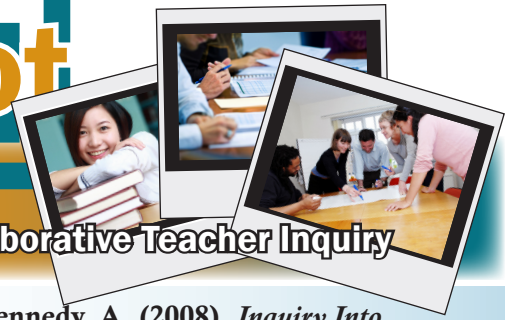


research snapshot

Inquiry Into Inquiry Into Inquiry:

Finding Out What Counts as Support in Supported Collaborative Teacher Inquiry



Source of Research: Slavit, D., Nelson, T., Laurence, W., & Kennedy, A. (2008). *Inquiry Into Inquiry Into Inquiry: Finding Out What Counts as Support in Supported Collaborative Teacher Inquiry*. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association (AERA) Conference.

What is this research about?

This research identifies supports essential to teachers engaging in collaborative inquiry. Focusing on how teachers conceptualized support and how specific supports influenced teachers' engagement in the process, the authors share themes from three case studies that illustrate secondary mathematics and science teachers' experiences.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers collected and analyzed data from a three-year professional development project involving 150 teachers in six rural and suburban school districts. Evidence included transcripts from PLC meetings, informal conversations, and interviews with teacher and administrator participants. After identifying themes present in individual cases the researchers conducted a cross-case analysis. Findings which outline: a) the degree to which supports were helpful; b) factors that influenced the potential and real impact of the supports; and c) missing supports that may have been useful to the teachers' inquiry work are presented.

What you need to know...

A one-size-fits-all model for supporting teacher collaborative inquiry does not exist.

Teacher leaders need facilitation support in regard to the inquiry processes of collaborative inquiry teams.

Successful teacher leaders had “knowledge and skills regarding the collaborative inquiry process, leadership abilities, strong group membership, administrative support, and a vision of external impact” (p. 28).

There is a need to “nurture existing resource networks in order to align teacher, school, and district initiatives in regard to purpose, processes, and expectations” (p. 31).

What did the researchers find?

Criterion-referenced state tests (similar to EQAO) and state content standards (curriculum grade level expectations) influenced and shaped teachers' collaborative inquiry.

- ✗ “(S)ate tests supported teachers' development of a focus that was meaningful to them and validated in the larger landscape of state standards” (p. 8) as inquiry questions were drawn from an test item analysis in conjunction with classroom-based evidence.
- ✗ The meaning of the grade level expectations were not “self-evident and teachers required a significant amount of time to construct a common understanding in just one area” (p. 14).
- ✗ Teachers' close examination of writing conclusions “stimulated ongoing reflection on and dialogue about their own understandings and expectations and helped them focus their teaching” (p. 14).
- ✗ Sustained dialogue about their inquiry provided a forum for teachers to construct common understanding of what students should know and be able to do.
- ✗ Time provided for collaboration allowed teachers to “delve deeply into the intentions” (p. 14) of the curriculum and determine ways to “elicit and examine student learning” (p. 14).

What supports do you need and/or utilize in order to ensure your collaborative inquiry is impactful?