

Better ways of teaching teachers: A study of professional development, professional learning, and teachers as adult learners

by

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Bachelor of Education, University of Lethbridge, 2003

Bachelor of Arts, University of Lethbridge, 2003

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This thesis explores the notion of teachers as adult learners, the professional development and professional learning available to them, and a space where these ideas can come together. Research participants offer insight into how they currently learn and use many sources of learning to create better learning opportunities for their students. Building on ideas from Lawler (2003) and Kennedy (2005) and using narrative methodology, particularly poetics and collage as a means of capturing participants' thinking, my findings support the idea that teachers need a transformative professional development model that acknowledges them as adult learners. No single participant spoke of all of the adult learning or teacher learning principles within a single professional development experience, yet each spoke of times when one or more of those keys to their learning was present throughout their transformative experience. Simply put, teachers use many sources of learning to bring about changes to their teaching practice. All of these work together to bring about the transformation they spoke of in their stories of learning.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to several of the balcony people in my life:

To my parents who have encouraged me to do my best, follow my passion, and more importantly, do what makes me happy. Thank you for your support even when you are not quite sure what my research is about 😊

To my sister who inspires friendly sibling competition and cheers the loudest for me through all of life's hurdles.

To my colleagues who ignite learning in classrooms every day and find a way to personally improve and learn no matter what obstacles they may encounter.

To Lori Mitchell, my grade five teacher, who introduced me to creative writing, poetry, and excellent teaching. Thank you for inspiring my ten year old self.

Chapter One An Introduction

Another school year was coming to an end and I was facing one of the realities of the teaching profession – grade change and classroom move. I took this as an opportunity to tackle the two four-drawer filing cabinets that had been following me around for several years. They were like any other filing cabinets I imagine – a drab grey color accented by my whimsical magnet collection, labels that long ago failed to match the contents of each compartment, and drawers crammed full with long forgotten manila file folders which are home to documents that were deemed worthy of storage at some point (as well as some things that I just didn't know where else to hide).

I prepared for the task ahead of me with absolute precision: a basket for files to scan into an electronic copy and one for shredding, the giant blue recycling collection bin, and a garbage can for the non-recyclables. The process itself was surprisingly painless, aside from the odd time my foot fell asleep, a logical consequence to sitting in awkward positions on the floor, surrounded by large piles of paper. Much of the drawers' contents found themselves in the recycling bin as they could be located again on the internet if I ever needed them for a lesson. There were a few files however that stalled my progress – my collection of teachers' convention handouts.

Ever since I was a pre-service teacher I have diligently attended teachers' convention, collecting ideas, handouts, and free stuff from sessions and merchants alike. Not sure of what to do with much of it, but always sure of its value and potential in my classroom once I found the time to work through the ideas and add them to my teacher repertoire, I developed a habit of stuffing everything into a clearly labeled folder,

promising I would get back to it “one day”. Of course, that day never came and once again I caught myself getting swept up in the great ideas and their potential as I reviewed the contents of each file, hesitant to do anything with the information except to return them back to the cabinet drawer.

I couldn't help but wonder how many other teachers in other classrooms in other schools all over the province of Alberta have file folders of great ideas from convention or other professional development, just waiting for the time to bring them to life in their classrooms? How many other teachers were keeping their learning locked in their classroom filing cabinets? How many hours of professional development have never been transferred into classroom practice? More importantly, can we still consider this learning or professional development if no changes in teaching or student learning take place?

Statement of the Problem

I've been faced with two contradictory realities around teacher learning in my career so far (as illustrated in Figure 1). On one hand is our annual teachers' convention, a two-day event that teachers in Alberta fought to have included in their professional responsibilities. Teachers are required (and paid) to attend the convention. (Please note that annual teacher' convention has a long history in the province between school boards, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), and government and I will not be exploring that within the parameters of this study.) On the other is the vast learning I have experienced while working with the teachers at my school.

I joined our local convention board after attending an opening address where the board president invited anyone who wasn't happy with the program to come aboard and

make changes. I was determined to streamline the types of sessions we offered and worked hard to ensure we weren't bringing in the same experts year after year.

Unfortunately we were (and continue to be) limited by our format – two days of one-shot-stand-and-deliver style sessions that all teachers must attend but no one takes attendance at. The facilities we utilize for convention in our region are more conducive to smaller audience, hands on sessions like wood turning, robotics, math manipulatives, cake decorating, or making art than conference centres used in larger centers.

Nonetheless, modifications need to be made to the convention-learning model. Research (as well as my collection of unused convention handouts) shows that changes in classroom practice don't come from a ninety-minute workshop alone (Guskey, 2000; Webster-Wright, 2009; Mesler Parise and Spillane, 2010; Timperley, 2011).

Next is my experience with the teachers in my school as we started with an education consultant in 2004 and then continued as a group of professional learners. I've seen the value of learning over time. Learning motivated by wanting to do better for students. Learning in a supportive environment. After noticing that our junior high students were missing key concepts in language arts, we went back over both our prioritized curriculum we had developed with the consultant and the actual curriculum from the province. We noticed issues with both. We decided as a group of teachers from grades one through nine that we needed to do some serious work with our understanding of language arts. Thankfully our administration saw value in this work and supported us with time to meet as much as possible. Our work with the language arts curriculum opened the door for dialogue and gave us the time to have exciting conversations about our teaching assumptions, our habits, and our questions. It forever changed what I know

about language arts in Alberta and how I teach the subject in my classroom as I am now able to better differentiate my instruction and talk about my teaching practice.

Perhaps very obvious at this point are my biases towards the topic before us. I cannot (and will not) and should not, as feminists argue, separate myself from my research. I am a teacher who has had first-hand experience with the ways that teacher learning is working and the ways that it is not. I believe that our teaching reality no longer (and may never have) matched teacher education. While I first thought that large scale professional development no longer had a place in teacher learning, I see the importance of teacher learning aligning in some way to district initiatives and goals which is why I think professional development (although still in need of an overhaul of its teaching methods) and professional learning need to co-exist in a space together. Ultimately I want to improve student learning in our schools and to do that, teacher practice needs to improve as well. To do this, teachers need to be supported in their work with learning opportunities which honour them as learners.

The recognition of the variety of student needs in the classroom and the bombardment of new initiatives are creating an atmosphere where teachers feel they cannot keep up because they simply don't know how. For the most part, teachers want to learn ways to better do their job and they often engage in professional development activities. While some of these activities are useful, many current professional development offerings are not meeting teachers needs in the ways they should (Timperley, 2011).

Scholars argue that problematically, much professional development does not mirror what scholars and teachers know about good teaching and better professional

practice. Research also shows that professional training that is organized as one shot, ‘one-size-fits-all’ workshops seldom results in major change in teacher practice (e.g. Wilson & Berne, 1999; Guskey, 2000). Although there are many reasons for this, one problem with professional development is that it does not teach teachers as though they were adults. In fact, considering teachers as adult learners seems to be a relatively new phenomenon (i.e. Lawler, 2003; Webster-Wright, 2009) although adult educators have begun to teach in teacher education programmes in places such as the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

Developing new understanding around the distinction between professional development and other teacher learning by researchers has only just begun. The term for this nascent inter-weaving is professional learning (Timperley, 2011; Webster-Wright, 2009). While this change in language creates a space for people to think differently about teacher learning, one could argue that it also creates a spectrum with professional learning and professional development at opposite ends. Because scholars and teachers alike may carry different definitions of professional development, for the purpose of this study I borrow words from Avalos (2011) who asserts “professional development is about teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth” (p. 10). I maintain that teacher learning is key to changing teaching practice and improving student learning and achievement. It is important to note that typically in education, the terms professional development and professional learning are used interchangeably as both have the same goal in mind. Throughout this study I have used these words to delineate two different approaches to teacher learning to create clarity for the reader.

Both avenues for development and learning have their merit and necessity. What is required, therefore, is an environment for co-existence – a space of encounter – where the notions are brought together, rather than plotted against one another. The image below in Figure 1 visually illustrates what I mean.

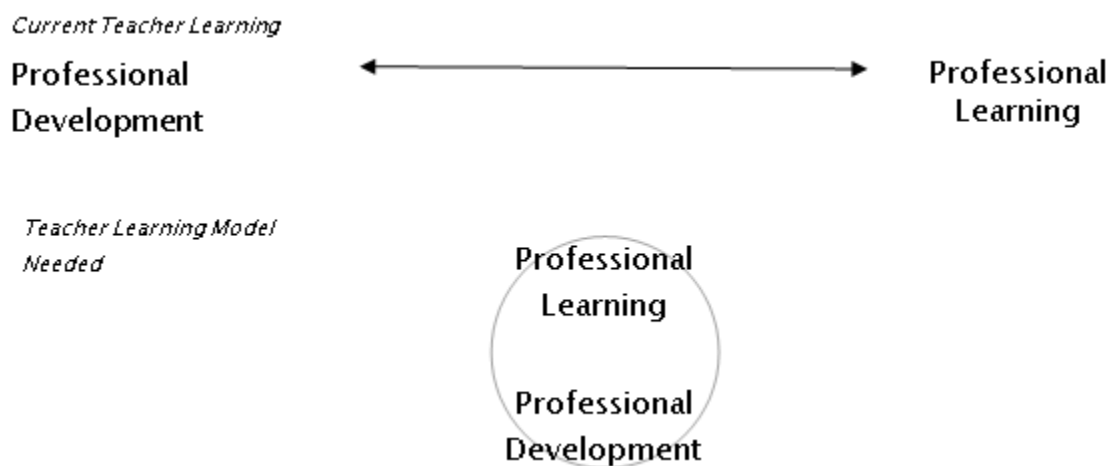


Figure 1 A space of coexistence

Within this space of encounter shown in Figure 1, it seems logical to me that the foundation be principles of adult learning and education, as teachers are indeed adults. While there are many facets to adult education, there are several key concepts essential for teacher professional development and learning: adults are diverse learners and need to be treated as such, learning is contextual, and engagement is essential for understanding (Lawler, 2003; Timperley 2011; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). Researchers and educators working with adults have a long history of turning to arts-based learning for engagement as “artistic forms of expression extend the boundaries of how we come to know, by honouring multiple intelligences and indigenous knowledge. Artistic expression broadens cultural perspectives by allowing and honouring diverse ways of knowing and learning” (Lawrence, 2005, p.3). Arts-based learning and the key principles mentioned

above stand in stark contrast to the ‘stand and deliver’ format that is used to ‘fill up’ teachers with new knowledge during professional development events.

Unfortunately, the competing approaches to teacher learning have created a divide between two important sources of knowledge for teacher, instead of considering how these ways of learning might intersect and or support/ supplement the other. This means that there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained by asking teachers how they approached their own professional learning and change in their teaching practice. If we can bring together how teachers currently learn and what we know about adult learning theory, given teachers are adult learners, perhaps we will have a better understanding of what teacher learning opportunities could and should look like.

Research Question

The broad question that guides this study is: In what ways can adult learning theory and knowledge about how teachers learn, contribute to the transformation of teacher professional development as we know it? To respond to this question, I brought together a group of teachers, including myself as participant-researcher, to explore how they feel they learn (and change) in their practice and then looked for examples and connections to principles of teachers as adult learners.

I set out to accomplish several objectives with this study:

- To use teachers’ own knowledge of the ways in which they learn to offer improvements to current practices of professional development
- To conceptualize a space of coexistence for professional development and professional learning

- To use arts based research methods to better engage research participants and to gain a wider audience for the study

Thesis Overview

Before exploring how teachers currently learn and change in their professional practice, I first examine the theoretical frameworks and literature that informed my study (Chapter Two). The notion of teachers as adult learners is the first topic I discuss before delving into what current research says about teacher professional development and professional learning.

Chapter Three explores the methodology and methods that I used. Narrative inquiry and arts based researched methods allowed me to honour the relational aspect of the teaching professional as well as engage teachers in a ways of knowing that they may not be familiar with. In addition, the use of poetry and poetic transcription creates the potential for a wider audience for my research.

Chapter Four is titled *An Interlude – Photography and Poetry*. Perhaps not common in all studies, I wanted a space for readers to consider the images and poetry in their own minds, without my interpretation or interruption. Images of the artefacts, collages, as well as found poetry created from the individual interviews and focus group transcriptions are included in this chapter.

Returning to a more traditional structure, Chapter Five explains my findings. I have sorted my data into three overarching themes: keys to changes in practice, successful professional development, and relationality of learning. The second half of this chapter identifies several connections that can be made from the participants' narratives to the principles of teachers as adult learners presented by Lawler (2003).

Chapter Six offers a discussion in which the ideas from the literature and data from my study are brought together. In addition I bring together the models of professional development from Kennedy (2005) and principles of teachers as adult learners from Lawler (2003) to create what I argue are the necessary ingredients for transformative learning experiences for teachers.

The final chapter explores recommendations and where research may consider going next. These suggestions include further work to understand how models of professional development work together to create transformative learning opportunities, as well as expanded use of arts-based research methods with teachers.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

I began my literature search very specifically – “teachers as adult learners” and “professional development”. Perhaps not surprisingly, very few results came back with these key words. I then changed my focus to start broad and narrow in on articles that addressed professional development, professional learning, teacher learning and/or change in teacher practice. This led me to the articles I have highlighted in this chapter.

Despite being at opposing ends of a spectrum (see Figure 1), both professional learning and professional development are trying to address teacher learning.

Unfortunately, neither of these seems to overtly acknowledge adult learning and education, despite teachers being adults. I begin this chapter by first looking at adult learning and education, teachers as adult learners, arts-based adult learning, and transformative learning before moving on to Kennedy’s (2005) models of professional development as a tool to organize the differences between professional development and professional learning.

Adult education and learning

Malcolm Knowles argued for a distinction to be made between adult education and child education using the terms andragogy (the science of teaching adults) and pedagogy (the science of teaching children) on opposite ends of a spectrum (Boulton-Lewis, Wilss & Mutch, 1996; Spencer, 2006; Merriam, 2001). While some scholars seem to have adapted Knowles perception of adult learners (see Terehoff, 2002; Spencer, 2006; Beaver, 2009), others have noted several problematic pieces to Knowles’ theory (Boulton-Lewis et al, 1996).

