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## ABSTRACT

This paper describes key aspects of a year-long study on the effectiveness of combining a professional development intervention in the form of a mentor teacher study group directed toward fostering educative mentoring with a research study to examine the study group's impact on professional learning about mentoring. The first section focuses on an urban elementary mentor teacher study group as a context for professional learning, which met for nine 2-3 hour sessions from September through April. Most of the sessions were devoted to analyzing artifacts of teachers' mentoring practice. This section describes a theoretical approach to understanding learning in communities of practice and presents an approach to analyzing professional learning resulting from interactive talk in the study group. Employing those theoretical and analytic perspectives, it then focuses on one example of the study group's work and examines how teachers used the study group as a context for joint construction of ideas about learning to teach and mentoring. The second section examines leadership for inquiry-oriented discourse and explores issues on initiating and sustaining collaborative learning in the study group. (Contains 22 references.) (SM)

A School-Based Mentor Teacher Study Group as a  
Context for Professional Learning

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School reform and reform efforts in teacher education are increasingly coming together as university teacher education programs extend prospective teachers' field experiences in schools. Spurred in part by a vision of professional development schools (Holmes Group 1986; Zeichner 1992; Darling-Hammond and Cobb 1997), new attention is being focused on the practice of mentoring in the context of reform-oriented teaching.

One outgrowth of this new attention is a growing recognition that mentoring novice teachers is a professional practice which needs to be learned. In its recent publication, What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future recommends that teacher education programs emphasize "preparing and supporting cooperating teachers and mentors so that they become excellent teachers of teachers and partners in the teacher education process"(Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996). This proposal presents a major professional development challenge for teacher educators and for the schools and mentor teachers with whom they work.

The visions of ambitious teaching advocated by reformers (Holmes Group 1986; Lord 1994; Ball and Cohen 1999) have the common aim of moving the conception of teaching away from the routine application of familiar strategies and knowledge and toward a conception of practice rooted in ongoing inquiry. To teach, according to

reformers' visions, is to continue learning in and from practice. "...A stance of inquiry should be central to the role of teacher"(Ball and Cohen 1999).

Mentoring to foster inquiry-oriented teaching must also take on a series of dimensions that parallel the challenges of reform-minded teaching. Feiman-Nemser (1998) has articulated one such vision with her conception of "educative mentoring." According to Feiman-Nemser, those who assume the practice of educative mentoring do the following:

- think about mentoring as a form of teaching and take on an educative role
- see novices as learners and attend to how they think and what they believe and to their ways of making sense of experience
- focus novices' attention on pupils' thinking and sense making
- have a vision of good teaching
- have a theory of learning to teach and a repertoire of mentoring moves

Taking on the practice of "educative mentoring" involves mentor teachers with many of the same commonly regarded elements of reform or standards-based teaching proposed for school reform – developing a deeper understanding of the subject matter (in this case, learning to teach), developing a solid repertoire of pedagogical content knowledge (mentoring practices), paying attention to students (prospective teachers) as learners, and developing a vision of good practice which informs one's ongoing professional learning.

This paper reports on key aspects of a year-long study conducted to pursue the challenge presented by the National Commission, combining a professional development intervention in the form of a mentor teacher study group directed toward fostering

educative mentoring, with a research study to examine the study group's impact on professional learning about mentoring practice. The professional development component of the study is consistent with the emerging consensus for effective professional development (Wilson and Berne 1999), combining professional learning situated in the mentoring practice of study group participants, a sustained and responsive effort to engage teachers in constructing their own understandings of that practice, and an ongoing study group of colleagues organized as a community of practice and striving toward "critical collegueship."

The first part of this paper focuses on a mentor teacher study group as a context for professional learning. It introduces the setting for the study, describes a theoretical approach to understanding learning in communities of practice, and presents an approach to analyzing professional learning resulting from interactive talk in the study group. Employing those theoretical and analytic perspectives, it then focuses on one example of the study group's work and examines how teachers were able to use the study group as a context for jointly constructing insights about learning to teach and mentoring. The second part of the paper examines leadership for inquiry-oriented discourse and explores issues in initiating and sustaining collaborative learning in the study group. With these features, the paper thus introduces potentially useful analytic tools to assess the nature and usefulness of teacher study groups as contexts for professional learning and identifies some of the crucial challenges and dilemmas associated with getting them started and helping them develop.

## A Mentor Teacher Study Group as a Context for Professional Learning

### Introducing Capitol Elementary School and the Michigan State University Teacher Education Program

The intervention and related study reported here take place at Capitol<sup>1</sup> Elementary School, an urban elementary school with a diverse enrollment of nearly 300 students in grades K-5. As a site for intensive work on developing teachers' capacities as school-based teacher educators, Capitol Elementary School features several important dimensions which make it both particularly suitable for and relevant to broader educational reform aims in the nation. The school serves a diverse student population and teachers and staff face key challenges representative of the national need to do a better job in developing urban schools as places in which to teach and learn. Teachers at Capitol are in the process of transforming their own teaching practice in ways that are consistent with national reform agendas cited previously. Integrating mentor teacher development activities into such a context represents the dual nature of the challenge presented by the National Commission (Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996).

The partnership between Michigan State University and Capitol Elementary School joins these features of the school with a large but reform-minded teacher education program. The organizational structure of the MSU teacher preparation program, with its cluster placement plan and with the assignment of a program liaison for ten hours per week to Capitol, focuses a critical mass of people and resources on teacher

education activities at the school. The presence of five teacher interns makes a significant impact at Capitol where there are essentially only twelve K-5 classrooms. In addition, the expectation of a long-term partnership between Capitol and the teacher education program makes the development of mentoring practices a more worthwhile long-term goal than would be the case if teacher interns were only placed there sporadically. Since joining with Michigan State in 1997, Capitol teachers have worked with five elementary interns each year. Teacher education work is thus an important part of daily life at the school. Finally, from the university teacher education program standpoint, the large scale of the MSU program represents a challenge common to many large universities across the country, seeking to develop high quality school-based teacher education experiences on a large scale.

