

EXPLORING COLLABORATION IN ELEMENTARY TEACHER TEAMS AND TEAMS IN
BUSINESS


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BUSINESS

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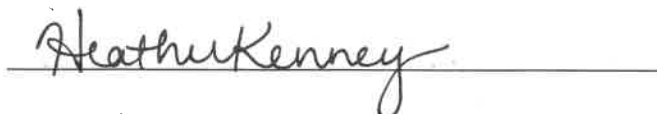
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EXPLORING COLLABORATION IN ELEMENTARY TEACHER TEAMS AND TEAMS IN
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As a child I said, “I think I will just stop at my specialist degree.” I watched my mom work hard on her dissertation and thought I would never get my doctorate degree. However, here I am today earning a doctorate degree while raising my own daughter. I would like to thank all the people who have helped me along the way. Thank you to my husband, Zane, for the ongoing support and encouragement. You refuse to let me give up and are always willing to help so I can complete my research. I am not sure how I got so lucky. Next, I want to thank my daughter, Millie, for being my inspiration. I wanted this accomplishment to demonstrate you can achieve anything you set your mind to. Earning my doctorate degree is a big accomplishment but you are my greatest achievement by far. Thank you to my parents for cheering me on and being my first great example of teachers. Dad, thank you for always being a source of wisdom and showing me first-hand how to make a difference. Mom, you have always been a dreamer and your passion for public education is unmatched. Thank you for inspiring me to always dream big and take risks.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list discuss the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Based on the eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams theory by Roger Schwarz(2013), this study sought to understand how the eight mutual learning were behaviors exhibited by teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list. This basic narrative qualitative study explored the eight mutual learning behaviors of three teachers from three different Blue Ribbon elementary schools, three teachers from three performing elementary school, three business professionals from three businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and three business professionals working for companies not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Teachers matter. A high-quality teacher directly impacts student outcomes (Cui et al., 2022). Teachers have a greater influence on student achievement than any other factor, including family and neighborhood experiences (Opper, 2019). A classroom teacher has the most significant influence on a child's early education development, especially in kindergarten and first grade as they lay the foundation for literacy. High-quality teachers lead to higher student reading achievement, which can have a carryover effect into later grades (Palacios, 2017). According to Corwin Visible Learning Plus (2023), teacher estimate of achievement has one of the largest influences on student learning with an effect size of 1.29 (anything greater than .4 has a significant positive effect), but it does not have the largest effect size on student learning.

Collective teacher efficacy is the number 1 factor impacting student achievement with an effect size of 1.34 (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, 2023). This factor is defined as a group's shared belief that their unified efforts can overcome obstacles and reach goals (Donohoo et al., 2018). Schools with a high collective teacher efficacy have fewer students with behavior issues and students are more engaged emotionally (Zhou, 2019). Collective teacher efficacy has also been proven to have a stronger impact on student achievement than a student's socioeconomic status. In addition to student achievement, collective teacher efficacy positively influences the implementation of school improvement plans, teacher leadership, greater job satisfaction, stronger teacher

commitment to students and a teaching career, and participation in professional development (Donohoo, 2018).

School leaders must promote collective teacher efficacy by creating a collaborative culture with teacher conversations focused on the meaning of impact, differences between achievement goals and progress, and using evidence to guide decisions (Donohoo et al., 2018). To develop collective teacher efficacy organizations must shift teachers' mindsets from task-related conversations to broader impact concerns such as the effect of a lesson on student learning (Donohoo et al., 2018). Creating an organization where people continuously expand their capacity to get desired results, where innovation flourishes, collective aspiration is valued, and people consistently learn together, requires following five disciplines, including team learning (Senge, 2006). Peter Senge's (2006) five disciplines of a learning organization are one of the theoretical frameworks of this study. Effective teacher team learning requires eight mutual learning behaviors from each individual (Schwarz, 2013). Therefore, the final theoretical framework of this study is Robert Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors.

This first chapter will explore the theoretical framework that served as the foundation of this study. Chapter One also includes the problem and purpose statement followed by the research questions used to guide this study. This chapter will define key terms for the sake of the study and define the limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and controls of the study.

Theoretical Framework

The study was supported by Senge's (2006) five principles of a learning organization that creates the notion of systems thinking and Schwarz's (2013) eight

mutual learning behaviors theory. Senge's systems thinking is rooted in the theory of systems dynamics that was created in 1956 by Jay Forrester, an MIT professor (Aronson, 1996). Forrester (1999) described systems dynamics as dealing with how things evolve, interpreting real-life systems into computer simulations in order to analyze the structure and decision-making policies in an organization. Senge utilized systems dynamics to develop the concept of a learning organization and the five disciplines, which includes systems thinking. Systems thinking is the process of discussing systems, agreeing about their importance and the positive impact they have (Forrester, 1999). The purpose of the study was to explore the eight mutual learning behaviors among teacher teams and teams in business. In order to understand the eight mutual learning behaviors between the types of teams, the researcher used a framework to help guide the research while assisting in answering the research questions. Utilizing aspects of Senge's principles of a learning organization and Robert Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors of a team theory helped to uncover the differences in collaboration between teacher teams and teams in business.

A learning organization is defined as an organization where people are continuously growing their capacity to create results they want, where new and extensive ways of thinking are cultivated, where shared ambition is free, and where people are constantly learning how to learn together (Senge, 2006). Senge (2006) explained there are key differences between a traditional authoritarian-controlled organization and a learning organization. The fundamental difference between a true learning organization and a traditional learning organization is the mastery of five disciplines. Senge's five disciplines include systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared

vision, and team learning. This study specifically focused on team learning. Team learning is described as a group of people who function as a whole or are aligned. Senge explained team learning requires three key dimensions: the need to think insightfully about complicated matters; a need for innovative; synchronized action; and the role of teammates on other teams. There are also two main disciplines of team learning that are the mastery of discussion and dialogue. Dialogue involves deep listening of teammates and suppressing one's own views. Mastery of dialogue also includes free and innovative consideration of intricate and subtle issues. Discussion in a team is described as when various views are presented and defended and a decision must be made to determine the best view (Senge, 2006).

Schwarz (2013) took team learning to the next level by defining specific mutual learning behaviors of an effective team. Schwarz explained it is one thing to say you value different ideas, transparency, inquisitiveness, or empathy, but it is another thing to act that way. Through his own research over 30 years, Schwarz tailored his list of mutual learning behaviors down to eight essential behaviors for an effective team. The first behavior is to state views and ask genuine questions. Teammates often do not build on each other's comments and some comments are off track. Schwarz recommended teammates state their view and ask a question to truly learn what others think about what was just said. He also suggested teammates avoid asking rhetorical questions even if they feel good to ask in frustrating situations. It is also recommended that teammates ask genuine questions but realize being curious about others' views does not mean it is necessary to agree with opposing thoughts (Schwarz, 2013).

The second mutual learning behavior is to share all relevant information. Relevant information is described as any information that could influence the decision that you or teammates make, the process for making a decision, or your thoughts and feelings about it. Schwarz (2013) explained to share all relevant information means to share everything even if it does not support your own view, provide information even if it could upset others, be timely when sharing information, and always be transparent. Withholding information can often be seen as showing compassion because sharing it might distress someone. However, not sharing feedback or information can prevent others from making informed decisions about changing their own behavior. Schwarz also recommended team members express their feelings when sharing information (2013). Effective teams share feelings to help others understand their views. For example, when providing feedback to a teammate one might say, “I want to share feedback with you, and because you said you were frustrated by me last time I did, I’m worried this may be difficult for you to hear” (Schwarz, 2013, p. 97).

Behavior number 3 is to use specific examples and collectively agree on what important words mean. The third behavior is necessary to develop a common understanding in a team and involves being very specific, asking what you really want to know, and using examples when trying to agree on terminology meaning. Additionally, using specific examples includes using names to specify to whom you are talking. Teammates may often use vague language such as, “Some of you did not turn in your report” instead of using specific names. Therefore, this causes confusion and concern among teammates. Instead, Schwarz recommended being specific such as saying, “Jake, Michael, Sarah, and Holly, I didn’t get your report. Did you send it?” This not only

specifies who is being addressed but also tests an inference as to why the report was not sent yet (Schwarz, 2013).

Mutual learning behavior number 4 is explaining reasoning and intent. According to Schwarz (2013), an effective team must be transparent about the strategy for holding the conversation in the meeting and state the main point of the meeting at the beginning instead of eventually easing into it. If the purpose is not stated first, then people will make up their own stories as to why you are saying what you are saying. The stories people make up are often inaccurate and negative, which hinders the team's effectiveness. Starting a team meeting with light conversation and slowly addressing the main concern can be confusing and misleading. Sandwiching the main concern with light conversation at the beginning and positive feedback at the end is often seen as being compassionate but it is actually unilaterally controlling. Schwarz argued that effective teammates can prevent a unilateral controlling conversation by identifying the strategy being used for the conversation: imagine explaining your strategy to the person with whom you are using it, and notice your reaction. If your reaction is to think of the absurdity of your strategy, then you likely are using the unilateral controlling strategy that prevents you from being transparent (Schwarz, 2013).

Behavior 5 is to focus on interests, not positions. Teammates often present solutions to their team that stem from their own interests without taking into account others' benefits. Therefore, they attend meetings to try and convince others that their solution or position is the right one without listening to anyone else first. Schwarz (2013) recommended teams build commitment by focusing on each person's interests and following four steps: identify teammates' interests, agree on interests to contemplate in

the solution, create solutions that meet interests, and identify a solution and implement it. Additionally, teams must avoid phrases such as “Don’t come with a problem unless you have a solution” and listing pros and cons to determine a solution (Schwarz, 2013).

Mutual learning behavior 6 is defined as testing assumptions and inferences. People are constantly making assumptions and inferences. For example, if someone sends an email, the recipient is typically trying to figure out the true meaning of the message and what the sender was really trying to convey. This natural behavior negatively influences team effectiveness. Schwarz (2013) recommended becoming aware of assumptions and inferences you are making, converting a risky inference into one you can test, and determining whether a view is true before testing or acting on it. In order to become aware of assumptions and test inferences, Schwarz recommended teammates use the Ladder of Inference. The Ladder of Inference described three key steps teammates can take: observe and select observable information such as a conversation or behavior, make meaning of observable information, and choose how to respond based on the meaning. When responding or testing an inference, it is vital to do so in the team setting so everyone has a shared understanding of what that teammate meant. Teammates that test inferences spend less time worrying or frustrated by what others might be thinking and spend more time being productive.

Behavior 7 is jointly design next steps. In a unilateral meeting, the person running the meeting sets the agenda, determines who can talk and for how long, and decides information members could share and what information is not relevant. Even if a decision is made, the other team members likely feel little commitment to follow through on the decisions made in the meeting. Rather than following this typical behavior, Schwarz

(2013) suggested teammates run the meeting together. First, teammates should agree on the purpose of the meeting before proceeding. Second, they should agree on the meeting process or how they will move through the meeting. Otherwise, teammates will often follow their own process. Next, keep the conversation on track by reverting back to the joint meeting process established earlier. If a comment is not aligned to the collective purpose and meeting process, then inquire to understand how it relates. Finally, a jointly designed meeting resolves disagreements with facts.

The last mutual learning behavior or behavior 8 is discussing undiscussable issues. Team meetings are often perceived as a waste of time because a team member is unprepared, someone always dominates the conversation, or everyone in the meeting acts one way but privately think another way. Then the meeting unfolds in a predictable manner and teammates leave feeling frustrated but do not say anything during the actual meeting. This situation can be described as facing an undiscussable issue. Undiscussable issues are often not addressed because teammates fear they will make a colleague embarrassed or defensive. Addressing undiscussables is seen as being uncompassionate and the start of conflict. To first prevent undiscussable issues from occurring, effective teams follow the first seven mutual learning behaviors. In order to address undiscussable issues, effective teams first state the issue they want to talk about and the reasoning for it. Next a teammate will share their concern about the risk and try to reduce it. Then the teammate asks others if they are willing to discuss it and jointly design how the conversation will be held. Finally, bring the conversation to the entire team if it was not initially started there and repeat the first four steps (Schwarz, 2013).

Senge (2006) and Schwarz (2013) both agreed effective teamwork is vital for a learning organization. Although it is important for organizations to have a shared vision and personal mastery, what really matters is employees know how to work together. There are heaps of teams full of talented individuals who share a vision but ultimately fail because they do not effectively function as a team (Senge, 2006). A high-performing team creates better results such as higher quality decisions, greater innovation, shorter implementation time, and reduced costs (Schwarz, 2013). Corwin Visible Learning Plus (2023) agreed collective teacher efficacy has the largest impact on student achievement. As a result, most educators agree providing teachers collaboration time is important (Nguyen & Ng, 2020).

Problem Statement

Teacher collaboration is the cornerstone for most school-improvement efforts yet not all collaboration equally supports instructional development (Brown et al., 2018). The lack of collaboration and varying ideas of teamwork reduces the impact of collective teacher efficacy on student achievement, which is a problem. These different perceptions of collaboration result in an ineffective use of time and resources (Piercey, 2010). In a study of public K-12 public school teachers, most teachers received teamwork training but explained there were key barriers to working as a team, including lack of time, individual differences within their team, and an inability to collaborate (Amorim Neto et al., 2020). Other teachers agree that time is a key barrier to collaboration but having more time is not enough. Research by Reyna (2019) concluded teachers do not just need more time but they need to know how to collaborate. Another recent study observed that most teacher teams do not communicate effectively nor do they make joint decisions towards a

common goal (Sekgota, 2020). Dyer (2022) reported 92% of teachers in one school district reported collaboration was occurring in their school but only 57% of teachers reported they implemented learned practices from collaboration. Although teachers say they enjoy working with others, it is a myth that teachers naturally work well together (Reeves, 2009).

Many school districts have adopted the model of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) to promote collaboration and to develop and maintain a culture of learning for all teachers and students. As a result, districts have made large monetary investments in developing a PLC yet numerous schools show minimal improvement in student achievement (Riggins & Knowles, 2020). One potential cause for the slight growth in student achievement is the numerous perceptions of PLCs. Districts often use the term professional learning community but do not implement the actions of a true PLC (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Some of the interpretations of a PLC include committees, departments, stakeholders, district and school-level administrators, students, teachers, and staff (Huffman, 2011). Charner-Laird et al. (2016) reported PLC participants struggled to collectively work and often spend collaboration time working independently while in the same space or focused on logistical action items instead of critical problems of practice. Effective PLCs call for critical reflection but most teachers tend to spend reflection time sharing beliefs and practices specific to immediate issues (Martin et al., 2019).

Teacher perceptions and having the skills required for an effective PLC also impact the success of PLCs. Although some teachers described participation in a PLC as a form of professional development, more teachers reported dissatisfaction with PLCs than with any other form of professional learning (Charner-Laird et al., 2016). Most

teachers also accept the idea of a PLC but are missing the skill set to effectively implement and apply the concept of a professional learning community in their environment (Yeol, 2020). For example, teacher conversations in professional learning communities can improve teacher practice if the quality of the conversation is high (Brodie & Chimhande, 2020). However, Brown et al. (2018) concluded the conversations during dedicated teacher collaboration often lacked the level of critical teamwork required for changes in teacher practices. An ineffective use of a professional learning community can negatively impact a school due to the lack of established norms, collaboration, communication, and accountability (Kociuruba, 2017).

Businesses such as Google complete almost all of their work collaboratively in teams, according to findings from Galbraith and Webb (2013). Productive teamwork and supportive environments in business were expected and begin very early in a professional's career (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). According to Google's Project Aristotle research study, a team is highly interdependent and plans work, problem solves, makes decisions, and continuously checks the progress of a specific project they are all working on (Google, n.d.). Vozza (2017) explained companies such as Netflix, Dell, Microsoft, and Apple also primarily work in teams. These businesses identify critical roles and assign their top employee teams to address issues directly influencing the company's success (Vozza, 2017). As a result of the frequent use of collaboration and all-star teams addressing critical issues, these companies are 40% more productive than the average company and have profit margins 30%-50% higher than industry averages (Leong, 2017).

This study was timely because despite collective teacher efficacy having the largest effect size on student learning, teachers do not regularly collaborate or work

together, which builds collective efficacy (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Sparks (2014) reported several school districts in the United States provide very little time for teachers to collaborate. Jensen et al. (2016) concluded 70% of U.S. teachers said they spent time on collaborative work but only 17% reported there was strong cooperation among staff. This study is also important because teamwork is one of the top five characteristics hiring managers are looking for (Gross et al., 2021). According to another study, the ability to work in a team is something every employee of a company should have (Stoica et al., 2023). More specifically, in the field of engineering, teamwork has been cited as a critical professional skill for the 21st century (Ellis & Zhang, 2016). Teamwork is often taught in education as a skill and frequently referred to as a soft skill or social skill rather than through a virtue framework that embeds teamwork (Gross et al., 2021). Business professionals agree educators should have experience working in effective teams in order to provide teamwork advice to students (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). The problem is the literature has not fully explored connections and disconnections between collaboration in business and education. This study aimed to fill this gap in literature by discovering the teamwork experiences of professionals in education and business.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list discuss the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Based on the eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams theory by Roger

Schwarz(2013), this study sought to understand how the eight mutual learning were behaviors exhibited by teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list.

This basic narrative qualitative study explored the eight mutual learning behaviors of three teachers from three different Blue Ribbon elementary schools, three teachers from three performing elementary school, three business professionals from three businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and three business professionals working for companies not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list. Blue Ribbon elementary schools are nationally recognized schools with students that achieve at a very high level or schools that make significant improvements in closing the achievement gap (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2022). Three different Blue Ribbon elementary schools were chosen from three different locations in Missouri: one from the Kansas City area, one from the St. Louis area, and one in the Southwest Missouri area. Performing elementary schools are accredited public schools that are not currently on an improvement plan by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The performing elementary schools selected for this study also were located in the same areas of Missouri as the Blue Ribbon schools. Business teams on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list were companies with the most revenue growth from 2021 to 2023, they had to be privately held, U.S. based, independent, and founded and generating revenue by March 31, 2019 (Inc. 5000, 2023). The businesses not on the

Inc. 5000 list were located in the same regions of Missouri and the criteria for selecting these businesses was not specified by the researcher.

Research Questions

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore the teamwork experiences of a teacher team in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, a teacher team in performing elementary schools, a team in business on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list, and a business team not on the Inc. 5000 list within the context of the eight mutual learning behaviors. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
2. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and performing elementary teacher teams related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
3. What are the experiences of performing elementary teacher teams and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
4. What are the experiences of business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list

related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because current research suggests continuing teacher professional development and collaboration are critical in order to facilitate change (Deng et al., 2022). More specifically, teacher collaboration has a positive impact on students' achievement. However, there are still schools where teachers continue to work in isolation with minimal collaboration and exceptional practices from the best teachers are rarely shared in these schools (Adams, 2021). Schools are also investing an abundance of time, financial, and human resources to provide teacher professional learning and development (McChesney & Cross, 2023). However, teacher professional learning from PLCs often produce minimal improvements on student achievement (Riggins & Knowles, 2020). Implementing an effective PLC can be difficult due to the absence of a collaborative teacher culture and the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the idea and implementation of a PLC (Jafar et al., 2022).

The inconsistent views on collaboration within the school system cause bewilderment among practitioners and impede the achievement of collaboration goals (Huffman, 2011). Some interpretations of PLCs are simply data meetings, curriculum planning meets, and grade level/department meetings that lead to a lack of experiential learning (Elfaragy et al., 2022). For example, a U.S. study uncovered teachers consider professional collaboration as a separate activity that is not integral to improving student learning (Hunter et al., 2016). One of the top soft skills businesses seek in new hires is teamwork and business professionals agree educators should have experience working in

effective teams in order to provide teamwork advice to students (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). However, collaboration means different things to teachers and without making assumptions clear, the time teachers do spend collaborating is likely ineffective, which is a problem (Piercey, 2010). This study is also significant due to a gap in research focused specifically on the differences of process, structure, and behaviors in collaboration practices between teacher teams and business employee teams. This study could potentially help educators and businesses collaborate and develop more effective teamwork in their organization.

Definition of Key Terms

Business Team. A group of people functioning together with common goals and producing results for the organization (Senge, 2006).

Collaboration. A systematic process in which teachers work together interdependently to analyze and impact professional practice and improve results for students and school (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Collective Self-Efficacy. A group's shared belief in the group's capabilities to organize and implement actions required to produce given levels of attainments (Bandura, 1997).

Intermediate or Experienced Professional. An intermediate or experienced professional has no supervising duties, a wealth of industry knowledge, and a history of work experience that earns them more autonomy (Herrity, 2023).

Mutual Learning. The mutual learning mindset involves a belief in transparency and curiosity, informed accountability and choice, and compassion (Schwarz, 2013).

Professional Learning Community. DuFour (2004b) describes a Professional Learning Community as a group of educators who follow these key principles: focus on student learning, not teaching; recognize the importance of collaborating on matters related to learning; judge effectiveness on the basis of results; and work hard and commit to continual improvement.

Professional Learning Organization. Senge (2006) defined a professional learning organization as an organization where people continually expand their capacity to create results they desire, new ways of thinking are encouraged, collective aspiration is set free, and people are continuously learning how to learn together.

Teacher Team. A group of teacher colleagues that occupy the same position in the organization and no member has special supervisory powers (Venables, 2017).

Teamwork. A group of people who work together to identify and solve problems, give advice, and make decisions collaboratively. The members are interdependent to one another based on the team's mission and they see each other this way. Members of a team understand the issues they address have an impact on each teammate and on the overall organization. Teamwork involves making decisions that meet the goal of the large organization (Schwarz, 2013).

Limitations

The researcher provided usable data by working diligently to remove external variables by delimiting the study. Despite this effort, limitations existed. In this qualitative study the following limitations existed, which includes variables outside the researcher's control.

1. Participants in the study might not have answered honestly.

2. Participants may not have accurately described their feelings about teamwork.
3. The length of time the participants had spent working in a team with their colleagues was not defined due to the lack of data provided to the researcher when selecting participants.
4. The lack of prior research exploring the teamwork experiences in education and business created limitations for the researcher.

Delimitations

The intent of this research was to provide the most accurate and relevant data.

Therefore, the following delimitations existed in this qualitative study.

1. This study was limited to two elementary schools that had received the Blue Ribbon award within the last 5 years prior to the study.
2. This study was limited to two performing elementary schools that did not receive a Blue Ribbon award and were located in similar areas of the state as the three Blue Ribbon award winning elementary schools studied.
3. This study was limited to two businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list.
4. This study was limited to two businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list.
5. The sample population was limited to 8 Missouri interviewees from two regions in Missouri: Kansas City metropolitan area and Springfield metropolitan area.
6. The researcher aimed to minimize bias and subjectivity due to being the only analyzer and coder of the data.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions throughout the study.