Merriam (2001) notes that there is “no one theory or model of adult learning that explains all that we know about adult learners, the various contexts where learning takes place, and the process of learning itself” (p. 3). Clearly understanding this Foley (2000) explores several theories – cognitive psychology, humanistic psychology which includes Carl Rogers’ notions of meaningful learning and facilitation, self-directed learning, adult learning principles, and critical theory and pedagogies – that contribute to adult education as we currently understand it. While the contribution of each of these is significant to adult learning theory, I will not be exploring them within this research.

Teachers as adult learners

There are several essential ideas that can be pulled from adult learning and education and considered when thinking about teacher learning. First, adult learners are diverse. Each learner has a unique personality, life-experience, values, educational experience, and outlook on learning (Lawler, 2003). When working with adult learners, it is essential to keep these things in mind. Next, learning for adults is contextual. This means that in order for new learning to take hold, adults need to be able to make connections to their current context (Lawler, 2003). The content needs to be relevant and that relevance needs to be clear for the learner. Finally, adult learners must be engaged in the content for learning to take place. It may be interesting to mention that this doesn’t mean the adult needs to choose the learning topic. Timperley (2011) notes there is no evidence that proves that teachers who volunteer for professional development are more likely to learn than those reluctant participants. This is because it may not really matter what gets them in the door, what matters is if they are engaged in the learning once they arrive.

Teachers become a unique portion of the adult learning community because they are learners *and* teachers. This means that they need to learn content as well as pedagogy and their attention is on the curriculum and student needs simultaneously as they learn (Marcus, 2008; Petrie & McGee, 2012). Moreover, “learning involves making oneself vulnerable and taking risks, and this is not how teachers often see their role” (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000, p.195).

It is important to remember that teachers (and all adult learners) are not simply mature children (Mackeracher, 1996) and their learning needs should be honoured so they can process the information provided in the learning opportunity and create application activities for their students, instead of simply repeating the tasks performed at the workshop. Petrie and McGee (2012) found that when “teachers became copiers [they] seemed unable to innovate and develop for themselves” (p. 68) showing that teachers aren’t learning how to be a teacher when they are busy playing the student. Far too often, professional development facilitators “position the students as the learners and convey to the teachers that their own learning is not central to the process” (Petrie & McGee, 2012, p. 61).

Any educator with a constructivist perspective would see very little difference between how adults and children learn (Boulton-Lewis et al., 1996). It is with this understanding that Bransford, Brown & Cocking (2000) are adding to the conversation on teacher learning “based on the assumption that what is known about learning applies to teachers as well as their students” (p. 190) as it is a relatively new topic with very little data (Wilson & Berne, 1999). They advocate for environments that are focused on four key areas. Teachers learning environments must be centered on the learner, meaning it

“build[s] on the strengths, interests, and needs of the learners”. It must also be knowledge centered as “the need to integrate pedagogy with the content of various disciplines” and deeper understanding of subject area to utilize new teaching techniques is essential. An assessment centered environment makes “opportunities for learners to test their understanding by trying out things and receiving feedback” (Bransford et al, 2000, p.192). And finally a community centered environment maintains “norms that encourage collaboration and learning” and “the importance of shared experiences and discourse around texts and data about student learning and a necessity for shared decisions” (p.199).

Paralleling these four environments are Lawler and King’s (as cited in Lawler, 2003, pp.17-19) six principles for adult learning based on the notion of teachers as adult learners: “create a climate of respect, encourage active participation, build on experience, employ collaborative inquiry, learn for action, and empower participants”. Gregson and Sturko (2007) used characteristics of adult learners and Lawler and King’s (as cited in Lawler, 2003) principles of adult learning related to teachers as adult learners to create a course for teachers of Career and Technical Education. They felt that their course was a success because it treated the teachers as adult learners. They go to say “as future professional development activities are planned, the principles of adult learning that guided the design and development of the integration course should be considered as foundational to the professional development process” (Gregson & Sturko, 2007, p.16).

Arts-based adult learning

When adults are invited to learn through the arts it can be an enjoyable, engaging, and motivating experience (Manning, Verenikina & Brown, 2010). Moreover, “adults may find a rich source meaningful learning opportunities in and through the arts” (Kerka, 2002, p.3). It is clear that “the arts are often a catalyst for dialogue, which can lead to collective knowledge” (Lawrence, 2005b). Lawrence (2005a) argues that “incorporating various art forms into the practice of adult education provides tremendous potential to enhance both teaching and learning...The payoff for such risk taking is that more of our human potential is activated as we continue to learn how to learn” (p. 10). It is important to remember that whenever arts-based learning is used, it is not about teaching art but about using the art as a learning tool (Lawrence, 2005b).

As we have already discussed, adult learning is contextual. Another way to think about this is the notion that “one’s experiences are bounded and defined by those to which one can relate” (Hayes & Yorks, 2007, p.96). It is up to the educators working with adult learners to discover ways to infiltrate these constraints. Hayes and Yorks (2007) say

the arts promote alternative, and powerful, methods for bridging boundaries and enabling learners to expand their experience by accessing those of highly diverse others. The arts are also a way of bringing into consciousness, and finding expression for, experiences and insights that heretofore a learner has not had the capacity to express. In doing so, the arts also have a way of making the ‘educator’ a learner as well, leaving him or her mindful of the need for new perspectives on learners. (p. 96)

Adult educators have come to understand the capacity the arts holds to “help adults make sense of their worlds, create meaning in their lives and re-create a better world” (Clover & Stalker, 2007, p.1). Much of this arts based learning has created an open space for community learning and social justice (Clover & Stalker, 2007). Very little research has been done on using arts-based adult learning with teachers.

Transformative Learning

One cannot talk about learning that inspires change without considering transformative learning. Mezirow (2006) defines this as

the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (p. 26)

Transformational learning stands in contrast to informational learning, as the former is about *how* we know and the latter about *what* we know. Transformational learning is really about the meaning making process (Baumgartner, 2001).

Cranton (2002) offers a simple articulation of transformative learning: “we cannot critically reflect on an assumption until we are aware of it. We cannot engage in discourse on something we have not identified. We cannot change a habit of mind without thinking about it in some way” (p.65). She goes on to suggest “we cannot teach transformation. We cannot even identify how or why it happens. But we can teach as though the possibility always exists that a student will have a transformative experience” (Cranton, 2002, p. 71). I propose that it is within this possibility that teachers as adult

learners might be considered to increase the likelihood of a transformative experience in their professional development and learning.

Kennedy's Models of Teacher Learning

Kennedy (2005) identifies several models for teacher learning – training, award-bearing (i.e. formal course work), deficit, cascade, standards-based, coaching/mentoring, community of practice, action research, and transformative (see below).

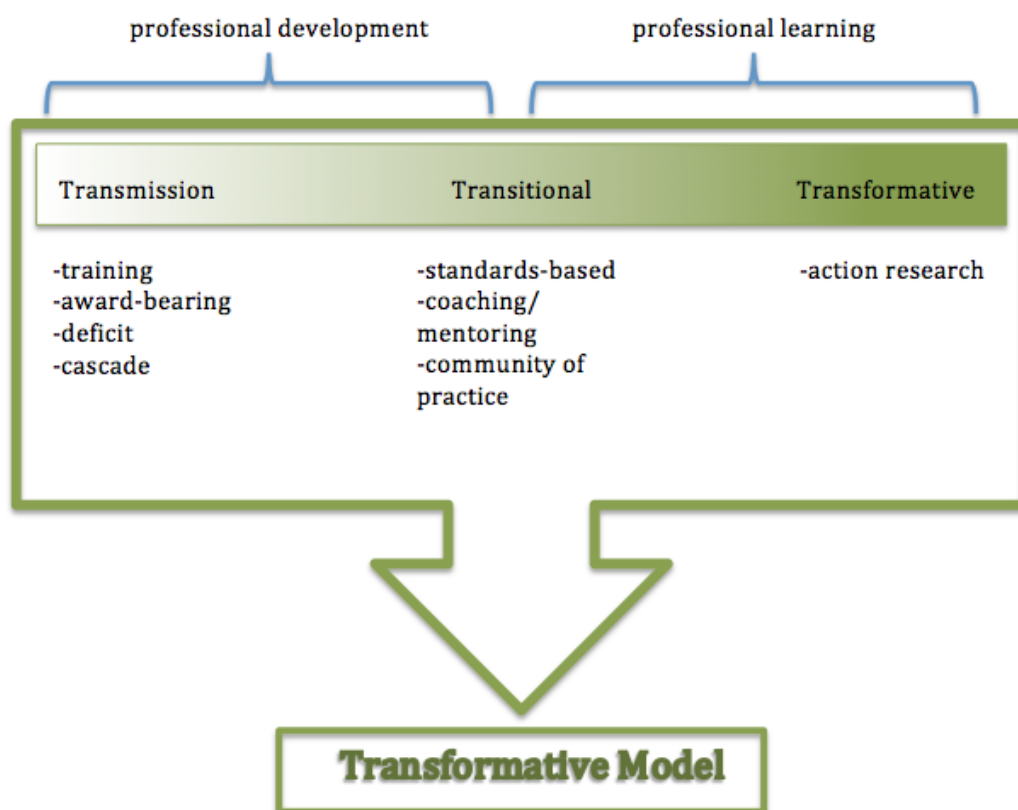


Figure 2 Kennedy's (2005) models of professional learning. Image has been modified from the original article.

Much of what comes to mind when we first think of professional development (as is described in the literature below) may fall into the left side of the image above.

Professional learning (also explored below) seems to occupy the middle section or possibly the right side of the chart. For Kennedy (2005) “the key characteristic of the

transformative model is its effective integration of the range of models” (p. 247). The power of this integration will be explored further as I bring together my findings and this model in Chapter Six.

Professional Development

With calls for educational reform and school improvement, as well as the push for standardized testing and higher levels of accountability, it seems that the way for teachers to keep up is through professional development (Guskey, 2000; Timperley, 2011; Garet et al., 2001; Webster-Wright, 2009; Linn et al., 2010). Hardy (2010) also credits globalization and economic competitiveness for reactionary and training types of professional development in education. Whatever the catalyst may be “there is a great faith among school reformers and education researchers that augmenting the learning opportunities for practicing teachers will enhance teacher performance and lead to improved student outcomes” (Mesler Parise & Spillaine, 2010, p. 324). Bechtel & O’Sullivan (2006) suggest “professional development opportunities are seen as critical mechanisms to facilitate teacher learning” (p. 363). While this may be true for school districts, professional organizations, and governments, the research and discourse around professional development paints a different picture entirely. In the following sections I discuss the tensions between these views.

Smylie (1989) surveyed teachers about their perception on the most effective source of learning. Ranking last out fourteen sources of learning was in-service training provided by school districts, while citing direct experience as the best source of learning. While interesting in and of itself, there are many questions that arise from these findings: what was learned by the participating teachers? Did teacher understanding change over

time? Furthermore the study did not dig deeper to discover if the learning the participants spoke of led to changes in teaching practice.

In a more recent study, Mesler Parise and Spillane (2010) set out to explore professional development and (what they call) on-the-job learning and their impacts on teacher change. They noted a clear divide between these two sources of learning in the literature. For those teachers that felt (and demonstrated) success with professional development, it was mostly when the structure or format had been reformed. Despite the few successes they discovered in the literature, they point out “the fact remains that the vast majority of the [professional development] learning opportunities in which teachers participate are the kind of one-shot training sessions that research suggests are not likely to facilitate teacher learning and change” (Mesler Parise & Spillane, 2010, p. 326).

An in-depth nine year case study done by Levin (2003) follows four teachers from their teacher education and into the classrooms and the changes they made to their pedagogy during that time. The juxtaposition of the interviews over the nine years shows obvious changes in each teacher’s practice. Levin notes that “teachers can continue to be learners and develop their pedagogical understandings by engaging in ongoing professional development opportunities” (p.279). While the participants did refer to some various professional development events, none of them specifically identified (nor were they asked to) how one specific practice developed over time or if a particular learning opportunity was more beneficial than others.

The intricacy of professional development and the learning it is meant to inspire is vast and complex (Avalos, 2011). Learning, or more specifically “meaningful teacher learning, is often a slow, difficult, gradual and uncertain process” (Petrie & McGee,

2012, p. 59). Bechtel and O'Sullivan (2006) further this notion as they discovered "teachers patch together a diverse curriculum of [professional development] opportunities in odd and assorted ways" (p. 377), rather than follow a set of professional development opportunities. This isn't to say that teacher learning from professional development is random. Guskey (2002) argues that "the process of teacher change through profession development is complex, not haphazard" (p. 389).

If we hold on to the idea that an enduring change in beliefs and practice comes after one's "knowing" has been disrupted, disorientated, or disturbed, we can find another potentially problematic feature of professional development. The fact is "seldom do teachers come to a professional development program assuming that their views of knowledge or subject matter or students need to change" (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 199).

Wilson and Berne (1999) continue by noting

Teachers who sign up for professional development experience expect to learn about new theories of learning or new instructional strategies. They do not expect to have their knowledge held suspect or their previous practices questioned. And admitting that you have done the wrong thing in the past or do not know the subject matter you teach is unsettling. Yet, professional development designed to help teachers acquire new professional knowledge, especially subject matter knowledge, can often involve just that (p. 200).

In the face of the many concerns and questions raised around professional development, as well as the calls for traditional professional development to be replaced by professional learning (see below), there are still some who see value in professional development when using methods supported by empirical evidence. Guskey and Yoon

(2009) provide an overview of *Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement* (Yoon et al., 2007). In this study, over 1300 studies were examined using the *What Works Clearinghouse Standards* for credible evidence and only nine of them were deemed acceptable to pursue further. Despite this disappointment, the nine studies did offer some insight into what works in relation to professional development and improving student achievement. Perhaps most surprising was workshops or summer institutes were used in each of the nine studies and “are not the poster child for ineffective practice that they are often made out to be” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p.496). It is important to note that the workshops and summer institutes utilized in each of the nine studies were not “one-shot” events, but were supported by follow-up or intensive work (as in the case of the summer institute) (Yoon et al., 2007). As some models for teacher learning dismiss the idea of relying on outside experts, each of the studies utilized an outside expert to work with the teachers and “those initiatives that showed positive effects included thirty or more contact hours” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p.497). Furthermore, this study suggests consistent follow-up, opportunities to adapt various practices based on teachers’ contexts, and professional development “centered directly on enhancing teacher’ content knowledge and their pedagogic content knowledge” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p.497) are key to seeing improvement to student achievement.