#### The Collaborating Teacher Study Group (CTSG)

This study took place during the 1998-99 school year, the second year of Capitol's participation in MSU's teacher education program. Five teachers, plus the principal, John, agreed to take part in the Collaborating Teacher Study Group (CTSG). John ended up attending sporadically, as his other duties allowed him, although he was an enthusiastic supporter of the activity.

The study group met for nine two-three hour sessions from September to April. Most of the sessions were devoted to analyzing artifacts of our mentoring practice – typically videotapes and transcripts of planning sessions with interns, videotapes of interns' teaching, and videotapes and transcripts of post-teaching conferences with

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<sup>1</sup> "Capitol" and the names of CTSG participants are a pseudonyms.

interns. I created these artifacts in the course of my mentoring work with interns and CTs, and I designed the analytic tasks which guided our study of the artifacts in the study group. One way that I approached this territory of designing tasks to support mentor teachers' learning about mentoring was to link tasks of mentoring with fundamental tasks of teaching<sup>2</sup>. Given the inherent idea in educative mentoring that the mentoring relationship is situated in joint practice between mentor and novice, the kinds of activities or tasks which mentors need to develop are associated with modeling and then sharing the key tasks of teaching.

Table 1: Tasks of Teaching and Mentoring

Tasks of Teaching <sup>3</sup>	Tasks of Mentoring
Planning for teaching	Co-planning; joint work on intern's plans
Enacting plans	Observing & documenting intern's teaching
Assessing student learning	Joint analysis of student work
Analyzing teaching	Joint reflection on teaching
Learning in and from teaching	Assessing intern development & learning

As Table 1 indicates, if a key task of teaching involves planning for instruction, the mentor's work begins with "co-planning" with the novice around the mentor's own

<sup>2</sup> For this insight I am indebted to my mentor and colleague, Sharon Feiman-Nemser.

<sup>3</sup> This chart was jointly developed in work with colleagues Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Patricia Norman.



teaching. By modeling and talking out loud the mentor helps the novice learn about aspects of planning such as getting a deep understanding of the subject matter, exploring resources, planning appropriate learning activities, considering students' prior knowledge and experiences with the topic, and considering how to assess students' learning. As the novice's learning progresses, the context for this joint work gradually shifts from the mentor's teaching to the novice's. In similar fashion, the mentor introduces the novice to other key tasks of teaching, in each case beginning with the joint work situated in the mentor's own practice.

### Learning in the Context of Communities of Practice

In order to examine the collective learning experience resulting from the development of the CT study group, I have drawn upon socio-cultural theories of learning, especially Wenger's (1998) work in studying "communities of practice." As Wenger notes, communities of practice are everywhere. They come into being as persons carry on their lives in family, work, and school settings and participate with others in making sense of their experience. They are reflected in the way we organize ourselves, communicate with others, and participate in any kind of activity. The concept is useful in this context because it provides a way of focusing on the social nature of learning.

As Wenger notes, not all communities of practice promote learning or generate knowledge; some tend to reify existing viewpoints and practices and foster the status quo. Wenger asserts that as individuals participate in communities of practice, learning occurs as a result of negotiating new meaning through their engagement. Wenger sees this

impulse toward negotiating meaning through engagement in the world as a fundamental human predisposition. Wenger identifies two key elements of his theory of social learning: participation and reification. Participation entails a process of “taking part” as well as relations with others, thus it “suggests both action and connection” (Wenger 1998, p. 55). Reification refers to the process of representing experience by turning it into words or other artifacts. Thus, according to Wenger’s theory, our study group sessions held the potential to engage us in a dynamic interchange of participation and reification, through which we could gradually negotiate the meaning of our collective mentoring experience, and thus engage in collective professional learning.

#### Understanding the Educational Significance of Interactive Talk

Determining just what the link is between participation in study group discourse and subsequent changes in mentor teachers’ understanding / practice has been a recurrent dilemma for researchers, despite growing enthusiasm for study groups among professional developers (Wilson and Berne 1999; Heath 2000). Duckworth (1987), in particular, has written about this quality of interactive collegial talk, asserting that it links teaching with inquiry. The challenge for this study was to develop an analytic approach to capture the sense-making and inquiry-producing qualities of talk across numerous complex discussions to understand the circumstances which promoted learning. Because of the sequential nature of talk, participants reveal their sense-making in the way in which they respond to, build on, or extend one another’s talk (Goodwin, 1990). Educational researchers using conversation analysis techniques have made use of this fundamental quality of talk to understand certain kinds of teaching and learning in

classrooms, but are only beginning to apply it to peer interactions among colleagues (Wilson and Berne 1999).

Since I was interested in figuring out to what extent and how our talk influenced participants' learning, I wanted to better understand the structure of that talk and identify patterns across sessions. Examination revealed that two kinds of speech activities – analyzing artifacts of practice and sharing accounts of mentoring – characterized a large proportion of the talk in our sessions. I came to call these recurrent speech activities *participant structures*, borrowing and adapting an idea from Florio, Shultz, and Erickson (1982). These two kinds of talk invited different kinds of participation from study group members, and presented different kinds of rights and responsibilities for participants and for me as group leader facilitating the talk.

*Analyzing an artifact*, such as a transcript of a planning session, involved us in making collective sense of a common text with respect to the mentoring moves it featured and the indications of the intern's learning it described. This kind of talk structure invited participants to describe what they noticed about the artifact and to offer interpretations about its meaning. As group leader in this kind of session, I typically proposed an analytic task for studying the transcript, guided the talk through the transcript by focusing on particular passages, and provided periodic summaries of our insights.