1. The study generalized all teacher teams in performing elementary schools in the state due to a limited number of interviews.
2. It was assumed all participants currently worked in a team.
3. The study generalized all teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools in the state due to a limited number of interviews.
4. The study generalized teams in business based on the selection of business participants due to a limited number of interviews.

Design Controls

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore the collaboration or teamwork experiences of teacher teams and teams in business. The teacher teams and business teams were strategically selected by using a basic narrative qualitative study design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). One of the groups studied was Missouri elementary teachers from performing public elementary schools not currently on an improvement plan. The study also focused on the experiences of Missouri teacher teams from public elementary schools that had received the Blue Ribbon award within the last 5 years prior to this study. The third group on which this study concentrated were teams in businesses on Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America 2022 list. Business professionals working for companies not on the Inc. 5000 list comprised the fourth group of participants studied.

To collect data, the researcher used semi-structured interviews followed by open-ended questions. In order to make sure the most honest and accurate data were used, the

researcher guaranteed respondents their answers would be handled with total anonymity and confidentiality. Ensuring confidentiality was used as a control to motivate participants to answer honestly.

There were multiple limitations within this study that the researcher addressed to maintain validity. One limitation was the limited number of interviews for the four types of teams studied: teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, business teams on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list. To control this limitation the researcher selected two Blue Ribbon schools, two performing elementary schools, two businesses on the Inc. 5000 list, and two businesses not on the Inc. 5000 list from two regions in the state of Missouri: Springfield metropolitan area and Kansas City metropolitan area. Another limitation was the participants in the study might not have answered honestly based on the point they perceived most important by the researcher. The researcher addressed this limitation by setting boundaries and refraining from sharing personal opinion and judgement. This study was also limited by the level of honesty from participants when describing their feelings about teamwork due to answering questions in a group setting with their colleagues. This limitation was controlled as the researcher set norms and boundaries prior to asking questions of the participants. An additional limitation was the length of time the participants spent working in a team with their colleagues due to the lack of data provided to the researcher when selecting participants. In an effort to control this limitation the researcher did not ask questions related to the number of years participants worked with each other. Finally,

the researcher minimized bias and subjectivity by performing a content analysis of participant responses that included coding transcripts to determine themes.

The delimitations of the study included the sample population being limited to the eight interviewees from two regions in Missouri: Kansas City metropolitan area and Springfield metropolitan area. Additionally, the study was limited to two Missouri elementary schools that had received the Blue Ribbon award within the last 5 years and two Missouri performing elementary schools that did not receive a Blue Ribbon award. This study was also limited to two businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list and two businesses not on the Inc. 5000 list. To control this variable the researcher chose the participating schools and businesses based on similar locations.

The study assumed the results of this study were generalized to the demographic the participants represented: Missouri elementary teacher teams from Blue Ribbon Schools, Missouri performing elementary teacher teams, businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list, and businesses not on the Inc. 5000 list. The sampling of this study ensured external validity of the research, which means the ability to accurately generalize findings to a specific population (Murnane & Willett, 2010). It was also assumed all participants currently worked in a team.

Summary

Teacher self-efficacy is important but collective teacher efficacy is even more vital to student achievement (Donohoo et al., 2018). Educators realize the importance of collaboration but the perceptions vary for what effective collaboration is (Huffman, 2011). Business professionals agreed the number 1 soft skill students need is teamwork

and educators need experience working in an effective team to guide students (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). However, there is a gap in research in reference to the connections and disconnections between collaboration in business and education. This study intended to fill this gap in literature by discovering the teamwork experiences of professionals in education and business. The purpose of this study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list talked about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Based on the theoretical framework of Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams, this study sought to understand how the eight mutual learning behaviors were exhibited by teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list.

This research study was organized into five chapters. Chapter Two entails a literature review organized thematically. The topics include the following: collaboration in education, perceptions of professional learning communities, effective and ineffective teacher collaboration, effective and ineffective collaboration in business, and similarities and differences in collaboration in education and business. In Chapter Three the methods used in this study, the design, and data analysis are discussed. The researcher selected eight participants based on the basic narrative qualitative study research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and explored how Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors were exhibited based on the answers of the participants. Chapter Four explains the

significant findings of the study and an analysis of the data, which includes tables and figures. Data from the study were analyzed and coded by outside sources to reduce bias. Finally, Chapter Five includes a brief summary and examines the researcher's interpretations of the findings, which correspond with the original research questions and problem statement. The final chapter describes implications for teamwork in education and business along with recommendations for future research followed by a chapter summary. A list of references is presented at the end of the study as well as appendices of related documents.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of Literature

According to John Hattie, a high-quality teacher has the effect size of 1.29 on student learning. Anything greater than .4 has a momentous positive effect, therefore an effect size of 1.29 is very significant (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, 2023). However, although teacher efficacy has one of the greatest impacts on student learning, it is surpassed in significance by collective teacher efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy is the perception teachers have that the work they perform makes a positive difference. Collective teacher efficacy has a substantial effect size of 1.34 (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, 2023). Teachers' belief of their shared capabilities directly influences students and positively impacts student motivation, engagement, achievement, and academic success (Burić & Kim, 2020; Lu & Mustafa, 2021). Schools where teachers have a high collective efficacy also benefit by having higher motivation and resilience when faced with the increasing challenges of teaching today. According to numerous research studies, teaching communities with high collective efficacy also reported increased job satisfaction (Buonomo et al., 2020; Ortan et al., 2021). As a result of this research, educational administrators try to promote collective teacher efficacy by creating a collaborative culture where teachers shift their discussions from task-related conversations to broader impact concerns, such as the impact of instruction on student achievement (Donohoo et al., 2018; Podolsky et al., 2019). Teachers also agree about the importance of collaboration. According to one survey, 95% of educators claim collaboration is an important skill for student career success (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017). One research study also found the number 1 soft skill businesses seek

in new hires is teamwork (Galbraith & Webb, 2013; Jalinus et al., 2020). Business professionals believe educators should have experience working in effective teams in order to advise students (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). School leaders attempt to create a culture of collaboration or teamwork by adopting the model of a professional learning community, also known as PLCs. However, most professional learning communities have minimal impact on student achievement due to the varying perceptions of true collaboration (Fuchs, 2023; Riggins & Knowles, 2020). Despite the attempt to create collaborative cultures and effective teacher teams, businesses are reporting students are not equipped with the soft skills they need to succeed, including collaboration and teamwork. According to TIME magazine, “entry-level candidates who are on tap to join the ranks of full-time work are clueless about the fundamentals of office life” (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017 p. 3). Companies such as Netflix, Dell, Microsoft, Google, and Apple primarily work in high-performing teams. They identify crucial roles and assign their top employees to solve problems directly impacting the company’s success (Nicoleta et al., 2021; Vozza, 2017). This strategy of using high-performing teams to address major issues results in 40% more productivity than the average company and profit margins 30%-50% higher than industry averages (Leong, 2017). This study is timely because the need for students to have the soft skill of teamwork is apparent from both teachers and business professionals, but students are still entering the workforce unprepared (Carnevale et al., 2021; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2017). Additionally, schools are making large investments in developing PLCs yet several schools show minimal improvement in student achievement (Hitt & Meyers, 2022; Riggins & Knowles, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this basic narrative

qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list talk about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Based on the eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams theory by Roger Schwarz (2013), this study sought to understand how the eight mutual learning behaviors were exhibited by teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list.

Chapter Two consists of a review of related literature first discussing the theoretical framework upon which this study was based, including Senge's (2006) five principles of a learning organization that creates the notion of Systems Thinking and Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors theory. Following the theoretical framework, this chapter will explore the evolution of collaboration in education and the prominence of PLCs. Then this chapter describes the vast amount of research on effective and ineffective PLCs, and the varying perceptions of PLCs. Following the research on PLCs is a review of literature on successful and unsuccessful collaboration or teamwork in business. Chapter Two will conclude with a compare and contrast of the research on collaboration in teaching and business, and include a discussion of how these two industries could learn from one another to better prepare students.

Effective Learning Organization

An effective learning organization is defined by Peter Senge (2006) as an organization that consists of continuous growth, where innovative ways of thinking are cultivated, where shared goals are promoted, and people are always learning how to learn together. According to Senge there are important differences between a learning organization and a traditional authoritarian-controlled organization. The key variances between a learning organization and a traditional organization are the mastery of five disciplines: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning (Senge, 2006). Team learning is the focus of this qualitative study. Based on Senge's theory, team learning is defined as when a group of people function as a whole and consist of three key characteristics: the need to think insightfully about complex issues; a need for innovation, coordinated action; and the role of teammates on other teams. There are also two main disciplines of team learning, which are dialogue and the mastery of discussion. The discipline of dialogue requires deep listening of colleagues, suppressing one's own views, and free and innovative consideration of all issues. Discussion in a team is defined as when multiple views are presented and defended and a decision must be made to determine the best view (Senge, 2006).

Not only does this study focus on team learning, but more specifically the mutual learning behaviors theory as defined by Robert Schwarz (2013). Similar to Peter Senge, Robert Schwarz also believed in the power of effective teams in a learning organization. He explains it is one thing for a teammate to say they value colleagues' ideas but it is another to act in a way that shows different ideas, transparency, and empathy truly matters. Schwarz described an effective team in a learning organization as one where

team members truly embody the eight key mutual learning behaviors: state and views and ask genuine questions, share all relevant information, use specific examples and agree on what important words mean, explain reasoning and intent, focus on interests not positions, test assumptions and inferences, jointly design next steps, and discuss undiscussable issues.

Collaboration in Education

The idea of colleagues working together in teams or collaborating has become more prominent in the last few decades and originated in the corporate sector from theorists such as Peter Senge, Steven Covey, Terry Deal, John Kotter, Warren Bennis, and many others (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). These theorists believed genuine teamwork is an essential component of a successful organization. A common theme between these business professionals is the belief that authentic collaboration involves coming together regularly to share thoughts and innovative ideas. Another key characteristic of collaboration from these corporate professionals is working together to create common understandings of goals and how to achieve them (L. Leonard, & Leonard, 2003).

Due to the push for public education reform and rigorous curricula standards, educators eventually began learning about these collaboration theories from the corporate world and figuring out ways to apply them in schools (Leonard, L. & Leonard, P., 2003; Wiglus et al., 2019). Discussions around public education reform began as early as the 1950s with education critics like Arthur Bestor publishing *Educational Wastelands*, which critiqued American public schools as having lax academic standards (Glazer & Mehta, 2020; Preston, 2020). The launching of Sputnik in 1957 also triggered public concerns about public education. Many citizens believed the main reason the United

States fell behind Russia in the race to space was due to the failure of public schools (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

The National Commission on Excellence in Education created a national stir in 1983 with the release of their grim assessment of public education in the United States. According to the report titled *A Nation at Risk*, the failure of public education was causing society to erode due to a rising tide of mediocrity that threatened the future of the nation (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Wilgus, 2019). The release of *A Nation at Risk* caused the United States Department of Education to respond with over 300 state and national task forces focused on analyzing the condition of public schools. This period in time is known as the Excellence Movement. The result of these task forces revealed a “stagnation at relatively low levels appears to describe the level of performance of American students.” In response to these results, a new movement was created: The Restructuring Movement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 4; Goodman, 1995).

The focus of the Restructuring Movement was to create national educational goals and standards. In 1989 President George Bush held a summit of state governors to discuss public education and as a result created “Goals 2000,” which included national goals for education. However, critics believed these goals represented a federal takeover of public schools. Therefore, at the next Education Summit in 1996 it was announced that the standards movement would be moved from the federal to state government and the task of creating national standards was left to professional organizations and curriculum specialists. Educators became optimistic during the Restructuring Movement as they felt there was a simple, innovative, and systematic way to address the monumental challenges before them. Unfortunately, school improvement agendas from restructured schools

focused more on non-academic, administrative issues that left students virtually untouched. Therefore, the Restructuring Movement ended with results much like the Excellence Movement with an inability to make a real difference in the ability to improve schools in the United States (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Elmore, 1996).

Upon the failure of the Restructuring Movement, educators felt discouraged and became defensive as critics continued to voice their opinions of public education. Additionally, more and more educators began conducting their own research about collaboration and professional development. Among these educational researcher was Judith Warren Little, who started to carry out initial studies on teacher workplace conditions and professional development. According to Little, professional learning is a teacher's professional growth as a result of formal and informal experiences that include workshops, mentoring, attending meetings, and more (Boz, 2023). One of Little's studies uncovered that successful schools viewed professional improvement is not an individual initiative to improvement but instead is an organizational phenomenon. These same schools were also found to have shared norms for school-wide work including analyzing and evaluating innovative practices and a group effort towards continuous school improvement. As a result, these schools were found to be more adaptable and successful among all the schools Little studied (J.W. Little, 1982).

In addition to Little's research, educators such as Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker (1998) began conducting research on why educational reform had failed and strategies to help successfully reform education, including teacher collaboration. First, DuFour and Eaker evaluated why educational reform had failed. Based on their studies, they concluded there are five key factors for why reform had failed to deliver results: the

complexity of the task, misplaced focus, lack of clarity on intended results, lack of perseverance, and failure to appreciate and attend the change process. Despite the reasons for why education reform had failed, DuFour and Eaker also began studying ways to save public schools. DuFour and Eaker's studies made connections between the private sector's findings on teamwork and explored how to apply it in education. According to DuFour and Eaker, educators have traditionally been quick to ignore experience and perceptions from those outside of education. They believed this was a mistake by educators. DuFour and Eaker believed educators should learn from organizations outside of education that have struggled with the same issues. From their studies they also concluded in order for schools to be much more effective, they need to separate from the industrial model public schools were founded upon and embrace a new model that allows schools to function as learning organizations or professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Professional Learning Communities

More recent research by John Hattie spoke to the importance of collaboration in professional learning communities and described collective teacher efficacy as having the largest effect size on student achievement (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, 2023). Professional learning communities have been linked to improving collective teacher efficacy due to the characteristics of a true PLC which include the following: shared leadership, productive and critical conversations are encouraged, group efforts to improve student learning through shared norms, and development of feedback and common practice among teachers (Akram et al., 2023; Khalid, 2021). According to research, providing teachers time to learn from each other is vital in order to develop a true PLC

and a collaborative school culture (Mofield, 2020; Weddle, 2022). DuFour (2004b) described a PLC as a group of educators who follow key principles, which include these: focus on student learning, not teaching; recognize the importance of collaborating on matters related to learning; judge effectiveness on the basis of results; and work hard and commit to continual improvement.

Early studies from DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggested PLCs as offering the most powerful model for transforming schools to meet new challenges. DuFour and Eaker (1998) described six key differences between a PLC and a traditional school. In a PLC there are a shared mission, vision, values, and goals with a fundamental focus on learning, not teaching. The emphasis on learning in a PLC shifts teachers' thinking to constantly answering four key questions:

1. What do we want all students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know if they learn it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn?
4. How will we expand the learning for proficient students?

As educators continue to answer these questions, they ensure there is alignment and everyone has a shared sense of the school they hope to become to meet their shared views (DuFour, 2004b). According to DuFour (2004b), collaborative teams is another basic structure of the professional learning community that consists of team members who work interdependently to achieve common goals. DuFour (2004b) provided several characteristics of collaborative teams as compared to teams in a traditional school, which are described in more detail in this section. One of these elements is colleagues who work in collaborative teams are able to learn from each other and create momentum for

continual improvement. Another difference between a PLC and a traditional school is collective inquiry. In a PLC teams are organized to engage in collective inquiry, which entails persistent examining and questioning of the status quo, creating new methods, testing new methods, and reflecting on results. DuFour (2004b) also described PLCs as being action oriented. Educators in a PLC turn aspirations into action and visions into reality. They do not tolerate inaction and create an increased awareness through new experiences that create a fundamental shift in attitudes, thus changing the culture of the school. As a result of constantly taking action and challenging the status quo, another key contrast between PLCs and traditional schools is continuous improvement. In a PLC educators do not simply learn a new system but create conditions for continuous learning. Unlike a traditional school, in a PLC continuous improvement is not viewed as another task, innovation and experiments are not just more things to complete on a to-do list but rather they are part of the daily school life forever. The last key difference between traditional schools and a professional learning community is PLCs are results oriented. Leaders of a PLC realize that all of the efforts—shared mission, vision, values, and goals; collaborative teams; collective inquiry; action orientation; and continuous improvement—must be evaluated based on their results (DuFour, 2004a). According to Senge (2006), the foundation for building a learning organization is centered around the idea that organizations will have drastically improved results. Therefore, educational leaders of a PLC use technology to provide staff with timely and relevant data that allow teams and individual educators to identify strengths and weaknesses in areas of improvement. Finally, and most importantly, the key difference between a PLC and a traditional school is a professional learning community is designed to touch the heart by

meeting fundamental needs of educators. All educators share the need to feel a sense of belonging, feel accomplished at work, and the need to live a life of significance by making a difference. A true professional learning community should meet all of these needs (DuFour, 2004b).

Prominence of Professional Learning Communities

More and more schools are investing a lot of resources into providing teachers time to collaborate and are creating new professional learning community models for teacher professional development (Arnold-DeHay, 2020; H. Liu & Ye, 2021). Among the most popular professional development model is professional learning communities (Avidov-Ungar & Konkes Ben Zion, 2019; Pitner, 2023; Riggins & Knowles, 2020). The professional learning community (PLC) concept gained significant attention in the late 1990s and has been positively associated with teacher and student outcomes (Bess, 2020; Christensen, 2022; Marzano et al., 2020). Professional learning communities became a popular trend in elementary schools as they responded to the increasing pressures for higher student achievement and school reform (Pitner, 2023). Some have described the idea of creating professional learning communities as the “lifeblood of innovation and risk taking in school” (Miller, 2020, para. 15). However, many PLCs are poorly implemented and as a result tend to lose the true meaning of what they are and what kind of results are trying to be attained (Muñoz & Branham, 2016; Paterson, 2019). Other educators are finding the typical enthusiasm launches the idea of PLCs but then it quickly follows the regular cycle of education reform (DuFour, 2004b; Muñoz & Branham, 2016). This cycle includes the beginning excitement, second there is confusion about the purpose, next are issues with implementation, then there is realization that the initiative

failed, next abandonment of the PLC, and finally a new idea to solve the problem is introduced (DuFour, 2004b). The process of transforming schools into professional learning communities sounds simple but the details of creating and adapting a new model for professional learning is daunting. Educators need more than just the professional learning community idea, but a system-wide implementation that includes teachers, administrators, and district staff all learning and working toward a common goal (Paterson, 2019; Voelkel et al., 2023).

Perceptions of Professional Learning Communities

According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), each of the three words in professional learning community were carefully chosen as they named their concept. A “professional” is an expert in a specialized field who has pursued advanced training to enter the field, and is expected to remain current in its developing knowledge base. The term *learning* means ongoing action and a curiosity to view concepts from various perspectives. Additionally, learning in a PLC is represented by two actions: studying and practicing. The word *community* in a professional learning community means an “administrative and functional structure, and a systematic arrangement for a definite purpose” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. xii).

Despite DuFour and Eaker’s specific characteristics of true professional learning communities, there are several differences in how PLCs are operated (Christensen, 2022; Ni et al., 2021). The term *professional learning community* has become so abundant it is likely going to lose meaning or inaccurately represent teacher learning by losing the fundamental concepts that support it (Antinluoma et al., 2021; Riggins & Knowles, 2020). One source describes teacher learning as a “broad construct that has different

meanings to different people” (Beilstein et al., 2021, p. 1). Researchers argue PLCs require a clear and shared focus that challenges members think differently, but broadly enough to create change (Brodie, 2021; Voelkel et al., 2023). Other perspectives describe effective teacher professional learning as “workplace learning” or learning that takes place on the job (Huijboom et al., 2021; Smith & Gillespie, 2023). Other educational scholars have tried to encompass the various definitions of PLCs with their own definitions. One example defined a PLC as a “learning community where professional learning increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment” (Wan, 2020 p.17). Some educational researchers explain there are required dimensions in a PLC: shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, and supportive conditions (Huffman, 2011; Ibrahim et al., 2019). According to other education researchers the five dimensions of a PLC are these: supportive and shared leadership, shared vision and values, supportive conditions, collective learning and application of learning, and shared practice (Morris-Hayes, 2023). Other scholars claim there are 12 dimensions of a PLC: shared vision and values; collective responsibility for pupils’ learning; collaboration focused on learning; professional learning: individual and collective; reflective professional enquiry; openness, networks, and partnerships; inclusive membership; mutual trust, respect, and support; optimizing resources and structures; promoting individual and collective professional learning; evaluating and sustaining a PLC; and leading and managing the PLC (Pandian et al., 2022; Thomas, 2023).

Teacher Perceptions of Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities are sustained by teachers' ongoing participation in collaboration in teams that are based on student learning (Brodie, 2021; M.E. Little, 2020; Thomas, 2023). Without the support of teachers and teachers' active engagement, PLCs are unable to make a long-term difference (Prenger et al., 2019; Reyna, 2019). Therefore, it is important to explore the literature regarding teacher perceptions of PLCs. Some individual interpretations of a PLC derive from committees, departments, stakeholders, students, teachers, staff, and district and school-level administrators (Huffman, 2011). Effective PLCs require open-ended conversations centered on educational issues that also allow for reflection, inquiry for improving instructional practice, and dialogue to work through difficult conversations (Admiraal et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2019). However, according to Martin et al. (2019), teachers often use this collaboration time to discuss immediate issues. Teachers also perceive a PLC as spending time working in isolation while in the same space or focused on logistical action items instead of critical problems of practice (Charner-Laird et al., 2016; Thomas, 2023). Additionally, educators have claimed they prefer not to work in professional learning communities and instead stay focused on their own classroom with little regard for fellow teachers' activities (Elfarargy et al., 2022; Thomas, 2023). One specific study found of 33 teachers, 40% with more than 10 years of experience would rather work independently to bypass participating in a professional learning community (Mo et al., 2021). Another idea of professional learning is common planning time. However, according to teachers, common planning time without a purpose is of limited value (Diehl, 2019). According to Datnow et al. (2021), effective PLCs use data to drive dialogue and improve student learning but teachers are not regularly using an evidence-based approach during PLC

discussions. There is also often an unwritten rule among teachers if one is new, one does not participate in collaboration while teachers with 5 years of experience or more are the most active participants (Derk, 2019; Zalaznick, 2020). Another common challenge to teacher professional learning is the mindset of “my kids’ versus ‘our kids” where teachers disregard their shared role in reaching the common goal of student academic success (Elfarargy et al., 2022; Zalaznick, 2020). Principal and teachers in the same building even have different perceptions of a PLC. In one study, principals agreed all key components of a PLC were present in their schools but teachers disagreed. Teachers in this same study also noted that shared personal practice was the weakest dimension of their school’s PLC and needed the most improvement (Wilson, 2014). Another study claims teachers in PLCs that lack a clear focus often just tell stories about their classes and lack deeper reflection about instructional practices (de Jong et al., 2021).

