Experiences of Responsibility and Professionalism in an Educational Accountability Context

by

KIMBERLEY MACNEIL

B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2006

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Special Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

July 2013

©Kimberley MacNeil, 2013
Abstract

This research project sought to explore how individuals working within a particular accountability context perceived their roles and responsibilities related to their participation in an educational change initiative. Accountability policies are often invoked in order to achieve desired improvements across educational systems, but managerial accountability in particular too often fails to effect the change it is intended to promote. Professional accountability has been called for in response to the shortcomings of managerial accountability. However, solely relying on professional accountability may inadequately address the complexities of change, and has led some to call for a combination of managerial and professional accountability. Secondary analysis of interview data from a larger, existing, longitudinal case study was employed to investigate educators’ experiences of accountability in educational change. In the larger project, a case study design was used to examine how members of a professional learning community (PLC) in one urban, inclusive, and multicultural school district in British Columbia made changes to practice in support of students’ learning through reading (LTR). In a secondary analysis of interviews from that study, conducted with 40 participants ranging from classroom teachers, teacher consultants, school- and district- level administrators regarding their experiences related to the change initiative, the present study addressed the following two research questions. From stakeholders’ perspectives: (1) How was professional responsibility evidenced within a professional learning community? (2) What conditions supported teachers to build from, and act upon, their sense of professional responsibility within the context of a larger accountability structure? Findings suggested that (1) participants evidenced professional responsibility in the ways they committed to continuous learning/improvement and focused on student needs; and (2) conditions supportive of professional responsibility were related to working in trusting
relationships; availability of needed supports (e.g., from others, structures, resources, from different levels in the system); shared goals; and experiences of formalized accountability structures.
Preface

This thesis builds from secondary analysis of existing data from a longitudinal project. For the current study, I was the principal investigator and as such I was responsible for conceptualizing and undertaking this new, unique analysis of the data.

In the original project, Dr. Deborah Butler was the principal investigator and data were collected by Leyton Schnellert and Stephanie Higginson. The interview questions and procedures were set at that time, and ethical approval for the study was obtained. The research team published other manuscripts from this project, related to complementary but separable research questions (e.g., student self-regulated learning in literacy; teacher collaboration and professional development). I transcribed the interviews from the 2006-2007 year for this project, which was analyzed with other research questions in mind.

For this project, my analysis was consonant with parameters established in the previous ethical approval (B05-0673). I built from contextual descriptions of the project as constructed in prior reports, but I drew independently on existing data for my secondary analyses related to these particular questions. Throughout my preparation of this thesis, portions of this work (e.g., preliminary analyses) were presented at a national conference (CSSE, 2012) with myself as first author (MacNeil & Butler, 2012).
Table of Contents

Abstract................................................................................................................................. ii

Preface .................................................................................................................................. iv

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. v

List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... vii

List of Figures ....................................................................................................................... viii

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. ix

Chapter One - Introduction ................................................................................................. 1

  Background........................................................................................................................... 1

  Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study ........................................................... 1

  Forms of Accountability......................................................................................................... 2

  Structures that Support Teachers' Engagement in Educational Change ............................ 5

  The Present Study................................................................................................................ 7

Chapter Two - Literature Review ......................................................................................... 9

  Exploring Accountability...................................................................................................... 9

  Managerial Accountability..................................................................................................... 10

  Professional Accountability/Responsibility......................................................................... 21

  Blending Accountabilities..................................................................................................... 33

  Summary and Research Directions..................................................................................... 38

Chapter Three - Methodology ............................................................................................ 40

  Context ................................................................................................................................ 41

  Research Design ................................................................................................................... 46

  Participants............................................................................................................................ 47
Chapter 4 – Results ................................................................. 58

How was Professional Responsibility Evidenced within a Professional Learning Community? .... 58

What Conditions Supported Teachers to Build From, and Act Upon, their Sense of Professional
Responsibility? ................................................................. 75

Chapter 5: Discussion ............................................................................................................... 105

RQ1: How was Professional Responsibility Evidenced within a Professional Learning Community?
................................................................................................................................. 105

RQ2: What Conditions Supported Teachers to Build From, and Act Upon, their Sense of Professional
Responsibility within the Context of a Larger Accountability Structure? .................................. 108

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Directions .................................................................. 115

References ............................................................................................................................. 119

Appendix A ........................................................................................................................... 134
List of Tables

Table 1 Forms of accountability ................................................................. 23
Table 2 Participants in learning community .................................................. 50
Table 3 Goals set by participants ................................................................. 61
Table 4 How participants emphasized student need ....................................... 69
Table 5 Supports as described by participants in different roles ....................... 79
Table 6 Alignment of goals as described by participants ............................... 92
List of Figures

Figure 1  Reasons for blending managerial and professional accountability ..................34
Figure 2  The context of the current case study, formalized engagement and supportive
          structures .............................................................................................................42
Figure 3  Participant distribution categorized by school and role  .....................................49
Figure 4  Next steps as described by participants ............................................................66
Figure 5  Conceptualizing participants’ ways of emphasizing the importance of
          student need .......................................................................................................... 68
Figure 6  Experiences and perceptions of accountability as described by participant
          ............................................................................................................................99
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my peers, instructors and colleagues at UBC and in the larger educational community for inviting me into your conversations. You have motivated me to both listen and ask in ways richer than I ever could have on my own. In particular, I owe overwhelming thanks to Dr. Deborah Butler, who has been first and foremost, my teacher, providing me with unending support and previously unimagined opportunities. I would also like to thank Leyton Schnellert for offering support and advice in our brief and infrequent encounters, you are inspiring. Thanks also to Dr. Marion Porath and Dr. Janet Jamieson for participating as members of my committee and offering their helpful feedback.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for encouraging me to explore and persist. To my parents for giving me everything; my siblings for making weeknights fun; Vivienne for staying up late; Adam for talking ‘big picture’; Shelly and Ori for assuming I was on a trajectory I didn’t know existed; and Andrew for returning at the end to help with those last minute edits.
Chapter One - Introduction

Background

Accountability is a reasonable expectation to have of education systems for which there are moral and ethical considerations at stake (Møller, 2009). For example, it is reasonable to expect that teachers and schools be accountable for the learning of students; and that school-based administrators be accountable for providing appropriate supports to teachers. Sinclair (1995) argues that there is general agreement that accountability is needed, but that it is the definitions and the perceptions of how it is provided that require resolution.

In educational contexts, accountability mechanisms are commonly established in order to promote hoped for improvements in teaching and learning. However, problems persist in accountability systems if they do little to effect the positive changes they are meant to achieve, or if they have negative effects on groups and individuals within the system. In response to this issue, this study is rooted in literature which suggests that providing support for teachers that allows them opportunities to make changes in practice and ‘space’ to have a voice in how changes are enacted, while at the same time satisfying accountability demands, may promote needed changes in education (e.g., Codd, 2005; Day, 2002; Day & Smethem, 2009; Goertz & Duffy, 2003; Hargreaves, 1994; Møller, 2009).

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

The dominant form of accountability in education today falls into what Sinclair (1995) identifies as managerial accountability (see also Biesta, 2004). She describes this form as a model in which those with formalized authority are required to answer to higher-ups for producing outputs or for using resources to achieve specific objectives. Despite research that suggests managerial forms of accountability do little to promote the educational changes as
intended (e.g., Codd, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Helgoy & Homme, 2007; Lasky, 2005; Lauerman & Karabenick, 2011; Sloan, 2007), there has been an upsurge in their use as prospective change catalysts in the last few decades (Anderson, Leithwood, & Strauss, 2010; Day & Smethem, 2009; Goertz & Duffy, 2003; Møller, 2009).

Approaches that build from teachers’ sense of professional responsibility have been proposed as an alternative in part because they attend to the complexities of teaching and learning in ways that are oversimplified by managerial accountability mechanisms (Kelchtermans, 2011). Accountability frameworks that build from and support teachers’ sense of professionalism and responsibility may better address issues such as agency, commitment, collegiality and teacher capacity building that may otherwise be neglected. But further research is being called for on how individuals experience accountability demands within change initiatives in relation to their sense of professionalism and responsibility (Camburn, 2010; Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor, & Cardarelli, 2010).

In response to those calls, this study was designed to investigate how local contexts can allow teachers discretionary space and establish supportive conditions in ways that foster teachers’ opportunities to exercise professional responsibility within a given accountability context. By investigating teachers’ and educational leaders’ experiences of accountability policies and change initiatives, this research sheds light on how alternatives to managerial accountability frameworks can be established.

**Forms of Accountability**

The hope in reform efforts that establish managerial forms of accountability is not simply that outcomes will be documented, but also that expectations to report on outcomes will spur educational change and motivate teachers to aspire to higher achievement for their students.
(Popham, 1987; Spady, 1988). Unfortunately, such reform efforts have often been found to be largely ineffective and wrought with unintended negative consequences (e.g., Hursh, 2005; Jones, 2007; O’Day, 2002; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). One problem is that managerial accountability overemphasizes evaluation and underinvests in teachers (Møller, 2009), thereby neglecting to take into consideration the centrally important role teachers occupy in educational change efforts (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Furthermore, managerial accountability can have negative effects on teachers, including high turnover in low-performing schools (Clotfelter et al., 2004), decreased morale and increased sense of job stress (Jones et al., 1999), and decreased sense of agency (Lasky, 2005; Sloan, 2007). Such programs of accountability often simply judge people as responsible, rather than motivate them to feel responsible (Lauerman & Karabenick, 2011).

As a response to the shortcomings of managerial accountability frameworks, forms of accountability that position teachers as responsible professionals acting in professionally accountable ways have been described as a promising alternative (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Debard & Kubow, 2002; Sahlberg, 2010). Sinclair (1995) identifies professional accountability as a model in which people are committed to a community of professionals and perceive a duty to uphold shared professional standards. Focusing on professionalism “draws attention both to instructional practice (agents’ strategies) and to teachers’ collective responsibility for student learning (outcomes)” and emphasizes the importance of the professional’s knowledge and skills in relation to effecting changes in students’ learning (O’Day, 2002, p. 21).

Frameworks that emphasize professional responsibility highlight the complexities of teaching and learning, and as such, shift attention away from testing and judging as the primary means for promoting change. But in this kind of accountability framework, a key challenge is
for leaders to recognize and provide conditions that enable teachers to build from their sense of professional responsibility. Such recognition and provisions necessarily require that leaders understand and are sensitive to the needs of responsible professionals in complex change initiatives. For example, a key component of professionalism is that professionals commit to continual learning in order to best address students’ needs. In frameworks that highlight professional responsibility, leaders are thus implicated as supporters of professional learning opportunities, which may require them to provide the structural conditions necessary for teachers to access learning support. Furthermore, teachers require the ‘space’ necessary to shape, monitor, and adapt their instruction in accordance with emerging evidence about students’ learning needs. To that end, solely relying on professional responsibility can also be inadequate in effecting positive gains for students, particularly if teachers are not supported to make links between shifts in their practice and desired learning outcomes. So what is required is that teachers, when making changes, are supported to monitor outcomes and reflect on and adjust instruction in order to nurture student progress. Such a cycle implicates assessment as a key component of change initiatives that emphasize professional responsibility.

Most recently calls are for a blend of both managerial and professional forms of accountability (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2005; Møller, 2009; O’Day, 2002), juxtaposed in ways that accommodate the complexities associated with promoting change in education. Importantly, emerging evidence suggests that we need to pay careful attention to how these different conceptualizations of accountability can be taken up in tandem by stakeholders (e.g., Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Blending managerial and professional accountability has the potential to highlight the need for all players in an educational system to be mutually responsible. Managerial accountability systems typically hold schools and districts solely responsible for
outcomes, whereas blended approaches have the potential to address needs across the system, including the underinvestment by governing bodies in building human capacities. Such reciprocal responsibility might spur the examination of the effectiveness of both inputs and outputs (Møller, 2009). Effectively investing in the professionals who work directly with students is not just an issue of time and money, but also requires acknowledgement of teachers’ roles as agents, rather than objects, of change (Borko, 2004). Doing so necessitates careful and thoughtful consideration of conditions that support teachers as professionals and their vital role in improvement efforts.

Building from these emerging trends, this research explored the interplay between managerial and professional accountability as conceptualized and enacted by stakeholders (e.g., teachers; school- and district-level leaders) who were working to better foster adolescent literacy within a multi-leveled educational system. More specifically, this research examined the important relationship between systemic structures and dimensions of professionalism (i.e., trust, responsibility to meet students’ learning needs, commitment to continued improvement, accountability, shared sense of responsibility across layers of an educational system) as experienced by members of a professional learning community within a multi-layered accountability context.

**Structures that Support Teachers’ Engagement in Educational Change**

Effective professional development has been found to foster changes in instruction at the classroom level (e.g., Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Suk Yoon, 2001). In particular, professional learning communities (PLCs) are designed to foster collaboration and continuous learning among teachers in ways that promote improvement (Mullen & Schunk, 2010). PLCs have the potential to mobilize the norms associated with professional responsibility in practice
through an emphasis on particular conditions. First, because PLCs operate as whole-school learning sites they require that leaders and teachers set common goals that shape decisions about how to support student and teacher learning. Second, PLCs assume that collaboration is a necessary condition for meeting learners’ needs and school-based personnel commit, as team members, to improve their school through mentoring of one another and instructional learning. Third, members of PLCs often engage in inquiry-oriented professional learning, incorporating assessment and research-supported teaching strategies. A fourth condition rests on establishing a community supportive of risk taking and idea sharing (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, as cited in Mullen & Schunk, 2010). Because the goals of PLCs incorporate organizational and cultural change in service of improvement, they require collaboration among teachers and administrators alike (Mullen & Schunk, 2010).

