Leading collaborative professionalism

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Introduction

Why should we collaborate? How do people collaborate? What kinds of collaboration are more effective than others? These are basic questions that have driven our work for three decades – well, in Andy's case, at any rate. Last year, when we had a chance to identify and investigate five different designs for teacher collaboration, in different parts of the world, we thought we already knew the answers to these questions. We were wrong.

Why should we collaborate?

The fact that we must collaborate is no longer contentious as a statement of intent, even if it is sometimes challenging to implement in practice. In education, professional collaboration and building social capital among teachers and other educators improves student learning as these educators circulate their knowledge and take more risks. It improves teacher recruitment and retention as teachers in collaborative cultures realise there are others who can help and support them.

It also improves the ability to initiate and implement change, as ideas spread and last beyond a few individual brainwaves.

Our schools are increasingly making collaboration a priority among their students, as part of the global competencies needed for fast-changing economies. Children in classrooms cannot collaborate unless their teachers do. Collaboration ironically also improves competitiveness in the corporate world – even to the point of collaborating with competitors, as we saw in our study of unusually high-performing organisations, like Cricket Australia and Fiat Auto, across different sectors (Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris, 2014).

How should we collaborate?

How we should collaborate is less easy to answer. In this paper, we will set out a number of different collaborative designs that are intended as structures and strategies to improve collaboration among educators in ways that enhance equity and excellence in student learning.

What kinds of collaboration are more effective than others?

First, we will give the game away. What we discovered is a difference between **professional collaboration** and **collaborative professionalism**. We did not invent the term collaborative professionalism – as far as we can tell, it originated in bargaining for a new working relationship between teachers, administrators and the Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014) – but, whereas professional collaboration is a descriptive term referring to how teachers collaborate together, in one way or another, here or there, collaborative professionalism is prescriptive. It is about how to collaborate more deeply, in ways that achieve greater impact.

As an advanced organiser, collaborative professionalism is about how teachers and other educators **transform teaching and learning** together to work with all students to develop fulfilling **lives of meaning, purpose and success**. It is **evidence-informed**, but not data-driven, and involves deep and sometimes demanding **dialogue**, candid but constructive **feedback**, and continuous collaborative **inquiry**. Finally, collaborative inquiry is embedded in the **culture and life of the school**, where educators actively **care** for and have **solidarity** with each other as fellow-professionals as they pursue their challenging work together in **response to the cultures** of their students, the society and themselves.

Underpinning the different ways in which collaborative professionalism is designed, and how they are implemented in practice, are two approaches to collaboration that reflect two broad approaches to educational and organisational improvement as a whole.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor Douglas McGregor set out a theory of two different leadership approaches to human motivation (McGregor, 1960). Theory X leaders, McGregor argued, believed that people needed to be monitored and motivated by external rewards and punishments. They could not be trusted to motivate themselves internally. External incentives would be needed instead. Advocates of and adherents to this theory are evident today, in supporters of market competitiveness between schools, individual teacher evaluation, and creation of elaborate standards frameworks to steer and even drive educators' work in directions determined by those at the top.

Theory Y advocates stretch back to the Human Relations movement of the 1920s, when two researchers in the Hawthorne suburb of Chicago found that when they tried to vary light and heat conditions of factory workers, the performance of these workers improved even when the conditions were worse (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). This was because somebody was finally paying attention to them as people. It was this study that gave rise to the commonly used term, in change, of the Hawthorne (otherwise known as halo) Effect. Theory Y proponents believed in developing and supporting workers who were assumed to be honest, capable and industrious. Their priority was to build relationships, develop trust and increase intrinsic satisfactions in the workplace. The popular management writing of Daniel Pink provides support for this theory, when it describes how the application of extrinsic incentives to workers who have to make sophisticated judgements, in pursuit of complex goals, does not only fail to improve performance, it actually leads to performance decline (Pink, 2009).

Theory X is about pay for performance. It is about structures, precision and extrinsic rewards. Theory Y is about paying it forward – investing in the intrinsic

> collaborative professionalism is prescriptive. It is about how to collaborate more deeply, in ways that achieve greater impact.

motivation and idealism of human beings. These different approaches are both alive and well in education today and, while educational reform pendulums will swing back and forth between them, neither of them will ever disappear completely.