Effective Professional Learning Communities

Due to the fast pace environment of today’s world and increasing diversity among students, schools are pushed to continuously improve to effectively support student learning (van den Boom-Muilenburg et al., 2021). High-quality teaching requires strong professional learning communities that no longer tolerate isolated teaching but instead collegial exchange is the norm (Admiraal et al., 2021; Bess, 2020; Morris-Hayes, 2023). Effective PLCs create a collaborative learning environment where teachers work together to improve teaching practices and student achievement (Hairon, 2020; Morris-Hayes, 2023). Despite the varying perceptions of PLCs, there are many schools that have effectively evolved into professional learning communities and have made a positive impact on student learning.

Several studies have described how effective PLCs can lead to improved cultures and practices, including an increased use of student-centered instruction and more social support for achievement (Carter Andrews & Richmond, 2019; Kilag & Sasan, 2023; Thornton et al., 2020). The implementation of a true PLC creates a collective responsibility of students and together creates collective growth among teachers (Hairon, 2020; Valckx et al., 2021). Effective PLCs involve shared power among teachers that leads to school improvement (Bean, 2020; Brown et al., 2018). According to Brown et al. (2018), collaboration in PLCs determines not only what students will learn but also builds teachers' capacity to determine how to respond when students do not learn.

Teacher participants in a recent study described how the use of protocols in their PLC enabled them to address differing perspectives and create a safe collaborative environment that allows all voices to be heard. Additionally, these same teachers explained how PLCs provided a space to have the necessary challenging conversations that helped them improve systems needed for social change (A. Leonard, & Woodland, 2022). Another study concluded teachers working in a small PLC that engaged in lesson observation, analysis, and discussion demonstrated three positive outcomes: new insights about pedagogy and students, greater collegiality among PLC members, and ongoing professional collaboration happened in schools as a result (Gore & Rosser, 2022). Moulakdi and Bouchamma (2020) analyzed a mixed study on the impact of professional learning communities in six low-achieving elementary schools and found that applying Senge's principles of a learning organization within the PLCs resulted in a positive impact on student achievement because educators combined their strengths and collectively focused on improving student performance. Another study on the effect of

PLCs on student achievement over the course of 3 years concluded there was a substantial increase in two groups of students' reading scores: at-risk students who had an average improvement of 4.24 points, and regular students who had a difference of 3.94 points (Moulakdi & Bouchamma, 2020). According to a study of 93 elementary schools in a high-poverty area by Goddard et al. (2015), teacher collaboration is a key predictor of student academic achievement. Educational research has also confirmed that teachers working in PLCs with standard-specific student achievement increased their own content knowledge and further incorporated standards in their classrooms, which positively impacted student achievement (Burgess, 2021).

Ineffective Professional Learning Communities

Due to the multiple interpretations of professional learning, some teachers are receiving a lack of professional development focused on their needs, which leads them to leave the profession (García & Weiss, 2019). Therefore, it is important to also review the literature on the ineffectiveness of PLCs as they are the most common models of teacher professional learning (Riggins & Knowles, 2020). One recent study described current PLCs as compartmentalized, episodic, and expert-delivered consultations that typify teacher professional learning that does not impact teachers' mindsets or craft in order to bring positive change for students (A. Leonard, & Woodland, 2022). According to one study 92% of teachers in a school district reported collaboration was occurring in their school but only 57% of teachers reported they implemented learned practices from collaboration (Dyer, 2022). In another study teachers reported more dissatisfaction with PLCs than with any other form of professional learning (Charner-Laird et al., 2016). Several districts have made significant monetary investments in creating a PLC yet they

show minimal improvement in student achievement (Admiraal et al., 2021; Riggins & Knowles, 2020). Many districts purchase DuFour and Eaker's (1998) book with guidelines for implementing a PLC. Districts all over the country also invest in conferences and professional development focused on the PLC model. Despite the monetary investment, many districts show minimal results in improving student achievement (Riggins & Knowles, 2020).

Teacher professional learning activities are still traditional with trainings focused on the individual teacher and typically not positioned at the workplace including workshops, informative meetings, training sessions, and courses (Fred et al., 2020). More current studies uncover that PLCs are highly context focused and not always helpful to teacher practice (Zheng et al., 2021). Instead of lasting effects from implementing a true PLC, manufactured collegiality among teachers is often the result (Chen et al., 2020). One study about teachers in a PLC revealed teachers were not collectively discussing student results, which the researcher explained was due to teachers still working in isolation and only feeling responsible for their class. Additionally, in this same study teachers reported that the principal played the main role in establishing the vision and providing time and space for collaboration (Fred et al., 2020). This lack of supportive shared leadership, and shared vision does not align with the key conditions of an effective PLC (Admiraal et al., 2021). According to Carmi et al. (2022), school districts often implement professional learning communities in a top-down approach that negates the purpose. Therefore, there are several different perceptions of professional learning communities that cause confusion to practitioners and hinder the impact of a PLC on student achievement (Huffman, 2011).

Collaboration in Business

Teamwork is one of the essential soft skills of a successful workplace today (Danao, 2023; Davis et al., 2022). According to Danao (2023), people who are able to effectively work with others are more likely to achieve their goals and contribute to the success of their company. Preparing students for the workforce is a focus in education and ensuring students know how to work collaboratively is the main priority (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018; Sridharan et al., 2019). The purpose of this study was to explore how teacher teams and teams in business talk about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors. Therefore, it was key for the researcher to not only review literature regarding teacher collaboration but also how effective and ineffective teamwork in business. The following sections of this chapter describe types of collaboration or teamwork in business, effective collaboration in business, and ineffective collaboration in business.

Teamwork and Teaming

Collaboration in business can take many different forms but there are two key types: traditional or stable teams and teaming. Businesses around the globe have been restructuring to a team-based organizational structure and culture (Groysberg et al., 2018; Tripathy, 2018). According to Tripathy (2018), team-based organizations require all members to take decisions on the future of the business rather than a top-down approach in traditional settings. As a result, team members feel a sense of belonging and care for the business overall (Groysberg et al., 2018; Tripathy, 2018). Additionally, traditional or stable teams are groups of people who have learned over time how to work well together and have typical structures. These types of teams are ideal for situations that do not

frequently change and they spend time building trust in order to accomplish big goals. The term *teaming* is referred to as an active process and a fluid group of interdependent professionals working in temporary teams to problem solve, improve, and innovate (Dalcher, 2018; Edmonson, 2012b, Ståhl, 2023). Teaming involves people from various backgrounds with complimentary skills who serve as specialists in their areas and are committed to one common goal (Dalcher, 2018; Edmonson, 2012a; Oliver et al., 2019). Active and complex work settings are ideal environments for teaming because of the need to actively adapt and engage in teamwork in order to meet work objectives (Mayo, 2020). As described in one research study, schools often respond to change like glaciers while businesses adjust to change quickly (Dickinson, 2013). According to Edmonson (2012a), these teaming groups are used as a response to today's speed of change, increased market competition, and unpredictability of consumers' needs. Once a problem has been solved or a goal has been reached, the teaming groups are dismantled. As a result of these fluid groups, more and more professionals from various industries work on multiple teams and are constantly shifting memberships (Edmonson, 2012b; Oliver et al., 2019). Agile teams, a form of teaming, were introduced by the information technology industry and have since been adopted by other industries (Peeters et al., 2022; Spiegler et al., 2021). These agile teams are small, independent, and cross-functional teams where members are encouraged to make joint decisions and have no hierarchies. Teaming is not only key in information technology but also is essential in fields such as product development, patient care, strategy development, and pharmaceutical research (Edmonson, 2012b; Oliver et al., 2019).

Effective Collaboration in Business

The effectiveness of collaboration or teamwork in business is often correlated with revenue (Leong, 2017). Teaming has been attributed to an acceleration of delivering new products and services while also reacting to new opportunities. Teaming has also been linked to improving employees' skills, networks, and increasing knowledge. Organizations that learn to team well are better able to solve complicated, multifaceted problems; deliver a wide variety of products and services; handle unexpected issues; and align departments to create a more cohesive culture (Dalcher, 2018; Edmonson, 2012b; Oliver et al., 2019). Additionally, companies that frequently use collaboration and teaming are 40% more productive than the average company and have profit margins 30%-50% higher than industry averages (Leong, 2017).

There is a wide variety of businesses that effectively collaborate. One well known business infamous for their constant use of teams is Google. According to Bariso (2020), Google utilizes findings from their Project Aristotle research, and ensures all teams have "psychological safety," which is the shared belief that a team is a safe place to be vulnerable. Therefore, effective teams at Google demonstrate compassion and intentionally listen to each other (Duhigg, 2016). These effective teams result in innovative ideas and are the hub of real production (Google, n.d.). Another business with effective teamwork is the animation studio, Pixar. Teams at Pixar thrive in an open and collaborative environment that encourages all members to share ideas, provide feedback, and actively participate in the creative process. As a result of this teamwork, Pixar continues to have large success at the box office (Tom, 2023). One of Southwest Airlines business strategies is to create an internal culture that emphasizes teamwork rather than a

hero's model and always honors the dignity of individuals. Leadership of Southwest Airlines also values a collaborative team approach. Southwest Airlines benefits from this culture of collaboration by having an outstanding business performance and receiving several awards (Mani & Mishra, n.d.). Teamwork is an essential component of Starbucks' success. Starbucks believes the success of the company relies upon employee success and encourages all opinions to be shared. Each morning local Starbucks host a meeting before the store opens to share and establish individual goals and group daily targets (Derghan, 2022).

Effective teamwork not only occurs in notable companies but in businesses from various sectors. For example, according to Burrell (2020) virtual teams are a common type of team in today's workforce including cybersecurity businesses. Businesses with a competitive advantage effectively use technology by implementing virtual teams. These virtual teams enable organizations to easily make use of intellectual capital, subject expertise, and a broad scope of talent without the restriction of location (Burrell, 2020). According to Lee and Duckworth (2018), in order for health care organizations to deliver high-quality care to patients, collaboration is required. Effective health care teams ensure all clinicians are dedicated to achieving a shared goal of putting patients first, maintaining a clear communication of values, focusing on successes and having a growth mindset, and embracing feedback in order to continuously improve (de Waal et al., 2023). Successful sales teams thrive on healthy team-based competition that are developed through mentorship programs and extensive training (Hochstein et al., 2019).

Ineffective Collaboration in Business

Teamwork is essential in today's workforce and is key to building a better business (Stoica et al., 2023). Teaming was introduced in the information technology (IT) industry two decades ago and was described as software development teams that are self-managing, self-reflective, quick with product turnaround, efficient, and collaborative with stakeholders (Peeters et al., 2022; Ståhl, 2023). According to Peeters et al. (2022), there are several studies that prove the benefit of teaming, or agile teams, in the IT industry but there is little evidence about the success of teaming when taken out of its IT context (Edmondson & Gulati, 2021; Mohagheghi & Lassenius, 2021). Not all collaboration and communication in business is beneficial and businesses often make assumptions and do not define team expectations regarding what constitutes strong teamwork (Skelton & Pais, 2019). According to Stoica et al. (2023), some businesses ignore teamwork.

Based on a review of the literature, there are various factors of ineffective teamwork in the business world. According to Turay (2023), members of teams should have emotional intelligence that includes being aware of their behaviors and emotions, their teammates' emotions, and how they impact the team's performance. However, teams, including virtual teams, in today's work force lack emotional intelligence and instead these teams typically trigger trust and harmful sentimental issues that negatively impact their ability to reach organizational goals (Turay, 2023). Successful agile teams in the IT industry require a certain team size, specific tasks, a type of company culture, and setting, and if a company does not have these components, teaming fails (Edmondson & Gulati, 2021; Ståhl, 2023). The workforce is more diverse than ever with people of all ages and backgrounds working together, which at times can be difficult for teams to

effectively communicate and be successful. Therefore, research by Jankelová et al. (2022) concluded it is vital for business leaders to have diversity management training in order to promote quality teamwork among employees, thus reducing current high turnover rates. Composing successful teams requires multiple phases that are very intentional in creating a self-sustaining and successful team; otherwise teams created only based on completing specific tasks often fade away quickly after finishing the work (Khairova & Khairov, 2020). Another factor that negatively impacts teams in business is the assumptions employees have clear expectations about the kind of work required for effective collaboration and communication (Skelton & Pais, 2019). Tighter deadlines, more market turmoil, and the continuously changing business landscape, including the increased use of virtual teams, present challenges to implementing effective teamwork in business (Webber et al., 2019).

One specific industry impacted by ineffective teamwork is information technology. A group of programmers might have astonishing talent and capacity, but they are unable to reach their full potential as a group due to personality conflicts or other issues (Arora et al., 2023). Therefore, businesses must be intentional about how they develop teams instead of merely grouping individuals with similar talents (Arora et al., 2023; Khairova & Khairov, 2020). According to the Carucci (2017) with the *Harvard Business Review*, the leader of a business owned by a large real estate development company made changes to their marketing plan and the CEO and other leaders on the executive team agreed it negatively impacted the company. However, when the executive team met to discuss business performance, nobody raised the issue because their team

lacked the safe environment where difficult issues are routinely raised, which ultimately hurt their business (Carucci, 2017).

Collaboration in Business and Teaching

Teacher collaboration is a crucial condition for the improvement of schools (Çoban et al., 2023; Wullschleger et al., 2023). And, in today's corporate world, teamwork is the most essential component in employee productivity and a company's overall performance (Bokaii, 2023). Based on the review of literature thus far, collaboration is a common practice in both business and education. Collaboration is effectively and ineffectively used in both industries with some organizations having large success and others failing. The purpose of this study was to explore how business professionals and teachers talk about teamwork in relation to Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams. Therefore, it was important to the researcher to explore the similarities and differences between current literature on collaboration in business and teaching, which will be described in the final sections of Chapter Two.

Similarities in Collaboration in Business and Teaching

Despite being two different industries, based on the literature reviewed it can be concluded that collaboration is a vital component of the success in both a business and a school. Although there are differences in how teams in business and education collaborate, there are also similarities. After the researcher reflected on the findings from previous studies on effective collaboration in education and business, a few common themes were found that have been synthesized in this section. The common themes among effective collaboration in education and business are these: sharing responsibility,

building capacity of team members, fostering innovation, cultivating relationships among team members, and producing positive, measurable results.

One similarity between collaboration in teaching and business is the sense of shared responsibility. Teachers working together in an authentic PLC create shared responsibility and power (Brown et al., 2018). Positive teacher collaboration involves teachers collectively working together to support each other in solving real issues connected to content and instruction, which leads to a comprehensible learning experience for students (Oppi & Eisenschmidt, 2022). An effective team in business involves joint decisions made by all members and as a result, all members feel a sense of belonging and value to the overall organization (Tripathy, 2018).

Another commonality between business and teaching collaboration is building team members capacity. According to Edmonson (2012a), teaming in business has caused improvements to employees' skills and networks, and increases in knowledge. Teacher collaboration in PLCs build teachers' capacity to determine an effective response to when students struggle to learn (Brown et al., 2018). Collaboration among teachers in PLCs also has been strongly linked to improving collective teacher efficacy, which positively impacts student achievement (Chaney, 2023). Schools with teacher collaboration also have an innovative environment where teachers respond more frequently and positively to authentic collegiality (S. Liu et al., 2022).

When teaming is successful in business, teams deliver more new products and services while also staying ahead of the curve on new opportunities (Edmonson, 2012b). Additionally, effective business teams are the center of real production and result in innovative ideas (Google, n.d.). Successful collaboration in education also produces

innovative ideas. According to teachers from one study, PLCs provided a safe space to have tough conversations and ensure all perspectives were heard in order to create systemic school changes necessary for social change (A. Leonard, & Woodland, 2022). Teachers that collaborate and work in a climate where new ideas are encouraged are more empowered and have a stronger creative self-efficacy, which leads to innovation (S. Liu et al., 2022).

Cultivating relationships among employees is another similar characteristic of effective collaboration in business and education. Based on the findings from Google's research of effective teams, members of successful teams have "psychological safety" or the shared belief that the team is a safe place to share all thoughts and opinions (Bariso, 2020). Successful teams at Google show compassion and respect for their teammates' thoughts and ideas (Duhigg, 2016). Teacher teams with high-quality collaboration describe their PLC as a place where all members feel respected and encouraged to share their voice (A. Leonard, & Woodland, 2022). According to Gore and Rosser (2022), teachers from successful teams demonstrated greater collegiality and ongoing collaboration was more likely to occur.

The final key similarity between the previous literature about effective collaboration in teaching and business is the positive, measurable results. Businesses with solid teamwork among employees typically have an increased revenue when compared to other companies (Leong, 2017). According to Leong (2017), businesses that properly utilize teamwork are 40% more productive than the average company and have profit margins 30%-50% higher than industry averages. Schools with teachers that successfully collaborate have been shown to produce higher test scores and an improvement in student

achievement. According to Moulakdi and Bouchamma (2020), two groups of students from schools with PLCs significantly improved reading scores. These two groups included at-risk students who had an average improvement of 4.24 points, and regular students who had a difference of 3.94 points (Moulakdi & Bouchamma, 2020).

According to a study of 93 elementary schools in a high-poverty area by Goddard et al. (2015), teacher collaboration is a key predictor of student academic achievement.

Teachers working in PLCs that incorporate standards in their classroom and increase their own content knowledge have been proven to improve student achievement (Adams, 2021; Burgess, 2021; Meesuk et al., 2021).

Differences in Collaboration in Business and Teaching

After a review of the literature about collaboration in business and education, the researcher not only discovered similarities between the two industries but also differences. According to Dickinson (2013), collaboration in business and education is different. There are a few key differences between the two industries that are summarized in this section. The main variations among collaboration in business and education are the organizational structure, the frequency of collaboration, and topics addressed in collaboration.

The first difference to be explored between collaboration in education and business is organizational structure. A business trend over the last few decades has been the idea of restructuring to a less hierarchical organization. Businesses have evolved from fragmented workers that focus on one task of an entire process, to the use of teams where people have ownership of the broader vision (Groysberg et al., 2018; Tripathy, 2018). According to Dickinson (2013), the organization of educators is heavily influenced by the

industrial revolution where teachers know part of the process and lack a sense of ownership in the whole product or child as a student moves from one class to another. Therefore, educators could learn from the business experience (Dickinson, 2013). Business leaders also agree educators should have experience working in an effective team in order to teach students to have the number 1 soft skill needed in today's workforce: teamwork (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). Throughout the last three decades, school reform changes have not been sustainable due to organizational structures that lack systems thinking, which was established by a business professional, Senge (Alsbury et al., 2018).

The frequency of collaboration in business and education is another difference between the two industries. Professional learning communities have been described as sporadic and expert-delivered sessions that typify teacher professional learning that does not impact teachers' attitudes or practices (A. Leonard, & Woodland, 2022). According to Edmonson (2012a), teaming in business is an active process and a fluid group of reliant professionals working in temporary teams. Rather than having expert-delivered sessions, teaming includes people from different backgrounds who serve as specialists in their own areas (Edmonson, 2012a). As a result of these fluid teams, most professionals from many industries work on several teams and are constantly shifting memberships (Edmonson, 2012b). While businesses respond to change quickly, schools often respond to change like glaciers (Dickinson, 2013).

The final key difference explored by the researcher is the topic of collaboration in business and education. Based on research by Fred et al. (2020), teacher collaborations are often still traditional trainings focused on individual teachers that are not focused on

the classroom. Professional learning communities are often highly context focused and not always helpful to teacher practice (Zheng et al., 2021). Teaming in business is typically used to address specific urgent issues. More specifically, teaming involves working together to problem solve, improve, and innovate (Edmonson, 2012b).

Summary

Research reveals despite schools' significant monetary investments in creating PLCs, several schools have yet to show substantial improvement in student achievement (Riggins & Knowles, 2020). As this chapter uncovered, the different perceptions of a professional learning community or collaboration results in an ineffective use of time and resources, and influences the effect on student achievement, which is a problem (Huffman, 2011; Piercey, 2010). Current studies of teamwork in business also prove the benefit of teaming in the IT industry but show minimal evidence of teaming success outside of the IT context (Peeters et al., 2022). There are also some businesses that simply do not leverage teamwork (Stoica et al., 2023).

However, the literature review also revealed there is research that described the successes of collaboration in both education and business. Educators working in PLCs have been provided an opportunity to have urgent conversations that lead to social change (A. Leonard, & Woodland, 2022). Teacher collaboration in PLCs has also been linked to an improvement in teacher capacity that ultimately resulted in improved student achievement (Burgess, 2021). Teamwork in business has been proven successful as well, as it is often correlated with a revenue increase and a quickening of new products and innovation (Leong, 2017).

In summary, given what we know about the subject, we can conclude there are connections between collaboration in education and business but there are also key differences. The purpose of this study was to further explore the teamwork experiences of teachers and business professionals in relation to Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors of successful teams. This study sought to fill the gap in literature regarding whether there are connections between the behavior of teams in both business and education, and how these two sectors could learn from each other. Chapter Three will explain the procedures and methodology for this basic narrative qualitative study. Chapter Four will provide a conclusion of the findings from the study. The final chapter, Chapter Five, contains a summary of the study, discussion, significance, implications, and recommendations for future studies. A list of key references is also presented and an appendices of related documents.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list talked about the use of Schwarz's (2018) eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Collective teacher efficacy, the shared belief that teachers can influence student outcomes, has the largest effect size on student learning (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, 2023). To improve collective teacher efficacy, educators agree they should provide teachers time to collaborate (Nguyen & Ng, 2020). However, not all teachers regularly collaborate or work as a team (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). The workforce ranks effective teamwork among the top skills new hires must comprise and teamwork has been cited as a vital professional skill for the 21st century (Ellis & Zhang, 2016). Frequent use of collaboration and all-star teams that address high-priority issues are used in business (Leong, 2017). According to business professionals, educators should have personal experience working in successful teams in order to provide teamwork advice to students (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). Another study by Alsbury et al. (2018) described how school reform changes are not maintainable due to the lack of systems thinking, which was established by a business professional, Senge.