Bechtel and O’Sullivan (2006) explore Fullan’s *Theory of Teacher Change*, Shaw, Davis, and McCarty’s *Theory of the Change Process*, and Guskey’s *Model for Teacher Change* in their examination of effective professional development for physical education teachers. While each of these change theories differ in some ways, they each

support professional development that is planned “with teachers rather than for them” (p. 365), processed over time (rather than a one-shot experience), and include ongoing feedback and support.

It is important to remember that participation in professional development does not mean change will take place in the classroom (Akiba, 2012) so data that is based solely on participation in professional development events is merely recording attendance and not learning. Hardy (2010) argues “the increasingly rapid rate of change in schools has exacerbated this trend towards individualistic, decontextualized and passive learning initiatives as part of teachers’ work” (p. 72). Ultimately this is leading to less time for teacher reflection on his or her own teaching/ learning, “resulting in the substitution of intellectual creativity with cultures of compliance” (Hardy, 2010, p. 72).

Webster-Wright (2009) completed a meta-analysis that addressed professional development across different occupations. Perhaps not surprisingly, education offered the most articles on this topic. She sorted the articles into those that were largely empirical research or professional commentary. The empirical articles were further categorized as evaluative or critical and the commentary articles grouped by discussion of a program or on the learning experience itself. Of the empirical articles on teaching, only 39% of them were critical in nature. Furthermore a mere 30% of the articles in the teaching professional commentary category addressed the actual learning experience of the teachers involved in the professional development. It is clear from Webster-Wright’s (2009) scan of professional development literature that it has its “focus on programs and content rather than learning experiences” (p. 712). Webster-Wright (2009) goes on to explain

[her] intention in scanning the extensive range of current literature is to add quantitative weight to the assertion that, despite decades of research into effective [professional learning], little has changed in [professional development] research and practice across most professions. The lack of change is not surprising when a scan of this literature reveals that the discourse of [professional development] is focused on the development of professionals through delivering programs rather than understanding more about the experience of [learning] to support it more effectively. (p.712)

This, amongst others mentioned in this section, are some of the many reasons scholars are advocating for a move towards professional learning (and away from traditional professional development).

Professional Learning

Webster-Wright (2009) argues that this shift to professional learning “moves the focus away from training, education, or development” and “avoids the separation between moment-to-moment work place learning and [professional development] programs that is apparent in the literature” (p. 713). Key to this then is acknowledging and understanding the unique contextual nature of each teacher’s working and learning environment (Scribner, 2003) and dismissing one size fits all professional development offerings.

Mesler Parise and Spillane (2010) share that

the extant literature on teacher collaboration indicates that learning is fostered when teachers engage in conversations about new material, discuss strategies for

effective teaching, push one another to experiment around new initiatives, work collaboratively to share expertise, and interpret policy measures (p. 327).

While the literature shows teacher learning is encouraged by the above scenarios, they do not indicate if permanent change in teacher practice or improved student learning comes as a result of these.

The notion of teacher collaboration is not new (Mesler Parise & Spillane, 2010). Perhaps one of the most notable shifts towards professional learning was the movement of Professional Learning Community (PLC) groups in schools made popular in Alberta (and other parts of Canada as well as throughout the United States of America) by Dr. Richard and Rebecca DuFour. In fact the 2003 Alberta Commission on Learning recommended that every school “operate as a professional learning community dedicated to continuous improvement in students’ achievement” (Alberta Education, 2003). DuFour does caution that “the term [PLC] has been used so ubiquitously that it is in danger of losing all meaning” (2004, pg. 6). At the heart of the PLC model is student learning and three critical guiding questions to help educators move forward: “What do we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?” (DuFour, 2004, p.8).

Wood (2007) connects this idea of teachers working together to “engage in collective inquiry in order to weight their practices and innovations against empirical evidence and critical dialogue” back to Dewey’s vision from times past. Key to this model for Wood (2007) is “teachers began to think of themselves as primary agents for necessary changes in teaching and learning. In order for their students to achieve more, they knew they needed to be constantly learning” (p. 290). Wood’s study of two schools

attempting to become a PLC showed very different results. While one was mandated and therefore saw little success, the other appears to have been accepted fully by the staff and has changed how they work with one another. Again, while a change in practice was noted, it was not made clear if a change in student learning also occurred.

Reeves (2010) acknowledges that there is often a gap in teacher learning between what we do and what we know. He argues that “we know what effective professional learning looks like. It is intensive and sustained, it directly relevant to the needs of teachers and students, and it provides opportunities for application, practice, reflection, and reinforcement” (Reeves, 2010, p. 23). Because of this he believes that we simply “need a practical mechanism to turn our ideals into reality” (Reeves, 2012, p. 23). He calls for a vision and focus on teaching, curriculum, assessment, and leadership that uses an action research model. In this model, Reeves encourages teachers and school leaders to create a research question that links student results and teacher practice, student data from several sources, and explicit professional practices that were developed or modified during the research.

What some may see as an extension of both PLC and Reeve’s action research, Timperley (2011) has created a framework of inquiry that places the needs of the students in each teacher’s classroom at the center of the teacher’s professional learning. This structure allows teachers to determine what their students need to know and do and then move forward in search of solutions. She acknowledges that moving towards this inquiry cycle “requires a shift from the traditional reflective practitioner model to one in which evidence about students, their learning and well-being form the touchstone for teaching and learning in ways that challenge existing assumptions” (Timperley, 2011, p.8). Like

DuFour (2004), Timperley has created guiding questions to help teachers through the inquiry cycle. This model acknowledges that learning takes place over a period of time and urgency for the learning is implied by the students' current needs. While she doesn't dismiss outside experts entirely, she does question where in the inquiry model they should come in and if they truly force teachers to question their practice (Timperley, 2011). With the requirement of experts being seemingly "on call" for when needed, Timperley's model seems to make traditional professional development irrelevant and obsolete.

While the professional learning models do appear to be the answer to many of the concerns that scholars voice over professional development, there are some cautions that one must consider. Putnam and Borko (2000) warn that PLC's can be difficult when they "embody norms and expectations that do not support the experimentation, risk taking, and reflection required to transform practice" (p. 10). And similar to professional development, the mere existence of PLC does not "[determine] effectiveness, but rather what happens, the expertise that is brought to bear on the participant's deliberations, and the extent to which the process promote learning and changes to practice in the interest of the students" (Timperley, 2011, p. 117). In addition, it is unclear where district wide initiatives and other large scale policy changes fit into Timperley's cycle of inquiry, Reeve's action research, or DuFour's PLC and it would be foolish to think that these types of things can be ignored in our current education structure.

Chapter Three Methodology and Method

As a researcher, I was drawn to qualitative methods for a number of reasons. In order to effectively answer my research question I believed it was not only important to “learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information” (Creswell, 2009, p.176) but also to “study things in their natural setting attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Dezin and Lincoln, as cited in Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.4).

Furthermore, qualitative research allows me to “make an interpretation of what [I] see, hear, and understand” (Creswell, 2009, p.176) and more importantly not to distance myself from my interpretation. Finally, qualitative research gives a space for multiple interpretations or views of a problem as well as multiple ways of knowing. These qualities are not only significant to my research, but to my classroom practice as well.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry appears to have been welcomed into educational research (see Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Lyons & Kubler LaBoskey, 2002; Clandinin, 2007) as sharing stories is “a way for teachers to construct meaning and preserve what it is they know and how they think, rethink their craft, capturing those illuminations discovered in the midst of classroom life and tested and refined over time” (Lyons & Kubler LaBoskey, 2002, p.12). Clandinin and Caine (2008) note that “narrative inquiry is marked by its emphasis on relational engagement between researcher and research participants” (p. 542). They go on to explain that “researchers recognize the centrality of relationships, the relationships among participants

and researchers, and the relationships of experiences studied through and over time and in unique places and multilayered contexts” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 542). To me this focus on relationships is central to the nature of teaching. We form relationships with our students, their parents, and perhaps most important, each other. Narrative inquiry allowed me to honor the relationships I have with the research participants, rather than try to ignore them.

Baldwin (2005) explored the importance of story telling (and story catching) in her book, *Storycatcher: Making Sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*. She begins her text with an observation:

Life hangs on a narrative thread. This thread is a braid of stories that inform us about who we are, where we come from, and where we might go. The thread is slender but strong; we trust it to hold us and allow us to swing over the edge of the known into the future we dream in words. (p.3)

To act as a spool for this thread, I asked participants to bring with them an artefact that represents a favourite lesson or unit (i.e. one that always works). Clandinin and Caine (2008) note that artefacts may be used to “trigger the telling of stories” (p.543) and as the teachers shared about their artefact I tried to peel back the layers of learning that led to this particular lesson to understand where and how teachers are learning in their practice. This process is explained further in this chapter.

Forms like narrative, poetry, and arts-based methods provide greater insight into the topic and the researcher (Cahnman, 2003; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Deacon, 2006) than surveys or observations ever could. In addition to this, arts-based methods “attempt to reduce the level of the researcher-participant hierarchy

and create partnerships between all those involved in the research” (Deacon, 2006, p. 96). Of course I understand that teachers have successfully mastered how to show their knowledge in traditional ways and therefore may not be comfortable with alternative methods. This is reinforced over and over again as teacher professional development offers very little in terms of creative forms of learning and knowing. It was my hope that artefact selection and collage would be seen as approachable and less threatening than other forms of arts-based research methods. While unsure of choosing the “right” artefact, each participant selected one for the individual interview; however, several were uncomfortable with collage and chose not to participate in the focus group because of this.

Poetic Transcription

Poetic inquiry has been gaining momentum within qualitative research over the past twenty years or so, specifically within the social sciences (Galvin & Prendergast, 2012). Poetic transcription (or what Prendergast (2009) categorizes as *vox participare* or *participant voiced poems*) is only one of several ways that poetry can be and is used within qualitative research. For Glesne (2010) this whittling of words from conversations or interviews means “being alert to the words and worlds of others” because “through attention and craft, you sometimes come to know something that was not seen or realized before” (p.30).

I turned to poetic transcription to summarize, reframe, and make sense of each interview transcript. The poetic form provided me some important benefits; first it offers a means of capturing the core or essence of the teachers’ words or expressions about learning. Secondly, as a genre it offers an important way to transmit and convey the

power of these experiences to the reader. As the purpose of my research was to navigate a space where professional development and professional learning could co-exist I felt that this form of arts-based research method made the most sense. As Nolan (1996) so aptly expressed, the arts “destabilize fixed ideas and existing identities; help find new ways of seeing, hearing, thinking, and feeling; allow new identifications to be made between people and help us move into a different space” (cited in Manning, Verenikina & Brown, 2010, p.210). Poetry specifically “reminds [us] that everything is constructed in language; our experiences are all epistemologically and ontologically composed and understood in words, our words and others’ words” (Leggo, 2008, p.166). Perhaps more practical is the idea that “developing a poetic voice prepares scholars to discover and communicate findings in multidimensional, penetrating, and more accessible ways” (Cahnmann, 2003, p.29). This is important to me as a scholar as I am also a practicing classroom teacher. I want the audience for my work to extend beyond the academic realm.

Collage

Collage is a data generating technique that “strives to create metaphoric evocative texts through which readers, audiences, and patrons create their own meanings on a given research topic” (Norris, 2008, p. 95). Not only does the image itself offer insight into the creator, so does the way in which the image or word is cut out and placed on the page (Norris, 2008). It was my hope that collage would create a space to explore ideas that may not be discovered during a more traditional conversation, that the arts could be a catalyst for transformational learning. Participants of my focus group were asked to create a collage to depict what professional development could or should look like after

our discussion about teachers as adult learners and their own understanding of how they learn. The overall goal of this methodology, as with all arts-informed learning, is that “understanding emerges through the *process* of production, rather than the *reproduction* or reiteration of knowledge” (McGregor, 2012, p. 310, emphasis in original).

Participants and Method

Participants volunteered in response to an email sent out by a third-party using the school district mailing list. There were eight participants involved in this study. Six respondents were female and two were male. All participants were required to have at least five years of teaching experience as changes in teaching practice may have been noticed during this time. All participants (including the researcher) are currently employed by a public school district in a city of approximately 55 000 residents in northern Alberta. This district employs about 500 teachers who work with approximately 7 600 students. Seven of the eight participants currently, or have in the past, worked at the same school as the researcher.

Individual open-ended interviews were conducted at a location and time most convenient to each participant. The conversations focused around four prompts/questions (see Appendix A). Interviews were thirty to ninety minutes in length. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to select and bring in an artefact to represent a favourite lesson or unit. During the interview the participants were asked to tell about the learning that led to this specific lesson or unit. Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by a transcriptionist.

Initially, I read through the transcriptions as they came in to get a general sense of what the participant was saying and made notes of key ideas and themes in the margins. Because this happened over several weeks, I then re-read the transcripts and notes in succession, allowing the codes to emerge as I read. Repeating this process several times, I eventually I grouped similar ideas from the participants to establish themes that seemed to be important to them as adult learners. It was very important to me to discover what the participants were saying about their learning and resist looking for a preconceived answer within their words. In addition, I focused specifically on the narrative each participant shared around his or her artefact. Using poetic transcription, I feel I embraced the essence of each story, if not the literal aspects of the study. These poems are shared in Chapter Four and then discussed further in Chapter Five.

Next, all participants were invited to take part in a focus group. Four of the female participants chose to participate in this portion of the research. Two additional participants (one male and one female) had also agreed to attend the focus group but were unable to at the last minute. The focus group discussion began with conversation around teachers as adult learners (as shared by Lawler, 2003 and Bransford et al, 2000; see also Appendix B) and the presence or lack of these elements in their own learning experiences. Participants were then asked to create individual collages showing what teacher professional development could or should look like. Supplies needed to create the collages were supplied (i.e. several boxes of old magazines, scissors, glue, paper, markers, and pencil crayons). Participants each chose their own work space throughout the room. As they created their individual collages (as did the researcher), participants engaged in friendly conversation, some education related and some not. Each participant

briefly explained their collage and what she was hoping to convey with the images. The focus group was audio and video recorded and then transcribed. Again, I used emergent coding during my review of the transcript to determine key ideas and themes shared during the conversation. I also used poetic transcription to summarize each participant's explanation of their collage. (See the next chapter to read these poems.)