When study group talk featured *sharing accounts of mentoring*, however, the talk was more informal and called for somewhat different kinds of participation. Participants had the opportunity to share narrative accounts of their own mentoring experience. Sometimes other participants elicited additional details about an account, asked probing questions about particular issues, or shared a related account of their own. My role as

leader was less direct and the group's access to the experience being described was dependent upon the thoroughness of the offered description or the willingness of the speaker to respond to questions.

To examine how participants' talk in taking part in these two kinds of participant structures engaged them in opportunities for learning about mentoring practice and introduced them to inquiry-oriented professional discourse, I used the idea of "participant frameworks" (Goodwin, 1990). O'Connor and Michaels (1993; 1996) studied interactive teaching practiced by teachers accomplished at engaging students in extended discussions. They applied Goodwin's construct of participant frameworks to study interactive group discussions in elementary science and math classes. Their research focused on what they refer to as "re-voicing" strategies, a kind of participant framework used by teachers to align students in various ways, with or in opposition to each other, and to particular academic (propositional) content. They documented how the teachers in their study used talk to reposition students' comments in ways that might clarify the message, direct it at other particular students, or connect it with teaching aims or purposes.

This dynamic construct of participant frameworks is well matched with the spontaneous evolution of discourse among experienced professional peers characteristic of the mentor teacher study group. At any given moment during a study group session, participants engaged each other in discourse which created participant frameworks, aligning individuals in relation to each other and particular propositional content about mentoring and inquiry, and assigning interaction roles and responsibilities. I identified the following five related forms of interactive talk in the transcripts of study group

sessions which I refer to collectively as “re-voicing moves.”<sup>4</sup> These re-voicing moves typically had the effect of introducing an inquiry perspective into our study group talk as speakers used them to engage others in considering ideas from different perspectives.

- *re-stating*: repeating an idea to invite additional attention or concurrence
- *re-conceptualizing*: developing or broadening an example into a more general idea
- *re-contextualizing*: shifting the perspectives brought to bear on it
- *recycling*: re-introducing an idea from earlier in the session to position it in relation to a current observation
- *making a warranted inference*<sup>5</sup>: to make an inference based on the previous speaker’s comment and implicitly invite concurrence or disagreement

While the participant framework construct allows for the close analysis of particular speech episodes, it also provides an analytic framework for examining a series of discussions among a stable group of colleagues over time. This is because individuals who come together regularly for discussion build a common repertoire of participant frameworks, such as the re-voicing moves described above, which they apply recurrently, although selectively and responsively, in different contexts. Thus, by examining to what extent and under what circumstances CTSG participants engaged in re-voicing moves across CTSG sessions I tracked the development of inquiry-oriented talk

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<sup>4</sup> The idea of “re-voicing” moves in general comes from Michaels & O’Connor (1993). The additional variations (restating, re-conceptualizing, re-contextualizing, and recycling are inspired by ideas in Cazden (1988)

<sup>5</sup> In a warranted inference, “the speaker is linking his/her utterance to that of the previous speaker and is making an inference that she believes to be warranted based on the previous utterance”(O’Connor & Michaels, 1993).

The participant framework construct also provided me with an analytic approach for bridging the two participant structures – analyzing artifacts of practice and sharing accounts of mentoring -- by describing recurrent speech forms in both participant structures. These two analytic constructs, participant frameworks and participant structures, thus provided a systematic way of analyzing how collaborative talk fostered learning in the CTSG. I will demonstrate the application of these analytic constructs to the examination of collaborative talk by focusing on an example from our work in the study group.

#### An Example of Learning Through Interactive Talk in the CTSG

One central outcome of our work across the year was developing the recognition that the experienced teacher's practice can become a key context for the novice's learning. At first glance, it may seem obvious that novice teachers would learn a great deal from the opportunity to observe an experienced teacher day in and day out as she teaches. However, as we had discovered, many interns have trouble making good use of this experience because they do not necessarily notice what is significant and cannot easily "get inside" the complex life of a classroom without assistance. Interns and other novices do not always see what we want them to see in classrooms. They also cannot easily tell what an experienced teacher is thinking about her teaching as it unfolds in the classroom, and what on-the-spot decisions she is making to adapt her plans to the situation. They may also have difficulty framing questions about what they see because the range of activities and details can be overwhelming.

CTs at Capitol came to appreciate these difficulties over the year and their conversation illustrates how they learned to take both practical and intellectual steps to “open up” their teaching to their interns. The excerpt below in Table 2 is from the 3/25 CTSG session, at which time we were working on summarizing and consolidating key insights we had developed across the year from the joint study of our mentoring practice. Our discussion was addressed at two guiding questions: “What do interns need to know and be able to do?” and “What can we do to support their learning?”

Table 2: An Illustration of Interactive Talk

CTSG 3/25 TRANSCRIPT

Pam: I mean the first thing that comes to my mind was observation... when they come in and they're first observing ... how to structure that so ... and I think that to some degree they're not going to be watching everything we want them to because they're not there yet but what kind of guidelines can we give them so they'll notice what's important?

Anne: One thing that worked really well for me last year with Kevin but did not work well this year... was ... he and I spent quite a lot of time where I was thinking out loud and going through my planning and saying how does this sound and he would bounce an idea off of me and I off of him and he entered into considering the ideas... of course at that point in time the decision was mine ... but he had a chance to see that thinking out loud process and we did that a lot.

Pam (asks an inaudible question)

Anne: So, instead of my just sitting there and doing what I normally do... I did it in front of him ... and we sort of talked as we went along, collecting ideas... throwing out ideas ... I did it all orally essentially and went through the step by step process of planning ... and he was participating in a way too... he came up with some ideas and he experienced that process... Now that was not happening this year.

Pam: Why do you think it didn't happen this year?

Anne: Well, with Brenda's situation... she didn't have time ... she had to get out of here... it just didn't work.... but I think it would have made for better planning later if we'd gone through that period because she would have gotten a better idea of how

(Topic switched briefly before Susan returns to this topic)

Susan: I did a lot of what Anne was describing... constantly talking out loud ... talking through what we were going to do and why...