This basic qualitative narrative study explored the teamwork experiences of teachers and business professionals through the lens of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual

learning behaviors. Participants were prompted to share stories about their lives working in teams through one-on-one interviews. The proposed research utilized the qualitative design because qualitative studies seek to thoroughly understand a subject instead of attempting to predict a result and it focuses on understanding individuals' viewpoints (Creswell, & Poth, 2016). A basic narrative approach to a qualitative study requires the researcher to pay attention to the meaning individuals attach to experiences through storytelling (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The core of a basic qualitative narrative study is to emphasize how participants share their stories and the relationship the stories have with other peoples' experiences (Green & Thorogood, 2018).

Chapter Three introduces the basic narrative qualitative method used to explore the mutual learning behaviors among four different groups: teacher teams in elementary Blue Ribbon schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list. Within this chapter is a description of the participants, selection of the sample, research setting, research design, and an explanation of the method used to gather observational data. Chapter Three also includes the procedures of the study, measures used to analyze data, and a summary of how this study was developed. A basic qualitative methodology was utilized as the design of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list discussed the use of the eight

mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Based on the eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams theory by Roger Schwarz (2013), this study sought to understand how the eight mutual learning behaviors were exhibited by teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list.

This basic narrative qualitative study explored the eight mutual learning behaviors of two teachers from two different Blue Ribbon elementary schools, two teachers from two performing elementary schools, two business professionals from two businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and two business professionals working for companies not on the Inc. 5000 list. Blue Ribbon elementary schools are nationally recognized schools with students that achieve at a very high level or schools that make significant improvements in closing the achievement gap (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020). Two different Blue Ribbon elementary schools were chosen from two different locations in Missouri: one from the Kansas City metropolitan area and one in the Springfield metropolitan area. Performing elementary schools were accredited public schools that were not currently on an improvement plan by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The performing elementary schools selected for this study also were located in the same areas of Missouri as the Blue Ribbon schools. Business teams on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list were companies with the most revenue growth from 2021 to 2023; they had to be privately held, U.S. based, independent, and founded and generating revenue by March 31, 2019 (Inc. 5000, 2023). The businesses not

on the Inc. 5000 list were located in the same regions of Missouri and the criteria for selecting these businesses were not specified by the researcher. /See

Research Questions

Throughout this basic narrative qualitative study, the researcher explored how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list talked about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
2. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and performing elementary teacher teams related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
3. What are the experiences of performing elementary teacher teams and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
4. What are the experiences of business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list

related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?

Participants

The researcher selected participants in this basic narrative qualitative study based on the goal of learning about the participants' stories and lived experiences (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). There were four key categories of participants in this study. One group consisted of two teachers from two different public elementary schools that had received the National Blue Ribbon award within the last 5 years. Elementary schools that received the National Blue Ribbon award were high-performing schools according to state assessments, demonstrated model performance in closing the subgroup achievement gap over the past 5 years, and upheld high standards in the areas of academics, arts, and athletics (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Therefore, the researcher selected to study Blue Ribbon schools to minimize bias and ensure teachers from high-performing schools were represented in the study in order to compile diverse perspectives about teamwork. The size and demographics of the Blue Ribbon schools these participants represented all varied so as to not limit the sample size. The grades taught by participants from accredited elementary schools were not specified. The data source used to select the Blue Ribbon elementary schools was accessed online from the official list on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.

The second category of participants were two elementary teachers from two various public accredited elementary schools that were not Blue Ribbon award recipients. It was important for the researcher to interview teachers from multiple schools in the state because the meaning of collaboration, specifically professional learning communities,

varies between teachers (Beilstein et al., 2021). To select participants from Missouri accredited elementary schools, the researcher used an open data collection system called Core Data, which can be found on the Missouri DESE (2023) website. The demographics of the accredited elementary schools represented also ranged and were not specified by the researcher. All teacher participants, including both Blue Ribbon and accredited elementary schools, had a minimum of 5 years of experience to ensure their perspectives of teamwork were credible. The grades taught by participants from accredited elementary schools were also not specified.

The third group of participants include two business professionals from two different Missouri businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list. The researcher studied business professionals that worked for companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list because businesses on this list had the most revenue growth from 2021 to 2023 (Inc. 5000, 2023). Therefore, employees of these businesses were high performing and had a credible perspective about teamwork. All of the business participants were intermediate or experienced business professionals, which was a level up from an entry-level employee. Intermediate employees had an abundance of knowledge, a history of work experience in their industry, and more autonomy (Herrity, 2023). The location of business professionals and teachers varied throughout the state of Missouri in order to gather multiple different perspectives about teamwork.

The fourth group of participants included two business professionals from two different Missouri businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list. To prevent bias, the researcher wanted to include the

perspective of business professionals that did not work for a high-performing company. The researcher selected participants that were intermediate-level employees to maintain consistency with the participants employed by businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list. Demographics of the businesses represented by these participants were not specified by the researcher in order to prevent restricting the sample size.

The participants' privacy and all information were maintained confidential by the researcher. The six teacher participants in this study included master teachers who had been in the profession more than 5 years. The three business professional participants had been in the work force for over 5 years. To ensure a variety of lived teamwork experiences and stories were explored, the researcher studied multiple participants (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

Selection/Sampling

The researcher used purposive sampling of participants from Blue Ribbon elementary schools, accredited elementary schools, and businesses from the 2023 Inc. 5000 list (Bywaters et al., 2020). Principals of the Blue Ribbon and accredited elementary schools were contacted by phone and e-mail to gain permission to conduct the study with a teacher from their school. The researcher worked with the building principal to identify a teacher that currently worked on a team of other teachers and would be available for a one-on-one interview. Human resources directors of businesses on and off the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies list were contacted by phone and e-mail to obtain permission to perform the study with an employee from their business. The researcher worked with the human resources director to identify an intermediate-level employee that

currently worked on a team and would be open to a one-on-one interview. The total number of participants in this study was eight, which included two teachers from Blue Ribbon elementary schools, two teachers from accredited elementary schools, two business professionals currently working for a business on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and two business professionals that did not work for a business on the Inc. 5000 list.

Once all participants had been identified and permission for the study had been granted to the researcher, a letter of consent was e-mailed to each participant explaining the study. This letter of consent can be found in Appendix A. It is important to keep participant information confidential in qualitative research. To protect the privacy of participants, the researcher used aliases for all teachers, business professionals, schools, and businesses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To select participants from public Blue Ribbon elementary schools, the researcher utilized the official list of Blue Ribbon elementary schools on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website. An open-access database was used to find a list of performing elementary public schools from which to choose participants. The selection of participants from businesses consisted of picking representatives of Missouri companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list. The researcher searched for businesses not on the Inc. 5000 list by looking up companies located in similar areas as the businesses on the Inc. 5000 list. Specific criteria for selecting businesses not on the Inc. 5000 were not described by the researcher.

Research Setting

The research setting for this study included teacher teams in National Blue Ribbon award-winning elementary schools in Missouri, teacher teams in performing elementary schools in Missouri, employee teams in Missouri businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Company 2022 list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list. Blue Ribbon elementary schools were selected for this study because they were award-winning schools with an overall academic distinction in closing achievement gaps within student subgroups (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Performing or accredited elementary schools were chosen for this study, which were schools that had achieved accreditation status from the Missouri State Board of Education after undergoing the extensive evaluation process by the state (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2023). Teachers from Blue Ribbon award-winning elementary schools and teachers from performing elementary schools were selected to explore how they talked about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. The elementary schools ranged in size, funding, leadership, and demographics to diminish bias and the credibility of the data (Creswell & J Creswell, 2018). Teachers from kindergarten to sixth grade were included to broaden the sample size. The study focused on Missouri teacher teams from public elementary schools that had received the Blue Ribbon award within the last 5 years in order to have a larger pool of participants from which to collect data. Participants that worked for a Missouri company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list were selected because they worked for companies with significant revenue growth from 2019 to 2022 (Inc. 5000, 2023). Employees from these high-performing companies were

selected to discover how business professionals talked about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. The study also focused on the perspective of business professionals that did not work for a company on the Inc. 5000 list in order to prevent bias.

Research was conducted through email, phone conversations, and one-on-one virtual Zoom video calls. All one-on-one interviews were held in a quiet, private room to remove distractions and interruptions. The interviews conducted over Zoom video calls lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Most interview questions were open-ended, unstructured, and used layman's language to ensure clarity and allow for the researcher to explore experiences brought forward by the participants (McGrath et al., 2019). The specific interview questions utilized by the researcher can be found in the appendices.

Research Design

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list talked about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. A basic narrative qualitative approach was selected because it allowed the researcher to explore participants' real-life teamwork experiences through storytelling (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Kekeya (2021) reported a case study described inquiry that investigated current phenomenon among a single unit. Therefore, the researcher applied the basic narrative design instead of a case study in order to discover the various experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings among participants instead of exploring a phenomenon (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Principals of the Blue Ribbon and accredited elementary schools were contacted by the researcher to gain permission to conduct the study with one of their teachers as a participant. Each principal provided contact information for a teacher they recommended for the study. To contact business professional participants, the researcher reached out to the business's human resources director to obtain permission for the study and to gain recommendations for an employee to interview. Next, a letter of consent was e-mailed to each potential participant, which included an explanation of the study, a request for informed consent, and logistics for conducting a virtual one-on-one interview via a Zoom call. The letter of consent can be found in Appendix A. Once all participants provided consent, the researcher began the first phase of the basic research design, which entailed intentional listening during one-on-one interviews about how participants talked about teamwork in relation to Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors. The interview questions used to guide the conversation can be found in Appendix B. The researcher recorded all virtual one-on-one interviews and utilized Google Meet's free transcription tool to transcribe the interviews.

Once the video recordings had been transcribed, the researcher made sense of the qualitative data by searching transcripts for meaning and important patterns in order to gain credible and insightful findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The researcher also conducted a content analysis by coding the transcripts to determine themes. A basic narrative approach focuses on how people share their personal stories and the relationship between other participants' real-life stories (Green & Thorogood, 2018). Therefore, the researcher determined the connections between the themes of participants' experiences and developed the findings and recommendations for future research.

Researcher's Role

The primary role of the researcher was to explore the teamwork experiences of business professionals and teachers in regards to Schwarz's (2013) mutual learning behaviors. In a qualitative study, the researcher serves as the facilitator who inquires, poses problems, and consults (Bloomberg, 2022). Therefore, the researcher in this study utilized mainly open-ended and unstructured questions, and also used layman's terms to maintain clarity that created an environment for participants to openly share their experiences. Qualitative studies should analyze data by uncovering patterns in order to determine credible and insightful findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The researcher used a Google Meet's free transcription application to transcribe video recordings to determine themes and patterns. A content analysis should be considered in a qualitative study in order to minimize bias (Mackieson et al., 2019). Therefore, the researcher coded transcripts to determine themes through a content analysis. Triangulation should be involved in qualitative research when examining sources of data outside of one-on-one interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher utilized triangulation to validate findings, involving multiple forms of data sources beyond interviews that were provided by participants. These specific triangulation sources included, the researcher's own interview notes, team meeting protocols, team meeting agendas, team meeting schedules, and professional learning plans.

Procedures

The researcher collected and analyzed data strategically and systematically. Once the Research Review Board (RRB) at Southwest Baptist University approved then the researcher began collecting data. A variety of lived experiences and stories should be

shared in a basic narrative qualitative study in order to explore multiple perspectives (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). To ensure various experiences were heard, the researcher involved teachers and business professionals from different locations and demographics. Building principals of both Blue Ribbon elementary schools and accredited elementary schools were contacted by phone and e-mail to gain permission to interview one of their teachers for the study. Names and contact information of teachers to be interviewed were provided by the building principal. The Blue Ribbon elementary schools were selected based on the official online list of Blue Ribbon award winning schools on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website. Building principal contact information was obtained from their corresponding official school websites. The accredited elementary schools selected to be represented in this study were selected by accessing information from an open data collection system called Core Data, which can be found on DESE (2023) website. The researcher followed the same process for contacting building principals of accredited elementary schools as the Blue Ribbon elementary schools. The researcher contacted human resources directors of businesses both on and off the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list by phone and e-mail to obtain permission to perform the study with an employee from their business. The human resources directors then provided contact information for an employee that could be reached for a one-on-one interview. The total number of participants was eight: two teachers from Blue Ribbon elementary schools, two teachers from accredited elementary schools, two business professionals currently working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and

two business professionals not working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list.

After participants were selected and building principals and human resources directors provided permission for the study, an e-mail was sent to each participant explaining the study and to request consent. Participant information must remain confidential in a qualitative study. Therefore, the researcher used aliases for all teachers, business professionals, schools, and businesses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher completed one-on-one interviews with participants through email, phone conversations, and one-on-one virtual Zoom video calls. Each one-on-one interview was held in a quiet, private room to eliminate distractions and interruptions. The interviews conducted over Zoom video calls took between 20 and 30 minutes. Specific interview questions used by the researcher can be found in the appendices.

The researcher made sense of the qualitative data by searching transcripts and determining patterns in order to gain credible and insightful findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). All interviews were conducted virtually using Google Meet. Additionally, the researcher used Google Meet's free transcription application to transcribe all video recordings. Most interview questions were open-ended, unstructured, and used layman's language to ensure clarity and allow for the researcher to explore experiences uncovered by the participants (McGrath et al., 2019). Additionally, the researcher completed a content analysis by coding the transcripts to determine themes. Qualitative research should involve triangulation as described in order to examine sources of data outside of one-on-one interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the researcher followed the process of triangulation to make sure the information compiled from participants was

credible and trustworthy. The researcher's interview notes—which included observations and thoughts—were utilized to triangulate the data.

Instrumentation

Based on the review of literature, the researcher's intent for this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore the lived teamwork experiences of teachers and business professionals in relation to Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors. The goal of a basic narrative qualitative study is to listen as participants describe stories about their lives and lived experiences (Green & Thorogood, 2018). Therefore, to understand the various perspectives and lived experiences of teachers and business professionals, a basic narrative qualitative approach was an ideal option for the study. A basic narrative design involves one-on-one interviews, observations of the participants during their storytelling, and documents that also represent the narrative (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The researcher conducted a combination of one-on-one interviews over the phone and using video calls. Protocol for the interviews was developed based on the findings from the literature review in Chapter Two. Interview questions were created based on Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors, which can be found in the appendices.

Pilot testing is recommended to examine interview questions and uncover potential issues before conducting research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher conducted pilot testing with a group of two different individuals: one teacher from a public school and a business professional currently working for a company not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list. Each of the individuals participating in the pilot testing was employed by schools and businesses separate from the other participants in this study.

One-on-one interviews should serve as conversations between the researcher and the participant. Interviews should start with open-ended questions so the researcher can get a broad view of the participant's perspective. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), as the interview progresses secondary questions become more focused. Additionally, the interviewer should refrain from guiding and influencing answers but instead should encourage the interviewee to speak freely (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The specific questions the researcher used to guide the conversation are located in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

According to Butina (2015), data analysis is an ongoing process that involves the researcher to identify developing insights during the first interview, which may cause the researcher to ask more questions or revise the interview questions. Throughout the interviewing phase of the study, the researcher continuously refined questions to align with emerging themes from previous interview data. The researcher collected data through one-on-one interviews and triangulating multiple sources of data including the researcher's interview notes, participant's team meeting norms or protocols, participant's team meeting agendas, participant's team meeting schedules, and participant's professional learning plans. Once all interviews are concluded, a more intensive analysis should be conducted that includes the coding process, determining themes or categories, and interpreting the data (Butina, 2015). After collecting data the researcher utilized open coding. Open coding is described as reading and rereading the data to check for themes, emotions, and unexpected points while also considering the overall picture (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Virtual interview recordings of the one-on-one interviews were

automatically transcribed utilizing Google Meet. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the transcribed data and checked transcripts to ensure accuracy. A qualitative researcher should analyze data, noting groups of topics mentioned by participants and coding data into categories and themes based on the theoretical framework, which in this case was Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher in this study determined whether common themes were revealed through participants' responses and organized the data in relation to Schwarz's eight mutual learning experiences. In addition to making connections to Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors, categories and themes were also evaluated through the perspective of Senge's systems thinking theory. Through the final narrative, the researcher explained connections between the data collected from participants.

Validity

The trustworthiness of research and whether it evaluates what it is supposed to be evaluating is how validity is defined (Abd Gani et al., 2020). To achieve validity of a study, it is necessary for the researcher to triangulate findings against other inquiry approaches (Daniel, 2019). Triangulation is described as examining sources of data outside of the one-on-one interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher included the process of triangulation to make sure the information compiled from participants was credible and trustworthy. Four sources were used for triangulation. One of the sources used for triangulation was collaboration protocols and team agendas. These data sources were obtained from participants. The researcher used collaboration protocols and team agendas as evidence of the professional learning environment participants work within. Another source of data used was participants' professional learning plans, which

outline the opportunities for employees to continue their education and improve practice. Team meeting schedules were obtained from each participant in order for the researcher to confirm the frequency teachers and business professionals meet with teams. The final source of data used for triangulation was interview transcripts and the researcher's notes to confirm the experience of participants.

Validity in a qualitative study is also referred to as accuracy checking (Taherdoost, 2022). To confirm validity, a researcher should follow specific procedures to check for accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the researcher of this study used credible data sources to select schools and businesses that should be represented in this study. To select Blue Ribbon elementary schools the researcher used the official list of Blue Ribbon schools on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website. Participants that represented accredited elementary schools were selected based on information collected from an open data collection system called Core Data, which can be found on the Missouri DESE (2023) website. The researcher ensured validity when selecting participants to represent businesses by selecting participants that worked for companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list because businesses on this list had the most revenue growth from 2021 to 2023 (Inc. 5000, 2023). The researcher maintained validity by selecting business participants not on the Inc. 5000 list by choosing businesses located in similar locations as the companies on the Inc. 5000 list. A basic narrative qualitative study should include participants with a variety of lived experiences and stories (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Therefore, the researcher studied multiple participants from elementary schools and businesses of varying sizes, demographics, and locations.

Reliability

Reliability is referred to as the demonstration of consistency in coding and interpretation of data (Daniel, 2019). A pilot test is recommended for qualitative research studies in order to ensure validity by creating an opportunity to pretest the research instrument before conducting the real study (Abd Gani et al., 2020). Therefore, the researcher of this study completed a pilot testing group. The pilot testing group consisted of a one-on-one interview with a teacher from a performing public school in Missouri and an interview with a business professional. The business professional interviewed worked for a company separate from the businesses selected for the actual study. The researcher used the same interview questions, found in the appendices, for pilot testing as well.

A qualitative researcher must develop trustworthiness of the data collected. The criteria of trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To meet this criteria, the researcher explained to participants that data collected from interviews would be anonymous and confidential, which encouraged teachers and business professionals to speak freely. The researcher should triangulate findings against other inquiry approaches to ensure reliability (Daniel, 2019). In this study the researcher used various data sources for triangulation, which included interview notes, collaboration protocols and team agendas, participants' professional learning plans, weekly and monthly work schedules, school performance data from the DESE website, and interview transcripts.

Summary

Chapter Three described the methodology for conducting this basic narrative qualitative study. Within Chapter Three the researcher described the connections between

the research questions and research problem statement, methodology, design, setting, instrumentation, validity, reliability, procedures, and data analysis. Participants were intentionally selected in this basic narrative qualitative study based on the goal of learning about the participants' stories and lived teamwork experiences (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Eight total participants were involved in this study, which included two teachers from Blue Ribbon elementary schools, two teachers from accredited, performing elementary schools, two business professionals currently working for a business on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and two business professionals working for companies not on the Inc. 5000 list. This study utilized a combination of one-on-one phone and e-mail interviews. All virtual video interviews were recorded using Google Meet. The virtual video interview recordings were transcribed using Google Meet's free transcription application. Triangulated sources of data were then used to ensure validity and reliability. The researcher used research notes as part of the triangulation process. Additionally, the researcher used open coding to determine themes, emotions, and unexpected points while also considering the overall picture (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Then the researcher noted recurring topics mentioned by participants and coded data into categories and themes based on the theoretical framework, which included Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors and Senge's systems thinking theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Finally, the researcher concluded by synthesizing findings into one narrative.

Chapter Four presents the findings and an analysis of the data, which include tables and figures that describe the significance of the study. Chapter Five provides a summary of the problem and an interpretation of the findings that connect to the research

questions and problem statement. Additionally, recommendations for future research are presented along with a summary of the chapter. A list of important references and an appendices of related documents are also included after Chapter Five as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list discussed the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Based on the eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams theory by Roger Schwarz (2013), this study sought to understand how the eight mutual learning behaviors were exhibited by teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list.

This basic narrative qualitative study explored the eight mutual learning behaviors of two teachers from two different Blue Ribbon elementary schools, two teachers from two performing elementary schools, two business professionals from two businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and two business professionals working for companies not on the Inc. 5000 list. Blue Ribbon elementary schools are nationally recognized schools with students that achieve at a very high level or schools that make significant improvements in closing the achievement gap (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2022). Two different Blue Ribbon elementary schools were chosen from two different locations in Missouri: one from the Kansas City metropolitan area and one in the Springfield metropolitan area. Performing elementary schools were accredited public schools that were not currently on an

improvement plan by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The performing elementary schools selected for this study also were located in the same areas of Missouri as the Blue Ribbon schools. Business teams on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list were companies with the most revenue growth from 2021 to 2023; they had to be privately held, U.S. based, independent, and founded and generating revenue by March 31, 2019 (Inc. 5000, 2023). The businesses not on the Inc. 5000 list were located in the same regions of Missouri and the criteria for selecting these businesses were not specified by the researcher.

Throughout this study, the researcher explored how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list talked about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
2. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and performing elementary teacher teams related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
3. What are the experiences of performing elementary teacher teams and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing

Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?

4. What are the experiences of business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?

Chapter Four describes the study's findings and data analysis including tables and figures indicating the significance of the study. The data analysis is organized into three sections. The first section describes the participant demographics of the chosen schools and businesses, which represented two parts of the state of Missouri. The second section explains the interview procedures and outcomes of patterns and themes that were revealed from participant interviews. The final section of the chapter provides additional insights.

Participants

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with eight different participants. The study encompassed four distinct participant categories. The first category included teachers from National Blue Ribbon award-winning elementary schools that varied in size and demographics. The second category involved teachers from accredited elementary schools based on data from an open data collection system called Core Data, which can be found on the DESE (2023) website. Performing elementary schools were accredited public schools that were not currently on an improvement plan by the DESE. The demographics of the accredited elementary schools represented also ranged and were

not specified by the researcher. The third group of participants included intermediate business professionals from companies listed on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list. Lastly, the fourth participant group was comprised of intermediate business professionals working for companies not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list. Demographics of all the businesses were intentionally left unspecified to prevent sample size restrictions.