Both of these ways of thinking about human motivation contain essential truths that are easily overlooked or dismissed by their opponents. What matters is not the zero sum supremacy of one over the other, but how aspects of each approach can work most effectively in combination with each other. If you believe in people, think the best of the students you teach, are driven by the passion for your work, and always try to remember to thank people for their efforts, there is a lot of Theory Y about you. If you count your steps every day and have a device to check that you do, if you make lists of tasks for work or shopping, if you keep meetings strictly to time, and if you put stickers and pictures on the wall celebrating the achievements of your students, there is more than a bit of Theory X there, too. We need, therefore, not to examine just Theory X and Y properties in isolation but also, like chromosomes, how they operate in combination.

If you had asked Andy ten years ago, or even less, about where he stood on collaboration, he would have put himself forward as a straight-up Theory Y man – believing in trust, relationships and self-determination among educational professionals. He would not have wanted much top-down structure or direction for collaboration at all, because he had seen the worst manifestations of contrived collegiality in action many times over. This included one-size-fits-all ways of implementing professional learning communities; so-called networks that turned into enforced clusters of schools required to implement government policies that were little more than regional arms

of government administration; and data teams that gathered teachers together on small chairs after busy days, to look at spreadsheets of student achievements and identify gaps that could be plugged quickly and cynically in order to lift the school's and district's results. Instead of all this, Andy believed in unleashing people's inherent capacities to collaborate so they could drive improvement together, themselves.

Meanwhile though, in his professional development and educational change work, Andy's inner X-man was using highly structured methods of cooperative learning, like Jigsaw, critical friends triads, human scatter-grams, consultation lines, and four corners of opinion and perspective. (If you want to know more about what these are, you will have to come to one of his or our workshops!) He even invented some new protocols of his own, including a routine of British pantomime that divides the audience into two groups, who respond to a controversial statement such as 'educational leadership has improved since more women moved into it' by shouting 'Oh yes it has!' 'Oh no it hasn't', in turn.

Without structures, protocols and the guidance of leadership, some people (and Andy admits this includes him and many other men, too) will tend to monopolise most of the conversation. Without deliberate devices to steer the interaction, some people do not listen properly or fully. Others tend to criticise their peers personally, rather than the views they are putting forward. Networks and collaborative activities will draw in the extroverts with agile attitudes and nimble responses, while pushing shy individuals and deeper thinkers to the side. Left to themselves, to form their own groups, many people will gravitate to others who remind them of themselves –

people of similar interests, teachers of the same subjects and even, it has to be said, individuals with similar ethnic and racial identities.

People cannot always mix things up by themselves. They need deliberate designs to help them do that – without sacrificing and, indeed, also actively enhancing the quest to build deeper and stronger relationships of trust, support and solidarity throughout the school, network or system.

One way to think about all this is in terms of high and low emphases on trust in working relationships (a Theory Y component) on the one hand, and structure, tools and precision in work organisation (more of a technical, Theory X element), on the other. These are represented in Figure 1.

No collaboration
(low trust, low precision)

No collaboration is a culture of teaching that has to be left behind wherever it can. It insulates teachers from ideas and makes them anxious about themselves and envious or suspicious of others. There are no clear frameworks for meeting, planning or decision making, or ways of sharing and giving feedback on practice. Improvement stalls, teachers get overwhelmed and lose heart, quality deteriorates, and many teachers leave.

> No collaboration is a culture of teaching that has to be left behind wherever it can.

Contrived collegiality
(low trust, high precision)

Contrived collegiality is top-down and enforces teamwork to implement requirements set by others. Contrived collegiality fails to maintain motivation or anything more than superficial compliance. It is high threat, low yield and also leads to teachers being lost to the school or the profession.

Informal collaboration
(high trust, low precision)

Informal collaboration builds strong and enduring relationships, supports professional conversation and maintains teacher motivation. However, it tends to persist only where teachers have a strong affinity for each other and their values and styles, and it has difficulty translating promising conversations into positive action.

Collaborative professionalism
(high trust, high precision)

Collaborative professionalism is the golden cell of professional collaboration, where teachers have strong relationships, trust each other and feel free to take risks and make mistakes. There are also tools, structures and protocols of meeting, coaching, feedback, planning and review that support practical action and continuous improvement of the work undertaken together.

