain a better understanding of the organizational ideas required to achieve and sustain that cultural ethos. From these two purposes the following (Figure 1.2) complementary purposes emerge:

Figure 1.2

1. Investigate how the educators perceive: a) cultural ethos and b) peer coaching.

2. Explore the educational relationships between the pairs of peer coaches during the descriptive case study.

3. Examine the initial impact of a peer coaching model on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy.

Research Questions

To address the purposes of the study the following research questions (Figure 1.3) will be answered within the qualitative research format of a case study:
### Figure 1.3

1. How has the peer coaching model shaped the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy?

2. How does the peer coaching model affect the teaching and learning of the educators involved?

3. What changes in the existing model would the peer coaches make based on their experiences thus far?

### Assumptions Related to the Study

The first assumption of this study is that the peer coaching model will produce positive effects on the teaching and learning of Excelsior Academy staff members. A second major assumption is that Excelsior staff members have experiences they can contribute to the study of peer coaching. Hence, when Excelsior teachers can practice together they can develop deeper reflections about their educational practices and commitments about reshaping the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy so they come to a greater understanding of the role of collaboration in the teaching and learning process.
I am limiting this study to the peer coaching aspect of Excelsior Academy, as I investigate the effects of collaborative practice on the cultural ethos of a school. I have chosen the zoom-lens approach as opposed to the wide angle-lens approach to investigate a smaller setting with a particular population. With this in mind, then, I will also limit this study to discovering the perspectives of those peer coaching educators at Excelsior Academy. For these reasons this study is limited to a descriptive case study.

Terminology

A definition of terms is essential in clarifying the meaning of key concepts that will be used in this study.

Cognitive Coaching - a nonjudgmental process of conferencing, observing, strategizing, reflection and application between professional colleagues; to develop positive interpersonal relationships and enhance intellectual capacities of students and staff.

Collaboration - the process of shared imagination and creation where
staff connect inner thoughts and feelings with those of their colleagues to make sense of their environment.

**Collegiality** - the power of seeing one another from different perspectives with respect for each other's viewpoints and trusting that the other is well-intentioned; creating aggregates of unity and support.

**Communication** - the purpose of which is to strive to go beyond any one individual's understanding; to become observers of one's own thoughts and to realize the participatory nature of thinking.

**Consultation** - a voluntary process where one professional educator assists another to problem solve specific educational concerns.

**Cooperative Teaching** - the simultaneous teaching of a general educator and a special educator side by side in the general education classroom composed of academically heterogeneous students.

**Cultural Ethos** - the perceived feeling or tone of the educational setting involving values, norms and beliefs that formally and informally guide and shape behaviors.
Democratic Dialogue - the process of educators engaging in dialogue where attempts are made to equalize representation, establish a feeling of community, and share substantive decision-making actions.

Discovery - a dynamic practice of ongoing inquiry and interaction where ideas and feelings are richly illuminated and carefully considered.

Distributed Intelligence - the theory that educators teach and learn more effectively in a person-plus environment than in a person-solo environment; where ideas are shared and reflective inquiry is ongoing.

Educator - any person who is responsible for the education of children including but not limited to teachers, administrators, teaching assistants, interns. When the term teacher is used in this study it may be interchanged freely with the term educator.

Empowerment - providing enabling conditions for staff to lead the most enriching lives they can and to engage in responsible and meaningful work through sensible actions.

Inclusive Classroom - an educational environment arranged collaboratively by a general educator and a special educator to address the
needs of students having a wide range of academic abilities and levels.

**Leadership** - the exercise of significant and responsible influence.

**Learning Community** - an educational environment wherein members are bonded to one another by mutual commitments and interpersonal relationships; where they share a quest for learning and mutual responsibility for acquisition of ideas.

**Participatory Leadership** - the act of engaging in significant and responsible influence through the sharing of roles, responsibilities and decisionmaking.

**Peer Coaching** - a metacognitive approach to teaching and learning among peers that assists educators in being more thoughtful about student achievement and about their role in the teaching and learning process.

**Professionalism** - the practice of engaging in the craft of teaching all the while displaying great skill and expertise.

**Restructuring** - a long-term commitment to fundamental, systemic change.
Shared Decisionmaking - the process of resolving problems and making decisions as a group or unit for the betterment of the school.

Shared Inquiry - the practice of making one's view open to influence and consideration.

Site-Based Management - a method used to transform schools into communities where educators on site participate in major decisions that affect them.

Staff Development - processes intended to improve skills, values, beliefs, understandings, knowledge and performance regarding the teaching and learning cycle; to be used in this study interchangeably with the term professional development.

Supervision - an evaluative approach taken by administrators who work with educators to bring about improvement in the school or school district.

Teacher Research - a deliberate and systematic inquiry about teaching and learning conducted by educators.

Teamwork - an activity in which committed members of a group
coordinate efforts to achieve a particular goal.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

PERSPECTIVES ON COLLABORATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

Introduction

The conducting of research involves a systematic, deliberate and critical inquiry of a particular theme. The researcher conducts a careful examination and ongoing survey of the literature of that particular theme. As a researcher, I bear the responsibility of becoming increasingly familiar with the particular theme under study. An in-depth study of a particular theme requires me to build a knowledge base from which I will inquire, examine and develop theories about the topic. In order to provide a knowledge base for this study, I conducted a deliberate and systematic search on the topic of collaborative teaching practices. This investigation revealed a plethora of staff development theories and practices leading to the correlation of collaboration to teaching as well as current theories and practices regarding educators as collaborators. Current studies reveal that educators engaged in collaborative teaching practices are taking center stage in the theater of educational reform and professional growth.

This chapter puts forth several themes synthesized from a critical review of the literature (Figure 2.1): (a) an emergence of collaborative teaching practices in general education; (b) the nature of collaborative
teaching practices in the 1990's; (c) the emergence of collaborative teaching practices in special education; (d) the effects of implementation of collaborative teaching practices; (e) coaching as a particular collaborative teaching practice; (f) peer coaching and its effects on educators; and (g) the issues and concerns of implementing a peer coaching model. The chapter concludes with a rationale for the need of further study in the area of collaborative teaching practices, especially in the practice of peer coaching.

Figure 2.1

Review of the Literature
Collaborative Teaching Practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>The 1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Effects of Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer Coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues and Concerns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emergence of Collaborative Teaching Practices in General Education

In general education today many schools are discovering the benefits of collaborative teaching practices. The most successful collaborative efforts are those that seek to provide regular opportunities for educators to share perspectives and seek solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of collegiality and professional respect (Fullan, 1993; Udall &
Collaborative practices allow tasks and responsibilities to be shared; they reduce the workload while enhancing the quality of the work. Additionally, working collaboratively helps focus attention on the shared purposes and achievement of goals that are the basis for a sound professional development process. The collaborative process presents varied configurations for each specific situation. From peer coaching to study teams to comprehensive collaborative schools, valuable insights and expertise can be shared.

**Reform of Professionalism**

There has been a rising tide in the literature regarding the need for educators to acquire increased professionalism (Fullan, 1993; Goodlad, 1984, 1994; Schlechty, 1990; Smyth, W., 1988). The theory underlying a need for increased professionalism among educators, according to Darling-Hammond (1989), is that strengthening the structures and conduits for creating and transferring knowledge will provide an effective means of meeting student needs and improving the overall quality of education. Professionalism among educators holds various meanings and displays various looks. One common thread found within the literature is the need for educators to become more thoughtful teachers and more thoughtful learners. This increased thoughtfulness requires a transformation of
paradigms, of leadership, of teaching practices, and of professional growth.

The goal, then, of educators should be to establish more systematic approaches to teacher development by transforming schools into environments of continuous learning. Environments of continuous learning involve reflective inquiry, collaborative cultures and interdependent communities of problem solvers. Judy Swanson conducted a study in 1995 from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education (Swanson, 1995). Her investigation led to three school/university partnerships that are creating reform of teacher education. In 1989 in West Virginia, the Benedum Project was established to reform learning environments. The Project’s philosophy is based on the bringing together of the best of research and practice to enhance the education of teachers. The Project’s goals include redesigning teacher education at West Virginia University and creating professional development schools. In 1991 in Toronto, the Learning Consortium was established at the University of Toronto and has focused its reform on creating professional development that attempts to change the culture of a school. The Southern Maine Partnership, established in 1989, began as a program to improve teaching and learning and has developed into an interactive dialogue about school change and teacher preparation. Swanson found that the efforts of the three partnerships reflect a common belief that teachers are professionals who require engagement in high
levels of inquiry and collaboration.

David Perkins in his book *Smart Schools* (1992), relates that smart schools are thoughtful schools where the teaching and learning process and the decision-making process are thinking-centered. He advocates for the development of schools where thoughtful learning takes place at all levels - not just for students in classrooms but for the professionals committed to those students. Developing thoughtful professionalism, he feels, is an essential component of school reform. Perkins reveals several conditions for advancing thoughtful professionalism in schools:

1. The smart school environment allows opportunities for learning by educators as well as students where collaboration and cooperation play vital roles.

2. The smart school includes many collegial activities such as discussions about best practices, peer observations, collaborating on curriculum writing, and staff teaching one another.

3. In the smart school administrators display a collaborative culture by practicing responsiveness to staff ideas and providing opportunities for shared leadership.

4. Within a smart school setting, staff are provide with opportunities and time to reflect and think about their teaching practices.

5. A smart school advocates creating a shared culture called the craft of teaching.

6. The smart school knows that beginning teachers need a great deal of nurturing and feedback and, consequently, pair their teachers in
order for more experienced teachers to mentor beginning teachers.

Several common themes are threaded throughout Perkins' work - collegiality, reflection, dialogue, thoughtfulness, sharing, inquiry, cooperation. These terms are not often heard in classrooms and schools when referring to educators, yet, the literature points to them often as a way of establishing a certain professionalism in today's educators. If professional reform is to take place, educators will need to engage in many forms of collaborative teaching practices. Collaboration was a distant ambition even in the last half of the 1980's. With increased efforts in schools and partnerships, collaboration is within reach. In addition, professionalism involves evaluation and supervision where educators are responsible and accountable for their actions and decisions.

Renewed Theories of Supervision

In an article for the Harvard Business Review (1991), Peter Drucker coined a new term - knowledge worker. A knowledge worker is a white collar professional whose tool is knowledge. Educators are knowledge workers. According to Francis Duffy (1997), educators as knowledge workers cannot be supervised directly because knowledge is not directly observable. Educators engage in context-based knowledge which arrives
in the form of stories, experiences, intuition and wisdom. This type of knowledge varies with the context of the particular setting and issue. Hence, Duffy's theory on Knowledge Work Supervision holds that the way to improve education is to focus on the performance of the school - not on individual teachers. In Knowledge Work Supervision strategic leadership, teamwork, cooperation, communication, coordination and collaboration all play a vital role in bringing the educators together to create successful learning environments for students as well as for staff. Supervision can occur when all the educational players collaborate to "supervise" the performance of the school. The theory is that assessing and refining and changing the organization will improve individual teachers. Collaboration is the key to this achievement.

Joyce and colleagues (1983) served as predecessors to Duffy's theory of Knowledge Work Supervision. In their work on school improvement they describe an ongoing process of refinement, renovation and redesign. Their school improvement process involved the creation of teams of educators from around the school district engaged in dialogue and reflection with the goal of continuous improvement. Another precursor to Duffy's innovative yet untested theory is the clinical supervision model created by Morris Cogan (1973). Cogan envisioned a clinical supervision model as "the development of a professionally responsible teacher who is analytical about his own performance, open to help from others, and self-
directing" (1973, 23). Consequently, clinical supervision demanded a paradigm shift from a strict evaluation of teacher by administrator to a dialogue between teacher and administrator working together as colleagues. Costa and Garmston (1994) have created a model of supervision which has its roots in all three of the aforementioned theories. Their model of Cognitive Coaching, discussed in more detail later in the chapter, employs the clinical supervision model as it is linked to teacher reflection and collegial dialogue. Hence the supervisor becomes a person with whom the teacher may dialogue, and Cognitive Coaching relies upon inner thought processes and intellectual functions as a basis for improvement in teaching practices.

As the progression of staff development and school improvement winds its way through years of professional supervision, one begins to see a pattern. The pattern includes increased focus on: teacher learning, reflective dialogue, higher level thought processes, shared inquiry and collaborative practices. Due to its isolated, evaluative nature, traditional exercises in supervision were unable to transform educators, schools or districts into more thoughtful teams. When schools consistently employ such models as Knowledge Work Supervision and Cognitive Coaching, entire schools may be transformed into high-performing learning organizations where collaborative teaching practices thrive and the changing roles of educators are in evidence.
Changing Roles in Restructured Schools

Current literature on the restructuring of schools has not revealed a commonly accepted definition of restructuring, however, Timar defined restructuring as "changing the rules of behavior that define both the roles of individuals and their actions" (1989, 266). When Fullan (1993) discussed the relationship between restructuring and reculturing, he spoke of the creation of a culture of supportive change. Brandt (1993) and Swanson (1995) both equated restructuring with systemic reform, where the rules, roles and relationships are changed to address how decisions are made about the use of space, time, technology and personnel. Whether the process is called restructuring, reculturing, systemic reform or school change, the changes that occur in rules, roles and relationships create new ways of looking at the teaching and learning process.

Restructuring, then, is the fundamental redesign of the organization and its methods of teaching and learning. The concept of restructuring involves changing: school operations and organizational structures; school leadership practices; management hierarchies; and ways in which educators approach curriculum and instruction. In addition, restructuring includes creating more thoughtful communities for educators; empowering educators to participate in shared decisionmaking; and creating work role transitions through increased professional development (Bredeson, 1989;
Cohen, 1989; Herman & Herman, 1993; Lane & Epps, 1992; Lieberman & Miller, 1990). These concepts may also be found within the literature associated with site-based management, shared decisionmaking, and participatory leadership.

**Site-based management.** Hill et al. (1992, 21) reveal “the purpose of site-based management is to improve performance by making those closest to the delivery of services - teachers and principals - more independent and more responsible for the results of their schools’ operations.” Within the past two decades, educators have begun recognizing the negative pedagogical effect of strong centralization, curriculum uniformity, and the fragmented nature of the educational system. For more than a decade certain educational experts have advocated the delegation of authority to school sites. The same educators have also expressed the need for a higher degree of school autonomy and more relaxation of the rigid restraints of organizational rules and operations (Cogan, 1973; Cohen, 1989; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Garman, 1986; Hess, 1992; Ross & Regan, 1993; Walling, 1994). According to these experts the schools should be:

1. Responsible for defining and expanding their educational goals and expectations.

2. Empowered to develop curriculum and instructional methods according to the school vision and the goals and expectations they
have established.

3. Responsible for monitoring achievement of their educational goals and student achievement.

4. More influential in the acquisition and maintenance of school staff.

5. Responsible and empowered to make decisions about the income and expenditures of their school.

6. Governed through a process of shared decisionmaking and participatory practices which involves all levels of school staff.

Over the years the public debate about site-based management has been intense and emotional. Opponents of site-based management point to a future full of woes: erosion of educational equality for all children; fear of the privatization of education; diminishing status of educational leaders; and disempowerment of local, state and federal educational agencies. The proponents of site-based management describe the benefits of such a venture as being: increased empowerment for educators; internal monitoring of the teaching and learning process; new and varied work relationships among staff; on-going professional dialogues; increased enthusiasm and intensity among staff; and increased student motivation (Boyer, 1993; Book, 1995; Hess, 1992; Ross & Regan, 1993; Walling, 1994). Whatever the advantages and disadvantages may be, educators need to be
able to arrive at a balanced compromise for site governance - something that has eluded public education for years.

Shared decisionmaking. Cohen (1989, 44) suggests "school decisionmaking and governance patterns must change as well. Creating greater discretion at the school site level also should involve broader participation in decisionmaking." With site-based management naturally comes shared decisionmaking among all levels of staff. Consequently, the purpose of shared decisionmaking is to empower all members of the educational circle to engage in the decisionmaking process. David (1996) sites a number of common traits within the shared decisionmaking realm:

1. A well-thought-out committee structure with a high correlation between decision content and the types of staff who can problem solve and resolve the issues found in that content.

2. Leaders who empower and mobilize the remaining staff to participate in and play an active role in the decisionmaking process in order to create schoolwide ownership of the school's vision.

3. Decisionmaking bodies that focus on student learning and connect noninstructional decisions with conditions that maximize learning opportunities.

4. An established mission wherein staff members believe in and engage in professional growth and development in order to acquire new skills and to practice problem solving and self-assessment.

5. Focused energy that is dedicated to achieving the school vision.
through increased communication, active inquiry, shared leadership and consistent follow-through of ideas.

Discussions about shared decisionmaking throughout the literature have brought to the forefront many questions about equity, adult learning, conceptions of teaching, decisionmaking and professional development (David, 1996; Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990; Ross & Regan, 1993). In particular are the following questions:

• What regulations will provide for equity among resources for schools?

• How can shared decisionmaking create a sense of community in schools that draw from large geographic areas where territorial issues may impede progress?

• What opportunities and resources will be provided for advanced professional development?

• How should staff roles be redefined to allow time for collaborative decisionmaking and ongoing professional growth?

• What balance can be found to structure school autonomy and flexibility with the importance of centralized operations providing consistency, coordination and legal guidance?

• How can work teams be established in schools such that they maintain an efficiency and cost effectiveness that enhances school resources?

These questions have not been fully answered. In theory, the benefits of shared decisionmaking outweigh the costs. In reality, the process of
shared decisionmaking has been slow in developing. Until educators can find more complete answers to the questions above and to ones they have posed, shared decisionmaking will continue to be found less in educational settings and more often in settings within the corporate world.

**Participatory leadership.** Schools are unlikely to improve unless their members begin to participate in meaningful ways. David (1996) expands this idea by stating that schools are unlikely to improve unless educators begin to shape the direction of change. She believes that those who have the greatest personal stake in schools are the ones who should take on the issues. Participatory leadership does not mean that all staff members make decisions about every issue. Decisions are best approached by those who are informed about the issues, who know the context, and who care about the issue. Participatory leadership, then, is a process where sound attention is paid to who makes which decisions; it is a deliberate, intentional and dynamic decisionmaking body that makes informed decisions using the school’s vision as a guide.

Schlechty (1990) feels that the concept of participatory leadership has focused for too long on the democratic ideals of truth and justice. Acknowledging that this focus has had a noble bearing, he suggests that the realities of school life require a more realistic outlook. He further suggests that participatory leadership be viewed from the perspective of organizational effectiveness. Taking his cue from the leaders of American
business, he cites that treating employees as important contributors to the enterprise increases productivity and employee satisfaction. In other words, participatory leadership in schools is important not only because it is democratic, but also because it produces better decisions and results. In the few research studies of a small number of schools that have attempted participatory leadership (Malen, 1993; Smylie, 1994), teachers commonly reported: satisfaction with leadership roles and increased stress due to the time demands. The question arises as to what is the role of teachers? This is not a question that can or should be settled empirically. Book (1995) believes that critical and constructive inquiry coupled with skills and motivation are the prerequisites to participatory leadership. Prestine and Bowen (1993) believe that the degree to which educators understand decisionmaking, organizational behavior and institutional change is critical to how effective the participatory process will become. Developing a greater understanding of these concepts would provide a solid basis for launching a participatory leadership practice in any school setting.

**Changing educational roles.** Bredeson (1995) has studied principal roles and teacher roles for a decade and has arrived at several group-centered leader behaviors involving principals that have shown promise:

1. Recognizing and attending to individual and group needs for reassurance and support as the teachers respond to new role expectations.
2. Acting as consultant, adviser, resource and teacher in response to the changing face of shared decisionmaking and participatory leadership.

3. Modeling desired leadership behaviors in order to share strategies and styles that would support teacher leadership.

4. Providing a supportive climate where teachers feel empowered to express their viewpoints, take initiative, and learn from their mistakes.

5. Encouraging teachers to be self-monitoring, to assume responsibilities for group effectiveness, and to select and frame problems to be addressed.

6. Relinquishing control over decisions and translate their controlling behaviors into supportive behaviors to help teachers achieve desired outcomes.

These changes in principal behaviors have a dynamic effect on teacher behaviors. Shifts in positional, personal and political roles as well as changes in formal leadership roles have profound implications for teachers.

Changes in power and the principal’s leadership role affect the role of teachers in schools. As principals relinquish responsibility in particular decision arenas, this expands the traditional role of the classroom teacher. This is especially true in the areas of curriculum design, student assessment, use of resources and professional development. These expanded roles result in significant changes in positional, personal and political roles.

Bredeson (1995) also looks at teacher roles and the effects that
changing principal roles have on participatory leadership. He points out five areas of need where teachers will require supplemental training to adjust to their changing roles:

1. Expanding the definition of teachers' professional work in schools to include differing levels of competence and various roles inside and outside the classroom.

2. Providing opportunities to enhance professional development in the areas of professionalism, collegiality, interpersonal skills, conflict resolution and leadership skills.

3. Presenting an awareness of the need for strategies and skills to help teachers deal with the anxiety and strain that comes with change.

4. Training and development provided in the areas of teamwork and collaboration.

5. Providing opportunities for teacher training in the area of group dynamics in order for teachers to become responsive to the group and its shared purpose.