Both the artefacts and collages were photographed and can be seen in Chapter Four. While I do feel the images speak for themselves, much like the poems, it is important to consider what these images may be telling us. For Szto photography is "writing with light" (Szto & Furman, 2005, p.140). He goes on to say "whether you are writing with words or with light, you are writing" (p. 140). Important to me as a researcher is the fact that poetry and photography are both accessible to a wider audience than traditional academic writing may be.

The inclusion of these images was intended to disrupt my own perceptions of what teacher learning looks like. Stories that teachers share, as well as the literature on professional development, tell us that teacher learning does not resemble one person talking at the front of the room, filling up the audience with knowledge. So what then, might teacher learning look like? While several of the artefact images were books, many of the images were varied which suggests that one teacher's learning may not be another's. To complete the analysis of the arts-based data, I simply laid out the collages alongside the artefact images. I moved the collages and images of the artefacts around from time to time hoping a change of location may bring something to mind I had not before seen.

I made note of which collages and artefact images shared similar ideas. I completed the same process with the poems. As I examined each of these pieces of data I simply asked myself, how are the pieces created from the individual interviews similar or different than those created during the focus group? What new information can this data tell me? The use of these methods provided insight that otherwise went unnoticed by me until I reviewed the data in this form. While there is an inherent difficulty with visual analysis as the scope of interpretation is vast and dependent on each viewer's background knowledge and perceptions, the inclusion of these images revealed another layer of information that supported the other sources of data in this study.

Authenticity

In qualitative research it is important to ensure that authenticity is established within our research methods. I established authenticity in this study in two ways. The first approach I describe as dialogic authenticity. By dialogic authenticity I mean I took steps to talk with participants about my thinking and representations of their responses to our shared inquiry into professional learning. While I did not return transcripts to participants for review as many of the participants felt it was unnecessary, I was able to share some of the poetry I created as a check for accuracy. I also engaged with all participants in an ongoing conversation about the research as they were also my colleagues. This form of continued conversation enabled me to more accurately represent and reflect participants' understandings. The second way I established authenticity was by revisiting the transcripts several times over a period of several months. This approach enabled me to develop more certainty around the themes and key ideas shared by the research

participants. Moreover, through the use of several sources in this study (transcripts, poetry, collage, artefact images) triangulation of data was made possible. Rothbauer (2008) explains “researchers tend to use triangulation as a strategy that allows them to identify, explore, and understand different dimensions of the units of study, thereby strengthening their findings and enriching their interpretations” (p. 892). Not only did multiple data sources help support the themes shared in Chapter Five and therefore provide greater confidence in the findings, they also helped reveal key ideas that may have otherwise been missed or overlooked with only one type of data.

Participant Description

All participants have been given pseudonyms in this study.

Table 1 Participant introductions

Name	Years of Teaching Experience	Focus Group Participant	Artefact
Adam	12		paragraph from textbook
Amelia	18	✓	base ten blocks
Cyndi	10		<i>Reading Power</i> book
Emily	11	✓	student literature circle booklets
Jann	15	✓	CD from her thesis
Julia	14		<i>Daily Five</i> , <i>CAFÉ</i> , <i>Writing Map of Development</i> books
Maria	16	✓	Sound City bulletin board
Tim	7		recipes for peaceful coexistence