Interview Procedures

To collect data, the researcher used semi-structured interviews and mainly open-ended questions which can be found in Appendix B. The researcher began the interview process by creating a pilot testing group comprised of one experienced teacher from a performing public school and an intermediate business professional working for a business not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list. Pilot testing aided the researcher in establishing content validity and improving questions, formats, and instructions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Principals of Blue Ribbon elementary schools and accredited elementary schools were contacted through email to secure permission for the study, collaborating with them to identify suitable teachers currently engaged in team-based activities for one-on-one interviews. Similarly, human resources directors of the listed and non-listed businesses were approached for permission, with the researcher working alongside them to select intermediate-level employees actively involved in team projects. Upon obtaining consent from all participants, an email explaining the study was sent to them along with a letter of informed consent, as detailed in Appendix A. The researcher emailed all participants a Google Meet meeting invite by email. All interviews were conducted one-on-one and

were recorded through the Google Meet application. Follow-up emails were required to confirm information provided regarding agendas, team meeting schedules, and professional learning plans.

Data Analysis

Maintaining confidentiality, the researcher used aliases for all individuals, schools, and businesses involved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were identified as Blue Ribbon Teacher A, Blue Ribbon Teacher B, Performing School Teacher A, Performing School Teacher B, Inc. 5000 Business Professional A, Inc. 5000 Business Professional B, Business Professional A, and Business Professional B. The total number of participants in this study was eight, which included two teachers from Blue Ribbon award-winning elementary schools, two teachers from performing accredited elementary schools, two business professionals working for a business on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list, and two business professionals working for a business not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list.

Triangulation

Ensuring the validity of a study requires the researcher to triangulate findings with other inquiry approaches (Daniel, 2019). Triangulation involves examining data sources beyond one-on-one interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher integrated triangulation to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the compiled information from participants. Four sources were used for triangulation. One source involved collaboration protocols and team agendas obtained directly from participants, serving as a description of the professional learning environment within which participants worked. In

addition, professional learning plans of participants were used to identify opportunities for ongoing education and skill development. Weekly and monthly team schedules were described by participants and recorded by the researcher in their notes, which provided insight into the frequency of team meetings. Lastly, interview transcripts and the researcher's notes were used to validate participants' experiences.

Coding Procedures and Theme Development

The researcher conducted a content analysis to interpret and organize the experiences described by the eight participants and determine themes. A content analysis is ideal for identifying themes or patterns in the dataset (Biggs et al., 2021). The content analysis began with a holistic reading of interviews, then the researcher identified connections between participants' responses based on the study's research questions, and finally refined emerging themes. Themes were determined by the researcher searching for groups of words and topics with connections. To ensure accuracy of the themes and confirm the number of occurrences for coded words/phrases the researcher utilized artificial intelligence.

A basic narrative qualitative study should include five to seven themes based on coded transcribed data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the researcher began by first coding all interview transcripts and creating one comprehensive list of themes, which can be found in Table 1. As a result, the researcher identified six themes that were mentioned throughout each interview for each research question. The connections or themes included the following: team structure and organization, communication, conflict resolution and handling differences, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement. Next the researcher identified coded words and phrases

from each interview. The specific coded words and phrases varied by research question as the terms used by participants differed based on their work environment and industry. However, the meaning of coded words and phrases all remained the same. For example, business participants used the word “transparency” to describe culture and trust while teacher participants used words like “norms”.

Table 1

Record of Coded Information for All Research Questions

| Coded words/phrases | Record of occurrence | Themes |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Teams, structure, grade level, roles, accountability, shared responsibility | 68 | Team Structure & Organization |
| Group chat, email, talking in-person, digital communication | 93 | Communication |
| Difficult conversations, addressing differences | 72 | Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences |
| Making decisions as a team, divide and conquer, team meetings, accountability for decisions | 73 | Decision Making |
| Trustworthy, teamwork, collaboration, reflecting, assuming, relationships, transparency | 92 | Culture & Trust |
| Team performance, perspectives, feedback | 77 | Adaptability & Continuous Improvement |

As outlined in Table 1, the first theme revealed was team structure and organization and was mentioned 68 times by participants. This theme was comprised of varying coded words and phrases including “teams, structure, grade level, roles, accountability, and shared responsibility”. The second theme of communication was mentioned 93 times by participants and included coded words and phrases: “group chat, email, talking in-person, and digital communication”. The third theme of conflict

resolution and handling differences was mentioned by participants 72 times and included these coded words/phrases: “difficult conversations, addressing differences”. The fourth theme of decision making was mentioned 73 times and included these coded words/phrases: “making decisions as a team, divide and conquer, team meetings, accountability for decisions”. The fifth theme of culture and trust was mentioned by participants 92 times and included these coded words/phrases: “trustworthy, teamwork, collaboration, reflecting, assuming, relationships, and transparency”. The sixth and final theme of adaptability and continuous improvement was mentioned 77 times and included these coded words and phrases: “team performance, perspectives, and feedback”.

Analysis of Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?” The focus of Research Question 1 was to explore teamwork experiences in relation to Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors from high-performing businesses and high-performing public schools. Once the researcher analyzed the interview transcriptions from Research Question 1, the researcher identified codes and organized them into six themes: team structure and organization, communication, conflict resolution and handling differences, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement. These specific themes and coded words/phrases can be found in Table 2. The researcher also kept notes during each interview to write down observations and thoughts. To confirm the accuracy of interview data, the researcher examined meeting

agendas, meeting norms or protocols, participants’ professional learning plans, and team meeting schedules.

Table 2

Record of Coded Information: Research Question 1

Blue Ribbon Teacher Teams and 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America Business Teams

| Coded words/phrases | Record of occurrence | Themes |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Shared responsibility, team leads, accountability | 10 | Team Structure & Organization |
| Group messages, internal communication, meetings, digital communication | 11 | Communication |
| Difficult conversations, handle conflict, private conversations | 7 | Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences |
| Collaboration, decisions | 9 | Decision Making |
| Trust, teamwork, culture | 15 | Culture & Trust |
| Reflect, performance, feedback | 13 | Adaptability & Continuous Improvement |

Team Structure and Organization

The first theme of team structure and organization was revealed when participants repeatedly mentioned these coded words/phrases: “shared responsibility, team leads, and accountability”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases 10 times, as outlined in Table 2. One connection between teacher participants and the business professionals was both types of organizations emphasized the importance of clear roles and responsibilities within teams

to ensure smooth operations and accountability. Despite companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list organizing teams by clients and Blue Ribbon Schools organizing teams based on grade level, they both had the same goal of leveraging individual strengths while working towards common objectives. When asked about teachers working in teams, Blue Ribbon Teacher A explained, “They're still working and they're still doing what's best for the common good.” One key difference between Blue Ribbon teacher participant responses and business professional participants from a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Private Company in America list was the business professionals had more fluid team structures that allowed for cross-functional collaboration and Blue Ribbon Schools often had more fixed team structures based on academic departments or grade levels. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A stated, “Even though you have those structures you can easily be working with all of them.” Additionally, Inc. 5000 Business Professional B described although they were part of one team, they supported and worked with two other teams regularly.

Communication

The second theme of communication was discovered when participants recurrently stated these coded words/phrases: “group messages, internal communication, meetings, and digital communication”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases 11 times, as outlined in Table 2. Several similarities and differences regarding the topic of communication were revealed through participants’ responses.

The first connection the researcher identified between Blue Ribbon School teachers and business professionals from companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-

Growing Private Companies in America list was they both recognized the importance of effective communication. Both types of organizations agreed effective communication is vital for fostering collaboration, sharing information, and achieving organizational goals.

When asked about sharing information, Inc. 5000 Business Participant A explained:

It's better if everybody knows because then you can move, you don't want to be a bottleneck. And I have seen examples here and the whole team recognizes it when it happens because it does stop us up when one person is holding too much information. It does actually slow the team down because it's like we have to wait on you to get your work done. It doesn't make you more valuable to hold all that information.

Clear and effective communication is considered essential for building trust, resolving conflicts, and maintaining positive relationships among team members. All four participants stressed the significance of using communication tools and practices to facilitate collaboration and information sharing among team members. When the researcher asked Blue Ribbon Participant A about sharing information they explained, "Definitely just open communication 24/7." The interviews indicated a reliance on multiple communication channels to ensure efficient communication, including face-to-face interactions, digital platforms (such as email, messaging apps, or project management tools), phone calls, and formal meetings. Regardless of the specific tools used, both types of organizations prioritized timely and transparent communication to keep everyone informed and aligned. Schools and businesses demonstrated an awareness of the diverse communication needs and preferences of team members. Efforts were made to adapt communication strategies to accommodate different communication styles,

preferences, and technological capabilities to ensure information was effectively conveyed and understood by all team members. In response to questions about sharing information, Blue Ribbon Participant B answered, “Group text but it really depends.”

One difference between the Blue Ribbon School participants and the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list participants was the Blue Ribbon Schools may rely more on face-to-face interactions and informal communication due to the close proximity of team members while businesses may utilize digital communication tools more extensively, especially for remote or distributed workforces. The scope of communication in schools often extends beyond internal team dynamics to encompass external stakeholders (parents, students, administrators, etc.), which can influence the tone, content, and frequency of communication among teachers. In business, communication is primarily focused on internal interactions and client relationships, with less emphasis on stakeholder involvement. Communication in schools is often more formalized and structured to reflect the hierarchical nature of educational institutions and the need for clarity and consistency in conveying information to stakeholders. However, in business, communication is more informal and adaptable, with greater emphasis on flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation in communication approaches. According to Inc. 5000 Business Professional B, “So we're constantly talking in person and collaborating together, which is really useful.” Another disparity revealed between Blue Ribbon Schools and businesses listed on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America pertained to the substance and emphasis of communication. Within educational settings, communication often revolves around academic affairs, student advancement, behavioral concerns, and administrative

notifications, aligning with the core objectives of education and student well-being. In businesses, communication may encompass project updates, client interactions, sales strategies, and organizational initiatives, aligning with goals of profitability, growth, and market competitiveness. Drawing upon the triangulation of data and examination of team meeting schedules across both organizational types, the researcher identified yet another disparity: teachers from Blue Ribbon Schools met once each week with their team and business professionals for companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list met multiple times with their team. Therefore, the frequency of communication among teams in high-performing schools and businesses differed.

Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences

The third theme of conflict resolution and handling differences was discovered when participants recurrently stated these coded words/phrases: “difficult conversations, handle conflict, and private conversations:”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases seven times, as outlined in Table 2. When asked about conflict resolution and resolving differences, teachers from high-performing schools and business professionals from high-performing businesses had several similarities and differences.

One connection regarding conflict resolution and handling differences was both types of organizations understood the importance of addressing conflicts promptly and respectfully to maintain a positive work environment. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A reflected on conflict resolution during team meeting calls and explained, “Conflict resolution, we deal with it either immediately or take it offline.” Additionally, Inc. 5000 Business Professional A further described resolving conflict, “Our job is all about what

the truth is or what's going on because we have to agree as a team.” Both schools and businesses emphasized the significance of open and effective communication in resolving conflicts and addressing differences. In both settings, there was acknowledgment of the inevitability of differences and conflicts among team members. Participants all recognized that differences in opinions, approaches, and priorities are natural occurrences within teams and can lead to constructive dialogue and problem solving. Inc. 5000 Business Participant B described the importance of varying perspectives on her team: “I would say what I try to do is get all of their different thoughts and opinions and my team has very, I guess, different skill sets.” The interviews indicated a commitment to finding solutions, reaching compromises, and moving forward positively, rather than allowing conflicts to escalate or persist unresolved. Blue Ribbon Participant B described the benefit of assuming positive intent to maintain positive relationships and said:

If you're positively assuming things like our team is really good and we always say we'll say QTIP: quit taking it personal, and then we always say assume the positive. I made you those copies because I assumed you didn't have time not me saying. You're a slacker, and you didn't get work done.

When asked about having hard conversations, Blue Ribbon Participant A explained, “I think there's enough mutual respect for us to just go to the person and say this isn't working.”

A key disconnection between the two types of organizations was Blue Ribbon Schools may face conflicts related to student behavior, which requires a different approach compared to conflicts arising from project deadlines or client expectations in businesses. The authority and processes for resolving conflict differed between the Blue

Ribbon Schools and 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America. In schools, conflict could be resolved within established hierarchies, with administrators or principals playing a significant role while in businesses, conflict resolution was more decentralized with team members empowered to resolve conflict collaboratively or through mediation. The sources of conflict also differed between high-performing schools and businesses. Conflict may arise in schools from differences in teaching approaches, classroom management styles, or student behaviors, while in businesses, conflicts stem from disagreements over project priorities, resources allocation, or interpersonal dynamics. The conflict resolution processes in schools may be more formalized and structured, involving established protocols or procedures while in business it is more fluid and adaptable, with a greater emphasis on informal discussions and problem solving strategies tailored to specific situations.

Decision Making

The fourth theme of decision making was uncovered when participants repeatedly stated these coded words/phrases: “collaboration and decisions”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases nine times, as outlined in Table 2. Based on participant interviews, both types of organizations had few commonalities and many differences in regards to decision making within their teams.

It was revealed that both types of organizations valued collaborative decision-making processes that involved input from various stakeholders. Whether it was determining curriculum strategies in schools or business strategies in companies, both recognized the importance of considering different perspectives before making decisions.

Decisions in both settings were typically made with the overarching goals and objectives of the organization or team in mind. However, Blue Ribbon Schools may adhere to more hierarchical decision-making structures and often involved the consideration of various stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Blue Ribbon Participant A agreed there were times when decisions were made by the principal: “If it's a bigger decision, it would be made with the principal and she would make that decision and kind of tell us this is how it's gonna go.”

Through the interview process, the researcher confirmed there were some distinct differences in how decisions were made in the two types of organizations. One variance was businesses had a more agile decision-making approach to respond quickly to market changes or client needs and focus on internal team dynamics and client needs.

Additionally, decision-making processes in education may be more structured and formalized with established protocols for seeking input, gathering data, and reaching consensus while businesses have a greater emphasis on flexibility and responsiveness to market dynamics. Blue Ribbon Participant A described the decision making process: “Usually it's like a group decision and for larger things it will be like, hey, what do you think about this? And we'll talk it out, the pros and cons and then make a decision.” The researcher confirmed the disconnection in how decisions are made by analyzing the team meeting agendas and norms or protocols provided by Blue Ribbon School participants and business professionals for companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list. Based on the provided data, both types of organizations utilized meeting agendas where team members could share input for the purpose of the meetings, but the business participants did not utilize norms or protocols for team

meetings. Therefore, there were not formal guidelines for how team members should seek input, gather data, and reach a consensus during team meetings. The level of risk in decision making also varied between high-performing schools and businesses. In schools, decisions related to student well-being, academic achievement, and resources may involve a lower tolerance for risk, prioritizing caution, and stability. In contrast, businesses may have a higher tolerance for risk, particularly innovative or entrepreneurial endeavors, where calculated risks are sometimes necessary for growth and success. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A explained the excitement around innovative ideas they were constantly exploring in her workplace: “We're always testing new things that we can be doing whether it's events we want to host or new ways we want to position products.”

Culture and Trust

The fifth theme of culture and trust was revealed when participants continually stated these coded words/phrases: “trust, teamwork, and culture”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases 15 times, as outlined in Table 2. Unlike decision making, the interviews of participants uncovered several similarities and differences in culture and trust within teams.

Based on the researcher’s analysis of the data, one culture-and trust-related similarity between high-performing schools and businesses was both prioritized building trust and fostering a positive team culture grounded in mutual respect and support. Blue Ribbon Participant B described the importance of how their school emphasized having fun and laughing together to build a positive culture: “That laughing builds to the culture which builds to the teamwork which builds to trust.” Whether it was through team

bonding activities in schools or celebrating achievements in businesses, both valued the role of culture in driving engagement and performance. Blue Ribbon Participant A claimed their teammates were very trustworthy and explained, “I feel like we can sit and talk about students and student needs without immediately it going anywhere. I am really lucky to have that relationship.” Teamwork was viewed as a vital component of success in achieving common goals and objectives in both high-performing schools and businesses. Collaboration among teachers, staff, and students was essential for academic success in schools, while collaboration among employees, teams, and departments was important for organizational success in business. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A further described the trustworthiness of their team and the importance of collaboration: “We’re teams and like this is a second home. I'd say for the team I'm on now, very trustworthy. We always have each other's backs. We help each other with their work, even the hard stuff.” Trust was closely linked with communication in both settings. Open and transparent communication among team members was essential for building and maintaining trust. Through face-to-face interactions, digital platforms, or formal meetings, effective communication contributed to trust among team members. Another similarity between high-performing schools and businesses was that trust was reinforced when team members shared common goals and held themselves and each other accountable for their actions. In both schools and businesses, a sense of shared responsibility and commitment to achieving objectives strengthened trust among team members. Both contexts also acknowledged the importance of taking personal responsibility for one’s actions and decisions. Individuals recognized the need to admit fault when they made mistakes or errors in judgment, as this fostered accountability and

trust within the team. Admitting fault was seen as crucial for maintaining positive relationships and effective teamwork in both high-performing schools and businesses. Inc. 5000 Business Professional B confirmed the importance of admitting fault on their team and explained, “It’s a matter of being like, all right, I’ve uncovered that this was a mistake and it’s okay. It’s okay to admit.” Both businesses and schools emphasized the importance of transparency, honesty, and humility in acknowledging mistakes, as this helped build trust and credibility among colleagues.

One disparity regarding culture and trust was the nature of the work differed significantly, with teacher participants spending more time discussing topics related to student growth, parent relationships, and academic outcomes, while business professionals discussed challenges related to growth, client strategy, and decision-making. Trust dynamics in schools may be influenced by stakeholder relationships including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the broader community. Building trust in this context requires navigating diverse perspectives and expectations. In contrast, trust dynamics in business may be more focused on internal team dynamics and external client relationships. Trust played a crucial role in decision-making processes within teams but had different impacts in high-performing schools and businesses. In high-performing schools, trust can influence the degree of autonomy and participation in decision-making and in business trust impacts the level of delegation and collaboration among team members. The different organizational cultures in businesses and schools influence the willingness to admit fault. In businesses, there is a greater emphasis on competitiveness, innovation, and bottom-line results, which creates more pressure to avoid admitting fault to protect one’s professional reputation or avoid negative

repercussions. When asked about how team members admit to mistakes, Inc. 5000 Business Professional B explained, “I think that's a lot more uncommon because especially if they're trying to get promoted or they're still trying to prove themselves. And so, they're nervous about saying something that they're wrong.” In contrast, in high-performing schools there is a more supportive environment for admitting fault and learning from mistakes. Another disconnect between Blue Ribbon Schools and companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list was the dynamics of stakeholder relationships on the ability to admit fault. Business professionals interact with clients whose perceptions and reactions to mistakes can impact professional relationships and business outcomes. In schools, individuals primarily interact with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators, whose expectations and responses to mistakes may differ from those in the business context. Admitting fault may be integrated into professional development practices differently in businesses and schools. In businesses, individuals may undergo training, coaching sessions, or performance evaluations aimed at improving self-awareness, communication skills, and decision-making abilities. In schools, professional development may focus on pedagogical strategies, classroom management, and student engagement methods.

Adaptability and Continuous Improvement

The sixth and final theme of adaptability and continuous improvement was discovered when participants recurrently stated these coded words/phrases: “reflect, performance, feedback”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases 13 times, as outlined in Table 2. When exploring teamwork experiences of high-performing schools and high-performing

businesses, it was discovered there were several commonalities and variances in the approach to adaptability and continuous improvement. The following section describes the similarities and differences confirmed from the interviews.

Both Blue Ribbon Schools and Inc. 5000 businesses acknowledged the importance of adaptability and continuous learning in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities. Whether it was adjusting teaching methods in response to student needs or refining business strategies in light of market dynamics, both prioritized ongoing improvement. Blue Ribbon Schools and Inc. 5000 businesses also had established channels for giving and receiving feedback, which included formal performance reviews, one-on-one meetings, team meetings, and digital feedback platforms. Feedback was also given regularly in both settings, although the frequency could vary. High-performing schools and businesses also encouraged two-way communication and it was not just a top-down approach from superiors; there was also room for employees to provide feedback to their superiors. This two-way communication was explained by Inc. 5000 Business Professional B: “I'm giving feedback to them. They're giving feedback to me.” Additionally, both types of organizations were metrics focused, with schools putting emphasis on student academic metrics and businesses emphasizing key performance indicators. Blue Ribbon Teacher A provided a specific example of how feedback was regularly provided within her team about student academics:

“I asked them what's the problem? They were like, I'm reading them the story and they're not comprehending it and I said that's not reading comprehension. That's listening comprehension. You're not teaching them how to read you're

teaching them how to listen and that's not what the goal is and so they were a little frustrated at first, but then I think they came around to like okay, I see your point.

According to the professional learning plans provided by all participants, the researcher confirmed both teachers from Blue Ribbon Schools and business professionals from 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list had specific professional learning plans to which their performance was tied to. One disconnection between the two types of organizations was the formality of feedback. Among the differences in adaptability and continuous improvement was school feedback processes may be more structured, with standardized assessments and grading systems, while business feedback processes may be more flexible and tailored to individual roles and goals. Feedback can come in many forms and from various sources based on the interview from Inc. 5000 Business Professional A, who further described feedback in their organization:

We are continuously getting feedback all the time. Processes change and we're asked for feedback. So, it's not just a one way and there's a lot of communication that goes back and forth, top, down, sideways. So, I feel like we're pretty transparent.

The culture regarding feedback also differed between Blue Ribbon Schools and Inc. 5000 businesses. In some businesses, there may be a culture of continuous feedback and open communication, while in others, feedback is less frequent and more hierarchical. In schools, feedback culture may be influenced by factors such as educational philosophy, teacher autonomy, and institutional norms. Blue Ribbon Teacher B expanded on the experience of younger teachers sharing feedback and how it was received by veteran teachers:

I think your veterans who've been here for a really long want to do the same thing they've done in the years past and just kind of keep it. And then there's kind of that younger, new ones that will say what about this or can we try this or let's do this differently.

Additionally, Blue Ribbon Teacher B shared more about how feedback from younger teachers is heard: "I mean some are heard, some are inputted and put into application more than others. They may not listen to a person on the team and just be like, okay great idea and kind of move on."