Although there are only five areas of need stated, each area encompasses a great deal of new learning. In addition, there are other areas such as problem solving, decisionmaking, goal setting and attainment and more. Participatory leadership, like site-based management and shared decisionmaking, cannot be found to be functioning effectively in the majority of school districts. Perhaps this is because there are too many unanswered questions.
School Reform

Both Schlechty (1990) and Fullan (1993) have an explanation for the lack of success involving site-based management, shared decisionmaking and participatory leadership. Schlechty reveals that school restructuring, which includes the various methods of making decisions, must be apolitical. By this he means, the school's purpose cannot be to further the empowerment of teachers. As a matter of fact, the purpose must not be focused on the teachers in any primary way. Instead, he suggests, the primary focus of the school should be about the students and their successes. Hence, says Schlechty, "a results orientation is critical to developing a nonpolitical, effectiveness-focused pattern" (1990, 52) of some type of shared decisionmaking. Schlechty also makes a distinction between learning-focused schools and student-focused schools: "Learning-focused schools too often become test-focused schools. The results pursued are gains on test scores (1990, 54)." As long as schools continue to focus on test scores and teacher empowerment, restructuring efforts will not be rewarded with more effective schools. This is not to say that collaborative practices are not valuable and relevant, but these practices are the means and not the ends. Schlechty's point is well taken. These types of collaborative practices are important as a means to the end of achieving
school success. Schools and educators will need to learn this lesson well in order to rise up from the quagmire of restructuring and reform.

Fullan would agree with his colleague, Schlechty, about the focus of education and the participation of educators: "The point is not that participation in decisionmaking is a bad thing - it is that it is not focusing on the right things... (1993, 51)." Fullan feels that top-down decisionmaking that passes on reform strategies to the schools do not have a chance of reaching the relevant issues and problems. What Schlechty might call a political concern, Fullan would call a policy issue. Oftentimes educators receive edicts that address how they should raise test scores, for example, knowing the edicts to be counterproductive to student success over the long term. Policymakers often divert the attention away from the core problems which require long term decisions and action and instead focus on responding to empirical issues and superficial concerns. Again participatory decisionmaking is necessary at the site level to reach the core of the school's purpose.

Berends (1992) studied 28 schools that have addressed the issue of school reform. He came to the conclusion that, because these schools were nominated from a field of only 123 schools around the country that might be involved in school reform, restructuring and reform are infrequent visitors to the nation's schools. Berends puts forth a number of conclusions about the failure to reform:
1. Even if a school receives a great deal of attention for reform is no indication that substantive change is occurring, as a matter of fact, reform is usually found in the smaller more sheltered schools.

2. Most strategies that are the result of school reform fail to address the core culture of teaching and learning, primarily because this core is very difficult to change.

3. When looking at changing ways of teaching to achieve more effective learning, one has to look at a major transformation in the culture of school collaboration.

4. Change - whether unanticipated or anticipated - is guaranteed during reform and schools must be prepared to dialogue, share and problem solve.

Thus far, the lessons presented by the three experts are becoming increasingly familiar. Change is a guarantee in school reform. Finding time for change will enhance the prospects for success. Educators must learn new behaviors and approaches. Administrators must provide opportunities for these new behaviors and approaches to be learned. Teamwork must extend to the entire school. Educators must learn the ways of participatory leadership, shared decisionmaking and collaboration. Finally, collaborative practices are only the vehicle in which to achieve student success and not the end. The following are various examples of school reform involving collaborative efforts that are productive and stimulating.

Learning communities. Recently, the Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching proposed a new model of school reform for the elementary school that "connects people to people to build community; connects elements of the curriculum to achieve coherence; and connects learning to life to build character (Boyer, 1995)." There is a growing consensus that schools must become places where educators create learning communities for the school population. Communities are places where people are bonded to one another by mutual commitments and a sense of shared purpose that they feel compelled to follow. Educators must pave the way for students by creating environments where they share commitments and common goals.

Nias, Southworth, and Campbell (1992) studied five schools in England who were selected because of their commitment to approach school reform as a group. Nias and her colleagues' findings offer solid examples of the dynamics of collaboration and reform. Four primary themes stand out in their investigation:

1. The commitment to learning as a group was seen by the educators as a primary way to improve education for children. Such public learning was regarded as a means of increasing individual and collective abilities and not as a sign of inadequacy.

2. Change in teachers' beliefs about sharing and working together evolved over time. They found that conflict is normal and that independence and interdependence can coexist in a dynamic relationship.

3. Shared organizational values and collaborative organizational
structures were essential to maintaining their commitment to learning. Each of the schools developed some type of school vision or purpose and worked within various types of collaborative arrangements.

4. The unpredictable and dynamic nature of the change process was seen by the educators in a new light. Many expressed the stressful yet highly productive results of working together with a common commitment.

It can be concluded that the commitment to approach school reform as a team brought about significant learning experiences for the educators involved. Among developments, they increased their understandings of change, collaboration, learning and school reform. This example of the development of productive learning communities would benefit educators all over the United States.

Teacher-as-learners. Teachers-as-learners is a basic school reform concept yet educators are increasingly acknowledging its implications for shaping their professional lives. Udall and Rugen (1997) cite an approach to teacher development called Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB). ELOB follows a simple maxim: when teachers view themselves as learners, they enhance their capacity to reflect on their craft in ways that help them do better. Traditionally when teachers wanted to increase their learning curves and build relationships with other educators, they enrolled in summer workshops or courses. Udall and Rugen contend that these experiences have been less than motivating, and have actually perpetuated
ineffective teaching methods. Their work over the past few years has been focused on professional development experiences in what they call summits. During summits, teachers are immersed in weeklong learning expeditions that focus on a particular theme. Summits model the active learning of ELOB and create opportunities for teachers to reflect on themselves as learners, to deepen their inquiry about their craft, and to engage in team-building exercises and collaborative work efforts. Summits encourage educators to collaborate intensely with one another on a common goal for which they all care. By establishing a community of learning, they may accomplish their goals by drawing on the talents and efforts of all.

Another incidence of effective school reform involving teachers-as-learners is cited by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993). They have studied a number of varying educator groups engaged in teacher-research

![Figure 2.2](image URL)

*Figure 2.2*
Communities for Teacher Research
A Framework for Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing time</th>
<th>Using talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructing texts</td>
<td>Interpreting tasks of teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
communities. Using examples from a number of the different groups, they have produced an analytic framework (Figure 2.2) that describes the qualities of such communities. The framework provides four perspectives on teacher-research communities: the ways in which they organize their time, use talk, construct texts, and interpret the tasks of teaching and schooling. Cochran-Smith and Lytle have provided this framework as a tool to assist existing and future teacher groups to plan their collaborative work and create cultures of inquiry. There can be a powerful connection between teacher communities and school reform. Teacher-research communities provide: opportunities for reflection about and improvement to the teaching and learning process; involvement with educators of differing perspectives and from varying segments of education; positive environments for shared inquiry; and stimulation for renewing and establishing productive collaborative relationships. It remains to be seen whether this type of school reform will remain on the fringe of the educational reform movement or become an integral component of teaching and learning.

Partnerships. In *Educational Renewal*, Goodlad (1994) discusses how a center of pedagogy serves to show the intensely interdependent productivity of a diverse array of people. The center is a joint venture in school reform between a university and cooperating school districts to increase professional development and experiment in new ways of
collaborating. Goodlad suggests that schools and universities take a look at the center’s example to help them develop effective partnerships. Goodlad has developed the National Network for Educational Renewal where universities and schools can understand and learn how to build university-school partnerships. His network provides several lessons for developing these types of partnerships.

1. The school or university should understand the culture of the organization with which they are about to collaborate.

2. The essential value of sustaining mutual commitment and maintaining effective leadership cannot be taken too lightly.

3. An ethic of collaboration and shared inquiry must be developed and modeled by those who understand these processes.

4. Learning to live with change and ambiguity is a significant step, especially in the planning and evaluation stages.

5. The translation of leadership into empowerment and shared responsibility is essential to any type of partnership.

It does not matter which vehicle is chosen for educational renewal and school reform. The important factor is that educators become engaged in some form of school renewal and communities of learning where they are guided by a shared vision and a mutual purpose.

The Collaborative School

Reform initiatives do not produce instant results, say Rallis and
Zajano (1997). Reform efforts that schools have been engaged in are designed to produce long-term results. Consequently improvements are not immediately obvious and may not be so for years to come. Moreover, they continue, these change efforts are requiring educators to interact in ways very different from those in traditional schools. The expected outcomes of these reform efforts are requiring different indicators of success. On the other hand, taxpayers, funders, policymakers and the community are demanding to see results that they can understand in a shorter amount of time. What Rallis and Zajano propose are for those who are involved of school reform to “keep the faith until the outcomes are obvious (p. 707).”

For collaborative schools this advice is never more timely and important. Many collaborative schools have been working for a number of years on reaching agreement on a vision and mission. Evidence of more effective schooling is just beginning to come into view as a result of collaborative schools who are guided by those visions. At the same time, it is difficult today to find a school district that has not adopted a vision and a mission. The question arises: since having developed a mutual purpose, why have these districts been unable to sustain long-term change? Peel and McCary (1997) suggest an answer to this query. They feel it is because the vision has not become part of the belief system of each individual and they are not living that vision. If a vision is developed
from the administrative level and handed down, or if the players do not understand their roles as communicators of the vision, then long-term change will be unachievable. Peel and McCary present their version of "The Little Red Schoolhouse," one example of a collaborative school. For a collaborative school to become a reality requires a fundamental rethinking of the roles and relationships that connect educators at all levels. The LRS can provide schools with a prototype for effective school reform. It is a school where collaboration is the vehicle for achievement and productivity. Teachers are leaders who have the time and skills necessary to reflect and to collaborate with each other. Ongoing adult learning is valued as a conduit for continuing refinement of the school program. Principals become the leaders of leaders whose primary role is to create a community of the mind that develops a clear vision which focuses on collaboration at all levels. Information, resources and positions are shared while decisions are made together. Because all educators in the LRS are elevated to responsible and professional positions, they must possess skills in the areas of decisionmaking, problem solving, consensus building, communication, collegiality and collaboration. Finally, the authors describe the major premise of a collaborative school:

While some districts have worked to develop schools of choice, our structural vision mandates the creation of schools of voice - schools in which all parties participate on an equal basis in communication
and decision making focused on learning, quality, and improvement. Democracy is not about individual rights, but participation in establishing the common good. True schools of voice are democratic places that establish powerful visions that affect the behavior of all stakeholders. (p. 702)

What are the key concepts that connect school reform and collaboration? Three repeating themes are shared vision, dialogue and collegial involvement. If these three qualities are present in a school the chances for developing and sustaining a collaborative school are greatly enhanced. Ahead are three characteristics that educators need to have or develop in order to be a part of a successful collaborative school.

Collegiality. Shifts in power and new work relationships among educators foster new norms for collegial behaviors. Little (1982) describes behaviors reflecting norms of professional collegiality. While engaging in collegial events, educators talk more about their work, observe each other, plan and design curriculum together, and enter into sharing professional expertise. Collegiality is dependent upon the amount of trust among staff members, according to Bredeson (1995). Trust can help to build confidence during the evolving processes, suspend premature judgments and sustain optimism for change.

The demands of today's administrators make it almost impossible to do the job in isolation. Thomas Hoerr (1996) suggests that the solution is
to share the responsibility with teachers. He outlines the steps necessary for building collegiality in schools:

1. Sufficient time must be allocated for engaging in collegiality on a regular basis. These time periods need to be lengthy enough to sustain discussions on educational philosophy, long-term planning and a shared vision.

2. Starting with a nucleus of interested staff members and inviting everyone to participate is a more positive approach to instituting a change in the schedule. This nucleus can be made up of teachers who are willing to take risks, look at their roles differently and get involved in schoolwide issues.

3. Principals need to learn to relinquish control of all decisionmaking and to decide which issues are important enough to engage collegial groups of teachers.

4. Modeling what is valued is an important step in building collegiality. If the meetings are important enough for teachers, they are important enough for the principal. Hiring substitutes is another way to show teachers their input is important and valued.

5. It is important to focus on issues that are meaningful to teachers. One way to do this is to ask them; another way is to create a reading group with articles or texts to read and discuss.

As has been noted by others, change is slow and difficult. Schools who excel in collaborative efforts and collegiality, continue to grow and learn. Principals who allocate time, invite staff members to partake, share
leadership, model what they value, and focus on meaningful issues, will have a greater chance at collegial success.

**Teamwork.** Gleason and Leader (1995) point out that teamwork is a significant component of collaborative schools. In the absence of teams, schools remain static, educators work in isolation, generative learning is limited and staff feel overwhelmed. When teams work cooperatively to address the educational direction of the school, school improvement becomes a dynamic process, collegiality increases, continuous learning becomes a way of life, and staff become motivated and regenerated. Teamwork allows an interdependency among staff that may not have existed before team development. Discussions in the literature about teamwork have posed several characteristics of an effective team: commitment, consensus, conflict resolution, effective communication, and self monitoring (Gleason & Leader, 1995; Glickman, 1993; Hergert, 1994).

An educational setting can expect great gains in many areas when teamwork becomes a conduit for decisionmaking processes. These gains can be found in increased: productivity, morale, efficiency, effectiveness, quality of work, and quality of content. An educator can expect gains in the areas of: decreased stress, greater self confidence, increased empowerment, increased achievement (Malen, et al, 1990). According to Glickman (1993) these benefits are only significant if the appropriate environment is established for teamwork. This environment includes:
supportive leadership, cooperation, sufficient meeting time, training in decisionmaking and problem solving skills, and staff commitment.

Becoming part of a team challenges educators to rethink their routines, values, and philosophies. Research into successful teaming experiences (Blase & Blase, 1994) indicates that active administrative support, staff recognition and availability of meeting time help to ensure successful teamwork. Whether the team is composed of two members or ten members, engaging in mutual decisionmaking and leadership can lead a community of learners who share trust, respect, passion and professionalism.

Collaboration. As the keystone to a collaborative school, collaboration creates a social system where the school staff share responsibility for excellence in academic, social and personal development of the students. In order for this system to thrive, educators must be involved in the creation of collaborative work cultures (Fullan, 1995). Although the need for collaboration is clear, a number of factors can make collaboration difficult to achieve. Research shows that there are several barriers to collaboration that educators can learn to overcome through awareness, sensitivity, growth and reflection. These barriers include beliefs about self and others, professional isolation, lack of skills, and resources (Bondy & Brownell, 1997).

Bondy and Brownell suggest that forming partnerships among all
educators in the school will help overcome some of these barriers to collaboration. They insist that all individuals involved in the education of a school's children should know, respect and trust one another. Even when staff members have similar perspectives and practice respect, collaboration can be difficult. At this level communication and negotiation skills are essential. The authors suggest that many collaborative efforts have gone awry because the group members lacked the skills to establish and maintain productive problem solving. These collaboration skills include: listening, sharing, withholding judgment, articulating clearly, respecting other views, and finding common ground. Bondy and Brownell emphasize a focus on observing those who indicate effective collaboration skills. They suggest observing the following:

- collaborators in formal/informal settings
- body language, tone of voice, facial expression
- expression of concerns and suggestions
- inclusion of other members
- how they listen
- how often they listen

For those indicating less effective collaboration skills Bondy and Brownell propose conducting a self assessment using these questions:

- How do I operate in a group? Am I open to other perspectives?
- Do I try to understand others' concerns and views free of judgment? Do I actively listen to others?
- Do I clearly express my ideas? Am I able to compromise or find common ground?
According to Elliott and Sheridan (1992), when educators collaborate, they improve their own skills and become more informed about their profession. Collaborating teachers become more active in school decisionmaking and are capable of modeling these skills and attitudes for their students. Although collaboration has become a cliche, it has not become a reality. If collaboration can be achieved in schools, educators can be lifted to "higher levels of understanding, commitment and performance" (Sergiovanni, 1995).

Coaching

One particular form of collaborative teaching method includes the practice of educators coaching one another. Two types of coaching theories have emerged from the literature: cognitive coaching and peer coaching. Costa and Garmston suggest that the term coaching refers not only to the advice given in an athletic endeavor but to a way to convey ideas. "To coach means to convey a valued colleague from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be" (1994, 2). Coaching then is a nonjudgmental process established between colleagues or peers who assist each other in the inquiry and reflection of an educational process. In reviewing the peer coaching literature there are three areas that impact upon this study: (1) theoretical basis for a peer coaching method, (2) practical application of
peer coaching and (3) the cultural effects of the peer coaching model on the educational process.

**Theoretical premise.** The premise proposed in this section is that educators have been too reliant for too long on hierarchical, isolating models of professional development. Rather than seeking to create effective teachers based on industrial management strategies such as accountability, inspection and isolation, educators can benefit from interactive processes that enable them to gain insights, acquire self-understanding and create a cultural ethos of collaboration. The issues of how educators are treated and how they work within their own schools need to be resolved (Robbins, 1991) if they are to create environments that foster development of a positive cultural ethos and increase professional growth. Teachers need to have opportunities to exchange ideas about teaching and learning and to address those important issues that affect society.

These opportunities are available only in some staff development programs. For years educators have assumed that if teachers like the training they received they will use it in their lessons. Oftentimes teachers have been excited about new ideas only to return and store them on the classroom shelf. Back in the classroom they do not find the skills and support needed to implement the new idea so it remains on the shelf (Gottesman & Jennings, 1994). If teaching is to consistently advance the
cultural ethos of the school in positive ways, the training segment needs to include a means to transfer skills and to reflect with others about the results.

The purpose of coaching is to provide for the transfer of training elements in an everyday situation where teachers can manage the skills more efficiently and effectively. Peer coaching is a process that may be the conveyance for any skill learned in a training program. The major purpose of peer coaching is to implement new training or to sustain previous or existing training in order for the new skills learned to serve as a basis for building collaborative relationships. The peer coaching model is not intended as a model for either supervision or evaluation. It is a model exactly as the name infers - intended to be brief, user-friendly, and effective. Peer coaching offers one way to bridge the gap imposed by isolation. This type of shared inquiry can become an avenue for developing a collaborative workplace where staff members interact freely to address curriculum and instruction, observe and teach each other, develop and analyze materials, plan, and solve problems together (Robbins, 1991, Gottesman & Jennings, 1994, Costa & Garmston, 1994 and DeBolt, 1992). The outcomes of such opportunities are highlighted by increased student achievement; committed, enthusiastic professionals; and a stimulating workplace.

Practical application. The literature reveals a variety of similar
models that address the idea of colleagues coaching one another to improve their own performances as well as those of their students. The problem is less one of conception than of implementation (Joyce, Weil, & Showers, 1992) since the practice of coaching involves three general functions: planning, observation and reflection. Although some models include additional elements or stages most models have these three basic elements.

The planning stage for Costa and Garmston (1994) is a time to build trust, establish goals and discuss the coach's role. Gottesman and Jennings (1994) see the first phase of peer coaching as a time for the teacher to increase professionalism by requesting a visit from a coach. They believe that this newly-found initiative will help educators to overcome their fears of asking for help. For Joyce, Weil & Showers (1992) the first phase is a provision established to provide companionship, application of the new skill and adaptation of the skill to student learners. Robbins (1991) refers to the planning stage as a preconference stage where the teacher becomes a researcher in the classroom and the coach is the data collector.

During the observation stage it is clear from the models that evaluation is in no way a part of the coaching interaction. Some models offer opportunities where teachers who are observed by their coaches are all working on the same skill while other models leave that decision to the teacher being observed. Most importantly the coach simply monitors for
and collects data regarding the teaching behaviors and student learning. The intent of the coaching experience in the observation phase is to provide the teacher with a safe, comfortable atmosphere in which to transfer the skills learned in training.

Most models seem to agree that the reflection phase should be completed after the teacher has had some time to reflect on the lesson. This intervening time allows for deeper analysis and self reflection (Costa & Garmston, 1994). Of the different coaching models in the literature I found that the post conferences could be categorized into three types: mirroring, collaborative, and expert. Mirroring refers to the process where the coach simply hands the data to the teacher and offers to answer any questions that might arise. The collaborative conference is a mutual discussion of the teaching and learning observed. The teacher decides what to do with the data, how deeply to delve into any issues, and what changes might be made. In an expert conference the expert has more experience and/or expertise and the teacher is guided to reflect upon the lesson. The expert, through a series of questions, may bring the teacher to a discovery of the issues, a rediscovery of any past information, and the desire to make some changes. The teacher continues to maintain control over the outcomes of the conference and the use of the data collected.

Cultural effects. In South Carolina one district administrator found that, if nothing else, peer coaching increases the time teachers spend
talking about instruction (Gottesman & Jennings, 1994). Increasing time spent on discussing instruction produces more of a chance that quality relationships will be formed. Quality relationships in turn result in the development of a cultural ethos within that school.

Another effect of peer coaching is the improvement of the learning climate. Frequent visitations in classrooms often stimulate higher levels of teaching by the teacher and learning by the students. Joyce, Weil & Showers find that the coaching relationship results in the “possibility of mutual reflection, the coaching of perceptions, the sharing of frustrations and successes, and the informal thinking through of mutual problems” (1992, 35). Predictions are difficult to make as to the effects of coaching in the learning environment. Costa & Garmston say that educational leaders must be extraordinarily patient with the progress of change, rejecting simplistic solutions to complex problems (1994). In DeBolt’s study of five teacher mentoring programs he concludes that each of the programs emphasize certain perceived strengths and benefits (1992). Overall the programs document positive effects as teachers learn to transfer their collaboration skills to the school climate.

