AN ANALYSIS OF FACULTY MEETING CONTENT AND PROCESSES: A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF THREE SOUTH TEXAS SCHOOLS

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DEDICATION

To my family and friends that encouraged me throughout this endeavor – I am sincerely grateful and could not have done this without your support.

Mom and Dad – I did it! Thanks for the many years of encouragement as I pursued advanced degrees and for always being there for me. You definitely taught me to never give up on a dream.

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This qualitative study explored faculty, staff, and principal experiences in faculty meetings. Using a dialogic hermeneutic approach, participants engaged in conversation, detailing their experiences while suggesting what their ideal faculty meeting might look like, obstacles that may inhibit the ideal from becoming reality, and whether current content covered and processes used affect student achievement. The experiences shed light on the pressures faced by all who attend faculty meetings mostly due to mandates. The findings suggest that faculty meeting time is a place to disseminate mandates and expectations, not for teacher development or affecting student learning.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“The majority of time spent in faculty meetings is disseminating information. I understand that sometimes discussion of information is necessary, so simply emailing the information out won't help us avoid the ever-annoying faculty meeting.”

Texas Teacher Comment from University Discussion Forum, 2009

Descriptions of faculty meetings such as this are all too common. Faculty and staff are facing continued pressure to increase student learning in the classroom. High stakes assessments and accountability have required them to learn new strategies that might increase student achievement scores, correlate lessons with curriculum standards, understand and follow district designed scope and sequence, and implement new programs with embedded test taking strategies. Each of these actions requires preparation and learning time for effective implementation. In the face of these pressures on their time, many, like the teacher quoted above, believe that faculty meetings are annoying yet sometimes necessary when discussing information.

Many authors have written about faculty meetings with the intent of offering advice to practitioners on leading productive meetings (Kasser, 1980; Garmston & Wellman, 1992; Change & Kehoe, 1994; Adams, 1996; Babbage, 1997; Mundry, Britton, Raizen, & Loucks-Horsley, 2000; Kohm, 2002; Klein, 2005; Jennings, 2007). In general, the advice focuses attention on the importance of members interacting with one another, participating, and feeling as though they are contributing to a team effort. Additionally, the advice emphasizes having an agenda with a purpose, planning according to staff needs, building relationships, delivering professional development, solving problems, and making decisions together. Recommendations include having a sense of openness where participants have the freedom to express opinions and thoughts.

Despite the advice from these and other authors (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Angelides, 2004; Sarason, 2004) and the pressures on teachers' time, meetings tend to run as they have always run with a focus on disseminating information. Teachers often have minimal input into topics covered or processes used during faculty meetings. Teachers have described faculty meetings as meaningless, ineffective, and unrelated to what they need to improve in their own teaching. Many have felt that meetings were often "boring or unstimulating, or at best a good deal less than helpful" (Sarason, 2004, p. 134). A main concern has been lost time and the persistence of the same ineffective processes passed down from one leader to another (Mehle, 1996). As Mundry et al. (2000) found:

> Meetings are often planned and held as part of many projects because we've always done it that way. Sometimes the only real purpose is to check off a tangible milestone in a project plan or proposal. We need to rethink this practice. Educators are working to reduce wasted time in classrooms and ensure learning for all. So, too, education reformers must guarantee that their activities are designed to produce significant results. (p. 5)

Two pilot studies informed this study. I conducted the first pilot study at an elementary school during my beginning qualitative research course. After collecting interview data from two teachers at an elementary school in an urban district, I thought that I had uncovered an exception to the rule, locating a campus where faculty meetings had a purpose, and faculty and staff were active participants. The two individuals I interviewed described the faculty meetings at their campus as participatory: where learning takes place, and where a sense of community among attendees is prevalent. At the conclusion of my observation at one of their faculty meetings, it struck me how different my perspective of the meeting was from theirs. The teachers spoke minimally throughout the faculty meeting; most faculty and staff appeared to sit with grade-level teams or friends; the principal and assistant principal talked during most of the meeting; and the agenda consisted of numerous items that I considered informational. What I realized later on, after the observation and from further conversation with one of the interviewed teachers, was that this was a typical faculty meeting. The faculty meetings consist of information, which the content specialists then build on during weekly grade-level meetings.

A second pilot study focused on teachers and a department head in a high school. Colleagues and I observed a departmental meeting and interviewed the department head and teachers afterward. The department meeting consisted of the department head's directives and what appeared to be, a time to check off items on a list. Teachers remained passive, sitting in desks, listening to someone tell them how and what to do. They could interject at any time and ask questions; however, few did. When they did ask a question, the department head answered with no additional discussion. After the observation, I interviewed some of the participants. The department head told me that she learned to lead meetings by watching the principal, thinking this is the way to lead an effective meeting. Although she did not necessarily believe that the principal-led faculty meetings were productive, she continued to replicate the processes. Interestingly enough, comments, such as this about learning to lead meetings were common. According to The 3M Management Team (1987), "The young manager is expected to learn about meetings by taking part in bad meetings" (p. 5). This negative approach was not only costly, but it did not allow for the exposure of seeing the facilitation of a productive meeting (Mehle, 1996). The department head also told me that she sometimes selected agenda topics because a meeting was on the calendar. Mehle (1996) also documented this in the literature, "The danger in routine staff meetings is that they become so routine that they take place even when they are not necessary" (p. 39).

Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study

The problem this study addresses is that faculty and staff has little time to waste given the pressure schools are under to increase student learning (Lortie, 1975; Wolf, 2002; Thomas, 2005). Campus principals who continue to use time in faculty meetings as platforms to disseminate information miss opportunities to engage staff members in professional learning and increasing instructional efficacy (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 2000). Despite the research and advice provided by scholars and experts on approaches to leading meetings, many campus principals are either unaware or do not implement these findings and ideas. My purpose for conducting this study was to find ways to make faculty meetings more useful for faculty, staff, and principals.

Research Questions

These questions guided my research:

1. What are the experiences of faculty, staff, and principals in faculty meetings?

2. How would faculty, staff, and principals design their ideal faculty meeting?
3. What, if anything, inhibits faculty, staff, and principals from changing current faculty-meeting practices?
4. What faculty meeting commonalities or differences, if any, exist among the exemplary, recognized, and acceptable rated campuses studied?

I explored faculty, staff, and principal viewpoints regarding their perceptions of current faculty meetings and how each person would design the ideal faculty meeting in schools. Additionally, I explored what factors they believed inhibited faculty meetings from improving. Although scholars and experts have written about and provided advice on enhancing meeting effectiveness, many faculty meetings have not changed. Despite the abundant resources designed for practitioners, the meetings continue to look as they always have (Schindler-Rainman, Lippitt, & Cole, 1975; Klein, 2005; Brandenburg, 2008) usually led by the principal while staff members listen passively.

Overview of Methodology

To understand the perceptions and experiences of faculty, staff, and principals concerning faculty meetings, this study employed qualitative methods. A dialogic hermeneutic approach (Adams, 2005) guided this study as I conversed with faculty, staff, and principals about faculty meetings and tried to understand ways to make faculty meetings more useful. The dialogue included topics such as hopes for improvement, ideal faculty-meeting components; focus of faculty meetings, content covered; processes, the purpose and/or routines used; roles, actions of the facilitator and/or participants attending; and organizational materials (tools, agenda, and so on) used to guide the faculty meeting. These targeted areas reflected faculty-meeting research literature (Sexton, 1991; Mehle, 1996; Klein, 2005; Arlestig, 2007; Brandenburg, 2008), research and advice from experts on meetings (Garmsten & Wellman, 1992; Adams, 1996; Garmston, 2002; Kohm, 2002; Hoerr, 2005; Rooney, 2006; Brinson and Steiner, 2007; Garmston & Welch, 2007), my personal experiences, and findings from pilot studies. The study took place in three elementary schools in a lower Rio Grande Valley district. I employed individual and focus group interviews; observed one videotaped faculty meeting from each school; analyzed one faculty-meeting agenda from each school; and recorded my interactions with faculty, staff, and principals in field notes. I interviewed three principals, six classroom teachers, three specialists, three paraprofessionals, and one district-level executive director.

Significance of Research

The outcomes of this study were twofold: (1) contribute to practice-oriented literature on how to improve faculty meetings based on participant responses; and (2) offer recommendations for school policy. Although I initially anticipated contributing to existing theories only, faculty, staff, and principal experiences and recommendations also led me to the development of my own model.

Significance to Practice

By understanding the experiences of faculty, staff, and principals during faculty meetings, it appears that multiple individuals play important roles in improving or altering existing faculty-meeting practices.

a) District Leaders. Findings suggest that principals learn to lead meetings by observing others, most often their immediate supervisors. This finding is important for district leaders and suggests the need for additional modeling and for incorporating effective meeting practice components and elements.

b) Principals. Faculty and staff say they want to attend faculty meetings that meet their needs. This includes designing agendas with relevant topics, as well as leading meetings that actively engage participants. Faculty and staff also said they wanted to take on leadership roles (i.e. presenting, sharing data) during faculty meetings.

c) Faculty and Staff. The findings suggest that faculty and staff want to be more involved in faculty meetings. Thus, these individuals may need to take the initiative and communicate what they want to principals. This includes content, processes, roles, and organizational structures that they would like to see incorporated into future faculty meetings.

d) University Faculty. The results of this study may inform course syllabi in university coursework for future school principals. Findings in this study suggest the need to discuss and model effective faculty meeting practices and to inform future principals about earlier research on meeting components and elements. Courses may also need to address how faculty meetings, staff development, and professional development relate, if at all.

Significance to Policy

By identifying current faculty meeting practices, this study offers district leaders, collegiate administrator instructors, and other policymakers' recommendations for increasing meeting effectiveness.

a) With budget shortfalls, faculty meetings might provide opportunities for professional development. National and State policymakers may realize that policies resulting in mandates and expectations take away from what faculty, staff, and principals believe to be the purpose for schools: teacher development and student learning.

b) National and State accountability policies appear to effect faculty meeting practices. Schools focus attention on reviewing student performance data and sharing results; however, less time is spent modeling or sharing instructional practices to target areas of need identified by these same data.

c) District policies appear to interfere with any possible chance of changing faculty-meeting practices. The abundance of required professional development, which are actually mandates and expectations, forces principals to use faculty meeting time to meet district requirements. Interview data suggest that alternative processes exist for the employment of the district required professional development (i.e. using an online system).

Chapter Summary

Despite the existing literature on leading effective meetings, it appears many school leaders continue to use faculty meetings as venues to disseminate information. Time in meetings, therefore, focuses on disseminating information rather than engaging participants in learning. By dialoguing with multiple stakeholder groups to learn about their experiences in faculty meetings at three sites, I hoped to find ways to make faculty meetings more useful for faculty, staff, and principals.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

> *Monday morning begins with a 20-minute information meeting led by the principals. Nearly all teachers attend these meetings. Communication is one-way—from the principals to the teachers—with little time for questions. One of the interviewed teachers compared the meeting to a shopping list, 'It is just to tick off the items.' (Arlestig, 2007, p. 266)*

Numerous authors in the fields of education and business have written books (Kasser, 1980; The 3M Management Team, 1987; Change & Kehoe, 1994; Babbage, 1997; Mundry et al., 2000; Jennings, 2007) while others have written non-peer reviewed articles (Garmston & Wellman, 1992; Adams, 1996; Kohm, 2002) offering advice on leading meetings and identifying components and processes that should be in place for an effective meeting. A search of the WorldCat database using the words "faculty meetings" returned nearly 60 theses or dissertations. Unfortunately, only two (Sexton, 1991; Brandenburg, 2008) were somewhat current, while the majority of the research was conducted prior to 1975.

Studies in education have identified critical components and elements needed for meetings to be successful (Sexton, 1991; Mehle, 1996; Klein, 2005; Arlestig, 2007; Brandenburg, 2008): preparing the meeting, opening the meeting, conducting the meeting, closing the meeting, and following up post-meeting. The tools used to support these components are: having an agenda, setting a purpose, posing questions, following a process, identifying products, honoring the time, identifying roles, establishing protocols and ground rules, and completing an evaluation (Brandenburg, 2008). Sexton (1991) found that, although these are important components and elements, principals tend to lead faculty meetings in a more authoritarian style with minimal input from the staff who participate in the meetings and devote considerable time to administrative issues. The findings in these studies were consistent; teachers wanted to participate in discussion and decision-making (Sexton, 1991) and wanted to recommend topics for faculty meetings that focus on learning and school improvement (Brandenburg, 2008). According to existing research (Klein, 2005; Arlestig, 2007), however, many faculty meetings devoted minimal time for teacher development and student learning, little time to problem solve and interact with one another, and little time for reflection.

Along the same lines, the business literature reveals similar findings in the business context. Francis (2006) outlined central components in her comprehensive conceptual model of meeting dynamics: purpose, structure, process and procedures, and outcome, noting that the meeting purpose affects all other aspects of a meeting. Participants perceived effective meetings as those that included involvement, thus indicating a need for meeting organizers to strategically structure opportunities to engage those in attendance (Leach, Rogelberg, Warr, & Burnfield, 2009). Although participants reported that they were most interested in meetings that fostered information processing or generation of ideas, meetings typically followed an informational delivery pattern (Francis, 2006). One conclusion in Luong's (2001) study of meetings and the well-being of employees suggested that organizations should ensure that meetings are relevant for participants and that topics both relate to employee roles and responsibilities and help them to achieve work goals.

Studies within the fields of education and business highlight the importance of agendas with relevant topics and participant engagement. Literature in both fields suggests that meetings need a clear purpose and that adequate preparation is necessary for meeting effectiveness.

Research on Effective Meetings

Meetings occur for a variety of reasons and are necessary for the success of any organization (Mehle, 1996). Numerous scholars have identified the necessary characteristics for effective meetings (Sexton, 1991; Luong, 2001; Klein, 2005; Longo, 2005; Francis, 2006; Arlestig, 2007; Brandenburg, 2008; Leach et al., 2009). Below is a compilation of ideas from these researchers:

1. Adequate preplanning
2. Effective and proper training of facilitators
3. Encouragement of teacher expression
4. Communication that encourages different perspectives and interpretations
5. Participant engagement
6. Shared decision-making
7. Establishment of safe and nurturing environment
8. Collectively-designed ground rules
9. Agenda with relevant topics for participants
10. Effective use of time and punctuality
11. Appropriate meeting facilities

12. Selective invitation, i.e., inviting those most impacted by agenda topics

According to researchers, commitment to several of these components could aide in creating meetings that promote change or growth, reach clear outcomes, or assist in establishing collaborative relationships.

Meetings that Enhance Learning

Education and business experts who study and identify effective meeting practices emphasize the need for a purpose when bringing staff members together and planning to enhance learning. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998), researchers in school leadership literature, suggested that "Time invested in teachers' learning, if integrated with the development of a collaborative culture, is time that ultimately pays off for students' learning" (p. 49).

> Teachers have little time outside 'the courtroom' and what they have is often not closely related to preparing their case. It is time dedicated to meetings, workshops and courses that are often disconnected from the refinements needed to improve their own teaching on an ongoing basis. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 49)

Preparation

Effectiveness can be a result of quality planning and balancing cooperative and individual tasks (Klein, 2005). Klein (2005) has recommended "early and methodical planning; avoidance of last minute notification; orderly, cultured and focused discussions in which all listen to each other; and generally accepted decision making procedures" (p. 76). Similarly, Luong (2001) concluded that meetings be scheduled in advance, noting that unscheduled meetings produce additional fatigue, stress, and negative attitudes toward meetings. Additionally, Barnett (2004) indicated that teachers preferred "well organized meetings that are short and to the point with practical information that they can take to their classrooms" (p. 11). Barnett recommended that teachers and principals share the leadership for planning and presenting. He indicated that teachers were interested in more practice and less theory, credible presenters, having implementation of techniques modeled successfully, and having time to share ideas and materials. Barnett also mentioned that meetings often include presentations and that presentations require preparatory processes: thinking through the material to convey, knowing how best to present the information, and understanding the expected outcomes.

Agendas

Although design and planning phases vary, having a focused agenda that promotes collaboration is a common element in the education and business literature. Based on her findings, Brandenburg (2008) suggested that leaders limit agenda topics to professional learning, school improvement goals, and student achievement. Other scholars tend to agree that an agenda is a powerful device that advances work and focuses the purpose (Mehle, 1996; Luong, 2001; Klein, 2005; Brandenburg, 2008; Leach et al., 2009). Thus, having an agenda that accurately describes the meeting objectives, processes, and outcomes is important for an effective meeting. Leach et al. (2009) noted in their study of perceived meeting effectiveness that disseminating meeting agendas early allowed participants to prepare in advance, which allowed them to contribute more effectively. They also noted that when providing a written agenda, participants believed it was important to complete all items.

Participation

Meetings serve as opportunities to share new ideas, discuss issues that have arisen in practice, collaborate with others, and evaluate student achievement or educational programmes (Klein, 2005). It is important that the right participants attend the meeting: those with something to contribute, those who can accomplish the task, or those affected by the actions taken or decisions made in the meeting (Mehle, 1996; Luong, 2001). Leach et al. (2009) found that high levels of involvement predicted greater perceptions of effectiveness, thus supporting the need for meeting facilitators to identify ways to involve participants no matter how large the group.

Studies from earlier work on group dynamics and meetings also suggest that participants want to be involved. Holstein (1950) studied faculty meetings in a school of nursing and found that the director of nurses conducted routine faculty meetings that were procedural in nature and emphasized policies and rules. Based on her findings, she concluded:

> In any faculty organization democratic administration accomplishes many things. Inasmuch as minority opinions are considered and agreement is reached on all major policies, a group feelings of mutual confidence and unity soon develops. Participation of a group in making decisions regarding its own welfare and affecting its own activities results in personal happiness of the members. The creative power attained by group thinking surpasses the abilities of individuals. (p. 432)

Similarly, Blumberg and Amidon (1963) reported that effective leaders in faculty meetings increased participation when they “directed behaviors towards clarifying, reflecting member feeling, calling attention to available resources, and sensitizing members to group work methods" (p. 466). Although involvement may be what participants want, Richardson (1956) found that the complex network of school staff members results in leaders finding it easier and less time-consuming to make their own decisions instead of creating a participatory setting.

Facilitating

Other researchers have recommended that meeting leaders assure participants that the meeting is theirs and make them feel important (Mehle, 1996) and that principals and teachers be trained to facilitate meetings (Brandenburg, 2008). One suggestion toward improving learning and development has been to talk with teachers, foster reflection, and promote teacher growth (Blase & Blase, 2004). Blumberg and Amidon (1963) found that faculty-centered meetings produced more favorable reactions from teachers than principal-centered meetings. The differences included:

1. the degree of satisfaction with the meeting,
2. teacher perceptions of the general feeling tone of the faculty,
3. teacher perceptions of the state of interpersonal relationships that exist among the faculty,
4. teacher perceptions of the extent to which the principal reacts critically to teacher behavior in faculty meetings,
5. teacher perceptions of the freedom of other teachers to speak in faculty meetings, and
6. the degree of conflict between one's preference about what should happen in meetings and what actually does happen. (p. 468)

However, according to a study on the dynamics of meetings and the impact on individual participants, merely having a facilitator does not ensure meeting quality (Francis, 2006). Francis noted that facilitators lead in varying ways, which suggests a need to study the training and behaviors of facilitators. Lewin, Lippitt, and White's (1939) work served as an early investigation into how groups of students performed under various leadership styles. Authoritarian leaders controlled, made decisions, and dictated step-by-step directions. Democratic leaders worked more collaboratively, allowing for group discussion or decision-making and the freedom to choose whom to work with. Laissez-faire leaders allowed the freedom of choice; however, with minimal direction and infrequent feedback. Students responded more favorably to the democratic leader as the interactions were factual, friendly, and spontaneous. They responded least favorably to the authoritarian leader whose dominance stifled any reason for students to think about alternative solutions to problems. Richardson's (1956) relation of these leadership styles to a school staff suggested, "The democratic leader knows that healthy conflict is necessary to grow and that resolution of group tension is more valuable than mere passive acceptance of a lead" (p. 163). Thus, she concluded that democratic leaders created the space to co-exist and that this style of leadership has lasting effects that builds capacity among school staff members.

The Advice Literature

Numerous experts have offered advice that compliments scholarly research related to faculty meetings (Garmsten & Wellman, 1992; Adams, 1996; Garmston, 2002; Kohm, 2002; Hoerr, 2005; Rooney, 2006; Brinson and Steiner, 2007; Garmston & Welch, 2007). These experts recommended having a purpose for meeting, preparing an agenda based on what participants need, allowing for participant engagement and ample time for conversation, structuring learning opportunities around instructional practices, and ensuring that there is an adequate plan for the meeting. As Garmston and Wellman (1992) suggested, “All presentations are made twice – first in the presenter’s mind, during the design stage, and second, during the actual presentation. Eighty-five percent of the quality of the second presentation is a product of the first” (p. 1). Garmston and Welch (2007) also noted that by improving the agenda, “groups clarified their outcomes and purposes, reduced meeting time, and increased time spent on student learning issues” (p. 55). Whatever the reason for meeting, it should be purposeful, well managed, and planned in advance if we are to increase effectiveness (Babbage, 1997).

Improving Schools

Faculty meetings serve as one way to improve schools by enhancing teaching and learning, as well as building a collaborative culture. Similar to much of the literature on meetings, school improvement literature also supports collegiality, emphasizes learning, and focuses on sustaining efforts and building capacity. What is common in much of this research is the need to establish a collaborative learning environment focused on relationships, building capacity among stakeholders, and developing a community of ongoing support (Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2002). Improving schools includes staff members feeling valued, engaging in purposeful peer interactions, learning every day, and experiencing transparency (Fullan, 2008). For this to occur, school communities must be able to undertake and support change efforts (Harris, 2002) while adhering to an established vision focused on curriculum, teaching, and learning (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Whatever the reason for meeting, it is important to plan relevant information for the participants, to understand the knowledge-level of those attending, and to incorporate activities and theory that will guide and foster learning. People want to attend meetings that are meaningful, where they can openly voice their suggestions or concerns, and where their ideas are occasionally utilized (Mehle, 1996).

Chapter Summary

The review of existing literature identified key components and elements necessary for successful meetings. The literature also noted that participants in both the fields of education and business are interested in meetings that are relevant and participatory, rather than simply information dissemination sessions. These findings provided a foundation of effective processes and practices that informed the development of interview and observation protocols, as well as aided me in identifying stakeholder groups needed for inquiry.

Despite the advancements in research on faculty meetings, it appeared that multiple stakeholder groups had not been involved in collaboratively dialoguing about their experiences. Additionally, existing literature appeared to contradict with what is actually happening in many faculty meetings. My hope for this study is that by dialoguing with faculty, staff, and principals about their experiences in faculty meetings that I will understand the potential obstacles that can make creating a successful faculty meeting difficult. The findings from participant experiences will inform recommendations for alternative practices or suggestions for changes to current policy.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I conducted a qualitative study of three Texas elementary schools in the lower Rio Grande Valley: one exemplary, one recognized, and one acceptable, per the State's standardized and mandated test of student knowledge and skills, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

These questions guided my research:

1. What are the experiences of faculty, staff, and principals in faculty meetings?
2. How would faculty, staff, and principals design their ideal faculty meeting?
3. What, if anything, inhibits faculty, staff, and principals from changing current faculty-meeting practices?
4. What faculty meeting commonalities or differences, if any, exist among the exemplary, recognized, and acceptable rated campuses studied?

Site Selection

I selected three schools because they fit the following criteria:

1. The principals led me to believe they have routine faculty meetings, and that processes and content used were in the best interest of faculty and staff needs.
2. Based on a review of the Texas Education Agency 2009 accountability ratings, one was an exemplary campus, one was a recognized campus, and one was an acceptable campus. My reason for selecting based on the

accountability criteria was to see whether experiences among the exemplary, recognized, and acceptable performing schools differed in the processes used and content covered in faculty meetings and, if so, whether they believed this affected student achievement data.

3. Each school principal had two or more years of experience at the same school to ensure the principal had led multiple faculty meetings. This provided insight into whether meetings remained the same or changed over time.
4. The demographics of these schools were similar, and these schools had diverse populations.

In addition, my experiences in education have taken me across the country, supporting numerous campus administrators and district personnel in curriculum-based initiatives. However, the three schools participating in this study stood out because of their inspiring leaders, who consistently demonstrated their commitment to motivate and encourage their faculty and staff while maintaining open-mindedness about continual learning. As administrators of high poverty sites, they had not only managed to retain their faculty and staff but also continuously focus on providing the highest quality education possible for their students.

I supported and worked closely with the schools studied for the past four years. From the associate superintendent for elementary curriculum and instruction to campus personnel, I established strong working relationships with many stakeholder groups. These relationships were built on trust, mutual respect, and belief in supporting learning at all levels. This allowed participants to feel comfortable during interviews and to feel as though they could speak openly in a non-threatening setting. The executive director for elementary curriculum and instruction acted as a key stakeholder by assisting me with purposefully selecting campuses that could provide in-depth information and by completing the necessary district protocol for conducting research (see Appendix A). At the time of the study, the executive director took part in reviewing district research proposals and supervised the curriculum and instruction department personnel as well as elementary principals. Regarding her background, the executive director visits campuses, observes instruction, provides guidance and support to principals, and assists curriculum specialists with determining and targeting instructional priorities for each elementary campus. She has served as an elementary principal and has many years of experience interacting with principals, faculty and staff members, and district level personnel.