Analysis of Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and performing elementary teacher teams related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?" The primary aim of Research Question 2 was to delve into how teamwork dynamics relate to these behaviors across high-performing and average-performing public elementary schools. Upon scrutinizing interview transcripts for Research Question 2, the researcher uncovered the same six themes previously discussed throughout the analysis of Researcher Question 1. These six themes include: team structure and accountability, communication, conflict resolution, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement. The themes and coded words/phrases for Research Question 2 can be found in Table 3. Throughout the interviews, the researcher recorded observations and reflections. Additionally, to ensure the accuracy of the interview data, the researcher cross-referenced meeting agendas, norms or protocols, professional learning plans of participants, and team meeting schedules.

Table 3*Record of Coded Information: Research Question 2**Blue Ribbon School Teacher Teams and Performing Elementary Teacher Teams*

| Coded words/phrases | Record of occurrence | Themes |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Roles, strengths, accountable, apologize | 7 | Team Structure & Organization |
| Group messages, internal communication, digital communication | 11 | Communication |
| Listening, relationships, compromise, private discussion, tough conversations | 10 | Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences |
| Discuss, input, decide together, voice opinions, decisions | 16 | Decision Making |
| Trust, teamwork, assumptions, culture, norms, support | 19 | Culture & Trust |
| Open, feedback, reflection, willingness to understand, learn, adapt | 13 | Adaptability & Continuous Improvement |

Team Structure and Organization

The initial theme concerning team structure and organization emerged as participants consistently referenced specific coded words/phrases such as “roles, strengths, accountable, apologize”. During discussions about their teamwork experiences, participants collectively mentioned these coded words/phrases a total of seven times, as detailed in Table 3. Both Blue Ribbon Schools and performing schools highly valued defined roles and responsibilities within their teams. Team members in both organizations understood their individual strengths and contributions to the overall success of the team. Performing School Teacher B confirmed the value of different assets among team members and explained, “We each have different strengths and I think that's

what we count on each other for.” Another connection between Blue Ribbon schools and performing schools was they all held each other accountable for their actions, worked collaboratively to achieve common goals, and acknowledged mistakes when necessary. “We all just do it,” claimed Performing School Teacher A when asked about who was accountable for how the team worked together. The formation of teams was also the same in both types of elementary schools with teams organized based on grade levels, district teams, or specialized departments (e.g., special education, curriculum). Teams in both types of schools also collaborated to achieve common goals and address challenges related to their specific focus area. Performing School Teacher A described questions their teammates asked when exploring the alignment of new ideas to educational goals: “Is it actually gonna hit our standards? Is it actually going to be worth our time to take away from education?” Despite the several connections between the two types of schools, there were disconnections that included the types of teams available to teachers in the building. More specifically, one of the participant schools was a Leader In Me school, which meant teachers served on many different teams in relation to the Leader In Me program. The frequency of team meetings also varied between each of the schools. Performing School Teacher A met just with their grade-level team once each week and also met with their grade level plus an instructional coach weekly. Performing School Teacher B and Blue Ribbon Teacher B met with their teams once per week. Blue Ribbon Teacher A met with their team weekly and bi-weekly. The researcher confirmed this information described in interviews by analyzing team meeting schedules provided by each participant.

Communication

The second theme of communication was revealed when participants recurrently stated these coded words/phrases: “group messages, internal communication, and digital communication”. Participants mentioned the coded words/phrases 11 times when participants were asked about their teamwork experiences. Table 3 provides an outline of this information. One connection between the two types of schools was they both utilized various communication channels such as group chats, emails, meetings, and face-to-face discussions. These communication channels facilitated information sharing, collaboration, and coordination among team members. When asked about communication, with enthusiasm Performing School Teacher A explained, “We have a text thread. I mean we have it all. So hey, I saw this on Tik Tok. Can we try it? Or I just saw this on Instagram.” Another connection between the two types of schools was both valued communication among team members to stay updated on important information, share resources, and coordinate activities. Open and ongoing communication was further described by Blue Ribbon Teacher A: “We're in each other's space all the time. So, we always just start talking and communicating.” Through analysis of interview data, the researcher uncovered variances including the formality of communication.

Communication in Blue Ribbon schools may include formalized meetings and structured communication channels within specialized teams or departments. Both Blue Ribbon Schools provided specific norms they used during team meetings while only one of the performing schools provided norms or protocols they used. This information confirmed the slight discrepancy in the structure of communication between the two types of schools. Performing schools may exhibit more informal communication styles, with team

members engaging in casual conversations, group text messages, and spontaneous discussions during planning periods.

Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences

The next theme of conflict resolution and handling differences was uncovered when participants repeatedly stated these coded words/phrases: “listening, relationships, compromise, private discussion, and tough conversations”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases 10 times, as outlined in Table 3. Based on participants’ responses, there were numerous similarities and differences between performing schools and high-performing schools handling conflict and differences. These commonalities and discrepancies are explored in the following section.

It was discovered that both types of organizations recognized open communication as a key tool for conflict resolution. Team members in both schools were encouraged to express their perspectives and concerns openly. Performing School Teacher B confirmed the importance of open communication during disagreements and explained:

I think we do it in a way that we know each other. So that we just kind of hold each other accountable. Like you said you were gonna do that, and then usually since we have such a good relationship, we're like, I'm sorry, I forgot, so just apologies when needed.

Both Blue Ribbon schools and performing schools promoted respectful dialogue when addressing conflicts or differences. Performing School Teacher A described that their

team tried to ask questions to better understand differing ideas. Performing School Teacher A further explained:

I think we're more about asking a question. We're in and trying to figure out the why behind things and trying to figure out if it's necessary, or is it something that we need to look into further before we make that big decision.

In the interviews, educators from both types of schools mentioned the significance of addressing challenges and conflicts rather than avoiding them.

Among the differences uncovered, Blue Ribbon schools may involve leadership more directly in facilitating hard conversations and big decisions that could cause conflict. When Blue Ribbon Teacher B was asked about having hard but necessary conversations with teammates, they explained, “The relationships with our principal and our learning coach are so wonderful that they can approach those hard topics and we're just like, okay.” According to Blue Ribbon Teacher A, “If it's a bigger decision, it would be made with the principal and she would make that decision and kind of tell us this is how it's gonna go.” Another finding from the interviews was both Blue Ribbon schools and Performing School A confirmed assumptions were often made among team members. However, Performing School Teacher B explained there were no assumptions. Performing School Teacher A quickly answered a question about assumptions and said, “Definitely yes, we all have those assumptions about others.” Performing School Teacher A further described assumptions among colleagues and said, “I try to keep out of the chit chat and all that. But yes, I have heard in the hallways and stuff look at that, she's getting this because she's this person.” Blue Ribbon Teacher A also responded quickly to a question about assumptions among teammates with the response, “Very much so” and

Blue Ribbon Teacher B said, “Yeah, for sure, especially if you’re positively assuming things.” According to Performing School Teacher A, “No, I don't think so. Not in our group. Like I said where I know we're not a typical team.”

The connection between Blue Ribbon schools and performing schools in regard to how difficult but necessary topics are handled was unclear: privately or open as a group. Blue Ribbon Teacher A explained, “We do just have those conversations behind closed doors” and Blue Ribbon Teacher B claimed, “Sometimes if it's like something we're addressing then we might have a smaller group or one or two people might pull that person aside and say hey, let's talk about this.” When asked how open or private were difficult conversations, Performing School Teacher A explained, “I would say there are some yes that go behind and just chit chat to another friend that way they can talk about it and bring it to the third person as teamed up against.” Performing School Teacher B explained their team was more likely to address differences as a group instead of privately, “ I think we would probably do it as a group.”

Decision Making

The fourth theme of decision making was uncovered when participants repeatedly stated these coded words/phrases: “discuss, input, decide together, voice opinions, and decisions”. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases 16 times, as outlined in Table 3. According to participants’ feedback, there existed many parallels and distinctions in decision making between performing schools and Blue Ribbon schools. The subsequent section delves into these shared traits and variations.

Based on the interviews and description of team meeting agendas, decision making in Blue Ribbon schools and performing schools involved input from team members. All four teacher participants described how all team members could share input for the purpose of team meetings. Performing School Teacher A further described how team meeting agendas were created: "I'll say hey guys. We got to work on this and this or somebody else will say and we need to work on this." Educators in these schools mentioned discussing decisions collectively. Team members were encouraged to contribute ideas, share opinions, and work together to reach consensus on various issues, such as curriculum planning, student support strategies, and school improvement ideas. Although bigger decisions were often made by the principal, all other decisions were made amongst team members according to Blue Ribbon Teacher A, who explained, "It's left up to us and how we want to decide." Blue Ribbon Teacher B confirmed a collective response to decisions and described, "We'll talk it out, the pros and cons, and then kind of make a decision." Performing School Teacher B had a similar response with how their team makes decisions and claimed, "We all kind of give our opinion and say if we agree or disagree." Performing School Teacher A provided a specific example of how their team worked collaboratively about curriculum planning decisions:

So every Thursday we work together. We set for the next week's plans. I'm in charge, like I said, of math so I make sure all the math slides and stuff are ready to go and I talk to them about what's coming up, hey in a couple weeks we have the assessment so we've got to really hunker down on these skills.

A disconnection that was uncovered through the interviews was the formality of decision making. Blue Ribbon schools may have more formalized decision making

processes compared to performing schools. This formality included structured meetings with designated leaders or facilitators, and documented procedures for reaching decisions. Blue Ribbon Teacher A described the specifics of how the team facilitator created the meeting agendas and got input and said:

There's a meeting agenda that they send out beforehand. There's a question sheet that you can request if you have any questions, but it pretty much follows that agenda pretty to the tea. There's not a lot of wiggle room to ask questions or that should have all been done beforehand.

Performing School Teacher A confirmed the less formal approach to team meetings and explained, “We usually don't have a written agenda.” Performing School Teacher B provided an agenda template and explained it was created collaboratively but did not describe specific processes or procedures of meetings. Blue Ribbon Teacher B described very structured team meetings that included an official team meeting facilitator, specific timeframes allocated for different topics on the agenda, and processes established to make the best use of their time. The process for preventing getting off task was described in more detail by Blue Ribbon Teacher B, who said:

We were getting off tasks so much that we started something like a parking lot. And so now it's on our agenda. So, if you have questions or whatever, like go back and look and say we need to look at this and figure out.

Culture and Trust

The fifth theme, culture and trust, emerged as participants consistently used these coded words/phrases: “trust, teamwork, assumptions, culture, norms, and support”. When participants discussed their teamwork experiences, they referenced these coded

words/phrases a total of 19 times, as detailed in Table 3. One connection regarding the culture and trust of both schools was trust was regarded as an essential. All participants highlighted how vital trust was within teams, emphasizing the need for open communication, mutual respect, and reliability among colleagues. When asked about the trustworthiness of teammates, Performing School Teacher A elaborated, “Very trustworthy. I mean, I tell them pretty much almost everything. They're my friends and I have to work with them day and day out.” Blue Ribbon Teacher B described the trustworthiness of their team in a similar way: “I think we can trust if something happens that they're gonna step in and do what they need to do, to help and support in any way that they can.” The emphasis on collaboration within the culture of both types of schools was unclear. Both Blue Ribbon schools confirmed how collaboration and teamwork were embedded in the culture of their schools. More specifically, Blue Ribbon Teacher B explained, “Teamwork is for sure part of our culture but I think that, that’s what makes our building different than others.” Blue Ribbon Teacher B further explained, “Ours is an open door policy. Come and laugh, play with the kids. Have fun.” Blue Ribbon Teacher A described how not working as a team was just not an option in their school and said, “I think our environment is just set up that way, there's no option.” Performing School Teacher A confirmed the collaborative culture in their building and explained, “It's just ingrained into us that we are collaborating. We are working. We are all going towards that one goal. So that's to make kids feel successful and want to learn more.” However, Performing School Teacher B described the discrepancies of collaboration among their entire school: “As an outsider looking at other grade levels, you can tell which teams have good teamwork and work together.” They went on to add, “I think some grade

levels definitely probably have a little bit more teamwork and a little bit more camaraderie than others, but you're going to have that in a big school.”

Adaptability and Continuous Improvement

The sixth and ultimate theme of Research Question 2, adaptability and continuous improvement, arose as participants repeatedly mentioned these coded words/phrases: “open, feedback, reflection, willingness to understand, learn, and adapt”. During discussions about their teamwork experiences, participants collectively referenced these coded words/phrases a total of 13 times, as outlined in Table 3. A connection uncovered between Blue Ribbon schools and performing schools was they both engaged in reflective practices to assess their teaching methods, classroom strategies, and interactions with students. Blue Ribbon Teacher A described participating in biweekly meetings to engage in reflective discussions about student progress, instructional strategies, and areas for improvement. Blue Ribbon Teacher B and Performing School Teacher B had similar responses with descriptions of how student data were utilized in team meetings to guide and provide time for instructional reflection. Performing School Teacher B also echoed a similar response to other participants and explained grades were often on the list of topics to discuss in team meetings. However, when reflecting on how the team performed collectively and whether members admitted to their contribution to issues, not all teachers agreed they engaged in this type of reflection. Blue Ribbon Teacher A explained, “When we do our observations, our reviews and summative and that kind of stuff, I think there's reflection there. But I don't think as a team, we don't sit back and think about how we did certain things.” A similar response was provided by Blue Ribbon Teacher B, who said, “I don't think so. I think sometimes.” Performing

School Teacher A also claimed, “I don't know. Yeah. I think it depends. On the big projects, if we look back and say hey, how did we do this? What can we do better? That type of thing we self-reflect as a group.” When asked about how reflective team members are, Performing School Teacher B clarified, “I'd say yeah. Some people are more self aware than others.”

Analysis of Research Question 3

Research Question 3 inquired, “What are the experiences of performing elementary teacher teams and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?” The primary objective was to explore how teamwork dynamics in average or performing elementary schools correlate with the behaviors across high-performing businesses. Upon analyzing interview transcripts, the researcher identified six themes previously discussed in the analysis of Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. These themes were team structure and organization, communications, conflict resolution and handling differences, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement. The themes and associated coded words/phrases for Research Question 3 are detailed in Table 4. During the interviews, the researcher documented observations. Furthermore, to verify the precision of the interview data, the researcher cross-checked meeting agendas, norms or protocols, participants’ professional learning plans, and team meeting schedules.

Table 4

Record of Coded Information: Research Question 3

Performing Teacher Teams and 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America Business Teams

| Coded words/phrases | Record of occurrence | Themes |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Roles, organized, accountable, responsibility | 18 | Team Structure & Organization |
| Internal communication, digital communication, specific examples, meetings, discuss | 26 | Communication |
| Conflict, relationships, apologize, listening, perspectives, understanding, address differences | 27 | Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences |
| Decide together, compromise, decision, decision making, collaboration | 24 | Decision Making |
| Relationships, trust, culture, teamwork | 33 | Culture & Trust |
| Adaptability, improvement, reflect, feedback | 23 | Adaptability & Continuous Improvement |

Team Structure and Organization

The initial theme of team structure and organization developed as participants frequently referenced key terms: “roles, organized, accountable, responsibility”. These coded words/phrases surfaced repeatedly during discussions about teamwork experiences, occurring a total of 18 times, as detailed in Table 4. Among the connections between the two types of organizations were roles and responsibilities within the teams. Both recognized the significance of each team member bringing different strengths to the table and holding each other accountable for their contributions. “We each have different strengths and I think that's what we count on each other for,” explained Performing Teacher B when asked about team accountability. Inc. 5000 Business Professional B had a similar response about their multifaceted team members and described, “They all have

different experiences and they all have different ideas.” When asked about accountability, Inc. 5000 Business Professional A said, “Really who's accountable is each individual on the team.” They elaborated further about accountability and explained, “We're serving the client but how we're getting it done is really based on us.” The nature of the teams in each organization varied. Performing schools had smaller, more closely-knit teams, organized by grade level or subject area. In contrast, Inc. 5000 businesses had larger, multidisciplinary teams organized by role, client, or department. Both Inc. 5000 Business Professional A and B explained they worked with teams of individuals from various departments or areas of expertise coming together to work on specific projects or initiatives. When asked about team structure, Inc. 5000 Business Professional B mentioned teams were organized by client, which included members from marketing, sales, client strategy, and product departments working collaboratively to serve the clients’ needs. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A revealed being part of the “bench” when not working on a client project, meaning there was always a pool of individuals with diverse skills who could be deployed to different projects as needed.

Communication

The theme of communication was uncovered as participants continually mentioned coded words/phrases: internal communication, digital communication, specific examples, meetings, and discuss. As outlined in Table 4, these coded words/phrases were mentioned 26 times by participants during discussions about teamwork experiences. The interviews revealed both Inc. 5000 businesses and performing schools utilized internal communication methods to facilitate collaboration among team members. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A quickly responded to a

question about how information was shared among team members and said, “Every way possible. We do use multiple forms.” As indicated by Performing School Teacher A and B, they both explained frequent use of group texts, email, and in-person discussions to stay connected to team members. Meets were also a common use of communication in both settings. To validate the use of team meetings, performing schools and the businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list described team meeting schedules with included weekly meetings. While both environments utilized digital communication tools, Inc. 5000 businesses relied more heavily on them due to the nature of remote work or dispersed colleagues. According to Inc. 5000 Business Professional B they used various forms of communication including digital channels: “I would say probably 50% communication digitally over Slack in those group messages.” Providing specific examples as part of communication appeared to be more emphasized in Inc. 5000 businesses. “Everybody is super explicit and they do provide you specific examples,” explained Inc. 5000 Business Professional A when asked about how team members clarified when there was confusion within the team. While specific examples are also mentioned by performing schools, they may not be as prevalent. Discussions were described in both settings, but the depth and frequency of discussions may differ based on the nature of the work and organizational culture. Inc. 5000 Business Professional B described discussions as part of the decision-making process, indicating a collaborative approach to problem solving; they explained, “Let's come together and come up with a solution.” Performing School Teacher B explained that team discussions included topics such as determining the needs of students, giving input on decisions related to curriculum or student assessments, and planning activities like field trips or

grade card preparation. Similarly, Performing School Teacher A indicated team discussions involved collaborative planning for lessons, coordinating field trips, and discussing students assessments or educational initiatives.

Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences

The subsequent theme of conflict resolution and handling differences emerged as participants frequently referenced key terms such as “conflict, relationships, apologize, listening, perspectives, understanding, and address differences”. These coded words/phrases recurred multiple times during discussions about teamwork experiences, amounting to 27 times, as described in Table 4. Both performing schools and Inc. 5000 businesses prioritized maintaining positive relationships among team members. Performing School Teacher B described that good relationships among team members helped recognizing others and apologizing when necessary. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A emphasized the importance of maintaining trust and relationships within teams in order to best serve their clients. “You have to,” explained Inc. 5000 Business Professional A when asked about trusting team members. Listening and understanding different perspectives was seen as very important in both contexts. Performing schools described situations of listening to teammates’ perspectives and how it helped them understand diverse viewpoints and recognize individual differences. When their team listens and tries to understand other perspectives, Performing School Teacher A explained, “We just kind of talked through it and figure out the why behind it.” Inc. 5000 Business Professional B had a similar answer to a question about hearing all perspectives and said, “There are times where I disagree and all three of them will disagree with what I’m thinking. I’m like, let’s just try it and figure it out.” While both environments valued

addressing differences and finding common ground, the approach may vary. Performing schools mentioned team members openly discuss differences and listen to each other's perspectives, resolving conflicts through understanding and compromise. Performing School Teacher A described how compromises are made: "We just kind of share about what we think and then we all talk about it. And then we make a decision. We usually will say here's my opinion, but I'm not gonna die on that hill." In Inc. 5000 businesses, there was a more structured approach to conflict resolution, where discussions were facilitated to address differences and find solutions. If disagreements emerged during team meetings, according to Inc. 5000 Business Professional A, "It's addressed on the call and then it's just immediately taken to private" in order to resolve the issue. Both types of organizations agreed apologies are necessary and addressing differences openly is a must, but the frequency and context may differ. In performing schools, team members apologized when needed and recognized differences. In Inc. 5000 businesses, addressing differences may involve more formal processes, such as team discussions or facilitated meetings, to ensure all viewpoints are considered and conflicts are resolved effectively.

Decision Making

The fourth aspect pertaining to decision making came to light as participants consistently reiterated these coded words/phrases: "decide together, compromise, decision, decision making, and collaboration". As outlined in Table 4, participants mentioned these coded words/phrases 24 times when asked about their lived teamwork experiences. Both types of organizations agreed on using a collaborative approach to decisions where team members worked together to reach decisions. Both performing

school participants described how decisions were made together with input from all members before reaching a consensus. “We all kind of give our opinion and say if we agree or disagree,” according to Performing School Teacher B. The Inc. 5000 business professional participants also indicated their teams came together to discuss varying thoughts and opinions. Inc. 5000 Business Professional B emphasized how different ideas were heard and explained: “I do try to make sure that we're not just always going with this person's idea.” Compromises is another connection between the two types of organizations with both using it as a means of reaching decisions that satisfied the needs and preferences of all team members. Inc. 5000 Business Professional B described how compromises were often made: “There are times where I disagree and all three of them will disagree with what I'm thinking. I'm like, let's just try it and figure it out.” One disconnection between performing schools and Inc. 5000 businesses was the formality of decision making. Decision-making processes in Inc. 5000 businesses involved more formal structures or procedures compared to performing schools. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A explained the role of project leads as they set expectations for projects and often make final, big decisions: “As for the big picture, they're the ones coming in okay, this is what it's gonna take.”

Culture and Trust

The next theme of culture and trust was uncovered when participants continually stated these coded words/phrases: relationships, trust, culture, and teamwork. When participants were asked about their teamwork experiences, they mentioned the coded words/phrases 33 times, as outlined in Table 4. Participants' feedback revealed a multitude of similarities and disparities of the culture and trust in performing schools and

high-performing businesses. These shared traits and distinctions are investigated further in the following section.

Based on the researcher's analysis of the data, one culture- and trust-related similarity between performing schools and Inc. 5000 businesses was that both prioritized fostering positive relationships among team members. "They're my friends and I have to work with them day and day out," explained Performing School Teacher A when describing the relationships with their teammates. "I definitely trust all of them," explained Inc. 5000 Business Professional B when asked about the level of trust among their team. Trust was placed as a high value among team members in both settings and fostering an environment where individuals rely on and support each other. Performing School Teacher B recalled a specific time their team rallied together to support them during a difficult time and said, "My team pulled together and they helped me get things together. We don't even have to ask. If one of us is sick or worried about something, we are there for each other school-wise and not school-wise, personal too." Inc. 5000 Business Professional A had a similar answer regarding the value of trust among their team: "Work-wise and even personal because we're teams and like this is second home."