Emergence of Collaboration Teaching Practices in Special Education

Two major factors have resulted in an increasing development of
collaborative practices between special educators and general educators. Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, requires schools to develop appropriate educational programs for all children and that this education must take place in the least restrictive environment. The result of this law has been an increased number of children in general education classrooms and a greater need for collaborative teaching practices (Schmuck, Runkel, Arends & Arends, 1977). The second major factor is the role educators play in regard to the education of children with special needs. Just as 94-142 mandates the least restrictive environment so has it mandated the communication and multidisciplinary teamwork of professionals who work with children with special needs. However, problems dealing with personnel and time constraints (Fleming & Fleming, 1983), insufficient group decisionmaking skills (Kaiser & Woodman, 1985), and lack of program options and opportunity to engage in follow-up work (Pfeiffer, 1981) mitigated against their working collaboratively to provide services to students with learning differences.

In the late 1980's, the force of the Regular Education Initiative (REI) began to propel educators out of their classrooms and into collaborative relationships, often in general education classrooms. This movement toward merging special and general education added new dimensions to the discussion of professional relationships. The REI debate, however,
initially focused on philosophical and policy issues (Will, 1986) and the ability of special education to meet students’ needs efficiently and effectively (Reynolds, Wang & Walberg, 1987). Only in the last five years have educators urged that dialogues deal less with broad policy issues and more with implementation issues (Gersten & Woodward, 1990). In 1992 the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), an interdisciplinary committee, developed a list of recommendations for the provision of services to special education students in general education classrooms that, in part, included the following:

• Establishing a schoolwide system for education students with learning differences in the general education classroom when appropriate
• Ensuring the availability of support services
• Requiring inservice training for all staff to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to educate children with learning differences
• Establishing instructional environments conducive to teaching children with learning differences in the general education classroom

The NJCLD recommendations have mobilized educators and administrators to critically rethink the design of education for children with learning differences beyond the traditional practices of mainstreaming. These emergent practices include: inclusion, cooperative teaching, collaboration, consultation, and peer coaching. On the following pages the reader will find a summary of these collaborative teaching practices.
The Inclusive Classroom

Inclusive classrooms vary in theory and practice from one classroom to the next. Oftentimes educators working in inclusive classrooms will use a variety of collaborative practices including, peer coaching, team teaching, collaboration and consultation. An example of an inclusive ninth-grade English classroom (Mahony, 1997) might include twenty students for whom reading and writing come easily, ten learning different students who find reading and writing difficult, and two developmentally delayed students who may have limited reading skills. The reading and writing assignments are parallel to those used in other ninth-grade classrooms, yet the classroom activities vary considerably. In Mahony’s class, students

![Figure 2.3](image)

Continuum of Services for Students With Special Needs

- Residential Treatment Center
- NonPublic School
- Special Day Classroom
- Resource Specialist Program
- General Education Classroom/Full Inclusion

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
with special needs have been included at the recommendation of a team of professionals who agreed that these students would benefit from a general education class. In addition, a special education teacher has been "included" in the classroom to lend instructional support, direct and redirect activities, serve as a resource, prepare accommodations and modifications and provide moral support. Inclusive classrooms require sustained communication over time, flexibility and openness to various perspectives, implementation of effective problem solving skills, continued study of the research and literature regarding inclusion, and strength of follow-through and commitment (Chira, 1993). Since not all students benefit from inclusion, by law, a continuum of services must be designed by school districts to provide the least restrictive environment for all children with special needs. This continuum (Figure 2.3) provides services at varying levels of restriction and placement depending upon the needs of each student.

**Cooperative Teaching**

Cooperative teaching is a collaborative practice where two or more educators with specialized sets of expertise work cooperatively to teach academically heterogeneous groups of students in the general education classroom (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995). Since its rapid emergence into the
education within the past decade, cooperative teaching has proved to be one effective way to facilitate the inclusion of students with special needs. The salient feature of a cooperative teaching style is that two educators are simultaneously present in the general education classroom for a scheduled part of the instructional day. The essential philosophy surrounding this teaching style is that all educators are responsible for all students (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1997). The authors present three distinct, field-tested approaches to implementing cooperative teaching: team teaching, supportive learning activities, and complementary instruction.

**Team teaching.** Two teachers jointly share, plan and present the presentation of new content to all students in a team teaching model. The choreography experienced by both educators includes use of: alternative learning modalities, various group sizes and formats, instructional rotations of both students and teachers, reviews, monitoring, modifications, clarifications, and supplemental materials. At specific times during the instruction each teacher would assume primary responsibility for specific types of instruction or components of the curriculum. Hence, as one teacher performs a starring role the team teacher performs a secondary role.

**Supportive learning activities.** The choreography continues as cooperative teaching partners identify, develop, and lead instructional
activities designed to reinforce, enrich and enhance learning for all students. These supportive learning activities might precede the primary instruction, follow it, or be integrated throughout the class period. Supportive learning activities may involve the same approaches in lesson format, lesson presentation and group format as a team teaching approach might include. The major difference between team teaching and supportive learning activities is that the teachers are more involved in parallel work with students in groups in supportive learning activities.

**Complementary instruction.** Similar to both team teaching and supportive learning activities, complementary instruction also involves two teachers working side by side in the classroom. In complementary instruction, however, one instructor maintains primary responsibility for teaching specific content matter. The cooperative teacher takes responsibility for teaching students the functional skills necessary to acquire the material, including study skills but not limited to, organization, time management, and self-analysis. Complementary instruction is not employed as a comprehensive teaching approach but takes the form of a side lesson included in the day’s instruction.

Bauwnes & Hourcade (1997) suggest that, after a decade of research and practice, cooperative teaching has demonstrated the ability to be an effective instructional strategy for providing success for students with special needs in general education classrooms. This success is due to the
analysis, development and implementation of the practical strategies critical to cooperative teaching styles.

**Consultation Model**

The major outcome of a consultation approach to educational instruction, according to Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1986), is to provide comprehensive and productive programs for students with special needs “within the most appropriate context, thereby enabling them to achieve maximum constructive interaction with their non-handicapped peers (p.1).” West and Idol (1990) cite three reasons for the implementation of a consultation model for students with special needs. 1) Consultation includes collaboration with other professionals regarding the needs of the child. If the child can be served in the general education classroom effectively, this collaborative approach serves as a cost-effective prevention to stigmatizing the child with harsh labels and isolation from peers. 2) Since the mid-1980s, research on restructured schools (e.g., Fullan, 1993b; Goodlad, 1994; and Prestine & Bowen, 1993) indicates that collaborative planning and collegial relationships are two key process variables present in effective schools. 3) A needs assessment was conducted of both general educators and special educators by members of the Council for Exceptional Children - the primary professional organization.
for special educators (Bos & Vaughn, 1994). The results indicate that the three top-ranked items focused on collaboration, communication and consultation between special and general educators.

The purposes of a consultation model are to prevent and remediate learning and behavior problems and coordinate instructional programs (West, et al., 1989). The model is based on a set of forty-seven consultation skills validated by field experts West & Cannon, 1988) and are grouped in the following areas:

- Consultation theory/models
- Research on theory, training and practice
- Personal characteristics
- Interactive communication
- Collaborative problem solving
- Systems change
- Equity issues and value/belief systems
- Evaluation of consultation effectiveness

Consultation may occur at varying levels of teacher and school involvement. Consultation may be used in the classroom to deliver direct instruction, in the resource room to design effective lessons or programs, in the pre-referral process to coordinate delivery systems, and in any number of innovative approaches that would further meet the needs of students who learn differently.

**Peer Coaching in an Inclusive Classroom**

Another way for consulting teachers to perform a supportive and
guiding role to the general educator is to serve as a peer coach. Peer coaching in an inclusive classroom follows the same theories and practices established for general educators who are peer coaches (Robbins, 1991, Gottesman & Jennings, 1994, Costa & Garmston, 1994 and DeBolt, 1992). Basically, a peer coach observes a colleague’s lesson; then, on the basis of the results of the observation, provides assistance in developing and improving instructional skills, strategies, and techniques. The peer coaching process in the inclusive classroom setting has been shown to increase teacher effectiveness by a) reinforcing and extending positive practice; b) extending skills and understanding; c) remediating or developing alternatives for less effective practices; and d) providing skilled teachers with research-based techniques and current best practices (Hunter & Russell, 1989; Miller, Harris & Watanabe, 1991; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Because schools are currently making rapid changes in the way they are delivering services to students with special needs, the initiative for improving classroom instructional procedures and collaboration between educators is essential. Research shows us that educators want more communication, more collaboration and more interactions. Peer coaching among special and general educators can greatly enhance the teaching and learning of all involved and can address the needs of educators everywhere.

In the inclusive classroom, peer coaching has been shown to facilitate
the collaboration necessary for positive change by breaking down the isolation of special educators and instilling a climate of trust and collegiality (Robbins, 1991). When collaboration is enhanced through peer coaching, teacher performance will improve. In order for a coach to identify strengths and weaknesses and provide specific feedback for suggestions, effective peer coaching must be guided by a clear definition of effective instruction (Hunter & Russell, 1989). Researchers (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Hasbrouck & Christen, 1997) have developed instruments that define key elements for an effective lesson and provide guidelines for debriefing. Either a commercial instrument or an instrument individualized by the school can facilitate the peer coaching process in an inclusive classroom.

Hasbrouck and Christen (1997) conducted a study involving the use of a coaching instrument they developed - the Scale for Coaching Instructional Effectiveness (SCIE). Special and general educators involved in the study felt that peer coaching, facilitated by the SCIE, was a positive and beneficial process in supporting inclusion. All participants expressed an interest in continuing the peer coaching process in the future. The teachers expressed that the coaching they received enhanced their teaching effectiveness, and all welcomed the increased collaboration that occurred as a result of the coaching process. As increasing numbers of children with special needs are being included in general education
classrooms, the need for providing support to classroom teachers through peer coaching will increase.

Implications for the Development of Collaborative Teaching Practices

The implications of this study upon educators are varied. Coming to a greater understanding of the importance of collaborative teaching practices among educators might lead both general and special educators to any one or to all of the following actions: 1) developing norms of collegiality, openness and trust; 2) seeking opportunities and time for disciplined inquiry; 3) learning and implementing teaching practices in context; 4) rethinking the functions of leadership; and 5) networking with educators outside the traditional school boundaries.

Research conducted at Stanford by McLaughlin (1990) has conceptualized three elements that build norms of collegiality: the building of a professional community, an established structure for problem-solving, and the control and influence teachers maintain over their work. It is important to recognize that these ideas of shared work, shared inquiry and shared leadership form the centerpiece for the building of a positive cultural ethos that encourages and supports continuous inquiry and collaborative practices.

When educators begin to assume leadership roles in curriculum and
instruction, and to think about collective strategies for working more successfully with students, it is important to think about how opportunities and time for such pursuits are to be made available. According to Grimmett and Neufeld (1994), some schools have begun to stretch the margins of time in planning how to do this. This is being done across the country through retreats, task teams, organizational planning teams, school improvement councils, student study teams, and the like. Such innovative structures can create opportunities for dialogue even as the team members continually struggle with the greatest resource problem of all - time.

The learning and implementation of teaching practices in context can provide for flexibility and diversity and for shifting the focus from the traditional teacher-centered classroom to the more appropriate learner-centered classroom. Hence teaching and learning are not seen as separate functions, but rather as interdependent parts of the entire process. Learning then becomes an engagement in the production and acquisition of knowledge as teaching becomes a facilitative leadership process. Collaborative teaching practices, such as peer coaching, assist all educators in developing the habits of mind that create and encourage shared inquiry. Such engagement of inquiry can highlight the teaching and learning process as part science and part craft whose components interact and change as a result of collegiality and collaboration.

Traditionally schools have been organized hierarchically: principals
as leaders, teachers as followers. Many schools, however, are beginning to understand that this type of organizational structure restricts the establishment of a culture of inquiry. If shared inquiry is one of the desired results, educators will need to move from adversarial to competitive to collegial relationships through practice and discourse. Many instances of formal and informal leadership roles are cropping up among educators. Roles such as team leader, mentor teacher, peer coach, resident researcher, teacher scholar, resident visionary and the like (Miller, 1990). Although these changes have not come about effortlessly and without conflict, they are important attempts at creating a more positive cultural ethos in our schools.

Emphasizing the school building as the focus for building a culture of inquiry is important, but it is also necessary to develop collaborative relationships outside the school. Schools in the process of change need to be connected to other schools who are engaged in similar change efforts in order to avoid isolation and to construct networks of support. In this way educators will be able to draw upon knowledge and encouragement from like-minded groups. Some types of collaborative partnerships include: school-university partnerships, The Coalition of Essential Schools, community-school collaborations, consortia of teachers, The National Network for Educational Renewal, and the like. Educators who see themselves as part of a school in the process of change must also see
themselves as part of a profession in the process of change. In that way the cultural ethos of a school becomes part of a larger social system, one that sustains and encourages improvement.

Summary

In summary, a literature review interprets and synthesizes what has been researched and published in the area of interest of the researcher. The thrust of a literature review is to present the state of the art with regard to the topic. The literature review process can contribute to formulating the problem as well as to presenting implications for implementation. It is apparent that further study is needed to analyze the implementation of collaborative practices such as peer coaching.

Michael Fullan points out that effective teachers “must be able to form and reform productive collaborations with colleagues” (1993a, p. 3). It is within these productive collaborations that educators can discover ways in which to practically apply peer coaching strategies. One of the purposes of peer coaching is to provide for the transfer of learning in everyday situations in order for teachers to be able to manage accumulating information. Peer coaching is not content, but rather a process that can be used for the acquisition of new knowledge or the relearning of past knowledge. Another major purpose is to help implement new training or help sustain existing training so that the
professional development that results will positively affect the culture of a school.

Collaborative partnerships can form the foundations for the practice of shared inquiry. Such relationships can also build bridges that move educators from pedagogical isolation to pedagogical collegiality, thus creating a productive and positive learning environment for all. Such a learning environment can create the sort of cultural ethos needed to sustain reflective, interactive relationships among all educators.

The growth of networks that foster norms of collegiality, openness and trust, opportunities for inquiry, the learning and implementation of teaching practices in context, and the reconstruction of leadership roles is being accompanied by the growth of a new process. This new process is a process that is entering into the shared inquiry of new ideas, expanding the roles of the educator, implementing collaborative practices such as peer coaching, and forming coalitions and networks. More importantly, it is a process of hope, commitment, growth, and connection. When seen in this way collaborative teaching practices become central to the process of education - not merely a new course, current trend or different approach to teaching, but a set of interrelated components to be structured, nurtured, and supported over time.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A CASE STUDY

Introduction

Collaboration occurs as the result of interpersonal dialogue and as the result of an interaction with context. Bredeson (1995) suggested that teachers need to learn to collaborate by observing, researching, evaluating, designing, planning, and implementing; and by teaching each other what they know, thereby sharing professional expertise and knowledge of craft. An investigation of collaborative teaching practices necessitates the use of a qualitative research process. According to Hess (1992, p. 181), “Qualitative research, combining observation of events and interviewing of the major actors in the process of implementation, has an advantage in explaining why things happen the way they do.” Hence, for this study, qualitative research was an appropriate way to investigate the effects of a peer coaching model on Excelsior Academy.

I selected a qualitative single-case inquiry with an ethnographic orientation for this research. The advantage of explanation that Hess spoke of lies in the process of inquiry which provides a basis for our most important decisions. Thus, I chose to conduct a qualitative inquiry where the process depends as much on perceptions and senses as it does on
experience and judgment. In order for us to know more about collaborative teaching practices and their effects on the cultural ethos of a school we need to know what is taking place in that school. We need to be able to see the events as they take place and to make meaningful judgments about their effects. In order for us to come to a greater understanding about how educators are affected by collaborative teaching practices we need to ask the educators to share their experiences. In this way, qualitative inquiry provides the understanding we need in order to create best practices and to evaluate the results of what we have created.

This chapter will focus on the methods and procedures (Appendix A) employed in a study of the Excelsior Academy collaborative teaching partnership. In this chapter the reader will find a methodological framework, including its application to the study; the research design and its specific components; and a description of the data collection and analysis. In addition, due to the type of research being conducted, it is important to include a synopsis of the background of the researcher.

**Methodological Framework**

The purpose of this study was to look at peer coaching and its effects on the cultural ethos of a specific school. Through a descriptive case study I hoped to gain a better understanding of the approach to school change required to achieve and sustain the type of cultural ethos created by
collaborative teaching practices. Qualitative research was the vehicle chosen to look at these effects. Merriam (1988) suggested several characteristics of qualitative research that include personal interactions, multiple realities and interpretation of phenomena. These three characteristics underscored the events in this study. Collaborative teaching practices occur within the realm of multiple realities. Each collaborator interacts with another collaborator and together or individually they interact with each context. These collaborative practices create events to be viewed and interpreted as subjective experiences where the researcher discovers and reconstructs meaning in order to come to a greater understanding of the issues and concepts. Hence, a qualitative case study with an ethnographic orientation will help the researcher as well as the reader to learn more about the culture of peer coaching and its effects upon a specific learning environment.

Case Study

The purpose of a case study is to understand the experience of those who are observed and interviewed. Merriam defined the qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources" (1988, p.3). As defined by Merriam this case study will provide a
type of empirical inquiry where I have been able to study contemporary phenomena within a real-life context. A case study provides a way to undertake involved research in a complex setting driven by dynamic, multidirectional interaction and constant flux. As Wolcott (1995) reminded us there are other reasons why a case study may be useful. Sometimes staff are puzzled by the success or failure of particular cases. Conducting a descriptive case study would assist in providing a detailed look at a specific case and its effects on a program. Other researchers are interested in whatever can be learned from a well-contextualized study of a single case. That particular knowledge earned is the singular contribution that the study has to offer.

A case study can also create a type of virtual reality which substitutes a vicarious experience for the actual experience. Making use of a virtual reality in research as opposed to the actual experience has some benefits. First, from the vantage point of a case study we can journey to a place where we have never been before. This opportunity allows us a peek at a subculture where new insights can be gained not only about the subculture but also about generalizations to our own world and experiences. Another benefit of employing a virtual reality-type case study is the view. In a case study we are seeing the world through the eyes of the researcher. This might allow us to see things we might never have seen before and help us to draw conclusions useful to our own research. A final benefit concerns an enhanced ability to undergo more
objective self assessment. When we consider the results of research through the eyes of the researcher we are more apt to be open to learning new approaches and less resistant to relearning established practices that are successful. Defenses come down and the teaching and learning process is reinvigorated.

Eisner (1991, 23) defined case studies as “field focused, emphasizing the self as an instrument, have an interpretive character, use expressive language, attend to detail and present their findings with coherence and insight.” He continued to infer that qualitative research can provide “the kind of understanding we need in order to create better schools and to evaluate the results of our efforts.” In conducting this case study I allowed Eisner’s work to guide me in presenting a detailed, insightful and coherent study which might better inform educators about effective collaborative teaching practices. Hence the goal of my research was to better understand the meaning of the peer coaching experience and its implications for creating an interactive cultural ethos at Excelsior Academy. The contribution that my research might make to Excelsior Academy is the extended knowledge base gained from this descriptive case study as well as a greater understanding of the effects that peer coaching has to the improvement of the teaching and learning process in order to better understand the effects of collaborative practices among educators.
This investigation involved a qualitative case study with an ethnographic orientation. As Schofield (1990, p.214) related, the term ethnography implies an “intensive, ongoing involvement with individuals functioning in their everyday settings that is akin to, if not always identical with, the degree of immersion in a culture attained by anthropologists, who live in the society they study over a period of one or more years.” Consequently I chose an ethnographic orientation to this research study because of the cultural aspects of the setting and its participants. Zaharlick (1992, p.122) provided me with the bridge from anthropology to the educational setting. He wrote that “ethnography, with its inherent sensitivity to people, culture and context, offers one approach to providing valuable new insights that can contribute to educational improvement” and this places educators “in a better position to improve educational practice.” A study about the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy must be a study about the people, the culture and the context.

According to Judith Meloy, the qualitative research process requires “personal rather than detached engagement in the context, it requires multiple, simultaneous actions and reactions from the human being who is the research instrument (1994, p.68).” Having a personal engagement with the research, then, allowed me to become the research instrument. The act of maintaining a journal provided me with opportunities to record personal
responses that supported my actions and reactions to the entire process. Speaking into a tape recorder assisted me in documenting my ongoing reflections and analyses about the study and the process. As I began to make decisions during conversations and observations I found the process of documentation through writing and tape recording an invaluable one. I became a methodologist, analyst, writer, thinker, interpreter and inquirer at once - responsible for a final, organized presentation of this ethnographic experience. Hence I came to understand the qualitative research process by doing it. No amount of text nor advice from my professors or committee members has been able to inform my understanding of the research process more than being involved in the process.

**Research Design**

A research design is a plan for gathering, organizing and analyzing information in preparation for presenting and interpreting that information at the end of a study. This descriptive analysis case study explored the experiences, concerns and attitudes of pairs of peer coaching educators. I gathered information within the natural context of the setting and included documents, artifacts, a systematic written interview, spontaneous interactions, non-interactive observations and group meetings. The aim of a descriptive case study is to examine the events and
phenomena of a study and to present a rigorous, rich description of the phenomena under study. Thus my main concerns were to focus on the particular aspects of peer coaching at Excelsior Academy, describe and offer insights about the phenomena involved in the peer coaching model, and provide interpretive and philosophical assumptions that I found embedded in the study.