Anne: And did he take... did she take notes ... Kevin last year took notes through all that ... and I said to him... jot down questions and then after school that's what we did ... we went back... he kind of de-briefed me

Pam: I like that

Susan: I think that's an important piece

Pam: Karen did that and I think we did that sort of thing for some... I don't know about Megan or Tammy?

Susan: Ben did that sort of thing when he came in .. but to have them write down questions...

Pam: Or us, asking them ... why do you think I did this instead of this? I mean if they're not being able... maybe that's the first checkpoint we should have... if they're not able to come up with observations and insights... well why did you decide to do this instead of this ... then we need to be asking them why

First, as Pam, Anne, and later Susan join into this conversation their statements are both an occasion for thinking and a reflection of the thinking each is doing. In this way, participating in such a conversation offers an opportunity for joining into a process of thinking. Examining the record of such a conversation offers the analyst a vantage point for studying participants' thinking and how it was influenced by the conversational interaction. In other words, it offers a perspective for examining their "negotiation of meaning"(Wenger 1998) in the course of participating in the talk.

Pam introduces the topic of observation by interns at the beginning of the school year. In doing so, Pam offers both a conjecture about interns as learners – "I think to some degree they're not going to be watching everything we want them to..." – and an



implicit inference about mentoring practice – that CTs will need to structure interns' experience by providing "guidelines" to help them "notice what's important." By ending her comments with the question, "what kind of guidelines can we give them...", Pam's remarks operate as a "participant framework"(Goodwin 1990), effectively opening up the next turn in the discussion to someone who will respond to that invitation. At the same time, the participant framework invoked by Pam's comment has the effect of inviting others participating in the discussion to consider her conjecture and implicit suggestion about practice, thus engaging them in thinking about these ideas.

In the brief interchange that follows Pam's opening remark, we see how Anne responds to the participant framework invoked by Pam's invitation and describes an approach to mentoring which she developed the previous year with her intern, Kevin, whereby she instituted a regular after school de-briefing time to help him understand her teaching. By putting these ideas on the table, Anne is herself invoking a participant framework, engaging other participants in considering a specific example about mentoring practice and, in so doing, she is clarifying and articulating a key underlying principle about mentoring as she describes it as a process of "thinking out loud." This latter idea is an example of how certain kinds of interactive talk have an inquiry content based on the way in which they invite others to move beyond the immediate description of particular circumstances or experiences to consider them from new perspectives or in light of larger ideas or principles, or in terms of underlying assumptions. By calling her activity "thinking out loud," Anne is highlighting the educational significance of her action as a mentor and conceptualizing it in relation to a broader principle of mentoring

practice. This use of the phrase “thinking out loud” also serves to “reify”(Wenger 1998) that idea in the collective practice of the group.

In response to Pam’s probing, Anne reveals that this de-briefing time has not worked so well this year because her current intern, Brenda, is unable to spend such expansive time with her after school. As this series of talking turns unfolds, we also see the development of what Edelsky (1993) calls a collaborative floor in the discussion. Each successive speaker is contributing to an evolving idea about helping interns learn from observing teaching. Conversations do not always develop in this way, in general, and in the CTSG. People do not necessarily make sense of and build upon one another’s ideas. They do not necessarily ask each other clarifying or probing questions, as Pam did in this instance, to elicit further description of an idea. When they do work collaboratively, however, and when they invoke participant frameworks that bring an inquiry orientation to the unfolding talk, participants in interactive talk have the potential of constructing joint knowledge, as we will see in the continuing analysis of this example.

Susan echoes Anne’s enthusiasm for the kind of talking out loud she has described. Anne counters with a question to emphasize the importance she places on having the intern write down notes during such conferences. Susan and Pam endorse this additional detail and Pam concludes the interchange with the idea that on some occasions it is important for the teacher to ask the intern directly about his or her observations or thinking if they are unable to come up with questions and observations on their own.

The idea of “talking out loud” is a basic strategy for helping a novice learn in the context of an experienced teacher’s practice, whether it be in the context of planning, or teaching, or reflecting after teaching. Unless the experienced teacher takes deliberate

steps to reveal her thinking to the novice, key aspects of the decision-making and other intellectual work involved in these fundamental tasks of teaching remain invisible to the novice (Tomlinson 1995, p.43). Anne and Susan were introduced to talking out loud the previous year when I worked with them with their first interns. We reminded each other of it at our September CTSG session as we analyzed an observation of Sandy, another study group member, working with her intern. Susan, Pam, and Anne then volunteered examples of their own subsequent efforts to implement the idea at the October CTSG session. In that October session, Susan added the idea of maintaining eye contact with her intern, Ben, while teaching, to signal him to pay particular attention to various aspects of what she was doing or saying. She also referred, at that time, to having Ben keep notes of such experiences.

Now, with Anne's anecdote, Susan is struck by the additional idea of having the intern "write down questions." For Susan, that phrase had come to have special meaning across the year. This idea recycles a suggestion she originally made back in September as we were discussing Sandy's intern, Megan, and her difficulties in "getting inside" Sandy's teaching. Later in the year, Susan ended up struggling to help her intern, Ben, learn the process of planning for instruction. Among the patterns of his experience which she came to recognize, with the help of her colleagues, was his tendency to make affirmative noises (uh huh's) as they were planning together, without really coming to understand what they were talking about. One of the insights she learned in the process of helping Ben was to insist that he articulate his own response to their conversations, including putting key elements in writing so she could see what sense he was actually making of their conversations.

In conjunction with this 'writing down questions' strategy, Pam also introduces the idea that there should be "checkpoints" to clarify our joint expectations and to alert CTs and myself about potential concerns about interns' learning. The idea of having the intern write down questions, and coining the term "checkpoints" to describe the emerging understanding among teachers that they needed to take an active role in assessing interns' learning from their mentors' practice, emerge at the end of this extended collaborative floor in the discussion. These ideas are also framed in language that invites either a collective warrant from the group, or continued revision. In essence, this process of negotiating the meaning of a collective instance of practice such as "talking out loud" represents a "regime of competence" (Wenger 1998) emerging in the CTSG. The participant framework construct offers an explanation for how the process of negotiating meaning occurs and a means of analyzing it.