Figure 1. Quadrants of collaboration

		Trust	
	Low		**High**
Precision High	Contrived Collegiality		Collaborative Professionalism
Precision Low	No Collaboration		Informal Collaboration

Investigating collaboration

In 2017, the WISE Foundation provided a research grant that enabled us to study five different kinds of professional collaboration in education that had been deliberately designed in some way or other.

At first, we selected eight examples of professional collaboration, but eventually discarded three of these, before or after site visits, because they had not developed or persisted for at least four years. None of these cases commenced with a grand Master Plan of steps or processes at the beginning that were followed rigidly throughout. They all commenced purposefully, however, and grew incrementally in an inclusive and adaptive way.

The designs focused on one or more of five areas or message systems of schooling – curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and feedback, whole school development and a whole society orientation. Our eventual selections were

- open class/lesson study in a Hong Kong secondary school;
- collaborative curriculum planning across a network of rural schools in the US Pacific Northwest;
- cooperative learning and working in a Norwegian elementary school;
- collaborative pedagogical transformation in the Escuela Nueva network of 25,000 schools within and beyond rural Colombia; and
- teacher-led professional learning communities in Ontario, Canada.

We had been familiar with some of these cases and designs for a long time. Together, over 5 years, we helped support and build the network of more than 30 schools focused on teacher collaboration for increased student engagement in rural communities in the Pacific Northwest. Andy has also engaged in collaborative research with one seventh of the school districts in Ontario, including the one featured here, for more than a decade. In these and other cases, we also undertook a site visit of at least three days, to see how the schools and their systems collaborated first hand. We were interested not just in hearing how educators collaborated in these schools, but also witnessing exactly how they collaborated in action.

All participants provided written consent to participate and reviewed drafts of our report. The initial report to the WISE Foundation can be found at www.wise-qatar.org/2017-wise-research-collaborative-professionalism. The development of our argument can be seen in our book, *Collaborative Professionalism: When Teaching Together Means Learning for All*, published by Corwin Press in May/June 2018.

In the rest of this paper we provide brief portraits of three of these designs, then draw conclusions about how they represent more robust forms of collaborative professionalism rather than mere professional collaboration. We conclude with recommendations for school leaders in particular.

Five designs for collaborative professionalism

Collaborative professionalism is rooted in deep relationships combined with deliberate design. This paper and our wider work do not and cannot contain all possible designs. This paper is restricted to designs that mainly involve educational professionals in schools and school systems, and not ones that also engage communities, businesses or universities, for example, in broader partnerships. We concentrate on collaborative designs involving three or more educators and, therefore, chose not to consider important innovations where people work in pairs like coaching, mentoring or team teaching. We also did not include specific and short-term collaborative techniques and processes such as learning walks, instructional rounds, data teams or learning sprints – important though all of these are – unless they were embedded in and part of a larger, longer-term culture of collaboration.

Let us now look at portraits of three of the cases we did select – a teacher-led professional learning community, a collaborative planning network, and a particular kind of lesson study.

Teacher-led PLCs

A thousand miles north of Toronto, Canada, is a school district with 17 elementary schools and six high schools in a far-flung territory the size of France. Some of its schools have over 80–85 per cent indigenous students (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2018; Protopapas, 2015). Only 53 per cent of aboriginal students graduate in four years, compared to 88 per cent of non-aboriginal students. Only 24 per cent of students in Grade 6 in the district met the maths standard in 2016, compared to the

provincial average of 50 per cent; and the district's students scored only in the mid-50s in writing and reading, compared to the Ontario averages of around 80 per cent.

As in Australia and many other colonised countries around the world, a tarnished history forcibly separated indigenous children from their families, language, culture, and communities, by placing them in residential schools. Today, the parents and grandparents of the district's students carry the scars of this historical legacy, often manifested in drug use, alcohol dependence, poverty, and low achievement. This historical tragedy disrupted an indigenous culture rich in arts, spirituality, wisdom, appreciation of elders, and living in and with nature.

Over more than a decade, the district has worked hard to improve learning and achievement for its young people. It has infused indigenous art into schools and school design. The floor of one of its schools is engraved with the Seven Teachings of the indigenous culture – truth, love, respect, humility, honesty, wisdom and courage.

Teachers use examples from nature and traditional fishing activities in their curriculum. They also introduce outdoor activities like building fires and shelters, to connect learning to students' lives in natural and even wilderness settings, where they often learn best. There are feasts and powwows, chiefs and elders are invited to be guest speakers, and the district's leader has been to meetings of tribal chiefs from all across the province.