A major challenge to qualitative research is to ensure a certain congruency between the research methods, the needs of the participants, and the specific research questions. To meet this challenge I needed to employ a wide variety of techniques including but not limited to: journal notes, an open-ended questionnaire, observations and document reviews. It was important that I worked with all collected data to design a study that would illuminate essential questions thereby allowing a relevant, meaningful study that has validity and reliability. The variety of techniques and the design used in this study helped to contribute to a rigorous methodology.

Selection of the Site

The choice of a site can be very involved and even convoluted. There are many reasons for selecting a site for research purposes. When selecting a site for this case study, I chose Excelsior Academy for its creativity, interesting developments and extraordinary practices as well as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
for its generalizability to other settings. The progressive development of Excelsior's collaborative teaching practices stands as a model for other schools - not just private schools or special education schools but for any school interested in tailoring a peer coaching model to the needs of their staff and setting. This study, then, is a study designed to explore what is happening in the realm of collaborative teaching practices as well as what could be happening in this domain.

Participants

This section of the chapter includes a discussion about the primary participants in this study. As a researcher in a qualitative case study, I also became a participant in the investigation. Hence I discuss my entry to the population in this section.

Entry to the population. As one of the directors of Excelsior Academy I had ready access to the participants and entry to the population was accomplished with relative ease. Due to the examination of the peer coaching model and the possibility of acquiring constructive feedback about improvements to the coaching process, the additional director and Excelsior staff expressed verbal interest in participating in the research phase of a study on peer coaching.

Selection of the participants. Participant selection was based on the assumption that I wanted to discover, understand and gain insights into
this particular peer coaching model noted at Excelsior Academy. Consequently, I chose to invite into the study all the pairs of educators who were engaged in the peer coaching model. I invited each of the pairs of teachers, interns, and assistants engaged in peer coaching to partake in this study. I wanted to establish an approach that would allow them to accept or decline, free from pressure or feelings of favoritism. It was left to them to decide who would become volunteers in the study.

Protection of the participants. Since informed consent is the crux of any method to protect human subjects I adhered strictly to the plan set forth by the University of San Diego. This meant that I agreed to inform all subjects about the process of the study before I conducted my research. They were reassured of anonymity and confidentiality by being assigned a numerical code for use with all documentation. They were also assured that they may choose to leave the study at any time with no questions asked. In addition, I agreed to mask their identities within the dissertation process or in the event of any publication of this study.

In order to safeguard the rights of the participants I created an atmosphere of anonymity free of repercussions and reprisals. This atmosphere was created by use of an outside research assistant who assigned each questionnaire a number for complete anonymity, and obtained written, informed consent forms from each voluntary participant. A copy of the consent form may be found in Appendix B of this study. The participants were asked to refrain from using identifying information such
as grade levels or room numbers to further their anonymity. I extended
this practice of anonymity throughout the course of the data collection. An
open-ended questionnaire was collected by the outside research assistant
at a previously appointed drop-off site. A copy of the questionnaire may
be found in Appendix C. After the questionnaires were collected the
research assistant transcribed all responses into a complete and combined
whole using the same computer and printer. Up to this point I did not see
any portion of this research. At the point where all responses looked the
same, I received the transcription of those responses free of any
identifying notations.

Data Collection

In case study research of contemporary education much of the data
collection is completed through an interactive process. In order to pursue
this interactive process, I included data from interviews, panels, group
meetings, and observations. These techniques of data collection proved to
be both structured and unstructured and often combined together to allow
me a more holistic interpretation of the phenomena being investigated.

Before initiating data collection, I applied to the Excelsior Academy
School Improvement Council for permission to conduct this investigation;
approval was received in March, 1997. I then petitioned the Committee on
the Protection of Human Subjects for permission to conduct this research.
Approval was granted in May, 1997. All data were collected between May and November, 1997, beginning with questionnaires and observations. Upon receiving final approval from the Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects, an open-ended questionnaire was provided to the participants to complete and return. This questionnaire was created in order to better understand the experiences of the peer coaches. I also included ethnographic observations of the case study participants, group meetings, field notes, spontaneous interactions and archival studies in the data-gathering process. Throughout the investigation, I conducted a thorough analysis of the data gathered in order to interpret the effects that peer coaching might have on the educators and present any insights I might have about the peer coaching model and its effects on an interactive cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy. Further observations were conducted and formal and informal meetings took place to discuss the peer coaching model. Document review was conducted from beginning to end of the investigation as documents were made available and/or developed. In order to document pertinent insights, questions, and emergent patterns, I maintained a journal throughout the investigation. In order to assist the reader in understanding the exceptional nature of Excelsior Academy, I have included the following background information.

**Background Information.** Excelsior Academy was a private school for children with learning differences. These are children who had average to above average intelligence but required specific teaching strategies,
smaller class size and self-advocacy skills in order for them to achieve their potential. Each child's potential was different, however, the majority of the student body were expected to attend college in the future.

Because Excelsior was a state certified school, the staff were required to hold the proper teaching credentials. Every teacher held a California credential for teaching either Multiple Subjects or Single Subject and a credential for teaching Learning Handicapped while many of the teachers had additional credentials as well. Several interns were completing work towards their California Multiple Subjects or Single Subject credential. Some staff members were completing work toward's their Master's degrees, some were working on their Bachelor's degrees, other staff members were pursuing professional growth through writing for publications or through presentations at conferences. Consequently, I note here that the staff was engaged in ongoing and productive learning at varying levels of their careers.

**Researcher's Journal.** As I continued to organize and develop this analysis I came to understand that the value of a journal seemed to go beyond the explicit commentaries of the participants. My journal provided a solid link to the multidimensional experiences of the qualitative research process. The journal was divided into two parts - one part focused on all notes and thoughts extracted from document reviews, spontaneous interactions with staff, noninteractive observations, and group meetings; the second part focused on my responses to the dissertation process itself.
In the first section of the journal and while transferring thoughts from my head to the paper I found the facts combined with feelings that combined with suppositions that combined with questions that combined with concepts. In addition, the process of actually writing the journal became a release for me of my feelings, frustrations, doubts and emotions. Having a journal provided me with a richer experience as well as an abundant amount of raw data with which to work. As I read and reread the journal notes I began to see emerging patterns and themes - something tangible that I could grasp onto and ponder.

As for the second part of the journal writing, I delved into more personal thoughts, feelings and responses to the actual dissertation experience. At times it became a tedious chore to include two types of journal entries - one for the research study and one for my personal experiences. However, I persevered and found at the end of my study a valuable documentation of the sights, sounds and dimensions of the research process. As I reread this section of the journal, participants would come back to life for me on the page and I formed new insights as a result of this two-tiered approach to journal writing. Consequently I was able to discuss and analyze the data in a more rigorous manner.

Open-ended questionnaire. Educational research is often dependent upon the questioning process. Seidman (1991, 4) reminded us that “the primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people.”
The avenue of inquiry open to a researcher through questionnaires helps him or her to understand the meaning individuals make of their experiences. If my goal was to examine the effects of peer coaching on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy, questioning had to be one of the methods of data collection.

Due to the nature of my study and with the advice and guidance of the Human Subjects Committee it was necessary for the participants in this study to remain anonymous to me. This anonymity meant that I did not have an opportunity to use follow-up questions nor to conduct an interactive interview. Anonymity had the potential to create additional difficulties, even to the point of stifling the interview process. However, I discovered that a comprehensive, open-ended questionnaire, with carefully scripted questions was an effective tool for drawing out the participants and providing me with enough data to add richness to the study. Of course the most important part of the questionnaire was to create descriptive questions from which the participants could move to tangential ideas, thoughts and feelings. There were a few methods I used to assist me in the development of descriptive questions. One way to create such questions was to immerse myself in the culture - watching and listening for questions posed by peer coaches about the process. Another technique I employed to assist me in formulating effective questions was to write expansive and fairly involved questions in order to solicit involved responses. In this way participants were able to write as much
as they were inclined to write. In addition, using open-ended questions afforded the participants an opportunity to be as comprehensive and complete as they wanted to be. As Spradley (1979) reminded us that descriptive questions are meant to elicit a large sample of responses within the participant’s own culture. In retrospect I found that the questions developed for this study provided the participants with a large canvas on which to paint their experiences, feelings and ideas about the peer coaching process.

Observations. Interpreting firsthand research experience can be cumbersome, frustrating and tedious; however Wolcott (1995) felt that such experience also provided “a unique contribution to the world of research as an interpersonal approach to seeking human understanding” (p.75). Based on my experiences during the dissertation process I agreed entirely with his premise. Observations worked in conjunction with questionnaires, interactions, document analyses, and field notes to assist me in creating a complete understanding of the process under study. From observations the researcher may have an observational understanding of the behaviors and yet not have an understanding consistent with those found within the responses of the participants. In other words, all methods of data collection were valuable in providing a way for me to come to a greater understanding of the behaviors, organization and process under study.

As a director of the school it was one of my roles to conduct
observations throughout the organization. These observations were conducted for many reasons beginning with program analysis and moving to student achievement and self study. My presence in the school became consistently random. That is to say, I conducted observations throughout the school for many reasons at various times with support from the staff. As part of the Excelsior professional development the staff understood and were in accordance with the need for ongoing analysis and improvement. One of the ways to undergo analysis is through observations and interactions. Due to these circumstances I was able to carry out an atmosphere of anonymity fostered from the beginning of the study. All staff were observed and provided with feedback. In addition, as I conducted observations of the peer coaching sessions specifically, all staff knew of my research study, yet it was made clear to them that I did not know which of them had volunteered to be included in the study. Although I did not know which staff members agreed to participate in this study I continued my observations of every staff member.

Because there were limitations to the amount of information gathered from what individuals related in questionnaires, observational data provided depth and detail to the study. The observational data needed to be descriptive, factual, accurate and thorough and free from irrelevant trivia. Consequently, the purpose of collecting observational data was to describe the program thoroughly and carefully. During the observational process I worked hard to specifically describe the activities,
the individuals and the meaning of what was observed. Having the
opportunity to observe peer coaches in their coaching sessions allowed me
to directly experience the process so to be able to later draw conclusions
about its effects on the culture of Excelsior Academy. Being immersed in
the process as an observer allowed me to stand back and consider events
that might have been taken for granted by the participants. These
opportunities afforded me with a more comprehensive view of the entire
coaching process.

**Investigative Interactions.** As a participant in the activities of the
school I had the advantage of being involved in many types of structured
and unstructured interactions centered around the peer coaching model.
These interactions included spontaneous conversations and observations,
formal meetings, debriefings and planning meetings. At times my role in
these interactions was more active and involved and at times it was
somewhat less active and more observational.

In regard to the formal meetings, debriefings and planning sessions,
implementation involved a chronological sequence of events. The planning
sessions took place on two varying levels (Fig. 3.1). One type of planning
session was conducted between the two peer coaches before they made
observations of each other in the classroom. The sessions were designed to
add structure and meaning to the observations by allowing an opportunity
for the coaches to organize their thoughts, plan activities to be observed
and discuss outcomes. Another type of planning session was conducted at
Figure 3.1
Sequence of Events

I. Debriefings and Formal Meetings

II. Planning Sessions
   a. Peer coaches conduct preplanning conference
   b. Whole group meetings are held for assessment and collaboration

whole group meetings beginning with the onset of the peer coaching model and throughout the months of peer coaching. These planning sessions were established to provide consistent continuity of the program, opportunities for staff interactions and ongoing assessment of the model. The debriefings and formal meetings were held consistently throughout the course of the peer coaching model. These meetings involved thoughtful, indepth discussions about peer coaching and its effects on the staff, the school and the students. They provided opportunities for staff to question, problem solve, clarify and support one another. As an observer I was able to describe the settings, the events and my perceptions of what occurred. This data was later added to the information collected from the participants themselves.
Additionally, during these periods of interactions I was involved in spontaneous conversations and unscheduled observations of the type which naturally occur within a collaborative work culture. These interactions were invaluable in helping me to better understand the peer coaching model and its effects on the culture at Excelsior Academy. I felt as if I actually never put away my “observational eyes” but remained open to the data-collecting process at all times - searching for that next bit of information that might more richly explain some component of the peer coaching model. It was during these unstructured interactive times that EA staff had the greatest opportunities to talk to each other about their experiences. During these times, sometimes I listened to the conversations and other times I asked informal questions or joined in the conversations, all the while writing responses in my journal. Here it must also be noted that I considered every event and nonevent to be data. In other words, although the meaning, pattern or significance of the data varied, there was continual activity, human experiences and program development. If the participants did not talk about the peer coaching model, I considered that data; if the staff spoke very little during the debriefing sessions, for example, that was data to be collected. This is what I mean by events and nonevents. Everything I heard and observed as well as everything I did not hear or did not observe was considered data. In order for me to capture a holistic view of the coaching model at Excelsior it was my sense that I needed to stay alert as well to these informal periods of activity.
During my involvement in these gatherings I naturally took notes to be referred to later as I conducted my data analysis. As I wrote I attempted to maintain a focus of each meeting, session or debriefing as a self-contained unit with a beginning, middle and end. In this way I was able to see and focus on specific details in order to add richness to my description. During the process of data analysis that occurred much later I was able to combine the writings from these interactions with the other types of data to assist me in formulating patterns and themes.

Documents. Eisner (1991, p.185) considered documents and artifacts to be "frequently mute but telling testimony" to assist researchers in their quest for knowledge about the subject at hand. As I have noted, observation at Excelsior included watching and listening and observing and conversing, with the intention of collecting as much data as possible about the model. I found the program records, artifacts, and documents to be as rich a source of information as the observations, interactions and interviews. As with most organizations, Excelsior left a trail of paper that lead to the doorstep of the peer coaching model. These documents provided an increased knowledge and understanding of the model. Types of documents and artifacts reviewed in this study included: school profiles, self assessments, surveys, project materials, brochures, newsletters, student and parent handbooks, staff manuals, staff bulletins and announcements, program handouts and graphics, and the like. Using all possible resources at my disposal, I found I was able to make
information become data and to give it meaning through imagination. By this I mean that imagination was the construct that provided coherence and value to the oceans of information sitting on my table, walls and floor.

The documents I reviewed provided me with the type of information that I was unable to observe such as those documents generated in committees for which I did not hold membership or that might include interchanges to which I was not directly privy. Consequently, the documents gathered for review provided me with valuable and direct information as well as stimuli for generating questions to be pursued. In addition, I was able to corroborate events and effects of the coaching model with observations, questionnaires and interactions. In some instances conducting a document review created an opportunity for me to validate themes and patterns that began to emerge.

While undergoing the document review I needed to remind myself about the protection of the participants. In order for me to maintain the anonymity of the participants I had the School Improvement Council to use as a vehicle to obtain documents for my review in the event that there might be identifying information about any of the participants. I was able to obtain access to all archives and documents having to do with the peer coaching model - including historical perspectives, procedures, memoranda, charts, routine records, and any other official or unofficial documents generated by or for the model. In this way I strived to conduct my professional research in an ethical manner where the rights of the
participants who agreed to voluntarily partake in this study were protected through confidentiality and anonymity.

**Validity of the Research**

In the technical sense of the term, validity allows us to discern if the researcher has indeed measured what the study actually intended to measure. In qualitative search it is believed to have a more expansive meaning where it is less limited to measurement and more closely associated with a correlation between research and the actual lived experience. In other words, the researcher has been in the field and has effectively lived the experiences of that which (s)he is studying.

In order to uphold the validity of the research in this study I turned to triangulation for assistance. Triangulation is a powerful tool used to help the researcher include various data sources. As Patton (1987) related, when a variety of sources are referenced one can avoid the problem of relying too much on a single source for data. Using triangulation also shows the reader that the researcher is open to more than one or two viewpoints. For this study I employed two types of triangulation - data triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation is the use of a variety of data sources in a study. When using the data triangulation, my purpose was to make sure the questionnaire was completed by individuals with different positions and with differing
points of view and that my interactions were conducted with various individuals. This meant comparing the perspectives of these individuals to look for corroboration and for differentiation. I compared what people said in public to what they said in private. Additionally, I checked the consistency of what individuals said over time. At times this process led me in other directions to pursue themes and patterns I had not considered. At other times I was able to make correlations between the data I was analyzing.

The second type of triangulation I employed was methodological triangulation - the use of multiple data collection methods such as surveys, observations, documents, and questionnaires. It was my intention to use methodological triangulation to directly scour the data in a more rigorous way. Observational data was compared to questionnaire data which were compared to the data taken from interactions which were compared to the documents data and so forth. Once collected and analyzed, the data frequently exhibited a consistent picture. There were a few instances where I was unable to corroborate a specific theory, concept or theme and needed to find a different approach or another source. In addition, the outside research assistant provided an analysis with the transcribed answers to the questionnaires. This analysis added another dimension to the triangulation process. Using triangulation was an important part of the data collection process as it led me to deeper understandings, reasonable explanations, and it contributed to the overall validity of the study.
Validity then lies in the accurate and comprehensive reporting of lived experiences which can be corroborated in some way. It was my opinion that validity or proof of measurement is less important in qualitative research than the resultant benefits offered through rich description and meaningful interpretations of a lived experience and how those descriptions and interpretations are evaluated. To assist me in understanding the ambiguity of my opinion and in judging the usefulness of research, Judith Meloy (1994) presented valuable feedback from the journals of doctoral students regarding the usefulness of research. In this section she puts forth certain criteria for judging quality research which included:

- Verity referred to the truthfulness, consistency and authenticity of the study.

- Integrity looked at the rationality, logic, structural soundness and appropriateness of a piece.

- Rigor confined itself to one element - the depth of intellectual reasoning found in the work.

- With utility the author was attempting to highlight the professional relevance and usefulness of the piece as well as the possibility of making contributions to the field.

- Vitality had me looking at the emotional aspects of conducting research such as was found in the excitement of discovery, the intensity of the approach and the degree of communication with the audience.

- Aesthetics forced me to look at the product for insights,
enrichment, the pleasures of experiencing the work and the manner in which it touched the spirit.

I found these criteria useful in judging my own research to understand its validity from many vantage points and, more importantly, in assessing and developing my writing throughout the dissertation process.

**Researcher Bias**

When addressing the issue of researcher bias one must address the differences between subjectivity and objectivity in research. Neither objectivity nor subjectivity are mutually exclusive in conducting research. In actuality and according to Van Manen (1990), both objectivity and subjectivity find their meaning in the personal relationship established by the researcher with the object of her/his inquiry. Subjectivity referred to the strength of my orientation regarding perception, insight and discernment and how I presented the study in a unique and personal way. Subjectivity in research did not include, and even avoided, the danger of becoming arbitrary and egocentric or of becoming captivated by preconceptions. Objectivity, on the other hand, referred to the way in which I remained true to the focus of the study. Hence, I attempted to become a guardian of the object of study by describing, interpreting, exhibiting and revealing, all the while remaining faithful to its true nature.
Both vantage points were important in this qualitative research. The difficulty came when attempting to make effective use of the stylistic techniques of objectivity and of subjectivity without venturing into their danger zones where perceptions became misperceptions and preconceived notions were taken as truth. Indeed, I was prepared at all times to present an oriented, strong, rich and deep text which invited dialogue with those who interacted with it.

**Data Analysis**

In discussing case study data analysis it is important to note that because there is not a precise point at which data collection ends and data analysis begins, they both to a large extent occur simultaneously. This is due to the habits of mind that a researcher has formed as she journeys through her study. In the course of gathering data, ideas about analysis and interpretation begin to emerge. As each piece of information is collected it is analyzed and used as a basis for refining and guiding further data collection. Moreover analysis becomes more intensive and rigorous once the data are gathered.

In this study, data analysis began with reviews of both the transcription of the questionnaires and of the first observation notes. Initial patterns and themes were considered along with the development of issues needing further clarification and investigation. Consequently, as I
developed a data analysis frame of mind, I frequently turned my attention back to points of inquiry, continually carrying on an internal dialogue about the data and the study. In addition, it was important that I come to the data with a certain sensitivity that afforded me an awareness of the subtleties of meaning, an insight into connections and bridges, and understanding of how to separate the pertinent data from the trivialities. My goals, then, were to describe the experiences of the peer coaching model as well as to integrate, synthesize, and interpret the data to identify themes and develop conclusions about the cultural effects of a peer coaching model on Excelsior. It was important to remain true to the goals of this study as well as to be open to the inevitable twists and turns brought about by living human experiences. Consequently, I wanted the study to be as exhaustive and comprehensive a study as I could undertake.

In order to attempt to conduct this exhaustive and comprehensive analytical study of the peer coaching model there are several steps I followed:

• Developing conceptual categories helped me to interpret the data.