The nature of trust differed between performing schools and Inc. 5000 businesses due to varying contexts and objectives of each environment. In performing schools, trust is built on shared educational goals, mutual respect among colleagues, and a sense of camaraderie. In Inc. 5000 businesses, trust may be based on professional competencies, accountability for tasks, and the ability to deliver results within a business context. Specific examples were often requested by businesses, which implied that trust within the team was based on individuals' abilities to provide concrete evidence to support their

claims and trust was linked to professional competencies. If team members are able to demonstrate their expertise and proficiency through specific examples, they are more trustworthy. Inc. 5000 Business Professional B expressed frustration as they explained the lack of using specific examples: “I would say that like 80% of the time they probably come without specific examples. And then I have to request that they come back with specific examples.” The overall culture of performing schools and Inc. 5000 businesses may vary based on factors such as organizational values, leadership styles, and the nature of the work. Performing schools may have a culture that focused around educational excellence, student-centered approaches, and supportive relationships among educators. Inc. 5000 businesses may have a culture that values innovation, adaptability, and performance-driven outcomes in a competitive environment.

Adaptability and Continuous Improvement

The sixth and ultimate theme concerning adaptability and continuous improvement surfaced as participants frequently mentioned these coded words/phrases: “adaptability, improvement, reflect, and feedback”. In response to inquiries about their teamwork experiences, these coded words/phrases were mentioned 23 times as outlined in Table 4. One connection between the two types of organizations was the value of feedback and reflection as tools for driving improvement. Performing School Teacher B described the exchange of feedback among their team and explained, “We listen to each other and we call each other out when needed.” The Inc. 5000 business professionals also shared similar responses and indicated a proactive approach to identifying areas for improvement and making necessary adjustments. “It comes in multiple forms,” explained Inc. 5000 Business Professional B when describing how feedback was shared within their

organization. The mechanism used for collecting and utilizing feedback was one disconnecting between the two types of organizations. In performing schools, feedback may be obtained through student assessments, peer evaluations, or supervisor reviews, with a focus on improving teaching practices and student outcomes. In Inc. 5000 businesses, feedback was gathered through surveys and performance evaluations, with a focus on enhancing quality, service delivery, and operational efficiency. This discrepancy was made more clear when the researcher analyzed professional development plans provided by participants. The goals outlined in teacher professional development plans were centered around student assessment data and supervisor reviews while business professional's plans were focused on individual performance goals.

Analysis of Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "What are the experiences of business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?" Its primary objective was to explore how teamwork dynamics in average businesses correlate with the behaviors across high-performing businesses. The same six recurring themes, described in the analysis of Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, were found most prominent as the researcher analyzed interview transcripts related to Research Question 4. These themes are team structure and organization, communication, conflict resolution and handling differences, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement. The coded words/phrases used to identify these themes and their occurrences in participants responses are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5*Record of Coded Information: Research Question 4**2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list Business Teams and Performing Business Teams*

| Coded words/phrases | Record of occurrence | Themes |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Roles, responsibility | 33 | Team Structure & Organization |
| Digital communication, meetings, discuss | 45 | Communication |
| Address difficult topics, openness, private discussion, assumptions, jumping to conclusions | 28 | Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences |
| Hierarchy of decisions, collaborative decision making, final say | 24 | Decision Making |
| Trust, teamwork, culture, transparency | 25 | Culture & Trust |
| Flexibility, improvement, reflect, metrics, change, feedback | 28 | Adaptability & Continuous Improvement |

Team Structure and Organization

The first theme of team structure and organization was revealed when participants repeatedly mentioned terms like roles and responsibility, which were spoken 33 times, as outlined in Table 5. Among the similarities between professionals working for businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list and professionals not working for a business on the list was the way teams were structured. Both types of businesses organized teams based on clients, projects, or specific roles within the organization. According to Business Professional A, “We work in teams according to accounts, so I'll work with certain people on certain accounts and other people on others.”

Inc. 5000 Business Professional B further described the varying groups their team worked with to support client accounts:

I work really closely with our sales team and also the client services team. So, my marketing role is really a support role for both of those teams. How can we help sales do their jobs better and then also with our clients?

Another connection revealed during interviews was the emphasis on accountability within their teams. “There's no real leader. We all share responsibility equally amongst ourselves,” said Business Professional A when asked about accountability among their team. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A also confirmed shared responsibility within their team and explained, “Really who's accountable is each individual on the team.” A disconnection between high-performing businesses and businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Company in America list was hierarchy and leadership. Inc. 5000 businesses may have more defined hierarchies and leadership structures, with clear roles for managers and team leads. Inc. 5000 Business Professional provided a detailed description of the hierarchy within their business and said, “How teams are structured are you have your lead and then you have a senior, you have project performers and your third level, pretty much micro managing smaller teams or smaller workflows, and then you have the boots on the ground.” Inc. 5000 Business Professional B also mentioned that roles and responsibilities are often more specialized with team members focused on their specific areas of expertise to maximize efficiency for clients. This specialization was not explicitly mentioned by non Inc. 5000 business professionals.

Communication

The next theme, communication, was based on the recurring mention of the following coded words/phrases: “digital communication, meetings, and discuss”. As specified in Table 5, participants mentioned these coded words/phrases 45 times. In both contexts, regular team meetings were held for updates and discussions. Additionally, the meeting schedules described and provided by each participant confirmed the use of regular team meetings for communication. Open communication channels and the use of various types of communication mediums were other connections between high-performing businesses and performing businesses. When asked how information was shared, Inc. 5000 Business Professional B described the use of digital platforms and face-to-face conversations and said, “I would say probably 50% communication digitally over Slack in those group messages and then 50% probably in person talking together.” Business Professional B had a similar response as they described the use of a different digital platform for communication: “We really try to keep everything in Basecamp. That way it's available to everyone, it's organized. Email does happen. It's kind of the last case scenario, but we have some clients that just absolutely love the email.” One disconnection within the two types of businesses was the structure of meetings. Inc. 5000 businesses tended to have more frequent and structured meetings. Inc. 5000 Business Professional B described one type of reflective meeting teams have in their organization, “You have retrospectives and that is when the team meets as a whole and you say what you did, what we could be improved on, and shout outs. When we reflect, we have meetings like those.” Weekly team meetings and brainstorming meetings were mentioned by Inc. 5000 Business Professionals as well. In contrast, non Inc. 5000 businesses

indicated less frequent meetings with a preference for informal discussions. When asked about the frequency and structure of meetings, Business Professional A described, “It's not a set time, most of the time. It's just whenever we need something or something comes through or client asks for meeting or anything along those lines.”

Conflict Resolution and Handling Differences

Conflict resolution and handling differences were discussed by all participants when they frequently mentioned coded words/phrases: “address difficult topics, openness, private discussion, assumptions, and jumping to conclusions”. As specified in Table 5, the occurrences of these coded words/phrases were 28 times. Open communication to address difficult topics and differences was a commonality between both types of organizations. When describing handling differences, Business Professional B said, “I think really it's just a matter of understanding each other's perspectives, asking questions and trying to figure out why someone is approaching it the way that they are.” Inc. 5000 Business Professional A explained the importance of resolving conflict in a meeting instead of avoiding it: “It's either talked about then and there, but we can't shy away.” Both businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list and businesses not on the list utilized private discussions to address sensitive issues. All business professionals mentioned the importance of one-on-one conversations to resolve conflict. To describe how conflict was handled, Business Professional B said, “I would try and do it in a one-on-one.” Inc. 5000 Business Professional B also explained how team members addressed differences: “I would say if I have a problem with this specific person I would say most of the time it's gonna be private.” A difference regarding communication is how assumptions and jumping to conclusions are addressed.

In Inc. 5000 businesses, where there's a focus on structured communication, there are efforts to mitigate assumptions through clear communication channels and fact-based discussions. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A provided context around how questions were asked when there was confusion, rather than making assumptions, "If something doesn't make sense or there's errors or I think you missed a tech or a test. It's made known I don't understand." In contrast, non Inc. 5000 businesses may rely more on open dialogue to clarify misunderstandings and address assumptions as they arise. Business Professional B described how open communication prevented assumptions: "Things are pretty out in the open and available, as far as information goes and the reason behind the action."

Decision Making

The fourth theme, decision making, was discovered when participants repeatedly mentioned these coded words/phrases: hierarchy of decisions, collaborative decision making, and final say. These coded words/phrases were mentioned 24 times. The interviewed revealed that both types of businesses valued collaborative decision making processes. All interviewees described the importance of involving all team members in decision making to ensure different perspectives were considered. Business Professional A explained:

Really cooperatively. We discuss things internally, if need be we go to the client and ask how they want things done and then we decide the best course on the back end. It's rarely a single person's decision on what's gonna happen.

Inc. 5000 Business Professional B described how various perspectives are influenced when making decisions and said, "I try to do is get all of their different thoughts and

opinions.” Both type of businesses value the importance of hierarchical decision-making structures in certain situations. While collaborative decision-making processes are valued, there are instances where participants agree decisions should be made by specific individuals or leadership teams. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A discussed how the project lead was often the final say for larger decisions and Business Professional B described how the project manager typically made major decisions in certain instances.

Culture and Trust

The fifth theme, culture and trust, emerged as participants consistently used the coded words/phrases: “trust, teamwork, culture, and transparency”. When participants discussed their teamwork experiences, they referenced these coded words/phrases a total of 25 times, as detailed in Table 5. Feedback from both types of businesses uncovered a wide range of similarities and differences in the culture and trust within their teams. These commonalities and distinctions are further explored in the following section.

When discussing trust, both types of business professionals agree on the importance of trust among team members. Trust is seen as foundational for effective collaboration and productivity. Team members feel comfortable taking risks and sharing ideas openly. Business Professional B explained, “I think there's just a lot of genuine trust there and benefit of the doubt which is super nice.” “Very trustworthy,” is how Inc. 5000 Business Professional A described their team. They added, “We always have each other's backs.” Another key connection among all the business professionals interviewed was teamwork and collaboration were additional key component of their organizational cultures. Team members from both types of businesses were encouraged to work together towards common goals. Business Professional B described how teamwork was embedded

in their business's culture: "I would say it's very much a part of our culture. It's just one big group project after another. Nothing happens without another person. And so I mean you're in it to win it." When asked about teamwork within their culture, Inc. 5000 Business Professional A explained, "It is a hundred percent and embedded. Yeah, it takes the whole project team to get the job done because they're just things that I can't do." Collaboration was also seen as leveraging each other's strengths and expertise. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A also elaborated on utilizing team members' strengths to work towards a common goal: "So it takes us all because nobody knows everything and oftentimes you're gonna run into something that is out of your league or you're gonna need someone to help troubleshoot with you." Both types of businesses acknowledged the significance of organizational culture in shaping behavior and performance. A positive and inclusive culture was considered crucial for employees' engagement and retention. Business Professional B described the importance of a positive culture and said, "The only thing we really kind of harp on is culture." They added, "It's all about your personality and how you're gonna take things." Inc. 5000 Business Professional B confirmed the importance of teamwork to be successful in their workplace: "I would say teamwork is definitely a big part of the culture. I mean you have to be especially at our company where you have a million different priorities."

Among the differences between the two types of businesses was the way trust was built. Inc. 5000 businesses emphasized trust-building through structured processes and systems. For example, Inc. 5000 Business Professional A mentioned the use of retrospective meetings where team members gave shout outs to their colleagues. Businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list may

foster trust through more informal interactions and relationship-building activities.

Business Professional A described how conversations were light and informal when there was confusion or mistakes made: “We'll just talk about it. Openly they'll yell across the room.” Additionally, Inc. 5000 businesses may actively cultivate a culture of excellence and innovation, driven by ambitious goals. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A eluded to the high demands of the job and said, “You're talking to people who are woken up maybe after five hours of sleep because they put in an extra work load.” In contrast, businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list may place greater emphasis on values such as work-life balance and employee well-being, fostering a more relaxed and supportive environment. Business Professional A explained the laid back culture of their company: “We're pretty relaxed on everything.”

Adaptability and Continuous Improvement

The sixth and ultimate theme of Research Question 4, adaptability and continuous improvement, arose as participants repeatedly mentioned coded words/phrases: “flexibility, improvement, reflect, metrics, change, and feedback”. During discussions about their teamwork experiences, participants collectively referenced these coded words/phrases a total of 28 times, as outlined in Table 5. When discussing flexibility, both types of businesses agree it is important to be flexible and adapt in response to changing circumstances. Business Professional A described how teams stay flexible by adjusting project timelines based on client feedback. Inc. 5000 Business Professional A also explained the frequency of changing: “We have to move at the change. Change is frequently here. Changes are every day. You don't know what you're gonna bump into that day, but that's like the nature of the job.” Continuous improvement was recognized

by both types of organizations as a means to enhance efficiency, quality, and innovation. Continuous improvement involved regular evaluation of processes, identifying areas of enhancement, and implementing changes accordingly. Additionally, both types of businesses prioritize feedback mechanisms to gather insights from employees, customers, and stakeholders. Despite the many connections, there were also a few variances regarding adaptability and continuous improvement. Inc. 5000 businesses may be more proactive in embracing change, viewing it as an opportunity for growth and innovation. Businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list may exhibit more caution towards change, preferring stability and gradual evolution over rapid transformations. The final difference noted throughout the interviews was reflection. Inc. 5000 businesses encouraged regular reflection analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and identify areas for adaptation. Non Inc. 5000 businesses may engage in reflection to a lesser extent, focusing more on day-to-day operations rather than long-term strategic planning.

Summary

Chapter Four included the findings of the study and an analysis of the data including tables and triangulation sources. The study focused on maintaining confidentiality; aliases were used for all participants, consisting of teachers from high performing schools and performing schools, and business professionals from high performing companies on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list and professionals working for companies not on the list. Triangulation was utilized to validate findings, involving multiple forms of data sources beyond interviews, including collaboration protocols, team meeting agendas, team meeting schedules, and professional

learning plans. Coding procedures were utilized to interpret and organize participant experiences with a content analysis identifying six themes: team structure and organization, communication, conflict resolution and handling differences, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement. Each theme was supported by specific coded words and phrases, reflecting diverse perspectives of participants from different industries and environments. Chapter Five includes a concise overview of the study's problem, accompanied by an explanation of its limitations. The researcher integrated triangulation techniques for data analysis and outlined the research methods employed throughout the study. Additionally, there is an analysis of the findings' implications, drawing connections to the research questions and the problem statement. The chapter also delves into practical implications and suggests avenues for future research, concluding with a summary. A comprehensive list of references is provided, along with appendices containing pertinent documents.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list discussed the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Through the literature review process, the researcher uncovered the existing research has not fully explored connections and disconnections between collaboration in business and education. Therefore, this study sought to address the gap in research concerning the variances of process, structure, and behaviors in collaboration practices between teacher teams and business employee teams. Furthermore, the aim was to potentially facilitate better collaboration and enhance teamwork within educational and business settings. In order to understand the eight mutual learning behaviors between the types of teams, the researcher used a framework to help guide the research while assisting in answering the research questions. Utilizing aspects of Senge's (2006) principles of a learning organization and Robert Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors of a team theory helped to uncover the connections in collaboration between teacher teams and teams in business.

Senge (2006) explained there are key differences between a traditional authoritarian-controlled organization and a learning organization. The fundamental difference between a true learning organization and a traditional learning organization is the mastery of five disciplines. Senge's five disciplines include systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. This study specifically focused on team learning. Team learning is described as a group of people

who function as a whole or are aligned. Schwarz (2013) elevated team learning by outlining distinct mutual learning behaviors that characterize an effective team. Schwarz explained it is one thing to say you value different ideas, transparency, inquisitiveness, or empathy, but it is another thing to act that way. Through his own research over 30 years, Schwarz tailored his list of mutual learning behaviors down to eight essential behaviors for an effective team, which served as a framework for exploring the lived experiences of both business professionals and teachers.

Chapter Five includes a brief summary of the problem and a description of the study's limitations. The researcher included triangulation methods of data and a summary of the research methods. Additionally, Chapter Five contains an explanation of the implications of the findings that connect to the research questions and problem. Implications for practice and recommendations for further research followed by a summary are also included. A key list of references and appendices are presented as well.

Research Questions

In this basic narrative qualitative study, the researcher explored how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 list talked about the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?

2. What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and performing elementary teacher teams related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
3. What are the experiences of performing elementary teacher teams and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?
4. What are the experiences of business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz's (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?

Limitations

The researcher provided usable data by working diligently to remove external variables by delimiting the study. Despite this effort, limitations existed. In this qualitative study the following limitations existed, which includes variables outside the researcher's control.

1. Participants in the study might not have answered honestly.
2. Participants may not have accurately described their feelings about teamwork.
3. The length of time the participants had spent working in a team with their colleagues was not defined due to the lack of data provided to the researcher when selecting participants.

4. The lack of prior research exploring the teamwork experiences in education and business created limitations for the researcher.

Delimitations

The intent of this research was to provide the most accurate and relevant data.

Therefore, the following delimitations existed in this qualitative study.

1. This study was limited to two elementary schools that had received the Blue Ribbon award within the last 5 years prior to the study.
2. This study was limited to two performing elementary schools that did not receive a Blue Ribbon award and were located in similar areas of the state as the three Blue Ribbon award-winning elementary schools studied.
3. This study was limited to two businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list.
4. This study was limited to two businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Companies in America list.
5. The sample population was limited to eight Missouri interviewees from two regions in Missouri: Kansas City metropolitan area and Springfield metropolitan area.
6. The researcher aimed to minimize bias and subjectivity due to being the only analyzer and coder of the data.

Summary of Methods

The researcher selected two teachers from different public elementary schools that had received the National Blue Ribbon award within the last 5 years and two teachers from different public elementary schools that had not received the National Blue Ribbon

award. To explore the teamwork experiences of business professionals, the researcher selected business professionals from two different high-performing businesses based on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list and two businesses not on the list. Half of the businesses and schools were located in the Kansas City, Missouri, metropolitan area and the remaining half of the selected businesses and schools were in the Springfield, Missouri, metropolitan area. To vet interview questions, the researcher conducted pilot testing with a group of two different individuals: one teacher from a public school and a business professional currently working for a company not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list. The researcher contacted the principals of the elementary schools to gain permission and contact information for possible teacher participants. For the businesses, the researcher contacted potential participants directly to obtain informed consent. Interviews were conducted using Google Meet, a video conferencing application. All interviews were transcribed using the free transcription application embedded within Google Meet.

Coding procedures included the researcher reading all interview transcripts and annotating and highlighting patterns, which included text that was repeatedly mentioned by participants. As patterns were revealed, themes were sorted into groups and into identified codes. The specific coded words and phrases varied by research question as the terms used by participants differed based on their work environment and industry. However, the meaning of coded words and phrases all remained the same. The researcher categorized text by hand and then utilized artificial intelligence to sort through each piece of data to identify similarities and differences to organize each coded phrase from the data. The researcher identified six themes: team structure and organization,

communication, conflict resolution and handling differences, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement.

After establishing the six themes, the researcher reexamined interview transcripts by research question for connections and disconnections between participants.

Connections were made using the coded data by identifying related themes and patterns were concluded when a coded word/phrase was repeatedly mentioned by participants.

Triangulated sources of data were used to provide validity and reliability of the data for the seven themes. Triangulation sources included team meeting agendas, team meeting protocols or norms, team meeting schedules, participants' professional learning plans, and the researcher's interview notes.

Summary of Findings

The theoretical underpinnings of this study were based on Peter Senge's (2006) theory of a learning organization, which is defined as an organization where all people are continuously growing their capacity to create results they want, where innovative ways of thinking are cultivated, where shared ambition is free, and people are constantly learning how to learn together. A learning organization is different from a traditional authoritarian-controlled organization by the mastery of five disciplines, including team learning. This study specifically focused on team learning. Roger Schwarz (2013) further studied team learning and over 30 years of research developed eight mutual learning behaviors that effective teams must exhibit: state views and ask genuine questions; share all relevant information; use specific examples and agree on what important words mean; explain reasoning and intent; focus on interests, not positions; test assumptions and inferences; jointly design next steps; and discuss undiscussable issues. The researcher of

this study tailored research questions around each of the eight mutual learning behaviors to explore how teachers and business professionals experience teamwork in regards to Schwarz's (2013) mutual learning behaviors.

Based on the interviews of participants, the researcher was able to draw telling conclusions from data relevant to each research question. Interviews from the eight participants revealed similarities and differences between teamwork behavior experiences of teachers and business professionals. Through a content analysis of participant responses, the researcher discovered six themes: team structure and organization, communication, conflict resolution and handling differences, decision making, culture and trust, and adaptability and continuous improvement. Most of the themes reveal connections between Schwarz's (2006) eight mutual learning behaviors. However, some of the uncovered themes differed from the eight mutual learning behaviors. The theme of communication relates to Schwarz's mutual behavior of share all relevant information, which involves making sure all teammates have access to information. The theme of conflict resolution and handling differences correlates with multiple mutual learning behaviors, which include use-specific examples and agree on what important words mean, discuss undiscussable issues, state views and ask genuine questions, and test assumptions and inferences. Participant responses unveiled the theme of decision making, which relates to mutual learning behaviors of focus on interests not, positions and explains reasoning and intent. Adaptability and continuous improvement was another established theme that connects to the mutual learning behavior of jointly designed next steps.

When participants were asked about the eight mutual learning behaviors, their responses uncovered themes that were disconnected from the mutual learning behaviors. These themes included culture and trust, and team structure and organization. Although these themes did not tie to the mutual learning behaviors, they revealed telling insights regarding teamwork experiences throughout the various types of organizations explored. Each research question required the researcher to analyze interview data of two different groups of participants at a time. The following sections provide a summary of the findings for each research question.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?” The focus of Research Question 1 was to explore teamwork experiences in relation to Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors from high-performing businesses and high-performing public schools. From Research Question 1, the researcher concluded although there are connections across high-performing schools and businesses, there are also notable differences.

Among the similarities between Blue Ribbon schools and businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list are the emphasis on clear roles, shared responsibility, and accountability within teams. Effective communication is considered vital in both contexts, with an emphasis on transparency and adaptability in communication strategies. Both recognize the importance of addressing conflict promptly

and respectfully, with an emphasis on open communication and finding collaborative solutions. Collaborative decision-making processes involving input from various stakeholders are valued in both settings. High-performing elementary schools and high-performing businesses trust and foster a positive team culture grounded in mutual respect and support. Adaptability and continuous improvement are acknowledged as crucial for navigating challenges and seizing opportunities, with feedback processes in place to facilitate learning and development.