Participants

I began the study by conducting a telephone conference with each principal to discuss my research, his/her role in my study, and the criteria that was used to select faculty and staff for the study. I initially planned to include the Local Campus Coach in this meeting; however, these campus-level positions became district-level positions. I asked the principals to assist me in compiling background information on each faculty and staff member to include gender, ethnicity, current position at the campus, total years of experience at this campus, and experiences in other campuses (see Appendix B). During my first onsite visit, the principal and I used this information to select participants. Similar to the principal criteria, we ensured that selected faculty and staff had two or more years of experience at the same school, thus allowing selected staff to provide details on the meetings that principals had led over a two-year period. The principals and I also selected some faculty and staff that had experiences at other campuses to see whether commonalities existed in leading faculty meetings. The final selection of faculty and staff included one teacher in kindergarten through second grade, one teacher in third through fifth grade, one specialist, and one paraprofessional at each school.

The final selection of participants provided a comprehensive view of experiences from various stakeholder groups. The following list outlines the various participant characteristics (numbers listed represent the number of participants that fit into that category).

1. Participants: District (1), Principals (3), Teachers (6), Specialists (3), Paraprofessionals (3)
2. Sex: 11 female, 5 male
3. Ethnicity: 16 Hispanic
4. Two or more years at current campus (excluding district participant): 15
5. Taught at another school within district (faculty and staff only): 5
6. Taught at another school in another district (faculty and staff only): 2
7. Taught at his/her current school only (faculty and staff only): 6

Prior to interviewing the selected participants, I went over the purpose of the study, reviewed the consent form so they were aware that the information they provided would remain confidential, and assured them that they had the right to decline participation at any time (see Appendix C). To ensure confidentiality for the participants, I used a coding system in the tapes and transcripts when referring to them (see Appendix D). In the event that an individual declined participation, the principal and I planned to select an alternate faculty or staff member.

A Hermeneutic Approach

I used a hermeneutic approach in this study as I worked to understand and interpret current faculty meeting practices. Hermeneutics originates in the Greek word for interpretation (Fowers & Richardson, 1996) and provides “a theoretical framework for interpretive understanding, or meaning, with special attention to context and original purpose” (Patton, 2002, p. 114). It begins when the interpreter is “questioned by something from tradition and seeks to find an answer by examining a text” (Schmidt, 2006, p. 116). Historically, the focus has been on understanding and interpreting Biblical passages, “striving to understand what is said by going back to its motivation or its context” (Grondin, 1995, p. ix). In current research, however, it refers to the role of the researcher in constructing reality in collaboration with the participant (Patton, 2002).

In Gadamer’s view, understanding projects the unity of a shared truth, a fusion of horizons between the interpreter and others to understand text (Weinsheimer, 1985). People engage in dialogue, aware of influential pre-understandings, and suspend personal beliefs or judgments. The hermeneutic approach allows for further conversation, suggests new meanings (Noddings, 2007) and closely follows attention human events, human situations, and human practices to understand part-to-whole and whole-to-part relationships (Crotty, 2003).

Dialogic Hermeneutics

The dialogic hermeneutic approach allows for conversation within and among different stakeholder groups. As Draper stated in a paper presented at a national conference of the American Psychological Association (cited in Adams, 2005):

> When we engage in hermeneutic dialogue, we don't suspend our own tradition or clearly held beliefs (we don't jettison our horizons) but rather we approach the other as having something potentially truthful to say in such a way that we are open to having to rethink our prejudices. This does not assume that all perspectives must be somehow assimilated or treated as incompatible to the point where dialogue would be impossible. Quite the contrary. The very nature of tradition itself could be seen as a horizon that is constantly growing, shifting, and unfolding, all the while constituted and shaped by the emerging horizons of the people who embody tradition itself. (p. 6)

Although dialogue can invite disagreement and potential tension among participants due to varying viewpoints, it also creates shared participation so that the experience is more democratic. Each point of conversation, each new experience adds more meaning to the individual (Slattery, Krasny, & O'Malley, 2006), allowing for a continuous redefining and reshaping of views (Adams, 2005). Dialogue allows the opportunity to take risks, relay opinions, and express feelings, by pushing participants to a deeper meaning as they contribute, create meaning, and form their perspectives. Ultimately, it becomes educative for all involved because the process of reflecting and dialoging consistently brings in new information for discussion, allowing for understanding self through understanding others (Ricoeur, 2007).

I chose a dialogic hermeneutic approach for this study because I sought to understand and interpret meaning with faculty, staff, and principals about their perceptions of and experiences in faculty meetings. I believed that each participant had his/her own interpretations about the purpose for faculty meetings including what they would like to happen and what they saw inhibiting change. By using a dialogic hermeneutic approach, participants could reflect on their own interpretations while engaging and learning about other perspectives. This dialogue brought about an awareness of individual experiences that may be unknown to others. It was the back and forth dialogue, between individuals and other participants in the study that brought clarity to the purpose for having faculty meetings. Dialogue also brought meaning to experiences in faculty meetings, led to a deeper understanding of each other's beliefs about faculty meetings, and contributed ideas to new possibilities for future practices.

I attentively listened, posed questions, and engaged participants in dialogue throughout the study. I wanted to learn about their faculty meeting experiences and interpretations. In order to do this, I maintained a focus on asking open-ended questions that allowed participants to reflect on their experiences while being aware of and suspending my personal beliefs. I offered interpretations and sought clarification on their experiences in faculty meetings, how they would design their ideal faculty meeting, and noted any obstacles that would inhibit change.

Data Collection

To learn about the faculty meeting experiences, I employed individual and focus group interviews, along with the taping of one faculty meeting and review of the corresponding agenda for that meeting. The individual interviews occurred prior to the focus group interviews and videotaping. I collected data from each participant including their individual experiences in faculty meetings. I identified themes from these individual interviews and used this information during the focus groups. After analyzing the individual and focus group data, I reviewed the faculty meeting videotapes and agenda.

The videotapes served as an opportunity to observe faculty meetings in action and to verify what faculty, staff, and principals said during individual and focus group interviews. The agendas allowed me to analyze meeting components such as time-frames, meeting topics, meeting leaders, and school-specific brandings or text such as mottoes, headings, and mission statements.

Comparative Case Study

I planned to use a comparative case study approach to guide my research, carefully examining each case, including activities and functions (Stake, 2006). However, as my analysis continued, it became clear that there were many similarities to analyze the data district-wide. As it related to this study, I entered into real-life experiences with faculty, staff, and principals, using a holistic approach to understand faculty meeting experiences. I sought answers to my research questions within the context of real-life events that I had no control over (Yin, 2009). I collected, organized, and analyzed data specific to each elementary school in this study, and, later, used these data for comparison purposes (Patton, 2002).

The data collection process consisted of interviews and focus groups. Each semi-structured interview began with a grand-tour question (Spradley, 1979); for example, “Tell me about your experiences in the current faculty meetings that you attend.” My hope was that this question would open up the conversation, allow participants to communicate their views and, in return, foster authentic conversation. I used an interview guide as a checklist, focusing attention on my research questions while maintaining flexibility throughout the interview.

Most interview questions asked about experiences and behaviors, meanings, and opinions and values (Patton, 2002) and were open-ended to allow for maximum input. The experience and behavior questions focused mainly on experience, actions, and activities. The meaning questions focused on what faculty, staff, and principals believed were going on in faculty meetings. The opinion and value questions aimed to answer what participants would like to be different about faculty meetings.

Interviews

The emphasis during interviews was to engage participants in dialogue and allow each individual to offer a personalized construction of faculty meeting experiences. I conducted one, 30–60 minute, one-to-one interview with each principal, as well as one, 30–60 minute, one-to-one interview with teachers at various grade levels, specialists, and paraprofessionals (see Appendix E). Additionally, I scheduled an informal interview with the executive director. I did not plan the interview with the executive director; however, after analyzing the individual interviews, it became apparent that I needed to speak with someone from the district to understand the role the district plays in faculty meetings.

Each semi-structured interview took place at the campus or district office in an area most conducive to the participant. During the interviews, I took field notes, recorded my thoughts, actions, questions, and any details that had assisted me in probing deeper during the interview or that had provided insights into specific areas that I wanted to refer back to when analyzing the data.

I digitally recorded and, within two weeks of each interview, transcribed the data from the individual interviews (see Appendix F). Due to the timing and short notice of the interview with the executive director, I did not digitally record this interview. Rather, I relied on my field notes. The transcription form allowed me to review and organize individual responses around themes that I identified while analyzing the data. I was able to note specific line item numbers as examples that I wanted to use during the focus group conversations and made initial comparisons across and within individual responses for each case, for respective campuses, and, later, for comparisons across all three campuses.

Focus Group

In a dialogical hermeneutic approach to research, a relationship with participants that enables and encourages dialogue is important. I brought together two teachers, one specialist, and one paraprofessional at their respective schools for one, 60–90 minute focus group interview to review and discuss the themes I had identified from each groups' transcripts when analyzing individual interviews. Not only did I converse with this group, but I also asked them to work together and visually represent on chart paper the components of their ideal faculty meeting. I had not previously planned to use chart paper for the visual representations; however, I believed that having three, unidentified visual representations would help principals understand the ways that faculty and staff wanted faculty meetings to improve.

Similarly, I brought the three principals together at one of the campuses to review and discuss themes. This deviated from my original plan of a second one-to-one interview with principals. Because of the campus findings and the principal's comments about wanting to learn about their colleague's experiences, I decided that the group conversation would allow for deeper reflection and awareness. Thus, I scheduled one, 60–90 minute, focus group interview with the three principals.

Prior to the focus group interviews, participants had an opportunity to review and reflect on my summary of the individual transcripts. This included their experiences in faculty meetings, their design of an ideal faculty meeting, and any obstacles that inhibited change. During the focus group interviews, I acted as a facilitator and collaborated with faculty and staff in interpreting the meaning of the faculty meetings as expressed in these interview transcripts, maintaining a focus on co-creating and identifying potential ways to improve faculty meetings that resulted in learning at all levels of the organization.

The focus group interview allowed me to interact with more individuals at one time and allowed me to engage in dialogue with those involved, working to understand what was said and what was not said (Grondin, 1995). It provided a richer source of data as the faculty and staff communicated with one another, making them aware of something they may not have thought about previously and potentially reaching a mutual understanding or common meaning (Weinsheimer, 1985). The participants often not only reached shared understandings about their faculty meeting experiences but also used this opportunity to expose and clarify varying viewpoints. I digitally recorded and transcribed the data collected from each focus group interview. After reviewing the data collected, I determined that I had enough information to answer my questions. Thus, I did not return or seek additional persons to interview.

Observations

Although I did not originally plan to observe a faculty meeting at each school in my study, I decided that seeing what takes place during a faculty meeting would allow me to gain a personal perspective on the meetings in relation to what faculty, staff, and principals told me. This served as an additional data collection source and as a means to triangulate the data collected. The observations took place after the individual and focus group interviews concluded.

Because scheduling challenges made it difficult for me to participate in an onsite faculty meeting, each principal agreed to videotape one faculty meeting and mail the tape to me. Viewing the faculty meeting videotapes provided me with firsthand knowledge of the activities, participant reactions, and structural processes. Because engrained routines may have made it difficult for participants to think of alternative approaches to leading faculty meetings, viewing the videotapes allowed me an opportunity to observe things that participants may have failed to disclose (Patton, 2002). I realized this when I asked focus groups to work together to visually represent what their ideal faculty meeting would look like. The conversations often referred back to the current processes used, rather than expressing their creativity about what they ideally wanted to take place.

Material Culture

I did not plan to analyze faculty meeting agendas. However, I asked each principal to send me an electronic copy of the agenda that corresponded with the videotape that each one mailed to me. I used the corresponding agenda to follow along as I viewed the videotapes. I identified segments of the meeting that lasted longer than other segments, observed how principals followed the agenda or made adjustments, noted topics that appeared most important, described the roles of faculty and staff, took note of who led conversations, and identified what seemed similar or different from the interview data collected.

Data Analysis

Single-Case Analysis

The analysis of data continued throughout the study as I identified themes emerging from the data. Merriam (1998) stated that the "right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection" (p. 62). I found that immediate reflections and analysis allowed me to understand the data more thoroughly, making it less confusing because of the amount of data collected and more meaningful because of the ongoing connections or disconnections that I could make. After each data collection point, I recorded my thoughts, reviewed my field notes, and captured responses from each participant or group noting emerging themes, key phrases or patterns used, thoughts and feelings, similarities, or differences. By immediately reflecting on the data, I could begin to organize the data and generate categories and themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

I collected individual interview data first. I used these data to identify themes and select sections of transcripts from each stakeholder group to use during the follow-up focus group conversation with faculty and staff, as well as with the follow-up, one-to-one interview with principals. Because of my interest in faculty, staff, and principal perceptions and experiences in faculty meetings, I maintained a focus on what each stakeholder group communicated, uncovering what they said about participating in or leading faculty meetings (Riessmann, 2008).

To organize the data for each campus, I developed a table (see Appendix G). Horizontal columns represented participant codes, while vertical rows indicated the themes I identified while analyzing the data, initially working from key words in my interview questions. Under each participant code, I included notes related to the themes that I identified from their respective transcripts. Initially, this organizational process allowed me to identify commonalities or differences, when they existed, for each theme. Second, it provided me with an organizational tool to identify quotes from the transcripts that I wanted to use during focus group interviews and served as a reflection tool to guide my development of follow-up questions.

Cross-Case Analysis

The final stage in the analysis was the cross-case analysis. I wanted to understand the commonalities and differences that existed within the three campuses studied. Using the table that included individual data and themes, I analyzed responses from each stakeholder and focus group across the three campuses and compared and contrasted the varying viewpoints. I organized the data to indicate commonalities and differences across all stakeholder groups, as well as within respective stakeholder groups only. By doing this, I could quickly review my notes and look for commonalities that existed among all participants or for differences specific to individuals or small groups. For example, I scanned the various tables and realized that almost all of the participants had mentioned that faculty meetings included informational items. This provided me with one element, important to everyone, to discuss in my findings. I followed a similar process to identify other elements that were either common across participants or were unique to individuals or small groups. The findings led to an alternative model based on my analysis and interpretation.

Credibility and Rigor

Hermeneutic inquiry remains an interpretation. Because interpretation varies for each individual, I knew that I had to plan for my personal interpretations or biases. My assumptions about faculty meetings were that they took up valuable time, favored power and privilege for principals, lacked opportunities for faculty and staff to learn, allowed for little or no input from faculty and staff on agenda items, and emphasized information dissemination. By identifying my assumptions, I brought to the forefront any personal bias that I needed to be aware of throughout the study.

For example, by having clear criteria for selecting participants for my research, I avoided selecting participants that I believed would satisfy my personal beliefs. There was also the possibility that I would not receive all of the data that I hoped to collect. This would mean coming back and selecting additional participants and/or conducting follow-up interviews because I needed to learn more about a response that could provide additional insight into answering my research questions.

The interviews and focus groups provided me with different ways of collecting data. Because the goal during individual and focus group interviews was to engage participants in dialogue, I allowed them to engage in conversation with each other. I had a pre-established set of questions to use as a checklist and tried to remain neutral throughout the individual and focus group interviews. I asked clarification questions, took field notes, accepted responses, recorded my thoughts, verified my interpretations, and probed deeper when a response seemed unclear—remembering that my goal was to answer my research questions and not to coerce participants into responding any certain way.

Did faculty, staff, and principals provide me with their honest perspectives of faculty meetings? I accepted all of the details they provided as their honest perspectives since a dialogic hermeneutic approach is about interpretations, not truths. The analysis of individual and focus group interviews assisted in determining if the data collected appeared to represent faculty meetings at each campus. If discrepancies arose, such as individuals saying one thing during individual interviews but saying something different during the focus group, I made plans to return and clarify their experiences. Fortunately, a return was not necessary because the data collected remained consistent.

By digitally recording interviews and focus groups, I had reliable access to what interviewees said. I shared my analysis and interpretation with participants to ensure that I had accurately captured what they had told me. Additionally, I had access to the videotapes of campus faculty meetings to compare verbal responses with visual representations.

Ethical Issues

The study had minimal risks for the participants. Participants may have felt somewhat uneasy because of the digital recording of interviews and focus groups. It's also possible that participants may have felt that the disclosure of personal, identifiable information could cause embarrassment or subject them to future ridicule by employers should their identity be disclosed (Stake, 2006).

To address this possible fear, I ensured participants that all data collected would remain confidential. I also discussed with them that their participation was voluntary and that my main purpose was to learn from them and to hear their stories about faculty meetings. I ensured participants that they would have opportunities to review any quoted material and interpretations that I made based on this material.

The focus of my research was on empowering faculty, staff, and principals to talk about their perceptions of and experiences in faculty meetings. By interviewing various individuals representing different stakeholder groups, I gained a clearer understanding of their faculty meeting experiences. By understanding these experiences and uncovering ways to foster change, my hope is that the findings presented may alter faculty meeting perceptions and practices.

Chapter Summary

A dialogic hermeneutic approach guided this study as I dialogued with multiple stakeholder groups at three sites to learn about their experiences in faculty meetings, how they would design their ideal faculty meeting, and obstacles that inhibited change. I individually interviewed faculty, staff, and principals and also organized focus group interviews at each site. Each school videotaped one faculty meeting and sent the corresponding agenda to me, which gave me the opportunity to observe and record notes on the activities, participant reactions, and structural processes used. Interview data was analyzed individually and then compared across cases. I describe my findings in the next chapter, followed by the development of my model, “The Pressure Box,” in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

"If it is new information, we are there and attentive. But, if it is basic district procedures that we tend to hear year after year after year, we go through this autopilot. 'Oh, OK. Whatever.'"

Texas Teacher Comment from Dissertation Study, 2010

This chapter describes the analysis of the data I collected and themes that I identified. My purpose for conducting this study was to find ways to make faculty meetings more useful for faculty, staff, and principals. Because I sought to understand and interpret meaning with faculty, staff, and principals about their perceptions of and experiences in faculty meetings, a dialogic hermeneutic approach guided this study. Each participant had his/her own interpretations about the purpose for faculty meetings including how they should be conducted differently and how attitudes, regulations, and other limitations, either perceived or real, may inhibit change. By applying a dialogic hermeneutic approach, participants not only had opportunities to reflect on their interpretations but also to engage and learn about other perspectives. Along with my analysis of participant responses, I incorporate interview data, observation data, videotape, and material culture analysis.

This chapter begins with an introduction of the participants. I use pseudonyms to protect the identities of faculty, staff, principals, an executive director, and their school names. I include background information to provide perspectives about the experiences shared throughout this study. By providing this information, readers gain a sense of the diverse participant backgrounds, including approximate work experience, faculty meeting attendance, and personal attributes.

I then identify and describe, based on my analysis and participant confirmation, two main themes that emerged from this study: (1) Unraveling Experiences: Accountability over Learning and (2) Hindering the Ideal. “Unraveling Experiences: Accountability over Learning” consists of the diverse, yet sometimes shared perspectives about faculty meetings and the emphasis placed on mandates rather than learning in these meetings. This theme signifies a lack of faculty and staff input into faculty meeting processes, an issue mostly due to pressures from the district.

Within the “Unraveling Experiences: Accountability over Learning” section, I describe faculty, staff, and principals’ experiences in faculty meetings. Additionally, I use three faculty meeting videotapes to support or identify a disconnection between experiences and actual events. Based on my analysis, it appears that hierarchical decision-making creates an environment where mandates and expectations assume a sense of urgency in faculty meetings, while improving teaching and learning seem less important. As principals, for example, receive additional mandates and updates from district leaders, they pass these along to faculty and staff. Because of the pressures placed on principals, they tend to take minimal time to think about or ask faculty and staff to participate in setting the agenda and outcomes for faculty meetings. Time becomes a challenge: instead of allowing faculty and staff to recommend changes to faculty meeting structures, principals continue to use faculty meeting time to meet district requirements.

The second theme that emerged in my study, Hindering the Ideal, signifies how faculty, staff, and principals would like to see faculty meetings utilized. In the Hindering the Ideal section, I describe how internal school pressures, external pressures from the district office or state, and federal mandates create obstacles that hinder the ideal faculty meeting from becoming a reality. Within the Hindering the Ideal section of this chapter, I also include faculty, staff, and principals' reflections on pressures and obstacles they face when attempting to alter current faculty meeting practices. Additionally, by incorporating a collaborative approach to planning faculty meetings, I show what faculty and staff want to change.

Participants

Valley Elementary

Valley Elementary was the largest school participating in my study. Pat, the principal for more than five years at Valley, described herself as a life-long learner; one who continuously improves upon processes or procedures used for the betterment of faculty, staff, and students; and one who wants her campus to achieve recognized or exemplary status in the state accountability system. Olga and Juan, experienced teachers for no fewer than five years at Valley, each described themselves as a model for others and as dedicated and creative individuals. Neither one had taught in other schools or in other districts. Jose, specialist at Valley, told me that he is a passionate and positive person and wants to ensure his classroom instructional practices are consistent with instructional practices used in other classrooms. Jose, an experienced teacher for no fewer than five years at Valley, had taught in another school in a different district prior to Valley. Letti, a paraprofessional, described herself as someone who desires involvement and holds a special passion for teaching. Letti had more than two years of experience at Valley only.

South Elementary

The smallest school in my study, South Elementary, reached the highest achievement goal of exemplary. Chris, the principal at South for more than five years, told me that teachers at this school get involved and take part in making campus-based decisions. Sylvia and Teresa teach at South Elementary and both are experienced teachers. Sylvia had taught at another school in a different district, and she described herself as one who wants to learn from colleagues and one who looks out for others. Teresa told me that she is a spontaneous individual, yet determined, self-motivated, and wants what is best for students. Teresa had more than five years of teaching at South only. Cameron, a specialist, had taught in different schools within the same district as South. While discussing faculty meetings, he told me that he wants to have fun and enjoys lightening the mood by cracking jokes and getting others to laugh. Anna, a paraprofessional, described herself as a committed and helpful individual who does what she is told. Anna had experience at South only.

Texas Elementary

Texas Elementary, a recognized campus, is a medium size school in the district with approximately 550 students. Rene, the principal at Texas for more than five years, told me that she spends ample time organizing for faculty meetings so that she does not waste faculty and staff time and that she is open to continuous learning and new ideas. Danny and Gloria teach at Texas Elementary, both with experience at other schools within the district. Danny has more experience at Texas Elementary than Gloria;

however, both told me they are hardworking, energetic, and devoted teachers. Cyndi, a specialist, taught at another school in another district. She informed me that faculty meetings at her past school were a place for fellowship. Susan, a paraprofessional, said that she is passionate about the local school community. She strives to motivate and engage students in school. Susan has experience at Texas only.

District

The executive director, Sandi, supports campus principals and leads curriculum development in the district. In conversations with Sandi, she told me she spends time communicating with the curriculum coordinators that she supervises to ensure, as much as possible, consistency in district-level support to schools. She often provides professional development to principals during district principal meetings too. She brings experience as a teacher and principal to her current position and describes herself as a caring individual who wants the best for all students.

The faculty, staff, and principals, and the executive director, bring different perspectives and experiences to my study. Some have experience at one school or study site, while others have experiences from other schools within and outside the district. Participant experiences range from two years at the study site to more than ten years of experience. Experiences also include different grade levels (kindergarten to fifth grade), and specialized areas, such as music, resource, or physical education. All participants, however, possess a passion for education and the desire to do what is best for the students in their schools.

Unraveling Experiences: Accountability over Learning

Argyris (1964) said that "The problem of integrating the individual and the organization is one in which both have to 'give a little' to profit from each other" (p. 3). This statement seems to encompass the experiences and perspectives of faculty, staff, and principals in faculty meetings. Unraveling Experiences: Accountability over Learning suggests the importance of dialogue and listening to one another to understand each other's perspectives, which is the dialogic hermeneutic approach to making one's viewpoints known while also becoming aware of others' perspectives. Although teacher development and student learning appear important to participants in this study, faculty meeting processes do not support these ideals. Rather, accountability, mandates, and expectations seem to overshadow teacher development and student learning in faculty meetings. This section unravels the experiences of faculty, staff, and principals in faculty meetings including their commonalities and differences.

Purpose for Schools

Individual interview data included descriptions of current faculty meeting practices and hopes for the future. After analyzing individual interview data, I learned that most of the current practices appear disconnected from student achievement. With this in mind, I asked focus groups, as well as the executive director to tell me what they believe to be the purpose for schools. Sandi described the purpose for schools as "students being successful; learning all the time". The focus group at South Elementary said, "To educate, to inform, to show the kind, loving ways that they (students) may not receive elsewhere - not only through teaching, but through modeling - to prepare wellrounded individuals to be ready for when they leave the educational system." Principals said during their focus group:

> Pat: Educate students but it has grown from that to educating the community; parental involvement; continuing the education of our staff and faculty.
>
> Rene: I just think for everything.
>
> Chris: Nowadays, you are doing so much that the schools are now accountable for so many things.
>
> Rene: And it isn't getting any better.
>
> Chris: We are everything—taking care of the needs of parents and kids and not just educational needs but physical needs, mental needs, you name it – and health wise.

Principals go on to say:

> Chris: We are just a place where people can come and not only get educated.
>
> Rene: And, expect you to fix it. I think it is everything.