Conceptualization became one of the first steps in the data analysis process. Because concepts are the building blocks of analysis, I realized the need to develop conceptual categories early on - even during the data collection stage. During the development of conceptualizing categories I
grouped concepts into categories and labeled the categories. It was not my intention to use words from the literature or words that were part of the jargon of education, but I did find myself making use of terminology directly from the field of education. The terminology fit naturally thereby prohibiting language barriers from occurring. As I sat with the categories I came to learn their properties and dimensions. These were important elements to the analysis process because finding properties and dimensions helped me to create subcategories. The further I delineated the data and the more I made use of dimensions and properties, helped me set the stage for carving out connections and bridges. From the connections and bridges came typologies. Patton (1987) provided me with an idea for a matrix (Fig. 3.2) that formed linkages between processes and

![Figure 3.2 Matrix of Linkages](image-url)
outcomes. Once I put the categorized data into such a matrix, I was able to create the typologies needed to form themes.

• Developing analytic questions directed the study and provided opportunities for additional investigations.

Although I was unable to conduct formal interviews due to the need for participant anonymity, I was able to conduct open-ended questionnaires, with permission from each individual, and to make use of secondary questioning techniques such as those questions asked during the various forms of interactions I experienced. During these times of questioning it was important to actively listen at every opportunity. From the listening and the data collected I was able to formulate analytical questions to further my understanding of the conceptual categories, typologies and themes that were emerging. A brief sample of the analytical questions I posed are as follows:

1. What recurring themes or patterns do I find in the data?
2. What specific indicators point to those recurring themes and patterns?
3. What strengths/weaknesses can be found in the linkages of the themes to the research questions?

By nature I was a questioner, hence, both the Excelsior staff and I felt
comfortable with the use of various types of questioning techniques. After delving into the transcription of the questionnaires I created additional questions which I carried with me throughout the day. As I came upon someone in passing or during meetings I made use of these questions to build upon the data collected thus far. During these conversations, if I was not understanding the use of certain language, the intent of the message or if I needed clarification, I would question the individual more closely. If I had used vague questions and felt unsatisfied with the depth of the answer I might offer more probing questions. As I questioned more and more individuals I developed a listening and questioning style that felt comfortable and seemed to provide me with richer data. This was true, in part, because I strived to present questions for which I did not know the answers. This technique produced two effects. It had the effect of putting the individual at ease and it provided me with more in-depth responses. Occasionally, if I saw that an individual might become uncomfortable I asked them to speak to me as if they were speaking to another person or I would ask them to “tell me the story” about peer coaching. Overall, the listening and questioning components of the data collection were very satisfying events of the data collection process.

- Planning data collection sessions based upon previous observations and interactions assisted me in formulating a routine.
Working in solitude during this investigation became a way of life. There were numerous occasions where I was alone with the data and with my thoughts. Usually, these occasions were times of stimulation and enjoyment. Often at these junctures I read and reread the data looking for connections, searching for inconsistencies, waiting for enlightenment. From data collected during the observations and interactions I planned further observations, interactions and questioning and listening sessions. Schedules of whom to see when and questions composed to follow my suppositions were developed during these planning sessions. There was no recipe to follow during this time. I found that it was important to follow my instincts, display genuine interest, and attempt to spread the contagion of my enthusiasm for this study.

• Making use of the observer comments section of my journal created additional insights and writing thoughts to myself regularly about what I was learning helped me to maintain multiple levels of reality.

It was important during times of observations and interactions that I maintained notes to be later transferred to my journal. This method of taking notes and transferring them into a journal worked well for me. Whenever possible, immediately following an observation or interaction of some form, I transcribed those notes into my journal. The primary purpose for my doing this was to allow an opportunity to include personal
thoughts and feelings. Methods and facts combined with reflections and ideas combined with feelings and hunches combined with doubts were all included in these transcriptions. Later as I worked on sorting through the data I formed categories: feelings, themes, areas to explore, questions. As I was taking notes, it was not difficult to focus on facts, concepts and themes, however, I found myself needing to concentrate more on sharing personal feelings, hunches and the like. By making my feelings and thoughts visible, I was better able to understand Meloy’s concept of “multiple constructions of reality (1994, 67)” thus bringing more quality to my research.

*Focusing the data around specific themes provided more breadth and depth for intensive analysis.

Using the more conventional method of organizing data, I searched the categories and typologies for patterns and connections that helped me to develop the themes that will be exhibited later in this study. The five themes that emerged were later searched for indicators that would better assist the reader in drawing conclusions and making connections between concepts. This search process required a large percentage of time and resources. Notes and transcriptions were read and marked; categories were coded and labeled; typologies were fitted into a matrix; and themes were developed from the matrix. As simple as this procedure may sound
it was time-consuming and frustrating as well as satisfying. It would be simplistic to regard the resulting themes as merely conceptual formulations. Themes were the reflective understanding of my experiences. Use of themes to assist me in capturing the lived experiences was an important element of the study process. For my purposes, the development of themes provided me with an opportunity to make sense of the oceans of data I collected. Theme development enabled me to maintain an openness to the study of peer coaching. In addition and in the words of Van Manen (1990, 88), the themes became my vehicle to “invention, enlightenment, discovery and disclosure.” Thus with the resulting themes I was able to discover a fuller description of the experience of peer coaching.

- Developing a theory about the data I found embedded in the study led me to a greater understanding of the effects of peer coaching.

Expressing the overall meaning of the data was a judgment call into which I readily became immersed. There was no substitute for total immersion in the data. It was important to affirm my judgment as a researcher and, by developing the resulting theory, I felt such an affirmation. I mention theory here not in such a way as to inflate its meaning but in such a way as to put forth the connections I found among
events, structures, roles and social forces operating within the peer coaching model. Theory development did not lead me to simple solutions nor did it provide answers to my questions. What theory development did is to lead me to a deeper understanding of the ideas, issues, beliefs and values that permeated the experiences of the peer coaches. It also gave me a fuller understanding of the complexities of collaborative teaching practices. Most importantly, it led me to relish the new understandings I discovered and to take pleasure in sharing the peer coaching model developed by Excelsior Academy.

• Discerning what this study uncovered helped me to reflect on its usefulness to others.

Interpretations and reflections are not events that happen at the end of the line in research. Just as analysis is an ongoing experience, interpretive and reflective work begin as soon as there are words to contemplate. It is tempting to think that analysis is complete when there is a visually-pleasing graphic organizer displaying themes or theories. However, I did not find this to be the case. At this writing I continue to interpret, analyze and reflect on this study of peer coaching. Various questions that came to mind at the end of this research study and should be answered as completely as possible. What was Excelsior Academy like before peer coaching? What effects did peer coaching have on the cultural
ethos of the school? How did the peer coaching experiences assist the coaches in refocusing their attentions and energies? What were the roles of the administrative bodies and how did they affect the peer coaching process? These were some of the questions I pondered and will address in Chapter Five. Discerning what this study uncovered is a valuable practice for myself as the researcher. It provided a link to future studies and further research. It may lead me to propose further developments for my own position. Considering the usefulness of this research study for others was a more difficult task. It is hopeful that the recommendations section, including researcher suggestions, in Chapter Five will provide some assistance with this difficult and humbling task.

Background of the Researcher

As the researcher, I brought to this study twenty-four years of work in the field of education. I selected three areas of emphasis for my undergraduate degree and majored in Elementary Education, Special Education, and Spanish. At the Master's level my studies focused on Learning Disabilities and Emotional Disturbance. I taught in private and public schools, in general education and special education and in bilingual education. My various teaching experiences have taken me from preschool to elementary to middle level to high school to university level.

In 1987 my husband and I founded Excelsior Academy, a school for
children with learning disabilities. Through Excelsior we have been providing the San Diego community with an alternative to the traditional special education approach. Through effective teaching and learning strategies, smaller class size, and school success, the students who attend Excelsior Academy enjoy an even greater opportunity to attend college and/or to be successful in the world of work.

Over the past fifteen years, I have had many opportunities to work as an educational consultant. Aside from presenting at national and state conferences annually, I have traveled to Canada, Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Louisiana as well as throughout San Diego county acting as consultant to public and private schools alike. In doing so, my goal was to assist other educators in preparing effective educational programs for children of all ages and of varying needs.

Summary

Research in education is important for extension of the knowledge base of the researcher as well as for the understanding and improvement of a particular practice. The skilled researcher designs a study that will help shed light on the research questions posed. As a researcher I have committed myself to a research design that is relevant, rigorous, understandable and able to produce useful results. A case study is only as exemplary as its data collection and analysis. Yin (1984) describes five
important criteria that compose an exemplary case study. They operate on the premise that the case study must be:

• significant
• complete
• open to alternative perspectives
• comprehensive and composed in an engaging manner

As I conducted all aspects of this research study, I attempted to use these criteria as guiding beacons. It was my hope that this study will make a contribution to the field of teaching in order that educational leaders might better understand the process of shared inquiry and consider the uses and effects of collaborative teaching practices in their organizations.
PEER COACHING AT EXCELSIOR ACADEMY

Overview

In this descriptive case study the investigation uncovered a greater understanding of what lies behind peer coaching and allowed me to propose specific themes that have emerged from this investigation of peer coaching which might otherwise have gone unexplored. My purpose in this chapter is to present an analysis of the findings in a systematic and thoughtful manner. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) defined analysis as “the working of thought processes” (p. 109) as opposed to some academic abstraction requiring a genius with mystic qualities. This working of the thought processes involved thinking that is objective and that became operational - so much so that the process became an interaction between myself and the data. Because the data were collected anonymously in the form of narrative written responses to open-ended questions and naturally occurring conversations I needed an appropriate tool with which to identify, extract and manipulate data from such discourse. It is at this point that I turned my attention toward typological analysis. Typological analysis involves the use and development of themes, identification of...
indicators of those themes, and exploration of relationships between themes (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). This methodical analytic technique allows for the use of a theoretically derived framework as well as the identification and description of new themes and characteristics of themes. This chapter will set the stage and share an analysis involving the embedded themes and their indicators as well as address the research questions presented in Chapter One of this study.

These research findings provided focus on an uncommon occurrence in education - educators involved in shared inquiry through the art of peer coaching. The Excelsior Academy staff and their responses were central to this study, particularly their responses concerning the relevancy of peer coaching to their professional development and to the teaching - learning process. My research assistant conducted an anonymous open-ended questionnaire with those staff members who chose to volunteer. To further the analysis of the data, I conducted a review of the documents as well as maintained journal notes from the following events: formal and informal observations, group meetings, and informal conversations.

The initial goal of the study was to present an accurate and rich description of the peer coaching model at Excelsior Academy and to provide interpretive commentary that would frame and explain the peer coaching phenomenon. The results of the analysis presented in this chapter indicated that this goal was met. It was my hope that the results of this study would provide an effective model that engages educators in
shared inquiry and collaborative teaching practices.

This chapter relates the story of Excelsior Academy and the development of its own collaborative teaching practices into what has been refined and shaped into a peer coaching model. Summaries of the questionnaire, observations, document review, and meetings notes are included and have become the primary portion of the text. This chapter discusses the major themes and their indicators and synthesizes the data. For clarity this chapter will focus on the evolution and analysis of the peer coaching model at Excelsior Academy.

The Stage:

Excelsior Academy

To understand the evolution and development of Excelsior Academy is to understand the evolution of the peer coaching model at Excelsior. Eight years ago the school opened its doors for students with learning disabilities (LD) who were not able to learn through the conventional methods found in public schools. For those students who were having difficulty with reading or writing or math but had an average or above average intelligence with dreams of college, Excelsior seemed to be an answer to their prayers. That first year six brave sets of parents ventured forth with child in tow to join two staff members on the first day of school. Today Excelsior Academy is host to sixty-six students and twenty-nine full
and part time staff members. Throughout the years Excelsior proved to be a support system for LD students who want to return to public schools armed with strategies and self advocacy skills and to staff who were following their quest for lifelong learning.

Figure 4.1

EXCELSIOR ACADEMY

Vision

All members of Excelsior Academy will be respectful and responsible individuals.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Excelsior Academy community (students, staff and families) is to provide a safe and nurturing environment wherein students become literate, thinking, independent, and productive citizens.

Goals

• To promote positive self esteem and character development.
• To stimulate intellect and curiosity within our community.
• To create self-directed, independent learners.
• To foster meaningful family-school relationships.
• To provide and encourage continuing professional development for staff.
The mission of Excelsior Academy was to create a safe and nurturing environment wherein students become literate, thinking, independent and productive citizens. As the staff created the vision and mission together (Figure 4.1) they also created the goals to help them accomplish these ideals. Using this philosophical beacon to guide them they created an atmosphere of mutual trust, cooperation and support. This atmosphere allowed them to design a collaborative environment in which shared inquiry took place.

The Players:

Excelsior Academy Staff

When the School Improvement Council (SIC) presented the peer coaching model to them, the entire staff of full-time educators chose to take part in the peer coaching model. Eighty-five percent of the staff chose to become voluntary anonymous participants in this study - that is eighteen participants from a total of twenty-one staff. Question number one of the questionnaire was: Tell me about your educational background. As shown by staff responses to the question, the ranges of skills, ages, knowledge and experiences were wide and varied. The background and experiences of that percentage of the staff ranged from teaching assistants to educators who were writing books and presenting at international conferences; from those with high school diplomas to those
who were in masters degree programs; from no previous teaching experience to many years of teaching experience; and from having the full complement of special education credentials to having no teaching credentials (Figure 4.2). This population was similar in background experiences and range of knowledge and skills to a public population of

![Figure 4.2]

**Staff Backgrounds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees</td>
<td>Degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Yrs Teaching</td>
<td>Average Yrs Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credentials</td>
<td>Credentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff with No Teaching Experience 5
Staff Acquiring Initial College Degree 4

special educators. A query posed to each prospective staff member during the interview process concerned their philosophy of learning. Were they lifelong learners? Did they enjoy learning? What was their personal philosophy of education? Candidates were chosen by the SIC as much for their desire to continue learning as they were for their skills, knowledge, background and experiences. Consequently the staff at Excelsior Academy understood that a life at Excelsior was a life of learning for all. With the philosophical stage set for learning, then, the evolution of collaborative
teaching practices was not difficult to achieve.

The Script:

**Collaborative Practices**

About five years ago with thirty-eight students and a staff of six, Excelsior began to look at expanding their staff development program. During those first five years the program had effectively fostered communication and collaboration under the umbrella of the teaching and learning process. Every Wednesday the students were dismissed at midday and staff would engage in inservice and staff training to study best practices, student successes, educational theories, and the like. As they were growing and would have three to four additional staff members in the coming schoolyear, they were planning to develop a more intricate and effective system for learning and growing. While research and theory turned into practice staff members found the Cognitive Coaching model by Garmston and Costa (1993) to be a useful model from which to design their own development. Understanding that Cognitive Coaching was designed for and implemented in regular educational settings, they tailored it to meet the needs of their accomplished staff members and their unique population of special education students. Essentially the redesigned model added video tapings and/or observations with constructive feedback delivered at a viewing meeting or a follow-up meeting. Because there was
trust, openness and support established and practiced on a daily basis, this model was effective. As Excelsior began to expand it became more difficult to manage larger groups and the significance of the coaching model was at times lost due to the size of the groups. As the staff continued to search the literature and the field for other types of collaborative teaching practices the two directors maintained individually-based coaching sessions with each staff member. These director-facilitated sessions continued into the next year as staff felt they were an effective vehicle for problem solving and professional growth. With continued expansions of the staff and the students the directors found it less manageable to meet with every staff member (now numbered at twenty-two full-time staff) individually on a bimonthly basis. More research was conducted and, the SIC designed a collaborative practice of shared inquiry where staff members would coach each other. This led to the current peer coaching model under investigation in this study.

The Dress Rehearsal:

Peer Coaching Model

In the fall of 1996 the SIC began discussing the importance of the new coaching process at Excelsior Academy. The question on the table was a question of destination. Where was coaching headed at Excelsior? With the directors short on time and the staff feeling the positive effects of a
coaching model, the SIC wanted to create a workable model for a growing school. One of its members had been researching various peer coaching models in the literature and felt that the SIC could tailor a model for the Excelsior staff. Together the Council arrived at the purposes of peer coaching the standards of peer coaching and the procedures staff would use as guidelines for implementation. To help the coaches avoid unstructured conversations a list of suggested questions (Appendix D) was also provided. These documents were presented by the Council at a January inservice training along with a signed form giving permission for the research to be conducted (Appendix E). The model was designed to support the professional growth of the Excelsior staff by affording them opportunities to engage in shared inquiry.

In January, 1996, one hundred percent of the staff chose to take part in the peer coaching model. They began the process by choosing whom they wanted as their partner. During bimonthly sessions they each took turns acting as coach. At the weekly staff development meetings coaches were asked to share any reflections, questions and feedback with the entire group. The Council and staff gave a hearty approval for the study. Eighty-five percent of the staff answered the call to anonymously respond to the open-ended questionnaire. This was a total of eighteen staff members. It is this body of data that I will share, analyze and interpret.
In Chapter One, to assist in addressing the purpose of this study, I posed the following questions:

1. How has the peer coaching model shaped the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy?

2. How does the peer coaching model affect the teaching and learning of the educators involved?

3. What changes in the existing model would the peer coaches make based on their experiences thus far?

In the following section I will attempt to answer these questions based on my observations, conversations and other data collected.

Cultural Ethos

As stated in Chapter One, a cultural ethos was a perceived feeling or tone of the educational setting involving values, norms and beliefs that formally and informally guide and shape behaviors. A cultural ethos is developed within a school whether it is intentionally designed or whether
it is an unintentional development. Professional behaviors are some of the elements that foster the development of a cultural ethos in a school setting. At Excelsior Academy various professional behaviors have been in evidence throughout this study. For future growth of the peer coaching model the staff would benefit from an increased awareness of the role professional behaviors play in the development of a cultural ethos. An increased awareness would lead to a consciousness of events, thoughts, feelings and impressions. This consciousness would assist the Excelsior Academy staff in monitoring their own goals and accomplishments; in articulating well-defined criteria for decision making; in practicing mental rehearsal to seek to improve their teaching strategies; and in becoming aware of the needs of their peer coaches. Professional behaviors were in evidence and need to be noted and reflected upon in order to increase the effects of peer coaching on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy.

The ways in which the present peer coaching model affected the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy are varied and many. Primarily an effective system of communication with candor, trust and encouragement was established. As evidenced by several staff responses, this communication system proved to positively affect the professional climate and professional behaviors of the school and its staff. Second, a sense of mutual empowerment where staff received affirmation for their work, opportunities to grow and change, and allowances for experimenting with new ideas became an important result of the peer coaching model. This
empowerment was reported to have provided staff with new challenges and increased confidence in their abilities as teachers and learners. Third, the peer coaching model affected the general atmosphere of professionalism at Excelsior through a binding collegiality. This atmosphere of collegiality made the teaching-learning process public thereby allowing it to become a communal challenge. A fourth effect on the cultural ethos of Excelsior can be seen in the insightful discovery that was experienced among the Excelsior staff. An act of discovery is an act of revelation which can create excitement and motivation in the learner. Both excitement and motivation were in evidence in the tone and language of the staff responses. Finally, a supportive collaboration was established where risk taking and the open exchange of ideas are valued, supported and practiced. Peer coaching at Excelsior provided a structure for collaborative professional development and improved the school’s cultural ethos through collaborative practice.

Teaching and Learning

Naturally teachers stand at the center of learning. Not only do they experience and practice teaching but they also experience and practice learning. This teaching and learning process occurs both inside and outside of the classroom. If productive learning conditions do not exist for
Figure 4.3

Effects of Peer Coaching on the Teaching and Learning Process

• Questioning
• Active listening
• Problem solving
• Sharing

teachers creativity and efficacy may suffer. The data suggested that productive learning conditions existed at Excelsior allowing greater opportunities for the practice of teaching and learning. At Excelsior Academy the peer coaching model had several effects on the teaching and learning of its educators (Figure 4.3). One effect on their teaching and learning was the development of questioning skills. Some of the teachers mentioned that they acquired improved questioning skills during the peer coaching process. Others suggested that their questioning skills were strengthened; such that those strengthened questioning skills aided lesson delivery and motivation of their students. A second effect on teaching and learning at Excelsior was an increased ability to actively listen. It was noted by staff that listening was essential to teamwork and collaboration. Some staff members felt that listening was an important vehicle to help
them arrive at more knowledge or a greater understanding of ideas. Developing the craft of problem solving was a third effect on the teaching and learning process. It was suggested that a teacher's day consisted of solving problems and that a teacher's effectiveness depended upon whether that problem solving was fruitful, ineffectual or destructive. Within the peer coaching model some staff members felt that their problem-solving skills were enhanced through activities such as: collaboration, discovery and communication. A final effect on the teaching and learning for Excelsior peer coaches was sharing. One staff member defined sharing in this way: “to communicate; to have an exchange; to be connected; to convey information - all of these involve the act of sharing.”

If collaboration is one of the components of the peer coaching model, sharing is at the heart of collaboration - a joint participation, a mutual experience. These four effects upon the teaching and learning process of the Excelsior staff created a springboard from which the School Improvement Council and the entire staff can work to revise, refine and improve their peer coaching model.

Responses for Changes to the Peer Coaching Model

To reiterate, the four major ideas for change referred to time, design, staff interactions and outcomes. Time was most likely the largest concern. The staff stated that they were experiencing difficulties with scheduling,
with choice of times and with frequency of the sessions. Design of the model was mentioned more to assist the staff in developing a structure and maintaining parts of that structure than it was to suggest the development of an overall plan. Increased staff interaction was voiced as a great need for this particular staff. Suggestions mentioning varied ways of interacting were plentiful and insightful. For example, one staff member suggested weekly discussions groups open to whomever desired to attend. Another staff member suggested peer coaches share their journal writings with one another. Program outcomes was the area of least concern. One can assume they were offered more as a reminder to address the suggestions as the model develops than as a request from the administration to provide some tangible or intangible element. In general the suggestions for improvement in the model were thoughtful, decisive, and sensitive to the integrity of the model. The Excelsior staff envisioned change as a learning process and as a journey. This placed them many steps closer to fulfilling their goals. As I pondered staff answers to the questionnaire and searched for patterns in the data I began to find emerging themes.