Key, also, is to understand how data and goal setting can be productively aligned between classrooms and public accountability mechanisms. Prior research suggests that an overemphasis on data has been problematic in educational change initiatives. Further, teachers may not necessarily access, interpret and act on data in ways that promote intended improvements in student learning outcomes, particularly if collected “summatively” at the end of a school year (O’Day, 2002). However, data can serve to spur professionals to engage in improvement-oriented instruction (e.g., Butler & Schnellert, 2012). Yet, how it is taken-up by teachers and instantiated by leaders shapes the degree to which it may be a factor in achieving desired student learning outcomes (Anderson et al., 2010). Providing teachers with the time to collaboratively interpret data as well as the freedom and flexibility to make instructional changes based on data have been identified as crucial conditions for the effective use of data (Datnow, 2011). Thus, by exploring teachers’ experiences surrounding assessment practices (i.e., the how of data use), this
research examined teachers’ perspectives about both data use and the supportive conditions that may have afforded and/or hindered their use of data in productive ways. Further, the current study considered how leaders understood their role in supporting data use as well as their roles as auditees in the provincial accountability framework.

**The Present Study**

In sum, this study focused on exploring stakeholders’ perceptions and enactments of professional responsibility as well as conditions that may have afforded and/or hindered change efforts within a given accountability context. In so doing, this study contributes to understanding whether and how frameworks that allow for teachers to build from their sense of professional responsibility while at the same time satisfying demands for accountability may address the complexities of change.

The change initiative under study was taking place in an inclusive, multicultural, urban school district. Building from an upwelling of interest across schools, the district’s goal was to foster adolescents’ learning through reading (LTR). As part of their adolescent literacy project, the district provided support for teachers to collect Fall and Spring data so that they might guide practice and monitor student learning outcomes. However, district leaders also valued establishing a context that facilitated local decision-making (i.e., in schools) and fostered teachers’ professional learning. Thus, members in the district established and nurtured a PLC in which teachers collected, interpreted, and built from data together. The present study explored how stakeholders were experiencing their respective roles and responsibilities, in the context of this overall change initiative, and in relation to the PLC established therein.

This study drew from data collected on this change initiative as part of a multi-year project. In previous years analyses focused on (1) how teachers engaged in collaboration and
inquiry; (2) shifts in teachers’ professional learning and practice; and (3) outcomes for learners. To complement those previous analyses, this study drew from interview data collected in the last year of the project. In that final year, the project was designed to examine stakeholders’ relative roles and responsibilities in the change initiative. In that year, interviews were conducted with 40 individuals drawn from across layers of the system, including district- and school-based leaders and educators. In the present study, secondary analysis of these interview data was conducted to address the following two research questions. From stakeholders’ perspectives: (1) How was professional responsibility evidenced within a professional learning community? (2) What conditions supported teachers to build from, and act upon, their sense of professional responsibility within the context of a larger accountability structure?
Chapter Two - Literature Review

The literature review begins with a rationale for exploring accountability within the context of education. Next, the usefulness and limitations of managerial and professional accountability are examined in relation to school improvement efforts. Finally, emerging understandings of the promise of blending managerial and professional accountability are highlighted.

Exploring Accountability

Accountability is defined in diverse ways in the public sector (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007) however, in its original economic context, accountability simply referred to the obligation an auditee had to present auditable accounts to an auditor (Charlton, 2002). This earlier clarity lies in stark contrast to current understandings and applications of the concept of accountability. The now muddily defined construct can be, and often is, glossed over in ways that oversimplify the complexities of the public policy issues accountability is intended to address. At the same time, it is the subject of much analysis and investigation in research across multiple disciplines. Despite the elusiveness of agreed-upon understandings of accountability (Sinclair, 1995), the phrase ‘school accountability’ is so well known to members of the education system that conversations about its meaning and application can be rare, particularly for busy educators (Ng, 2012). This can be problematic, in part, because accountability is a pervasive and contentious issue in education. Therefore, it is important that educators and stakeholders alike engage in building more sophisticated conceptualizations of accountability that might trouble simplistic uses and understandings.

Furthermore, because of the “persistent belief that ... problems could be resolved or at least better managed if the nation’s schools and those who teach in them were more
‘accountable’” (Wagner, 1989, p. 1), it is important to nuance conceptualizations of accountability in ways that extend the rhetoric beyond accountability as “all-good” or “all-bad” (Sloan, 2006, p. 119). Such oversimplified discussions do little to indicate how accountability contexts influence teachers’ experiences of agency, trust, and professionalism, which are key to understanding and designing effective school improvement efforts (Sloan, 2006). Therefore, this research responds to calls for more nuanced explorations of teachers’ experiences because they are part of an overarching accountability context (Camburn, 2010).

**Managerial Accountability**

Despite the variety of approaches to, and purposes of, accountability around the world, many countries have shared a marked increase in calls for accountability in the last few decades. Leithwood, Edge, and Jantzi (1999) point to the confluence of sharp increases in calls for school accountability in the 1960s and 1970s across developed countries. While the reasons for calls to account vary, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and Canada have been described as being similarly influenced by New Right thinking. New Right thinking was typified by policies that prioritized moderating budgets. For example, in the mid-1970s, voting patterns and public opinion polls in the United States illustrated a shift away from concerns regarding the adequacy of school facilities and teacher qualifications. Calls increasingly came for reduced educational spending and demands that teachers account for school effectiveness, particularly in response to requests for increased funding. At the same time, business models were being proposed as more efficient and effective ways of managing schools in order to achieve desired outcomes (Wagner, 1989). This emphasis on outcomes fit well with a changing economic landscape that encouraged nations to be globally competitive, thus necessitating a prepared workforce (Codd, 2005).
Sinclair (1995) refers to accountability approaches that complement New Right Thinking as managerial, which are based on both the intent to manage effectiveness in addition to an emphasis on the importance of outputs. Managerial accountability, also referred to as bureaucratic accountability (O’Day, 2002), requires that those with delegated authority answer to higher-ups for performance, thus positioning stakeholders in hegemonic relationships. Sinclair’s definition of managerial accountability indicates who is answering to whom (subordinate to authority) and for what (outcomes). Further, managerial accountability mechanisms are often invoked as mediators of change in an effort to improve schools. Such mechanisms may be problematic when based on the assumption that people need to be controlled in order to work in a competent manner, despite evidence demonstrating that employees find satisfaction from working effectively and are encouraged by opportunities for learning and responsibility (Deming, Senge, as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2005). In these ways, and others, managerial accountability has been described as being deficient in achieving the broader aims of accountability.

Problems with managerial accountability. Managerial accountability represents a narrow orientation towards ensuring standards and effecting change in education systems. As an approach, it has been criticized for its inability to mobilize positive change (e.g., Sahlberg, 2010) and its propensity to have a negative effect on teaching and learning (e.g., O’Day, 2002).

Data. Managerial accountability typically relies on outcome-oriented approaches to accountability and school change, foregrounding the role of summative evaluation (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Møller, 2009). This particular emphasis on evaluation and reporting of outcomes reflects demands for public schools to demonstrate their abilities to prepare students (Anderson et al., 2010) and is motivated by the assumption that assessment will alter the
behaviours of educators (Darling-Hammond, 1994). The uni-dimensional use of data as a medium through which to demonstrate achievement inadequately addresses the complex demands of improvement efforts related to teaching and learning. This is evidenced in the scarcity of research citing the benefits of large-scale, summative assessments for shifting classroom practice (Koretz as cited in Anderson et al., 2010; O’Day, 2002) in contrast to examples citing the importance of assessment and data that can be used formatively for improving teaching and learning (O’Day, 2002; Schnellert, Butler & Higginson, 2008).

Significant investments of energy, money and time are devoted to large-scale assessments, which might seem useful for providing a snapshot of performance at a systems level and targeting where change might be needed. However, these forms of assessment incur minimal return in actually driving change, in part because they are difficult to interpret in ways that are useful for improving instruction (Nagy, 2000). O’Day (2002) has argued that the information produced as part of accountability initiatives is inadequate to promote adaptation and learning. She notes that both the periodicity and grain size of many testing regimes are inappropriately matched to the level and purposes of the intended use of tests. Tests are often conducted in the springtime at which point it is late for educators to respond instructionally to the information generated by tests. Additionally, the assessments often provide a profile of general school needs that may be valuable at a systems level, but lack the specificity that would help educators respond dynamically to individual students’ needs. For example, Jones and Egley (2004) studied how teachers responded to a test-based accountability initiative in Florida and found that teachers reported feeling that “formulaic approaches have stifled their teaching ability and creativity, including limiting their ability to meet the learning needs of students” (Jones,
This example demonstrates how standardized testing may serve to decrease teachers’ sense of capacity and control over meeting the needs of learners in their classrooms.

Examining the ways in which large-scale testing practices are inadequate might allow for considering how assessment practices might better serve to support change and improvement. This refocusing may promote a shift from conceptualizing testing as an “all-bad” feature of “all-bad” managerial accountability towards an understanding of the ways in which information might usefully serve improvement efforts. For example, assessment data that are used formatively by teachers in classrooms can be beneficial if they reveal information about student learning needs and also spur instructional improvements. Such understandings may serve to foreground the important role teachers occupy in improvement efforts. Improving student learning is integral to purposes for accountability policies, while the measurement of students’ learning often comprises the accountability policy itself (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Planning assessments that can be taken up in ways that are useful for teachers (e.g., Schnellert, Butler & Higginson, 2008) is an important consideration for stakeholders designing accountability policies intended to promote improvements in teaching and learning.

**Trust.** Accountability initiatives that are managerial in nature may assume that the responsibility for change lies with those who are external to teaching. A reliance on testing and the requirement that teachers answer to outside agencies communicates the assumption that “politicians must do for education what educators have presumably refused to do” (Debard & Kubow, 2002, p. 302) and that teachers cannot be trusted to make competent decisions about students’ abilities and potential achievement levels (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Likewise, Helgoy and Homme (2007) write that trust in professionals has declined and has been replaced by external mechanisms “designed to secure the standardization and quality of professional
practice” (p. 234). These mechanisms imply a distrust in teachers’ willingness to be active agents in educational improvements. However, trust is an important contributing factor to processes associated with promoting positive changes in schools. For example, trust can enhance communication and cooperation among people (Baier as cited in Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) and foster communities that are professional and committed to learning and improvement (e.g., Cranston, 2011). Thus, research identifies trust as an important factor in improvement efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), one that is worthy of further exploration within the context of improvement efforts.

The United States has attempted to catalyze changes by invoking the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. NCLB is based, in part, on the assumption that testing structures and correlated losses of resources and threats of sanctions will drive school improvement. Daly (2009) draws on the idea that such a context, with its focus on performance and threat, may hinder a system’s ability to respond adaptively to NCLB demands (Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1997; Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). He builds from Staw et al.’s (1981) threat-rigidity thesis which:

postulates that when faced with significant perceived threat, organizations (like individuals) may close down, reduce information flow, engage in poor decision making, and limit divergent views. Under a perceived threat, organizations often create rigid hierarchical systems, centralize top-down decision making, limit access to information, enact habituated/stereotyped responses, and stifle divergent views. These rigid responses to threat may inhibit innovation, creative responses, and input from a variety of perspectives. (p. 204)
Such rigid responses may stifle teachers’ willingness and ability to respond to students’ diverse learning needs. Therefore, Daly (2009) examined the perceptions of teachers in schools deemed performance improvement schools (PI) as compared to those of teachers in schools that were meeting demanded goals. PI schools had failed to meet yearly progress goals and were to undergo successive sanctions, possibly resulting in a reconstituted school. PI schools were found to exhibit threat-rigid responses rather than adaptive, problem-solving responses. Daly further investigated the degree to which trust was a possible predictor of threat-rigid responses and found that teachers in PI schools perceived significantly less trust than did teachers in non-PI schools. However, supportive climates that promoted important facets of trust (i.e., openness and risk-taking) in PI schools mitigated threat-rigid responses in ways that promoted flexible responses, bolstering organizational capacity to promote positive change.

Similarly, Seashore Louis (2007) studied five districts that were implementing a change initiative. She described two of the districts as high-trust environments, while three of the districts were characterized as low-trust environments. The aims of the initiative were to build organizational processes around specific principles derived from business management literature, a subject that may have been controversial among educators, particularly due to its emphasis on performance. Interestingly, in high-trust districts the principles of the initiative evoked responses from teachers indicating that they felt the district could be “relied on to ‘do the right thing’” (p. 19) and that the goals of the initiative were in line with their schools’ needs. By contrast, in the low trust districts teachers spoke of systemic unfairness and mistrust regarding perceptions that the processes were manipulating school personnel and being used as a form of punishment. She suggests that trust is a precondition for enacting change. Because distrust was characteristic in two of the districts prior to the initiative, the change initiative was viewed as exacerbating
existing issues of mistrust. In this research, Seashore Louis illustrates the complex interrelationship between potential change and trust. The relative openness to change in each of the various districts was not due to differences in the content of the change initiative or ground-up versus top-down approaches, but rather existing cultures and patterns of interaction.