Contrary to how faculty, staff, and principals describe the purpose for schools, faculty meetings appear to reflect something different. The interview with Sandi revealed that faculty meetings do not necessarily reflect what people might believe is the purpose of schools. Although she believes that the purpose of schools is to make students successful learners, she went on to say that "the many pages of stuff to complete for required professional development often spills into faculty meetings to meet district deadlines." Coincidentally, the initial response during the focus group with principals was silence when I asked them to describe the relationship between the purpose for schools and faculty meetings. Then:

Pat: I don’t know.

Rene: I think your faculty meetings are a little bit of everything. It can include staff development.

Chris: We cover so much.

Faculty and staff tend to agree more subtly with principals and the district perspective. The focus group at Valley Elementary indicated that reviewing data during faculty meetings provided a sense of direction for targeting student needs. Similarly, the focus group at South Elementary said, “Through informational meetings regarding our scope and sequence, our educational expectations, district-wide objectives say, we are able to as educators focus ourselves with the vision that has been set before us”.

My findings suggest that faculty meetings are a place to obtain information. Sandi told me that many faculty meetings must include the professional development sessions required by the district because of the deadlines set for each training. There are not enough professional development days during an academic school year, so faculty meetings become the main place to disseminate mandates and expectations. Principals said the following during their focus group:

Rene: Well, you know, and I think I’ve shared this with you, we don’t even have a lot of time. Even our own agendas are taken away from us because of the required staff development that needs to take place.

Anna and Chris: Yes, needs to take place.

Teachers reiterated that faculty meetings are often a place for disseminating information that originates from the district office. Juan said:

> Sometimes, of course, our principals do tell us that we got this from the district, or from the superintendent, or something from Human Resources. We need to share this with you. Or, sometimes it is just our principals, our administration, saying well this needs to be happening in our campus. This includes their expectations, their procedures basically.

Sylvia said:

> When people from our district come in, they could maybe give a 15-minute presentation. I find that teachers, if we know if it is going to be a 15-minute presentation, then we kind of have it in our head. Okay, it is 15 minutes. I'm going to listen, we are going to do this, and here is the information.

Although many faculty, staff, and principals appear to share similar viewpoints on the purpose for schools, this purpose somehow gets lost in faculty meetings. During some of the interviews, I remember wondering how principals could justify using faculty meetings for informational purposes, which had no alignment to the school's purpose. I also wondered if anyone had explored the relationship between the content covered in faculty meetings and the school's purpose.

Content Covered During Meetings

This section describes the content covered during faculty meetings and is comprised of student performance data; district mandates and expectations; and principal, faculty, staff, and paraprofessional learning. In the first part, I introduce the types of student performance data reviewed and the person often responsible for disseminating it. The second part, "District mandates and expectations," describes how faculty meetings consist mostly of disseminating information based on the district-required professional development sessions, thus signifying a chain-of-command communication system. The information to be disseminated, sometimes originating at the state and federal levels, progressively moves from the district to the principals and then to faculty and staff. The "Principal, faculty, staff, and paraprofessional learning" section highlights the ways participants might learn during faculty meetings. After introducing and discussing these three subheadings, I conclude with my reflections.

Student performance data. Faculty, staff, and principals consistently said that student achievement data is an important part of faculty meetings. This includes district reading and mathematics benchmark data, TAKS data, or diagnostic data such as results from the Texas Primary Reading Inventory or Tejas LEE. I learned from Sandi that the district assists schools in disaggregating or understanding student data to support professional development. Sandi's interview with me revealed that data are often disseminated and shared during district principal meetings. She described how principals spend ample time at these meetings reviewing their campus benchmark or state assessment data, identifying areas of weakness, and setting goals to improve student performance. She said that principals have opportunities during these meetings to work with colleagues to review and select instructional strategies that will target the areas of weakness, as well as opportunities to schedule time for district curriculum coordinators to come to their campus and model these instructional strategies in the classroom.

During the principal focus group, Pat, Chris, and Rene said that they share student data with faculty meeting participants so that "everyone is aware of what everyone is doing or how their students are doing in the different grade levels". This seemed especially true at South Elementary and Valley Elementary. All teachers and specialists from these two schools indicated that student performance data was included in faculty meetings. Teachers and specialists at these two schools said principals often spent time making connections to prior year's scores and noting gains or declines.

Rene agreed with the other principals during the focus group that her school routinely reviewed student performance data during faculty meetings; however, interview transcripts from faculty and staff did not suggest this. Teachers and specialists interviewed at Texas Elementary mentioned that the dissemination of information, such as changes to policies, were what occurred most frequently during faculty meetings. As for paraprofessionals, they did not mention reviewing student performance data during their meetings with principals. Their meetings typically consisted of increasing their awareness of the expectations associated with their daily work.

Although Valley Elementary and South Elementary transcripts reveal that the principal delivers and reviews student performance data at faculty meetings, Valley showed specific evidence on the videotape. During his interview, Jose described the sharing of data at Valley and the comparisons made to prior year's scores, "Here is where we stand, here are our numbers, and here is where we need to be. We are stronger in this area and weaker in this area." The videotape aligned perfectly with Jose's description. During one part of the meeting, the reading facilitator shared data for kindergarten. When she finished, a fifth grade teacher shared math and science benchmark data. Then, a third grade teacher disseminated reading benchmark scores. Pat believed that if you share data during faculty meetings, then everyone stays informed on how the school is performing.

South Elementary transcripts reveal that student performance data is an important part of faculty meetings. The faculty meeting videotape, however, consisted only of mandates, so there was no evidence to support the transcripts. As for Texas Elementary, the importance of using data can be inferred. Although not mentioned specifically in transcripts, comments heard while watching the videotape include the importance of knowing the struggling students and developing acceleration plans for during or after school tutorials. Texas Elementary's videotape also included comments about providing extra assistance in kindergarten during the language arts block to target students' needs.

District mandates and expectations. When expressing faculty meeting experiences, every participant mentioned sharing information, although comments varied in terms of what "information" means. All three principals described "information" as passing down updates from the district, such as policies and mandates, sharing about campus-level improvements that were needed or sharing about changes that would be taking place. Valley Elementary teachers, specifically Olga and Juan, said "information" items consist of program evaluations, expectations, and procedures. Jose added fundraisers as an informational item covered during faculty meetings, and Letti generalized by saying, "Information is shared." At South Elementary, Sylvia and Teresa told me that informational items sometimes included community activities, policy revisions, and textbook adoptions. Cameron added, "80% of the meeting is informational and typically includes year after year district procedures." Anna remarked that most informational items for paraprofessionals consisted of clarifying their roles with students when assisting in the classrooms, upcoming events to prepare for, and paperwork requirements they needed to meet.

The experiences at Texas Elementary align with those from Valley and South. All faculty and staff said informational items included district mandates, expectations, and changes to existing district or campus policies. Cyndi said, “At least 60% of the meeting is informational” and that informational items keep her updated and abreast of activities. Susan mentioned that informational items during the paraprofessional meetings, although usually passed down from the district, “are clear, straightforward, and relevant.” Danny and Gloria respectively said that informational items included relevant information that everyone needed to hear and that by including it in faculty meetings, everyone heard the same message. The latter reflects Rene’s vision, in that including informational items during faculty meetings results in everyone hearing the same information at one time. Of course, saying everyone hears the same information at one time is not completely accurate when paraprofessionals typically meet separately. The data collected suggest that informational items disseminated during faculty meetings are often a result of the need to pass down expectations, changes, or mandates from the district. As Cameron said, this delivery format “often results in participants tuning out.”

Informational items also include instructional adjustments to the district scope and sequence, updates on testing, or the delivery of district-required campus professional development sessions. Upon closer review of the required campus professional development sessions, they appeared to reflect compliance training and included topics related to the employee handbook, Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS), ethics, harassment, and child abuse. Chris told me that “most of the time when I meet with my staff I simply give them information that needs to be given to them.” Along with the other informational items mentioned by faculty, staff, and principals, the district-required campus professional development sends the message that policies, procedures, and mandates are the most important elements in faculty meetings.

Principal, faculty, staff, and paraprofessional learning. When asked about the learning that takes place in faculty meetings, participants expressed varying viewpoints. Some suggested that learning took place when reviewing student performance data. Others learned from information or learned about new strategies when colleagues or special guest presented, but one participant was not sure what learning took place. Three participants, the principal, specialist, and one teacher, from Valley Elementary learned from reviewing student performance data during faculty meetings. Pat, Juan, and Jose believed that sharing student data during faculty meetings made other faculty and staff members aware of student performance strengths and needs.

Learning from informational items included the principal and paraprofessional from Texas Elementary and the paraprofessionals from South and Valley Elementary. Rene mentioned that learning occurs through the dissemination of regulations and learning about new procedures or role expectations. As a paraprofessional, Anna said that she learns about “special dates, what it is we need to help out with—having paperwork ready for teachers or administrators or decorating for some event. They let us know what is it that we are supposed to do for the next coming months of the year.”

Learning new strategies to increase instructional efficacy or meet student needs was another way a few participants learned during faculty meetings. Interestingly, six individuals mentioned they learned during faculty meetings when colleagues or peers shared effective instructional strategies or when guest speakers attended and taught something new. One teacher at South Elementary, Sylvia, said that when guest speakers attended and taught, “This is what I find helpful and what I like.” Others, including Chris, the principal at South, said teachers like to hear from “people of their own.”

Unfortunately, experiences at Chris' campus do not seem to focus on hearing from other faculty or staff members. Cameron estimated that 80% of the meetings at South Elementary were informational and delivered by the principal. This was a very different perspective from the principal's perception. Finally, one individual was unsure if any learning took place. Olga responded to my question about learning in faculty meetings, initially sighing, then, "I don't know that we would learn." She went on to say how a learning example might be if pre-kindergarten teachers shared something that they did well and how that might affect kindergarten teachers.

The perspectives regarding what learning takes place varied across faculty, staff, and principal groups and sometimes changed during the interview. Pat mentioned that learning occurred through the sharing of data; however, she went on to say, "The faculty meeting does attribute somewhat to learning, but it is just a small part." Rene, however, maintained a consistent message, "If we are looking at faculty meetings, I think that it is just basically giving them new information, changes that have taken place, a lot of training that you need to do as a whole staff."

I was surprised to hear that most principals were unsure if learning occurred in faculty meetings or alluded to the idea that learning took place intrinsically. All principals mentioned that hearing from other presenters could allow a faculty or staff member to process or learn. In other words, the principals inferred that allowing someone to speak meant everyone listened and learned something new. Learning, in this instance, was not meant in the sense of improving classroom instruction, but in the sense of understanding expectations and mandates. There was also no evidence to suggest that faculty meetings affect student achievement. When asked how faculty meetings affect student learning, Pat said, “It’s kind of hard with faculty meetings to say they would be significant,” while Chris said, “definitely.” Upon further investigation, however, the “definitely” from Chris appeared to apply to maintaining high expectations and setting accountability parameters so that faculty and staff could implement what they heard at the meeting.

Researcher reflection on learning at faculty meetings. With such diverse beliefs and responses, I wonder if anyone has a clear sense of the purpose of faculty meetings, and who decides the purpose? Why don’t faculty meeting learning experiences reflect the purpose of schools?

Compared with teachers, specialists, and principals whom describe learning as occurring through the review of student data or the sharing of instructional strategies, the learning of paraprofessionals consisted mostly of receiving information. Part of my assumption is that they don’t have the experience to know what other learning might be available to them. Another possibility is they may view their position as a job of ‘being told what to do’, not necessarily one of learning about instructional techniques when working with students.

Principals, specifically Pat and Chris, mentioned that learning takes place when faculty and staff share ideas or successful strategies. Faculty and staff at both schools agreed; however, learning in this manner appeared to be a rare occurrence. For instance, Chris suggested that others make presentations; however, faculty and staff said this is infrequent. Additionally, the videotape analysis of Chris’ meeting included only the principal presenting, and the agenda included only the name of the principal as the person responsible every section of the meeting.

How does learning in faculty meetings affect student achievement? It did not seem to matter which school or participant I spoke to, because the majority said faculty meetings have little or no effect on student achievement. Regarding whether or how faculty meetings affect student achievement, out of the three principals, only Chris said, “Definitely because we share a lot and we expect whatever is being shared is being implemented in the classrooms.” Chris goes on to describe walkthroughs to hold teachers accountable for implementing faculty meeting content in the classroom. Rene wanted to think faculty meetings had an impact but was unsure. Initially, Pat did not believe faculty meetings had much of an effect saying, “It is kind of hard with faculty meetings to say that they would be significant.” Retracting some of the initial statement, Pat said, “We always look at data; so in that sense maybe.”

Based on my analysis of the interview transcripts, I concluded that each school spent approximately one hour or more each month during faculty meetings on activities not directly related to student achievement or the school’s purpose. Holding faculty meetings one time per month for at least one hour during a nine-month school year would equate to at least nine hours, more than one instructional day, spent on information dissemination with little or no effect on student achievement or a school’s purpose.

My question for the district: Given the requirements that professional development often must occur during faculty meetings, how do district leaders feel about the lost time, which affects student achievement?

How might the school’s faculty meetings affect student performance on TAKS? Most participants in this study did not believe faculty meetings affected accountability ratings. A few participants from Valley Elementary, Juan and Jose, think that exemplar schools might have higher expectations, are more positive, or are more motivating for teachers. Chris, principal at South Elementary, believes there is a relationship between faculty meeting content and processes and student achievement; however, Chris is alone in that thinking when compared to the faculty and staff perspectives at South. At Texas Elementary, one teacher, Danny, and the specialist, Cyndi, believe that exemplar schools probably have a better sense of their goals and focus more on data and monitoring student progress. Based on the analysis of the videotapes, the principal of the exemplar campus in this study spent almost the entire time in their faculty meetings presenting mandates and expectations. Is this what it takes to reach exemplary status?

How is the purpose for schools reflected in faculty meetings? Throughout interviews and during my reflection periods after interviews or observations, I often wondered about the answer to this question. Are schools about mandates, abiding by expectations, and high test scores? Alternatively, are schools about learning and providing the necessary resources to make teachers as effective as possible while leading classroom activities? Based on interview and observation data in this study, it would appear that the former question reflects more on the purpose for schools.

Organizational Tools used to Facilitate Faculty Meetings

This section describes organizational tools implemented during faculty meetings and is comprised of agendas used to guide faculty meetings and routines followed in meetings. In “Agendas used to guide faculty meetings,” I describe the uniqueness of each school’s agenda including content and layout, as well as some common agenda features. I also discuss general procedures for disseminating agendas and connect my analysis to the faculty meeting videotapes. In “Routines followed in meetings,” I describe the location and time for faculty meetings and the processes used. I conclude this section with my personal reflections.

Agendas used to guide faculty meetings. When I began collecting and analyzing individual and focus group interview data, it was clear that the majority of faculty meeting agenda items consisted of disseminating information. Cameron told me that 80% of the South Elementary agenda was informational and Cyndi said about 60% of the agenda was information at Texas Elementary. Additionally, many other participants mentioned that faculty meetings were mostly informational in nature.

However, nearly two and a half months into this study when I asked principals to videotape a faculty meeting and send me the corresponding agenda, my analysis of the videotapes and agendas from two schools showed several agenda topics that were no longer only informational—mandates and expectations, for example. Rather, the agenda items now included faculty and staff sharing instructional strategies and celebrating student performance successes. While watching the introduction at the Texas Elementary faculty meeting, Rene shared some initial reflections since taking part in my study. She told participants attending the faculty meeting that a few faculty and staff members took part in interviews for my dissertation. Based on some of their suggestions, what she learned when viewing the faculty and staff ideal faculty-meeting charts, faculty meetings from now on would incorporate some of their ideas. Rene went on to say, "We'll come together, do what we need to do, but at the same time take care of some personal business and have fun at the same time. We are going to start implementing some things including grade-level sharing and welcoming paraprofessionals."

Similarly, Pat began her faculty meeting at Valley Elementary by letting faculty and staff know this meeting was being videotaped for my dissertation and that some faculty and staff members took part in interviews as part of my research. Pat said:

> We are part of a Ph.D. dissertation on faculty meetings. Mr. Daryl Michel is working on his Ph.D. at Texas State University. His dissertation is on faculty meetings, so we are being videotaped for his dissertation. But, he has also been meeting with a committee of teachers and paraprofessionals about faculty meetings and principals associated with his study. After videotaping today, we will ship the tape off to him. He will then analyze and give us feedback as to what his findings were. The overall idea to his dissertation is the impact faculty meetings have on student success.

Rene and Pat's comments about implementing some of the faculty and staff suggestions or receiving feedback on my findings made me wonder if these two principals, throughout this study, became more aware of their existing structures and began making alterations based on faculty and staff responses.

Agenda templates varied in organizational formatting for each school. The Valley Elementary agenda consisted of a bulleted list to outline meeting items. The bulleted list began with a welcome and birthday celebrations and then moved into federal program updates, data reporting, article review, instructional strategy sharing, reminders, and an open agenda. The South Elementary agenda consisted of several items from the district's required professional development list, review of campus data, and ended with an open agenda. Their agenda included specific time-frames, topics, and listed the lead person responsible for each item. The Texas Elementary agenda consisted of mandated trainings, grading policies, fundraisers, grade-level sharing, and an open agenda in a list organized by Roman numerals.

Faculty meeting agendas also varied in design and detail. Valley and Texas Elementary did not include time frames, whereas, South Elementary did. Texas Elementary did not include names of presenters for any item, whereas Valley and South did. Each agenda included a motto at the top or bottom of the page. The Texas Elementary motto was “Wild About Learning”; South Elementary’s motto was “Reaching for the Stars”; and Valley Elementary’s motto was “Teachers Empowering Teachers.” Each motto appeared to reflect what faculty, staff, and principals said was the purpose for schools: student learning and teacher development. Upon closer review of these items, two of the three school mottos appeared to somewhat reflect the meeting topics listed. Over half of Valley’s agenda included classroom teachers sharing instructional strategies or presenting student achievement data to colleagues. These practices would seem to align with their motto of “Teachers Empowering Teachers.” Similarly, some of Texas Elementary’s meeting agenda topics appeared to reflect the “Wild About Learning” motto when teachers shared instructional practices. The rest of the Texas agenda included district required professional development infused with application to the school’s student population and informational items included updates from prior trainings and not repeated in its entirety. Unrelated, the South Elementary motto, “Reaching for the Stars,” appeared disconnected from the agenda topics. The agenda included a list of mandates and expectations such as electronic communication procedures, the code of ethics, fraud, conflict of interests, and sexual harassment. Still, nearly all faculty, staff, and principals participating in my study mentioned the importance of having an agenda.

When asked to describe faculty meeting experiences, several participants said that they picked up an agenda upon arrival to the faculty meeting. At Valley Elementary, the principal was the only person that did not mention the use of an agenda. Valley's teachers and specialist were in agreement that they gathered at the faculty meeting, picked up and agenda, and followed it. Coincidentally, the principal was the only one that did not mention use of an agenda at South Elementary. Cameron and Sylvia described these steps in the process: sign in, pick up an agenda, answer roll call, listen to a short greeting by Chris, listen to an overview of the agenda, and follow along as items are addressed. Only Gloria and Cyndi mentioned the availability of an agenda at Texas Elementary. Neither said distributed, only that an agenda was available as they entered the faculty meeting.

From participant responses, it appeared that the distribution of agendas occurred at the start of each meeting. Thus, there was no time for participants to prepare to share instructional strategies because they were unaware of the meeting's contents. I wondered about Texas Elementary and the grade-level sharing topic listed on the agenda. Maybe, it was not an organized activity and required only minimal preparation. However, if this were a structured sharing opportunity, how would faculty and staff know to prepare ahead of time when they were unaware that this was part of the agenda?

Based on my analysis of faculty meeting videotapes, presenters that formally presented student performance data or other information had PowerPoint presentations and necessary handouts. This might lead one to believe that they were aware of the agenda and their presentation responsibilities. However, I wondered about the preparation for faculty meeting topics that required connections to classroom instruction or student needs, if and when, these topics existed. How would anyone know what to prepare?

When analyzing the videotapes, order of topics appeared unimportant even when numbered or organized by time-frame. The only agenda that followed the prepared order was from Valley Elementary with only one modification at the beginning of the meeting, the result of a scheduled presentation by a district representative who was not able to attend. The agenda at South Elementary included a day's worth of staff development. During my conversations with Chris, he frequently said "staff development" when speaking about faculty meetings, thus my understanding as to why he would send me an agenda that encompassed an entire day of meeting. However, the videotape included only four of the 12 agenda items and lasted approximately 54 minutes, very different from what one might expect when looking at his detailed agenda that included six and a half hours of stuff. Texas Elementary completed seven of eight items listed on the agenda in addition to allowing time for birthday celebrations. Organization of items, however, did not matter and appeared random, almost as though decision-making occurred throughout the meeting to maintain fluidity.

One commonality that existed on each agenda was the open agenda section at the end of the meeting. Principals told me during their focus group interview that there was always an opportunity for faculty and staff to respond during the open agenda. This was a time to voice concerns, ask additional questions, or get clarity on information shared during the meeting. Pat said, "I always close mine with an open agenda: 'Is there anything that you all would like to talk about?'" Rene and Chris quickly agreed they used an "always open agenda".

Faculty and staff at all three schools agree that there was an open agenda and that this item was usually the last item on the meeting agenda, suggesting that the open item was more of a gesture than an attempt at real dialogue, since most attending the meeting wanted to go home by this point. Although the Texas Elementary focus group spent very little time talking about the open agenda, other than it was an item on the meeting agenda, the Valley Elementary focus group had a lot to say:

> Jose: I felt, and you have all been here a long time, all of us, the faculty meetings are headed by administration and ended by administration. I would think our faculty meetings should be started by administration, get their top three things discussed, and then include every grade level to give their five minutes or three minutes or whatever – if they have something to discuss in front of the faculty. Grade K or 1st, anything?
>
> Letti: You guys don't do that?
>
> Jose: It is just, boom!
>
> Juan: It is just that there is an open agenda at the end but everyone wants to go home by then.
>
> Letti: I seriously thought that that is what you guys did: let's start with prekindergarten, kindergarten, etc.
>
> Olga: Never.
>
> Letti: Wow!
>
> Juan: You get there and they tell . . .
>
> Olga: Tell you.

> Juan: Tell you what you need to know and be addressed on. It is basically [going] down the agenda: let’s cover this, cover this, go over this, and open agenda at the end. Open agenda at the end when everyone wants to go home.

Open agenda, although listed, appeared to have no impact at Valley Elementary. It was interesting to note how Letti, a paraprofessional, assumed what happened in faculty meetings was different. I wondered throughout parts of the focus groups, instances such as this, if Letti still wanted to have the opportunity to take part in faculty meetings.

South Elementary, similar to Texas Elementary, made few remarks about the open agenda item. Anna did mention that during the paraprofessional meeting “we do have open agenda but a lot of us don’t have the courage to say.” This statement did not seem surprising given my interpretation of other comments made by paraprofessionals: that they are told what to do, given role expectations, and so on. I wondered that paraprofessionals felt as though it was not their place to make suggestions.

One alternative to an open agenda item included Sylvia’s experience at another school. She said:

> At another campus that I used to work at, the faculty meetings were started with kudos to the teachers. There was a little open agenda to where does anyone have good news to share, maybe it was a trip, my birthday is coming up, or just something like that. We would do presentations for the teacher and paraprofessional of the month at that time. So, that was a time when we would present to them. It made you feel good and at the same time it set the tone for the meeting.

Compared to other practices mentioned, having an open agenda time at the beginning of the faculty meeting seemed a unique experience, but, based on Sylvia's comments, appeared to have set a positive tone for the remainder of the meeting.

While analyzing each school's agenda, I noticed open agenda was the last item for each school. One thing that was interesting to me was how principals seemed to have the same feeling about open agendas when attending their all-day principal meetings. When they got to the end of their district principal meetings and it was time for open agenda and some type of application activity, principals wanted to leave. In this case, I wondered what purpose the open agenda item served. Was it a way for participants to feel as though there was dedicated time for them to talk? Was there a reason the open agenda item came at the end of the meeting agenda when most were ready to go home?

Routines followed in meetings. Faculty meetings appeared to convene routinely. Faculty, staff, and principals at all three schools mentioned that faculty meetings usually occurred once monthly after school and lasted approximately one hour. The meetings did not include paraprofessionals, and grade-level teams usually sat together.

During interviews, Sylvia described the organizational routine at South Elementary as, "We have to sign in, make sure we get an agenda, and our administrator follows the agenda". Similarly, the principal at Texas Elementary, Rene said, "I'm going to tell them that we need to do this, we need to do this, we need to do this, and this is our timeline. Please, bear with me."

Most faculty and staff believed that routines suggested that principals were conscientious of time during faculty meetings. All principals prepared the necessary handouts and Teresa said, "Give us only the most important information of what we need to do or what directly affects us in the classroom". All principals appeared empathetic for the many faculty and staff members that had children to pick up after school. In fact, when anticipating a longer than normal faculty meeting, Rene organized an onsite daycare for the children of faculty and staff.

The faculty meeting videotape analysis highlights varying routines for each school and suggests alterations since this study began. For example, Rene engaged faculty and staff throughout most aspects of the meeting at Texas Elementary. Participants clapped and sang during the recognition of birthdays at the beginning of the faculty meeting. Participants had opportunities to ask questions during presentations geared toward mandates and expectations. Grade-level teams reported, gave accolades to other faculty or staff, reported on student performances, and described support for other grade levels. The meeting took place in the library, appearing to be a more intimate setting for a large number of people who occasionally laughed and, for the most part, appeared involved. Presentations incorporated videos, PowerPoint presentations, and handouts when necessary.