The Set:

The Five Themes

Five common themes emerged from this investigation to provide a
framework for the peer coaching story. The themes included: communication, empowerment, collegiality, discovery and collaboration (Figure 4.4). From the voices of the Excelsior staff, I will present data that will display an analysis of each theme and how those themes relate to one another. These themes were discovered and developed from the responses of questions two through five of the questionnaire for the Excelsior Academy peer coaching model (Figure 4.5).
Figure 4.5

Peer Coaching
Open-ended Questionnaire #2-5

2. Describe the peer coaching model here at Excelsior.

3. How has this particular model affected the teaching and learning process for you personally?

4. How has the peer coaching model affected your professional development at Excelsior?

5. What factors affected your involvement in the peer coaching model?

Communication

In his book *Emotional Intelligence* Daniel Goleman (1994) described communication as "the wish and ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings, and concepts with others; related to a sense of trust in others and of pleasure in engaging with others (p. 194)." The consideration of communication was extremely important in a study intended to address the field of collaborative teaching practices. The very acts of teaching and of collaboration required communication in one form or another, and the ability to coach one's peer similarly required effective communication. Excelsior staff responses which were categorized under the theme of communication presented a similar outlook. The indicators embedded within the theme of communication are listed in Figure 4.6.
In general terms the staff were saying that communication was a very significant component within the peer coaching model. Some described peer coaching in terms of the verbalization of thoughts, feelings and ideas and noted the opportunity to “share ideas.” Others spoke about the value of nonverbal signals and language and realized the importance of “body language” and the “use of gestures” as well as the value of “sharing ideas about nonverbal cues for the classroom.” Excelsior staff suggested that the time spent in coaching sessions was valuable because there was “someone to talk to” while other staff felt that receiving “advice” and “fresh perspectives” was helpful. Many staff members reported feelings that the experience provided them with an opportunity to develop skills in “listening”, “facilitation” of conversation, and “questioning” while developing an atmosphere with limited barriers to communication. Consequently, the staff felt that not all communication was oral and that a repertoire of communication strategies was necessary to engage in peer coaching. Extending the interpretations, one could say that the peer...
coaches experienced an important opportunity to develop a set of communication strategies that might assist them to engage in productive shared inquiry.

**Empowerment**

The second theme that emerged from an analysis of the data was empowerment. One definition of empowerment was to "enable." During conversations with the Excelsior staff many of them voiced the opinion that empowerment connotes the need for a "crutch" and that they would not operate within the confines of such a limited scope. Judging from their responses to the questionnaire a more apt definition might be the one employed by Ponticell, Olson and Charlier (1995) in *Educating Teachers for Leadership and Change*:

"to help them develop a more internalized locus of control (p. 100)." The various indicators seemed to be

---

**Figure 4.7**

**Empowerment Indicators**

- Interactions with self
- Interactions with students
- Interactions with literature
- Interactions with other staff

---

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
centered around a core, or locus of control, consisting of interactive processes. At differing stages the staff members spoke about interactions with themselves, with the literature, with their students and with other staff members and colleagues (Figure 4.7). Aply a majority of the indicators which illuminate this theme of empowerment belonged to the area of interactions with self. Staff members saw peer coaching as providing them with a “sense of purpose and direction”, with “self assessment” and “self actualization”, with time for “reflection, renewal and positive change” and with the ability to “regroup” and “to gain confidence in their work.” The next largest focus group illuminated by the indicators was that of the students. Responses directed my attention to the staff members’ needs to address classroom concerns, “to become a better teacher”, and to be able to “make their own decisions about instructional practices.” One indicator of empowerment pointed outside of the traditional teacher setting to peer coaching being an inspiration for expanded research and study. Perhaps one of the strongest indicators of empowerment was the one which involved colleagues. Some of the staff members mentioned that they appreciated being given the opportunity to “design the peer coaching model” with their colleagues from within Excelsior as opposed to being asked to implement a model designed by others outside Excelsior. Just as interaction was at the heart of these indicators growth seemed to be at the junction of empowerment and its relationship to peer coaching. Each of the indicators were seen as growth-
inducing. Reflection was another indicator of growth - an event which is reported to have happened with some regularity during the peer coaching sessions.

**Collegiality**

Growth increased the chances that quality learning among the staff would take place. In order for this to happen among the staff an atmosphere of collegiality needed to be established. Phillip Schlechty in *Schools For the Twenty-First Century* (1990) suggested that collegiality among staff must avoid competition and rivalry and create ladders for unity and support. A sense of collegiality was the third theme found emerging from the data. Collegiality involved, among other things, mutual observations, dialoguing, planning curriculum and programs together and teaching one another. Collegial learning required trust, sharing, openness and meaningful conversations concerning the teaching-learning process. The staff responses directed my attention to the theme of collegiality and the role it played in the peer coaching sessions. I gathered the collegiality indicators and grouped them into three aggregates: safety, connection and meaningfulness (Figure 4.8). The indicators for safety embedded in the staff responses displayed staff feelings of established confidentiality; “a safe atmosphere” in which to experiment with new ideas; the opportunity
to "vent off steam"; mutual attitudes of encouragement; and a nonjudgmental exchange. A feeling of connection was surmised by the use of indicators such as: "bonding"; "rapport building"; "open and honest" exchanges; quality time; "laughing and commiserating" together; and establishing a positive coaching relationship where coaches become "soulmates." The third aggregate of indicators accentuated a sense of meaningfulness to the peer coaching model. From staff responses the following indicators highlighted the theme of collegiality while providing us with a look at the quality of the peer coaching experience: an enriching as opposed to evaluative experience; an opportunity to complement each others' teaching and learning styles and a growing respect for the profession, for each other and for self. Reportedly, an atmosphere of collegiality was established during implementation of the peer coaching model, and that this collegiality included trust, openness, sharing and meaningful conversations.
**Discovery**

Discovery was the fourth theme found emerging from participant responses. According to Ponticell and others (1995), professional development is "an ongoing discovery in practice where teachers engage in a process of interaction and inquiry in work that is perceived as dynamic (p. 99)." The indicators which illuminated this theme of discovery may be grouped into three areas: teaching and learning, the field of education and professional growth (Figure 4.9). These indicators highlighted experiences where the staff looked inward to reflect upon their teaching-learning process as well as looked outward at professional practices and contexts in the field of education. The professional growth indicator showed us that peer coaching afforded Excelsior staff opportunities to explore "professional options" as well as opportunities to come to a greater understanding of their roles as educators. The indicators entitled

---

**Figure 4.9**

**Discovery Indicators**

- Teaching and learning
- Field of education
- Professional growth

---
"awareness of new methodologies" and "breaking new ground" in education were both examples of the field of education indicator. They accentuated the desire for the staff members of Excelsior to engage in meaningful professional development exercises. The final indicator for the discovery theme was teaching and learning. Many of the staff responses expressed an outcome of self improvement in the teaching-learning process and were shown by these examples: peer coaching afforded an opportunity to "explore avenues of learning and methods of teaching"; to "help others explore teaching techniques"; "to help others come to their own solutions and insights"; and to "apply the knowledge and skills learned." For those participants in the peer coaching model who responded in this way, the experience of peer coaching led them together in a discovery mode to consider various perspectives, realms, and resolutions about the teaching and learning process.

Collaboration

We are smarter than me. It was a motto that guided the staff development program at Excelsior Academy and it exemplified this fifth and final theme of collaboration. In Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform (1993), Michael Fullan described a culture of collaboration as having a high degree of participatory decision making within an atmosphere of care, humor and camaraderie. In the natural
course of an educator's day it was common for the adults to seek each other out to engage in various types of discourse. They sought informal sharing and supportive relationships which helped to create the cultural ethos of the school. This was the core of collaboration which might be loosely defined as working together toward a mutual goal. In the interest of organization and clarity aggregates for the indicators that underscored the theme of collaboration have been formed and are represented in

![Figure 4.10](collaboration_indicators.png)

**Figure 4.10**

**Collaboration Indicators**

- Professional interactions
- Knowledge base
- Improving school culture

Figure 4.10. Within the aggregate of professional interactions a majority of staff responses made reference to opportunities for professional interactions during the peer coaching sessions at Excelsior. These responses were noted in the following examples: “animated and enthusiastic” dialogue; problem solving and planning together; sharing lesson plans and “working on a project together”; and being motivated by “one who has been there.” There were three pieces of evidence from staff responses that revealed an appreciation for the opportunity to expand
their knowledge base. These included opportunities to: “brainstorm ideas”; engage in an exchange of “feelings, thoughts and skills”; and teach one another new skills. The aggregate regarding improving the professional culture also offered three elements that reveal staff thoughts on school culture: a growing “support” for one another; “making my load lighter and my job easier”; and creating a sense of “teamwork throughout the campus”. The cultural ethos that developed as a result of the peer coaching sessions described an Excelsior staff that worked together toward a common goal, within an atmosphere of teamwork, support and open exchange.

The Rewrite:

Staff Suggestions for Improvement

The overall tone of staff responses to question number nine from the questionnaire were favorable. Question number nine: What actions would improve the existing peer coaching model? It is significant to note that one hundred percent of the responses displayed favor for continuing the model for the following year. Many responses implied this continuation by discussing how to improve the model; and some responses stated directly that they would like to see peer coaching continue at Excelsior. In particular, there was not one staff response in favor of discontinuing the model. The responses were grouped into four focus
areas displayed in Figure 4.11.

![Figure 4.11]

**Staff Suggestions For Improvement**

**Focus Areas**

- Time
- Design
- Staff interactions
- Outcomes

**Time**

That precious and rare commodity for educators, time, made an appearance in varied ways throughout the responses to this question. From a more general vantage point one of the respondents was looking forward to a "complete year of coaching" in order to "learn more skills and share more ideas." Many participants found it difficult to meet at the specified time while admitting that they did meet even though pressed for time. It was suggested that a "time be blocked out that couldn't be avoided" in order to assist the coaches in avoiding the resultant stress of being "pressed for time." Some staff members wanted "more coaching time"; two staff members specifically suggested scheduling the sessions
once a week. It was strongly suggested by two other participants that the “specified time and day” be maintained during the following schoolyear. Two other respondents felt strongly that staff members should have the “freedom to choose the time and day” of the peer coaching sessions. In schools everywhere scheduling is one of the most difficult of events. It appeared to have been a difficulty for the Excelsior staff as well and they should take a close look at how they schedule the peer coaching sessions in order to address this important focus area.

**Design**

Even though one staff member mentioned design in a favorable light in response to questions two through eight - specifically about the ability to design the model from within as opposed to being given a model to implement - the following responses were staff requests for assistance in the design of the peer coaching model. Some of the participants were encouraged by the opportunity to be allowed to select their own partners and requested that same opportunity again. Two participants in particular wanted another chance to “choose more wisely.” Both of these participants mentioned that they would have liked to have had a coach with “similar roles and responsibilities” and, given the chance, they would be “more thoughtful” in their selection. The request of being provided with “more structure” and with “suggested topics” arose on several occasions.
Particularly in the first several weeks of the onset of the model it seemed that the coaches needed topics from which to structure and guide their sessions.

Staff Interactions

The overall tenor of this focus area revealed a need for the staff to expand their opportunities for interactions with other staff members. Many staff members requested the opportunity to undertake additional "classroom observations" of one another. They related that conducting classroom observations on a regular basis and making use of coaching sessions to "give and receive constructive feedback" about their teaching practices would be a significant improvement to the model. One staff member suggested that it would be productive to gather in "teams of four" (two peer coaching pairs) occasionally to share their experiences. Several staff members mentioned that it was a positive and constructive event when peer coaches would "share their ideas from the coaching sessions" with the staff as a whole. Finally, the significance of the opportunity for peer coaches to "debrief at staff meetings" was evidenced in several staff responses. Four staff members mentioned that they found these debriefings to be "very worthwhile", "incredibly validating", "an interesting experience", and "worth keeping." Consequently, the social organization of Excelsior Academy was an important component of the peer coaching
model. Excelsior was an organization conducive to open exchange, cooperation, trust and support and it can be implied that a spirit of collaboration and interaction is important to the participants of this study.

**Outcomes**

The role of an educator in part is to consider outcomes of a particular event or activity. From its inception those staff of Excelsior Academy who chose to take part in this study gave serious consideration to the outcomes of peer coaching. Through the planning stages and beyond it was evident they had been interested in the effects of the peer coaching model on their professional development and on the climate of the school itself. This fourth focus area addressed the future outcomes that staff wanted to see result as the peer coaching model continues into its next phase. Several staff members mentioned taking notes during their sessions. Two staff members suggested the value of maintaining "a weekly written reflection" or a "journal of our thoughts and ideas" to be able to share with others or use as a later reference. Another suggestion for improvement to the model was voiced in the form of a personal outcome. In order to instill a certain accountability for the program it was suggested that peer coaches practice "more follow through on suggestions from the peer coaching sessions." One peer coach thought that an improvement to the model would be to "explore more resources" during the peer coaching sessions. In the near
future it will be helpful if the staff regroups and looks at additional outcomes to their peer coaching model; including these specific outcomes voiced by several of the peer coaches.

The feedback comments for improvements to the peer coaching model were constructive and vital to the future development of the model. By my observations, it was an optimistic and enthusiastic staff that chose to volunteer for this study. Their insightful suggestions and dynamic responses were a welcome addition to the Excelsior Academy evaluation of their peer coaching model.

**Summary**

Chapter Four reported a summary of the current practices of peer coaching at Excelsior Academy as well as an evolution of the development of collaborative teaching practices that shaped the current peer coaching model. A review of the research questions revealed a greater understanding of how the peer coaching model shaped the cultural ethos of the school; how the model affected the teaching and learning of its staff; and what changes the staff would make to the existing model. From staff responses, a review of the documents and observational notations, five major themes emerged. These themes were presented with their resultant indicators and were discussed in depth. The five themes: communication, empowerment, collegiality, discovery, and collaboration.
were employed to present rich descriptive data for analysis. A typological analysis aided the structuring of a framework from which the themes and their indicators were described and their possible relationships explored. The data was synthesized to better prepare it for a reporting of the interpretations, recommendations and implications to be found in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?

Introduction

When asked what they want from schools, business leaders tell us they would like people who know how to accomplish two things: 1) to learn how to learn and 2) to learn how to communicate effectively (Stacey, 1992). In corporate offices and industrial settings across the nation an honest enlightenment has overtaken our corporate leaders. According to Costa and Garmston (1994), “There is a growing desire to enhance individual creativity, stimulate collaborative efforts, and to continue learning how to learn” (p. 5). If the corporate world sees the value in these qualities, then it is imperative that the academic world fall into step and keep pace. Before these skills are passed on to our youth, the adults in our schools must strive to acquire them. If educators are to survive in the twenty-first century they will need to know how to learn and to know how to communicate effectively. As more educators acquire and master these qualities they will be able to pass the torch to the children. This is a challenge that has never before been so evident in education today. Collaborative teaching practices allow educators the opportunities to learn how to learn and how to communicate. It is becoming a common practice for teachers to use cooperative learning groups and peer mentors to help
impart the knowledge and skills students need. A natural progression of events would be for the teachers to learn collaboratively from one another - imparting knowledge and skills to each other. The ability to think and solve problems; to take a creative turn; to listen to and communicate constructive feedback are attributes of effective collaborative teaching - in particular of an effective peer coaching model. Peer coaching - a technique of pairing educators to engage in shared inquiry, reflection and renewal - has proved to be effective in orienting schools toward collegial problem solving and advanced empowerment (Joyce and Showers, 1992). For educators who may have been operating on automatic pilot for years, peer coaching is a way to help them raise their consciousness about the quality of their own teaching efforts. Hence, collaborative teaching practices, in particular peer coaching methods, can bring profound changes to the way educators approach the teaching and learning process.

As a learning community Excelsior Academy became a model school for educators to study. Informal staff reports indicated that although the staff development program at Excelsior Academy was beneficial and meaningful, collaborative teaching practices there were in need of structure and consistency. As the School Improvement Council (SIC) researched effective models to be adapted for implementation at Excelsior, the staff showed a willingness to explore the most appropriate model for their setting and population. As the SIC learned more about specific peer coaching models they created a model tailored to meet the needs of their
staff. A quiet revolution took place at Excelsior. It was a revolution of relationship and a revolution of the intellect—minds in relationship with one another. At Excelsior the relationship brought about by peer coaching was that teaching is a collaborative act wherein the teachers become more creative, insightful and reflective about their practices. In this setting teaching became a public act where the need for collaboration and trust was met with the practice of nonjudgmental coaching and collegial support. Such conditions could not have occurred without those involved coming to understand and embrace what is expected and valued at Excelsior.

Colleagues at Excelsior knew what was valued and expected by knowing what was inspected and respected. The peer coaching model provided an opportunity for staff to inspect their methods and practices, to reflect on the efficacy of their efforts, and, based on both inspection and reflection, to make changes based on the results. The systematic and sustained energies of the Excelsior staff were directed toward creating a school where the cultural ethos was continually evolving and where every individual was involved in a meaningful learning community. And as a meaningful learning community it practiced the following tenets:

- Individuals of any age can continue to learn throughout their lifetime.
- All staff of the Excelsior learning community are active teachers and learners.
- Collaboration is the keystone to a successful learning community.
• Effective communication is essential to the collaboration process.

• Collegial support provides the atmosphere necessary to develop trust and constructive relationships.

• The art of discovery is developed through self evaluation, collaboration and mutual problem solving.

• The end product of an effective learning community is empowerment.

These synergistic and progressive tenets contributed to a current concept of the learning community at Excelsior as a place for personal and professional growth as well as for self renewal and interdependence.

This study on peer coaching delved into: 1) the effects of a collaborative model on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy; 2) the effects of such a model on the teaching and learning of the educators; and 3) the results of a qualitative assessment of the model. The Excelsior Academy vision for collaborative teaching practices was based on shared inquiry, reflection and renewal. What was uncovered in this study was the means by which Excelsior educators developed, refined, and molded that vision so that it became widely understood and embraced throughout the school. A clearly articulated purpose and a well-thought-out vision that was consistent with that purpose indicated what the peer coaching model signified at Excelsior Academy. The present chapter is an analysis about how this event came about.

This chapter presents a summary of the study's: literature review;
purpose; methodology; and the key findings. In addition, the chapter will take a look at the implications of this research for educational practice, and recommendations for practitioners and for future research. Concluding remarks about the process of the study address my experiences.

Summary of Study

As stated in Chapter One my purpose in completing this study was to analyze the factors at Excelsior Academy that contributed to achieving and sustaining a cultural ethos among educators who were involved in a peer coaching model. A secondary purpose was to gain an increased understanding of the vision, development and shaping required to achieve and sustain that cultural ethos. An understanding of peer coaching as part of a collaborative teaching practice was important for educators to learn, for not all collaborative teaching practices include peer coaching. Peer coaching was based on research findings that indicate teachers generally identify other teachers as their primary sources of assistance and information when learning about teaching (Ponticell, Olson, & Charlier, 1995). Teachers naturally seek informal learning and support relationships. Coaching provides a structure for collaborative professional development and for improving a school’s professional culture through collaboration. The practice of peer coaching provides teachers with opportunities to develop a common culture and understanding about the
teaching and learning process and contributes to an atmosphere of collegiality, communication, discovery, collaboration and empowerment.

This chapter begins with a summary of the literature review presented in Chapter Two. Following that summary is a review of the methodology and a summary of the key findings. In addition, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the ideas that emerged from the findings of the study about collaborative teaching practices, specifically: peer coaching effects; implications on collaborative work at Excelsior; my research recommendations based on staff input; research suggestions and the meaning of peer coaching for the twenty-first century.

Summary of Literature Review

From the literature, I found that one of the purposes of peer coaching is to provide for the transfer of learning in everyday situations in order for teachers to be able to manage accumulating information. Peer coaching is a process that is used to acquire new knowledge or to relearn past knowledge. Another major purpose is to help implement new training or to help sustain existing training in order for the growth that results to positively affect the teaching and learning process.

Teaching and learning are processes that reap the benefits of shared inquiry through collaborative partnerships. Such relationships can also build bridges that move educators from cultural isolation to collegiality,
creating a productive and reflective learning environment. Such a learning environment can create the cultural ethos needed to sustain interactive relationships among the entire staff in an educational setting.

The growth of networks in general education and special education and in both private and public education that foster norms of openness and trust, opportunities for inquiry, the implementation of strategies in context, and the reconstruction of leadership roles, is in full bloom. Schools are restructuring and educators are increasingly finding themselves in positions of leadership which involve such practices as: site-based management, shared decisionmaking, and participatory leadership. School reform faces new challenges where teachers form partnerships, become active learners or engage in research in the classroom. Schools that have become organizations known for collaboration are characterized by increased levels of teamwork, collegiality and collaborative teaching practices. In general, educators are more engaged in full inclusion, team teaching, complementary instruction, consultation and varied forms of coaching. This increased activity toward collaboration has led to further the concept of teacher as learners.