There is an abundance of literature that illustrates how mistrust may be communicated through accountability mechanisms and/or exacerbated by change initiatives, leading to hampered improvement efforts (e.g., Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). However, Daly (2009) and Seashore Louis (2007) extend this literature by analyzing how trust is both affected by, and has an effect on, change efforts. This line of research is important because understanding how people experience trust in top-down change efforts and outcome-emphasized accountability contexts may impact how change agendas might be conceptualized.

**Teachers’ professional identity, agency, commitment.** Managerial approaches to reform can serve to diminish teachers’ professionalism (Day, 2002). Definitions of professionalism are broad, varied (Evans, 2008; Helsby, 1996; van de Camp, Vernooij-Dassen, Grol, & Bottema, 2004; van Mook et al., 2009), continually changing and context-specific (Evans, 2008). Despite this variability, common characteristics of professionals, or professional groups, include having a common knowledge base acquired in specialized post-secondary education, commitment to the profession and to meeting clients’ needs, autonomy to use professional judgment in non-routine contexts, and a commitment to further learning (Day, 2002; Hoyle, 1982; Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2012; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994; Tschannen-Moran, 2009; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Having the freedom to exercise professional judgment in service of meeting individual clients’ needs has been highlighted as a key component of professionalism across disciplines (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Such
liberties are necessarily important for professionals due to the enactment of practice in non-routine situations (Hoyle, 1982; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). However, managerial accountability policies may limit teachers’ opportunities for autonomous decision making. In some cases, the limit to teachers’ autonomy may be an indirect result of accountability policies. An example of an indirect relationship between policy and practice can be found when district leadership responds to overarching performance expectations by regulating how teachers teach, through the use of scripted, ‘teacher-proof’ lesson series (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). In such cases, it is not the accountability policymakers stipulating the regulation, but lower-level administrators’ threat-rigid responses to policies that may restrict teachers’ abilities to act on their professional discretion. Crocco and Costigan (2007) found that new teachers felt that such prescription was “oppressive and insulting to their developing sense of professionalism” (p. 526) and aggravated teachers’ attrition rates.

Stifling teachers’ opportunities for input in decision making beyond classroom practices may hinder their level of ownership over their teaching (Campbell, 2011) and investment in change efforts. For example, Debard and Kubow (2002) reported that negative reactions on the part of teachers and administrators in one Ohio district towards proficiency testing were, in large part, due to the lack of input from educators regarding testing. Interestingly, these findings indicate that it is not simply the testing regime teachers reject, but the imposed nature of testing. As a result of being disenfranchised from decision making, teachers may feel underinvested in larger, systemic goals that lie in tension with their personal and professional goals (e.g., Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006) potentially having a negative effect on their sense of agency (Frost, 2006; Lasky, 2005).
Furthermore, research suggests how managerial accountability policies may negatively impact teachers’ continuous learning trajectories. A narrowing of the curriculum and rigid environmental constraints restrict opportunities for innovation and professional learning to occur (Darling-Hammond, 2005) and may limit teachers’ professional discretion and authority (Helgoy & Homme, 2007) potentially impacting their participation in professional learning. For example, trusting relationships between school leaders and teachers potentially foster teachers’ propensity to engage in professional learning. By contrast, the mistrust communicated by managerial accountability efforts may serve to stifle collaborative learning among teachers (Cranston, 2011). Moreover, the use of student data has been shown to play an important role in teachers’ own learning and development of practice (e.g., Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Schnellert et al., 2008) but may be undermined by testing regimes that do little to support teachers in making adjustments to practice that will lead to improved learning outcomes for students (O’Day, 2002). Thus, accountability frameworks may negatively impact teachers’ opportunities for professional learning, thereby positioning teachers’ professional learning outside the scope of professional development programs. The professional learning and development of educators is a key component of how individuals and groups experience their professionalism within a given accountability context. Further, how professional learning plays out in an educational system is deeply related to individual, group and systemic capacities for change and improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Managerial accountability approaches may compromise teachers’ levels of professional commitment and un-committed, underinvested professionals are unlikely to ‘buy into’ change efforts, thwarting development (e.g., Hubbard et al., 2006). Professionals are defined, in part, by having an ethical and moral responsibility to the client and/or society at large (e.g.,
Kelchtermans, 2011) and such values have been found to occupy a core, stable role in both teachers’ sense of professional identity (Day et al., 2005) and agency (Lasky, 2005). Research suggests that it is these dimensions of teachers’ work that feeds their intrinsic motivation and influences their professional commitment (Day et al., 2005; O’Connor, 2008). Top-down policy initiatives risk causing discordance between teachers’ valued goals and the goals of reform efforts, thus having a negative effect on teachers’ levels of professional commitment (Day, 2005; Day & Gu, 2007). Thus, research suggests how top-down initiatives that propel a culture of compliance may hamper professional commitment and agency.

The lack of clarity regarding the term ‘identity’ has been noted (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004), but nevertheless it has been implicated as an important factor in understanding teachers as professionals and commitment as an important element of professionalism. O’Connor (2008) conceptualized identity as having “reflective and active dimensions, encompassing both an individual’s professional philosophy and their public actions” (p. 118). She further found that teachers use their identities to guide their decisions. O’Connor (2008) suggests that teachers’ beliefs and emotions are negatively affected if their professional identities are threatened. Thus research suggests a need for policymakers to consider creating contexts that allow teachers to connect personal, professional and collective identities in an effort to address commitment and its integral role in teacher effectiveness (e.g., Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011).

If change-initiators overlook professional identity and the related ethical and moral components of professionalism, they risk being unsupportive of teachers’ professional commitment. For example, Lasky (2005) studied the effects of reform on four experienced teachers in Ontario. She found that the moral purposes and core characteristics of their identities were threatened by new policies. She suggests that the ways the policies were being
implemented as well as the associated tone were a threat to teachers. Teachers’ sense of agency was negatively impacted and they felt their professionalism was being undermined. However, she found that “one of the most powerful enduring elements of participants’ agency was their unwillingness to change their identity as individuals working in a human-centered profession, which required making real connections with their students” (p. 913). Here, Lasky highlights the notion that teachers may comply with aspects of reforms while maintaining allegiance to strongly held views about what is important in teaching and learning. It is those ‘strongly held views’ that may require respectful acknowledgement when planning for effective programs of change.

Thus, research suggests how hindering teachers’ opportunities to exercise dimensions of their professionalism may undermine improvement efforts. By neglecting the vital relationship between autonomy and investment, professional learning and improved outcomes, alignment of values and goals, and teachers’ sense of identity, policymakers are threatening teachers’ agency. By supporting the agentic professional, policymakers may more wholly address the needs of teachers as professionals. By prioritizing teachers’ professional selves, policies may be more sensitive to the ways in which change can occur, emphasizing professional learning and support for capacity building, rather than control and compliance (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2005). Policies that conceptualize teachers as objects of change are problematic (Mullen & Schunk, 2010) and contrast with suggestions by researchers that adequate professional agency is a necessary condition of commitment (Day et al., 2005; Little & Bartlett, 2002; Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, Eteläpelto, & Rasky-Puttonen, 2008).
By attending to the *how* of change contexts, this study provides insight into how the intricacies of data use, trust, agency, autonomy, and professionalism play out in an accountability context to potentially support changes in teaching and student learning.

**Professional Accountability/Responsibility**

Although managerial accountability policies may be well-intentioned, with goals to improve learning conditions and outcomes for students (O’Day, 2002), their lack of, and/or negative effect on teaching and learning have led to calls for alternative approaches to accountability and improvement efforts. In particular approaches have been proposed that are more sensitive to teachers’ motivation, sense of agency, and commitment to improvement, acknowledging teachers as “key agents” of change (Spillane, 1999, p. 133). Furthermore, educational reform efforts are typically based upon principles of change and improvement, which necessarily require that teachers engage in professional learning (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Therefore, in order to promote improved achievement outcomes for students, many have advocated for a focus on teacher learning and capacity building (e.g., Smylie, 1997) while at the same time highlighting a history of insufficient support for professional learning in systemic reform efforts (Sykes, 1996).

Systemic improvement efforts that build from teachers’ sense of professionalism and responsibility are in line with proposed approaches that place greater value on teachers and their learning. For example, Elmore (2007) states that “Our professional development practices, at their best, are not powerful enough to do all the work they are being asked to do by the accountability systems under which schools operate” (p. 31). He, and others, call for educators to act as professionals in order to improve education (Codd, 2005; Elmore, 2007; O’Day, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, Parish & DiPaola, 2006;). Research suggests that framing improvement
efforts in such ways addresses the shortcomings of managerial accountability policies, which Hargreaves (2000) describes as the “antithesis of any kind of professionalism” (p. 169).

Responsibility is an important component of professionalism as illustrated in descriptions of professionals as “central to the moral regulation of society” (Durkheim, as cited in Solberekke & Sugrue, 2011, p. 13) and “collectively oriented’ rather than ‘self-oriented’” (Durkheim, as cited in Solberekke & Sugrue, 2011, p. 13). Historically, because professionals were assumed to have the requisite skills, knowledge and moral values that prioritized society rather than the self, they were permitted the autonomy necessary to determine the criteria of acceptable work (Freidson, as cited in Solberekke & Sugrue, 2011).

Over time, the supremacy of a profession’s autonomy to self-regulate has been called into question for reasons that are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, as previously stated, there has occurred in educational policy a rise in governmental scrutiny and an increased focus on managerialism and achievement outcomes. As a response, researchers such as Solberekke and Sugrue (2011) recommend that professionals reflect on the roots of professionalism and responsibility and recognize that “being a professional requires courage to articulate and enact practices that resonate with the values of their profession” (p. 21). Doing so may require interpreting notions of professional responsibility, a term which “embeds the responsibility for professionals’ discretionary specialisation with regard to both individual clients and the public interest, and it requires professionals to base their judgments in both science- and experience-based knowledge and professional ethics” (p. 60) in ways that are responsive to particular circumstances (Englund & Solberekke, 2011). This definition of professional responsibility captures many dimensions of professionalism while emphasizing the significance of responsibility.
Table 1. Forms of accountability (Møller, 2009; Sinclair, 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Managerial Accountability</th>
<th>Professional Accountability/Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For whom?</strong></td>
<td>Outputs or outcomes related to delegated tasks.</td>
<td>Responsibilities associated with the ethical standards of a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To whom?</strong></td>
<td>Superiors located in a hierarchy.</td>
<td>Students, parents, professional colleagues, governing bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>By whom?</strong></td>
<td>Subordinates located in a hierarchy.</td>
<td>Members of a professional group; professional group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatives to managerial accountability that emphasize professionalism and responsibility may be referred to as professional responsibility (Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2011) or professional accountability (e.g., Møller, 2009; O’Day, 2002; Sinclair, 1995). Table 1 outlines distinctions between managerial and professional forms of accountability as defined by Møller (2009) and Sinclair (1995). Distinguishing between professionalism, responsibility and accountability may be difficult depending on the ways in which they are variously conceptualized. For example, Møller (2009) describes how, in the Norwegian context, responsibility and accountability are indistinguishable because both refer to the concept of responsibility. To further nuance distinctions between terms, Møller states that:

> responsibility concerns the obligations teachers and school leaders, as part of a profession, have to each other [emphasis added] in answering questions about what has happened within one’s area of responsibility and provide a reliable story of practice; what has happened and why it has taken place… (p. 38).

Here, Møller is suggesting that providing an account to others lies within the realm of a professional’s responsibility, drawing accountability into our understanding of responsibility. By linking responsibility and accountability to professionalism in this way, he is representing the complex interplay of these concepts. Møller (2009) takes up Sinclair’s (1995) definition of
professional accountability and usefully describes it in relation to education. Here, he emphasizes the perceived duty to standards members of a profession have because of their dedication to a community of professionals, thereby requiring them to communally uphold and adhere to agreed upon standards. In this conceptualization, autonomy is not awarded to the individual, but rather to the profession itself. Further, moral and ethical responsibility necessitate that students’ needs are at the forefront of the work of educators as professionals.

O’Day (2002) delineates three foci of professional accountability. First, professional accountability is focused on the process of practice, and teachers’ performance as much as students’. Second, teachers’ learning and capacity building is a requisite consideration in service of effective instruction. And third, professional accountability takes into account norms of professionalism, in particular: prioritizing the needs of students; collaboration in order to attend to student needs as well as to preserve standards of practice; and commitment to the improvement of practice.

**The promise of professional accountability.** Professional accountability has been proposed as an alternative framework to managerial accountability for addressing the needs of complex school systems. In particular professional accountability may serve to emphasize the use of data for supporting learning and practice development and better address trust, agency, commitment, collaboration and further learning as important facets of improvement efforts within accountability contexts.

**Data.** Research suggests that teachers are internally motivated to meet their students’ needs (O’Day, 1996), but internal motivation alone is not typically sufficient for raising student achievement levels. Data are important components of improvement initiatives (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995), despite the negligible and/or negative effects associated with
its (over)use in managerial accountability contexts. Data can be important sources of information for teachers in classrooms as well as administrators at various levels throughout the system. For example, teachers can use assessments to determine students’ needs in order to plan lesson sequences and formative assessments can help teachers monitor the effectiveness of their instruction. At a systems level, data that illuminate patterns of struggling students can indicate where resources and supports may be most needed. However, research on managerial accountability describes how such approaches favour an overinvestment in testing and outcomes and an underinvestment in supportive inputs (Møller, 2009).