The faculty meeting at Valley Elementary took place in the school cafeteria. Similar to the Texas Elementary faculty meeting, the meeting opened with birthday celebrations. As the meeting progressed, presenters used PowerPoint presentations and distributed handouts when necessary. Unlike the other two schools, the majority of presenters at this campus consisted of teachers. Teachers shared ideas regarding learning boards and effective strategies used in mathematics. Additionally, they shared results from student achievement data and described areas of gain and areas to target.

South Elementary appeared unique when compared to the other two schools. The meeting took place in the school cafeteria, and the principal presented every item on the agenda. There was an occasional question; however, this was infrequent. The one similarity included the use of PowerPoint presentations.

Researcher reflection on organizational tools used for facilitation. The appropriate use of time appears important to everyone. Agendas and routines assist in keeping faculty meetings to a limited amount of time. I wondered about the selection of topics and minimal preparation by faculty and staff at all schools. If faculty and staff were unaware of the topic or preparation required, then I would expect that the meeting would take more time. However, if everyone knew the topics ahead of time and made necessary preparations, it would seem that routines and presentations would not have to be one-sided or principal-dominated. I wondered whether faculty meetings could maintain the current time-frame while increasing participation and focusing more on student learning and teacher development.

Each school covered different topics during the faculty meeting. Valley and Texas Elementary both included presentations on the Homeless Education Act and migrant population. The district required professional development document mandates both of these trainings, which is perhaps the reason for the commonality. However, the presentations only occurred at Texas Elementary because the district representative responsible for presenting at Valley did not show up. All three schools included at least one required professional development topic as mandated by the district list.

While watching the videotapes, I also noticed what appeared to be changes in meeting structure since this study began. Again, the videotaping took place approximately two and a half months after the interviews. This caused me to wonder if faculty and staff requests and suggestions might not be shifting how some principals think about organizing faculty meetings. Pat at Valley Elementary and Rene at Texas Elementary both incorporated teacher sharing on the agenda and invited paraprofessionals to the faculty meeting. This may suggest that the reflective nature of this study, as well as hearing and seeing what faculty and staff want to discuss in faculty meetings, is the cause for a slight shift in faculty meeting practices.

Principal, Faculty, and Staff Roles in Faculty Meetings

This section describes the roles of faculty, staff, and principals during faculty meetings. I include subsections about one-way communication, paraprofessional participation, learning to lead meetings, and conclude with my reflections. The subsection on one-way communication describes the approach used in faculty meetings, often from a hierarchical, top-down standpoint where one person is in charge. This section also includes the possibility of collecting constructive feedback about faculty meetings through evaluation. The paraprofessional participation subsection describes the unique perspectives and experiences of paraprofessionals and how they typically meet with the principal separately instead of participating in the larger faculty meeting with everyone else. I describe how they feel about not being included, as well as their unique viewpoints. In the learning to lead meetings subsection, I describe the principals formal training in leading faculty meetings, along with suggestions from faculty and staff on improving faculty meeting effectiveness. I also incorporate the expectations listed in the district required professional development document. I conclude by sharing my reflections on the existing roles in faculty meetings.

One-way communication. Based on my analysis of the data collected during individual and focus group interviews, faculty meetings at each school tend to follow similar patterns in which the principal does most of the talking. Juan did not agree with the one-way communication process, hierarchical from principal to faculty and staff, and the lack of participant engagement:

> I mean the way I look at it from a student's point of view we do not want to just be sitting down and just be looking at a person standing there talking for over an hour. To me, I think that is rather frustrating. I am pretty sure everybody gets frustrated and gets bored because you just sit there.

During the South Elementary focus group, Teresa said that she wanted to hear information from someone most knowledgeable on a given topic and not only the principal reading from slides. She said:

> Like when we talk about bilingual, one thing we don't need to be hearing is from somebody reading the guidelines word for word. But, have the coordinator of bilingual say it so that I can ask her questions, know what she meant with that point or whatever, versus me tuning him off because I know how to read it. I can read it at home or during planning period.

Faculty meetings at each school may be following the processes used when district leaders meet with principals at central office. Sandi described the district principal meetings as principals sitting passively and listening to district personnel pass along expectations, policy changes, and so on. Based on the similarities of district and campus-led meetings, it appears to me that the person in charge, whether a superintendent or associate superintendent or principal, more or less owns the meeting. This was especially true at South Elementary where the communication consisted of approximately 54 minutes of Chris, the principal, talking.

Yet when feedback was gathered from evaluations, one-way communication did not seem to represent the principals' actual beliefs. Sandi told me that principals complete online evaluations at the conclusion of their district principal meetings. She also said that, "Although evaluated, campus leaders say the data may not be 100% accurate." She said the evaluations might not be completely accurate because principals do not always communicate what they want to say for fear that someone reviewing the evaluation will figure out who submitted it. All principals agree that they complete evaluations; however, they are careful with what they say:

Pat: We do [submit evaluations] at our principal meetings where you have to evaluate them.

Chris: Online.

Rene: But I'm always scared of doing that.

The reasons principals feel scared and perhaps are not completely honest on the evaluations of district principal meetings are uncertain. It is not clear who reviews the evaluation at the district office and whether electronically submitted evaluations are confidential with no means of recognizing who submitted the evaluation.

Principals did not replicate their district principals' meetings process and have participants complete an evaluation at the conclusion of each campus faculty meeting. Principals discussed completing evaluations at the conclusion of faculty meetings:

Chris: That is something I've never done.

Pat: I've never [done it either].

Rene: Maybe that is something we can start looking at, me personally.

Pat: That would give us an idea of what they are expecting from faculty meetings. It appears principals liked the idea of learning from evaluations. However, how would the anonymity issue be any different for faculty and staff when evaluating an authority figure, the campus principal?

At Valley Elementary, the faculty and staff focus group recommended that the evaluation include questions such as "how did I present or what other topics should we include in the future?" They suggested returning the anonymous evaluation the next school day so that there would be adequate time to reflect on the meeting. When I asked, "Do you evaluate the effectiveness of current faculty meetings?" the South focus group said:

Sylvia: Formally?

Teresa: Do we what?

I repeated the question: "Do you evaluate the effectiveness of current faculty meetings?"

Sylvia: No.

Cameron: No.

Teresa: No.

Anna: No.

Cameron went on to say, "That would be very interesting to have." Sylvia said, "Just like when we go to a presentation they give us an evaluation form at the end." I then asked if the evaluation was important for a faculty meeting. Sylvia said an evaluation "would help" while Cameron said, "I mean we do it for presentations or staff development. There is an evaluation that we have to fill out. Anybody that wants to learn would want to go through some sort of evaluation." Teresa and Anna then agreed that it was important to have an evaluation at the conclusion of the faculty meeting.

At Texas Elementary, the focus group initially said that they completed an evaluation but quickly retracted their statement when they realized the question pertained only to a faculty meeting evaluation. I asked, "How do you currently evaluate how effective a faculty meeting is?"

Danny: It is online.

Gloria: Through our online system - we have surveys.

Danny: Yes, surveys.

I asked for clarification to ensure Danny and Gloria were talking about evaluating faculty meetings, "Am I correct in understanding that you evaluate your faculty meetings by going online?"

Danny and Gloria (simultaneously): No.

I then asked, "How do you evaluate how well the faculty meeting goes?"

Gloria: I don't think we do.

Danny: There is nothing set in stone for us to evaluate the meetings.

Cyndi: But, that is a good idea – using our online system.

I asked, "What would it tell you if you evaluated the faculty meeting?"

Danny: What you learned, did you learn anything you might apply in your classroom and stuff like that.

Susan: Ask them in the next meeting if they are applying what they are learning in the meeting.

Danny: Like a suggestion box.

Gloria, Cyndi, Susan: Yes.

Gloria: Didn't get this or understand that – let's add that to our ideal meeting.

Susan: We could discuss this with the team leaders also.

Gloria: With constructive feedback.

Danny: At the meeting, write a quick question.

I clarified, "How would a suggestion box refer to evaluating?"

Danny: Maybe you have a question.

Gloria: Or even to evaluate – wasn't sure about this but now am clear.

Danny: Very general.

Gloria: Do we have one now?

I asked, "If you included an evaluation, would that come at the end?"

Danny: Yes – at the very end – evaluate the faculty meeting.

Gloria: Include suggestions, evaluations, or comments.

What appeared to be missing in existing faculty meeting practices was learning from them and adjusting practices based on constructive feedback. As Cameron suggested, "anyone that wants to learn" would undergo some type of evaluation. The questions I posed forced faculty, staff, and principals to think about faculty meeting routines, which may not have been considered previously. The conversations about evaluating the faculty meeting appeared to focus mainly on learning or making recommendations for future meetings. This may suggest that providing evaluations at the conclusion of a faculty meeting could provide meaningful information for structuring future meetings, choosing which topics to include, and adding clarifications as needed.

Paraprofessional participation. Although omitted from the larger faculty meeting, paraprofessionals proved to be a unique group of participants. I learned that these individuals are minimally involved in school faculty meetings, yet they possess a great deal of knowledge about the school and community. Anna said, “I am exposed to almost every student and every grade level. I would like to know what teachers know so that I can better help the students.” I understood Anna as saying that she wanted to strengthen her instructional knowledge base to better support the students she works with throughout the school.

Paraprofessionals did meet with the principal. All three paraprofessionals said they usually met in the morning after school started. During this meeting, they followed an agenda that included information: special dates they needed to be aware of, what they needed to help with, what paperwork needed to be completed, or what upcoming events needed planning. These meetings tended to be straightforward with opportunities to ask questions or voice concerns at the end (open agenda).

All three paraprofessionals shared their knowledge of alternative instructional methods used in classrooms because of their work throughout the school. It appeared that paraprofessionals had a working knowledge of a vertical curriculum alignment, if minimally, and perhaps more knowledge than some teachers, because they saw similar concepts and skills covered differently within, and across, grade levels. Letti, Anna, and Susan’s first-hand knowledge of the school community was a unique perspective. Most of them had children attending either the schools they worked in or nearby schools. The surprising part was, they were minimally involved or rarely asked to provide input on how students within these schools might learn best. When I asked Susan what processes she would include in her ideal faculty meeting, she said:

> I'll tell them to show me, to give me examples – that is one thing – examples, for them to model to me. This way, I could make sure they understand what I am trying to tell them, if they understand my point. I could say, ok – they are getting my point, and they understand where I am coming from. Actually, when you do this type of meeting or when you become a professional, you can give more feedback when you come from down than when you have everything in life. When you have, like, you are raised in a community like this one and become a professional you are more open-minded because you already lived here. But, when you come from a place that you have everything, you don't know what these people really need. So, I have to give them an idea of living in this type of community so they could see why I'm telling them to get students motivated, why to give them opportunities to talk, and try to understand them because not everybody had nice things in life.

Based on Susan's response, when we fail to gather input from paraprofessionals, often the individuals most closely associated with what students might be dealing with, we may miss opportunities to meet some students' needs. We may even misinterpret obstacles that students face at home, such as the values students' parents place on school. More importantly, paraprofessionals living within the community may have insight into approaches that would best support students and their educational goals. Sure, any administrator or teacher can say they know what students go through on a daily basis or what their living conditions are like by driving through the community; the paraprofessionals, however, have first-hand knowledge of students' daily lives.

Aside from understanding real-world experiences and home lives, paraprofessionals also possess knowledge about the campus and want to learn more. When asked about the paraprofessional-only meetings, Anna said, "We are together. We work as a team. We are all involved. Actually, we all have something to do, and we play a very important role in helping . . . helping out and making it a little bit easier for the teacher." Anna also noted that paraprofessionals bring a different point of view than principal or teachers. Although they may have a different viewpoint and principals suggested that they are part of the team, Letti mentioned that some of her paraprofessional colleagues feel "like less and are just here to work." Possibly, some paraprofessionals believe this because of their minimal involvement in faculty and staff meetings and their separate meetings, or maybe it is because their viewpoints or experiences are rarely explored.

Letti, Anna, and Susan all appeared to feel like outsiders and often received information after everyone else. For example, Anna said:

> When the TAKS scores come in, we are all anxious. We (paraprofessionals) are all outside the door wondering what is going on. The teachers are called in because TAKS results are in, and we are in the hallway. And, you know, whoever wants to stay and wait for them to come out, then the teachers let us know.

This is one example that exemplified a feeling of being left out, a group of paraprofessionals looking in and not being part of the larger group. When Anna described this during her interview, I could not help but wonder why she would not be hearing the results at the same time as everyone else. She worked with students all day, wanted them to do well on TAKS, and had a stake in student success. If, as principals stated during their focus group, paraprofessionals were part of the team, why would they not hear the results with the rest of the teachers?

Something that I became curious about was that most participants suggested that faculty meetings served as times when everyone came together and was a time for principals to pass along information. After learning during individual interviews that paraprofessionals were usually excluded from faculty meetings, I tried to figure out what was meant by “everyone comes together.” Paraprofessionals, omitted from the whole group faculty meeting and instead having a smaller meeting with the principal, missed what teachers and specialists were hearing. Paraprofessionals, like every other stakeholder group interviewed, understood why they were not part of every faculty meeting. They were hourly employees and would need to receive monetary compensation or be awarded comp time if required to attend faculty meetings. Although this may have been the case, my question to one paraprofessional was, “Have you ever asked if you may voluntarily attend the faculty meeting?” Interestingly, Anna said, “It has always been like that, but I guess we haven’t really asked.” I remember thinking, what does that mean? Why not ask?

Learning to lead meetings. Based on feedback from the district, it appeared that principals received little to no formal support regarding what a faculty meeting might look like. Upon closer review of the required campus professional development, the last page indicated that faculty meetings should include elements such as differentiated instruction, hands-on learning, rigor and relevance, or targeted on instructional strategies.

However, current faculty meeting structures tended not to lend themselves to these elements. For example, incorporating the rigor and relevance framework would be difficult when most of the faculty meeting content consisted of disseminating information. I wondered how the district might model incorporating a rigor and relevance framework when the employee handbook or migrant education was being discussed in a faculty meeting. Was it even possible to increase the rigor, employ the organization of Bloom's Taxonomy, or provide relevance and integrate these concepts into a faculty meeting when such topics the employee handbook or migrant education were being covered?

From the data I collected, specifically during the faculty and staff focus group, it appeared that teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals had ideas about how to make this happen. For example, the South Elementary focus group said:

> Anna: We need people with experience. I think we need people with experience, even from another teacher of how did this work for you. It might give an idea to somebody else and not just coming from one person [the principal]. This is how I was told and it is going to be good for you.
>
> Cameron: And on the agenda, like we all mentioned, the information that needs to be disseminated must be on the agenda in advance and then the staff is responsible for preparing themselves on what they know, don't know, and what they want to apply in their areas.
>
> Teresa: Thank you.
>
> Cameron: When they show up to the meeting, they are going to present.
>
> Teresa: Exactly.

Cameron: I already know that. I already know that. I e-mailed you that. I know this already.

Teresa: Or, you could say, I don't know if you have this, but maybe you could add these additional items.

Cameron: I want to learn this from what you are going to talk about in the faculty meeting. I already have the agenda in advance. I want to use this. How could I apply it to music, to library? Yes, you need to disseminate this information, but I want application. You want us to do the Bloom's Taxonomy, then how do we do synthesis?

While the South Elementary focus group discussed their ideal faculty meeting, they captured several ideas about how to integrate the necessary elements from the district-required professional development list that included rigor and relevance. This focus group shared the need for information to be relevant, delivered by knowledgeable individuals, and applicable to different settings. If principals, however, did not accept the input from faculty and staff, how might the district support and model what a faculty meeting looked like when integrating the elements of rigor and relevance or differentiated instruction with informational items such as a discussion of the employee handbook?

The principals' formal training appeared to have no impact on how they led faculty meetings. All three principals shared what they remember from formal administrative training:

Rene: There was a course called 'Principalship.' It did talk about effective faculty meetings, but very little. One of them was 'make them relevant.'

Chris: Very short.

Rene: Have an agenda before and stick to it, like a part of a chapter.

Chris: It wasn't very long – the Principalship course.

Rene: That was the only time.

Chris: It wasn't something lengthy.

Rene: Nothing tested – just mentioned.

Pat: I don't remember that when I went through leadership.

I concluded from this short conversation that principals figured out on their own what an effective faculty meeting looked like and what content it included. Given time constraints, maybe it was (1) easier to structure faculty meetings based on what they observed during district principal meetings, or (2) that how district supervisors led meetings was the only model they knew.

Research reflection on roles used during faculty meetings. The faculty meeting structure tended to result in a hierarchical, top-down approach. One leader, the principal, disseminated to followers, faculty and staff. A deeper analysis of the existing structure pointed to individuals who were uneducated about how to create better faculty meetings. Thus, it seemed as though principals led faculty meetings similarly to how their supervisors led district meetings. This resulted in some members of the campus feeling left out and others feeling as though the faculty meeting topics were irrelevant and time consuming.

I continued to ask myself more questions. This was especially true when statements contradicted one another, i.e., "we are all part of the team," while not everyone participated in faculty meetings. I wondered if the negative attitudes or feelings toward faculty meetings would be different if principals received formal training on how to lead effective faculty meetings. Also, what about the district expectations of incorporating elements that engaged participants and differentiated learning based on faculty and staff need, even though it was rare to see this integration process modeled during district principal meetings?

I learned a lot about the roles of faculty and staff during faculty meetings, including who participated and who did not. I began to understand how mandates and expectations controlled faculty meeting routines. I also began to realize that two principals, Rene and Pat, were rethinking their faculty meeting practices as evidenced in their videotapes from Valley and Texas Elementary. This included Rene's reflection with her faculty and staff about what she learned since taking part in this study and what she wanted to change for future faculty meetings. Additionally, during the individual interview, Pat stated that the ideal faculty meeting would empower teachers. Since much of the Valley Elementary agenda and videotape consisted of teachers sharing ideas and strategies with others, it appeared that transforming faculty meeting practices at Pat's campus could potentially shift meetings from a top-down approach to one of empowering teachers to take the lead.

Processes used by Principals during Faculty Meetings

This section describes processes used during faculty meetings. The first subsection, faculty meeting commonalities and differences, compares the faculty meeting processes used at the three study sites and how these processes relate to other schools within and outside of the district. In the second subsection, frustrations often result in obstacles, I describe how pressure tends to create obstacles related to time, attitude, and content because topics often appear irrelevant to participants. I conclude this section with my reflections.

Faculty meeting commonalities and differences. Data collected for this study aligned with my own experiences in faculty meetings and the pilot studies I carried out during my doctoral coursework. This suggests, at least for the schools I studied, that principals in many faculty meeting settings, whether in elementary or high schools, might follow similar processes. Meeting commonalities included organized principals, distributed agendas, occasional refreshments, and the dissemination of information. Another commonality was that interaction among faculty and staff was uncommon and paraprofessionals' participation in faculty meetings was infrequent. An exception to this practice occurred during the pilot study I did at an elementary school. Paraprofessionals participated for 30 minutes, after which the principal excused them due to contractual obligations.

Participants sometimes created positive and negative mental images when describing past faculty meeting experiences. Gloria described a prior principal as a "workaholic—it was understood that we had to be at the faculty meeting until 5:00 or 5:30 p.m. and sometimes twice or three times per month. It was mandatory." Danny described a school within another district as "negative and faculty meetings were more like a griping session."

Cyndi described a faculty meeting experience in another district as a place of fellowship: "We are eating, and we are going to have like a little game but at the same time we are meeting." While working in another elementary within the district, Cameron described meetings as "hands-on practice opportunities connected with informational topics such as building relationships." The latter statements of positive experiences in faculty meetings were not the norms heard throughout this study.

At least one faculty and staff member at each school reported that principals were conscientious of time during faculty meetings. Olga mentioned that Pat understood that time was precious, so Pat organized and planned faculty meetings and kept them on track. Juan, however, disagreed. Juan understood the need for Pat to disseminate information from the district; however, the thought of Pat adding a second faculty meeting each month did not sit well with him because it would mean the loss of additional after school instructional preparation time. At for South Elementary, one teacher mentioned from the principal's sensitivity to time. Teresa told me during her interview:

> What is working well is that Chris is very conscientious and takes into consideration that the faculty has taught the whole day. Chris is considerate and has everything ready, has copies already made, gives us only the most important information of what we need to do or what directly affects us in the classroom. And, by doing that and disseminating the other information that could be relayed via e-mail or a memorandum or grade level meetings, [by] choosing that route and that way alleviates us in wasting a lot of time in faculty meetings that really are not productive for us.

Rene specifically mentioned the need to be conscientious of faculty and staff time at Texas Elementary. Faculty and staff at Rene's campus agree. Danny said, "Rene doesn't keep you very late. Rene is very understandable as far as the distance and that we all have things to do." Cyndi noted that Rene is aware that many faculty and staff members are parents saying, "Rene apologizes every time we go over the time . . . if the meeting is going to go over time we'll know ahead of time." Gloria added during her interview, "Here the faculty meetings are always announced ahead of time and they are usually very brief and to the point where we don't have a lot of time to just a lot of time is not wasted." Gloria also mentioned that on days where faculty meetings may go late, Rene provided childcare services for faculty and staff with parents. Although the faculty meeting practices at each school shared some commonalities, differences also existed.

Frustrations often result in obstacles. The pressures in faculty meetings appeared to increase the likelihood of obstacles such as time, attitude, and irrelevant topics. Pat mentioned, "Faculty meetings have been getting longer and longer, and it is harder to keep everybody on task and attentive." Many participants agreed that time was an obstacle, not only in terms of meeting length but also in choosing the best time to hold faculty meetings. If held after school, paraprofessionals could not attend because of their contracted time. If held during the day, who monitors the students? If held before school, then the perception is that principals have no empathy toward faculty and staff with children. What is the best time for a faculty meeting? Is there a right time for everyone?

In addition to the issue of time, many participants believed that irrelevant topics led to disengagement while lack of awareness about faculty meeting topics created feelings of unpreparedness and disconnection. This ineffective use of time and the irrelevancy of topics affected the overall attitude of participants. When I think back to the district-required professional development list, one element was differentiated instruction. Unfortunately, faculty meetings tended to be a one-size-fits-all approach and a convenient way to disseminate information to everyone at one time. Principals in this study tended to agree that they leaned toward gathering staff members together to relay information rather than seeking an alternative means of delivery, i.e., e-mail or memo.

Many faculty and staff who took part in this study disliked the process of everyone having to attend information meetings, especially when it related to the countless hours of district-required professional development. When I asked Teresa what frustrated her about the faculty meetings that took place, she said:

> One of the things that not only frustrates me but a whole bunch of faculty is when we have to sit in a faculty meeting that information is being given to us that does not pertain at all to us. Let's say for example there has been numerous meetings where the information is solely for math faculty and I'm teaching a reading subject area or language arts and I have to sit in for 30 minutes to hear that kind of information. Or, information like sexual harassment that for the past 11 years I've been hearing and viewing the same video and I have to go through all of that. Or, the cafeteria video where we learn how we are going to pass out the breakfast or how we are going to go about the procedures for handling breakfast in the classroom.

I wondered why this is necessary every year for every faculty and staff member. And, does the district require these trainings as a means to cover itself in the event of a potential violation or future audit? Who decides this and for what reason?

One conversation with Sandi helped me to understand the position of the district. District leaders or the district's attorney typically attends legislative sessions regarding updates to existing policy or new requirements. These individuals determine next-step actions that include meeting with principals and then having them disseminate the additional mandates and expectations to faculty and staff during faculty meetings. Knowing this, I wondered if this cycle could stop. The mandates and expectations seem to increase, while it does not appear that anything is eliminated. I continued to ask myself these questions: Are mandates and expectations the real purpose for schools? Is there no need to increase teacher's instructional efficacy? By focusing a great deal of attention on mandates and expectations, are we meeting the instructional needs of our students?

I sensed Juan's frustration when he shared how principal leadership or modeling did not align with the expectations of faculty and staff in the classrooms. Thus, this results in another obstacle. Viewed through the lens of a student, Juan said, "Just like students, we do not want to be sitting down and looking at a person standing there talking for over an hour." Although Juan as a teacher understood the need for principals to hold faculty meetings, his frustration and negative attitude toward attending faculty meetings seemed to be a result of the approach. Juan's frustration stemmed from a lack of involvement; he tuned out because of the one person-led meetings. Because of his lack of participation in meetings and not having his needs met, Juan saw faculty meetings as time taken away from planning instruction.

In addition to frustrations about lost time and irrelevant topics, unfocused and non-participatory attendees also created obstacles. During the focus group at South Elementary, Cameron said:

> I think a slight roadblock are those apathetic people. They don't want to move much or whatever. When they hear people that want to learn and are asking questions . . . they give us the extra friction whether nonverbal or actual verbal

> when they tell us to shut up and let the meeting finish. ‘Why are you asking questions? Why are you making this longer?’

This comment from Cameron might suggest several things. These individuals believed they had nothing to learn, had little respect toward other colleagues who wanted to learn, and perhaps were tired of attending meetings that focused only on mandates, or perhaps a combination of these attitudes caused their response. Whatever the reason, these same individuals could hinder faculty meetings from changing.