With this one set of examples, we see how three individuals participating in interactive talk engaged each other in new thinking and joint knowledge construction. The initial idea of "talking out loud" became articulated in a series of related practical "mentoring moves" from literally talking through one's thinking, to having the intern keep notes of out-loud talking, to signaling the intern through "eye contact" while teaching, to occasionally asking questions or having the intern write down questions to test the understanding of the intern listening to the talk. By invoking participant frameworks in the course of interactive talk, three individuals also engaged each other in inquiry-related tasks associated with the intellectual work of teaching like identifying underlying principles and key features of learning experiences, re-cycling ideas from earlier experiences with practice to contribute to new contexts and generating mutually

warranted norms and expectations for a common practice of mentoring. In short, they have constructed joint knowledge about mentoring practice. In my further analysis of the data from the study group's work across the year, I identified thirty-eight such instances of extended collaborative conversational floors which led to the joint construction of mutually warranted ideas about mentoring practice. This capacity to serve as a kind of seed bed for the joint construction and mutual endorsement of ideas about practice seems to be an important potential of such study groups, and a key feature of professional communities of practice.

### Leadership for Inquiry-Oriented Professional Discourse

In this section, I shift perspective from examining how participants engaged in talk which led to professional learning, to analyzing the kinds of leadership moves which I made to enable such learning through collective inquiry-oriented talk. I begin by summarizing and analyzing the range of materials and associated learning tasks I generated for study group sessions. Next I examine the range of my own participation in the study group and consider my role in fostering inquiry-oriented discourse. I present three recurrent circumstances in study group talk and give examples of my participation in them. Finally, I summarize the interactive and dynamic demands of leadership for this kind of collective study group inquiry.

### Developing Materials of Practice and Learning Tasks For the Study Group

A key aspect of initiating and facilitating the kind of inquiry-oriented talk about practice which occurred in the CTSG involved generating materials of practice and

analytic tasks for investigating them. At this point, I am going to review the range of tasks and materials which I generated and we engaged in and draw implications for their purpose and usefulness in relation to promoting professional learning around mentoring practice. The majority of time spent in CTSG sessions involved either analyzing artifacts of practice or sharing accounts of mentoring. Since the latter activity consisted of spontaneous discussions, there were no prepared materials. Accordingly, to analyze the use of materials in the CTSG, the chart shown in Table 3 summarizes the CTSG sessions in which we analyzed artifacts of practice.

Table 3: CTSG Sessions Involving Analyzing Artifacts of Practice

Date	Materials	Analytic Task(s)	Purpose
9/16	-- Observation text of Sandy -- Interview notes with Megan	-- What do we notice about Sandy's teaching that would be important for an intern to "get inside" of? -- What did Megan notice?	-- Articulating a common vision of good teaching / what interns need to learn -- Considering one intern as a learner
11/19	-- Karen's teaching unit plan -- Instructor's feedback -- Pam's observation of teaching -- David's observation of teaching	-- What are the Karen's ideas about subject, planning/ teaching, children's learning -- What happens when she encounters others' perspectives?	-- Analyzing a student assignment -- Understanding her experience in negotiating among numerous perspectives
1/22	-- Transcript of a co-planning session in social studies featuring Megan, Sandy, and David	-- What kinds of work are Megan, Sandy, and David doing in the planning session? -- What is it that planning involves for a novice? -- What can we do to help them?	-- Analyzing a record of practice representing a central task of teaching & mentoring (planning/co-planning) -- Articulating and consolidating repertoire of ideas about mentoring in support of planning
2/16	-- Videotape of co-	-- What kinds of work	-- Analyzing a record of

	planning session in math featuring Megan, Sandy, David -- Prepared materials from teachers' guide for unit	are Megan, Sandy, and David doing in the planning session?	practice representing a central task of teaching & mentoring (planning/co-planning)
2/23	-- Videotapes of Megan's math teaching and of debriefing session with David -- Megan's lesson plan -- transcript of debriefing	-- Practicing observing using note-taking format -- What do we notice about Megan's teaching that we might want to talk with her about? -- How would we think about conducting a debriefing conversation with Megan about this teaching? -- What moves was David making in conducting the debriefing session with Megan?	-- Practicing key aspects of mentoring repertoire using artifacts of practice
3/9	-- Ben's unit planning notes -- Videotapes of co-planning, teaching, debriefing session featuring Ben and Susan -- Susan's observation notes from teaching	-- What did you notice about Susan and Ben in the planning session? -- What did you notice about Ben's teaching? -- What did you notice about the debriefing session?	-- Studying a case of mentoring practice featuring a planning, teaching, reflecting cycle

In considering this range of CTSG activities, three elements stand out, which are consistent with advice offered by Ball and Cohen (1999). In their proposal for a "pedagogy of professional development," Ball and Cohen assert that the materials of practice used for such professional development must 1) be "grounded in the activities of practice" 2) must provide "opportunities to investigate and construct knowledge central to teaching," and 3) must enable participants to "have encounters with very different practices... to broaden and diversify teachers' knowledge and create opportunities to see

new versions of teaching and learning, and to understand things differently”(Ball and Cohen 1999, pp. 15, 25). In translating this advice to apply to professional development in support of mentoring practice, it is useful to recall the chart illustrating the relationship between tasks of teaching and tasks of mentoring shown in Table 1, page 6. A considerable part of the practice of “educative mentoring,”(Feiman-Nemser 1998) according to this configuration, entails working with the novice to “get inside” the central tasks of teaching by “assisting his/her performance.”