Approaches to accountability that build from teachers’ sense of professionalism may support the productive use of data. The provision of freedoms that are awarded to professionals may allow teachers the space necessary to make decisions about students’ learning needs in light of assessment findings. Thus, autonomy is not only a component of professionalism (Hoyle, 1982), but it is also a functional component of data-driven change (O’Day, 2002). Furthermore, by using data to indicate needed adjustments in practice in order to improve teaching and learning, teachers are working in line with held notions that teachers, as professionals, are expected to commit to continual learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). Finally, such data-informed development can lead to improved sense of efficacy for teachers as they have the opportunity to more accurately attribute links between their practice and student outcomes (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Butler, Schnellert & MacNeil, under review; O’Day, 2002; Schnellert et al., 2008;). Thus, research suggests how data can be productively incorporated into professional accountability approaches in ways often unaddressed by managerial, outcome-oriented accountability mechanisms.
Data are consequential to improvement efforts, particularly, because they provide information from which teachers can build to determine learner needs and instructional effectiveness. However, research suggests that process-based conditions may need to be met in order to support teachers to usefully build from data sources. Data are situated in the larger organizational context and how they are employed is an important factor in understanding change efforts, not only in the context of accountability but also in the professional learning context of a school.

One way to establish process-oriented conditions supportive of productive data use is to foster the development of professional learning communities (Birenbaum, Kimron, Shilton & Shahaf-Barzilay, 2009). Professional learning communities (PLCs) are described as collaborative communities in which teachers reflect not only on practice but also the relationship between practice and student achievement in order to improve teaching and learning (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). School-based PLCs have been linked to positive student achievement outcomes (e.g., Lomos, Hofman, & Bosker, 2011; Opfer, Pedder & Lavicza, 2011; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Effective PLCs have been characterized by their members’ commitment to change, shared goals, expectations that all members can successfully collaborate, and the formulation of assessments that reflect goals, among other factors (Mullen & Schunk, 2010).

Further, learning in PLCs has often been taken up through “inquiry” processes, which include systematic and intentional study into one’s own practice, and has been related to positive professional learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Birenbaum et al., (2009) postulated that because schools described as effective PLCs are associated with improved learning, and because inquiry plays a significant role in the learning process, higher-level PLCs would engage more fully in cycles of inquiry than would lower-level PLCs. In their research, they found that teachers
in schools characterized as high PLCs engaged fully in cycles of inquiry, while those at schools characterized as low PLCs did not monitor and adjust practices based on feedback from assessments. More specifically, Birenbaum et al. found that, in schools with a weaker PLC, where the school culture was less inquiry-focused, assessments were characterized as summative and their use was motivated by the intent to raise achievement in order to meet accountability mandates. Low PLCs were also characterized by leaders that adopted bureaucratic administrative styles. They suggest nurturing an “assessment culture in school so that inquiry becomes a ‘habit of mind’ that plays a leading role in the quest for improvement” (p. 146).

Birenbaum and colleagues (2009) confirm the important role context can play in improvement efforts, and in particular, how the professional orientation of a community may foster important changes. They extend previous research by suggesting that when teachers collaboratively inquire into teaching and learning, data might be taken up in ways conducive to positive changes in teaching and learning (see also Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Schnellert et al., 2008). Thus research suggests that, for teachers to utilize data in ways supportive of gains for students’ learning, they may require the support of an inquiry-oriented, improvement focused community.

While data-driven decision making, formative assessment and the like have the potential to inspire and support educational change, attending to teachers’ professionalism, both individually and collectively, adds an important piece of an intricate puzzle. Research suggests how sophisticated data collection and evaluation alone may be insufficient for promoting change if important conditions, such as inquiry- or improvement-oriented approaches, are not present. It is these orientations that are so much a part of professionalism that managerial approaches tend to erode. Further, improvement efforts that attend to teachers’ needs as professionals, for
example, by providing teachers with the room to make decisions autonomously, creating opportunities for collegial support, or emphasizing improvement rather than judging outcomes, may more successfully incorporate data use into inquiry cycles.

**Trust.** Responding to accountability policies that communicate a distrust of teachers, researchers have proposed approaches that build from, and strengthen, teachers’ professionalism (Codd, 2005). Codd (2005) writes that managerialism fails to take into account the moral agency of teachers, adding that there is a significant erosion of trust and shared responsibility in low-trust accountability (i.e., managerial accountability). By contrast, Codd (2005) argues that, “high trust accountability is based on professional responsibility, with an underpinning conception of moral agency. It is maintained by internal motivations such as commitment, loyalty and sense of duty…” (p. 203). By recognizing the moral agency and “the ethical obligation on the part [of] professionals to offer an account of (or a justification for) their actions” (p. 203), policymakers might communicate trust through legislation in ways that acknowledge responsibility as an important dimension of professionalism.

Research suggests that trust is integral to improvement efforts (Scribner, 1999). Tschannen-Moran (2009) describes how bureaucratic and professional orientations differently approach governing of workers as related to issues of trust. She describes the former as implying a distrust of teachers and the contributions they make to education, in contrast with a professional orientation that is grounded in trust. For example, in a professional orientation teachers are provided with “greater autonomy and discretion in the conduct of their work” (p. 221).

To investigate how people in formalized leadership positions might foster trusting environments, Tschannen-Moran (2009) completed a study examining two schools whose
leadership styles were qualitatively different: one school was led by administrators who adopted a bureaucratic style while the other school’s leadership adopted a professional orientation. She found that professional orientations, on the part of school leaders, promoted professionalism in teachers. She also found that when leaders communicated a trusting stance towards teachers, teachers were more likely to trust principals. Furthermore, high trust in the principal correlated with higher levels of trust across faculty members, suggesting that trusting environments may go a long way to foster professional communities. This research suggests how leaders can foster trusting environments, an important precondition for developing professional learning communities that may lead to improved outcomes (Cranston, 2011).

Similarly, Cranston (2011) examined the contribution relational trust may make towards the establishment of professional learning communities. Relational trust, as defined by Bryk and Schneider (2002), describes the degree to which congruity exists between various groups’ expectations and obligations. For example, if there is a match between a classroom teacher and literacy consultant’s assumed values as well as one another’s perceptions of their respective responsibilities, then such a match may be a foundation from which trust can be built. In Cranston’s (2011) study, data from principals suggested that relationships and trusting environments are integral for the development of professional communities. Principals saw trust as something that develops in relationships, thus suggesting that trusting environments require a degree of collaboration from which trust may emerge. They described the necessity of nurturing teachers’ perceptions that theirs is a safe environment in which to take risks in order to facilitate conversations regarding change and school improvement. They claimed that norms that foster safe spaces and climates of trust allow teachers to collaborate and learn together more successfully. Principals also saw themselves as playing an important role in nurturing trusting
communities, and also viewed teachers’ trust in principals as centrally important for establishing professional learning communities. Cranston concluded that providing necessary conditions for PLCs to function includes meeting the relationship needs of a school group. Not only does this research suggest that bureaucratic leadership styles may hinder trusting communities, and that trust matters in school communities, but it also suggests that people in formalized leadership roles have an important part to play in fostering trust.

**Teachers’ professional identity, agency, commitment.** Managerial accountability mechanisms may be enacted with the expectation that they will increase teachers’ sense of responsibility, for example, by delineating standards and implementing incentives and punishments. But professional accountability frameworks may go further to foster responsibility than do approaches expecting compliance with responsibility demands. For example, in their analysis of the responsibility literature as related to education, Lauerman and Karabenick (2011) distinguished between formal and internal responsibility. They assert that “formal responsibility (e.g., as defined by an accountability system) does not guarantee personal commitment and an internal sense of obligation” (p. 136). They suggest that such systems oversimplify teacher responsibility, and fail to acknowledge the interrelationship between contextual factors, such as job autonomy and availability of strategic information, and “person factors such as perceived organizational support, proactive personality type, internal locus of control, self-efficacy, trust, and work ethic” (p 136). They conclude by underlining the need for an increased understanding of how teachers’ dispositions interact with accountability systems in order to shape teacher responsibility at systems levels. Their research indicates that teachers do feel responsibility, and that professional orientations to accountability may provide a way of building from, and planning for, responsibility.
Research also suggests how providing teachers with opportunities to engage in improvement efforts that align with their values and beliefs may foster agency and promote change in ways desired by stakeholders. For example, Vähäsantenen et al. (2008) state that “having agency means being able to make occupational choices concerning one’s core work, based on one’s own interests and motivations; it means that in relation to social suggestions one is able to act in a way that corresponds to personal values and hopes (Etelapelto & Saarinen, 2006; Fenwick, 2006)” (p. 133). In this, they are underscoring the importance of a professional’s ability to act in ways consonant with their beliefs for both agency and educational improvement.

For example, research by Wallace and Priestley (2011) suggests how change efforts might foster important changes in classroom practice when teacher beliefs fit with the philosophy of a reform. In their research, Wallace and Priestley (2011) studied teachers who were working collaboratively in inquiry groups to implement “invention/modification” (p. 363) of their own practices based on principles of formative assessment. Although none of their five participants taught the same subject area, all held beliefs about the purposes of teaching that fit with the philosophy underlying formative assessment techniques. What Wallace and Priestley found was that, when teachers were “not attempting to adapt policy to fit their beliefs, they were able to construct and share policy representations based on their beliefs” (p. 378). They conclude that teachers were open to reform initiatives when initiatives fit with their existing beliefs within a context of collaborative inquiry. Their research also speaks to the importance of teacher investment in, and ownership over, learning initiatives.

Ketelaar, Beijaard, Boshuizen and Den Brok (2012) also illustrated how beliefs and agency influence policy interpretation. They studied a policy innovation that did not provoke resistance from teachers, highlighting that resistance is not a necessary outcome of government-
initiated policy. They found that “if teachers’ frames of reference correspond with the frame of reference of the innovation, and they experience enough agency to be able to find their own way in putting the innovation into practice they can feel a high degree of ownership regarding the innovation” (p. 281). These examples of effective reforms contrast with the abundance of literature citing instances where teachers were not supported in ways that promoted their understanding of reforms (e.g., Kalin & Valencic Zuljan, 2007), instantiated reforms in the short-term only (e.g., Robbins & Wolfe, 1987), or failed to implement reforms across a system (e.g., Hubbard et al., 2006).

The two reform efforts described above illustrate how initiatives that fit well with teachers’ existing beliefs might lead to more effective improvement efforts. In their synthesis of 97 empirical studies related to teacher knowledge and positive impacts for diverse learners, Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008) found that

those situations in which the greatest gains were evident in substantive rather than narrow curricula areas were those that sought to deepen teachers’ foundation of pedagogical content and assessment knowledge within coherent conceptual frameworks that could then serve as the basis for decisions about practice (p. 349)

Here, Timperley and Alton-Lee relay that teachers’ understandings about the underlying conceptual basis for practice can be guided in professional learning initiatives in ways that promote positive outcomes for students. This parallels the findings of Wallace and Priestley (2011) and Ketelaar et al. (2012), which also uncovered how underlying beliefs and understandings are significant in larger agendas. But Timperley and Alton-Lee’s (2008) review extends those ideas by suggesting that it is possible to influence teachers’ beliefs in professional learning initiatives.
How teacher learning is understood also impacts ideas about how to foster change in teacher professional development, schools, and the larger educational system (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) argue for inquiry as a stance, an “across the lifespan” orientation to change that contrasts with mandated teacher learning that is “simply professional development” (p. 293). This idea is connected to their conceptualization of teachers’ learning as “knowledge of practice,” in which teachers take an activist role in change efforts by constructing, rather than receiving, knowledge and working collaboratively to transform classrooms, schools and even societies. They assert that this conception of teacher learning emphasizes the teacher as agent and postulate that inquiry communities are better positioned to address complex issues, as opposed to the simplification that teachers need to “know more to teach better” (p. 295). Inquiry communities offer participants the opportunity to co-construct knowledge with colleagues and potentially foster shifts in conceptual understandings (Butler et al., 2004). In contrast to forms of professional development that decrease “the power and voice of teachers as agents for change” (Crafton & Keiser, 2011, p. 104), teacher research and inquiry has professional agency at its core (Groundwater-Smith & Campbell, 2009). Ground-up communities of learners have the potential to foster change in ways hindered by bureaucratically controlled professional development initiatives.

**Blending Accountabilities**

Despite the promise of focusing on teacher professionalism and responsibility through professional accountability approaches, many researchers cite the need for a blended emphasis on managerial and professional accountability (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2004, 2005; Day, 2002; Debard & Kubow, 2002; Englund & Solbrekke, 2011; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Møller, 2009; O’Day, 2002; Sahlberg, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2009).
While a focus on professional accountability goes a long way to address the vital contribution teachers make to improvement efforts that managerialism does not, there remain existing and potential problems with its use as a sole approach. Figure 1 outlines reasons researchers have cited for blending accountabilities, which are expanded upon below.