Increased collaboration in educational settings is breathing new life into the process, the content and into the educators themselves. This new life is exhibited by an increase in shared inquiry, the expanding roles of educators, the implementation of collaborative practices, and the formation of networks and coalitions. Significantly, it is a life of commitment, growth
and connection that become central to the process of education.

**Summary Of Methodology**

Qualitative research, according to Merriam (1988), assumes multiple realities within a subjective world that constantly involves personal perceptions and interactive relationships. Amid this subjective setting then the research undertaken required not measurement but interpretation. In the experiences of Taylor and Bogdan (1984) this interpretation needed to include rich descriptions of the contextual settings, the meanings of events and views of the events as seen from the informants’ points of view. The ultimate purposes of qualitative research in the eyes of Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.21) were to: “clarify and illustrate quantitative findings, build research instruments, develop policy, evaluate programs, provide information for commercial purposes, guide practitioners’ practices, and serve political ends, as well as for more scientific purposes such as the development of basic knowledge”. In this case study the goals of my qualitative research were to evaluate a model in practice, provide information and feedback to the practitioners and accumulate more knowledge about collaborative teaching practices. Case studies in particular are intensely descriptive and depend upon inductive or deductive reasoning to manage the varied and numerous sources of data. Both deductive and inductive reasoning, therefore, were an integral
component of the data collection process in this study.

The data collection in this study focused on viewing the experience of the peer coaching model through the eyes of those key participants who were intimately involved in the ongoing development and practice of peer coaching. As researcher, I became one of those participants. Completion of an open-ended questionnaire by the participants was augmented by my journal notes from: formal and informal observations, whole group meetings and informal conversations as well as a review of the site documents. From the onset, I was fortunate enough to have formed a professional alliance with the Excelsior staff before the onset of this study. I understood the need to maintain the delicate balance between researcher and colleague. The advantages to being involved in both roles outweighed the disadvantages to being so close to the investigation. One of the advantages was acquiring a more developed understanding of the behaviors, visions, anxieties, and feelings of the participants. Having established a prior professional relationship with the staff, another advantage was the benefit of an established foundation of trust, rapport and mutual respect. All of these elements were essential in establishing a role as researcher and in communicating the purposes of that research. Hence the focus remained on attention to matters of data gathering. As completion of the data-gathering process neared, my attention was turned even more to matters of interpretation. In short, data analysis began long before I left the field of investigation.
Data analysis allowed me to organize the rich data obtained through the questionnaire, observations, conversations, meetings and document reviews and to integrate, synthesize and interpret those themes. In data analysis, there was a necessity for the: careful undertaking of a disciplined study, deliberate reliance on creative insight, and particular attention to the purposes of the study. Organization of the data in preparation for analysis was, at first, an overwhelming task. Patton (1987) revealed the process of constructing a case study moving from assemblage of the data to construction of a case record to content analysis to the final writing of the case study narrative. This organizational structure provided me with the discipline and deliberation necessary to approach the analysis and interpretation stage of the investigation.

Summary of Key Findings

A qualitative case study may be presented either chronologically or thematically. Because of its ethnographic orientation, I chose to present this case study from a thematic framework. This particular case study investigated a specific peer coaching model and its effects on a school. The aim was to examine the events and phenomena of the peer coaching model and to present a rich, meaningful description of those phenomena. The main aspects of the peer coaching model at Excelsior Academy were highlighted by describing and offering insights about the phenomena.
involved in the model. These phenomena included: reflective and strategic thinking; shared inquiry; collective study combined with individual action; and collegial problem solving. When teachers engaged in these phenomena, they were more adept at synthesizing new strategies with proven strategies and skills, and they were better able to gain control of their own professional development. The final step in the data analysis process was to provide interpretive and analytical assumptions about the five themes found embedded in the study (Figure 5.1). These five themes, as stated in the introduction to Chapter Five, were: communication,
empowerment, collegiality, discovery and collaboration.

**Communication.** There are many functions of communication including: to inform, to persuade, to participate, to express feelings, to imagine and to hypothesize (Book, 1995). At Excelsior, communication was perhaps the most common behavior among educators and involved all of the above indicators. It was fitting then that educators would come to learn as much about effective communication as was possible. Ross and Regan (1993) demonstrated that shared inquiry had little effect upon professional development unless the interactions of the educators involved self reflection and challenges from their colleagues. Reflection among the peer coaches involved both thought processes and expressive language communication. It was in this act of communication of thoughts that Excelsior peer coaches began to challenge the reflections of their colleagues.

**Empowerment.** From my journal notes I found a statement by one Excelsior staff member that "teachers here have a mindset to empower themselves." Personal empowerment emanated from individual expertise, growth in acquisition of skills and knowledge and consistently dealing with new challenges. As Excelsior educators worked together to solve problems and reflect on their roles, they gained confidence and learned to motivate and support one another. As they began to recognize their successes in planning, decision making and implementation, they began to discover
feelings of personal and professional efficacy. This positive atmosphere was reinforced through occasional celebrations of the successes of all, creating layers of confidence. Layers upon layers of feelings of efficacy and empowerment positively affected the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy.

**Collegiality.** Neubert and Stover (1994) described peer coaching as a collegial relation between educators who engaged in a reciprocal practice of assisting one another in the teaching and learning process. At Excelsior collegiality implied mutual support. Colleagues worked together in safe and meaningful ways to share, plan, problem solve and help one another improve. Strategies that connected educators to one another in collaborative teaching practices not only enhanced skill acquisition through peer support, but also taught collegiality as an effective means of professional development. Once collegiality became the standard it transformed the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy. Within the organizational structures of Excelsior collegiality was nurtured and supported to enhance the atmosphere of teaching and to develop an ethos wherein collegial relationships were valued.

**Discovery.** Albert Einstein once said that it is a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet strangled the inquiring mind. Once the peer coaches saw teaching as learning they were able to engage in a process of transformation that would positively affect professional lives. This continuous process of discovery required time to reflect and
opportunities to practice and refine skills. Discovery in teaching was an essential component of the teaching and learning process. Peer coaches were consistently in discovery mode. At Excelsior Academy educators understood that teaching was a creative activity that required the discovery of new learning where they moved from survival to mastery to impact. During this discovery process they built a repertoire of strategies, refined their techniques and came to understand their roles as teachers and as colleagues. To be engaged in the process of discovery was to be engaged in the continual exchange of meaning and understanding. Because the discovery process was evident in this particular school setting it served to enrich the lives of everyone in the learning community.

**Collaboration.** Developing collaborative work cultures at Excelsior was clearly central to the concept of peer coaching. Collaboration would help reduce the professional isolation of educators, allowing the structuring and sharing of successful practices and the provision of support (Fullan, 1991). Collaboration within a peer coaching model would also contribute to the professional practice of teaching as well as teacher leadership (Walling, 1994). Goodlad (1994) told us that educators needed to learn how to collaborate. He advocated the use of modeling and demonstrations as a way of teaching collaboration. True collaboration would not be a process that one acquired without practice. One learned a great deal about collaboration by engaging in collaborative practices. Excelsior educators were involved in some form of collaborative teaching practices for quite
some time. They learned a certain amount about observation, role playing, introspection, reflection and critical conversation. Now these factors have served as organizing elements within their peer coaching model to be developed over time through a series of planned field experiences in a variety of settings.

The Excelsior Academy staff together generated the initial stages of a collegial organization that productively engaged in the teaching and learning process through the activities of shared inquiry and problem solving. This achievement effectively established a foundation from which teaching and learning became a dynamic and ongoing study wherein staff members acquired increased knowledge and skills. This foundation embodied a powerful vision of professionalism, bringing together as it did a community of collaborators, a recognition of emerging knowledge and its value, a belief that the future of education could be built around inquiry and a sense of true empowerment for every staff member.

This feeling of empowerment resulting from the peer coaching model should not be understated. Empowerment can sometimes be translated into executive control. In educational terms this executive control could be the point at which educators employ a judgment-based repertoire of skills to exhibit competence. Thus executive control consists of educators understanding the purpose of the skill, knowing how to adapt and apply it to their craft and, modifying, creating and blending it with other aspects of the teaching and learning process, to develop a smooth and powerful
whole. This is true empowerment - where control over decision making is left to the experts - the educators who live and breathe the teaching and learning process on a daily basis. It is just this executive control that educators at Excelsior found in the peer coaching model. In addition to the feeling of executive control gained by Excelsior staff, I observed a positive demonstration of shared-decision making that effectively replaced the traditional hierarchies of top-down governance found in most schools. This shared-decision making fostered more empowerment when staff were involved in activities related to their roles and that had an impact on the quality of their work. In gatherings, educators at Excelsior were not to be involved in banal activities that did not increase their feelings of professionalism. They appeared to be deeply involved in the important and relevant task of educating children.

Successes.

There were many successes revealed by the Excelsior staff as they reflected upon the peer coaching process. Primarily, as observed within the peer coaching structure, the Excelsior team became adept at shared inquiry and shared decision making through implementation of the peer coaching process. Secondly, the staff learned that problem solving together helped to create an environment of collegiality, efficacy, and trust. Thirdly, effective communication and collaboration lead the staff to a sense
and degree of empowerment that was seldom seen in educational settings. Finally, their use and mastery of discovery methods within the teaching and learning process afforded them a sense of professionalism much needed in the educational world. These were accomplishments that could stand alone and make a great impression to an enlightened outsider. Together these successes solidified a unity of spirit and collaboration that could serve as a role model for other schools seeking such outcomes.

Challenges.

The Excelsior Academy peer coaching model also created many challenges as it completed its inaugural year. The most frequently mentioned element of the model that needed improvement was time constraints. Participants in the model reported difficulty in meeting with their peer coaches at the designated time. Some participants found themselves needing to reschedule occasionally and some with more frequency. Still other participants felt it would be helpful to have a designated time as a reminder of the importance of peer coaching.

Another challenge faced by the peer coaches was to design a model that was appropriate to the styles, strengths and needs of the staff. As they agreed upon providing input during the peer coach selection process, some also reported that in the future they would be more thoughtful about their selections. An additional component to model design involved topics
to be addressed. As a result of the innovative elements of the peer coaching model, the staff expressed a need for guidance in the actual peer coaching sessions. They asked for guided questions or suggested topics to assist them in approaching and sustaining a peer coaching session.

A third area of challenge facing the peer coaches at Excelsior involved staff interactions. Due to the highly collaborative nature of the Excelsior staff and the collegial atmosphere of the organization, many staff members reported the need to share more information more often about their peer coaching experiences with schoolwide colleagues. Suggested interactions included written reflections, teams of coaches sharing experiences and the continuation of whole group debriefings.

A final area of improvement for the peer coaching model as suggested by the staff was the determination of outcomes of the model. One of the more frequently reported outcomes was skill acquisition. Peer coaches were looking forward to learning more about: the art of questioning, active listening, problem solving and the sharing of ideas. Another outcome frequently requested by the staff was the need for more classroom observations. Upon review of the field notes, this request can be underscored. The Excelsior staff reported increased learning experiences after observing their colleagues in the classroom. An additional outcome desired by the staff was the need for consistency in implementing the suggestions provided to them by their peer coaches.

It may be noted that the four categories of improvement for the peer
coaching model were significant and comprehensive. It would be difficult to find any other areas needing improvement. Staff members were thoughtful and conscientious in responding to the questionnaire. These qualities served only to assist them in their search for self improvement.

Peer Coaching and Leadership.

In educational settings the active study of leadership is a rare event - in individual schools rarer still. Although leadership happens on a daily basis in schools, participants in the leadership process are either oblivious to the event or take it for granted. From the University of Washington Kenneth Sirotnik (1995) identified a definition created by the faculty of the educational leadership program at his university: “Leadership is the exercise of significant and responsible influence” (p. 236). Based on this definition, that same faculty might concede that this type of leadership took place among the peer coaches at Excelsior Academy.

The University of Washington definition contains four key words that are appropriate for the peer coaching model at Excelsior Academy:

- exercise
- significant
- responsible
- influence
The word exercise is meant to imply a deliberate, decision-oriented approach to leadership. In the peer coaching model when the peer coaches exercised leadership it was with specific outcomes in mind. The stated outcome was to explore how the peer coaching model shaped the cultural ethos of the school. The unstated but implied outcome was to examine the relationships between peer coaches and their effects on each other as well as on the school as a whole.

The word significant is intended to highlight the fact that leadership conveys something of meaning and substance. From observations, discussions, and intuition the peer coaches at Excelsior understood the significance of the effects of peer coaching upon their professional and personal development as well as upon the development of their colleagues. Probably the most controversial word is responsible. The controversy surrounding the term responsible lies in the implication that peer coaches at Excelsior were in a position of significantly influencing their colleagues in profound ways. This position of influence further implied a sense of moral obligation which might be difficult for some educators to accept. Influence is a very important word as it implies the power of the peer coaches to affect or alter the course of events - alteration involves change. For the most part, the peer coaches at Excelsior regarded change in healthy and positive ways. Hence, the exercise of influence upon each other as coaches lead to a professional feeling of empowerment seldom experienced by educators.
Leadership and Change.

The change process is very complex as one comes to understand that effective change is about learning and is the responsibility of every educator. Every person must take action to alter their own environments in order for meaningful change to take place. This is why peer coaches at Excelsior felt such a sense of empowerment as coaches; it was because each one of them were creating change in subtle ways - both internally and externally. In any school setting it is up to each and every individual to work together to design a school which involves individual and shared inquiry as well as continuous renewal. The peer coaching model provided for individual inquiry as peer coaches prepared for their coaching sessions as well as while they were teaching and learning in their classrooms. Shared inquiry was found at several levels of staff interactions at Excelsior: in the actual peer coaching sessions; in the whole-group debriefing sessions; within formal and informal conversations and in the weekly staff meetings. Hence, at Excelsior, there were opportunities for both internal and external changes to take place amid a dynamic exchange of ideas, issues and values.

Meaningful change often takes place as a result of a combination of individual and shared inquiry. With such a strong emphasis on collegiality and collaboration it is easy to forget the power an educator has to affect
change. At this singular level is where change first begins to happen. The capacity to understand one's own viewpoint on a specific issue is just as vital as the ability to affect change in collaborative ways. In collaboration educators find strength, support and a more advantageous position from which to judge and act on learning opportunities. Neither shared inquiry nor individual inquiry alone can affect the kind of meaningful change necessary for today's educators. When practiced together such as in the Excelsior peer coaching model meaningful change took place. Together both individual inquiry and shared inquiry provided the synergy necessary for complete learning.

Discussion of the Findings

It was hoped that the study of collaborative teaching practices at Excelsior would continue even as this particular study came to an end. As the end drew near, and as happens in research, many questions surfaced. What was Excelsior Academy like before peer coaching? What effects did peer coaching have on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy? How did the peer coaching experiences assist the coaches in refocusing their attentions and energies? What were the roles of the administrative bodies and how did they affect the peer coaching process? What were the effects on the educators as individuals? What was the importance of building collegiality? How did the newly found sense of empowerment contribute
to an atmosphere of shared inquiry? What do these results suggest for future educational policy and practice? What recommendations can be found for policymakers, educators and future studies?

For what began as a basic extension of the collaborative teaching practices implemented at Excelsior Academy over the last few years, the peer coaching model study revealed some surprising results. Among a myriad of additional revelations educators discovered: the value of classroom observation; a capacity for being observed; the many-faceted process of shared inquiry; a strengthened collegial trust; a sense of personal and professional empowerment and a positive and meaningful communication system. The peer coaching process invited an aura of renewal and heightened consciousness among Excelsior staff.

Excelsior Before Peer Coaching

As Excelsior entered into the peer coaching model, the effects of the change were not as pronounced as they might have been due to a history of collaborative teaching practices implemented by the staff in the years leading up to peer coaching. Beginning with the weekly three-hour staff inservices Excelsior staff engaged in the study of best practices, student successes and educational research. The major focus for staff development centered around the teaching and learning process as evidenced by their efforts at ongoing improvement. Influence and work in the area of
cognitive coaching by Garmston and Costa led the staff to design a coaching model at Excelsior based upon observation, conferencing and feedback. Growth of the faculty affected the size of the groups and consequently the influence of cognitive coaching on individual staff members. These growth concerns led them to return to the literature in search of a model that would enhance collaboration and shared inquiry. This is the peer coaching model they discovered and individualized to meet their needs of their particular school and staff.

Between the time of their cognitive coaching collaboration and peer coaching process Excelsior staff continued to meet with the directors for coaching and guidance. However, the atmosphere created by cognitive coaching was greatly diminished and this loss was felt by the entire staff. Many staff members were unable to understand the cause of their feelings of loss until they were given the opportunity to evaluate the first several months of the peer coaching model. It was in the results of the study that staff began to understand the need for and the positive effects of collaborative teaching practices. They came to the realization that it was not enough to meet with an administrator for guidance and direction but that they needed the sense of collegiality and empowerment brought about through collective collaboration. Peer coaching provided the staff with greater collaboration with one another thus affording them opportunities to improve the teaching and learning process collectively.
In Chapter One cultural ethos was defined as the perceived feeling or tone of the educational setting involving values, norms and beliefs that formally and informally guide and shape behaviors. One of the research questions addressed the effects of peer coaching on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy. The beliefs practiced by the Excelsior staff centered around the notion of collaborative work cultures. Since Excelsior's inception they have grown in depth and intensity from mere weekly staff meetings to a culture of collaboration and empowerment. Because the growth process was meaningful and productive the effects of this transformation should not be overlooked.

At the onset, developing a collaborative work culture became central to goals of the Excelsior staff. The cornerstone of this collaborative work culture was to contribute to the ideas of others while seeking to improve practices for one's own repertoire. It was not a contrived collegiality characterized by a set of formal, bureaucratic procedures, but a deep, personal and lasting culture of collaboration sought by a committed and interested staff. What was undertaken at Excelsior through the peer coaching model was the development of an interdependent work culture within a community of shared inquiry. The effects of practicing shared values and interdependence of thought and communication strengthened the collaborative work culture in many ways. The following were changes
observed throughout the school since the creation of the peer coaching model:

• Professional collegiality and collaborative discourse
• Codification and sharing of successful practices
• Provision of support and increased staff development
• Increased morale, enthusiasm, and positive interactions
• Receptiveness to experimentation and self-assessment
• Maintenance of autonomy within a collegial setting
• Increased sense of efficacy

1. *Professional collegiality and collaborative discourse.* Peer coaches shared that they learned to talk about their work in meaningful, concrete, and precise ways; to observe and critique each other; to collaborate on common goals; to engage in problem solving activities and to teach each other what they know, thereby sharing professional expertise and knowledge of craft. These effects helped Excelsior staff to create a more productive learning community for all.

2. *Codification and sharing of successful practices.* Staff members expressed that they began to learn to organize and systematize their work into meaningful and understandable products with which to share with their fellow colleagues. That is to say, they found a way to recognize the
differences between a successful practice and a nonsuccessful practice and a way to share the successes with their peer coach. Costa and Garmston (1994) revealed that teachers with higher conceptual levels drew from a broader repertoire of teaching methods thus creating a range of successful options to share.

3. Provision of support and increased staff involvement. Peer coaching provided a structure of support where staff members expressed feelings of being valued, thus providing the entire work culture with an incentive to continue professional collaboration. Professional collaboration required certain qualities such as skill, trust and patience. This structure of support founded in collegiality and experienced by Excelsior coaches provided a foundation from which those coaches practiced such qualities and from which they may continue to increase their level of involvement.

4. Increased morale, enthusiasm and positive interactions. Interest in each other's work stimulated and boosted morale. When asked about their responses to shared inquiry and collegial problem solving, coaches expressed a sense of contentment and enthusiasm. These feelings created a positive atmosphere for ongoing growth and communication. Many coaches spoke about the role peer coaching played in maintaining positive morale within a stressful workload. There was a general consensus that professional collaboration assisted in balancing the stress experienced in
day-to-day activities.

5. *Receptiveness to experimentation and self assessment.* Maintaining a dynamic and diversified environment was a goal expressed by the Excelsior team and implied in their schoolwide learning expectations. It was reported in several ways that peer coaching empowered staff members to engage in unfamiliar practices due to the support and encouragement received from their peer coaches. Empowerment also led them to begin to assess themselves in deeper and more productive ways thus creating an understanding of the value of coaching.

6. *Maintenance of autonomy within a collegial setting.* It was reported by some staff members that personality styles played an important role in collaboration. Staff members who considered themselves introverted and expressed a need to work in solitude at times were considered when collaborative teaching practices were the focal point of the working culture. The peer coaching model at Excelsior made allowances for autonomous work as well as for collaborative work. Excelsior staff members were diversely talented individuals who worked creatively toward a common goal - a positive learning environment for staff and students. Staff members were individuals working together toward a common goal. At times their work required collaboration and
other times it required independence and solitude. The peer coaching model allowed a certain choreography between the two settings.

7. *Increased sense of efficacy.* Peer coaches at Excelsior reported believing that their efforts made a difference in the overall school culture. With efficacy came a willingness to expend more energy, a sense of optimism, longer perseverance, a desire to set more challenging goals, and the will to proceed in the face of failures or barriers. These effects produced by a sense of efficacy and created by collaborative teaching practices had an significant impact on the entire school.