The district also introduced professional learning communities (PLCs), run by principals. These PLCs required teachers to share examples of their students' work, to engage in moderated marking, using common rubrics to try and improve students' writing, and to post data walls

of students' progress in their schools. Teachers did not always like these at first, but in time they were able to be more open about their students' learning and have more challenging conversations about how to improve their own teaching.

PLCs haven't always been popular with teachers. In a 2014 study in which the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation enlisted the help of the Boston Consulting Group, PLCs were one of the strategies most preferred by US administrators and professional development providers, but one of the least liked by teachers (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). As one of the teachers in this Northern district put it, school-level PLCs had been 'a very top-down kind of thing as opposed to collaborative, and did not support best practices.' It was time for teachers to run their own PLCs.

Steve is a teacher and an ice hockey coach. He is part of a students' hockey academy in the district that has been made famous on national TV news for increasing engagement among students. 'When you get a kid that's on that path that you're fearful of, and you can bring him back, and he's excited about it, that's why I'm here,' says Steve (Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, 2016). Steve and his colleagues noticed how students who often experienced little or no success in the regular school environment could display success, motivation, and even leadership on the ice. How could they transfer that into other environments of learning, educators wondered, including those in the regular school day?

We came across Steve and his interdisciplinary team, sitting around their laptops in their workroom, trying to identify the academic and non-academic skills that students in Grades 1 to 8 were displaying on the hockey rink, so that they could be made transferable into standards and rubrics for regular classroom settings. 'We're linking hockey to other areas of the curriculum,' Steve explained. 'So in science and math, we're able to study how the skate and stick are made, how the puck comes off the stick with such velocity,' and so on. 'We're taking hockey, we're connecting it to the curriculum, which is engaging the students, as well,' he continued.

Steve's group told the district that teachers were now ready to run their own PLCs – a practice that is now a district requirement. The PLCs are teacher-led, and they concentrate on the whole student and their learning, not just academic achievement. 'Asking questions about our indigenous and aboriginal student population, wondering why they are engaged in some subject areas or in some schools and not in others – that is a good PLC topic,' the district's director concluded.

Rural collaborative planning networks

'We all live in the sticks,' says Martha, a high school English Language Arts (ELA) teacher in a rural school in Washington State, USA, about the network of rural school educators to which she belongs. Schools like Martha's find it hard to get access to what can come so easily to teachers in towns and cities: other colleagues who teach your own grade level, share the same curriculum, or who can just come down the corridor to give some ideas, advice, or moral support if you're having a rough day. But 'in the sticks' teachers often find they have to do almost everything themselves.

Twice a year, Martha and her colleagues drive over mountain passes and across state lines to get to places like Spokane, Washington, where she and teachers and administrators from other rural schools

PLCs have not always been popular with teachers.

and communities convene for two days as members of the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) Network. During their two-or-so days in this small city, teachers from rural and remote schools in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington listen to presentations and share ideas about their students' learning. What has been expressed in survey responses as most beneficial, and what receives the greatest time allotment, is time when educators get together in unique groupings. These are job-alike groups of colleagues working with similar subjects or groups of students across their schools, such as maths teachers, kindergarten teachers, teachers of special needs, and school administrators. Opportunities to meet with like-colleagues are rare, which is why job-alike time in the network is so highly valued.

Student engagement, especially in rural schools, is the focus of the network. In the US, over 40 per cent of K–12 schools are located in rural communities (in Australia and New Zealand, the figure is closer to 10–15 per cent) (Battelle for Kids, 2016). 85 per cent of the persistently poor counties in the US (ones where 20 per cent of the population has lived below the poverty line for the last 30 years or more) are classified as rural counties (Cohen, 2014). Other challenges of rural American communities include weak economic development, chronic absenteeism, low educational aspirations, poor achievement, and low completion rates for high school and college.

In the US and elsewhere, student achievement is closely connected to student engagement. For teachers in the NW RISE Network, this means learning to work with and plan around what students and their rural communities have, as well as what they lack. It also means working with other rural teachers (and their students) to create the inspiration, ideas, curriculum and assessments that can bring their students' learning alive.