**Figure 1.** Reasons for blending managerial and professional accountability.

First, accountability to stakeholders is held as a reasonable expectation of professionals (e.g., Poulson, 1998) “as a means of ensuring good-quality public services” (Englund & Solbøkke, 2011, p. 59). Similarly, Møller (2009) writes that

Accountability is also an important dimension of professionalism. This dimension highlights that the teacher is morally responsive to the students’ and the parents’ needs, as well as responsive to the public through the mechanism of the state. In moral terms accountability can be seen as keeping to ethical standards held by teachers as a group and as individuals (p. 39)
Rationales for accountability mechanisms are typically comprised of statements indicating that teachers are needed both to account to the public as well as promote improvements in educational quality.

Second, a benefit of outcome-based targets may be that they serve to inform governing bodies about where needs are highest from a systemic perspective. By combining professional and bureaucratic accountability, important information is generated that can help stakeholders to monitor progress and identify weaker areas in order to make decisions about resource allocation. At the same time, the emphasis on monitoring progress and adaptive learning on the part of professionals in classrooms may serve to identify student needs more effectively.

Third, schools may require partnerships with people in formalized leadership roles in order to foster communities whereby collaboration can be enacted in order to promote capacity building in service of student learning needs. When schools fail to foster collaboration or encourage mentoring, they may not be able to support organizational learning due to limited opportunities for the sharing of information (O’Day, 2002). Leaders can play important roles in providing structural supports (e.g., release time) for teachers to come together collaboratively during the school day.

Finally, extensive reliance on building teacher professionalism and responsibility leaves out the important role of leaders and policy-makers in supporting improvement efforts. While teachers exert significant effect over student outcomes, they are working within a larger socio/political/economic context of which governing bodies are a part. Leithwood and Earl (2000) question the validity of holding a person or organization solely responsible where a larger, shared responsibility for outcomes exists. By attributing sole responsibility for student learning to teachers and/or the school as an organization, governing bodies are putting in motion
improvement efforts that incompletely address the conditions that affect student learning outcomes. In particular, the role of governing leaders is limited to formulating policy, setting standards, and judging school and/or teacher effectiveness, emphasizing educational ‘outputs’ and leaving out supportive ‘inputs’ (Møller, 2009). If school-based professionals and district administrators are to account to the public for ‘educational quality’, so too should public officials be held accountable for supporting improvement efforts (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 2004; Greenfield et al., 2010; Hargreaves, 1994; Møller, 2009; Sahlberg, 2010; Sirtonik, 2002).

In many accountability systems, roles and responsibilities are imbalanced. In reframing accountability policies by invoking ‘two-way accountability,’ stakeholders may better serve to align goals across system layers. For example, Møller (2009) builds on this idea of reciprocal accountability by stating that “standards must specify both learning outcomes students are expected to achieve and the resources necessary to support teachers and students to produce those outcomes, and state officials have to be accountable to students and parents” (p. 45). Where superiors are demonstrably supportive of teachers and schools, there is an implication that leaders are also responsible for student learning. Here, the focus is on student learning rather than simply judging teachers and/or their effectiveness. Further, accountability networks that share a common purpose across layers are more likely to function effectively (Harlow & Rawlings, 2007).

Managerial accountability policies require that subordinates (teachers) answer to superiors (e.g., government officials, school leaders) in ways that situate the actors in a decisive hierarchy (Sinclair, 1995; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). As previously noted, teachers in such hierarchies are often answering to their superiors for outcomes that have been externally prescribed (Sinclair, 1995). By building from teachers’ ethical motives for having gone into
teaching in the first place (Sahlberg, 2010) policies that equip teachers with ways of meeting student needs (e.g., incorporating useful data, providing supports for professional learning) imply that teachers are accountable to students and parents for improved learning outcomes, rather than simply superiors who may be distant from classrooms and schools. Here, too, the role of governing bodies is rendered more complex as it implies a supportive role, rather than simply that of mandating and regulating.

Englund and Solbøkke (2011) highlight the temporal responses teachers have to issues of professional responsibility and accountability. They describe professional responsibility as involving proactive action, as the professional voluntarily takes responsibility for their commitments, whereas more limited accountability frameworks create reactivity to demanded reports on actions. They call for the need of professionals to be “supported and encouraged to keep up proactive responsible practices, and not simply lapse into reactive reporting” (p. 68). In this respect, administrative agents play a key role in supporting professional responsibility.

Similarly, Tschannen-Moran (2009) describes how educational leaders risk adopting highly bureaucratic structures in order to ensure that many people across a system come together to work towards joint goals. She uses a pyramid to symbolically represent a “machine bureaucracy,” with power and authority concentrated at the peak streaming down to the employees (teachers). She contrasts this model with professional organizations (e.g., small groups of doctors, lawyers in private practices), represented as an inverted pyramid with the key professionals across the top and administrators at the bottom serving in supportive roles. She adds that it is unlikely that public schools could function strictly as professional organizations due to their size, mission, and complexity. However, she calls for a hybrid of the two models as a response to the adverse consequences of managerial models, suggesting that members of the
system might “enjoy the greater commitment and joint deliberative action inherent in a professional organization” (p. 219). Tschannen-Moran describes how formalized leaders might cultivate professionalism among school communities without adopting bureaucratic orientations while still challenging teachers who may not be effectively improving instruction. This blend complicates the role of leaders and implicates them as enablers of professionalism among teachers.

Summary and Research Directions

In sum, the literature reviewed in this chapter uncovered the importance of complicating notions of accountability and responsibility in educational change. Educational improvement plans often incorporate accountability frameworks in order to mobilize change. Specifically, managerial accountability, with its emphasis on reporting student achievement outcomes, has dominated reform efforts in various countries. However, managerial accountability policies have been ineffective, or in some cases have had deleterious effects on teachers and students.

Professional accountability, with its emphasis on professionalism and responsibility, may better reconcile the complexities of improving teaching and learning. Working from a professional approach to accountability, stakeholders involved in change efforts may be better positioned to attend to issues such as data use, teacher trust, identity, agency, and commitment. However, solely relying on professional accountability may inadequately address needs across the layers of a system. Blended approaches may better position players to account to parents, students, and colleagues for outcomes; productively incorporate data into improvement efforts; form supportive partnerships across layers; and implicate all members of the system as being mutually responsible for improvement.

Given the prevalence and importance of school improvement efforts coupled with the
enduring expectation of a general level of accountability, research is sorely needed into individuals’ experiences of how change efforts play out in relation to the forms of accountability established (Camburn, 2010; Greenfield et al., 2010). This study addressed this need by exploring teachers’ and school- and district-level leaders’ perceptions about their roles and responsibilities within a change initiative. Specifically, the following research questions were examined. From stakeholders’ perspectives: (1) How was professional responsibility evidenced within a professional learning community? (2) What conditions supported teachers to build from, and act upon, their sense of professional responsibility within the context of a larger accountability structure?
Chapter Three - Methodology

This study comprised secondary analysis of data collected as part of a longitudinal research project investigating how collaborative, inquiry-based professional development fosters shifts in teachers’ understandings about teaching and learning. The larger research project employed a qualitative, case study methodology in order to study teachers’ and students’ learning in tandem within a professional learning community. Multiple sources of data were collected for the larger research project, including documents, observations, student learning assessments, and stakeholder interviews and emails. In this last year of data collection, interviews were conducted with 40 stakeholders engaged in an “adolescent literacy initiative” at both district and school-levels. Questions asked of participants focused specifically on their perceived roles and responsibilities as part of a systemic-change initiative. In the present study, attention was focused primarily on interview data in service of investigating participants’ experiences and perceptions of responsibility and accountability.

Within the larger study, prior analyses focused on teachers’ professional development and students’ self-regulated learning. Prior reports have described teachers’ collaboration and engagement in inquiry, as well as student outcomes related to shifts in teachers’ practice (see Butler et al., 2012; Butler et al., 2011; Butler & Schnellert, 2008; MacNeil & Butler, 2012; Schnellert et al., 2008). In this final year of data collection, interview protocols were extended to allow for a better understanding of participants’ experience of change within the district as well as within the overall accountability context. Given that change initiatives implicate actors at multiple levels, exploring the experiences of teachers and leaders allows for a richer description of how change plays out in a given context.
In the larger study, a qualitative case study design (see Butler, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2003) was chosen to explore stakeholders’ support of a larger change initiative, as well as teachers’ engagement in processes associated with the initiative in context. A qualitative case study afforded a process-oriented, descriptive analysis of how individuals were making meaning of relationships, contexts, and personal experiences within a professional learning community (Merriam, 1988). As such, use of a case study approach has been useful in attempting to answer how and why questions regarding individuals’ experiences as engaged and supportive members of a complex community (Yin, 2003).

For the present study, I was also able to draw on rich descriptions of the “case” developed for the larger study. I had access to previous reports and background documents that defined the context in which stakeholders were working. These materials suggested how accountability frameworks were set up across levels, and conditions were established to support professional development and educational change. My interpretation of interviews was conducted in relation to these contextual factors.

To describe the methodology used for the present study, in the remaining sections, I start by providing an overview of the context in which participants were working, based on my review of previous reports and case study materials. Then, I outline the methods I took up in this secondary analysis of interview data.

**Context**

This study was conducted in an urban school district located on the West Coast of Canada. At the time of data collection, this district was part of a provincial accountability context that influenced goal-setting and monitoring both at the district levels and within schools. Figure 2 outlines formalized accountability mechanisms and supportive structures at each layer.
of the education system relevant to the literacy initiative (i.e., provincial, district, and school).

**Figure 2.** The context of the current case study, formalized accountability engagement and supportive structures.

In Canada, responsibility for education is located at the provincial level. In parallel with other global trends in accountability policies, at the time of this study provinces across Canada were engaged in creating cycles of accountability (Jaafer & Anderson, 2007). In the province where this study took place, the accountability cycles were formalized as part of the Ministry of Education’s (MoE) Accountability Framework in the School Act to be implemented in 2002. The MoE in this context defines “‘accountability’ as responsibility for the improvement of achievement of each student in the province” (Ministry of Education, n.d, para. 3).

In this provincial context, the MoE required that school districts commit to “Achievement Contracts,” which were described as public statements of commitment to improve individual
student success rates. The MoE required that achievement contracts were prepared by the Superintendent and contained the district’s goals for student improvement based on information about students’ learning (i.e., data). Achievement contracts were also required to outline how districts planned to strategically meet goals, monitor progress and improve results. Specified goals were not identified by the MoE, but were expected to address targets for literacy (K-12), Aboriginal student improvement and completion rates. Reports on student achievement were to complement the achievement contract and provide a report on how students were progressing in relation to goals.

The MoE also required that schools formulate annual school plans to be developed by School Planning Councils (SPC). SPCs were identified by the MoE as key elements of the accountability framework and, at the secondary level, were required to include the school’s principal, a teacher, one student from Grade 10, 11 or 12 and three parents. SPCs reflect the MoE’s effort to heighten parental involvement in school improvement planning. SPCs were described by the MoE as “advisory bodies” who were complementary to Achievement Contracts whose “major responsibility is to develop, monitor and review school plans for student achievement in consultation with the school community” (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

In the province where this study took place, a provincial Teachers’ Federation (TF) plays an important role as a union representing educators in the K-12 system. At the time of this study, delegates of the provincial TF voted to withdraw teacher participation from SPCs, annual school plans and accountability contracts officially citing an overemphasis on data use (2006, TF AGM section 9). Elsewhere, in publicly available pamphlets, the TF expressed concern about the legislated composition of SPCs due to the three-to-one parent to teacher ratio. They were concerned that teachers’ underrepresentation and the lack of representation on SPCs by school
support staff signaled a growing focus on bureaucratic processes that took time away from teaching and learning. They further stated that SPCs limited teacher participation and access to decision making (TF, n.d.). Teachers in the context of the present study were thus positioned to navigate their participation in a multi-level change initiative in spite of tensions between the MoE and the TF.

The participating district responded to accountability demands by publicly committing to two goals in their achievement contract. The district’s stated goals were to: (1) improve all students’ literacy; and (2) improve all students’ social responsibility. In their achievement contract, they described how these goals were born out of prominent themes evident in school-based goal setting. They also clarified that, if schools identified other goals based on their data, that those schools were not required to align their goals with district goals. However, in the achievement contract, they did recommend that schools take into consideration district level goals because such goals direct the district’s focus of development and would therefore encompass structures that might support schools.

In addition to requiring districts’ development of achievement contracts, at the time of this study, the provincial MoE called for proposals from districts engaged in improving literacy (Butler et al., 2012). Successful applicant districts were to receive funding from the MoE for their initiatives. The participating district had already instantiated an Intermediate Reading Initiative (IRI), which was born out of overlapping interest in improving adolescent literacy across various schools in the district. As a successful applicant to the ministry’s literacy improvement fund, the district drew on awarded funding to extend the IRI to the secondary level (with a focus on grade 8 learners). Because of the decentralized nature of the district, schools
chose whether or not they would align their goals with district literacy goals, specifically, the goals of the IRI.

Support structures established through the IRI provided each secondary school in the district with one block for a site-based literacy leader to support staff in furthering the goals of the project. Literacy leaders worked with individuals and school-based literacy teams and also had opportunities to meet with other literacy leaders across schools within the district. The IRI also provided opportunities for teachers to engage in school- and district-level professional development. The district also explicitly promoted inquiry-based professional development and provided teams and literacy leaders with two district consultants whose role included support in developing literacy plans. Furthermore, administrators had some flexibility in their budgets in order to fund release time for teachers to provide opportunities for collaborative inquiry.