In helping mentor teachers develop their practice then, professional learning needs to be grounded in key tasks of that practice. In reviewing the tasks undertaken in the CTSG in light of the chart in Table 1, we can see that the sessions from January-March focused on the three areas of mentoring tasks listed in Table 1 as co-planning, observing and documenting intern’s teaching, and joint reflection on teaching.

Reviewing the list of purposes associated with study group sessions listed in Table 5 also reveals recurrent opportunities for mentor teachers to work on constructing and articulating ideas about mentoring and a repertoire of mentoring practices. Developing these understandings enables mentor teachers to construct knowledge which is central to the practice of educative mentoring.

Ball and Cohen also refer to the need to make sure that teachers’ experiences are broadened and diversified through exposure to different approaches to practice. In the case of the CTSG, we generated all of the materials we used from our own practice. By joining with other participants in examining my own practice and making it available in the form of artifacts, the contrast between my own approach to mentoring and that of different teachers provided a considerable range of perspectives.



In analyzing records of my work, however, I was careful not to set it up as an example of “best practice.” On the contrary, I typically made specific criticisms of my own practice in the group to invite others to do the same. This did not require dissembling on my part. I began the year with a considerably underdeveloped understanding of how interns learn to plan. In working with various interns, I made numerous missteps and miscalculations, yet I also learned in the company of my CTSG colleagues. By joining in the examination of practice as a colleague with other participants, and by publicly recognizing myself as a learner in reflecting on my own practice, I was able to make my practice one of the contexts for our collective learning, without setting it up as a normative model.

#### Analyzing My Participation in the CTSG as Study Group Leader

In considering leadership issues in the CTSG, it is also useful to examine the range of my participation in CTSG sessions. My participation reflects the fact that I chose to engage in the study group as both a participant and discussion facilitator. This is a key element of the kind of leadership role I constructed for myself, and will play a part in the subsequent analysis.

Before proceeding with that analysis, however, it is important to consider another important dimension of the CTSG as a context for exploring discourse which fosters inquiry. In comparison with some other teacher study groups reported in the literature (Philadelphia Teachers' Learning Cooperative 1984; Cochran Smith 1993; Featherstone and Pfeiffer 1996) the CTSG was just venturing into the territory of inquiry, even by year's end. While we constructed important joint insights from our efforts, this is

essentially an account of getting the disposition toward and the capacity for collective inquiry underway. No doubt, other important dimensions of the relationship between discourse and inquiry would come into play in a group with more experience with and commitment to inquiry over time.

Earlier in the paper I presented an analysis of the way in which participant frameworks were invoked in the CTSG in the course of interactive talk, resulting under certain circumstances in inquiry-oriented talk about mentoring and the joint construction of ideas about mentoring practice. Now I want to revisit the context of that analysis and examine my role in promoting inquiry in CTSG sessions.

In order to do that, I reviewed a set of transcripts representative of our whole series of sessions, collecting and analyzing my own contributions to the discourse to characterize my contributions in a similar way to that presented in analyzing other participants' talk described previously. I noted a high frequency of "revoicing" moves on my part, as well as a pattern of making conjectures or inferences. In addition, there are several occasions when I modeled basic inquiry processes such as grounding comments in evidence, and inviting elaboration and conjectures from others. To consider more specifically how my participation in CTSG discourse fostered inquiry, I will examine three kinds of recurrent roles which I played: 1) facilitating analytic tasks, 2) talking "out loud" about my own mentoring moves, and 3) posing tasks to consolidate learning.

#### Facilitating analytic tasks.

Most typical of my role was simply creating and facilitating analytic tasks around artifacts or accounts of mentoring practice. The following example in Table 4 illustrates my role in the January session in getting other participants to interpret the meaning of our mentoring moves in a co-planning session among Sandy, her intern Megan, and myself, as documented in a transcript. Prior to this excerpt, Pam noted the “back and forth” pattern in the planning session, between investigating the big ideas and considering specific details of possible lessons. Susan had also previously articulated the idea that I was attempting to draw on Megan’s previous interests and successful experience.

Table 4: Getting Participants to Interpret the Meaning of a Mentoring Move

CTSG 1/22 TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTARY
David: What do you see going on on the top of page four.. the first half say?	David: Refocusing on task and text
Pam: That seemed like it was more <u>specifics</u>	Pam: Applying previous conjecture to next example
Susan: <u>Again</u> pulling in something she’s had success with too.. <u>you said</u>	Susan: Recycling David’s earlier comment in relation to new example
David: <u>Yeah..drawing on her success..</u> there’s more brainstorming of possible learning activities..... what happens further down the page?.....	David: Endorsing others’ comments and recycling “learning activities” language
Pam: Connecting it again to like Martin Luther King’s birthday	Pam: Cites new example
David: Yeah that sort of integrating it with other curriculum that’s going on.. we’re thinking about that....	David: Re-conceptualizing Pam’s example as “integrating it with other curriculum”
Pam: Back to activities at the bottom of that page.. like specifically some things you might do	

Susan: And materials Sandy has	
--------------------------------	--

In this example, we see how the analytic task of interpreting our mentoring moves enables me to position Susan and Pam in relation to ideas about mentoring. I call our collective attention to a specific episode in the artifact. A key part of our collective talk is to generate larger ideas and principles from the analysis of the artifact. If this had been an observation of someone teaching, as we examined in our September CTSG session, teachers would have been quick to interpret the teaching moves in terms of larger ideas and principles. However, in relation to mentoring practice, they were less ready to see the ideas and principles embedded in the event. By guiding the analysis of the artifact in this instance, I could use my comments to help others articulate some of the key ideas and principles implied by our talk. Pam had previously introduced the observation that we were focusing on “specifics” in the planning conversation. Now in this portion of our analysis, I deliberately echoed and endorsed that idea, but re-stated it as “working on specific learning activities.” I have come to refer to this kind of move, which functions as a participant framework, as a re-conceptualization of an idea. I have slightly enlarged Pam’s notion to emphasize a key aspect – that we were developing learning activities.