Chris Spriggs described how she, Martha, and another founding member of the ELA job-alike group got started. 'We had decided that we really, truly wanted to focus on student engagement, but that we wanted to focus on authentic learning,' she told us. For their first project together, Chris and the other group members chose to teach their 9th to 11th grade students how to write and defend an argument. These arguments focused on local topics, such as 1:1 technology adoption in their own schools or drone policies in their home communities, and involved writing to an authentic community-based audience, like their school technology committee or the state representative in their town.

Through activities like these, students learned about different genres and structures of writing, and about how to consider different writing purposes and audiences, especially in their rural communities. Most importantly, however, these writing projects connected the students across the schools, as well, so they could collaborate on their writing. Chris explained: the teachers 'put the kids together, and then they [we]re given a common peer editing rubric that they use to give feedback and post onto *Schoology* [a digital learning management system] for their peers to read.' Connecting students with students and having them write to an authentic audience ended up being transformative. As one student said, 'I took the project a lot more seriously. I thought I could be heard.'

In the US and elsewhere, student achievement is closely connected to student engagement.

The design of the NW RISE Network grew out of collaboration between State Education Agency (SEA) members and Education Northwest, with technical and strategic support from Boston College. Learning from global expertise and research on effective networks, the NW RISE Network was created to find better ways to serve remote, rural schools in their states.

Danette Parsley, Chief Program Officer at Education Northwest says this work is grounded in a central belief 'that teachers working with teachers is the most effective way that you can improve schools.'

Chris Spriggs agrees. 'It's completely changed my thinking,' she says. 'I've been so isolated as a teacher. I just have gotten used to being my own boss and doing what I want and making my decisions. And then I have to come here and hear ideas that don't necessarily go with mine and learn to be flexible and see others' perspectives.'

Lesson study

Imagine you have to teach a complicated lesson with a large class in front of a dozen visitors. The visitors have been instructed to give you feedback and you know that some of this will be critical in a very direct way, and will be presented in front of all the other visitors and your colleagues. How would this make you feel?

Welcome to Iris's 8th grade English class at Fanling Secondary School in Hong Kong, way out from the city, right on the border with mainland China. Iris is teaching her students how to write a formal email to a professional – the school's social worker – about a personal adolescent problem like name-calling. With her class of over 30 students, Iris's lesson consists of several precisely timed and sequenced components, and it moves at a blistering pace.

Since self-regulated learning was introduced into the first year of secondary school at Fanling five years ago, a lot of the learning has been organised into multiple steps, in which students demonstrate what they have been learning in real time. Students listen to the teacher, engage with questions set out on her whiteboard, work in pairs for 20 seconds to brainstorm adolescent problems worth writing about, and respond to the teacher's questions by jumping to attention and calling out 'let me try, let me try,' as they raise their hands enthusiastically. Then, in carefully designed mixed ability groups, they discuss how to express their problems formally, write them down on little shared chalkboards known as iBoards, circulate and give feedback to another group's iBoard writing, then present what they have learned in front of the whole class – all in about 50 minutes! The whole lesson flies by. It is a whirlwind of orchestrated activity.

The really remarkable thing is that Iris is teaching this complex class in front of a dozen or so visitors. Every year, on two occasions, Fanling opens around half of its classes to outside visitors – up to 100 or more of them. It is what the school calls *Open Class*. On the day Iris is teaching her class about formal emails, she and her colleagues – about 28 of them – are teaching in front of principals and teachers from other schools. Once each class is over, there is a post-*Open Class* 'conference' where visiting professionals are invited to give their feedback to Iris.

Some of the feedback is complimentary: the objectives and structure were very clear; there was lots of peer learning. More than a bit of the feedback is also unambiguously critical: Why did the teacher only call on a small number of students to volunteer answers? Was the pace of the lesson too

fast for some students? The lesson was brisk, but don't there also need to be quiet moments when the teacher can tap into what her students are thinking?

This is a lot of criticism for any teacher to endure, especially in public. Some teachers at Fanling remember what it felt like being observed when they were in other schools, or earlier in their career. One said that when she was 'very green' she 'got very upset about feedback.' So how does Fanling invite and manage all this criticism without destroying the confidence of its teachers?