A university-school collaboration had been a part of the district for many years. Researchers’ roles in the context of the larger project were to support teachers engaging in a community of inquiry focused on improving students’ literacy performance. Both investigators of the larger study had existing relationships with all district-level stakeholders (see Butler, Schnellert & MacNeil, 2013 for a full description). Of note is the nature of the university-school collaboration in which researchers assumed supportive roles to the overall initiative at the time of data collection, in contrast with research projects that establish the project’s goals and objectives. To that end, they focused in particular on supporting teachers to co-construct literacy assessments and to interpret and build from data to identify student needs and inform practice development. The literacy assessments were grounded in two conceptual frameworks that identified processes essential to students’ active, strategic reading: a model of self-regulated learning (SRL; see Butler et al., 2004) and provincial performance standards for reading.
informational text (see MoE, 2002). A goal of the IRI was that teachers engage fully in inquiry, by monitoring outcomes and responding to student needs by adjusting practice and re-engaging in the cycle.

Participants first collected data in the Fall in order to determine students’ needs. A second phase of formal data collection took place in the Spring in order for teachers to monitor student outcomes. Two measures were used as assessments of students’ reading. All secondary schools in the district employed one of the measures in the Fall and Spring of each year, the “Performance Based Assessment” (PBA; see Brownlie, Feniak & Schnellert, 2006). The four schools included in the larger project also used a second measure focused on students’ self-regulated engagement in reading, the Learning through Reading Questionnaire (LTRQ; Butler & Cartier, 2005; Cartier & Butler, 2004). In the Fall and Spring, school-based, grade-level literacy teams created PBAs that were appropriate for their contexts. Both researchers and teachers then collaboratively scored the PBAs using BC’s Performance Standards for Reading Information rubrics (MoE, 2002). Researchers also worked with teachers in collaborative professional development activities that were designed to support engagement in cycles of inquiry for instructional change (i.e., setting goals, planning, enacting strategies, monitoring outcomes, assessing outcomes) (see Butler, 2003). There were also opportunities for teachers to participate in workshops related to adolescent literacy. Formal and informal literacy teams also had meetings within and/or across participating schools and the district funded release time for teachers to work collaboratively during the school day.

**Research Design**

In Chapter two I highlighted the importance of investigating stakeholders’ experiences so as to illuminate how individuals perceive their roles and responsibilities within a change
initiative. To that end, I conducted a secondary analysis of interviews using qualitative interpretive methods. Interviews are an important source of information in case studies and allow for respondents to speak about “the facts of the matter as well as opinions” (Yin, 2003, p. 90). In this study, analyzing data from semi-structured interviews allowed me to study participants’ perceptions about their roles and responsibilities within a given accountability context and change initiative.

My interpretation of interviews was informed by the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter 2. Specifically, I examined how individuals thought about and enacted facets of their professionalism and responsibility, including processes surrounding data use and issues of trust, responsibility, and commitment to continued improvement. At the same time, qualitative analysis of interviews allowed for inductive (i.e., abstracting from details) reasoning (Merriam, 1988) which allowed me to test emerging patterns and themes against emerging hypotheses. Such inductive reasoning helped me to make sense of the data and develop or refine theories based on participants’ perspectives in the context of this investigation. I drew on multiple perspectives in order to contribute to this richness. In line with this type of research, I sought to “make sense of phenomena from the participant’s perspective” (Merriam, 2002, pp.6).

Participants

Participants in this study included school personnel from four secondary schools (grades 8-12), one elementary school (Kindergarten – grade 7) and district office (see Figure 3 and Table 2 below). All participants were given pseudonyms, and any references to participants in the current document are pseudoinitials. Interviews from forty participants constitute the database for the current research project. Interview data both in the Fall (pre) and Spring (post) were collected from eighteen participants. Six participants sat for interviews in the Fall only; sixteen
were interviewed only in the Spring. Overall, participants’ years of experience as educators, educational consultants and/or educational leaders ranged from two to thirty-three years.

In terms of stakeholders in formalized administrative roles, participants included the district superintendent, the district director of instruction, four school-level principals and five school-level vice-principals. Three of the vice-principals spent a portion of their workload as classroom and/or resource teachers. District- and school-level administrators’ years of experience as teachers and educational leaders ranged from twelve to thirty-three years.

In terms of stakeholders in formalized support roles, district- and school-level literacy consultants participated, including two district-level literacy consultants and four school-level literacy leaders. All school-level literacy leaders had one block of dedicated consulting time and the remaining portion of their timetable was teaching time. One literacy leader, FO, was both a literacy leader and a teacher librarian. Another, ZF, from School 3 left her position as literacy leader midway through the academic year to go on her maternity leave. In her place, a teacher (LA) formally took on the position of literacy leader for the remainder of the year. The one participating elementary school included a teacher who occupied the role of informal literacy leader. Literacy leaders’ years of teaching experience ranged from four to twenty-nine years.
Aside from literacy leaders, twenty-two teachers participated in the study. Across schools, seventeen participants were classroom teachers; two were resource teachers. One teacher was both a classroom teacher and a resource teacher, and one teacher was both a classroom teacher and a teacher librarian. One teacher, ZZ, was a French Immersion teacher, meaning her teaching of Humanities was conducted primarily in French. Teachers’ years of experience ranged from two to thirty-three years.
Table 2. Participants in learning community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Teaching Assignment</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>N/A (Physics)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>JB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>DoI</td>
<td>N/A (Special Ed)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>JC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td>N/A (Special Ed)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>IO</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>DLC</td>
<td>N/A (English)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>DLC</td>
<td>N/A (English)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>AQ</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N/A (Home Economics)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>BL</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>LL, RT, CT</td>
<td>Humanities, Second Shot, SPED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>RT</td>
<td>SPED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>VO</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Lib, CT</td>
<td>Library, English</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>ZO</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, Physical Education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>CL</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>English, Portfolio Block</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>FN</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, English</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, English</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>FE</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Science/Math</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>JZ</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, SPED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1 (S)</td>
<td>KV</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, Drama</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>ZB</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N/A (Science, Math)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>SZ</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>N/A (Physical Education)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>VP, CT</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>LL, CT</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>RL</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>RT, CT</td>
<td>English, SPED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>CB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, English</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>CE</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, Social Studies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>QQ</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>English, Humanities, French</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>ZZ</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities (French Immersion)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, English</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>IG</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2 (S)</td>
<td>LZ</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>English, Social Studies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3 (S)</td>
<td>QR</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N/A (Social Studies)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3 (S)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>VP, RT</td>
<td>Second Shot, SPED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3 (S)</td>
<td>ZF</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>LL, CT</td>
<td>English, Social Studies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3 (S)</td>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>RT</td>
<td>SPED</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3 (S)</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, Social Studies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3 (S)</td>
<td>RS</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Humanities, History, Social Studies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4 (S)</td>
<td>OG</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N/A (Math/Science)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4 (S)</td>
<td>FO</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>LL, Lib</td>
<td>Library, Technology</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4 (S)</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5 (E)</td>
<td>VC</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N/A (Generalist)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5 (E)</td>
<td>JK</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Generalist</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5 (E)</td>
<td>MV</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>CT (LL)</td>
<td>Generalist</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. (S) = secondary school, (E) = elementary school; M = Male, F = Female; S = District Superintendent; DoI = Director of Instruction; DP = District Principal; (DLC) = District Literacy Consultant; P = School Principal, VP = Vice-Principal; LL = literacy leader; CT = classroom teacher, RT = resource teacher; Lib = Librarian; Second Shot = pull out support to LTR; SPED = special education
Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews took place at the beginning and end of the academic year in the Fall and Spring of 2006-2007 (see Appendix A). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Questions were parallel across stakeholders, but were adapted to the role of the participant being interviewed.

In the Fall, questions for teachers began with a focus on participants’ professional goals for themselves and their ideas about the supportive people, structures, or resources that might be needed to attain goals. Participants were also asked to describe: (1) how they intended to monitor their goals and to comment on any outcomes related to professional goals they had observed, either through formal or informal observations and assessment of students’ learning; (2) if they perceived shifts in their own thinking about teaching and learning and what aspects of their involvement with the project may have led to such shifts; (3) how their professional development goals were related to the goals they had set for their students’ learning; (4) the role assessment played in setting goals, monitoring and/or adjusting practice; (5) how collaboration had an effect on their engagement in goal-directed activity as well as their own understandings and instructional practice; (6) their perceptions of the literacy project in relation to school and/or district goals or plans as well as their interpretations of accountability as related to professional development; (7) how they felt their involvement in the literacy project had influenced changes in practice; and (8) what might hinder and/or contribute to the project’s sustainability.

Spring interviews were structured to allow teachers to revisit their understandings and perceptions about similar themes and issues as addressed in the Fall interviews. However, teachers were also asked to comment on: (1) aspects of practice they might maintain and what they might change in the following academic years; (2) how and why they were motivated to
work with specific individuals; (3) how they might support the broader aims of the literacy initiative (i.e., boosting LTR); (4) the perceived efficacy of their practice; (5) how and what type of resources they gathered to support their work; and (6) how their academic background and current teaching load relates to LTR and how to support it. Finally, teachers were prompted to consider how they were having an impact at the classroom level and beyond.

Interview questions for literacy leaders were designed to touch on the same themes, but added questions that allowed them to address their roles as formal supports within schools and in support of a broader agenda. Interview questions for school- and district-level administrators and district-level literacy consultants were designed to address their perceptions about the changes they were observing within and across schools due to their involvement in the project. In their Spring interviews, school- and district-level administrators and literacy consultants were also asked about how they were supporting project goals, how they saw the learning community functioning and not functioning, and how data collection and analyses as implemented within the district related to the demands of the larger accountability context.

Data Analysis

As previously stated, the current analysis was secondary and based on interviews that occurred in 2006-2007. My goal was to make meaning from participants’ perspectives in a rich and descriptive form that would ultimately “constitute the findings of the study” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178).

As part of the larger project, I had previously transcribed all interviews to support previous data analyses based on those data. Throughout the act of transcribing, I recorded memos for each individual interview in an effort to capture my thoughts and observations in “reflective remarks” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 69). In doing so, I was hoping to reflect on
any emerging conceptual understandings, relationships, and patterns I was noticing. At the time I was memoing, however, I was doing so with general interpretations not tied to specific research questions or hypotheses. I was asked to do so by my research supervisor and research colleague so that I might be able to bring to them a perspective that was new to the team using as yet, unanalyzed data. The transcribing and memoing I conducted in this prior work supported previous analyses of this data set (see Butler et al., 2012; Butler et al., 2011; Butler & Schnellert, 2008; MacNeil & Butler, 2012; Schnellert et al., 2008). But, what also evolved from those experiences was my own curiosity regarding how accountability frameworks and concepts of professionalism and responsibility were implicated in this change initiative. Following this new line of investigation, the following outlines how I carried out secondary analyses of interviews for this thesis study.

The process of analysis was both iterative and recursive so that I could construct, test, review, revise, and organize codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1990; Merriam, 1998). First, I re-read all interviews in order to begin to identify patterns and broad meaning units related to my research questions. For this iteration of data analysis, I read interview transcripts void of my earlier memos. My intention was to re-read interviews with ‘fresh’ eyes suited to my newly coherent research agenda. The interview files were organized by location (e.g., all of School 1’s interviews in one folder) and alternatively in files based on roles (e.g., all literacy leaders’ interviews in one folder). I conducted two different sets of readings, first by location (e.g., all interviews from one location) and second by role (e.g., all interviews by individuals with similar roles). Doing so allowed me to see how contexts and roles related to individuals’ experiences. At that time, I took note of pieces of information that occurred to me as interesting, potentially relevant and/or important in the margins of each interview transcript (Merriam, 1998). After
reading through each interview I distilled margin notes into a summary as a step towards category construction (Merriam, 1998).

With each additional interview reading I amalgamated, and where necessary added to, my list of emerging patterns in an effort to move from data to the conceptual level (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Throughout this process, I attended to both theory-informed, deductive analysis (i.e., *a priori*) as well as open coding, inductive analysis in order to decipher meaning related to my research questions. Deductive analyses were both theory- and experientially-informed in part due to my previous involvement in researching with Butler and Schnellert.

Once I had a summary ‘list’ of memos I grouped them by theme, into codes. Coding data helped me to “pull a lot of material together into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 68). At this first level of coding, the process of testing and revising categories pushed me, not only to reorganize, validate and collapse categories, but also to consider new, emergent categories as themes and patterns became apparent with additional readings. Further, I sought to remain attuned to the probability that both confirming and disconfirming evidence might inform my interpretation of the data. Disconfirming evidence aided me in challenging and validating the assertions I was making, and promoted more nuanced, descriptive interpretation.

Throughout this iterative process, I pulled codes into displays which Miles and Huberman (1994) describe as visual representations of information in organized and compressed form (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Creating displays enabled me to view emerging evidence systematically and in one place, and also allowed me to validate patterns and move to higher levels of abstraction (Lecompte & Schensul, 1999). Moving to higher levels of abstraction, based on emerging conceptual understandings, required that I link ideas together while I sought
to remain cognizant that each category on its own would not tell the whole story (Merriam, 1998). These next, more interpretive, actions required that I pull codes into displays in order to see relationships that may have eluded a more narrative, descriptive form of analysis.