Chapter Four An Interlude – Photography and Poetry

¹

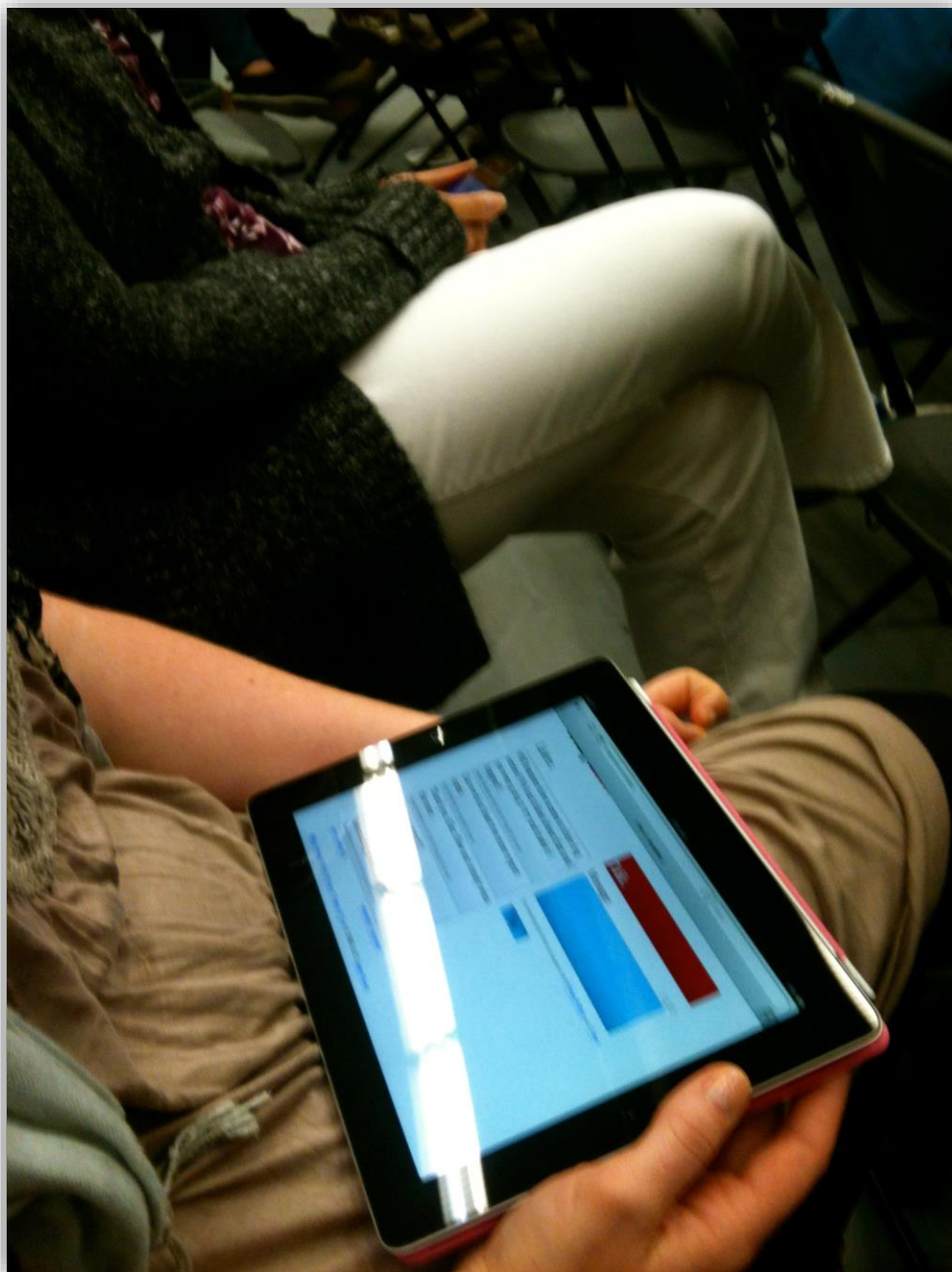


Figure 3 Just Listen

¹ Researcher's own photo

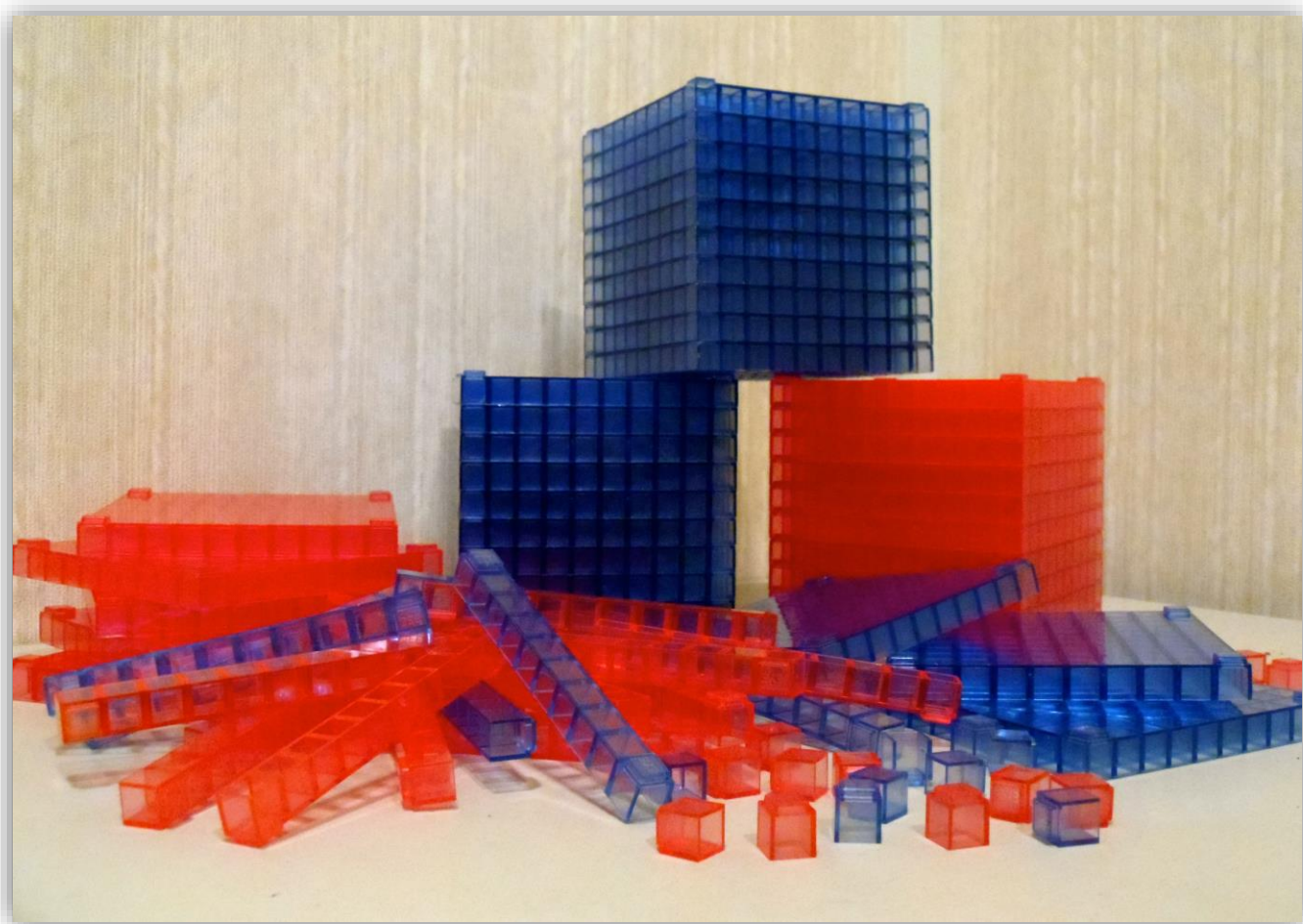


Figure 4 Base Ten Blocks



Figure 5 Literature Circle Student Booklets



Figure 6 Sound City



Figure 7 Reading Power

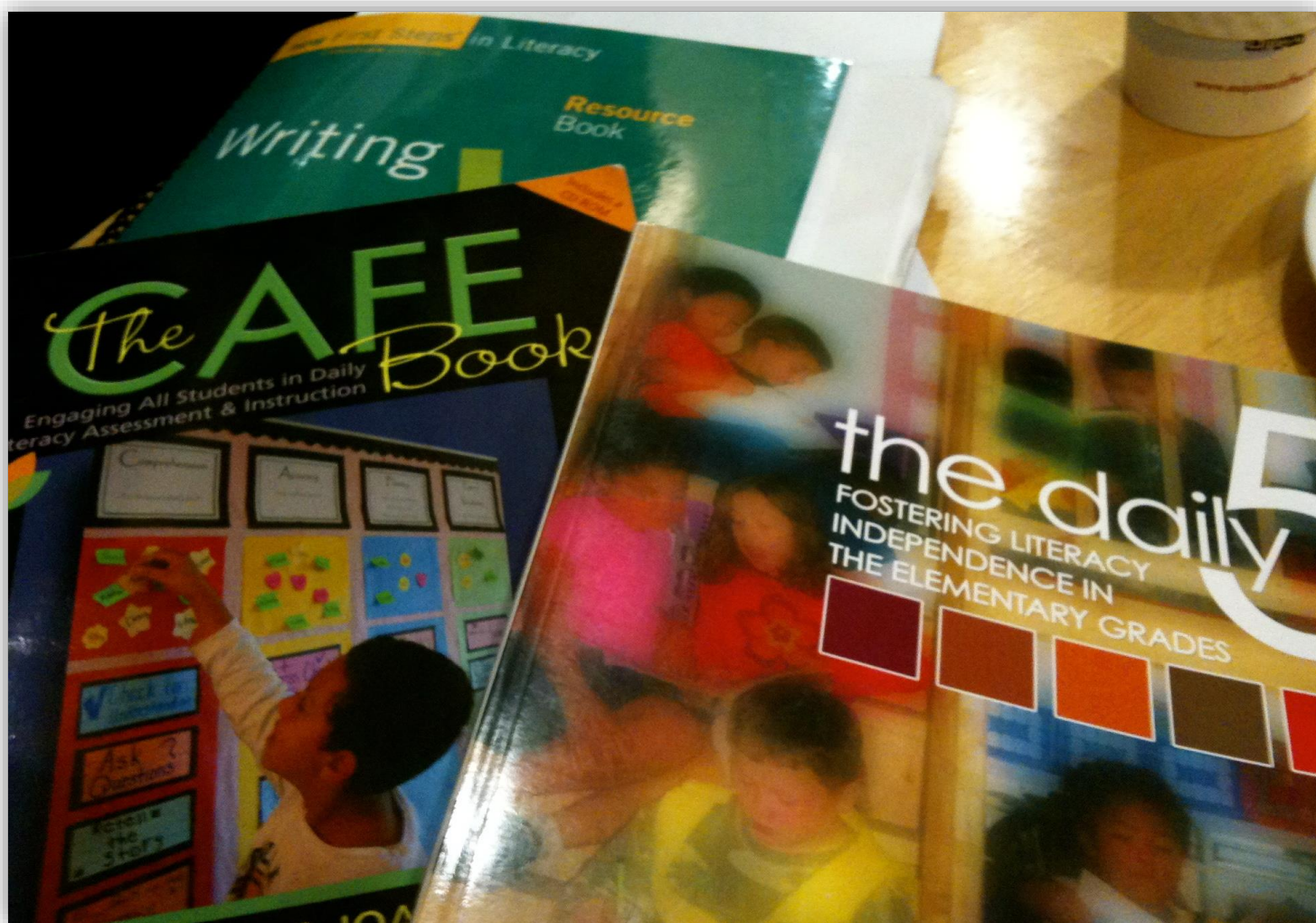


Figure 8 Resources

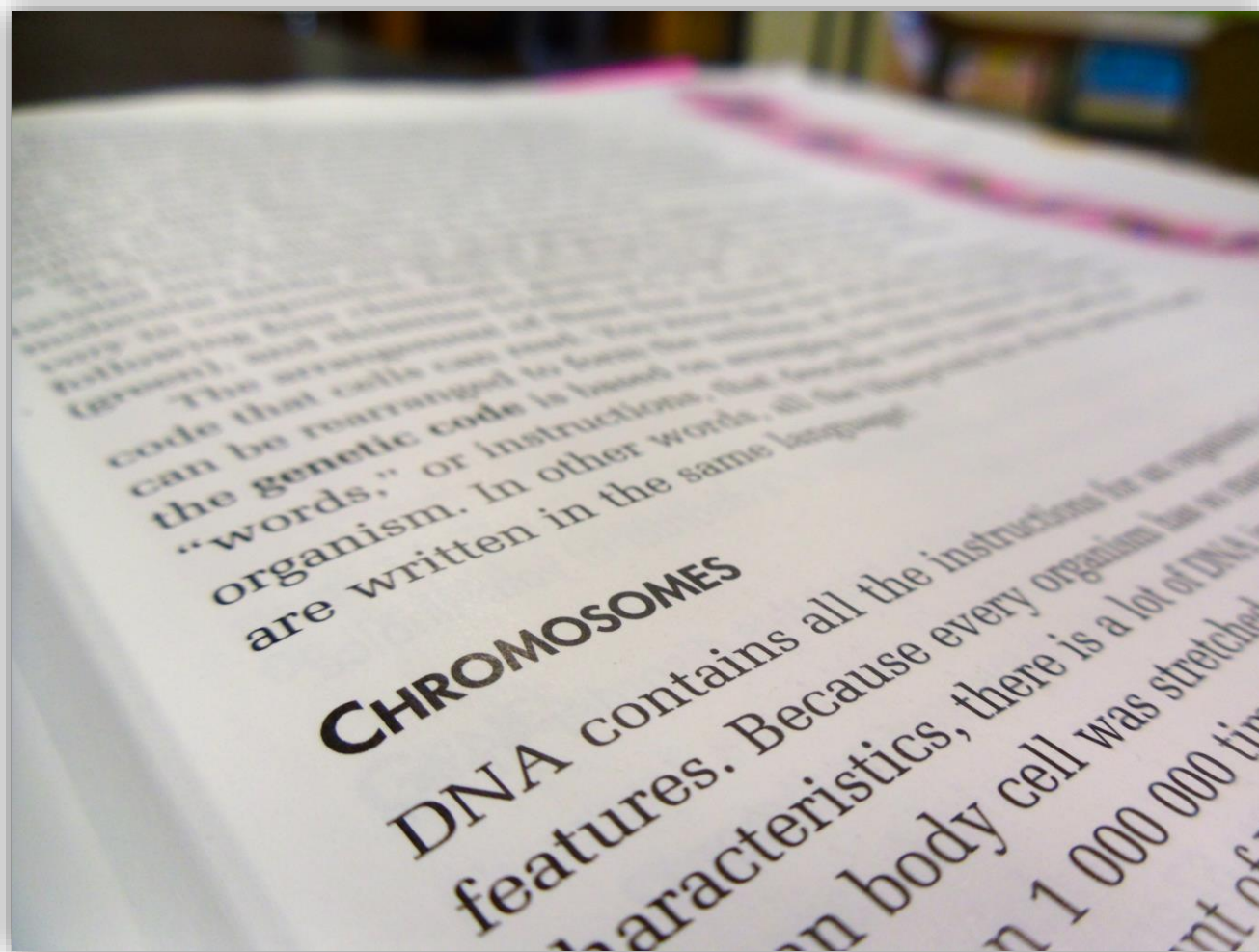


Figure 9 Paragraph



Figure 10 Thesis in Song

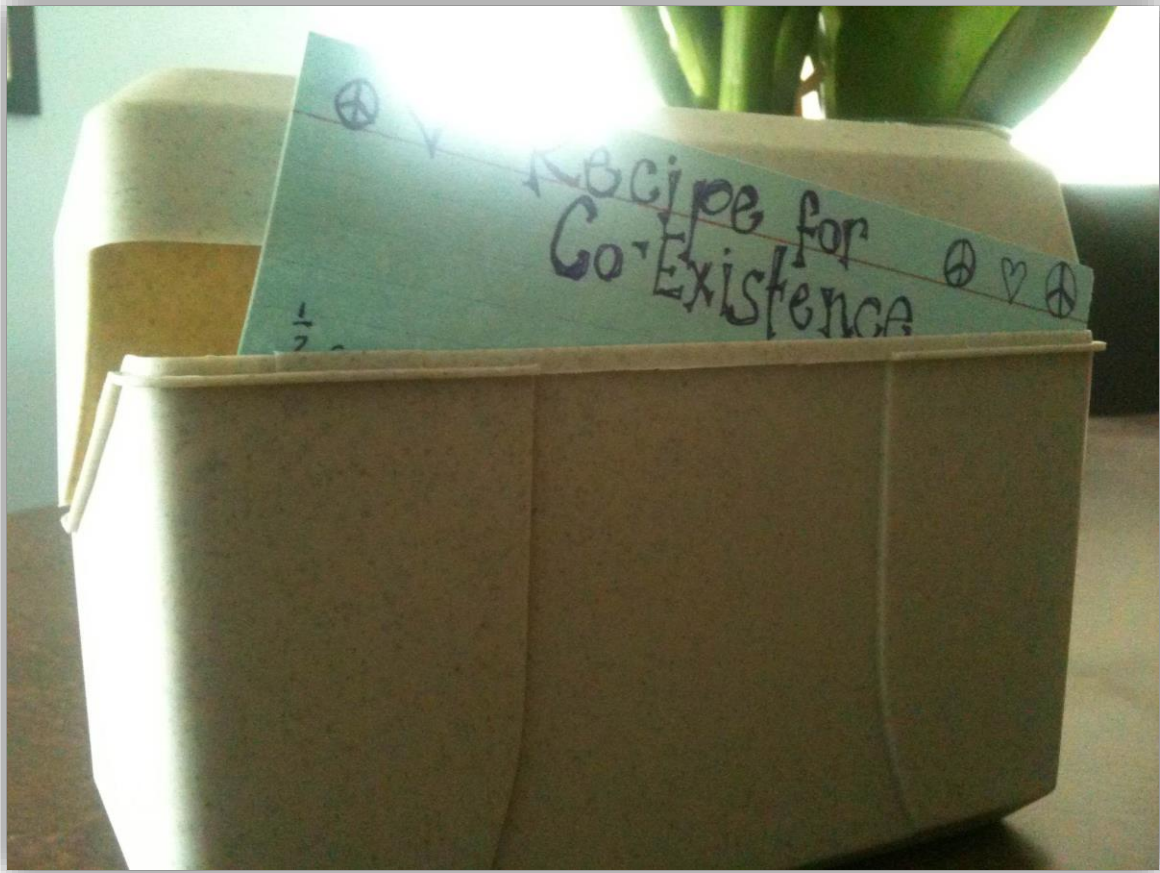


Figure 11 Recipe for co-existence

2



Figure 12 Conversation & Collaboration

² Researcher's own photo



Figure 13 Collage A (created by Jann)

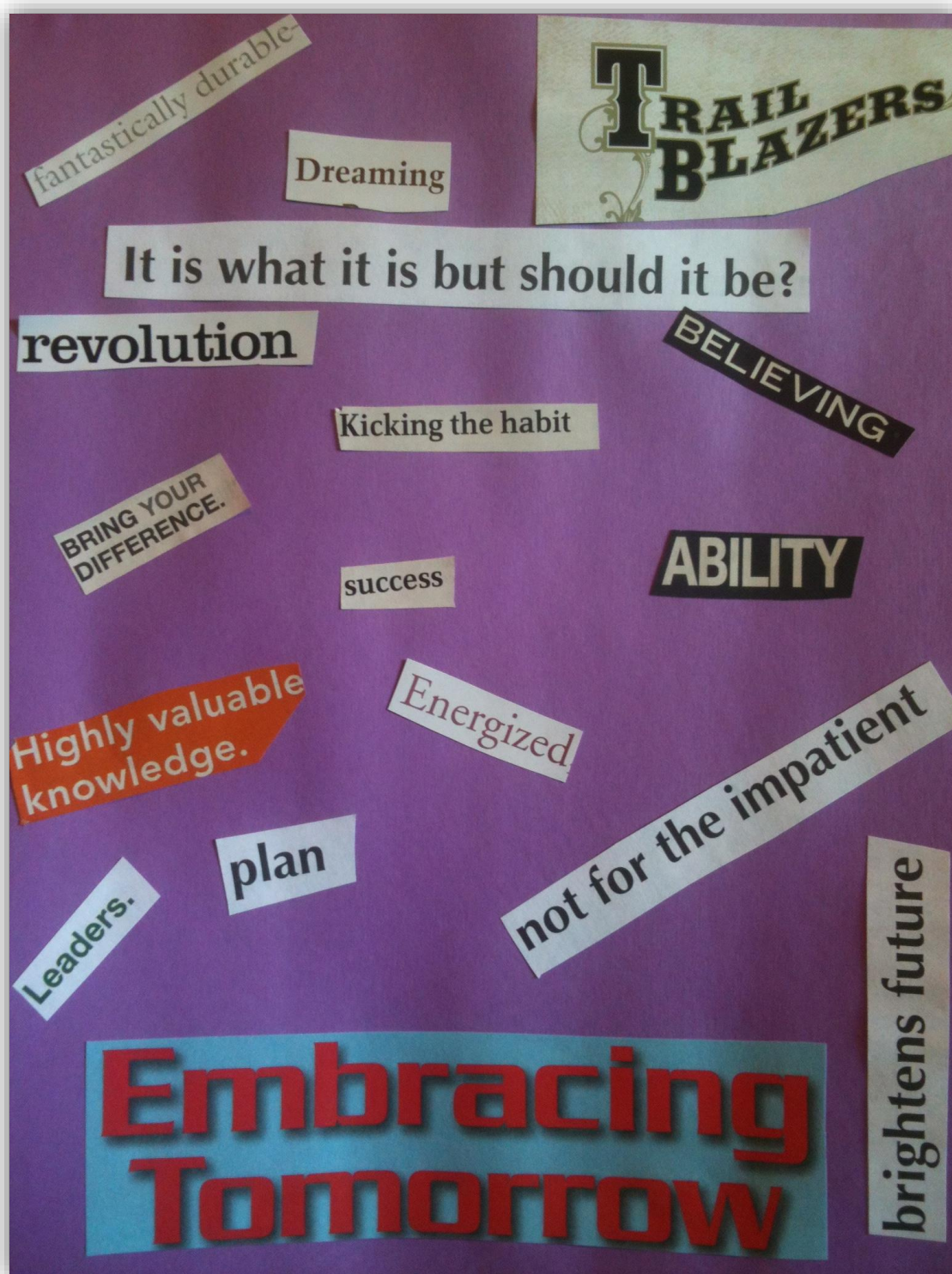


Figure 14 Collage B (created by Amelia)

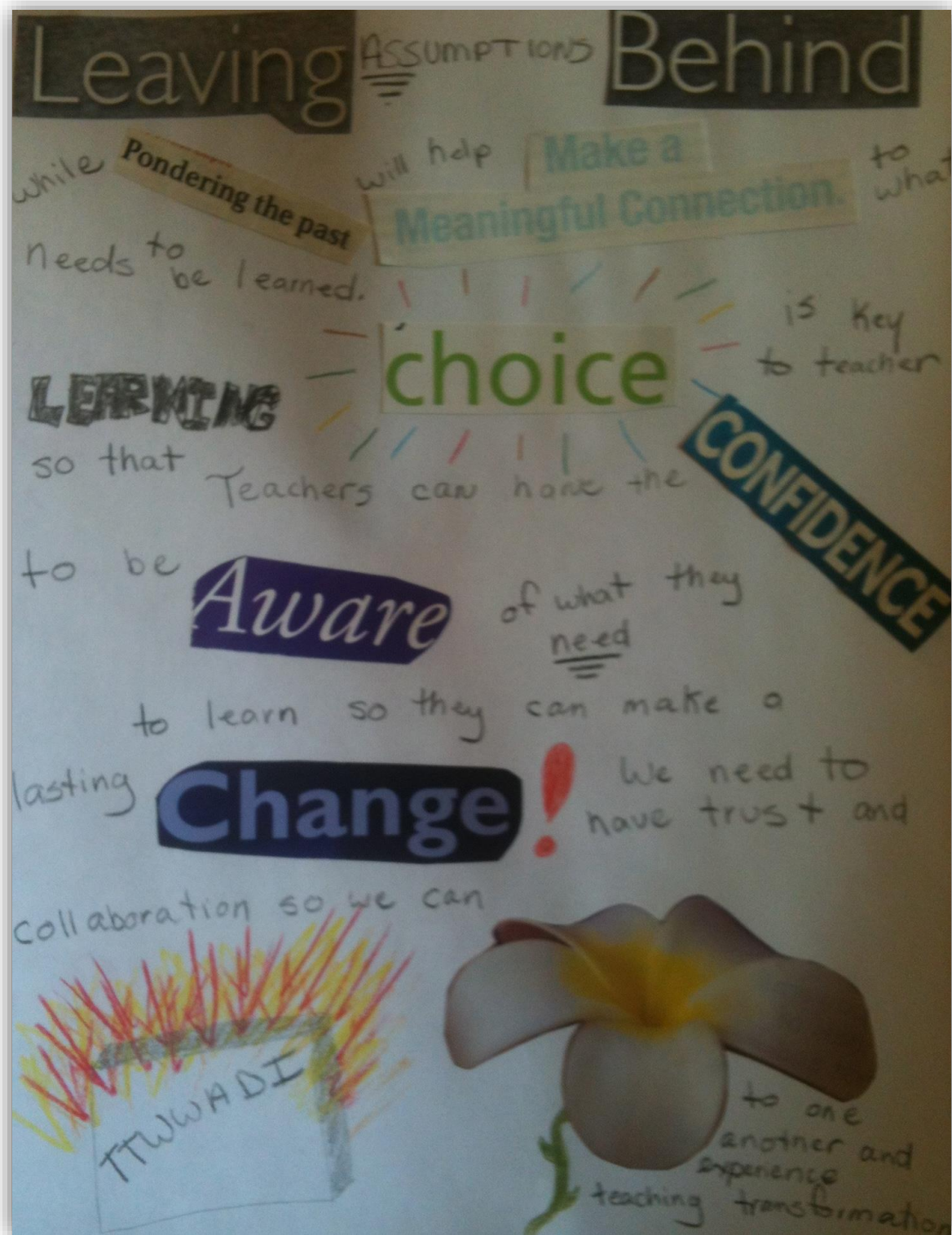


Figure 15 Collage C (created by Emily)



Figure 16 Collage D (created by Maria)



Figure 17 Collage E (created by researcher)

*I*³
sat,
tweeted,
listened,
laughed,
thought,
wiggled.