First, Marco, the senior teacher leader, gives a PowerPoint presentation on their *Open Class* procedures to the visitors. He presents five essential principles and protocols of constructive professional feedback, to guide the observers: mutual respect, equal participation, focus on self-regulated learning, understanding the teacher's situation, and sharing honestly. The feedback is facilitated. No single person or point of view will dominate. The feedback will be neither too blunt nor too bland. Observers are directed to focus not on the personality of the teacher, but on the task they are performing. Marco and Iris divide the observers into groups – one concentrating on the objectives and the learning guides or workbooks; the other focusing on teaching strategies and student participation. The members of each group also get their own iBoards and write down four key ideas. The visitors are very engaged with the task and hang up their iBoards when they have finished, just like the students.

Iris is not just stoic about accepting criticism. She and her colleagues actively encourage and directly solicit it. Iris accepts it is easy to omit questions

from quiet students when others are so eager to respond. Marco explains how concentrating too much on formal grammar and vocabulary can limit other aspects of students' thinking. Everyone is learning. They 'share what they can learn from the visitors and celebrate the learning together.'

It is not only the protocols that create a positive feedback process, though. There is also the fact that this lesson is not Iris's lesson. At least, it's not **only** Iris's lesson. Marco has taught it. So have several colleagues in her department. The lesson belongs to all of them. They created, rehearsed and revised it together in the previous week. The lesson is a common product and responsibility. The successes and limitations belong to all of them. In Principal Yau's words, 'No one is perfect but the team can be.'

From professional collaboration to collaborative professionalism

The movement from professional collaboration to collaborative professionalism is a choice for some and a progression over time for many. In work with Dennis Shirley and a Boston College research team, for example, that examined developments in 10 Ontario school districts over a decade, we found, by accident, that the ways teachers worked together had developed significantly over time (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2018). In an influential Ontario policy document in 2005 called *Education for All*, for example, the term **professional learning community**, referred to

'No one is perfect but the team can be.'

*a way of operating that emphasizes the importance of **nurturing and celebrating** the work of each individual staff person and of **supporting** the collective engagement of staff in such activities as the development of a **shared** vision of schooling and learning, capacity building, problem identification, **learning** and about students, teaching, and learning identifying related issues and problems and **debating** strategies that could bring about real change in the organization.*

(Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, 2005)

Apart from the inclusion of debating, the definition of professional learning communities was one that involved nurturing, celebrating, supporting, sharing and learning. This kind of **professional collaboration** provides comfort and reassurance, while avoiding unpleasant or difficult subjects. It places a premium on the idea that all teachers are equal, which makes it hard for colleagues to acknowledge that expertise is hard-won, unevenly distributed, and warrants the respect that should be accorded to anyone with an impressive professional knowledge base.

More in tune with the principles of **collaborative professionalism**, and providing an important foundation for continued progress in the field, was the commitment to collective responsibility for all students' success. This was most evident in the sustained interaction between special education resource and classroom teachers and between special education and curriculum staff in the school board offices. Teachers used tools and protocols like anchor charts of key

curriculum ideas in a classroom, menus of strategies of differentiated instruction, and data walls that enabled better monitoring of student progress. 'Coaching at the elbow' enabled teachers to have the assistance of instructional coaches as they practised new strategies in literacy, though on one or two occasions there were concerns that the coaches were there more to ensure compliance with prescribed methods than to improve learning. Overall, though, professional collaboration tended to concentrate on discussing and reviewing new strategies, especially in relation to the foregrounded priority of literacy, and reviewing student progress on assessments posted on data walls.

By 2017, professional collaboration was transforming into collaborative professionalism. Educators remarked that their conversations were more focused and action-oriented. Collaborative inquiry is widespread in practice, strongly supported by Ministry policy and documents that provide guidance for educators, and continuously advocated by the thought leaders who are the province's ambassadors. Compared to the period around 2010, there is less use of data teams to manipulate test score results. Other areas of collaborative professionalism concentrate on areas like developing the curriculum to respond to cultural diversity, or focusing on a particular student of 'mystery' or 'wonder.' Teachers are more often the drivers of their own professional collaboration now.

This sort of movement towards stronger collaborative professionalism is evident in the case examples described in this paper, along five lines.

Teachers are more often the drivers of their own professional collaboration now.