This back and forth “testing” of evidence against the codes and ensuring useful and appropriate coding allowed me to create lower-then higher-level displays to reveal patterns and assess conceptual coherence (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Higher-level displays allowed for the checking of data against emerging conclusions, and revealed both patterns of participants’ common perspectives as well as variations and anomalies. All higher-level displays contained sources of direct quotation allowing me both to continually re-check the meaning of patterns I was interpreting, and to move smoothly to the descriptive, narrative writing up of findings.

Bracketing

In qualitative research it is recommended that researchers “bracket” their assumptions up front, so that readers can judge the potential impact on how the research unfolded as well as the success of strategies used to ensure credibility and interpretations (Merriam, 2002). To that end, in this section, I describe my prior experience and perspectives that certainly shaped the goals and interpretations found in this study. My interest in the topic of professional responsibility stems largely from my experience as a teacher. My initiation into the teaching profession was during a year of job action in which teachers went on strike during contract negotiations. During that time, I became cognizant of the fact that there was a stalemated, very public ‘discussion’ between union leaders and the provincial government. The ‘discussion’ appeared as the following on public TV and radio: the union was accusing the province of seeking to enforce greater accountability which ran counter to wanting to preserve teachers’ autonomy. My perception at that time was that the accountability versus autonomy debate was not particularly
productive in practical terms, nor was it particularly satisfying in social circles. Defending autonomy for the sake of autonomy did not address friends’ and families’ questions about educational quality. When I became a teacher, I saw first hand the dedication of many colleagues and was frustrated by the portrayal that autonomy was a mask for inefficacious or lazy teaching. After teaching as a special educator in two districts, I have become more and more interested in how we can come together as educators to meet diverse learners’ needs in ways that are supportive of change and improvement. In essence, I love to learn and chose teaching in part for that reason, and I want to understand how schools can address the needs of professionals as learners. I am interested in moving beyond the accountability versus autonomy dichotomy that I feel undermines teachers’ dedication and commitment, and does little to acknowledge teachers’ sense of responsibility for students. These experiences motivated my interest in this topic, and sensitized me to issues of responsibility and accountability as I read the interviews for the larger study. That said, in preparing for this study, I conducted as balanced as possible a review of the literature to inform my thinking. Further, through careful data analytic methods, I strove to as fairly as possible represent participants’ perspectives about their respective roles and responsibilities in the change initiative.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was granted to the principal investigator, Dr. Deborah Butler, on September 22, 2005 (Certificate # B05-0673) before beginning this research. The aims of this project were in line with the overall program of research approved in the previous ethics review. No other data collection and/or procedures were implemented for the present study. I conducted a secondary analysis of data drawn from that larger study and maintained congruency between the stipulations of the ethical approval that were granted in the original study with my own thesis.
project. Participants were treated ethically as participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained by all prior to the commencement of data collection. Potential harm was mitigated by ensuring participants were aware that answering questions was voluntary. I ensured participants’ confidentiality and anonymity by keeping hard copies of interview transcripts in a locked cabinet as well as by using pseudonyms when writing both this proposal as well as the final thesis project. These steps were, and will be, taken to make certain that participants in this research were treated ethically.
Chapter 4 – Results

In this chapter I report findings from a secondary analysis of participants’ experiences related to a change initiative and accountability framework. Findings are reported in line with my two research questions. Specifically, I begin by describing how professional responsibility was evidenced within a professional learning community. Then, I report findings related to the conditions that may have supported teachers to build from, and act upon, their sense of professional responsibility.

How was Professional Responsibility Evidenced within a Professional Learning Community?

**Improvement orientation.** Professional responsibility, defined in part earlier as pertaining to the commitment professionals make to further learning in order to meet students needs, and/or achieve other professional responsibilities as related to their positions, was evident in how participants adopted an improvement orientation. This orientation was reflected in how they set goals, engaged in continuous learning, and communicated their ‘next steps’ for the following academic year.

**Goals participants set.** One way in which professional responsibility was evidenced was that participants intended to improve by actively setting goals (35/40). The focus of participants’ goal setting could be categorized in the following five ways, as on: 1) student learning, 2) practice-level goals, 3) their own learning, 4) supporting the initiative, and 5) supporting colleagues. Table 3 represents the frequency and type of goals participants set.

First, participants’ exercise of professional responsibility was evident in how 33/40 school-based participants sought to achieve better outcomes for students. Goals for student learning were the most commonly set and also spanned participants’ roles suggesting that student
learning was a shared focus across participants’ roles. For example, AA (S) described two district goals related to students’ learning, “one is literacy of course” and the second goal, providing an inclusive context, was described by him as related to literacy. LC’s (LL) goal for her students was to build their capacity to access prior knowledge when engaging in a literacy activity.

Second, related to goals for student learning, many participants explicitly described goals to improve practice (18/40). Not surprisingly, of those who created practice-level goals, most were literacy leaders (4/5) and teachers (11/21), which were the participants who spent the majority of their time working directly with students in classrooms. For example, QQ (T) sought to shift her teaching to “focus more on process than on product…and to focus more on strategy versus the information, not that I’m throwing out the product and throwing out the information, but balancing it.”

Third, participants’ professional responsibility was evident in how they set goals to further their professional learning (13/40). For example, DL (T) had previously taught elementary school and had a goal to: “increase my knowledge and understanding of where I wanted to go with literacy, and that was all around adolescent literacy … I’ve done the early literacy piece…Years and years of that, and now I’m doing the adolescent literacy piece and there’s so much that’s similar and some that’s different.”

Fourth, some participants’ sense of professional responsibility extended to supporting the overall initiative (8/40). For example, BL (LL) described

try[ing] to move the initiative beyond the Humanities department. I’m not quite sure how to do that in terms of inviting other people in …. but if we can have even a couple of Science teachers that we can use like, and start with that as building a relationship.
Finally, other school-level participants set goals aimed at supporting their colleagues (7/40). For example, AQ (P) described her goal as “to support the staff who are working on the project.”

It is notable that it was primarily classroom-based educators who set goals for students’ learning and practice-development, while it was the literacy leaders and school-level administrators who set goals related to enhancing colleagues or the initiative overall. This suggests that participants’ sense of responsibility could be linked to their relative roles and responsibilities in the project.
Table 3. Goals set by participants.

| Participant | Board-level leaders | School-level administrators | Literacy Leaders | Teachers | | |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------|----------|
| AA          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| JB          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| JC          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| IO          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| MI          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| AQ          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| ZB          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| OG          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| VC          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| SZ          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| LS*         | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| QR          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| CR*         | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| JK          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| BL          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| LC          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| ZF          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| FO          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| LA          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| DL          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| VO          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| ZO          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| CL          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| FN          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| LF          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| FE          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| JZ          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| KV          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| RL          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| CB          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| CE          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| QQ          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| ZZ          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| AS          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| IG          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| LZ          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| LZ          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| RS          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| JD          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |
| MV          | ✔                   |                             |                 |         | ✔        |

| Total       | 33                  | 18                           | 13               | 8       | 7        |
| Out Of      | 40                  | 40                           | 40               | 40      | 40       |

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates administrators who also occupied a teaching role, initials are pseudoinitials for participants, (✔) indicates any time a participant spoke at least once to goal in specific category (could have been more than once).
Continuous learning. Another way in which professional responsibility was evidenced was in how participants described the importance of their engagement in continuous learning/improvement (13/40). These descriptions often extended from identification of more concrete goals to considering how it was important to learn or improve continuously over time.

Overall, two literacy leaders (2/5), ten teachers (10/21) and one district-level administrator (1/5) stated a commitment to continuous learning/improvement or a need to continuously learn/improve in relation to teaching and learning. Among these, leaders often wanted to continue to learn more about aspects of literacy or curricular frameworks in order to support their colleagues. For example, the sole participant at the district level who made such a statement was IO, who did so in relation to the responsibilities associated with her role as a DLC:

Well, personally of course I’m always learning more and more about literacy and how we can best help our teachers to best help their students with respect to literacy…lifelong learning, and find better ways, better and better ways to have teachers target literacy so that students can successfully improve.

Similarly, BL (LL) discussed how she hoped to refine her understanding of reading and a curricular design framework (Universal Design for Learning; UDL) in order to competently communicate to colleagues “the difference between the big idea and enduring understanding and how they’re connected and related. Umm, obviously, you never stop learning about reading…if it’s effective reading in terms of instruction or what’s best practice.” She went on to consider needed learning in relation to the instruction the students in her classroom might benefit from:
There are things like, oral reading, like you should be reading to your kids everyday, there’s some certain district principles of teaching reading that I need to do some reflecting on. I don’t read to my kids aloud everyday… so, how can I begin to, kind of, look at some of those things and incorporate them into what I’m doing.

Here BL blended her goal to support her colleagues (i.e., being able to teach others about UDL) while also considering what she needed to learn about in order to implement more effective practices for her students within an overall statement about how she will “never stop learning”.

Teachers most often expressed a need to continuously learn and improve so as to put in place the best possible practice for students. This emphasis on professional learning in service of achieving better student outcomes is emblematic of a teacher’s sense of professional responsibility. For example, when asked why she chose to collaborate within a small group of specific teachers, CB (T) described how:

There’s all these new ideas out there and we want to take those new ideas and apply them…Like, we want to be progressive and take the best, you know, like the best technology, like change it to a doctor. Like we don’t want to use the old, old medicine, we want to use the new one that’s going to work better.

QQ (T) simply, but profoundly, stated that she still needs to learn “everything. The more I learn, the more I know nothing.”

Also, participants’ descriptions of how they hoped to expand their potential for success in the future were often linked to their roles in this initiative. Teachers’ sense of responsibility for practice and students was reflected not only in the focus of goals they
set (as described earlier), but also in their commitment to on-going learning about effective practices. Participants in leadership roles felt responsible for practice/students when they were in classrooms, but otherwise set goals to support colleagues and the initiative. Correspondingly, some leaders described a need to advance their learning about how to achieve those responsibilities effectively.

**Next Steps.** Participants’ improvement orientation was also evident when they described in some detail how they intended to improve their practice (20/40). Literacy leaders (2/5), teachers (16/21), and board-level leaders (2/5) conveyed a sense of forward momentum by describing specific next steps they would take in order to refine their teaching and/or learning. For example, IO (DLC) discussed her upcoming transition back into the classroom in the Fall of the following year (her term as DLC was nearing an end) and she felt she would need:

> about three or four years in the classroom to really get the curriculum the way I’d want it to be, in terms of infusing it with what I learned from the PBA…so I don’t feel I was quite there, I feel like I was on the verge of being there, but not quite.

Many teachers described specific aspects of their practice they would change or improve in the future. For example, ZO (T) described how what she learned from the Spring PBA caused her to alter plans for next year.

> The one thing that I’ll do differently next year, is because my Hum 9s … were weaker than most other Hum 9s in the note-taking and I kind of was thinking about that last night, ‘Well, why would they be weaker we did a lot of,’ and then I realized that I had given them all theses kind of sheets. So, they were used to me providing them with a source to organizing.
She went on to reflect about how when she did have them create their own way of organizing notes (i.e., “it turned out to be one of those rush, rush units…”) and linked that aspect of her practice to their weakness in note-taking. Similarly, DL (T) described how she would:

   do more reading to students and I did conferencing with students but I’m going to do it on a much more regular basis so that part of every day…I’m going to make sure that I conference with a group of students. I tried to do that, I wasn’t always consistent, but I think it’s absolutely critical to do that.

Some participants communicated next steps that were needed, not only for themselves, but also for the literacy team (7/40). Figure 4 illustrates how literacy leaders were as likely to describe next steps for the team (2/5) as they were for themselves (2/5). By contrast, teachers were more likely to describe next steps for themselves (16/21) than they were to consider directions for the team (5/21). This would suggest that literacy leaders were conceiving their responsibility for student learning as extending to promoting capacity among the team and by extension to more students. Interesting here was that school-level leaders did not comment on next steps for themselves or the team. While teachers and literacy leaders focused on practice-level next steps, it appeared that administrators were more likely to describe how they would establish and sustain supports for the literacy team (see below).
That said, some teachers (5/21) did focus on next steps for their team’s future, showing evidence of collegial responsibility for improvement and/or further learning. For example, QQ (T) said:

I think we need to move towards more theory. I think we need to move towards reading some articles, looking at some books, doing some kind of a study group, if you wish, to bring ourselves further along...For me I think that the group is rolling along, and the new people have settled in quite nicely, it’s a question of where do we go next, which is learn more. I think we’ve got much more to learn.

In articulating these next steps, QQ implied her community had a responsibility to incorporate a specific type of learning (i.e., research related) into their team’s plans over time in order to better meet students’ needs.
In sum, data suggested that participants exercised professional responsibility by planning for future improvement in ways both specific (e.g., practice-related) and general (e.g., infusing team activities with more research and theory). Further, participants did so in relation to both their own and their team’s future improvement. Given that professional responsibility emphasizes a commitment to continuous improvement and a duty to uphold shared standards, participants’ plans for themselves as individuals and for a larger community seemed to be illustrative of a professionally-responsible orientation.

**Student need.** Above I described how participants’ professional responsibility was evidenced in how they adopted an improvement orientation related to their roles and responsibilities in the project. This improvement orientation was reflected in how they set goals, committed to continual learning, and defined next steps for their own and/or their teams’ learning and practice.