Refill coffee. Consume doughnut. Return to seat.

I
wiggled,
thought,
laughed,
listened,
tweeted,
sat...

But when did I learn?

³ Researcher's poem

Grade Two Math⁴

18 years ago

Cute little workbook with colourful pictures

Put a number above the stack –

There's a box for it.

Memorize the procedure...

I thought I was doing the right thing.

Now

my understanding has changed –

Sitting in a circle on the floor with me,

Base ten blocks,

Scraps of paper and felt pens.

“If I walk into a store and that candy costs eighty four cents...”

to give them context.

We'll build one number.

We'll build the other number.

We'll put them together.

We worked our way through it.

The light bulbs went on.

Not only did they understand the concept,

They understood the foundation of it.

If we hadn't had a change in curriculum,

If we hadn't had a change in the way we look at things,

If we hadn't had the PD that showed us –

we never would have even tried it.

⁴ from Amelia's artefact sharing

Literature Circles for grade nine.⁵

A very good idea –

Collaboration between the students

Activities got them thinking

Stories were fabulous.

But then in really reading the curriculum

(for the third or fourth time)

in depth –

What we were asking the students to do wasn't curriculum based!

Literature Circles became –

Explicitly aligned with the curriculum

Considered different interests and levels

Twelve to thirteen stories to choose from.

Exhausting but worth it.

⁵ from Emily's artefact sharing

*An Anna Ingham summer institute,⁶
Catching the passion/ fever/ framework.
Reflection:*

Is this working?

How can it work better?

Modify with new knowledge.

*Through all the new stuff,
Things that work get put on the backburner.
Too much new = running out of time.*

Going back to Sound City.

Build the /o/ /r/ house –

put on coveralls and workbooks and hard hats and tool belts.

Visit any time you find an /o/ /r/ word.

They are engaged. They are learning.

⁶ from Maria's artefact sharing

*Our staff is a team;⁷
We're growing.
There's a vision and a strong leader –
What's in the best interest of the kids to help them succeed?*

*I'm doing the literacy plan –
a deer in headlights.
Model a lesson, show me connections...
Now I see it,
How all the pieces fit.*

*I'm reaching out,
Stepping up to the plate,
Because there are things
I'm still working on.*

⁷ from Julia's artefact sharing

*Not afraid to make mistakes,⁸
To not know something.
Everyone makes mistakes –
Trial and Error.*

*Amino acids make up genes,
Genes make up chromosomes,
Chromosomes make up DNA*

which is like

*Letters make up sentences,
Sentences make up paragraphs,
Paragraphs make up books.*

*An analogy they can relate to,
that they can use later on.*

*It worked for me,
Made me interested and
Made me remember.*

⁸ from Adam's artefact sharing

Grade Seven Social Studies⁹

*a recipe for peaceful coexistence
a starter discussion.*

*A project put together at the U of A,
Another teacher and I sat down,
It developed from there...*

*The explanations got shorter,
Points became clearer –
It became much more effective.*

*Bring something awesome to the kids –
I just need time
to develop stuff
to make sure my classes are better.*

⁹ from Tim's artefact sharing

*We were frustrated.¹⁰
We've got to find something;
They're just not getting it.*

*It said Reading Power –
step by step lessons
the list of books
Let's try this first lesson.
It was a hit.*

*We did it for a year.
We loved it.
The whole school started using it.*

*I've tweaked it
and collected more books.
The first year actually taught me a lot too...*

*It's amazing what teachers have come up with,
gone and done things
came back
reflected on it together –
"I never thought of that!"*

How exciting.

¹⁰ from Cyndi's artefact sharing

*An artefact of what changed for me¹¹
As a teacher?
My most brilliant lesson
came out of that.*

*My artefact is
my thesis –
 He said poetry
 I heard songs.
Differentiate for myself –
 finding a place
 where a person makes meaning.*

*How do I help my kids make meaning?
Creativity still alive –
 A way to express
 Making order out of chaos
 Finding a point of entry.*

¹¹ from Jann's artefact sharing

*Fueled by big questions,¹²
Passion,
Hope and
Love.
Know that you may not know...*

*I'm willing to do that
Because it matters that much.*

¹² From participant collage explanation. Collage created in response to “What could/should teacher professional development look like?”

A bit of a revolution – ¹³

Embrace tomorrow.

Believe

Everyone has ability.

Go into it energized.

Have some highly valuable knowledge.

Be mindful,

Not impatient.

Come back to it, again and again.

¹³ From participant collage explanation. Collage created in response to “What could/should teacher professional development look like?”

*Connections¹⁴,
Links,
Passion,
Openness.*

*It's opportunities.
It's investing.
It's not for winding down;
It's for revving up.*

*It's time
To do the learning,
To implement the learning,
To process,
To make it best for our students.*

¹⁴ From participant collage explanation. Collage created in response to “What could/should teacher professional development look like?”

Experience teaching transformation:¹⁵

A meaningful connection.

Choice,

Trust and collaboration.

Get out of patterns

We have built for ourselves.

See where you have to go.

Be confident.

¹⁵ From participant collage explanation. Collage created in response to “What could/should teacher professional development look like?”

Imperfection of learning¹⁶

Is about

*reflection imagination reinvention innovation education conversation
creativity discovery inquiry
questioning thinking
change.*

Challenge

Different abilities

Best possible version of themselves.

Going the distance

Living in the moment.

Optimistic

It will happen.

¹⁶ From researcher collage explanation. Collage created in response to “What could/should teacher professional development look like?”

Chapter Five Findings

The focus of this study was to unpack how teachers currently learn and change in their practice to better understand how professional development might be transformed to become more useful for teachers. The individual interviews revealed several thematic areas that were important to the participants' improvement as educators: keys to changes in practice, successful professional development, and relationality of learning. There are sub-themes within each of these overarching themes. In addition, the focus group specifically explored connections to adult learning that the participants had experienced, as well as conveyed what teacher professional development could or should look like through collage. All sources of data (transcripts, poetry, artefact images, and collage) are equally important and each revealed its own insight into this study.

Keys to Changes in Practice

The participants revealed three specific elements that led to the changes they have seen in their teaching practice: leadership, a change of assignment or school, and student needs.

While two of these were not surprising to me, the powerful impact of a change in assignment or school was not something I had before considered playing such a significant role in teaching practice.

Leadership

Julie spoke explicitly about the role the leadership her administration offered and the direct impact it had on her learning. She feels that her administration is not only invested in her learning but that they are "guiding the staff" towards a shared vision. It is very important to her that she is supported both emotionally and instructionally, as well as

with time for learning with them and from them as well. Similarly, Emily feels the role of leadership or the principal of the school is “as the number one guide in the school” whose responsibility is to lead the staff towards whatever goal the school or district needs. For her, their leadership should be as an instructional leader. She explains, “otherwise we’re just all like mice in a maze, unless you’ve got someone who can take the lead.” Tim believes that the variety that a change in leadership brings to the school forces teachers to step outside of their comforts and begin to learn and change in their teaching practice. For Cyndi, it was her administration learning alongside her as a new initiative came into her district that was essential to the learning process for everyone involved. For each of these four participants, the leadership in the school is necessary to support learning that brings about change in practice. Without strong leaders, these teachers feel that the learning they experienced may have not been the same.

Change of Assignment or School

Emily shared that “if [she] hadn’t moved from Edmonton, [her] practice wouldn’t have changed at all.” Similarly, Adam revealed “if [he] had stayed [in his old district], [he] wouldn’t have changed. Moving here pushed [him] and made [him] a better teacher.”

While Julia did not change districts, she did switch schools. Julia shared that she “dabbled in guided reading” but didn’t “fully dive in” until she was forced “in a good use of the word forced” by and with the support of her new administrator to fully include guided reading in her practice. What each of these participants shared corresponds with what Tim suggested in the previous paragraph – a change can be a catalyst for teacher learning and was significant for each of these teachers.

Student Needs

All of the participants acknowledged that the needs of the students were centre to their own professional development. Jann spoke of differentiating her assignment to engage each of the students in her gifted classroom. This was reflective of her own learning that she spoke about when discussing her artefact. Amelia shared that much of her changing has “been through sitting down with kids and realizing this is not working and that’s not fair, so what am I going to do instead?” This too is what pushed all of the other participants to reflect and change their teacher practice. Interestingly, Julia admits that when she first started teaching this was not how she selected her professional development. She says that putting students’ interests/ needs at the forefront of her learning is something that she has learned “on the job through [her] experience and collaboration.”

Each of the artefact poems address students’ learning needs either directly or indirectly. It is interesting to note however that only one of the collage inspired poems mentions students. This doesn’t mean the participants didn’t mention students during their collage explanation but when reviewing the transcripts, this is not something I pulled out as a key idea. I do not think that this means the participants have forgotten about the students but that they recognize that the teachers themselves need to be motivated and engaged in their learning before any change may happen.

Successful Professional Development and Learning

There were several characteristics of successful professional development that could be pulled from the participants’ stories. They spoke of the importance of making connections, having enough time, reflecting, and meeting their needs as a learners.

Make Connections

Two of the participants explored the notion of connections during their open-ended interviews. For Julie this meant forming real-life connections for herself and her students. Making these connections seemed to make learning more approachable according to Julie. This was very similar to what Maria spoke of. When she shared about her least effective professional development experience she explained that she was unable to take anything away from a computer workshop she attended because she had no background knowledge to connect the new learning to. The background knowledge allows her to “be somewhat engaged in [the learning] before [she] even [goes].” This notion was echoed as Maria felt that for her, professional development is most effective when there is a connection or flow between different sessions or workshops. The importance of connections was also conveyed in several of the collages. While Collage C (Figure 15) used the words “making connections”, Collage D (Figure 16) used the image of lily pads in a pond and Collage E (Figure 17) used the image of a tree with wide branches and deep roots.

Time

Time was a significant contributor (and inhibitor) to successful professional development and learning for several of the participants. Cyndi, Maria, Amelia, Emily, and Tim all spoke of the impact ongoing learning and collaboration had on their transformative learning experiences. Many of the changes that Cyndi saw in her practice came from ongoing professional development that her previous district organized. It was designed so that the facilitator came several times throughout the year, over several years, pushing the learners a little further each time. Amelia spoke of a similar situation and how learning over a period of time empowered her to try the ideas presented in each session. She

explains “knowing in the back of my mind the whole time I was with [the facilitator] that I am going to go back and try this because in two or three months I am going to meet with her again. I am going to be able to talk to her and say ‘this went well; this didn’t go well; I tried this and it bombed. What did I do wrong here? I’m not getting this. [The students] aren’t getting this.’ I knew I was going to have that follow up and that was huge.”

Amelia and Maria both felt that their ongoing collaboration with one another as teaching partners was key to their professional growth. Amelia explained that she and Maria “are together every prep...we’re firing off ideas; we’re talking about guided reading groups.” This of course takes time. Maria also included the image of a clock and the word “time” in her collage, reinforcing its importance to professional development. Emily agrees as she feels “change happens slowly over time.” She goes on to say that explain that through her instructional coaching workshops (which have also been ongoing throughout the school year) she has learned there are many stages to change and that it “just naturally takes a long time.” Time was also an element for the reflection that the participants felt helped change their teaching practice.

Reflection

Each of the participants either spoke specifically about the importance of reflecting on his or her learning journey or alluded it during our conversation. Cyndi and Amelia both discussed how having time for reflection both during and in between professional development helped their learning. Jann shared the importance of reflection to ensure she maintains mindfulness during her day, allowing for better boundaries between all parts of

her complex position. Learning to maintain this mindfulness throughout her practice and life has been essential to her life/work balance.

Adam referred to this reflection as trial and error or “figuring out how to do it better.” He goes on to say,

I think I have the ability to see what works and what doesn't work and then make little improvements on the things that aren't working and maybe expand on the stuff that is working. I think...a lot of teachers don't have that ability and that's what makes their job harder for them because they can't make those adjustments...I reflect on things as they're happening and make adjustments that need to be made in my opinion to make the best possible learning environment at that specific time. Absolutely, reflection is huge.

Similarly, Emily recalled having to keep a reflection journal during her time as a student teacher. She wondered, however, how many teachers continue this reflective practice after the first few years of teaching. Emily maintains a reflective practice on a daily basis but she is “still not sure how many people say, ‘This is not working; I have to change it.’”