I make a similar move part way through this excerpt when Pam refers to Martin Luther King’s birthday. I re-conceptualize that comment as “integrating it with other curriculum.” This process of articulating our emerging observations publicly, and moving toward collectively warranted ways of describing the inherent ideas and principles, is what Wenger (1998) calls “reification.” He sees the processes of engaged participation and reification as mutually essential aspects of communities of practice

which foster learning. In this kind of professional study group, where habits of collective inquiry are just taking hold, the leader plays an essential role in fostering the reification process by recycling and re-conceptualizing important ideas and phrases.

### Talking “out loud”.

A second recurrent role that the joint analysis of an artifact or account of my own mentoring practice allowed me to play was to offer further interpretation of my own moves – to “talk out loud” myself. An example of that occurred a bit later in the discussion as we were focusing on a part of the transcript where Sandy described how she intended to link the observance of Martin Luther King day to the idea of “rights.” I was trying to help Megan understand some of the potential connections which could be made with that plan. My comment to Megan was quoted in the transcript of the planning session:

David: "Another way to say some of this is freedom and responsibility. That rights are to some extent similar to freedom... and carried to the extreme... if you've got freedom and not responsibility, that leads to ... if everybody is free to do whatever they want they get the impact of everybody else's freedom. But figuring out an example that hits them is hard.... I guess you're trying to instill in them some sense of responsibility for the consequences of their actions."

In the CTSG session, I called attention to that portion of the transcript, trying to further explain my purpose in terms of Megan’s learning needs, and to use this example to illustrate why planning needs to shift back and forth between “big ideas” and “specific learning activities.” In this example, I am making use of the same “talking out loud” idea about mentoring which we had developed for CTs, but using it with them to enable them to get inside my thinking as a mentor. In that sense, I am “talking out loud” with them to

explain the thinking behind my words as they appeared in the transcript of the planning session.

What happened to me was... you know this notion.. and I think partly in all this conversation around Martin Luther King ... the notion of freedom came to mind and it struck me that this is a related idea... how does that cross over and if she's going to be juggling these two curriculums that's something we ought to put on the table a little bit.. So that to me that's partly in response to what Pam was noticing that it makes sense that there should be a back and forth between planning particular activities and digging deeper into the ideas because you get an activity like the Martin Luther King thing and then that makes you think of an idea that you've got to go back and connect to it (CTSG 1/22 Transcript).

#### Posing tasks to consolidate learning.

After we completed our analysis of the planning session transcript, I made another choice in guiding our discussion, which is typical of a third kind of leadership strategy which I employed frequently. I felt that we had just come to some tentative collective insights about interns' needs in learning to plan, and I wanted to consolidate them more deliberately. Accordingly, I asked people at that point to try to articulate what I called a "curriculum for learning to plan." We did that and were able to pull together some key ideas. At the same time, I recognized that we were still coming at this territory from several different perspectives. Rather than push for consensus, I drafted notes after the session which attempted to capture some of the key issues and dilemmas we were contending with. An excerpt of those notes is included here.

#### Capitol CT Study Group

#### Questions / Issues From 1/22/99

#### Planning Sessions:

- when / how often to plan in detail; about what topics
- what sort of preparation should we do for planning sessions
- how can we conduct planning conversations to foster interns' learning

### Knowledge for Planning:

- what kinds of knowledge/experience do experienced teachers draw on in planning (of classrooms, materials, subject matter, kids, curriculum, etc.)
- what kind / how much subject matter knowledge is needed for good planning
- what challenges do interns face in planning / teaching so much for the first time

### Resources:

- Teachers' Guides; how to help interns make good use of them
- how to strike a balance between not reinventing the wheel and challenging interns to learn the process of planning

### Teaching For Understanding:

- when do you strive for deeper understanding and when not in teaching
- what expectations for student understanding are appropriate at different age levels
- what changes in expectations for teaching and learning are emerging from state curriculum frameworks, MEAP, etc.

- what does teaching for understanding entail / what does it look like

### Differing Assumptions About Learning to Teach:

- "so much of it just comes" (with experience)
- "you have basic knowledge from the book (teacher's guide) then things just come"
- "tear apart an idea and look deeply into it"
- "learn a process of planning"
- "wanting interns to get introduced to the profession with very high standards surrounding it"

In writing the notes, I deliberately reflected our continuing disagreements and uncertainties by framing questions we were still struggling with such as “when to strive for deeper understanding in teaching and when not?” or by literally noting our contradictory viewpoints, such as with assumptions about learning to teach. Nevertheless, it is an important function of leadership in this kind of activity to record the evolving ideas and circulate them back into the conversation.

### The Challenges of Providing Leadership for Interactive Talk

Earlier in this section, I explored the kinds of materials we used and the kinds of tasks we took on to explore mentoring practice jointly in the study group. As was evident

from that account, this kind of professional development occasion does not happen “spontaneously,” as Ball and Cohen note(1999). It requires considerable forethought and preparation, and the development of particular materials that will enable participants to engage in constructing understandings about core aspects of the practice. Following upon that preparation, we saw how particular kinds of leadership “moves” are needed in fostering, refocusing, sustaining, and consolidating inquiry, and thus the joint construction of knowledge among participants. With that backdrop, it is apparent how complex it is to conduct this kind of inquiry-oriented talk in a study group format. Leadership for this kind of activity requires a knowledge of the terrain of teaching in question, in this case, mentoring, in order to construct materials that address essential tasks of the practice. In setting up materials and analytic tasks for the CTSG, I gained a better sense of the importance of anticipating the nature of the teaching task in question, and how to examine what novices might experience in learning how to do it.