In fact, Pat and Rene reported their frustrations with participants who were off task or inattentive. When asked if anything frustrated her during campus faculty meetings, Rene said:

> In faculty meetings, I – no, I can’t – well, I think (laughter) the frustration of, I think it is just more of a personal basis when you need to give information and teachers are doing what they don’t want their kids to do. And, nobody is paying attention to you, that kind of thing.

Maybe this was a coincidence, but Rene also said, “You see the same behaviors at principal meetings.” Rene told me that you see similar off-task behaviors during district principal meetings when irrelevant material is being presented. Was this a coincidence or do district principal meetings have something in common with campus faculty meetings? Was it too much to sit and listen while one person disseminated information?

When I spoke with Pat during her interview, she had similar frustrations about participants being inattentive.

> I think what I like best is just hearing the teachers—what they have to say. Sometimes I don’t like what I hear and it kind of bothers me. What I don’t like

> about it is again having everyone involved in what's going on. Usually, it is—I hate to say this but I guess it happens everywhere—it is usually the same people who are very involved, very attentive, and then there's the ones that I kind of have to walk around, just like in the classroom, that proximity type of thing, [and say] tell me what you are thinking.

I sensed some uneasiness from Pat, so I said, "So, there are some frustrations." She then said:

> Yes, there are. And like I said, it's the end of the day and usually our faculty meetings are on Mondays. The reason is that we have tutorials Tuesday through Thursday. And so to have everyone there, Monday is the perfect day. It is just [that] faculty meetings have been getting longer and longer and it is hard to keep everybody on task and attentive.

It seemed like a difficult cycle that was permeating district principal meetings and campus faculty meetings. It seemed that the presentation of irrelevant material and a lack of participation by attendees resulted in some negative attitudes or disinterest. What causes the inattentiveness of meeting participants? How might the content of meetings play a role in promoting unrelated conversations by participants, if at all? What relationships exist between student misbehavior during classroom instruction and participant misbehavior during meetings?

Researcher reflection on faculty meeting processes. Principals said that faculty meetings served as opportunities for everyone to be on the same page and hear the same thing. Although it might appear that the purpose for faculty meetings was to provide a consistent message for everyone to hear, not all faculty and staff attended meetings at the same time.

I got the sense from principals that they were doing their best. Principals led faculty meetings as they saw district meetings led or according to their perceived ideas about what faculty and staff wanted. They did not seem to have alternative strategies in mind to alter current practices. They did not receive formal training in leading faculty meetings. The principals seemed to possess a limited repertoire of strategies and might benefit from learning about other tools or strategies that could make faculty meetings more successful and better aligned with faculty and staff expectations. Knowing this, it does appear, however, that this study has made all three principals, especially Pat and Rene, more aware of what his/her faculty and staff would like to see in future faculty meetings.

Principals and Hope for Change

This section focuses on the ways that the principals in this study began to think about altering existing structures for faculty meetings. I begin by describing principals' reactions to current faculty meeting practices and introduce how each began rethinking current practices during their individual interview. I also share the principals' reflections from the focus group interview, which includes their inquiries about how to learn more about leading effective meetings. I conclude this section with an overall reflection for Unraveling Experiences: Accountability over Learning.

Altering existing structures. As I listened and engaged in conversation with each principal, each began reflecting on their past and present practices of leading faculty meetings. Each principal provided constructions for what he/she did and for how decisions are made. Moreover (and this was especially true about half way through each individual interview with principals), when I asked what learning took place in faculty meetings, something changed in the principals' attitude and in their thinking about meeting processes. The response from each principal turned to reflecting in action: possibly questioning their faculty-meeting practices or beginning to think about faculty meetings differently, thereby affirming Schon's (1987) research:

> A familiar routine produces an unexpected result; an error stubbornly resists correction; or, although the usual actions produce the usual outcomes, we find something odd about them because, for some reason, we have begun to look at them in a new way. (p. 26)

I sensed a transformation occurring with each principal when reflecting on current or past faculty meeting practices. What struck me was that it seemed that each principal had spent minimal time in the past thinking about or reflecting on faculty meeting processes or content. As I conversed with each principal and continued to ask questions, it seemed as though each began reflecting in action, producing a paradigm shift from what they had said at the beginning of the interview.

The reflection on action in conjunction with reflecting in action appeared to make principals aware of what they were doing or what they might do differently in the future. Although this epiphany may have made each principal more aware of his/her actions, it did not mean that change was imminent or that alterations occurred. An example of the shift in thinking occurred when talking to Chris about how current faculty meeting practices affected learning, "Whether I do or someone else does . . . we are simply teaching them strategies of what they can do. This year, I want my teachers to be even more involved in sharing ideas of how things are happening in the classrooms." In a separate interview, Pat said, "I think the teachers when they see each other in the classroom or when they observe other teachers present, I think they are more apt to listen."

As I reflected on the interview with each principal, I realized the differences between each viewpoint. Pat and Chris began rethinking how to structure faculty meetings. These two principals, when questioned about their ideal meeting design, shifted to a more faculty- and staff-directed meeting. They mentioned increasing participation for attendees and allowing teachers to identify topics, share strategies, and take the lead on designing agendas. They also mentioned the role of the principal changing to be more facilitative. Rene, however, maintained a vision of providing the information in a concise and timely fashion.

Although I mention Pat and Chris rethinking their faculty meeting processes during their individual interviews, this changed to include Rene during the principal focus group. In response to viewing the ideal faculty meeting charts developed by faculty and staff, Rene said, "So what do you do? Give me some answer so that I can become a better meeting giver." My response, "I don't have the answer."

After further time to reflect on the conversation, I came to the conclusion that the answer to 'what do we do' could be found within Pat, Chris, and Rene's respective campuses. A simple conversation to outline what future faculty meetings might look like, including the content and processes and how to integrate campus needs with district mandates, could be a start.

Research reflection on principals and hopes for change. Participant reflections during interviews created a clearer understanding of what took place during faculty meetings. Viewing the faculty meeting videotapes reaffirmed that the principals did most of the talking. The participants, for the most part and especially at South Elementary, sat passively and listened to the information with minimal engagement. The content of the faculty meetings were mandated trainings. However, as this study continued, the mindsets of the principals at Valley and Texas Elementary appeared to shift in thinking to how to incorporate more faculty and staff and less principal talk during faculty meetings.

The experiences of faculty, staff, and principals indicated that the purpose for schools was student learning and teacher development. However, it seems that the most prevalent message during faculty meetings was disseminating information, often mandates from the district. Although seen as mandates from the district because they are part of the required district professional development, I wondered if most of the mandates were a result of state and federal requirements. I then wondered how aware district and state administrators were of what happens during faculty meetings in schools? Do district administrators think about modeling or preparing principals to lead effective faculty meetings? Do they assume principals obtain graduate degrees where an emphasis in conducting faculty meetings is included in the curriculum? Or do district administrations believe that they currently model effective practices?

Hindering the Ideal

Hindering the Ideal describes the pressures and obstacles principals, faculty, and staff face to alter or change current faculty meeting practices. This section incorporates what faculty, staff, and principals appear to want in faculty meetings; however, numerous challenges may stand in the way of creating their ideal. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) have written: “A professional learning community is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all” (p. 3). Although this statement seems to sum up what faculty, staff, and principals wanted in this study, faculty meetings are not synonymous with, nor do they necessarily relate to the concept of, a professional learning community.

Faculty and Staff Ideal Meeting Elements

This section includes these subsections called: what faculty and staff want to happen in faculty meetings, the need to motivate and engage participants, the desire of faculty and staff to lead meetings, and the need to hold faculty and staff accountable. The section concludes with my reflections. The first subsection about what faculty and staff want to happen in faculty meetings outlines a comprehensive list of ideal meeting components generated by each of the faculty and staff focus groups at Valley, South, and Texas Elementary. The subsection about the need to motivate and engage participants describes how faculty and staff want their work recognized, as well as told what they are doing well. The subsection about the desire of faculty and staff to lead meetings suggests that they want to take on a more active role in faculty meetings. This includes taking part in the planning, as well as the delivery of material in faculty meetings. This section also reveals the need for principals to model instructional strategies and techniques, similar to what they expect to see when observing faculty and staff teaching in classrooms. The subsection on the need to hold faculty and staff accountable incorporates a feeling of ownership and suggests that it is important for faculty and staff to share what they already know. This section discusses how many faculty and staff members, after participating in the same required trainings for several years, wanted the opportunity to deliver the material in a different way. I conclude this section with my reflections and questions about how faculty meetings might look differently if faculty and staff had more opportunities for leadership roles.

What faculty and staff want to happen in faculty meetings. During the faculty and staff focus groups, I asked teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals to work together and develop a visual representation to capture their ideal faculty meeting elements. I include each school's ideal faculty meeting ideas below in a written, bulleted format.

The Valley Elementary focus group wrote the title, "Ideal Faculty Meeting," at the top of their sheet of chart paper and quickly began discussing key elements for their ideal faculty meeting. Their final product included

- positive feedback;
- snacks;
- 45–60 minute length;
- an agenda with student data organized by grade level, strengths and weaknesses in each grade level, district topics, and the inclusion of teachers to model positive strategies;
- an evaluation of the meeting;
- motivational activities; and
- mandatory attendance for teachers and administrators with paraprofessionals welcomed.

The South Elementary faculty and staff reviewed the task and immediately changed the concept to their "Ideal Staff Meeting." This became their working title as group members said that "staff" at their campus suggested everyone. Their final faculty meeting outline included

- an agenda (working document) that was previewed in advance, incorporated suggestions, omitted unnecessary items, and allowed staff to make preparations;
- presenters who were knowledgeable, professional, enthusiastic, and who incorporated hands-on activities and avoided generalizations;
- kudos for staff, teacher, and paraprofessional of the month, a positive beginning and ending, special news, success stories, a "works for me" segment, and munchies; and
- procedures, which were scratched out and seen as unnecessary.

Similar to South, Texas Elementary changed their working faculty meeting title to "Dine and Discuss for Student Success." The focus group at Texas numbered their items in order of importance. Their ideal faculty meeting outline included

1. motivation;
2. structure, but fun such as including refreshments;
3. sharing successful strategies and inclusive of everyone;
4. vertical alignment conversations at least three times per year;
5. current trends to include mandates, issues, changes; and
6. a suggestion box to serve as an informal evaluation.

Faculty and staff at each school developed the ideal faculty meeting charts on different days. The time it took to develop the charts varied, although each group averaged about 30 minutes from start to finish. The faculty and staff members conversed throughout the development, sometimes agreeing on what to include and other times challenging one another.

The need to motivate and engage participants. Contrary to current practices, the ideal faculty meeting charts suggested that focus group members wanted motivational topics and instructional techniques incorporated into faculty meetings, along with some faculty- and staff-led meetings. Similar to students in a classroom, Olga said she wanted her work validated and wanted to receive a pat on the back for her accomplishments. "Our administrators have to know that we also need a pat on the back. We are out there doing our best, and we need to be told." The South Elementary focus group also said:

> Olga: You know kids like to get good grades and hear good things.
>
> Juan: It is the trickle-down effect. If you expect us to be positive and to be praising, then it should be modeled.
>
> Olga: We all want it, a pat on the back.
>
> Jose: You all are making good points.

Similar to teachers, the three specialists appeared to have an interest in faculty meetings that engage participants. Specialists believed faculty meetings should be motivational and incorporate success stories. They wanted principals to act as facilitators or mediators and to keep presentations and discussion topics aligned with meeting goals. All principals said that they enjoyed hearing colleagues share ideas and wanted the ideal faculty meeting to be more engaging. Most paraprofessionals, like many teachers and specialists suggested more positive reinforcement displays of gratitude, and an increase in pep talks as key ingredients for better faculty meetings. One specialist recommended implementing cooperative learning strategies to increase engagement. Cameron said:

> I would prefer more hands-on [activity] if it is available. Like I mentioned, if they are just going to be telling us information, then it isn't going to include group activities or getting into groups. I have had meetings like that [more hands-on] and they are great. They are very unexpected. And, the faculty will remember that.

One teacher at South Elementary, Teresa, suggested that curriculum conversations should take up a big portion of faculty meeting agendas and that "teaching faculty everything else as far as time management, as far as procedural kinds of things could be disseminated in grade-level meetings where it pertains to specific grade levels."

When it came to student learning and achievement, specialists indicated their interest in knowing about gains being made, or the lack thereof, on formative assessments and about learning classroom instructional strategies that have worked teachers. According to the three specialists, understanding student performance and effective techniques implemented by classroom teachers would allow them to incorporate similar practices into their daily practices or to concentrate on non-mastered skills in a different discipline. This may result in increased student motivation, increased practice opportunities, or increased use of similar instructional approaches that are working for the given population.

When discussing the ideal faculty meeting, it became evident that faculty and staff were interested in faculty meetings that were hands-on, motivating, and led by their colleagues. It was also clear that they learned the most when hearing from their peers and were more likely to participate and connect to classroom practices.

The desire of faculty and staff to lead meetings. Many teachers indicated that faculty meetings could serve as opportunities for principals to model what they expect to see happening in the classroom. As mentioned, all teachers wanted to receive praise and positive feedback. They were interested in seeing how instructional strategies worked. One teacher, Juan, describing the ideal meeting in the terms of the principal's role said, "I would have my faculty do hands-on activities to where they could internalize the data in a manner that even our students do." The focus groups' ideal faculty meeting focused on using different techniques to meet various learning styles, engaging the audience, and using alternative modes to assist participants in understanding what was being verbally communicated. Cameron, who suggested using Bloom's Taxonomy as an example of an instructional technique stated, "I want to use this. How could it be applied to music or library? Yes, you need to disseminate information, but I want time for application."

Based on teacher perspectives of modeling during faculty meetings, I assumed principal meetings at the district to be similar to campus approaches. When I asked the focus group at Valley if they believed district meetings for principals were any different than campus led faculty meetings, they responded:

Olga: I think they are exactly the same.

Juan: They are probably like the way they offer them here.

Olga: Yes.

I then asked why they thought the meetings might be the same.

> Juan: It must be basically the same thing. The superintendent or assistant superintendent handing down . . .
>
> Jose: Data. And you gotta to do this and this and this. [It's] the same thing for us—data and you have to do this and this and this.

Many faculty and staff wanted opportunities to take the role as leader and present to their colleagues, share instructional ideas, and leave faculty meetings with deeper understandings of student needs or instructional strategies. Teresa said during the focus group at South Elementary:

> Leaders of this time, delegate. Leaders of this time don't have to hover over all the information—it isn't a power thing. It is, 'we need the information, and we need it from the people that know what needs to be presented.'

By having colleagues or those most informed present ideas, teachers feel less intimated. They perceive colleague presentations as sharing ideas and being different from the principal sharing mandates. Similarly, faculty and staff want the most experienced or knowledgeable person delivering the information. For example, Teresa said, "When we talk about bilingual . . . we don't need to be hearing from somebody reading the guidelines word for word. We need the bilingual coordinator so that I can ask questions."

Empowering faculty and staff to take on leadership roles during faculty meetings will require communication and planning. These conversations may include the material that needs to be covered or possible strategies that need to be used during presentations. Faculty and staff would then take on the responsibility for additional planning and delivery in the upcoming faculty meeting.

During the focus group interview, principals suggested changes to existing structures and wanted to include everyone in faculty meetings. Here is an excerpt from the principal focus group:

> Rene: You know, maybe your paperwork will have impact on our district. Because if they do want us to get paraprofessionals at that level, which would be awesome, . . . to create great teachers or teachers in the making, maybe they need to start bringing them in for staff development like teachers. [And] not just the last day for staff development when preparing for school to start.
>
> Pat: I agree.
>
> Rene: Because that to me is already . . . for principals and I'm not going; I'm at fault on that. You already put them [the paraprofessionals] in a different spectrum because you [are] say[ing], '[The] district says they are not important enough to bring in for staff development. They are here for a workday, so get to work. [They are told] 'We need bulletin boards, we need this, we need that. The teacher needs this and that.' So, you are kind of in that mode with them. I hate to say.
>
> Pat/Chris: Uh, huh.
>
> Rene: There are some [faculty and staff] that want a lot more, and I think that as principals we need to allow . . . that opportunity for those that really want to learn.

The need to hold faculty and staff accountable. One thing that surprised me from faculty and staff participants was their perception of 'being held accountable' if given the opportunity to present. Many teachers indicated that being responsible for planning and delivering some part of the faculty meeting would result in: (1) increased participation on the part of the attendees; (2) accountability; and (3) principals being able to monitor their knowledge. The conversation I had with principals during their focus group included their response to faculty and staff taking a greater lead in faculty meeting processes:

> Rene: You know what? I'm all for looking at all of this [faculty and staff ideal meeting charts] and there are very good ideas, but they feel that we have taken total control of, basically we are in total control of, the meeting and that is in reality . . . how it is. But I think that the control has been taken away from us.
>
> Pat: In a lot of ways.
>
> Chris: In a lot of things.
>
> Chris: We have to show every single step.
>
> Rene: Breakfast at 8; this; lunch at 12; sign in. So, yes, they are absolutely correct. All of these things need to be done, [but] reality it can't be.
>
> Pat: Because of everything else we have to do.
>
> Chris: We would love for them to [participate].

I said, "When talking about data earlier, one of you mentioned sharing data, that nearly all faculty and staff…when they talked about sharing data they like how you take and have a summary of something - each of you in your own different way".

> Chris: For each campus.
>
> Rene: Uh, huh.

I then said:

> But, during focus group conversations with faculty and staff, grade levels mentioned being able to even talk about their own data…Instead of principals presenting the data, the grade level talks about their data. There is a time

parameter to each group sharing, as mentioned by Juan, because nobody wants to hear somebody just talk for a long time.

Pat: To rattle on and on, of course.

I continued, “But if first grade is going to talk about their data, second grade talks about their data. In several cases it was maybe about three minutes each; very concise and to the point.”

Rene: That is a very good idea—I like that. I like that because you know what? It gives you ownership. You know that the principal is going to make you go up there and be accountable to the entire school for what we are doing—especially the team leader.

I said, “You just mentioned something else that came from faculty and staff focus group conversations.”

Pat: Ownership?

Rene: Accountability?

I continued, “Faculty and staff want the ownership of being able to present but with adequate time to preview and prepare in advance.”

During the faculty and staff focus group, Jose said, “Being accountable for presenting at the faculty meeting . . . really puts you on your tiptoes.” At South Elementary, Teresa spoke of the importance of other people sharing and being accountable, even if informational. “If I’ve seen the same training for 12 years, then I should know it. I should be able to present something like that.” Cameron added:

I guess if it is just general procedure [information] like we have year after year after year, I would have them [teachers] conduct the meeting. I have a lot of

> experienced teachers that have heard the same thing over and over and over. Well, I'm going to do this backwards. I want you all to tell me what this is about. So, I have to get them involved and tell me.

The conversation with faculty and staff suggested the need for principals to trust faculty and staff and to delegate material, empower them to present, and allow them to take the lead.

In many ways, having faculty and staff present appeared to be a win-win situation for principals. Unfortunately, this was not a conversation that principals had engaged in with faculty and staff and so the process or concept was unknown to them. Unraveling differences through conversation, however, could open the door for critical dialogue and reflection on what faculty and staff would like to see happen during faculty meetings versus what principals might believe faculty and staff want.

Researcher reflection on ideal meeting elements. While viewing the videotapes, I thought about opportunities for active engagement. During one faculty meeting, Pat referred faculty and staff to an article and then continued to note statements within various paragraphs of the article. I wondered how much additional time it would have taken for faculty and staff to read the article prior to attending the faculty meeting so that the time during the meeting could be spent reflecting on the article with colleagues. During another faculty meeting, Chris read information from slides, bullet by bullet with some commentary. Given that each bullet from one of the required district professional development sessions was read, I considered that one or more faculty and staff members could have presented the information, perhaps with a fresh perspective or a more engaging method of delivery. What other alternatives might exist instead of reading verbatim and bullet by bullet? Could faculty and staff work through a jigsaw activity where groups study and present information or could Chris allow experienced faculty and staff to take the lead on different sections of the training?

Is the Ideal Possible?

This section includes the following subsections: “Existing structures makes change difficult,” “Purpose for school overshadowed by mandates and expectations,” “Principals and their role in compliance,” and “Awareness and need for change.” The section concludes with my reflections. The “Existing structures makes change difficult” subsection describes how current processes require a lot of face-to-face training time to complete all of the district professional development requirements. The subsection titled “Purpose for school overshadowed by mandates and expectations” suggests that mandates and expectations are more important than student learning and teacher development. The “Principals and their role in compliance” subsection describes the pressures principals face to comply with mandates and expectations. Although faculty and staff have their vision for an ideal faculty meeting, principals face many challenges in making this ideal situation a reality. The subsection “Awareness and need for change” incorporates a changing mindset on the part of principals. Over the course of this study, principals seemed to begin thinking about alternatives to existing structures, albeit difficult, such as changes to agendas, including paraprofessionals in faculty meetings, and engaging faculty and staff through sharing.

Existing structures makes change difficult. Faculty, staff, and principals realized that district mandates placed a great emphasis on disseminating information, which (1) required a lot of time for principals to cover everything, and (2) was often unrelated to student achievement and learning. This was not to say that the information was not important or necessary. The trainings, however, emphasized safety and compliance and included information as about such topics as sexual abuse, child abuse, and blood-borne pathogens. During one my conversation with Sandi, the dialogue moved from the current process of how to get these trainings accomplished to “What other ways might we handle these mandated trainings instead of taking away time focused on student learning?” Our informal conversation turned into a brainstorming session, eventually leading us to the conclusion that the district has systems in place to make online learning a reality. By placing much of the district required professional development online, less time could be spent on these items and more time could be spent on instruction that would impact student learning. I wondered, though; was this approach possible? Would others in the district office be willing to explore this avenue? And who would tackle the challenge of placing the mandated items online?

Many faculty and staff may not have completely understood the pressures that principals faced. When the principals reflected on this possibility, they said:

> Chris: You have to think that we as principals get it from everybody. All of the departments are sometimes there and will share their aspect.
>
> Rene: [We hear from people] at the district administrator meetings.
>
> Chris: And we have to take all of that back because it is on us. If it isn’t technology, it is budget. If not budget, then something else. Everything falls on us. It might be their one thing, but is it our hundredth thing.

This dialogue occurred near the end of the principal focus group. It sent a powerful message about the pressures principals were under, and I gained a deeper sense of how they must get everything accomplished in a short amount of time. As I considered this conversation, it once again brought up this question: Why not let faculty and staff take on a more active role in faculty meetings?

Purpose for school overshadowed by mandates and expectations. Although faculty, staff, and principals described and outlined their ideal faculty meeting, compliance and mandates remained potential obstacles. Barth (1991) said, “God did not create self-contained classrooms, university departments, and isolated schools within a district. We did—because we find working alone safer than and preferable to working together” (p. 127). This statement captures how isolated decision-making by a few affects many. In faculty meetings, it appeared that the system with more authority, especially the district office, often worked independently and counter intuitively with what schools believed to be their central purpose. Rather than emphasizing student learning and teacher development—what study participants believed to be the main purposes for schools—findings from this study indicate that mandates and expectations are the priority. Leaders at the district office, however, might be unaware that many decisions they make or mandates they require control much of the campus-level professional development time and faculty meeting time.

Similarly, expectations from the state and federal level also require time from faculty meetings. This includes topics such as No Child Left Behind, scientifically-based research, instructional education programs for special education students, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). In short, the principals in this study were not the single cause of ineffective faculty meetings. The faculty meeting simply became a place where principals could disseminate the mandates and expectations from the district, state, and federal levels, instead of a place devoted to student learning and teacher development, due to the pressures they face.

Principals and their role in compliance. One of the most striking realizations I had was about principals and the pressures they face. Because of the many required professional development sessions, faculty meetings tend to become another source of time to accomplish the tasks mandated by the district. Principals mentioned pages of mandated information they must review and go over with faculty and staff. At the district level, Sandi agreed. During my interview with Rene, some of the pressures became evident when I asked if there were obstacles that stood in the way of altering faculty meetings. Rene said:

> Yeah, I see and you hear; I don't know if it is true or not, that there are marathon meetings taking place. You hear teachers coming and telling you. I think that some administrators feel that—again, I don't know how else to put it—but it is Wednesday and we are going to have a meeting. I believe in communication and all that, but I think you can find that way to disperse the information to where the staff is very much in tune but not at the expense of two and three hours of faculty meetings on Tuesday and on Wednesday. And another thing that has really put . . . a burden on us as administrators is that when the training for the TAKS starts coming around, you are bombarded with trainings. You have to train for this, now train for that, now train for second administration, now TELPAS, now that, and these are state-mandated trainings, so we are going to do the training and . . . then . . . all of the trainings from the district. On top of that, you are going to have a

> mandatory faculty meeting so that we can iron out our issues. So I think when testing comes around, I take a step back. It doesn't mean that my staff is not informed; it means that we are going to have a team leader meeting after school and you are going to take [it] back to your teachers during your grade-level meeting. ... That is what has to happen because if you are doing TELPAS training, you know, the four hours, [the] two hours, [the] three hours—and then TAKS—it is a monster. It is. I wish that you could see the amount of training. Are you aware of how much training it is for every single person? You need to get trained for the first administration. You need training for writing, and [for] this and [for] your backups and [for] small group testing. So you are not just talking about training your fourth grade for writing. You are talking about training at least half the staff to accommodate the dyslexia bundle, to accommodate the one-to-one, to accommodate the small group. What if that teacher is absent? You need two or three others on standby. What about monitors? Now monitors need to be trained too. So you are not talking about training a few teachers anymore. You are talking about training at least half of your staff. So if they have been going through all of this, they've been staying for tutorials every single day, they are going through all of these TAKS trainings. On top of every training that we need to have, then I want to have a meeting every Wednesday. That is going to be very hard on the teachers I think.