Meeting Own Learning Needs

As participants shared stories of their learning, it became apparent that each of them felt best about their learning experiences when their own needs as learners have been met.

Adam recalled a workshop that got participants to think about teaching math in different ways. He said “we were not told to pretend we were grade nine kids. We were adult learners and he put us through the lesson as an adult learner, not as a kid.” Adam saw the facilitator modify the lesson for the learners, giving some groups more hints or guiding questions than others. Equally important for him, the presenter acknowledged Adam's

discomfort with group work and let him move about on his own rather than forcing him to work with a group.

Tim and Maria both need hands-on learning experiences in order to understand new ideas and ways of thinking or doing, whereas Julia prefers to observe someone model “their knowledge and understanding of it and using it in a way or using language in a way that makes sense” for her. Words like “choice” (Figure 15) and “bring your difference” (Figure 14) and the image of the differently abled athletes competing in a race with varying success and facial expressions (Figure 17) used in the collages seem to suggest the need for professional development to acknowledge and accommodate teachers as different learners with different needs.

Relationality of Learning

While all of the participants spoke of what might be the most obvious relationship in teacher learning – collaboration, I was intrigued to learn from participants how important relationships were for them during workshops and other learning opportunities. This section will explore the findings around collaboration and personal connection during learning opportunities.

Collaboration

Collaboration is at the heart of what the scholars envision when they explore professional learning and the shift away from professional development. (See Chapter Two.) All of the participants spoke with fondness about the opportunities they had for collaboration and how important it was to changing their teaching practice. This collaboration took on many forms for the participants. Some spoke of daily collaboration and PLC time that

was embedded in their schedules. Others talked about conversations between colleagues that meant connecting with passionate teachers, sharing expertise, and building relationships.

Two of the collages (see Figures 16 and 17) make reference to hands. Collage D includes a hand, palm side up. Maria explained that for her, professional development should be about giving “a hand up. The ability to work with your peers, to give each other a hand, hopefully a hand up to make those big changes that we all want to do.” Similarly Collage E features the words “helping hands”. Both of these collages convey to me the supporting and collaborating nature of transformational learning.

Tim felt that the cohort of teachers he was part of that got together from two different districts to discuss and create projects for social studies helped him change his teaching practice. He shared that “the cohort really helped establish and bring in some new ideas because the projects were shared amongst the group of people.” He appreciated the project variation and differentiation that came from that collaboration. Maria believes that “collaboration as much as actual professional development has changed [her] teaching practice because it is through that opportunity to collaborate with somebody...and start brainstorming and trying different things. It’s amazing what change can happen from just doing that.” Adam enjoys collaborating with his teaching partner “because he’s a younger, new teacher that has newer ideas, different ideas. [Adam] is supposedly the veteran teacher that has ideas as well so [they] feed off each other...Collaboration this year has been very beneficial.”

Personal Connections

Additionally, it was important for many of the participants to have a connection with the professional development instructor or facilitator. They spoke of someone who acted as a guide and was approachable, helpful, and trustworthy. In addition, it was important that the facilitator seem invested in them as learners, have expertise to offer, and tailored the workshop to meet the needs of them and the district. Jann shared that “if [she] can’t get excited about it, it’s unlikely [she’s] going to do it.” Adam echoed this as he spoke of workshops that impacted his teaching. He gets frustrated when he is not treated as an educated professional during professional development. For Maria the presenter’s passion for the topic and the students are the ones that she connects most to. Amelia spoke of a wonderful presenter that shared many useful ideas throughout the workshop.

Unfortunately she “didn’t have any opportunity to talk with the woman at all and [Amelia] knew she’d never be back...She was a good presenter and [Amelia] thought that [she] had got a lot out of that presentation.” Upon further reflection, Amelia realized that very little actually changed in her practice since attending that particular workshop. Feeling a personal connection to the facilitator is an important piece to her learning.

Emily, Julia, and Cyndi all spoke of the learning that has come from books. This learning was enhanced because of the conversations they were able to have with colleagues reading the same text. Julia admits that she had already looked through and read several of the books before moving to her new school but it wasn’t until she was there and talking with all of the other teachers also using those resources, that she was able to begin making changes to her teaching practice. Emily’s role as an instructional coach has led to several required reading texts. While she completes the reading tasks, because she experiences very little conversation around the texts, she does not feel she is

getting the most out of the books. She says “[I’m] reading the book on my own. I probably won’t have any conversations. I did not choose to read that book...it’s going to be a stretch for me to have to read that book.” The personal connection between teachers reading the same books and the conversation that ensues, appears to be an essential part of learning in this way for each of these participants.

Connections to Adult Learning

There are two ways that I have pulled together connections to adult learning as shared by Lawler and King (as cited in Lawler, 2003). The first was directly from focus group conversation centered around each of the principles Lawler discusses in her article and the second being through analysis of the learning each participant shared around his or her artefact. As mentioned previously, Lawler and King (as cited in Lawler, 2003) identify six principles that are needed when considering teachers as adult learners: create a climate of respect, encourage active participation, build on experience, employ collaborative inquiry, learn for action, and empower participants.

Create a Climate of Respect

Essentially creating a climate of respect means starting where the learner is at in a social and physical environment that is conducive to adult learning. In other words, it is very important to incorporate the learners’ understanding into the professional development experience. One focus group member spoke about a facilitator who had worked with teachers in her school. She said the facilitator “worked really well in listening to us, finding out where we were in our understanding, and guiding us to where we needed to be.” As mentioned previously, Adam’s experience with a math facilitator was similar as

he adjusted the professional development experience depending on the participants' background knowledge and understanding of the mathematical concepts. When a climate of respect is not developed, it can leave learners feeling frustrated and disengaged. An example of this came up during the focus group conversation. One participant recalled a series of professional development days where facilitator didn't "structure our day around us. She structured it around her... She didn't gauge where we were at as learners; her agenda was her agenda."

Encourage Active Participation

In addition to using participation and collaboration that encourages learning, this principle includes being respectful of the professional expertise that teachers bring into the room. Several examples of this were shared during the focus group meeting. While working with instructional coaches and administrators, the facilitator re-iterated throughout the day that what he suggested was only one way of doing things. He explicitly told them "to respect the expertise of the teachers you are working with." Two other facilitators were mentioned as well. Since they have worked together for some time, both of them ensure "there's time to be engaged, time to partner, time to build on that knowledge, and time to share information that can be taken back and used right away." One participant admits "if someone is up there lecturing I can guarantee my brain would be elsewhere; I'd be gone."

Build on Experience

Calling to mind the previous two principles, this one explicitly requires facilitators to acknowledge and understand that learners come with a wealth of experience. Effective adult learning opportunities may need to build on, expand, question, or disrupt this

experience for learning to take place. Focus group participants told about a professional development experience they had during a staff meeting this past school year. Rather than one staff member standing up in front of the group to “fill up” the teachers with new knowledge, teachers were asked to share their own expertise on a specific topic, showcasing the experience already within the building.

Connecting to this notion is what Cyndi spoke about as she shared her artefact story. She and her teaching partner were frustrated with the impact their teaching was having on the students in their classroom. She explains her and her teaching partner “were looking for reading strategies because [the students] didn’t seem to comprehend [what they were reading].” They used what they already knew about better teaching practice and found a resource that would help them move forward. The resource “came with step by step lessons... [and] the list of books you needed to use.” The success they had with *Reading Power*, inspired the rest of the staff to use it in their classrooms as well.

Employ Collaborative Inquiry

According to Lawler (2003), employing collaborative inquiry simply means valuing cooperation and collaboration during professional development opportunities. The professional development that Amelia and Emily spoke of in their artefact narratives included much collaboration. Amelia and her teaching partner had daily collaboration and PLC time (during the school day) with other grade one and two teachers throughout the district several times a year. This continued for several years before Amelia was able to reach the level of change she spoke of during our interview. Very similarly, Emily shared the huge influence collaboration with her teaching partner had on the work related to her artefact. It was through collaboration and discussion of ideas presented in ongoing

professional development activities and district initiatives that led to Emily and her teaching partner making these changes in their practice.

Focus group participants said things like “[collaboration] is the most amazing thing ever” and “absolutely no one should be teaching alone in their room.” Amelia argued that without collaboration “you don’t have those thinking outside the box moments.” All of the participants in this study spoke specifically about or referenced the importance of collaboration in their learning. It is not surprising then that the collages that depict what participants feel professional development could or should look like feature words or images that bring to mind collaboration, discovery, questioning, and/or thinking (see Figures 13-17).

Learn for Action

Learning for action requires that teachers need an immediate application of learning. Teachers not only need to make connections between what they are learning and their lives, but also between the content and the application of it in the classroom. I would argue this principle requires a delicate balance. Teachers often want to leave a professional development session with something to use on Monday morning yet making the connections mentioned above requires space and time. Amelia spoke fondly of the facilitator of the learning consortium workshops that she attended. Not only did she “teach us but also teaches us how to teach it. It was very hands on, very active, and she’s a very dynamic person. She does not get up there and read her notes...Knowing in the back of [Amelia’s] mind the whole time [she can] try this because in two or three months [she is] going to meet with her...and be able to talk to her again.”

Empower Participants

The final principle calls for opportunities and strategies that motivate and empower the learner to change or think differently. Each of the stories the participants shared holds an example of empowerment. They changed their teaching practice because they were empowered to do so. Interestingly enough, several participants talked about times when they felt the opposite of this. It may have been disconnect to the topic (i.e. lack of connection) or facilitator or an environment that was physically uncomfortable to learn in, but they did not change their practice in this professional development experience. I think it is important to note within this principle that this empowerment endures over an extended period of time (and in many participant examples, years). Perhaps this is why a number of the participants chose to include images or words related to some kind of journey (such as race, explore, adventure, and trail blazer) in their collages (see Figures 13, 14, 16, 17).

Conclusion

This chapter explored specific elements that led to the changes participants have seen in their teaching practice, characteristics of successful professional development (such as making connections and meeting their needs as a learners), as well as the relationality of teacher learning as revealed through the data. In addition, this study found several examples of the principles of teachers as adult learners as suggested by Lawler and King (as cited in Lawler, 2003) and supported by Bransford, et al (2000). As with many studies, the discovery of answers often call to mind more questions. Some of these questions, as well as further discussion on the findings, will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Six Discussion

Each of the thematic areas explored by participants in their individual interviews, as well as the focus group discussion, offers an entry point for discussion. Perhaps more importantly this information can call to mind more questions that may or may not have answers at this time. This chapter will revisit the three objectives this study set out to achieve: understanding how teachers currently learn and change in their practice, developing a space of coexistence for professional development and professional learning, and exploring the potential of arts-based research methods with teachers.

How Teachers Currently Learn

Much of what the participants shared about how they feel they currently learn and change in their teaching practice confirmed what the literature has said on this topic. Participants spoke of the importance of leadership (see Fullan, 2002; Sharratt & Fullen, 2009), collaboration (see DuFour, 2004; Wood, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009; Reeves, 2010; Timperley, 2011), and being motivated by student needs (see DuFour, 2004; Reeves, 2010, Timperley, 2011). They also shared frustration with one-shot professional development as it had little impact on their teaching practice.

Keys to Change

Participants revealed that leadership, change in school or assignment, and student needs were all catalysts for them to change their teaching practice in some way. I can't help but wonder about the implications of the first two catalysts for change – why does/did it take a leader or change of school to make deep learning/change happen? Two participants acknowledge that without a move, their practice would not have changed. What was it about this new environment that brought about these changes and why are they convinced

this would have not happened in their old habitat? Is it fair for teachers to put the onus of inspiring change onto the leaders in the schools? What elements (such as confidence, creativity, risk taking skills, problem solving skills, etc.) do teachers need to pursue this learning (and thereby changes) independently? How do we foster these skills or elements in beginning teachers and veteran teachers alike? One might argue that the traditional teaching model featured in many undergraduate programs (i.e. expert sharing his or her knowledge with students in a lecture format) does little to encourage teachers to become active, critical thinkers¹⁷. Students (and therefore teachers) become conditioned early on to follow the direction of the person with positional power and knowledge. Perhaps it's not simply the move or the leader that causes the change to happen. Perhaps each of these moves or leadership contributions came at a time when the teacher was ready for learning and a change in practice? These keys to change in practice seem to raise more questions upon analysis and may require further study.

The third key to change was student needs. Each participant maintained that student needs were the driving force in their professional development. While they did not mention it explicitly, there seems to be several tensions between students' and teachers' learning needs. The first was made apparent through the comparison of the artefact poetry with the collage poetry. While I acknowledge that the poems were centered around slightly different topics (i.e. participants best lesson and the learning that led to that versus what professional development could or should look like), I think it is significant that the collage poems seem to focus more on the teacher as learner than the artefact poems. The collage poetry appears to be thematically connected by teacher

¹⁷ Several scholars have explored how to change this through teaching critical thinking in their undergraduate classes (see Zascavage, 2007; Szabo & Schwartz, 2011; Mulnix, 2012).

empowerment as opposed to the artefact poetry which emphasizes student learning. As referenced in Chapter Two, professional development inherently tells teachers that their own learning is less important than their students' learning (Petrie & McGee, 2012). Perhaps through collage, participants were able to shed light on this phenomenon. To me this is saying that for these teachers, professional development should make their learning and understanding the focal point throughout the process.

The second tension lies between the students' (and therefore teachers') needs and when and what kind of professional development is offered. Teachers' formal learning is often limited to several days throughout the school year and topics are usually pre-determined by school or district goals. While it is possible that a teacher may find valuable information at a session like this, it is also possible that this will not happen. Teachers seem to have become trained to accept a sometimes small nugget of useful information in exchange for an entire day of their time and attention. While I am unsure of what this may look like in practice, it is as though teachers need quality "on demand" professional development and learning opportunities for when the need arises. This of course echoes some of what Timperely (2011) calls for in her collaborative model.

Successful Professional Development and Learning

Participants included connections, time, reflection, and learner needs as the pieces to what they felt were successful professional development and learning experiences. The notion of time came up during individual interviews, focus group discussion, as well as in several collages. Participants acknowledged that their learning took place over an extended period of time, not magically in a single sitting.