1. *From* focusing on narrow learning and achievement goals *to* embracing wider purposes of learning and human development

The Ontario schools progressed from concentrating collaborative efforts mainly on achievement gaps and proficiency levels to considering ways of engaging students more fully with the assets of their own cultural knowledge and traditions. Students in the Pacific Northwest were introduced to writing assignments that were based on authentic issues in their own communities and that were shared with students from other rural communities. Teachers in Hong Kong used lesson study to receive feedback on the self-regulated learning that was designed to increase students' responsibility for their own learning and development.

2. *From* being confined to episodic meetings in specific times and places *to* becoming embedded into teachers' and administrators' everyday work practices

The job-alike groups in the Pacific Northwest network met for two in-person convenings a year, and also communicated, collaborated, and planned online between those meetings. The Ontario teachers used to meet in PLCs around achievement scores, raising expectations and examining pieces of student work. Now they collaborate more pervasively on how to increase students' engagement in their learning. In Hong Kong, collaboration and feedback are not just confined to two 'open class' sessions a year but are expressed in all other aspects of school life, including prospective teachers being asked to observe lessons and give feedback to experienced teacher leaders in the school.

3. *From* being imposed and managed by administrators and their purposes *to* being run by teachers in relation to issues identified by themselves

Ontario teachers seized the leadership of PLCs from school principals, once they were confident, and had a sense of collective efficacy that they knew how to work together so they could improve all their students' learning. The job-alike groups in the Pacific Northwest operated with their principals' knowledge but not with their interference. In Hong Kong, a more traditionally Confucian and hierarchical society, Principal Yau nonetheless supported a high degree of distributed leadership among her teachers as they engaged in lesson study planning together.

4. *From* comfortable or contrived conversations *to* challenging yet respectful dialogue about improvement

Hong Kong teachers used feedback protocols that ensured observers' comments were open and candid but not personally critical. Chris Spriggs in the Pacific Northwest ultimately welcomed hearing opinions that did not always agree with hers, provided they were focused on improving learning for students. The school district Director in Ontario used to drive up teachers' expectations from the top, but willingly handed over the leadership of PLCs to teachers when they were ready; and teachers themselves now felt they could walk into each other's classrooms and tell a colleague when they had 'goofed'.

5. *From* collaborating for students *to* collaborating with students

This pattern was not characteristic of all our cases but, in the Pacific Northwest, students gave each other feedback on their writing, sometimes across thousands of miles, in addition to their teachers collaborating on curriculum planning. Also, in a case we have not discussed here but that is in our book, in thousands of schools in the forests of Colombia, not only do teachers circulate their best ideas among each other but, as part of the methodology of improvement, students often give their teachers new ideas, too.

How can leaders help?

When the principle of collaborative professionalism was first negotiated between administrators and teachers in Ontario, the first thing that concerned everyone was the prospect of loss. Administrators feared loss of power and control. Teachers feared ceding control over what they could work on together, to administrators. But in the end, collaborative professionalism depended on many kinds of leadership from teachers and administrators alike. What did leaders do and what can leaders do now to support not just professional collaboration but deeper and more demanding collaborative professionalism? Here are seven ways to be a leader of collaborative professionalism.

1. Build slowly; act fast

We purposely chose collaborative designs that had been in existence for four or more years. What we did not expect to see was the presence of individual leaders who had been involved for many years – Veronica

Yau for 9 years as principal in Hong Kong; Sean Monteith for more than a decade as superintendent then director in his school district in Ontario; Chris Spriggs as a stepping-forward teacher leader from the very start of the NW RISE network. When you have built slowly, new things can happen more quickly – like open classes in Hong Kong, teacher-led PLCs in Ontario, or starting to involve students in the Pacific Northwest. Sprints are not successful without warming up, and data teams or learning walks have few prospects of success without prior attention to trust and relationships. Lead slowly before you lead quickly and understand that sometimes you will need to have a bad meeting where everyone can commiserate and get things off their chest before you have a good meeting that gets the job done.

2. Increasingly integrate formal and informal collaboration

Leaders often ask where they should start when they are trying to build better collaboration. Should they begin with meetings, ice-breaking activities or social events? The answer is to start somewhere, but not anywhere. Avoid highly threatening forms of collaboration like peer evaluation, critical feedback or team teaching until some level of trust has been established. Otherwise, however, you can begin with something structured, like a shared inquiry, something more informal like a staff lunch, or something in between like a book club. What matters is that over time, the formal and informal aspects of collaboration are woven more closely together, so that the trust is so high and the solidarity is so strong that teachers can engage in challenging dialogue about difficult issues together.