Rene described numerous stresses faced in schools, mostly centered on the accountability for disseminating testing mandates and expectations. Rene painted a picture of the pressures she faced; one could also infer from her comments how these same pressures affected faculty and staff.

What Rene described above is one set of expectations—testing accountability. Rene and other principals also faced the challenge of documenting the times that the district-required professional development occurs. With a list of required professional development sessions in addition to training on testing and accountability procedures, faculty meeting time has become another instance of trying to do everything. What does this mean? The pressure seemed to confirm that creating the ideal faculty meeting as described by faculty, staff, and principals was going to be challenging, maybe impossible, unless they could think of alternative ways to integrate compliance and mandated training with the ideal.

As my study continued, I began to understand this system of compliance where some individuals play the role of compliance receiver and others compliance providers. The district seemed to play the main role of compliance provider; however, state and federal accountability mandates acted as compliance providers as well. The district seemed to play a dual role, as did principals, by acting as compliance receivers and providers. State mandates moved through the hierarchy from the state to school districts to principals and then to faculty and staff. In addition to state mandates, the district, as mentioned by Sandi, received mandates from the district attorney, which then gets passed along to principals and then to faculty and staff. Faculty and staff, at the lower end of the hierarchy, appeared to have one role and that was to act as compliance receivers. When thinking about Rene's description of everything that needed to be accomplished in relation to compliance and accountability, it seemed that our purpose for schools was compliance rather than teaching and learning.

Pressures associated from the many mandates and expectations could create havoc in faculty meetings. For example, Gloria compared her faculty experience at Texas Elementary with experiences from previous experiences at another school:

> I think ours are pretty fun because there are always people laughing at these meetings. I was at another campus for five years and it was stressful when we had those faculty meetings. It was not good; people were on pins and needles when it came to faculty meetings.

Gloria went on to describe how accountability contributed to creating stressful situations, in addition to meetings not starting on time or lasting longer than planned.

Awareness and need for change. Based on principals' feedback, it appeared that they reflected on their own faculty meeting practices throughout this study. Their participation in and reflection on faculty meetings brought about an awareness of what was happening and the ideal that could happen. Seeing the ideal faculty meeting charts developed by their faculty and staff provided insight into what was hoped for in the future. Here is an excerpt from the conclusion of the principal focus group interview:

> Chris: . . . this was very good that you shared this with us because it is an eye opener of things that we would like to try and do, because we are here to try and help and make things better for everybody, not to be tyrants. We are not here to say this is the way it is and that is the only way. We are only human and we need to hear their side of it as well. If they have concerns, we need to know about those concerns. Yes, I'm sure just like I do they [the other principals] have open door

> policies for them [faculty and staff] to come and share anything they would like to share . . . having them tell us this is good. I like the ideas and [they are] something that we could consider with time. It is just time.
>
> Rene: And especially if you chose people who you respect . . . And I think that for the most part I know all of us did, right?
>
> Pat/Chris: Yes.
>
> Rene: If they are going to tell you 'hey, this is not right,' then you kind of listen and consider the source. So I know that I chose people that I respect as professionals. So I definitely want to start doing some of that stuff.

The principals came to the conclusion that faculty meeting material should be relevant to how meetings are carried out.

> Rene: Make them relevant.
>
> Pat: Relevant.
>
> Chris: Relevant to them.
>
> Rene: Keep the staff involved. I know that maybe I am learning a lot from this, and I know that it can only make whatever it is that I'm doing better. I think that in the rat race that we have, in getting everything done and initialed and sent back to staff development office, we forget the human element. We need to think, 'oh my god they want to be involved.' Well maybe I can't do it every single time but let me hear from a grade level, give them 15 minutes to present.
>
> Chris: I like the idea.

Research reflection on whether the ideal faculty meeting is possible. Faculty and staff may not understand the principals' role of acting as a liaison, messenger, or enforcer between the needs of the campus and expectations from the district, state, and federal leaders. All principals have the responsibility of ensuring that mandates and expectations get disseminated and implemented. Principals shoulder the responsibility of documenting when required professional development takes place, abiding by the district completion timeline, and submitting a signed document affirming the completion of all district-required professional development.

Faculty and staff may also not realize that some mandates are a result of grant-funded or federal programs. These mandates, often embedded within policy and funding guidelines, become additional topics for faculty meetings. As with the district required-professional development, most mandated trainings do not focus on teacher development or student learning. What is important for faculty and staff to understand is that principals do see the benefits of using faculty meeting time better. Unfortunately, the monotonous routine continues because disseminating several pages of required professional development to everyone seems convenient and efficient. Disseminating information often results in faculty and staff disengaging in faculty meetings. Principals, similar to teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals also mention the feeling of disengagement when attending district principal meetings. At some point, principals have a sense of information overload during their district principal meetings.

DuFour et al. (2006) suggests the following about professional learning communities:

> Members of professional learning communities are action oriented: They move

> quickly to turn aspirations into action and visions into reality. They understand that the most powerful learning always occurs in a context of taking action, and they value engagement and experience as the most effective teachers. (p. 4)

Faculty, staff, and principals seemed to agree with the research of DuFour et al.; however, creativity will be necessary to make this a reality. While watching the videotapes of the three faculty meetings, I noted that two principals mentioned changes that would be made to existing faculty meeting structures. The principals' reflections during individual and focus group interviews suggested they were each gaining a deeper sense of their own practices and other's perceptions toward faculty meetings; however, it appeared that two of the principals truly took this to heart. One principal articulated what would be different in the future whereas another principal actually did alter the faculty meeting processes to be more engaging.

Synthesis of Results

This study employed individual and focus group interviews, observations, and reviews of faculty meeting agendas and videotapes. This section describes my reflections after completing the individual and focus group interviews, along with my reflections after watching the faculty meeting videotapes and analyzing faculty meeting agendas. Within each section, I included observations as well as thoughts or questions that I posed to myself while reflecting on the data I collected.

Researcher Reflections on Individual Interviews

As I drove home from finishing the faculty and staff interviews, I could not help but think of what I had heard and what I was learning. I thought about the paraprofessionals being minimally involved, specialists who wanted to be aware of student data and learn more about what takes place in the classroom, and the teachers' interest in participating more in faculty meetings or having faculty meetings that modeled what principals expected to see them doing in the classrooms. I thought about the diverse perspectives from the participants and how their experiences might actually work against one other within the system. I thought about the pressures placed on principals from district leaders. If given the opportunity to voice opinions, I wondered if principals would tell district leaders how mandates and expectations affected campuses. I wondered which district leaders made the most decisions and about their professional experiences before assuming a district office position. I also became increasingly interested in the "necessity" for holding faculty meetings. Was the purpose for faculty meetings to utilize precious time to disseminate information such as procedures, mandates, and expectations? How, if at all, did communicating all of these mandates affect teaching in the classroom? How did faculty meeting content affect student performance?

One additional topic I continued to question was how some participants used the term "faculty meeting" synonymously with "staff development" or "professional development." This was especially evident with Chris; however, Rene also suggested using faculty meeting time for staff or professional development. Rene mentioned how the number of required professional development topics mandated by the district required time in faculty meetings so that everything was covered. As for Chris, he used the two terms interchangeably throughout the study. In fact, the heading on Chris' faculty meeting agenda read, "Staff Development." Are faculty meetings the same as professional development or staff development? Did principals perceive these to be similar because of the incorporation of required professional development into faculty meeting time or could principals look at the required topics as something other than mandates?

Researcher Reflections on Focus Group Interviews

I believe that one of the most beneficial aspects of the focus group conversations was the creation of and reflection on the ideal faculty meeting charts that faculty and staff developed. Barth (1991) suggests that reflection is an opportunity to distance oneself from the day-to-day routines and take a closer look: “In order to envision what might be, you have to see what is” (p. 127).

The development of the ideal faculty meeting charts involved a reflection process in which faculty and staff could work through their personal beliefs, hear others’ beliefs, and compromise, when possible, on how their ideas might look in the ideal faculty meeting. In all three faculty and staff focus groups, teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals took active roles in sharing ideas and/or developing the ideal faculty meeting. Although there was occasional disagreement, it was interesting to see how the dialogue among the different participants seemed to create new knowledge or helped them clarify personal beliefs about faculty and staff involvement in faculty meetings. For example, Letti’s perception of what happened during faculty meetings was not at all what Olga, Juan, and Jose described. Juan’s perception of principals modeling techniques that they expected classroom teachers to use was not something previously discussed between other faculty and staff members. Nor had they talked about Anna’s comment, about how paraprofessionals rarely spoke up and shared their ideas.

If any stakeholder group stood out, it had to be the paraprofessionals. As I thought about the focus group interviews, I understood more reasons why paraprofessionals were not included in faculty meetings. However, I also believed that including Letti, Anna, and Susan in this study brought about an awareness that neither other faculty and staff members, nor principals had thought about previously. Paraprofessionals often feel isolated and left out; yet these individuals possess unique knowledge about the school community, and they have experiences with many grade levels.

My reflection process also brought about deeper awareness and insight related to Pat, Chris, and Rene as they examined the non-identifiable, ideal faculty meeting charts. Seeing what faculty and staff wanted in faculty meetings (i.e. motivation, praise, and involvement) made them think about their emphasis and use of time. The three principals saw minimal mention of mandates and expectations on the charts. Not only did I begin to understand what these three principals might not have known about their respective faculty and staff, but I also became more knowledgeable of the pressures principals face on a daily basis. I got the impression that even if these principals wanted to alter his/her current faculty meeting processes, the district requirements and lack of training on effective faculty meeting components would make change difficult.

Researcher Reflections on Observations

Although faculty, staff, and principals expressed an understanding of each other's perspectives, it appeared that larger accountability structures stood in the way of change. As I viewed the faculty meeting videotapes, evidence of compliance training existed throughout about topics such as sexual harassment, the code of ethics, transition guidelines, and electronic communication. I listened when Rene said on the videotape, "Basically, everything I am sharing is the same. We are just going over it again." On his videotape, Chris said, “Another thing that we discuss with you every year is sexual harassment.”

As I listened to these principals, I kept questioned why it was necessary to have everyone sit and listen to this year after year. Was taking part in these trainings year after year a requirement? As I watched Chris’ faculty meeting, I too became bored listening to Chris read each bullet on each slide. I put myself in the position of faculty and staff sitting in the audience and wondered why it was not possible for them to read this information on their own. What is the difference between reading it on my own or having it read to me? I thought that there must be a better way, that faculty and staff needed to be trusted to read this stuff on their own. Or maybe that becomes another obstacle—lack of trust. Could it be that the district requires face-to-face trainings because they do not trust faculty and staff to review the information when time allows?

As I watched the videotapes, I also thought about the principals and their approaches to leading the faculty meeting. At the time of videotaping, we had already completed individual and focus group interviews. Thus principals had several opportunities to reflect on prior faculty meeting processes and to see how faculty and staff represented the ideal faculty meeting on a chart. It appeared that two principals began making changes in their faculty meeting practices immediately. Although compliance training existed, faculty and staff at these two schools had opportunities to communicate with one another, share strategies, and receive recognition for accomplishments. At Valley Elementary, Pat acknowledged faculty and staff birthdays, and faculty and staff provided updates on student achievement. The faculty meeting at Valley also included time to review an article on engagement and relationships. Although the principal did most of the talking when discussing the article, the attempt to include professional reading to engage participants was evident. At Texas Elementary, Rene had Danny acknowledge faculty and staff birthdays. Then Rene shared while faculty and staff celebrated increases in student attendance. Rene also included a raffle and allowed grade-level teachers or teams to share successful teaching practices. Rene also singled out the paraprofessionals. She thanked them for attending the faculty meeting and recognized them for their work throughout the school. Although compliance training took place in each meeting, Rene took steps to incorporate engagement for faculty staff and to include paraprofessionals.

Chapter Summary

The district in the study, like many other districts, has undergone substantial professional development aimed at professional learning communities or increasing the rigor and relevance in instruction. However, the question of change in practice remains. In their research, Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) asked, “Why does knowledge of what needs to be done frequently fail to result in action or behavior consistent with that knowledge?” (p. 4). The elements of rigor and relevance are part of the district-required campus professional development; however, these elements do not appear to connect with practices or process in faculty meetings. I wondered how familiar district leaders are in what happens in faculty meetings. I wondered if district leaders realized the amount of pressure they placed on principals, faculty, and staff. I wondered if district leaders had clear understandings of what the state requires regarding professional development. Did district leaders have a sense of what faculty, staff, and principals believed to be the purpose for school, and would they agree that the required district professional development supports that purpose?

The themes I have described in this chapter include "Unraveling Experiences: Accountability over Learning: and "Hindering the Ideal." Although many pressures exist in these three schools, it appears that beginning a reflective conversation on what faculty meetings could be has begun a change in practice for at least two of the principals. Based on the findings, I believe that a disconnect exists between what faculty and staff want in faculty meetings, what principals perceive to be the needs, and what the district expects. As Barth (1991) said, "You need to find mechanisms that will enable you, in the midst of stultifying routine and unrelenting demand, to get outside the dryer and observe anew" (p. 127).

Based on my findings, it appears that altering current faculty meetings might require critical conversations and deep reflections inclusive of district leaders, principals, faculty, and staff. In Chapter 5, I will introduce my model, which represents current faculty meeting structures and content, and I will relate my findings to existing research, as well as compare current district required professional development with expectations from the Texas Education Code (TEC). From what I have researched about the TEC sections on professional development and staff development, it's possible that the district requires a great deal more than the state and places a lot of emphasis on mandates rather than curriculum and instruction.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

"Understanding causes is helpful because such understanding can guide action. But by itself, this knowing is insufficient – action must occur" (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, p. 263).

My purpose for conducting this study was to find ways to make faculty meetings more useful for faculty, staff, and principals. Throughout this chapter, I incorporate the experiences of faculty, staff, and principal in faculty meetings and include their perspectives on these meetings, how they would design their ideal faculty meeting, and factors they believed inhibit current faculty meetings from improving. I support findings from this study with findings from existing research and introduce and describe the development of a new model, which makes connections to existing theory.

I begin this chapter by identifying discrepancies I found in principal, faculty, and staff perspectives. Next, I present findings that show discrepancies in what the district requires for professional development, the expectations of state and federal government, and how these requirements lead to the idea that higher power individuals or organizations might affect faculty meetings. I continue by reflecting on my research questions, connecting some of my findings to existing research, and introducing my model, "The Pressure Box." I conclude this chapter with a discussion on rethinking faculty meeting practices.

Discrepancies in Perspectives

Mezirow, J., Darkenwald, G., and Beder, H. (1975) defined the perspective discrepancy assessment methodology as "analyzing two dimensions of congruence: (1) discrepancies between the expectations of those involved in the program and current practice, and (2) discrepancies between the expectations of those most directly involved in policy formulation and program implementation" (p. 12). When analyzing the data that I collected, discrepancies existed across and within stakeholder groups: principal to principal, teacher to principal, paraprofessional to teacher, and so on. Although principals often understood the perspectives of faculty and staff, they sometimes felt as though faculty and staff did not understand the reality of district expectations. Additionally, district perspectives on required professional development did not align with what faculty, staff, and principals believed to be the purpose for schools, nor what they wanted to occur in faculty meetings.

Principals, especially Chris, seemed to believe that what faculty and staff wanted in faculty meetings was already taking place. Chris believed faculty meetings affected student achievement, but his faculty and staff did not agree. Chris said during his individual interview that faculty and staff participated in current faculty meetings; however, videotape analysis revealed that Chris was the only one who talked during the meeting. Chris mentioned during his individual interview of the need to get faculty and staff more engaged, even have them presenting, during faculty meetings. Two and a half months after his individual interview and after I analyzed the faculty meeting videotape, the same practices existed where one person led the meeting—Chris.

The main discrepancies in this study, however, seemed to come from the district. The required professional development list from the district requires principals to include differentiated instruction, rigor and relevance, hands-on activities, and so on. These required components, however, appear difficult to implement when the information presented focused on mandates and expectations. I initially believed many of these mandates and expectations came from federal or state guidelines or expectations because Texas Education Code 21.451 was listed underneath the district-required professional development document heading, but after reviewing state professional development and staff development requirements, the district-required professional development topics appeared unaligned. TEC 21.451includes the following requirements for staff development:

(a) The staff development provided by a school district must be:

(1) conducted in accordance with standards developed by the district; and

(2) designed to improve education in the district.

(b) The staff development must be predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives established under Section 11.253, and developed and approved by the campus-level committee established under Section 11.251.

(c) A school district may use district-wide staff development developed and approved through the district-level decision process under Section 11.251.

(d) The staff development:

(1) may include training in:

(A) technology;

(B) conflict resolution; and

(C) discipline strategies, including classroom management, district discipline policies, and the student code of conduct adopted under Section 37.001 and Chapter 37; and

(2) subject to Subsection (e), must include training based on scientifically based research, as defined by Section 9101, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (20 U.S.C. Section 7801), that:

(A) relates to instruction of students with disabilities; and

(B) is designed for educators who work primarily outside the area of special education.

(e) A school district is required to provide the training described by Subsection (d)(2) to an educator who works primarily outside the area of special education only if the educator does not possess the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the individualized education program developed for a student receiving instruction from the educator. A district may determine the time and place at which the training is delivered.

(f) In developing or maintaining the training required by Subsection (d)(2), a school district must consult with persons with expertise in research-based practices for students with disabilities. Persons who may be consulted under this subsection include colleges, universities, private and nonprofit organizations, regional education service centers, qualified district personnel, and any other persons identified as qualified by the district. This subsection applies to all

> training required by Subsection (d)(2), regardless of whether the training is provided at the campus or district level.
>
> (g) The staff development may include instruction as to what is permissible under law, including opinions of the United States Supreme Court, regarding prayer in public school. (TEC 21.451, 2009)

In addition to Texas Education Code 21.451, Section 21.4511 describes professional development activities for teachers and administrators. Section 21.4511 says:

> (a) From funds appropriated for that purpose in an amount not to exceed $2.5 million each year, the commissioner may develop and award grants to school districts, regional education service centers, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education for establishing and providing technical assistance and professional development activities in the staff development training of public school teachers and administrators.
>
> (b) The training under this section shall include training relating to implementing curriculum and instruction that is aligned with the foundation curriculum described by Section 28.002(a)(1) and standards and expectations for college readiness, as determined by State Board of Education rule under Section 28.008(d).
>
> (c) The commissioner may give preference to a school district, regional education service center, or institution of higher education conducting professional development activities under this section that applies for a grant in partnership with a state or national organization that has demonstrated success in the

> development and implementation of high school reform strategies. (TEC 21.4511, 2007)

Having studied the state requirements in the TEC, I sent a message to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Legal Department inquiring about more specific professional development requirements for districts or schools. The response from the Texas Education Agency (personal communication, May 10, 2011): “A school district must provide the staff development specified under TEC 21.451. There is not a more specific list.”

I wondered why most of the required professional development trainings that Valley, South, and Texas executed did not exist within either TEC 21.451 or TEC 21.4511. Actually, the TEC requirements appeared to place a greater emphasis on learning, which is more in line with what all faculty, staff, principals, and district executive director believed to be the purpose for schools. I wondered why the state codes did not always specify time-frames for a training, nor whether a training must be conducted face-to-face, delivered annually, or indicative of persons that must attend.

During her individual interview, the executive director mentioned the annual requirement for all school district employees on blood-borne pathogens. Knowing this, I questioned why this district would require training not listed within the TEC requirements. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to speak with the Associate Commissioner of Standards and Programs at the Texas Education Agency while attending a state-level planning meeting, so I asked her for guidance on locating professional development requirements for Texas schools and districts. She referred me to the Texas Administrative Code (TAC). Although I did not find blood-borne pathogen training requirements in TAC Title 19 related to Education, I did find it in Title 25, Health Services. Within this section, there is reference made to annual training requirements. Rule §96.203, Section C states: “Employers will annually review their exposure control plan, update when necessary, and document when accomplished” (TAC Rule §96.203, 2006). This TAC section also references the Title 29 Code of Federal Regulation, §1910.1030, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. This federal statute requires annual blood-borne pathogen training.

Similar to the TEC, TAC nor OSHA specify exactly what content or how the training must occur. It provides guidelines on what to include in the training; it also says that employees must have access to someone if they have questions. It does not list face-to-face training as the required dissemination method. It states that someone must be available to answer questions. Thus, one could argue that faculty and staff could read the contents themselves and have access to an onsite contact if someone has a question. This seems like one training that would require minimal time, especially for faculty and staff that have previously taken part in it. Contrary to how the TEA Legal Department responded, it appears that there may be a more specific list or should be a more specific list, which is inclusive of all necessary trainings and can be easily accessible to anyone.

I spent hours searching the TEC and TAC trying to locate the training requirements for blood-borne pathogens. Although I made time for this research because I wanted to incorporate an example into this dissertation, the average principal, faculty, or staff member would likely not have the time to spend researching one topic such as this. This means abiding by district mandates without questioning the requirement or without knowing about alternatives that could save time. From my experience, the TEC and TAC websites are confusing and time consuming to search. Because theses sites did not seem user-friendly, it made it difficult to locate a comprehensive list of expectations from the federal government, state government, or local school district or to understand if one exists.

Unfortunately, for these study sites, the state requirements mention the district playing a key role in determining professional development. This seems to result in a major disconnect between what district leaders believed was important, what principals believed was important, what the state requirements said, and what most faculty and staff believed to be important. This returned me to earlier questions regarding who makes the decisions of what to include on the district-required professional development list. Do district leaders have a sense of how their mandates and expectations affect schools? How do district leaders perceive, if at all, the effect required professional development—meaning mandates and expectations—have on teacher development and student learning? Why might district leaders require professional development not specifically addressed in state codes?

As I posed these questions and reflected on what I had learned throughout the study, I wondered to what extent the concept of power played in decision-making. Instead of campus-based decision making, differentiating and providing training based on need, district leaders took control and developed a one-size fits all approach to hold campuses accountable for mandates. Campus principals then received the eight-page document of required professional development. This included presentation deadlines, presenters, audience, space for principal initials to show training completion, space to document the features incorporated into the training (i.e. rigor and relevance, hands-on), and a final box for the principal to sign at the end of the year to confirm the completion of all trainings.

Although I am amazed at the amount of time and number of required professional development topics, the final section lists additional elements to mention when presenting each topic. This includes differentiated instruction, English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) strategies, hands-on learning, instructional strategies, rigor and relevance, Response to Intervention (RTI), and targeted math and science instruction. Knowing that many of these presentations take place during faculty meetings, it seems unrealistic to incorporate all of these features. In fact, I did not observe most of these features during a district representative presentation that was part of one of the videotapes. So my question now became, who must include these features, only campus principals? If the document came from the district, one would expect district office presenters to model and abide by the same expectations when presenting.

Although the state requirements placed a stronger emphasis on curriculum and instruction, I am not sure what some of these sections/subsections might look like in training or application form. With so many chapters, sections, and subsections in the TEC, I wondered who would provide examples for the delivery of these expectations at schools. For example, training in Section 21.4511 “shall include training relating to implementing curriculum and instruction aligned with the foundation curriculum.” What does this look like when implemented? How would state policymakers describe or demonstrate what they expect of this requirement as written in the TEC? I gathered from reviewing the TEC and from seeing this district’s professional development requirements that much of the information was ‘open to interpretation’ by the reader. In this case, it meant district leaders interpreting the requirements.

Reitzug (2008) tells us:

> The reason for involving followers in organizational decision making and direction setting is not simply to make them feel good about being part of a democratic organization, but to provide the opportunity for them to become more reflective about the purposes of education, schooling, and the role of their personal practice. (p. 402)

What I learned from analyzing data from this study, is that the district-required professional development sessions, which all faculty and staff must attend, created and maintained a hierarchical, top-down structure where the district made the decisions not aligned with what Reitzug writes. These requirements and this autocratic structure allowed for minimal to no interaction during faculty meetings because the district-required professional development sessions took precedence. These requirements created an environment of mandates and expectations, regulated by district leaders, and perpetuated by an annual process. This structure put in place a standardized approach, not differentiated for individual schools to make their own decisions.

Additionally, the existing structures resulted, for the most part, in faculty, staff, and principals routinely following and complying with regulations rather than focusing faculty meetings on student learning and teacher development. All principals used faculty meeting time to complete the district-required professional development sessions. Most teachers and specialists attended faculty meetings and passively listened to the information presented. The three paraprofessionals usually attended separate meetings with principals, often unaware of what occurred during faculty meetings, mostly a result of district requirements on their contractual time. The one-size-fits-all approach appeared to take into consideration one group's perspectives and opinions, that of district leaders and their interpretations or expectations. This established an organization in which those at the lower end of the hierarchy, faculty and staff, did not frequently participate in decision-making, which resulted in their voices regularly going unheard. Teachers did not collaboratively share instructional strategies or techniques that might assist someone else. Paraprofessionals, based on those involved in this study, did not share what they knew about local school communities or what they saw from their work across grade levels. Ultimately, the decisions were made by those most removed from the actual school environment, instead of incorporating the ideas of those working in schools on a daily basis.