At several times during the focus group conversation, participants shared they felt overwhelmed with the amount of new learning they were asked to do in their district. While many teacher conversations around the lack of time to do all the learning they want to do will often be supported with nodding heads, it is also important to question the beast of time. At what point is saying “I don’t have the time to learn about that” move from a legitimate concern to an excuse. Are we really talking about taking on too much or is this about time prioritization issues? Is it possible that the lack of time within the teaching profession is simply an urban myth perpetuated year after year? Or is this a case of perceived student needs far exceeding teacher knowledge and the amount of learning teachers feel they need to have? Elementary teachers in particular are put in a difficult place as they are responsible for many subject areas, several of which may be undergoing a change towards better practice.

Perhaps not surprisingly, teachers felt that when their own learning needs were met they experienced deep learning and change. While I do not disagree with these observations, I would argue that it could be problematic if teachers limit themselves to learning experiences that only fit their “style” of learning. Several research participants were not comfortable with the collage portion of the focus group and therefore did not attend. As education moves to include various ways of knowing, I think it is important for teachers to engage in new ways of learning if not to simply help their students, but perhaps even to discover a side of themselves they do not know exists.

Relationality of Learning

The power of collaboration was easily conveyed in each of the stories participants shared in this study. This should be considered then when planning both school calendars as well

as professional development opportunities. In addition, they talked about the importance of personal connections during professional development opportunities. It is not enough then for the speaker to have valuable knowledge to share; it is also essential for him or her to convey connectedness and interest in the learners (i.e. teachers) in the room. These may be valuable tools for facilitators of any adult learning environment to consider and use.

An Environment for Coexistence

I believe that my data reinforces what the literature has said about the juxtaposition of professional development and professional learning. My participants spoke of the varying experiences they had with both professional development and professional learning. Their learning seemed to be most successful when these two sources of learning complimented and worked together to build understanding, suggesting both avenues for development and learning have their merit and necessity. This supports the call for an environment for co-existence – a space of encounter – where the notions are brought together, rather than plotted against one another.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Kennedy (2005) offers a continuum of teacher learning models (see Figure 2) that progress from transmission (traditional professional development) to transitional (professional learning model) to transformational. As Kennedy's (2005) model moves from transmission as the purpose for the professional development to transformation, she argues that the capacity for professional autonomy has the potential to increase.

Using the notion of teachers as adult learners can expand Kennedy's original framework (see Figure 2) of analysis to incorporate the needs of the participants in

professional development as experiencing a transformative learning experience may be difficult if the learners are not engaged in their own learning. My research participants talked about the changes to their practice, or transformation, that was a result of learning from a variety of professional development models and their stories made apparent the qualities of teachers as adult learners that Lawler and King (as cited in Lawler, 2003) and Bransford et al (2000) discuss. As mentioned previously, Cranton (2002) maintains that it is essential educators continue to create spaces for transformation to occur since we cannot determine when or why it happens. For teachers, this is done when they are treated as the adult learners that they are.

No single participant spoke of all of the adult learning or teacher learning principles within a single professional development experience, yet each spoke of times when one or more of those keys to their learning was present throughout their transformative experience. Simply put, teachers use many sources of learning to bring about changes to their teaching practice. All of these work together to bring about the transformation they spoke of in their stories of learning. Secondly, a transformative model of professional development should consider what we know about teachers as adult learners. By considering these needs, it is likely that teachers may more often experience transformation of practice from their professional development. A modified framework of Kennedy's models of teachers learning can be seen in Figure 18.

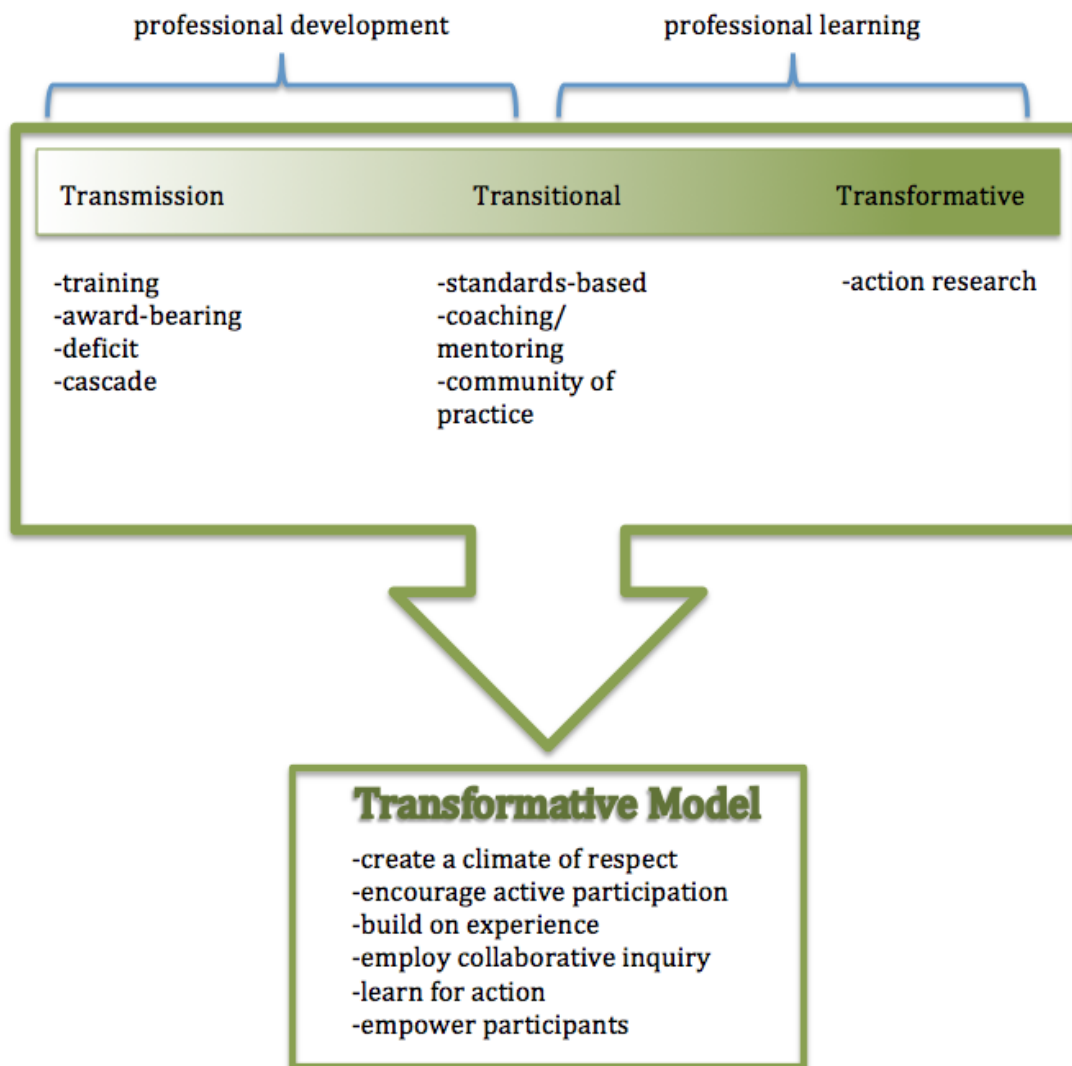


Figure 18 Models of Professional Development Including Teachers as Adult Learners
 See Kennedy (2005) and Lawler and King (as cited in Lawler, 2003)

Hesitant to point out the obvious, I would like to call attention the fact that Kennedy's transformative model includes all models of professional development and learning working together. As this is a theoretical framework, further work needs to be done to understand how each of these models of professional development may include principles of teachers as adult learners, as well as how school districts and government departments

can ensure that the models of professional development provided for teachers remain interconnected and relevant to their students' learning needs.

Arts-Based Learning and Research

Initially my primary goal for using arts-based research methods was to create a wider audience for this study. I was pleasantly surprised by the insight the poetics and collage provided. While none of the collages offered concrete suggestions of what professional development could or should look like, they each conveyed a sense of optimism and hopefulness (through words like *patience*, *believing*, and *passion*) at the same acknowledging the difficulty learning and change can bring (through words such as *challenges*, *habits*, and *choice*). The artefact images may not immediately call to mind “teacher learning” or “teacher professional development” and this is similar to the images included in the collages. This is precisely what I was hoping for. If we know that teacher learning does not resemble one expert speaking to (and filling up) an audience of teachers, then I cannot help but question what it does look like. The diversity in the images found in Chapter Four reveal to me that teacher learning takes on all forms. What one teachers sees as learning, another teacher will not. For example, several of the artefacts were books and only one of the collages includes a similar image.

I would argue that the space for creativity and various interpretations are what makes arts-based learning and research significant for teachers and students alike. While McGregor (2012) writes specifically about leaders, her assertions can be extended to include teachers. She argues that if we continue to be exposed to texts that simply perpetuate the status-quo, then learning is limited to that understanding. However, if we

“are exposed to more ‘open’ texts, such as aesthetic modes...where multiple readings are expected, even encouraged, then the potential for multiple/ negotiated readings becomes greater” (p.313). I believe it is these sorts of skills that teachers need to learn and model to their students so that they can be better prepared for a world that continues to evolve unpredictably at a rapid pace.

The recent Ministerial Order from the Minister of Education of Alberta seems to echo this notion (Alberta Education, 2013) as it aims to develop student “competencies of Engaged Thinkers, Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial Spirit” (p.1). These competencies include creative and critical thinking, reflection, risk-taking, motivation, and tenacity (to name just a few). I argue that teachers not only need to create spaces for these competences to develop in their classrooms, they will also need to have them (and model them) for their students. I think it is unlikely this will happen unless changes, such as those presented in this study, as well as the embracing of other ways of knowing becomes common practice in all classrooms (including those where teachers are learners).

Chapter Seven Conclusion

In corner one
professional development –
traditional
most effective when
partnered with follow-up and context

and

In corner two
professional learning –
collaborative
developed over time
student needs central to teacher learning

and

Judging this bout
teachers as adult learners –
neither copiers nor children
theory, pedagogy, curriculum
risk taking required yet difficult

but wait
there's been a rule change
this game isn't working

Come together
In the middle
For more wins
For enduring understanding
For student learning

This study set out to accomplish three objectives in an effort to query how teachers currently learn and change in their practice and to understand how knowledge of teachers as adult learners could inform or improve professional development offerings.

Additionally, it was my hope that the use of arts-based research methods would create a wider audience for this study. The stories and artefacts the participants shared, along with the focus group discussion, collage creation, and poetry provided me with insight as to how professional development could change so that it would be more likely for transformative learning to take place.

While this study supports the theory of including principles of teachers as adult learners within a transformative model of professional development, more work needs to be done to understand what this may look like in practice. How might we include adult learning theory in all models of professional development? How can individual schools, school districts, and governments work together to ensure all types of teacher professional development are interrelated and relevant to both the teachers' and students' learning context and needs?

Moreover, with shifts at the provincial level towards competency development rather than knowledge recall, I would argue that many teachers do not have the skills themselves to teach and model to their students. When asked about this shift in thinking (and thereby teaching), Honorable Jeff Johnson acknowledges “the need for additional training [will vary] teacher by teacher [and] a lot of the newer teachers coming into the system are ready and willing to embrace this new approach. Some will need professional development” (as cited in Rubin et al, 2012, n.p.). While I ponder just how many new teachers will indeed be ready for this significant shift, I also can't help but wonder about

these professional development opportunities he speaks of. Teachers often say (and my experience would support) that modeling expectations and skills to students helps students take on these skills themselves. I question, are teachers critical thinkers? Do they have these skills to model to their students? What might professional development look like to foster this skill in teachers? What are the political consequences of teachers becoming critical thinkers? Moreover, what might professional development look like for the 3 E's (Ethical Citizen, Engaged Thinker, Entrepreneurial Spirit) if it considers teachers as adult learners and the ways in which teachers already learn and change in their practice? I believe that at least some of the answers to these questions may lie within arts-based learning and research. Alas, there is more work to be done.

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Appendix

Appendix A Individual Interview Questions

- Tell me about your teaching experience and educational background.
- Tell me about the significant changes you have noticed in your teaching practice since you began.
- Tell me about some of your professional development experiences – what did you learn? What did the pedagogical practice look like? Was it valuable and if so in what way and if not, why not?
- Tell me about the artefact you brought with you today. What is the learning that lead to the lesson that this artefact represents?

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

- Scholars argue that teachers need to learn content as well as pedagogy and their attention is on the curriculum and student needs simultaneously as they learn (Marcus, 2008; Petrie & McGee, 2012). Is this something you have noticed in professional development workshops or sessions you have attended? How could professional development opportunities better address this need?
- How might professional development opportunities be better structured to address adult learning needs like climate of respect, active participation, building on experience, employing collaborative inquiry, learning for action, and empowerment of the participants (Lawler, 2003)?
- Transformative learning is about *how* we know and make meaning. Cranton (2002) explains it this way: “we cannot critically reflect on an assumption until we are aware of it. We cannot engage in discourse on something we have not identified. We cannot change a habit of mind without thinking about it in some way” (p.65). Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) note “learning involves making oneself vulnerable and taking risks, and this is not how teachers often see their role” (p. 195). What changes need to be made to professional development workshops or sessions to encourage transformative learning experiences?

Appendix C Ethics Certificate of Approval



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of Victoria

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Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	Charlie Kraig	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER	12-391
UVic STATUS:	Master's Student	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:	16-Oct-12
UVic DEPARTMENT:	EPLS	APPROVED ON:	16-Oct-12
SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Catherine McGregor	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:	15-Oct-13

PROJECT TITLE: **Better ways of teaching teachers: A study of teachers as adult learners, professional development and professional learning**

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: **None**

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: **None**

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

Modifications
To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

Renewals
Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures
When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.



Dr. Rachael Scarth
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Modification of an Approved Protocol

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UVic DEPARTMENT:	EPLS	MODIFIED ON:	04-Feb-13
SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Catherine McGregor	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:	15-Oct-13
PROJECT TITLE: Better ways of teaching teachers: A study of teachers as adult learners, professional development and professional learning			
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: None			
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None			
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL			
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.			
Modifications			
To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.			
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