As mentioned, despite the many similarities, there are also key differences between the two types of organizations. One disconnection is team structures. Businesses have more fluid team structures while high-performing schools create teams based on academic departments or grade levels. Communication channels may vary, with businesses relying more on digital platforms, while schools may rely on face-to-face interactions and informal communication due to close proximity. Conflict resolution processes and sources of conflict vary between high-performing schools and high-performing businesses due to the influence of stakeholder relationships and organizational hierarchies. Decision-making processes are also different, with schools having more hierarchical structures and involving various stakeholders, while businesses adopt more agile and responsive approaches. Trust dynamics may differ due to the nature of the work and stakeholder relationships, impacting the willingness to admit fault and the culture surrounding feedback. While both prioritize adaptability and continuous improvement, the formality and frequency of feedback processes may vary between schools and businesses, influenced by organizational norms and educational philosophies.

Overall, while there are similarities across high-performing schools and businesses, there are differences due to the contexts and objectives of each organization.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, “What are the experiences of elementary teacher teams in Blue Ribbon Schools and performing elementary teacher teams related to the implementation of Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?” The primary aim of Research Question 2 was to delve into how teamwork dynamics relate to these behaviors across high-performing and average-performing public elementary schools. Upon analyzing data, the researcher concluded there are also similarities and differences between the teamwork experiences of Blue Ribbon elementary schools and performing elementary schools. Both types of schools emphasize the importance of shared responsibility, defined roles, and accountability. Teams are also structured similarly and are based on grade levels or specialized departments. Participants from both types of schools utilize various communication channels such as group chats, emails, meetings, and face-to-face discussions to facilitate information sharing and coordination. Open and respectful communication is utilized in both types of schools for resolving conflict. Team members are encouraged to express their perspectives and concerns openly. Decision making involves input from all team members in both types of schools, and most decisions are made collectively among team members. Trust is regarded as essential within teams in both types of schools, emphasizing open communication, mutual respect, and reliability among colleagues. Collaboration is embedded in the culture of both types of schools.

Although performing elementary schools and high-performing or Blue Ribbon elementary schools have many similarities, the researcher uncovered a few differences. First, there is a contrast in the formality of communication. Blue Ribbon schools tend to have more structured communication processes, while performing schools may handle communication more informally among team members. Blue Ribbon schools may involve leadership more directly in facilitating difficult conversations, while performing schools may handle conflicts more informally among team members. High-performing schools tend to have more formalized decision-making processes compared to performing schools. While collaboration is embedded in the culture of both types of schools, performing schools may exhibit discrepancies in teamwork among different grade levels or departments. In conclusion, both types of schools share common values and practices in team dynamics, but there are notable differences in communication styles, decision-making processes, and levels of teamwork.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 inquired, “What are the experiences of performing elementary teacher teams and business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?” Its primary objective was to explore how teamwork dynamics in average or performing elementary schools correlate with the behaviors across high-performing businesses. Based on the data collected, the researcher concluded there are key discrepancies and similarities between teamwork in performing elementary schools and high-performing businesses. Both types of organizations value roles, accountability, and recognizing diverse strengths within teams.

Internal communication methods such as group texts, email, and in-person discussions are common in both environments. Performing elementary schools and high-performing businesses utilize digital communication tools, although businesses rely more heavily on them due to remote work or disperse colleagues. Positive relationships, listening, understanding diverse perspectives, and addressing differences are priorities in both contexts. In each organization, open discussions and compromises are also important. When making decisions, both types used a collaborative approach that satisfied everyone and involved input from all team members. Cultivating positive relationships and trust among team members is crucial for both environments. Feedback and reflection are viewed as vital for driving improvement in both settings.

Among the differences, performing schools have smaller, grade-level or subject-based teams, while businesses have larger, multidisciplinary teams organized by role or client. While performing schools emphasize open discussions and compromise, businesses may employ more formal processes for conflict resolution. Businesses may have more formal decision-making structures compared to performing schools. The nature of trust differs between performing schools and Inc. 5000 businesses due to varying contexts and objectives of each environment. Specific examples are often requested by businesses, indicating trust within the team is based on individuals' abilities to provide concrete evidence to support their claims. The mechanism for collecting and utilizing feedback varies, with performing schools focusing on teaching practices and student outcomes, and businesses emphasizing quality, service delivery, and operational efficiency. While there are similarities in how teamwork is experienced in performing schools and businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America

list, there are distinguished differences influenced by the nature of the work, organizational culture, and objectives of each environment.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, “What are the experiences of business teams working for a company on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list related to the implementation of Schwarz’s (2013) eight mutual learning behaviors?” Its primary objective was to explore how teamwork dynamics in average businesses correlate with the behaviors across high-performing businesses. When analyzing data from Research Question 4, the researcher discovered parallels and discrepancies in teamwork among businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list and business teams not on the list. One connection that was revealed is both types of businesses organized teams based on clients, projects, or specific roles within the organization. Regular team meetings and open communication channels were common in both types of businesses. Open communication and private discussions were utilized to address sensitive issues in both types of organizations. Collaborative decision-making processes were valued in both types of businesses. Trust, teamwork, and transparency were seen as foundational for effective collaboration in both types of businesses. High-performing and performing businesses recognize the importance of flexibility and continuous improvement.

One of the discrepancies between the two types of businesses was Inc. 5000 companies may have more defined hierarchies and leadership structures compared to businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list.

As for communication, Inc. 5000 companies tended to have more frequent and structured meetings. In Inc. 5000 businesses there was an emphasis on hierarchical decision-making structures in certain situations, while businesses not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list may have more flexible decision making processes. In regards to culture and trust, Inc. 5000 companies built trust through structured processes, while non Inc. 5000 businesses fostered trust through informal interactions. Businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list also were more proactive in embracing change and engaging in reflection analysis. Companies not on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list exhibited more caution towards change and focused more on day-to-day operations. In conclusion, the researcher discovered both similarities and differences in various aspects of organizational functioning, particularly in terms of structure, communication, conflict resolution, decision-making, culture, and adaptability.

Discussion

This study's theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of effective teamwork in education and business, drawing from Peter Senge's (2006) concept of a learning organization and Roger Schwarz's (2013) theory of eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams. It explored collaboration among teacher teams in Blue Ribbon and high-performing elementary schools, as well as teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list and those not on the list. Senge's principles stress team learning within an organization, while Schwarz's behaviors offer specific guidelines for productive collaboration. The study examined how these behaviors are applied in different organizational contexts and their impact on collective efficacy and

student achievement. Qualitative analysis of team interactions compared practices between educational and business teams, aiming to enhance learning outcomes and organizational success by promoting effective collaboration.

The study shed light on crucial elements of teamwork observed when studying teamwork across different organizational contexts, revealing both similarities and differences, which aligns with the existing literature explored in detail in Chapter Two. In comparing high-performing Blue Ribbon elementary schools and high-performing businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies in America list, commonalities emerged in emphasizing clear roles, effective communication, collaborative decision making, and trust. These conclusions align with the researcher's review of existing research, which concluded some of the commonalities among teamwork in business and education include shared responsibility and building capacity of teammates. However, distinctions arose in team structures, communication channels, conflict resolution processes, and decision-making structures, influenced by the unique objectives and organizational cultures of each setting. These discrepancies also correspond with current literature on teamwork in education and business, which concluded there are variances between the two industries: team structure, the frequency of collaboration, and the topics addressed in collaboration.

The comparison of high-performing elementary schools and performing elementary schools uncovered similarities such as both types prioritize shared responsibility, defined roles, accountability, effective communication, conflict resolution, collaborative decision making, trust, and collaboration. Nevertheless, variances exist between the two types of schools including the formality of communication, conflict

resolution processes, decision-making structures, and teamwork cohesion. Similarly, comparisons between performing elementary schools and high-performing businesses underscore shared values in teamwork dynamics, yet highlight variances in communication methods, decision-making processes, and trust dynamics. Additionally, the contrast between businesses on the Inc. 5000 list and those not listed revealed common priorities in defined roles, communication effectiveness, and continuous improvement, alongside differences in organizational structure, communication frequency, decision-making approaches, and trust-building mechanisms.

Overall, the research emphasized the significance of contextual factors in shaping teamwork experiences and highlighted opportunities for cross sectoral learning. Contextual factors such as organizational structure, communication norms, decision-making processes, and trust dynamics significantly influence how mutual learning behaviors are implemented and experienced within teams. Recognizing these contextual nuances is crucial for understanding the complexities of teamwork dynamics and identifying strategies for improvement. The research also highlights opportunities for cross sectoral learning, where insights gained from one sector can be applied to another to enhance teamwork effectiveness. Examining similarities and differences across sectors can help organizations gain valuable insight into alternative approaches, best practices, and innovative solutions that can be adapted to their own context. This cross sectoral learning fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, enabling organizations to optimize their teamwork processes and achieve better outcomes. The research emphasized the dynamic interplay between contextual factors and teamwork

experiences, while also promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange across sectors to drive organizational excellence.

Educational Implications

Educational implications of this study are multifaceted and offer valuable insight to educators. The parallels between high-performing businesses and high-performing schools unveil a realm of opportunity for schools to glean insights from the corporate world and adapt successful business practices to optimize their own dynamics. Delving into the core principles that underpin successful businesses, such as clear roles, a culture of shared responsibility, effective communication channels, and collaborative decision-making processes, holds immense promise for improving teamwork and elevating overall performance within schools. In the fast-paced and interconnected landscape of education, the need for streamlined processes and efficient collaboration has never been more necessary. By emulating the organizational structures and operational strategies of high-performing businesses, schools can cultivate an environment where every member of the team understands their role with clarity and embraces a collective responsibility for the success of the organization's mission. Additionally, insights from this study can aid schools in becoming learning organizations which, as described by Senge (2006), are organizations where people are continuously expanding their ability to achieve desired results, foster new ways of thinking, share common goals, and engage in collective learning.

Just as businesses rely on seamless communication to ensure alignment and productivity, educational settings can leverage the power of clear and transparent communication channels to foster collaboration among teachers, administrators, and

support staff. Whether through digital platforms, face-to-face meetings, or informal discussions, the distribution of information and ideas can inspire innovation and drive collective action towards shared goals. These new insights can assist educators in better implementing the mutual learning behavior of sharing all relevant information, which ensures all team members have common knowledge from which to make educated decisions (Schwarz, 2013). Additionally, the fundamental principle of collaborative decision making that drives successful businesses can be smoothly incorporated into educational frameworks. Engaging stakeholders across various levels in decision making, educational leaders can leverage collective knowledge and skills of the entire community, resulting in better informed decisions and increased support from all involved parties. In essence, the adaptation of the business practices in education represent a paradigm shift toward organizational excellence and student success. By drawing inspiration from high-performing businesses and infusing their principles into the fabric of education, we have the opportunity to cultivate a culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement.

Professional development programs tailored to incorporate insight from successful businesses offer educators a valuable opportunity to enhance their skills in teamwork, conflict resolution, and collaborative decision making. By integrating principles of mutual learning behaviors from high-performing organizations, educators can develop strategies for fostering cohesive teams, promoting open communication, and sharing responsibility effectively. Training modules can provide practical techniques for navigating conflicts constructively, fostering a culture of respect and understanding within teams. Educators can also benefit from learning decision-making models

employed by successful businesses, enabling them to leverage diverse perspectives and arrive at consensus driven solutions aligned with educational goals. Additionally, offering this type of professional learning will assist educators in mastering mutual learning behaviors related to perspectives and conflict resolution including testing assumptions, explaining reasoning and intent, and focusing on interests, not positions. These professional development initiatives also cultivate a culture of a learning organization, encouraging reflection and collaboration to drive positive change in educational practice. Overall, by investing in professional development that draws upon insights from successful businesses, educators can enhance their effectiveness, promote collaboration, and ultimately improve outcomes for students.

The findings from this study also provide implications for educators in relation to team structures. Traditionally, educational institutions have organized teams based on academic departments or grade levels, adhering to a rigid hierarchical structure. Senge (2006) distinguished a learning organization from a traditional authoritarian-controlled organization as one that fosters innovation and where people are constantly learning together. By embracing more fluid team structures similar to those found in successful businesses, educators have the opportunity to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation within educational settings. One opportunity for promoting flexible team structures is the creation of cross disciplinary teams based on specific projects or student needs. A flexible approach to teams connects with Senge's (2006) team learning discipline, which entails synchronized action and the role of teammates on other teams. Rather than isolating educators within their respective departments or grade levels, schools can assemble teams comprised of teachers with diverse expertise and

perspectives. This tactic not only encourages the sharing of best practices across disciplines but also fosters a holistic approach to addressing complex educational challenges. A holistic approach to challenges also aligns with Schwarz's (2013) mutual learning behaviors, specifically jointly designing next steps, which involves team members making decisions collectively instead of unilaterally. Furthermore, by forming teams around specific projects or student needs, educators can capitalize on the collective talents and strengths of team members to devise innovative solutions. Whether attempting a school wide initiative, implementing a new instructional strategy, or addressing the needs of specific student population, interdisciplinary teams can bring a breadth of knowledge and experience to the table, leading to more effective outcomes.

Another educational implication as a result of this study is enhancing communication strategies. In order to distinguish a traditional organization to a learning organization, team members must develop a mastery of discussion and dialogue (Senge, 2006). To enhance the benefits of communication, educators should explore a diverse range of methods tailored to their unique needs. Digital platforms, such as the ones utilized in businesses, offer opportunities for real-time communication, fostering collaboration regardless of physical location or scheduling constraints. In addition to digital channels, face-to-face interactions play a vital role in building relationships and fostering trust among team members. Meetings, huddles, and informal gatherings provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue and idea exchange. Emphasizing transparent communication cultivates trust and accountability within teams, promoting a culture where every voice is valued. By soliciting feedback and addressing concerns openly, schools can create an environment of shared responsibility. Adaptable communication

strategies also enable educators to navigate challenges and seize opportunities effectively. Being responsive to changing circumstances ensures that communication remains effective and relevant in dynamic educational environments. By embracing diverse communication methods and prioritizing transparency and adaptability, schools can cultivate collaboration and innovation.

The findings of this study also underscore the importance of feedback processes to drive continuous improvement and professional growth. Educators can utilize insights from the schools and businesses studied to enhance feedback mechanisms within schools, nurturing reflection and excellence in practice. Establishing structured feedback processes allows educators to receive constructive input from peers, administrators, students, and stakeholders. Feedback focused on teaching practices, student outcomes, and operational efficiency provides valuable insights for educators to refine their approach and enhance student success. Soliciting feedback aligned with individual professional goals, educators can tailor their professional development experiences to address areas of growth and capitalize on strengths. This targeted approach drives continuous improvement and overall performance within the school. In conclusion, incorporating feedback processes modeled after high-performing organizations promotes a culture of reflection and collaboration, ultimately enhancing outcomes for students and stakeholders.

Drawing upon insights from this study, educational leaders have a unique opportunity to prioritize the cultivation of trust and positive team culture within schools, promoting environments where mutual respect, reliability, and support among colleagues are paramount. Schwarz (2013) concluded team members must have trust in order to

discuss undiscussable topics that lead to growth. Additionally, encouraging open discussions allows diverse perspectives to be heard and respected. Conflict resolution training helps educators navigate conflicts constructively, fostering understanding and empathy. Recognizing and celebrating contributions reinforces the value of teamwork. Promoting recognition and appreciation, leaders inspire educators to excel and contribute to the success of the school community. Ultimately, fostering a culture of trust and positive team dynamics leads to improve collaboration.

The study also highlights the need for flexibility and adaptability in decision making within educational settings, which provides a final key implication for educators. While schools often operate with hierarchical structures, educators can enhance adaptability by involving various stakeholders and adopting flexible approaches inspired by high-performing businesses. Traditional decision making in schools may limit responsiveness and innovation. Involving stakeholders like teachers, administrators, parents, and students, schools can gain diverse perspectives and generate creative solutions that reflect the needs of all involved. Adopting flexible decision-making processes allows schools to respond quickly to changing circumstances. This may involve shorter decision cycles, empowering staff to make autonomous decisions, and using technology for real-time information gathering and analysis. In essence, by embracing agility and collaboration, educators can enhance flexibility and adaptability in decision making, leading to more effective responses to challenges and opportunities within educational settings.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher limited this study to eight participants from elementary schools and businesses in the Kansas City metropolitan area and Springfield, Missouri, metropolitan area. Further research should be conducted to widen the interview pool and increase participation with more teachers and business professionals from other parts of the state of Missouri and other states around the country. Conducting research to a broader range of participants could provide new perspectives and insights.

Given the differences observed between high-performing schools and businesses, future research could focus on conducting a more comprehensive comparative analysis across different industries within both education and business. This could provide deeper insights into how different businesses and education contexts influence teamwork dynamics and the implementation of the mutual learning behaviors.

The findings from this study briefly explored the culture of each organization and how teamwork is either embedded or not. Therefore, the researcher also suggests investigating the role of organizational culture in shaping teamwork dynamics and the implementation of the mutual learning behaviors. Understanding how organizational values, norms, and beliefs influence teamwork practices could inform strategies for cultivating collaboration and learning oriented culture.

An additional recommendation for future research is investigating the relationship between teacher teamwork, mutual learning behaviors, and student outcomes. Insight into how teacher teamwork impacts student outcomes could be an important area of research. Exporting how effective collaboration among teacher teams influences student

achievement, engagement, and socio-emotional development could highlight the importance of teamwork in promoting student success.

A final suggestion for additional research is to conduct a study specifically in secondary education. Cross disciplinary teaming is often utilized in secondary education. Therefore, it would be intriguing to uncover how teachers in secondary settings experience teamwork and the mutual learning behaviors.

Summary

The purpose of this basic narrative qualitative study was to explore how teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list discussed the use of the eight mutual learning behaviors in their teams. Based on the eight mutual learning behaviors of effective teams theory by Roger Schwarz (2013), this study sought to understand how the eight mutual learning behaviors were exhibited by teacher teams in Blue Ribbon elementary schools, teacher teams in performing elementary schools, teams in businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America's list, and business teams not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list.

This basic narrative qualitative study explored the eight mutual learning behaviors of three teachers from three different Blue Ribbon elementary schools, three teachers from three performing elementary schools, three business professionals from three businesses on the 2023 Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies in America list, and three business professionals working for companies not on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-

Growing Private Companies list. This study aimed to fill the gap in research focused specifically on the differences of process, structure, and behaviors in collaboration practices between teacher teams and business employee teams. Additionally, the goal of the study was to potentially help educators and businesses collaborate and develop more effective teamwork in their organization.

The literature revealed there are similarities and differences in teamwork between education and business and the findings from interviews of participants in this study had the same conclusion. However, the findings from this study provided more insight into how collaboration compares and contrasts between education and business. Similarities between the two industries included an emphasis on roles and accountability. Both education and business environments studied prioritize roles, shared responsibility, and accountability within teams. They also both emphasized the importance of effective communication, valuing transparency, adaptability, and open channels for resolving conflicts, and making collaborative decisions. Additionally, both high-performing schools and businesses prioritize trust, mutual respect, support, collaboration, and continuous improvement within their team cultures.

This study also provided specific findings regarding differences in teamwork experiences between elementary schools and businesses. While team businesses often have more fluid team structures, schools tend to organize teams based on academic departments or grade levels. Businesses also may rely more on digital platforms for communication, while schools often use face-to-face interactions and informal communication due to close proximity. Schools may involve leadership more directly in facilitating difficult conversations, while businesses may have more formalized conflict

resolution processes. In regards to decision making, schools tend to have more hierarchical decision-making structures involving various stakeholders, while businesses adopt more agile and responsive approaches. Trust dynamics may differ due to the nature of the work and stakeholder relationships, impacting the willingness to admit fault and the culture surrounding feedback. Although both prioritize adaptability and continuous improvement, the formality and frequency of feedback processes may vary between schools and businesses. Therefore, while teamwork in both education and businesses share common values and practices, there are notable differences influenced by the organizational context, objectives, structures, communication styles, decision-making processes, and levels of formality.

Existing research concluded the paramount importance of collective teacher efficacy, exclaiming its significant impact on student achievement with an effect size (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, 2023). Collective teacher efficacy is defined as a group's shared belief in its ability to overcome obstacles and achieve objectives (Donohoo et al., 2018); this factor emerges as crucial in educational contexts. Additionally, the alignment between sought-after soft skills in the professional realm, particularly teamwork, and the expectations placed on educators, highlights the necessity for educators to possess practice experience in effective team dynamics (Galbraith & Webb, 2013). Nevertheless, the differing interpretations of collaboration among teachers accentuates the potential inefficacy of collaborative efforts (Piercey, 2010), emphasizing the need for clarity and alignment in collaborative endeavors to maximize effectiveness and address this prevalent issue in educational settings. The findings from this study can be utilized for

educators to develop the necessary clarity and alignment around teamwork to be more effective in their organization and ultimately positively impact students.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this basic narrative qualitative study exploring teamwork in elementary schools and businesses regarding Robert Schwarz's eight mutual learning behaviors.

Please note the following:

- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- You may choose to withdraw at any time.
- There is no penalty for not participating or choosing not to answer all questions.
- All responses are anonymous.
- No information identifying you individually or your school will be reported.
- Responses will be compiled and reported anonymously.

In order to participate in the interview, informed consent is required. If you agree to allow me to use your interview responses for research purposes, please sign below.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

We will get started once you are ready. If you need clarification on a question or additional information during the interview, please let me know.

A. Let's start with some general questions about your experience.

1. How many years have you taught at your school or worked at this company?
2. What do you enjoy most about your job and what are your biggest challenges?

B. The second set of questions is centered around the structure of teams in your organization.

1. What teams are you part of? Describe your role.
2. What team do you regularly work in?
3. How are teams structured?

C. The next set of questions is related to the behaviors exhibited in the team you regularly engage with at work.

1. How are decisions made within the team?
2. Who is accountable for how the team works together? Is there a formal leader that holds the team accountable or is it a shared responsibility among all team members?
3. How do team members share information?
4. How often do team members give specific examples to make clear what they are saying?

5. How likely are team members to acknowledge when they don't know something?
6. How does your team address difficult but necessary topics?
7. Is your team open to asking questions to understand different perspectives or are they more interested in making their point clear?
8. How does your team exchange and receive feedback from each other?
9. How does your team reflect on the team's performance?
10. Are team members willing to ask how they have contributed to the problem?
11. How are team meetings facilitated?
12. During a team meeting, do members share input on the purpose of the meeting and how to move through the agenda?
13. Do team members assume things about others without asking them about it?
14. How do team members hold each other accountable?
15. How are differences handled?
16. Do team members tend to address differences privately rather than addressing them directly as a group?
17. How likely is your team to jump to conclusions before gathering all the information?
18. How trustworthy are you of your team members?