The Pressure Box

In this section, I respond to the four research questions I posed at the beginning of this study using my analysis of the data I collected. First, I will introduce my model, "The Pressure Box." After analyzing and reflecting on faculty, staff, and principal experiences in faculty meetings, I developed this model to convey the overarching findings in this study. Next, I discuss how faculty, staff, and principal ideas for their ideal faculty meeting may shift The Pressure Box to more of a Participant-Centered Learning Environment and then describe some inhibitors that hinder faculty meetings from changing. Finally, I discuss the perceived effects faculty meetings have on school accountability ratings.

What were the experiences of faculty, staff, and principals in faculty meetings? I learned many things by listening and engaging in conversation with faculty, staff, and principals to understand their experiences. Having an agenda is important. Most faculty, staff, and principals noted the necessity of having an agenda that outlined the structure of the faculty meeting. Scholars have suggested that an agenda serves as a device to advance work and focus on a common purpose (Mehle, 1996; Luong, 2001; Klein, 2005; Brandenburg, 2008; Leach et al., 2009), and this held true for this study. The differences that existed between this study and what existing research has described is that agenda topics in the three study schools did not always focus on professional learning, school improvement goals, and student achievement. Rather, the sites in this study tended to maintain a focus on mandates and expectations, which were often determined by the district.

Most faculty and staff in this study understood the need for faculty meetings; however, they wanted to see more engagement with them and to share responsibilities with principals. Sexton (1991) argued that principals tend to lead faculty meetings in a more authoritarian style with minimal input from those participating and devoting considerable time to administrative issues. These findings from 1991 appear to remain prevalent today when connecting to the sites in my study. The majority of faculty, staff, and principals indicated that faculty meetings consisted mostly of information containing mandates and expectations. Most faculty and staff said that faculty meetings were one-sided in that the principal did most of the talking or presenting.

Another finding consistent with Sexton (1991) was that many teachers wanted to participate in discussions and decision-making. In describing their ideal faculty meeting, all faculty and staff described what a faculty meeting might look like if it included collaboration and shared decision-making. The district mandates seem to overshadow these ideals unfortunately. Principals, in fact, took on a great deal of responsibility that seemed unknown to faculty and staff. A short conversation amongst principals made this clear:

> Rene: You are responsible for everything. And, as a principal, you are the target of everything.
>
> Chris: Of all, constantly dodging bullets at all times because you are responsible. We are ultimately responsible for everything that goes on in a campus. I tell my staff if you do good, it comes to me. You do bad . . .
>
> Pat: it comes to you.

Sarason's (2004) description of faculty meetings as boring and unstimulating aligned with faculty, staff, and principal experiences in this study. It appeared that these perceptions were often created by a lack of involvement in planning the meeting, being prepared for the meeting, or seeing no benefit of the material being covered. Many faculty and staff members described feelings of inattentiveness when topics were irrelevant and time was wasted. These findings appeared consistent with what Luong (2001) found when she referred to unscheduled meetings producing fatigue, stress, and negative attitudes. All principals in this study scheduled meetings in advance; however, participants had no time to prepare for the meeting because they were unaware of the topic/s.

The literature review in this study has indicated that numerous scholars have identified the necessary characteristics for effective meetings (Sexton, 1991; Luong, 2001; Klein, 2005; Longo, 2005; Francis, 2006; Arlestig, 2007; Brandenburg, 2008; Leach et al., 2009). Among some characteristics were communication, pre-planning, shared decision-making, proper facilitator training, and participant engagement. Unfortunately, the faculty meetings at the study sites tended to focus on mandates and expectations and were often lead by the principal. Mehle (1996) noted that meetings are held for a variety of reasons and are necessary for the success of any organization. Meetings may include opportunities to share ideas, discuss issues, collaborate, evaluate student achievement, or educational programmes (Klein, 2005). Although most participants said that faculty meetings included sharing student data, the focus remained on disseminating information and not on collaboration or sharing ideas.

The data I collected in this study highlight some commonalities and discrepancies. The three principals said there was a great deal of information to pass on from the district, and this was evident when reviewing the list of required campus professional development. Two principals, Pat and Chris, believed that faculty and staff wanted faculty meetings to be more interactive while one, Rene, believed faculty and staff wanted to receive information. Most faculty and staff suggested the former. Faculty and staff were interested in faculty meetings that were interactive and hands-on and that allowed them to present, share strategies, and discuss vertical commonalities. These findings were consistent with Barnett (2004) when he indicated that teachers want practical information to use in the classroom.

The experiences of faculty, staff, and principals in faculty meetings led me to the realization that many factors contribute to the effectiveness or lack thereof in meetings. In Figure 1, The Pressure Box, I represent my interpretation and model based on my analysis of individual and focus interview and observation data, as well as material culture.

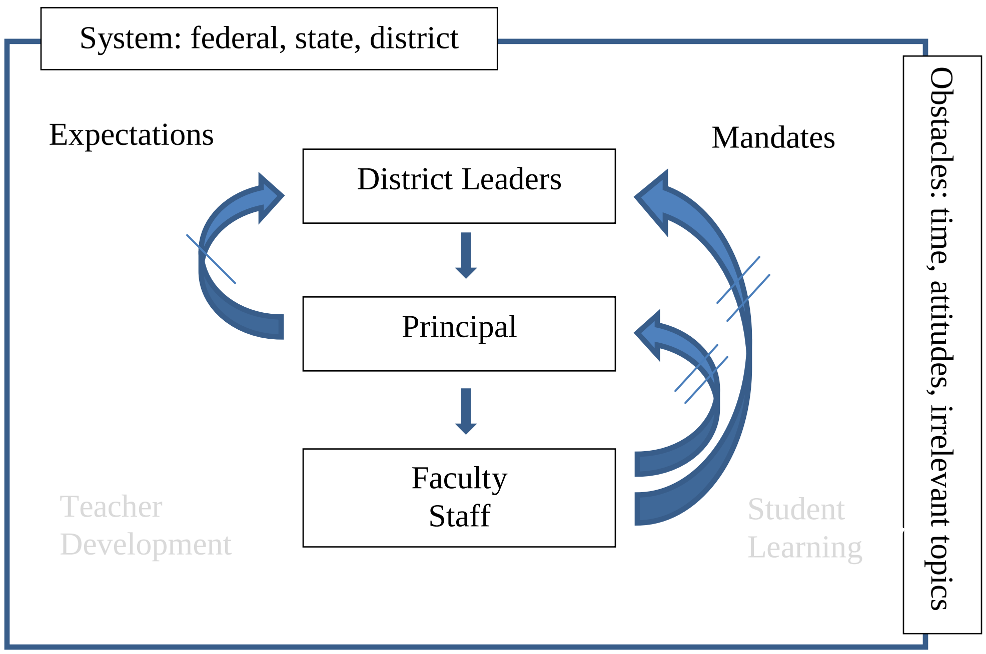

Figure 1. The Pressure Box

The Pressure Box conceptualizes the increased expectations to bolster student achievement, while at the same time expectations and mandates outweigh the time used for teacher development and student learning. Summarized by Cameron at South Elementary:

> I think that most meetings don't really relate to our personal performance. They'll sure tell us about our performance after TAKS and benchmarks. They'll show us numbers and their pressures from further on up, but I would like for our meetings to have more . . . about us, the ones in the trenches.

Amidst a time when scholars (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2002) have suggested that leaders empower, trust, and build capacity, increased accountability and higher expectations challenge these ideals. The pressures placed on schools result in less time spent on learning and development and more time on communicating expectations. This situation delineates a system that places more and more pressure on higher performance, but does not communicate how to achieve these higher performance levels; instead most communication is about ‘do this’ versus let’s determine and demonstrate ‘how to’.

The light shading in The Pressure Box represents what study participants believed were the purposes for schools and includes teacher development and student learning. Although these were the ideals, they were nearly non-existent in faculty meetings because expectations and mandates from the district overshadowed them. The information shared at faculty meetings tended to come from a hierarchical structure, federal, state, and local district policies disseminated via district leader interpretation to principals and then to faculty and staff with paraprofessionals often the last to receive information because they were excluded from the faculty meeting. With the increased pressures and lack of engagement or input from faculty and staff, faculty meetings created numerous obstacles. Mandates presented resulted in participants feeling time was wasted and irrelevant information resulted in negative attitudes and actions such as faculty and staff not wanting to be present, talking to other people, discouraging others from asking questions, or focusing on going home.

The Pressure Box illustrates an environment, which is dominated by the hierarchical chain of commands and emphasizes mandates and expectations rather than what participants say matters most: student learning and teacher development. The Pressure Box illustrates the pressures on accountability and processes, which result in faculty and staff being talked at, tuned out, and losing interest. The center section delineates the communication structure and lack of feedback between the district leaders, principals, and faculty and staff. District leaders pass on mandates and expectations, yet often fail to gather feedback. In Chapter IV, I mentioned that principals evaluate the district principal meetings; however, I also mentioned how they often fail to say what they believe for fear of someone finding out who said what. The Pressure Box shows this incomplete or partial feedback as one line through the left-side arrow. The two lines through the right-side arrows illustrate the findings from this study that suggest faculty and staff feedback is rarely gathered from principals or the district, especially when it pertains to faculty meeting content.

Participant-Centered Learning Environment

How would faculty, staff, and principals design their ideal faculty meeting? I represent findings to this question in Figure 2. This is a similar depiction to The Pressure Box in Figure 1. The second figure focuses less on expectations and mandates and more on teacher development and student learning. The open lines of communication allow for ongoing feedback. Many faculty and staff members mentioned during the focus groups that if they were the ones leading, sharing, and being actively engaged that many of the obstacles to better faculty meetings would diminish significantly. They realized there would always be mandates and expectations, but they also believed there were alternative methods for presenting them.

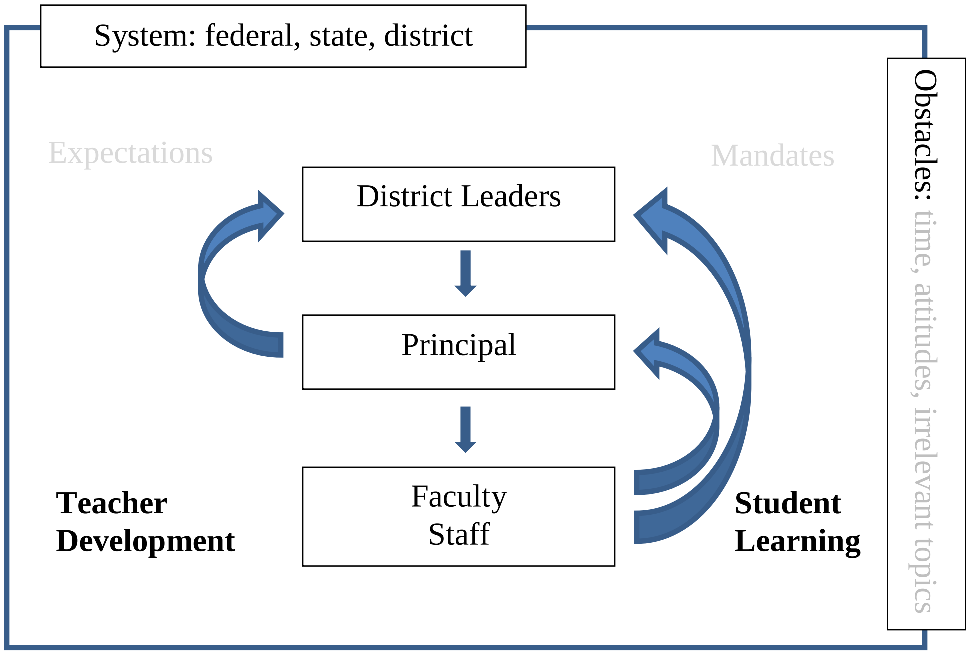

Figure 2. Participant-Centered Learning Environment

Most faculty and staff suggested that faculty meetings be participatory and inclusive of everyone. They indicated that they wanted to have the opportunity to act as a leaders, feeling empowered to present to colleagues yet held accountable. They wanted time for vertical conversations to ensure the alignment of instructional strategies and to gain a deeper understanding of what students needed.

The Participant-Centered Learning Environment connects the entire system. Sergiovanni (1995) has described the systems view as “not limited to the individual teacher, the school, the workflow of teaching and schooling, or the broader political and administrative context. Instead, the four are viewed as interacting units of change, all requiring attention” (p. 280). The current faculty meeting scenarios seemed limited to one aspect of Sergiovanni’s systems view, the broader political and administrative context. I learned throughout principal, teacher, specialist, and paraprofessional conversations that faculty meetings did not devote specific time to individual teachers, nor time for improving teaching. Rather, the political mandates and expectations took precedence.

Faculty Meeting Inhibitors and Alternatives

What, if anything, inhibits faculty, staff, and principals from changing current faculty meeting practices? This was the third question to understand, how to make faculty meetings more useful for faculty, staff, and principals. All stakeholder groups had a sense that the district placed great pressures on the schools. This was evident in faculty meetings when principals conveyed the many mandates, policies, and procedures. Losing sight of individual campus communities and needs, the district may not have realized how these pressures place an emphasis on compliance and not learning.

The required campus professional development sessions, and district principal meetings placed significant pressures on principal's and which, in turn, affected faculty and staff. The required campus professional development sessions required the completion of set trainings by a certain date, identified the person responsible for the training and those expected to participate, identified the resource to use, and for some trainings have even established time frames (i.e., 1: 30 p.m.-4: 00 p.m.).

These requirements adversely affected faculty meetings. Because of the number of trainings and the number of people to train, faculty meetings became the place to disseminate the many mandates and expectations. Although the district-required professional development checklist also included a reference to the TEC, Section 21.451, it may not be accurate. This code, outlined earlier in this chapter, does not specify many of the trainings listed on the district's required professional development document.

The passage of Public Law 107–110 on January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, also sets a focus on federal and state accountability. The four principles of NCLB includes stronger accountability for results, expanded flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work. NCLB required states to create and measure student learning in reading and mathematics in grades 3–8 annually. States established annual yearly progress measures that schools should attain. Failure to meet the annual yearly progress goals can include major implications, sometimes through additional district monitoring and mandates or through a state required school restructuring (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Data collected, analyzed, and disseminated on the Texas Education Agency website include state, district, and campus reports; reports based on race, ethnicity, and other criteria; as well as reports that identify achievement gaps. These data provide parents information about the quality of their child's schools, teacher qualifications, and a child's progress in tested subjects.

In Chapter IV, one of the findings I presented was the sharing of student performance data during faculty meetings. I shared how district leaders share results with principals during their district principal meetings and disseminate data in faculty meetings. I also described faculty, staff, and principal perspectives about the purpose of schools are, teacher development, and student learning. What I learned in this study is that there is no lack of sharing data at the state, district, and campus level. What seems to be lacking is the emphasis on instructional techniques to strengthen what the results indicate. For example, students struggle in third grade on problem solving. What does that mean? What strategies might we integrate into instruction? And how might this be integrated in faculty meetings?

Based on the findings in this study, what I see missing in faculty meetings and professional development is time spent on developing teacher instructional practices, which ultimately affect student learning because district mandates and expectations take on a more important role. The state gives districts the flexibility and power to make decisions and does not require a one-size-fits-all approach. I wonder, however, who monitors district implementations for the state recommendations in the TEC. For example, how would the state know if a district allowed campuses to make site-based decisions regarding curriculum, professional development, and so on. Campuses in the district studied appeared inundated with mandates and it was not clear why or from whom. It did not appear, for example, that the study sites made many site-based decisions on professional learning, as evidence by this statement, cited earlier, from Rene:

> You know what? I'm all for looking at all of this [faculty and staff ideal meeting charts] and there are very good ideas, but they feel that we have taken total control of, basically we are in total control of, the meeting and that is in reality . . . how it is. But I think that the control has been taken away from us.

Dissemination Alternatives

Are there alternatives for disseminating the many mandates, potentially overcoming one of the greatest obstacles? The faculty, staff, and principals suggested alternatives. Here is a conversation during the principal focus group interview that occurred as they reflected on the ideal faculty meeting charts and an alternative method for mandated compliance trainings:

Pat: What does it say?

Rene: . . . done online. Oh, that would be awesome.

Pat: Well they've talked about doing it.

Chris: You know, but you say for them to go online and be able to do it. Sometimes they need to go and prepare themselves for TELPAS and get that training online for TELPAS. Just to get them to do that they are like 'oh', just to do that. Can you imagine if we have them do this all the time?

Rene: I think when you give them the reality: 'Ok, we have 10 sessions to go' . . .

Chris: Do you want to do this [in person] or online?

Rene: [If you say] 'It'll take about six faculty meetings after school probably until about 4:30PM or 4:45PM or do you want to do it on your own?' I guarantee you [they will say] on their own.

Pat: On their own.

Rene: Whoever did this, that is an awesome idea!

The principals then continued the conversation regarding how faculty and staff would be accountable:

Pat: And they [should] do an evaluation on it.

I asked, "So that you know it is done?"

Chris: Yes, because they do the evaluation.

Pat: They do the evaluation to get CPEs.

Chris: Because they [the CPEs] are [given] through evaluations.

I then said to the principals, “So, let’s say that all of that is done, all of those trainings that you do that takes up all this time is done online. Does this look like it could become more of a reality then?”

> Chris: Yes.
>
> Pat: Yes. I could see for instance the vertical teaming getting together for the conversations, for it to happen three times a year. I could see that happening during staff development days. Again, with all these other requirements we have to do, we don’t have time.

This was one example of involving all of the stakeholder groups in recommending alternative solutions to what has become a major problem. Another example, also from the principal focus group:

> Rene: Or maybe at the very beginning of the school year meeting with team leaders and saying ‘OK I really want to make great faculty meetings. What do you all suggest take place?’ And [then I] get the feedback from them. I know that whenever my team leaders are onboard I can usually get the rest of the staff.
>
> Chris: Right.

It appears the district creates the most obstacles inhibiting faculty meetings from changing. However, there may be campus level obstacles too. One contributing factor may involve the lack of training principals received on leading faculty meetings. Each principal recalled minimal mention of faculty meetings during their graduate preparation:

> Rene: There was a course called Principalship. It did talk about effective faculty meetings, but very little. One of them was make them relevant.
>
> Chris: Very short.

Rene: Have an agenda before and stick to it, like a part of a chapter.

Chris: It wasn't very long – the Principalship course.

Rene: That was the only time.

Chris: It wasn't something lengthy.

Rene: Nothing tested – just mentioned.

Pat: I don't remember that when I went through leadership.

This is indicative of the minimal preparation for leading meetings and, thus, suggests that these principals learn to lead faculty meetings by what they experience. One of the main concerns with faculty meetings is lost time and the persistence of the same ineffective processes passed down from one leader to another (Mehle, 1996).

As mentioned, the pressures that exist often result in obstacles such as wasted time, attitude including inattentive participants, and irrelevant topics. Although not simple, maybe there are ways to overcome some of these obstacles by creating and integrating innovative ways to present the many mandates and expectations required by the district. Hackman and Wageman (2007) have described leaders as having to "continuously chart a course between what essentially is a covert coup (acting as if one's own leader need not know what one is doing) and abdicating (mindlessly passing on to one's subordinates whatever is received from above)" (p. 45). The principals in this study, if interested in faculty meetings that meet the needs of their faculty and staff, will need to be creative in figuring out how to maneuver around mandates and expectations to focus on student learning and teacher development. Based on findings in this study, a conversation with faculty and staff may be the place to begin to find some clever ways to present the mandates and expectations.

Faculty Meeting Effects on Accountability Ratings

What faculty meeting commonalities or differences, if any, exists among the exemplary, recognized, and acceptable rated campuses studied? This was my fourth question in understanding ways to make faculty meetings more useful for faculty, staff, and principals. Regarding exemplary schools, Jose said, “To be honest, their faculty meetings are probably more on the positive side in the sense that they reached their goal. They are on the right track obviously if they hit their goal and that is the highest goal you can get.” Other faculty and staff members believed that higher accountability ratings meant clearer goals, higher expectations, ongoing classroom accountability, and data-guided decision-making. Chris expressed this perspective on whether an exemplary campus might be different:

> Definitely, because we share a lot and we expect whatever is being shared is being implemented in the classroom. As we do our walkthroughs as administrators, whatever is being shared, I make sure that it is being effective in the classroom because that is going to impact instruction. If I gave you this skill, taught you this strategy, gave you information on how to do something, I expect it to be done.

However, these faculty and staff members’ perspectives were in the minority. The majority of faculty and staff members believed faculty meetings had little to no effect on student achievement and believed that content covered in faculty meetings was similar in other schools:

> Anna said, “I don’t think the meetings have anything to do with that.”
>
> “No idea, I would expect it to be the same,” said Letti.

"I have no idea, I wonder," said Olga.

And Sylvia said, "I don't think so. Maybe meetings have changed a little bit, but not deviated much, and we've been acceptable, recognized, and exemplary." Even Pat said, "It's kind of hard with faculty meetings to say that they would be significant."

Based on my analysis of the data, I do not see a relationship between accountability ratings and faculty meetings. However, this is my hypothesis and an area that requires further research.

Rethinking Faculty Meeting Practices

DuFour et al. (2006) has told us that "many teachers and administrators prefer the familiarity of their current path, even when it becomes apparent that it will not take them to their desired destination" (p. 12). Can schools move from The Pressure Box to a Participant-Centered Learning Environment in faculty meetings? If so, what conditions might be necessary for principals to create this ideal place as described by faculty and staff?

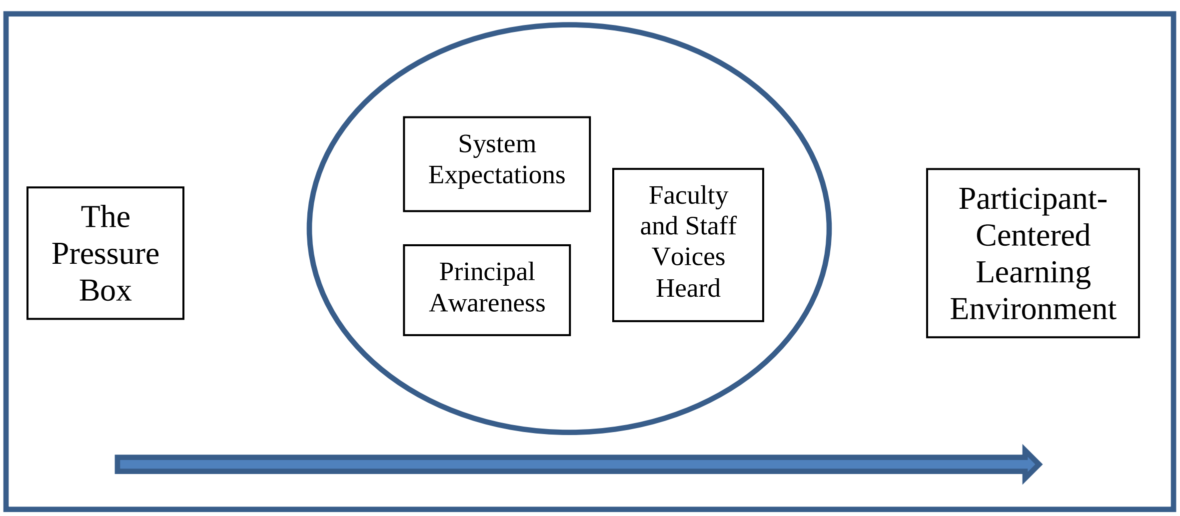

Figure 3. Rethinking Faculty Meeting Practices

Reflecting on my findings (see Figure 3) it appears that moving from The Pressure Box to a Participant-Centered Learning Environment will require a shift in current thinking at multiple levels. Faculty and staff alone cannot change faculty meetings. Principals may have difficulty moving out of The Pressure Box because of the pressures they face. Nonetheless it does not appear impossible.

System Expectations

The required campus professional development needs revisiting. Based on findings in this study, the district mandates imposed a lot of pressure on schools. Also, the required professional development did not appear to align with state requirements. This creates another question, who determines the requirements? Who interprets the state expectations and deems it necessary to create a multi-page document listing the districts' required professional development, especially when the emphasis only contains mandates and expectations?

As I reviewed sections of the TEC, I was in shock over the amount of material. First, finding the details about specific information is extremely difficult. Embedded within the many chapters, sections, and subsections is a plethora of minutiae. Second, finding someone in a district that could keep track of all of the information seems impossible. In some instances, and for only one section or subsection, you might find the words require, "may," or "shall." The professional development and staff development sections are two sections out of multiple chapters and hundreds of sections within the TEC. Third, I wondered how policymakers could model someone maneuvering through all of the information. For example, how could someone show someone else how to maneuver through the TEC, TAC, and OSHA to find all of the required elements for the blood-borne pathogens training? Furthermore, how many policymakers might know and even understand all of the content in the TEC and TAC.