> not only do teachers circulate their best ideas among each other but, as part of the methodology of improvement, students often give their teachers new ideas too.

3. Use protocols to separate criticisms from critics

One of the reasons we often resist criticism is that we do not like the critic. Separate the criticism from the critic – like in the open class procedures in Hong Kong – and we are less likely to take criticism personally. One of the tasks of leaders is to invite criticism without it destroying the dynamics of the group and its capacity to improve. Protocols can be as old-fashioned as simple suggestion boxes or they can extend to the modern-day methods of lesson study. The NW RISE Network used red, yellow, and green paddles with sub-teams in steering committee planning meetings, to signal when they agreed with, disagreed with or were unsure about a proposed idea or decision. It is because people matter that we sometimes need protocols to structure the interaction among them so it will be open, inclusive and productive.

4. Allow people to collaborate in their own way

People are not all alike. They work differently, think differently and collaborate differently, too. In Colombia, teacher collaboration is passionate and also political. In Hong Kong, it is more deferential and restrained. These sorts of differences can occur within buildings as well as between countries. Not everyone enjoys ice-breaking activities. For some colleagues, book clubs can be a cerebral bore. Understand that people will not always work together in the way you want them to. Do not make the mistake of thinking that they do not want to collaborate at all. Figure out the way they like to collaborate best, and capitalise on it.

5. Do not let bad collaborative experiences poison the possibility for having good ones

One swallow does not make a summer; and one snow goose does not make a winter either. One bad experience with a student's parent who intimidates you, perhaps, should not lead you to avoid future interaction with all other parents. The same goes for collaboration. Every so often you will have a bad one – a committee member you cannot stand, a colleague who does not pull their weight, or a writing partner who thinks their work is beyond reproach. Andy has written or edited more than 30 books – most of them with other people. Three of these, around 10 per cent, were close to a collaborative nightmare, but this was not a reason to avoid collaborating on many other successful projects in the future. So we should persevere with collaboration just like we do with other things, and encourage our teachers to do the same.

6. Use technology to expand interaction

The pros and cons of technology in the classroom, or as a way to provide professional learning and development, are hotly debated. The strongest case for digital technology in education or life, however, is when it uniquely provides something of value that cannot be offered in any other way. Technology platforms enable teachers and students in small, remote schools in the Pacific Northwest and Northern Ontario to collaborate regularly when there is no other cost-effective way to do so. In Hong Kong, teachers post pictures of their blackboards, student writing or other artifacts on Whatsapp so colleagues,

parents and the principal can see them in real time, pick up ideas, and know what the students are doing. Some aspects of collaborative professionalism, especially across schools, definitely benefit from creative uses of digital technology.

7. Learn to let go

Last, how can leaders empower others to work together? Sometimes this can occur through invitation and encouragement. Sometimes it can be afforded by coaching and mentoring processes, or by provisions of scheduled time; but sometimes, one of the best ways to encourage the growth of leadership behind and beside us is simply to step out of the way. In the words of Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh, 'Fear is an element that prevents us from letting go. We're fearful that if we let go, we'll have nothing else to cling to. Letting go is a practice; it's an art.' (Hanh, 2012)

Collaborative professionalism is a necessity rather than an option in the schools of today. Our problems are so great and our goals are so complex in today's rapidly changing and uncertain world that we can no longer drive change from the top through stronger assessments, more specific standards or the establishment of teams and clusters to implement the relatively simple wishes of others. No profession, nor the people served by it, can progress without the ability and willingness of professionals to share their knowledge and expertise and to figure out complex problems of practice together. Learning for all requires teachers who can and will work together in relationships of trust and solidarity, using methods that have impact. It is the job of leaders of all kinds to help them do that.

> Some aspects of collaborative professionalism, especially across schools, definitely benefit from creative uses of digital technology.

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L–R: Andy Hargreaves and Michael T O'Connor

About the Authors

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About the Paper

The authors set out and comment on a number of different collaborative designs that are intended as structures and strategies to improve collaboration among educators in ways that enhance equity and excellence in student learning. They provide brief portraits of three international designs – a teacher-led professional learning community, a collaborative planning network, and a particular kind of lesson study – then draw conclusions about how they represent more robust forms of collaborative professionalism rather than mere professional collaboration. They conclude with a number of recommendations for school leaders in particular.

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