This kind of leadership also requires orchestrating such tasks flexibly, invoking inquiry norms and processes responsively, recognizing key ideas as they arise in participants’ comments, and maintaining an inquiry mode in managing the response to such issues. There is a repertoire to be developed around this kind of professional development practice, associated with the sorts of “revoicing” moves I identified, with the spontaneous posing of tasks to consolidate emerging understandings, and the related activities of summarizing talk and generating written notes to create texts of the groups’ evolving ideas. Finding the right words for “re-voicing” comments demands a blend of genuine curiosity about others’ ideas and a tactful command of language to present thoughts in respectful but clear terms. This goes beyond popular conceptions of “active



listening” where one might simply re-state what someone else has said. To be effective and helpful for others’ negotiation of meaning, the group leader’s revoicing comments need to pick up on larger patterns of ideas lurking in the details of the ongoing conversation and rebroadcast them in ways that enable new perspectives or apparent underlying principles to be apprehended.

In summing up, one key tension underlies nearly all of the contentious dimensions of this kind of hybrid professional developer/collaborative leader stance. It has to do with a tension inherent in the vision of teaching and learning which I am trying to promote. When thinking about my role as teacher of mentor teachers, I have a vision of “good teaching” and “good mentoring” which I am trying to advance. I built that into the plans I made for CTSG sessions, such as analyzing a transcript of a planning session. When I think about my vision of learning, I assume that learners need to construct their own understanding of ideas out of experience and they cannot simply be told what to do or how to perform as mentors. Yet when strong differences of value arose between myself as “teacher” and one or more of my CTSG colleagues as “learners,” it was all too easy to shift into a “persuading” mode, instead of trying to bring contentious ideas and values out in the open and seeking to understand them. I needed to work on ways of recognizing such moments and developing “moves” for working with them instead of butting against them. I think it requires confronting the fear that our differences will lead to an uncomfortable breakdown in relations, and instead finding confidence in seeking out others’ strongly held viewpoints. Alisa Belzer (1993, p. 283) has written thoughtfully about this dilemma. I think that is also what Bruner refers to when he proposes adopting a pragmatic view of knowledge in relation to examining values underlying educational

situations. He asserts that this leads to an unpacking of presuppositions in order to explore one's commitments, and to a view of knowledge as relative to perspective.

Pragmatist's Questions:

What would it be like to believe that?

What would I be committing myself to if I believed that?

How does this view affect my view of the world or my commitments to it?

(Bruner 1990)

Leaders of collaborative study groups need to become virtuosos in recognizing and proposing these questions.

Leadership for enacting inquiry-oriented professional development thus involves a series of interrelated dimensions which must be orchestrated responsively. The inquiry focus puts one's crucial attention on the learners and understanding the sense they are making, as Duckworth (1987) advises. Yet in order to be in a position to make such an effort, and to focus the learning on the right target, one must construct materials and make appropriate plans to enable participants to make sense of central activities of the practice under study. In the case of the CTSG, I was able to introduce different and contrasting artifacts of practice by making my own, as well as other participants' practice the context for our study. We also see how enacting this kind of inquiry-oriented practice requires a repertoire of "moves" to promote inquiry – moves which are easy to get wrong. It requires a flexible knowledge of the territory of practice under study to enable responsive facilitation of talk and the alignment and repositioning of participants with respect to each other and key ideas.

## Conclusion

If teacher education programs are to be able to address the challenge from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future to support teachers in becoming "excellent teachers of teachers" (Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996), they will need to develop strategies for helping teachers learn mentoring practice. This study has yielded key insights about the complexities of learning the demanding practice of "educative mentoring" (Feiman-Nemser 1998), a vision of mentoring particularly well-suited to reform-minded teaching. As with reform-minded teaching practice, part of the challenge in fostering educative mentoring is the lack of sufficient images of that practice or how it is learned. This work thus contributes to school-based teacher education reform by providing images and representations of inquiry-oriented mentoring practice and how it is learned.

The professional development effort described in this study was based upon several key dimensions of a new perspective on professional development, including situating learning in participants' practice, enabling participants to construct their own understandings, treating participants as colleagues and conducting professional learning in a collaborative format with ongoing and sustained interaction. This study now contributes to that new perspective about how to design and conduct effective professional development.

Although focused on developing teachers' understanding about and practice of mentoring, this study also offers wider insight about and provides an example of the kind of professional learning needed to promote inquiry-oriented practice more generally. Ball and Cohen (1999) have argued for the value of situating such learning in the context

of materials of practice, and have suggested ideas about the kind of discourse about such materials that would promote inquiry-oriented learning. In this study, we saw how, by fostering interactive talk around artifacts of mentoring practice, developed out of the practice of CTSG participants, we were able to jointly construct increasingly reliable understandings of mentoring practice. I examined the features of our talk which seemed to promote inquiry, particularly emphasizing the “re-voicing” strategies that had the effect of aligning participants in relation to each other and to ideas about mentoring.

I also focused upon the qualities and skills of leadership needed to promote inquiry-oriented professional learning. I analyzed the role that I played in developing materials of practice, in designing analytic tasks, in modeling re-voicing moves myself, and in directing the flow of conversation to promote inquiry. Taken together, these dimensions of the leadership role call attention to the challenges of finding or developing persons with the experience and capacity to fulfill such roles. As with other forms of inquiry-oriented practice, this practice of leadership also needs to be learned in and through practice. Hopefully, this account may be of use to others in venturing into that territory.

A final contribution of this study is to introduce a potentially useful analytic approach for studying how learning occurs through interactive talk. The constructs of participant structures and participant frameworks offer a promising approach to analyzing how participation in certain kinds of inquiry-oriented talk promotes learning, and to identifying evidence of such learning. In this case, I directed the focus of my use of the participant framework and structure constructs toward mentoring and inquiry content. In other cases, they could work equally well, I believe, to examine content around such

things as history learning or literacy instruction. Providing evidence of the link between reform-oriented professional learning opportunities focusing on discourse, such as teacher study groups, and participants' resulting learning, is a recognized need in current educational research (Wilson and Berne 1999). The usefulness of the analytic approach employed in this study warrants further investigation of these ideas in other contexts.

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