To change current requirements, district leaders will need to become aware of and open to alternative faculty meeting processes. This might mean additional modeling on what it looks like to incorporating the rigor and relevance framework into a required training on dyslexia. It might also mean working interdepartmentally to design an alternative approach, such as an online system, for stakeholder groups to complete compliance trainings. The departments already exist; however, the conversations and planning need to occur. The principals suggested reviewing updates to compliance trainings, rather than doing the entire training annually:

> Rene: We will cover the new slides. These [referring to the 504 training] are the changes to slides 4, 6, 8, 9. And, that is what we do at a campus [determine the changes]. But, it's on top of everything else. Why don't they do it for us at the district? The 504 presentation is 654 slides but everything is the same. We'll take you through the changes.
>
> Pat: She [a district staff developer] only touches on the changes.
>
> Rene: On page 6, go to page 6 and highlight this. Go to page 7, and it takes all of 10 minutes. When before her [a district staff developer], pre-her, we used to go through the faculty student discipline code of conduct every single year. So . . . it can be awesome in that respect. The e-mail [training], we learn about this every year. Why do it again? Get it out of there [off the required professional development list]!

I learned from Sandi that the decision to train everyone partly comes from the district attorney and partly from some district leaders. By training and holding everyone accountable annually, the district ensures that all faculty and staff comply with district, state, or federal training regulations regardless of whether they have been teaching for 20 years or are just beginning.

From my perspective, there must be a better way to carry out mandated training. I am overwhelmed at the number of compliance trainings required and am disheartened at the fact that most have nothing to do with teaching or learning. Having said that, individuals in this study had good ideas for altering current practices if someone is willing to listen. If the district personnel and infrastructure exist, and it appears that it does after my conversation with Sandi, to put this training online and to allow individuals to complete them on their own, why not save the time so that more time in faculty meetings can be devoted to teacher development and student learning.

I realize that alterations will take time. The online training will require development and funds, along with ways to monitor progress. There will need to be deadlines established. Most importantly, someone will need to figure out the frequency for recurring training for each faculty and staff member. Currently it is much easier to say that everyone must take part in all district-required professional development sessions. Differentiated learning, however, based on faculty and staff experience, might focus more attention on teaching and learning instead of sitting through the same district-required professional development, mandates and expectations, year after year.

Principal Awareness

Although these principals were engaged in self-reflection about their practices in this study, this may not be the case for other principals. Principals need time to reflect on their actions during faculty meetings. It is notable that all principals appear to deliver information at their faculty meetings similar to how the district disseminates information at the principals' meetings. Although some principals suggested that they remember the "dreaded faculty meeting" from when they were teachers, they have somehow fallen into the same patterns, which at one time they did not appreciate. As some faculty and staff mentioned during interviews and focus groups, principals should treat faculty meetings as if they are a classroom and model their expectations of faculty and staff when working with students.

Principals appeared to have minimal preparation to leading faculty meetings in their graduate preparation programs. This suggests that training and/or knowledge regarding approaches are necessary within these principal preparation programs. If formal education is not properly training principals to lead faculty meetings, then it seems that the district should take the responsibility for modeling techniques or making connections for integrating instructional strategies into compliance trainings.

Faculty and Staff Voices Heard

Until principals take time to hear faculty and staff voices on altering faculty meeting processes, it will be difficult to know what faculty and staff want or need. As I learned in this study, most faculty and staff wanted to be involved in the planning and delivering of content during faculty meetings. They were most interested in being motivated, receiving a 'pat on the back', sharing instructional strategies and learning from one another, and having more of a leadership role. The question is, will principals and the district listen and act on the perceived needs of faculty and staff with regard to faculty and staff meetings?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I introduced The Pressure Box and discussed what it might take to transform current faculty meetings practices into a Participant-Centered Learning Environment. I described The Pressure Box as an environment dominated by a hierarchical chain of commands, which emphasizes mandates and expectations rather than what participants say matters most: student learning and teacher development. I concluded that The Pressure Box illustrates pressures on accountability and processes used to convey these accountability messages, which result in faculty and staff being talked at, tuned out, and losing interest. I also showed that a lack of communication exists between the district, principals, and faculty and staff.

Next, I presented alternatives for changing existing faculty meeting practices since, based on my conversations with faculty, staff, and principals, it seemed that alternatives exist. However, adopting alternatives may require systemic conversations to move toward what faculty, staff, and principals say is the purpose for schools: student learning and teacher development.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This chapter describes implications based on my research, recommendations for future research, and my concluding thoughts. Based on my findings, the first section in this chapter discusses implications for the study sites, district leaders, principal preparation program developers, and federal and state policymakers. Although my findings led to the development of my own model, I include references to existing theories such as participative management theory and engagement theory. The second section introduces recommendations for future research based on this study. I include future research recommendations regarding the study of mandates and expectations and the effect they have on student learning and teacher development; relationships between district, state, and federal policies; graduate coursework and/or syllabi analysis; video analysis to reflect on faculty meeting practices; and others. This chapter ends with my concluding thoughts.

To begin, Pfeffer and Sutton's (2000) organizational research has identified themes to understanding organizational problems and possible ways of addressing them. They include:

1. Why before How: Philosophy Is Important.
2. Knowing Comes from Doing and Teaching Others How.
3. Action Counts More Than Elegant Plans and Concepts.

4. There Is no Doing without Mistakes. What Is the Company's Response?
5. Fear Fosters Knowing-Doing Gaps, So Drive Out Fear.
6. Beware of False Analogies: Fight the Competition, Not Each Other.
7. Measure What Matters and What Can Help Turn Knowledge into Action.
8. What Leaders Do, How They Spend Their Time and How They Allocate Resources, Matters.

Additionally, Spillane (2005) has said "A distributed perspective frames leadership practice in a particular way; leadership practice is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation" (p. 144). Based on findings in this study, a distributed leadership perspective is lacking among the study sites. By interacting and learning from each other about what is or is not working in faculty meetings, opportunities to modify existing structures seem possible.

In short, Pfeffer and Sutton's themes aligned with what I learned from faculty, staff, and principals in this study. Most participants wanted faculty meetings to have a clear purpose, to be action-oriented, to involve others in the planning and delivery, and to include opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. More importantly, participants wanted faculty meetings to focus on student learning and teacher development, not compliance. During the videotaped faculty meeting, Rene shared with her faculty and staff what she had learned from this study:

> The teachers had really, really good suggestions, and I think that we want to start implementing some of these things and for them to start taking place during faculty meetings. And, hopefully, it will be a time that we do come together, be[come] informed, do what we need to do, but at the same time, take care of

some personal business and have fun . . . So we are going to start implementing some of these things, and you will see these noted on the agenda. One piece of advice that I took from the suggestions was to include grade-level sharing, and we are going to be doing some of that in a little while.

Implications

Study Sites

Based on the findings of this study, it appeared that faculty and staff have ideas for reorganizing faculty meetings. Their ideas included the following:

1. Short, concise meetings, modeled after classroom practice expectations
2. More participant engagement by posing questions and allowing for group dialogue in grade-level or vertical teams
3. A clear purpose set prior to meeting and participants informed about the topic early so they can prepare
4. Meetings that are planned so that topics meet the needs of and target the participants (audience)
5. Presentations by external or internal experts who are very knowledgeable about the agenda topic
6. Schedule times for the principal and select faculty and staff to plan the faculty meeting. Faculty and staff then lead the faculty meetings, while principals facilitate, monitor, and interject, if and when necessary
7. Hands-on activities and motivational techniques to engage participants
8. Necessary mandate and expectation information disseminated at the end of the meeting

9. Online modules for compliance training, which allow participants to complete the training at their own pace

The questions remain: How willing are principals to act on the ideas of faculty and staff and will district leaders listen or realign their current expectations?

Faculty, staff, and principals reflected on current and ideal faculty meeting practices during this study. Multiple stakeholder groups had their voices heard. As learned throughout this study, faculty, staff, and principals did not always share similar perspectives about faculty meetings. It appeared, for example, that some faculty and staff might not always have been aware of the pressures placed on principals by district mandates and expectations.

All faculty and staff say they wanted to suggest alternatives for future faculty meetings and wanted change so that the meetings could begin to emphasize student learning and teacher development, rather than mandates and expectations. Although they stated these desires, will change occur if they are asked to take on the responsibility for planning and presenting during faculty meetings? Are they willing to put forth the extra time and effort to turn existing faculty meetings into their ideal faculty meeting?

District Leaders

This study confirmed for me the immense pressures principals face in schools. They face the responsibility of providing quality learning environments for students, monitoring instruction and budgets, organizing day-to-day activities, attending meetings, allocating resources, and responding daily to many different stakeholders. What surprised me most were the additional pressures principals faced from the district, state, and federal requirements. Specifically, and reflecting on the additional pressures from the district, I was surprised because, based on conversations during individual and focus group interviews, many of the individuals responsible for the additional pressures were once in principal positions themselves. I was surprised to learn that the district emphasized mandates and expectations for required professional development, not student learning and teacher development.

The findings from this study led me to several questions for the district. What alternatives might exist at the district level that could alleviate faculty, staff, and principals from having to sit through pages of compliance trainings? How could the district support principals in leading effective faculty meetings? How might the district model for principals what it means to differentiate a ‘required professional development’ session when the topics are mostly mandates or expectations? What are the background experiences of district leaders making the professional development decisions? What is the role of a paraprofessional, and what might they bring to a faculty meeting?

Principal Preparation Program Developers

Then there is the question of training for principals. What do we currently do to inform principals about how to lead different types of meetings? What message(s), if any, do we provide when discussing faculty meetings? What resources are available for principals so that they may become better educated about how to use faculty meeting time? How do we educate principals in the roles that are possible during a meeting to ensure that it is not one-way communication?

Based on comments from the three principals and from my personal graduate experiences, time spent learning about faculty meetings appeared minimal or non-existent. What theories, if any, could higher education instructors discuss or share on the topic of faculty meetings?

Federal and State Policymakers

Although accomplishing the many federal and state requirements written on paper might not look like much, when one looks at the larger picture of everything there is to accomplish, it seems like a daunting task. Again, these layers of requirements beg the question, “What is the purpose for schools?” How do state and federal mandates align with this purpose(s)? What might future faculty meetings look like if we could maintain a focus on what participants in this study felt were most important—student learning and teacher development—instead of mandates and expectations?

Based on findings in this study, it appears that future research could try to understand the relationships of how mandate and expectation trainings affect student learning. The TEC and TAC outline pages of rules for school districts to abide by, often in response to federal regulations. I reviewed the Final Initial Compliance Review Crosswalk 2010-2011 document on the Texas Education Agency website and found 113 compliance items. Each item includes a compliance question, data sources for accountability purposes, and requirements for meeting standards, along with other criteria (Texas Education Agency, 2010). As I reviewed this document, I could not help but wonder who put this together? More importantly, who looks at and reviews the data submitted by districts?

The review of compliance items and findings from this study led me to several questions. How does the state agency assist districts in understanding or providing examples of what these compliance items look like? How does the state agency demonstrate the relationship between compliance items and student learning? How does the local school board of trustees interpret these mandates and expectations? How does this governing board help other stakeholder groups understand the relationships that exist? What effect do their decisions have on faculty, staff, and principals, and ultimately, how do their decisions affect student learning? These questions could serve as reflective questions for future research on compliance. I think we realize that mandates and expectations will exist; however, I wonder, is there is a way for them to make sense to practitioners?

As for the TEC and TAC, the numerous chapters include multiple chapters, sections, subsections, and so on. What does this mean and what do some of the mandates and expectations look like? To me, many items appear open to interpretation, and I am unsure how districts review and decide what they will require. Do all school districts require the same trainings and is there one means for delivering that training? How might rural districts with limited personnel deliver, if at all, the same training that an urban district delivers?

I stated in Chapter I that the problem this study addressed is that faculty and staff have little time to waste given the pressure schools are under to increase student learning (Lortie, 1975; Wolf, 2002; Thomas, 2005). Campus principals who continue to use time in faculty meetings as platforms to disseminate information miss opportunities to engage staff members in professional learning and increasing instructional efficacy (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Cohen & Hill, 2000). The findings from this study reflect earlier research and the pressures that continue to build as we devote more time to disseminating information rather than engagement. How do state or federal policies and compliance items affect schools and, ultimately, students?

Theory

Participative management theory. Faculty, staff, and principal responses to questions in my study suggest similar findings to past theory. It is not new knowledge about the importance of participating in decision-making or engaging in conversation. What is new knowledge is how existing theory on engagement and participation reflect what faculty and staff want in faculty meetings. Likert's (1967) System 4 characteristics emphasizes that all stakeholders take part in decision-making, goal-setting, and problem-solving. When stakeholders engage in planning and making decisions, they feel a sense of pride, often motivating them to implement new ideas. Stakeholders feel as though they are contributing to a more effective implementation. The emphasis in participative management theory is on empowering all stakeholders, involving them in decision-making and taking on responsibilities (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Participants in this study tended to agree with what we know about participative management theory. Many faculty and staff members want opportunities to take the lead in faculty meetings, acting as leaders and presenting to colleagues.

Engagement theory. In addition to being involved in decision-making and planning, all faculty and staff suggested the importance of engagement during faculty meetings. Engagement theory places an emphasis on collaboration, allowing for engagement opportunities for learning to take place (Marcum, 1999). This theory focuses on student learning while collaboratively collecting information or ideas, cooperating with others, enjoying learning, being involved, and creating products. There are opportunities for students to explore and provide feedback to one another (Schneiderman, 1993). This theory aligns well to the faculty meeting literature where there is a strong emphasis placed on learning, working together to solve problems and design products, and participating with others to make decisions. Faculty and staff in this study appeared to want what Marcum and Schneiderman have proposed: opportunities to collaborate, explore, and engage with one another.

Recommendations for Future Research

Faculty, staff, and principals described their experiences and provided recommendations on how to make faculty meetings more useful. Although I found answers to my research questions, the findings suggest other areas for future research.

1. This study included three schools. The findings from participant experiences related to findings from my pilot studies and personal experiences. Thus, additional research might use the same methodology from this study to see what commonalities or differences exist in other districts or schools. Findings may suggest, if consistent with this research, that faculty meetings or meetings in general, require attention.
2. Because it appeared that policies from the district, state, and federal levels took up a great deal of time in faculty meetings, additional research might focus on how mandates and required compliance trainings affect student learning or teacher development. Another policy research topic might include reviewing and making sense of the relationships that exist among district, state, and federal-level requirements and what these relationships mean for schools.

3. The principals in this study said that graduate coursework minimally focused on leading faculty meetings, which is also my personal experience. Thus, principals often follow the lead of their superiors and mirror their approaches, good or bad. Future research might analyze graduate course syllabi to gain a deeper understanding of the training principals receive to lead effective faculty meetings.
4. One key aspect of this study included the faculty meeting video analysis. The findings in this study related interview data to faculty meeting practices. Future action research might use video analysis as a main data source and also use it for reflective purposes, documenting and monitoring adjustments made over time.
5. What appeared to be significant in this study were the isolated decisions made at the district office that affected faculty meeting practices, specifically, emphasizing compliance instead of teaching and learning. Future research might focus on the processes used, if any, and how districts model effective meeting techniques or how mandates or expectation decisions made at the district office align with student learning and teacher development. Another research avenue might also be how districts could manage to complete ongoing compliance trainings without taking away from teaching and learning.

Concluding Thoughts

Although the results of this study may not apply generally to all faculty meetings, it would appear, based on the experiences of faculty and staff in this study and my pilot studies, that the practices used in these three schools are not uncommon. These findings opened my eyes to the immense pressures on schools, specifically, the mandates and expectations principals must convey to faculty staff, as well as the limited time to disseminate the information. What appears to be missing is taking the time to reflect on our current practices. Are we willing to engage others in critical conversations to learn about their perspectives or ideas? Are we willing to step back and realize that someone else might have an easier or more effective way? The bigger question might be whether we are willing to take the time to listen.

This study aimed to understand faculty, staff, and principal perceptions of and experiences in faculty meetings, how those involved in the study would design their ideal faculty meeting, and what obstacles they thought would inhibit change. Despite the research and expert advice provided in studies and articles, faculty meetings, it appears, have not changed. They continue to be led in an authoritarian format, lack participation, and are most often used to disseminate information.

Additionally, this study aimed to learn about and understand faculty meetings through a qualitative approach, which was minimally present in past or present research. Much existing literature on faculty meetings has tended to follow a quantitative or mixed methods approach, thus missing opportunities to hear the experiences of principals, faculty, and staff. By listening to the stories and learning about the experiences from those facilitating and participating in faculty meetings, valuable contributions to the existing literature were made about the processes used and content covered.

This study was also important to the sites studied and on a larger scale. At the local level, this study informed practices based on data collected from faculty, staff, and principal experiences. The findings informed the local district of commonalities and differences among the three sites, which varied in academic performance levels, and served as a reflection and learning opportunity for each of the respective campuses.

On a larger scale, this study provides recommendations for improving faculty meetings, which may be useful for principal and teacher preparation programs and which could inform other campuses and districts of recommended practices that might positively alter or enhance faculty meetings. Ultimately, this study was an opportunity to learn from those most affected by faculty meetings: those leading and those participating. The study served as a reflective conversation, as an opportunity to ask ourselves why faculty meetings are what they are, and what might they become.

APPENDIX A

DISTRICT RESEARCH APPROVAL

SURVEY/RESEARCH COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM

The following survey has been reviewed by the Survey Committee as per Policy EF [LOCAL]

Title of Survey: An Analysis of Faculty Meeting Content and Processes: A Multi Case Study of Three South Texas Schools

Requestor: Daryl Michel, Primary Investigator, Texas State Doctoral Student

☑ Approved	☐ Not Approved	[illegible] ~~Director of Instructional Technology~~ Executive Director for Student Services	1-5-2010 Date
☑ Approved	☐ Not Approved	[illegible], RN Director of Health Services	1-5-2010 Date
☑ Approved	☐ Not Approved	[illegible] Director of Elementary Education	1-5-2010 Date
☑ Approved	☐ Not Approved	Christina U. Flores Director of Guidance and Counseling	1-5-2010 Date

Comments:

☑ Approved ☐ Not approved

[illegible] 1-6-10
Superintendent Date

RECEIVED
1/5/10
Student Services Department

Superintendent comments:

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT SELECTION DATA SHEET

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Position	Number of Years at Campus	Taught at Another School/# Yrs

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM and IRB

IRB Approval Number 2010K5536

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions before deciding whether to take part. Your participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to your standing with Texas State University or __________Independent School District. You may choose not to answer a question(s) for any reason.

Title of Research Study: An Analysis of Faculty Meeting Content and Processes: A Multi Case Study of Three South Texas Schools

Principal Investigator/Dissertation Chair
Daryl Michel, Texas State University, Doctoral Student, 210.380.8375
Ann Brooks, Ph.D., Texas State University, Professor and Dissertation Chair, 512.245.1936

Funding Source: Not applicable.

Purpose of the Research Study: The purpose of this study is to explore elementary faculty, staff, and principals' experiences in faculty meetings, gain insight into improving them, learn what inhibits them from changing, and determine commonalities and differences that exist among an exemplary, recognized, and academically acceptable school. A dialogic hermeneutic approach will guide this study and data gathered through semi-structured interviews, observations, and focus groups. The dialogic hermeneutic approach engages participants in dialogue, presenting their perspective and listening to another's perspective, possibly altering or refining one's viewpoint.

Participation: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in the following.

Principal: One-to-one interview before and after the faculty meeting observation, as well as videotaping one faculty meeting. The one-to-one interview before the faculty meeting observation will include approximately 10 questions and last 30-60 minutes. You may be asked questions such as: What is your role during a typical faculty meeting? What content is typically covered during a faculty meeting? How do faculty and staff evaluate faculty meetings? What communication structures are in place with faculty and staff during a faculty meeting? The second interview will include viewing and reflecting on video segments, responding to approximately 15 questions, and will last 60-90 minutes. You may be asked questions such as: How were you feeling during this part of the meeting? What are faculty and staff doing? What did you learn during this part of the meeting? What changes would you make to the content covered during this faculty meeting?

Faculty and Staff: One-to-one interview before the faculty meeting observation. The one-to-one interview will include approximately 10 questions and last 30-60 minutes. You may be asked questions such as: How do you prepare for a faculty meeting? If you were to improve the current faculty meeting content or processes used, what would you do? What would inhibit faculty and staff from improving faculty meetings? The focus group will take place after the faculty meeting observation and will consist of viewing and reflecting on video segments, responding to approximately 15 questions, and will last 60-90 minutes. You may be asked questions such as: What questions might you have been asking yourself during this part of the meeting? How does this faculty meeting compare with other faculty meetings that you have attended at this campus? If you were evaluating this part of the meeting, what comments would you provide?

Benefits: The experiences you share and information you provide will inform the local district of commonalities and differences among three schools participating in this study and serve as a reflection and learning opportunity for each participating school. Additionally, this study will provide recommendations for improving faculty meetings, which may be useful in principal and teacher preparation programs, as well as inform other schools and districts of recommended practices that may alter and/or enhance faculty meetings.

Risks: This study will have minimal or no psychological/emotional risks, no risk of physical harm, and is non-experimental. You may feel somewhat uneasy because of the digital recording of interviews and focus groups or slightly uncomfortably during the videotaping of the faculty meeting. Additionally, you may feel slightly stressed to disclose personal thoughts about faculty meetings in fear that your principal may find out what you said.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in this study. There may be snacks provided during one-on-one interviews, focus groups, or during the videotaping.

Contacts and Questions: If you choose to stop participating in this study for any reason, contact Daryl Michel, principal investigator, at 210-380-8375. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant or any other pertinent question about the research, please contact Dr. Jon Lasser, Ph.D. and Texas State University IRB Chair, at 512-245-3413. You may also e-mail Dr. Lasser at lasser@txstate.edu. You may also contact Ms. Becky Northcut, Texas State University Compliance Specialist, at 512-245-2102.

Confidentiality: All one-on-one interviews and focus groups will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The recordings and transcriptions will be coded so that no personally identifiable information is evident. Videotapes from the faculty meetings will be viewed by the principal investigator and used during one-on-one interviews with principals and focus groups. Videotapes, digital recordings, and transcription data will be secured in a locked filing cabinet at the principal investigators home and destroyed five years after completing the study. The principal investigator or dissertation chair are the only individuals that may view this information. If results of this study are published or presented at a conference, then all identifiable information will be excluded.

Results of the Study: A summary of the findings will be available upon completion of this study. If interested in receiving this summary, please provide instructions below:

____

Signatures:
By signing this document, you are indicating that you fully understand the consent form and its contents. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have been told that participation in this study is voluntary. You are not waiving any legal rights by signing this document.

____
Printed Name of Participant and Date

____
Signature of Participant

____
Printed Name of Principal Investigator and Date

____
Signature of Principal Investigator

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW CODES

100 Principal

200 Teacher

Kindergarten: 201

First Grade: 211

Second Grade: 221

Third Grade: 231

Fourth Grade: 241

Fifth Grade: 251

300 Specialist

Art: 301

Computer: 311

Counselor: 321

Music: 331

PE: 341

School Psychologist: 351

Other: 361

400 Paraprofessional

500 Focus Group

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL SAMPLE

Begin by reviewing the IRB Consent form.

1. Tell me about your experiences in the current faculty meetings that you attend or lead?
   - What do you like the best?
   - What are your frustrations?
   - What learning takes place?
2. As you reflect on current faculty meeting practices, what do you believe is working well?
   - Provide examples and describe why these practices are successful
     - Do practices impact learning? If so, who benefits?
3. If you could design your ideal faculty meeting, what would it include?
   - What are your hopes?
   - What would be most useful for you in relation to:
     - Content covered
     - Processes used
     - Roles assigned
     - Organizational materials used
4. If you asked your faculty and staff what their idea faculty meeting looked like, how do you think they would respond? (principal only)
5. What obstacles may stand in the way of reaching your ideal faculty meeting?
6. How do faculty meetings affect, if at all, student achievement outcomes?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

My goal is to elicit faculty, staff, and principal experiences in faculty meetings, how they would design their ideal meeting, and what, if anything, inhibits change. I will probe into responses from participants, asking for specific examples or descriptions as necessary.

APPENDIX F

TRANSCRIPTION FORM

Code:

School Name:

District Name:

Date of Interview:

Interviewer Name:

Transcription Codes:

Interviewer (I)

Principal (P)

Teacher (T)

Specialist (S)

Paraprofessional (A)

Focus Group (FG)

1 Begin Interview

2 (I) – Question

3 (Code) – Response

4

APPENDIX G

CAMPUS INTERVIEW ANALYSIS SAMPLE

Code:	100	201	231	341	400
Experiences:	Review data; review information from the district (policies, mandates, procedures); recognize accomplishments; discussions; one mtg. per month but moving to two	Gather, pick up agenda, follow the agenda; sharing of campus visits – evaluation of programs or observations by visitors; data-driven; information once a month for an hour or more	Lengthy; general information passed on by principal (expectations or procedures) or from district; not a 'happy feeling' to hear faculty meeting; understand need for principals to bring everyone together to share information; once a month for an hour or more	Agenda provided; Getting together; review statistics, fix problems; situations; discussing what is coming up; information on fundraisers or pep rallies; share tutorial strategies; administration using handouts or overhead to show and explain data; teachers sharing ideas from conferences; once a month for 45 minutes to one hour (longer as TAKS gets closer)	Minimal involvement; information shared; many feel that they are a waste of time or repetitive; can ask questions, about 30 minutes or more
Like Best:	Hearing from the teachers	Well informed; updated on what is happening or taking place; come together as a school	Announcement of scores and how the school is performing	Understanding what kids need or what is working for them in the classroom; teachers provide information	Hearing the information, giving feedback, asking questions
Summary: **Transcript selections:** **Follow-up questions:**					

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