**Implications of Collaborative Work at Excelsior**

There were many implications to be discussed when considering the effects of the peer coaching model on the professional work culture of Excelsior Academy. From the research questions, I was able to conclude that peer coaching positively shaped the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy by: providing the staff with a broader vision of teaching and learning; creating opportunities for collegial dialogue; and providing an atmosphere of trust and rapport. As to the its effects on staff teaching and learning, staff reported learning diverse strategies in varying settings each time they collaborated with another colleague. In so doing, they engaged in thoughtful communication that resulted both in innovative activities and
an atmosphere of collegiality in which to grow and develop. An increased comfort level for the staff was noted when they were engaged in experimentation and risk-taking activities. Amid support from colleagues peer coaches engaged in both independent reflection and in interactive and critical examination of their teaching practices. Peer support and practice in classroom observation and instructional analysis led staff to develop alternative instructional strategies and to engage in systematic evaluation of the success of those strategies. Additionally, Excelsior staff provide several thoughtful and significant improvements for the existing model including: the acquisition of new skills, the maintenance of working components, the addition of increased observations and continual staff input. Both peer coaching and the collaborative networks formed by this model provided a climate for investigating the effects of collaborative teaching practices on the teaching and learning process at Excelsior Academy.

The results of this study of peer coaching at Excelsior Academy suggested that such strategies as those discussed above were a significant vehicle for empowering staff to: promote a sense of optimism about teaching, adjust instructional behaviors, discover additional tools to learning, engage in critical dialogue, and rekindle self assessment strategies.

Perhaps the most significant drawback to dynamic collaborative teaching practices was time. When peer coaches experienced shared
inquiry and discovery, improved communication and collaboration and a strong sense of collegial support and empowerment, they continued to creatively problem-solve the time barrier concerns. Time was of little consequence when staff exercised choice, explored their potential for growth, gained recognition for their successes, enriched skills and enhanced trust and support.

The findings of this study suggest that peer coaching and other collaborative teaching practices were the key to renewal of the teaching and learning process where staff focused their attentions on their own professional growth. This study demonstrates that when staff members were instrumental in forging their own professional growth their perseverance in creating a more positive teaching and learning environment increased. This study proves that it is time to look at the significance of collaborative teaching practices on student achievement as suggested by the theory: Greater teacher achievement should increase student achievement.

The implications of this identified new path of study are significant. There is no framework for the initiation of such a study. Educators point out that the link between professional development and student achievement is nebulous at best. Therefore clarity of common goals, purpose, and outcomes for the study are essential. Programs that continue to promote collaborative teaching practices across public and private education are the means. The end is the ongoing development of both
teacher and student in the teaching and learning process.

Recommendations

This investigation presented a study of collaborative teaching practices - more specifically the peer coaching model at Excelsior Academy. It journeyed with the Excelsior staff in relating the story of the effects of peer coaching on the professional work culture. It developed a description of the process, an investigation of themes and patterns, an examination of structures, a discussion of successes and challenges and a look into the emergent collaborative culture. In addition this investigation presented the effects of the peer coaching model on the cultural ethos of Excelsior Academy. Finally, the study revealed the implications of the results of the study for educators relative to their professional development and collaborative teaching practices.

This section begins with the recommendations offered by staff members at Excelsior. Next it presents recommendations from the researcher based upon an integration of the findings, an identification of the research implications and suggestions from research participants. Finally it introduces ideas for further study in the realm of collaborative teaching practices.
Staff Suggestions and Researcher Recommendations

As was presented in Chapter Four the staff suggestions were categorized into four major areas: time, design, staff interactions and outcomes (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2
Staff Suggestions For Improvement of the Peer Coaching Model

• Time
• Design
• Staff interactions
• Outcomes

Staff Suggestion. #1 Guidance and support in time schedules for peer coaching sessions.

Researcher Recommendation. #1 Set designated time and allow for flexibility.

It was suggested that time was a problem in how staff members did
and did not schedule their coaching sessions and classroom observations. Peer coaches requested more guidance and support in establishing a workable schedule for both coaching and observations. *It is recommended that the staff member in charge of scheduling peer coaching sessions set a designated time and allow for flexibility by encouraging those staff who cannot adhere to the designated time to set a time more workable for them. For example, there could be regularly scheduled coaching sessions to be held within a broad window of time with one date and time designated specifically within that window of time.*

**Staff Suggestion. #2** Model design to include suggested topics, structural guidance and personal allowance for peer coach selection.

**Researcher Recommendation. #2** Provide coaches with opportunities for input, suggested topics, list of guiding questions.

The next category among staff suggestions regarded the design of the model. Design of the peer coaching model was a significant enough area to warrant a critical eye. Staff members asked for continued opportunities to select their peer coach, more structural guidance and even suggested topics from which to begin their session dialogues. *It is recommended that the selection of peer coaches continues to involve the participants in as many ways as possible. For example, allowing them to provide the facilitator*
with two or three possible choices would increase the likelihood that they would be paired with a peer coach of their choice. Additionally, providing a list of suggested topics and a selection of guiding questions could enhance the quality of their sessions and provide structural guidance. For further collaboration the peer coaching facilitator might ask for volunteers to provide topics and questions they have discussed to be include in this list.

**Staff Suggestion.** #3 Increase staff interactions and classroom observations.

**Researcher Recommendation.** #3 Staff decides upon types and frequency of interactions and is provided increased opportunities for classroom observations.

Staff interactions was the third category of suggested improvement presented by staff members. As was noted in many areas of this study, the Excelsior Academy staff was a highly collaborative and collegial group. Deep roots of collaboration were found in the school’s history and culture. Staff members were comfortable with communication, collegiality and collaboration and almost automatically depended upon these qualities for professional development. They requested even more opportunities to develop a thoughtful community through increased classroom observations and continued and expanded staff interactions regarding the peer coaching
model. It is recommended that the coaches decide together at a staff meeting the types of staff interactions they would like to implement. It may be that they will have additional suggestions for other types of interactions as well as for the frequency of those interactions. At any rate it is necessary that this decision on staff interactions be left to those it most affects. In addition, more opportunities should be available to the peer coaches for classroom observations. Notes from the observations could be useful in maintaining meaningful discussions and in effecting positive change throughout the school. To increase frequency of observations, it is recommended that a classroom observation schedule be developed by the peer coaching facilitator with input from the peer coaches as to the most appropriate times.

**Staff Suggestion.** #4 Staff should continue to decide future outcomes of the peer coaching model.

**Researcher Recommendation.** #4 SIC needs to address coaching skills in staff development meetings; provide opportunities for discussion of implementation of peer coach suggestions; and provide guidance in seeking out resources and maintaining journals.

The final focus area presented by staff members referred to outcomes of the peer coaching model. Beginning with the planning and
inservicing undertaken by the SIC and continuing on through to the evaluation of the model itself, staff members gave serious considerations to the outcomes of this project. The suggestions about outcomes addressed the need to continue to decide upon future outcomes during the next phase of the peer coaching model. Peer coaches expressed the need for: written reflections, follow through on suggestions from their coaches, more investigation of the resources at their disposal, skill acquisition and increasing the frequency of classroom observations. It is recommended that the Excelsior Academy School Improvement Council address and reinforce coaching skills in their staff development program. In addition the peer coaches could be called upon to share their learning experiences when addressing skill acquisition. It is also recommended, since some coaches have sound advice on how they have been able to achieve such consistency, that the peer coaching facilitator initiate an open discussion with all peer coaches as to ways in which they can increase meaningful implementation of peer suggestions. Additionally, it should be the responsibility of the staff member to seek out resources and to maintain notes or journals; however, it would be helpful if the facilitator were to provide reminders or guidance in these areas.

Such recommendations should be examined carefully by the entire staff at Excelsior Academy so as to ensure appropriate fitness. When the findings are shared with them perhaps they may be inclined to arrive at their own recommendations for the Excelsior peer coaching model. The
goals of this activity would need to be clearly defined. Suggested goals include: to maintain a focus on the outcome of peer coaching; to encourage innovation and ongoing improvement; to maintain collegiality; and to promote growth and development throughout the peer coaching model. The future of the peer coaching model depends upon the strong collaboration and sense of empowerment reported by the peer coaches themselves. Let them take up the torch and continue to light the path for others.

**Researcher Suggestions**

This section will focus on three areas of needed improvement for the second year of implementation of the peer coaching model. These areas include: staff training, integration of cognitive coaching elements into the peer coaching model, and future inquiry.

**Staff Training**

Staff training is a crucial element in any dynamic and developing program. From journal notes of conversations, meetings and observations it can be noted that the Excelsior staff would benefit from five main inservice areas to bolster their emerging skills and provide them with new skills and knowledge. These areas include: active listening, conducting a
meaningful analysis, self assessment, topic development and teacher as researcher.

"A sharp listener is fully present in the here and now, " (p.11) says Morey Stettner (1995), author of The Art of Winning Conversation. Human interaction is fraught with hazards that block communication. Active listening is a useful skill to acquire for all parts of one's life. In peer coaching active listening is absolutely essential to the productive exchange of ideas. Excelsior staff voiced a need for advanced training in listening techniques. It is recommended that active listening inservices be provided for all staff members and that they include some of the following elements: nonverbal components of listening; benefits of active listening; and guidelines for listening to one's peer coach. Staff members may find that acquired skills in listening could add a new dimension to peer coaching sessions.

The second area of further staff development is that of conducting a meaningful analysis. As peer coaches engage in shared inquiry, problem solving and the exchange of ideas, it is important for them to understand the components of a meaningful analysis. According to Senge (1995) various analysis techniques engage the individual in becoming more attuned to the organization and its elements, thus leading all individuals to regard these elements with a more critical review. Differing analysis techniques may prove to be quite useful to them during the coaching sessions, during times of individual reflection and throughout the teaching
and learning process. It is recommended that the S.I.C. provide inservice trainings regarding various types of analysis such as deductive and inductive, critical and reflective, and summative and formative analyses. Thoughtful and meaningful analysis may add depth and texture to an otherwise average conversation during a peer coaching session.

Another area of focus for staff trainings involves self assessment. The practice of self assessment merits closer inspection. Self assessments, whether formal or informal, would serve as diagnostic tools for the peer coaches to increase awareness and provide focal points from which to begin a plan for improvement. In Observing Dimensions of Learning (1995), Brown relates how peer coaching becomes a powerful vehicle for self assessment where coaches work together cooperatively to assess one than the other’s practices within a classroom setting. It is recommended that Excelsior Academy staff advance their knowledge of self assessment and how it can be related to peer coaching. This will provide opportunities for staff to better measure their own performance.

Topic development is the fourth area of focus for staff development training. Many effective writers and speakers understand the need for topic development and are often able to undertake this particular task with ease. Individuals who find it more difficult to expand and elaborate upon a topic often experience difficulty in reaching beyond a particular level of discussion. Marzano (1992) explained that the most effective learning occurs when information is continually challenged and refined.
Peer coaches at Excelsior would benefit from acquiring the skills necessary to challenge and refine a topic in order to add additional depth and meaning to their peer coaching sessions. *It is recommended that staff inservices focus on topic development, including advanced questioning strategies, to enhance not only the value of peer coaching but also to add flair and expression to the day-to-day activities.*

Teaching is a creative, analytical insightful activity. Seldom is the classroom seen as a setting for research. When the teacher becomes a researcher the stage is set for growth and development. In his book entitled *The Teacher-Researcher: How to Study Writing in the Classroom* (1985), Myers emphasizes the benefits of teacher research. These benefits include insightful experimentation, a renewed commitment, an appreciation of classroom complexity, and data for guiding instruction. Peer coaches at Excelsior have in theory agreed to become researchers who probe, question, confront, examine and refine the teaching and learning process. When staff members become peer coaches they are setting the stage for research to take place. *It is recommended that peer coaches learn as much as possible about the nuances of conducting research in the classroom in order for them to better probe, examine and refine their teaching and learning.*
Integration of Cognitive Coaching and Peer Coaching

A second area of researcher recommendations is the integration of elements of the Cognitive Coaching model created by Costa and Garmston (1994) and redesigned for fit and appropriateness by the Excelsior staff into the peer coaching model. The Cognitive Coaching model included several elements employed earlier by Excelsior staff that could benefit them still. These elements included: the five states of mind; planning and reflection conferences; questioning techniques and observation procedures.

Costa and Garmston delineated five states of mind necessary for successful coaching. These states of mind include: flexibility, consciousness, efficacy, interdependence and craftsmanship. Each of these states of mind are catalysts for creating meaningful peer coaching sessions. They serve as diagnostic tools through which the peer coaches can assess their individual professional development as well as the development of each other and plan interventions. It is recommended that Excelsior Academy reactivate the use of these five states of mind in their peer coaching model, thereby assisting self and others toward meaningful expression and productive refinement.

The planning and reflecting conferences precede the classroom observation and would provide Excelsior staff with a comprehensive road map from which to operate. A planning conference is an opportunity to build trust, focus on teacher goals and mentally rehearse the lesson. The
planning conference provides a context for the reflecting conference where the coaches can reflect not only on the events of the lesson but also on the intentions of the teacher. The reflecting conference is provided for teachers to share impressions of the lesson, recall specific events and make comparisons. The coach makes use of this time to share data and use reflective questioning. It is recommended that the S.I.C. initiate staff trainings based on Costa and Garmston planning and reflecting conferences thus allowing staff to achieve simultaneous states of autonomy and interdependence.

Further Questioning and Observations

A third crucial element in the Cognitive Coaching process is the craft of questioning. Questioning strategies are difficult to acquire without practice. Peer coaches reported a need to develop advanced questioning techniques. When a coach poses a question it sets the stage for analysis, application of learning, and projections of the future. Well-placed questions can probe, suggest alternatives, provide detail and help to establish a baseline from which to work. It is recommended that Excelsior staff be provided trainings in advanced questioning techniques as well as opportunities to practice their new skills. Through effective questioning skills peer coaches will bring additional substance and meaning to their sessions.
A final element to the Cognitive Coaching model, and one for which the staff have specifically asked, is conducting classroom observations. The classroom observation is a diagnostic tool used to monitor and collect data regarding teacher behaviors and student learning. Any form of data collection may take place. The most significant component of the classroom observation is the teacher's perception of the data and how it might add meaning and relevance to one's self-improvement. As is noted earlier, it is recommended that a schedule be created to assist peer coaches in conducting classroom observations on a more regular basis. Classroom observations could provide more structure and relevance to the overall peer coaching sessions.

Future Research

The second year of implementation for any experimental model is often more difficult than the first year due to the quantity of data to be analyzed. This is also the case for Excelsior Academy and their peer coaching model. As the second year began and individuals began discussing peer coaching at staff meetings one could see enthusiasm coupled with hesitancy. The hesitancy stemmed from a look at the data and the query of “Where do we go from here?” It is evident that staff members continued to regard peer coaching as a valuable component of their program and that they will not lack for recommendations. It is also
important to note that this project suggested several directions for subsequent research - perhaps after peer coaches feel more comfortable in their roles. Hence so as not to overwhelm my gracious hosts I will only offer one question to be considered for future research. It is hoped that this question will be significant enough to lead to further research in other areas. The question put forth is: *How can collaborative teaching practices such as peer coaching enhance the teaching and learning process for both staff and students?*

The following is a suggested list of areas for further research:

- Teacher communication and skill acquisition
- Effects of staff achievement on student achievement
- Staff professional development of peer coaching skills
- Collaborative teaching practices and student learning
- Staff members as change agents
- Coaching practices replacing principal evaluations
- Shared inquiry and teacher leadership
- Staff leadership within a collaborative culture
- Sharing professional experience in today's schools
- Peer Coaching and its effects on the transference of learning
- Educators becoming collaborative learners
Any one of these areas would include substantial questions enough for an additional dissertation. The prospects of these further areas of study are exciting and challenging and an increased study in the area of collaborative teaching practices is important for ongoing growth and development at Excelsior.

**Concluding Remarks**

In the fall of 1992 I embarked upon a journey understanding very little about future events and implications of the outcomes of my decision. As I reflect upon the journey I remember stimulating discussions, scintillating readings, challenging professors and a lifetime of powerful memories. The time was ripe for renewed commitment to higher education. I can say only that I have no regrets and much contentment because I chose this path of study.

I must place responsibility for this contentment with my professors, my colleagues in the Leadership Studies program, and the University of San Diego. My leave-taking is bittersweet: happiness for completion of a great undertaking and melancholy for that same completion.

Writing a dissertation and completing the Leadership Studies program has left me with a great deal more self knowledge and leadership skills than when I entered the program. The entire process has taught me
what I know and understand and what I do not know and understand. It has been both an alienating experience as well as a generative one. Through the study of leadership I was able to measure not only the depth of things but also to come to a sense of my own depth. This six-year exercise was an exercise in thoughtfulness where I have become disembodied from the experience as well as to have reclaimed the experience by making it my own in a new and more significant way.

How will I think and behave differently because I have encountered these experiences? As Goodlad observes (1994):

Renewal - whether of ponds, gardens, pools, people or institutions - is an internal process, whatever the external concerns and stimulants. It requires motivation, dedication, systematic and systemic evolution, and time. (pp.25-26).

The answer is not to produce more of the same nor to engage in irrelevant and meaningless activity. The answer is to rediscover leadership through collaborative teaching practices; to share the wealth and spread the word; to identify where we want to go and what we need to get there. These challenges will require new forms of leadership, commitment and collegiality. Leadership abstracts my experience of the world while concretizing my understanding of the world. Through leadership I will think and behave in ways which create greater understanding; which nurture and support; and in ways which produce meaning and relevance in my work.
The central thesis, then, to my journey is that educators as leaders must create cultures of inquiry, renewing themselves continuously, by candidly addressing the issues of discovery, collaboration, community, empowerment and collegiality through collaborative teaching practices. Those who strive to improve education in these ways will need dedication, professionalism, flexibility, creativity and knowledge. There are no miraculous recoveries, only incremental improvements and set-backs. Hence, this is an endless journey with many miles to cover. Educators of all levels, disciplines and fields must join in this million-mile walk to begin to create collaborative teaching and learning environments for all.
REFERENCES


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


APPENDIX A

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
Research Procedures

Researcher invites all staff to participate in study.

**Research assistant** collects consent forms in an envelope at a designated drop-off point.

Researcher gathers entire staff together to explain research procedures and departs leaving written interview questions.

Researcher examines pertinent documents prior to and during length of study.

Researcher establishes and maintains a research journal.

**Research assistant** collects from drop-off point written interviews and transcribes interview responses.

Researcher continues ongoing literature review through length of study.

**Research assistant** delivers transcribed responses to researcher.

Researcher reflects on emerging thoughts and theories from responses.

Researcher compares preliminary assumptions with current reflections.

Researcher searches for disconfirming evidence.

Researcher provides opportunity for entire staff to review transcribed interview responses and expresses appreciation to all.

Researcher conducts ongoing data analysis throughout the study.

Researcher updates all staff as to the progress of the study.

Researcher provides a copy of the results of the final report to the school.

Researcher provides a summary of significant findings to all staff.
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM
University of San Diego

CONSENT TO ACT AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Nance Maguire will be conducting a research case study on Collaborative Teaching Practices for Educators of the Twenty-First Century. I have been invited to participate and I understand that I will be a research subject.

The data collection for this research study will take approximately five hours over a period of about two months. Participation in this study should not involve any added risks or discomforts to me with the exception of possible minor fatigue.

My participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I understand that I may decline to participate or withdraw myself from the study at any time without jeopardy to myself or my position.

I do understand that the research documents and records will be completely confidential. My identity will not be disclosed without the consent required by law. This will be accomplished through an anonymous research assistant who will collect responses to the interview questions at a designated drop-off location. I further understand that my anonymity will be preserved during the reporting of individual data and in the case of any publication of the results of this study.

Nance Maguire has explained this study to me and has answered my questions. If I have any other questions or any research-related problems, I will be able to reach Nance Maguire at Excelsior Academy or at 566-3442. There are no other agreements, written or verbal, related to this study beyond those expressed on this consent form. I have received a copy of this document and “The Experimental Subject's Bill of Rights.”

I, the undersigned, have read and understand the above information and I give my consent to voluntarily participate in this research study.

______________________________
Signature of Subject

______________________________
Signature of Witness

______________________________
Signature of Researcher

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
APPENDIX C

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE
Peer Coaching

Open-ended Questionnaire

This questionnaire was conducted within a minimum structure and with open-ended questions to encourage the free flow of ideas. These questions were based upon my research questions but tended to be more specific in nature.

1. Tell me about your educational background.

2. Prior to coming to Excelsior Academy what were your experiences with collaborative practices?

3. Describe the peer coaching model here at Excelsior.

4. How has this particular model affected the teaching and learning process for you personally?

5. How has the peer coaching model affected the cultural ethos of Excelsior?

6. What factors affected your involvement in the peer coaching model?

7. Would you voluntarily continue your involvement in this model?

8. Describe your most favorable peer coaching experience here at Excelsior.

9. Describe your least favorable coaching experience here at Excelsior.

10. Based on your experiences thus far, what actions could improve the existing peer coaching model?
APPENDIX D

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS
Peer Coaching
Suggested Questions

1. What subject or class would you like to discuss today?

2. What is working? Why?

3. What is not working? Why not?

4. What do you want to do next?

5. What do you think would happen if......?

6. Is there anything you need? (i.e., resources, ideas, observations, assistance)