In this section, I describe how participants’ professional responsibility was also reflected in their emphasis on the importance and value of understanding students’ needs (29/40). In analyzing how participants perceived students’ needs, the following two categories emerged: (1) participants described why understanding and knowing student needs is important, and (2) participants linked outcomes to knowing student needs.

Figure 5 represents the conceptual distinctions evident in participants’ responses. Table 4 elaborates on the ways in which different participants emphasized the importance of student needs.
Figure 5. Conceptualizing participants’ ways of emphasizing the importance of student need.
Table 4. How participants emphasized student need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Thinking About</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Important/</td>
<td>Requisite</td>
<td>Effort/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Valuable</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board-level leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level Admin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lit Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>14/40 (35%)</td>
<td>12/40 (30%)</td>
<td>23/40 (58%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes.** Asterisk (*) indicates administrators who also occupied a teaching role, initials are pseudo-initials for participants, (◆◆) indicates any time a participant spoke at least once to student need in specific category (could have been more than once); S = District Superintendent; DoI = Director of Instruction; DP = District Principal; DLC = District Literacy Consultant; P = School Principal, VP = Vice-Principal; LL = literacy leader; T = teacher
**Thinking about student need.** Roughly 1/3 of participants explicitly described the importance of recognizing and responding to student needs (14/40). Two board-level leaders (2/5), four school-level administrators (4/9), three literacy leaders (3/5) and five teachers (5/21) made statements along these lines. Of note is that these assertions were distributed across roles with no significant concentration within a particular role group. For example, in his role as principal, ZB (P) described how better understanding students is valuable to improve their learning.

We’re doing a detailed analysis now as to where the kids are weak, what strategies will help them learn – be more effective so they’re more successful later on down the road…when you, umm, get some data on kids and the you sort of look at their work and just say, ‘We need strategies one, two, three, four,’ we’re going to work on that because we think that’s going to work and then it’s nice payback in the end to say that the intervention in those strategies pays off by higher scores in the end. So, it’s kind of rewarding stuff.

Some participants attributed value to recognizing students’ needs because it allowed them to authentically focus their planning and instruction. For example, CB (T) described information about students’ strengths and weaknesses as “very useful because it gives us insights on what to work on, like it’s, it’s a target. You know, it’s something useful.” Similarly, LA (LL) expressed appreciation for data because:

it informs my teaching in a lot of ways, it also helps me to plan differently for the two classes, because I can see the different strengths and areas of need for the two different classes….just getting this information is invaluable because I can see some of the stuff that they’re really missing the boat on.
The importance and value participants across roles attached to knowing more about students suggested that they shared a sense of responsibility to address students’ needs. Some participants more specifically spoke about how understanding, or better understanding, students’ learning needs was a necessary and requisite component of their ability to teach effectively (12/40). Proportionally more board-level leaders (3/5) and literacy leaders (4/5) than teachers (4/21) explicitly described themselves and/or others as needing to understand or better understand students’ needs. CB (T) said that:

You need to know the kids. You know, you need to know who you’re working with and what their abilities are and also their backgrounds, and also the dynamics that you’re working with. Like, as I say, I had these great goals this year, but when I saw the composition and the dynamics, a lot of it change.

Participants often stated that they needed to further understand students’ learning needs. For example, FE (T) said “I need, professionally, I need to slow down in the class and be with the kids…to see where they are, so I can help them go somewhere”

Some participants moved beyond a conceptualization of what they themselves needed to know, and bridged to what members of their professional community should know in order to meet students’ learning needs. Here again, participants implied a sense of shared responsibility in service of meeting students’ needs. For example, from his position at the district level, AA (S) described how secondary teachers should “know that their kids don’t already know how to read, even the skilled ones…I think that awareness that reading is fundamental, that you have to teach it, they haven’t already learned it in elementary school.” Similarly, JB (DoI) perceived the larger community, the members of
the literacy initiative at all layers, as needing to better understand adolescent learners and described the project as:

important for literacy but … also important for focusing on the adolescent learner because we’ve had, in fact, that was probably the primary reason for designing the literacy initiative, not so much for literacy, because it provided an opportunity to look at what do adolescent learners need? Especially as they move from grade seven to grade eight and the environment’s so different…so what do they need, what do we need to pay attention to so that they feel a part of their community, they feel connected? Because if you talk to them they’ll say, ‘I don’t feel connected,’ you know, so I think this is helping a lot not only with literacy, but with getting teachers to kind of think differently about, you know, the adolescent learner.

Literacy leaders (4/5) also conveyed a desire to spread information about students’ learning beyond already involved members of the literacy team. For example, ZF (LL) sought to “break out to the science department because I think it’s good for all teachers to know what students need to work on and maybe they can work on these skills so kids don’t just compartmentalize and say these are the skills I use in Humanities or in English class and be able to use their skills in other classes as well.” Similarly, after interpreting student data BL (LL) reflected on

how do I share this information with the staff in a way that’s not going to overwhelm them, but can highlight kind of, what are the most important things we’ve learned about our kids in terms of their strengths and their challenges…How can I then be thinking about not only my own kids in terms of
sharing that out with the rest of the staff, and how can we as a staff pay more 
attention to that?

These participants demonstrated a sense that it was the community’s responsibility to 
meet students’ needs, a belief that seemed to be felt most acutely by members in a formal 
leadership role but also by some teachers.

**Outcomes related to knowing student needs.** Across roles, participants articulated 
how their own, or others’, efforts to better meet students’ needs could be associated with 
positive outcomes (23/40).

First, 23 participants, including board-level leaders (2/5), school-level 
administrators (6/9), literacy leaders (3/5) and teachers (13/21), explicitly linked how 
they, or others, were taking up information about students to focus efforts in ways that 
helped them to more closely align actions with what students needed.

In some cases leaders observed how the community was attempting to better 
fulfill their responsibilities by attending to students’ needs. For example, ZB (P) 
described how their school was:

on the continuum and we’re moving up towards the end where hopefully we can say most teachers use the data to inform their practice, and when the kids are successful they will go back and they’ll re-teach, they’ll decide as a team of teachers, not on their own. You know, they’ll use that synergy and that energy, they’ll say, “Look, here are the scores from my blocks of Science 8, or Hum 8.” You know, where the kid’s weak. What strategies can we then put back into the instructional wheel so when we catch these kids three months down the road, they’ll be able to achieve those learning outcomes.
Many teachers and literacy leaders outlined the ways in which they were better equipped to meet their students’ needs through involvement in the literacy initiative. For example, ZF (LL) described how her thinking had been impacted after exploring alternate assessment strategies learned at a district workshop.

I think my thinking is different, like it’s not you know one way of learning for the kids, like it’s the multiple learning, right? So, trying to teach in a different way just so I could target all the kids.

CL (T), too, described how she had shifted to a more thoughtful approach to ensure her students’ understanding.

Well again, I just think it has slowed me down and it’s made me a more thoughtful practitioner because … I am not trying to race through material, I am thinking about a lot more. Not that I didn’t before, but I think I’m just more thoughtful, and I don’t move on quite as quickly because some kids aren’t understanding some things so I just back right up.

RS (T) revealed how knowing student needs had moved her beyond assuming what students might be thinking.

I probably wouldn’t have even focused on teaching specifically inferencing. I would’ve maybe assumed that kids would have just known that, and jumped right into talking about theme and then probably having backtracked afterwards, going, ‘Oh, well, I guess they don’t get it.’ …so I’m definitely recognizing that need to sort of start at that really low level with them where they can actually understand and work my way up, so it’s not wasted time with them.
In these ways, and others, participants noted how their developing understandings helped them to better fulfill their responsibilities as thoughtful practitioners who strove to take into consideration where students were in their learning, rather than just moving through a curriculum. These examples show how participants felt responsible towards students rather than curricular outcomes or a superior.

Second, six participants reflected on what they had learned about students and indicated a sense of responsibility to meet those students’ needs. For example, LA (LL) stated that “I think it’s kind of sad actually they don’t think they’re good readers. So, I don’t know how I could work on that yet.” This example demonstrates LA’s thoughtful engagement in striving to meet students’ learning needs.

In sum, participants across layers described their responsibility to acknowledge and respond to students’ needs. This would suggest that members of this professional community were usefully taking up data, engaging in continuous learning, and focusing goal-directed thinking and/or actions in ways that were consonant with a student-focused, professionally responsible approach.

**What Conditions Supported Teachers to Build From, and Act Upon, their Sense of Professional Responsibility?**

The preceding section suggested that participants in this project felt responsible for responding to student needs and advancing their own learning so as to achieve that goal, either in classrooms (by improving practice), and/or by supporting colleagues or the overall literacy initiative. This section elaborates by describing conditions that may have supported participants to achieve what they perceived as their professional responsibilities (e.g., to support students, to advance their own learning). Here conditions
identified as important by participants included: (1) working in trusting relationships, (2) availability of needed supports (e.g., from others, structures, resources, from different levels in the system), (3) shared goals, and (4) experiences of formalized accountability structures.

**Trust.** Across roles, some participants valued how trust was embedded in their ways of working or suggested that it was needed for professional learning communities to be effective in achieving learning/improvement goals (8/40). For example, five participants described how trust was evident in their collaborative relationships. CE (T) noted the uniqueness of the safety in his school’s community. He suggested that working with his school’s literacy leader (LC), as well as the processes around data use in the literacy program:

> has also made myself, and I would say most of us, very aware of the fact that we have [LC] and we can pick her brain, and we don’t have to feel intimidated by somebody who is bright. And we do all pick her brain, but it’s also got us so that we pick each other’s brains. And we criticize each other and to get to the point where you can criticize safely is an amazing accomplishment…it’s a whole thing here, has brought us to that point where we can not just give each other good ideas but criticize our bad ideas. And they criticize me too, and that’s beautiful.

Similarly, CR (VP, T) described how the ways in which the team worked together to assess influenced the team’s safety. “On that team … you feel safe right, because when we’re looking at it together and we’re assessing together we’re having conversations about what the kids can do and not do. Because it can be a pretty scary thing, you know,
other teachers doing the assessment of kids in your class, right? But because it’s been a team building and it’s been very professional it’s been safe, it’s been nice.”

Three participants identified trust as a necessary condition for teachers to engage in professional learning. For example, ZB (P) described trust as a key element in order for the literacy initiative to sustain. KD (DP) described teachers’ need for trust when engaging in setting goals related to student learning.

You want people to engage in that activity of reflection and goal-setting without feeling like they’re being evaluated on what they’re putting down…and being able to do that, you know, that sense of trust and it’s okay to be there, and the importance of the activity and the process, instead of the evaluation of what they’re doing with it. And I think that’s what happens, and I think you [researcher] modeled that really well.

FN (T) saw trust as necessary for authentic and constructive collaborative professional learning activities. When reflecting on what could have been improved in a lesson study activity at his school, he explained:

I think for us to work together to elevate the profession we have to, we have to be able to work with people that we trust, because there are different styles and they must fit into some rough groups where people are going to feel safe and there are always going to be the mavericks that aren’t going to want to be a part of that, but for those people who do…really want to push their practice to the next level I think finding their own group is the best solution because you have to earnestly go into the person expecting and wanting the criticism, and be willing to both hear it
and do something about it. Do whatever you’re going to do about it, right?

Teaching, co-teaching is really good for that, right?

Of note is that FN reflected on the *how* of the lesson study activity, thinking ahead to how it might be improved, rather than allowing the lack of safety he had experienced to prohibit him from further engaging in collaborative learning and improvement efforts.

In sum, many participants identified how trust plays an important role in collaborative learning efforts. This suggests that trust may have been a condition that supported their exercise of professional responsibility, for which collaboration and learning are integral.

**Support.** Participants outlined various supports as helpful in fostering their capacity to meet students’ needs or engage in their own learning/improvement, and/or in supporting the overall community to come together to meet students’ needs. In other words, nearly all (38/40) participants described qualities of their learning community that provided the conditions necessary for themselves, or others, to exercise professional responsibility. Table 5 represents the type of supports participants in various roles described. Through analyzing perceived supports, four categories emerged: (1) people as supportive; (2) structures that supported learning and/or collaboration; (3) supportive resources; and (4) supports from different levels in the initiative structure.
Table 5. Supports as described by participants in different roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Their role as support</th>
<th>People as supportive 34/40 (85%)</th>
<th>Structures 29/40 (73%)</th>
<th>Resources 34/40 (85%)</th>
<th>Levels 10/40 (25%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>Literacy Leaders</td>
<td>DL Consultant/Pro-D Presenters</td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>Team meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board-level leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-level administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZB</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OG</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SZ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS*</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR*</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JK</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZF</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZO</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LF</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JZ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KV</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QQ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IG</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LZ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MV</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (out of 40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes. Asterisk (*) indicates administrators who also occupied a teaching role, participants initials are pseudo-initials for participants, (✔) indicates any time a participant spoke at least once to a support in a specific category (could have been more than once)

**People as supportive.** Overall, participants perceived people in various roles to be supportive of their own or others’ learning and/or improvement related to meeting students’ needs (34/40). As represented in Table 4.3, participants’ descriptions of supportive people could be grouped into six categories. Leaders often described their own roles as supports within the community. Then participants also described important supports received from administrators, literacy leaders, researchers, district-level consultants/pro-d presenters, and colleagues, respectively.

In contrast to leaders who might conceptualize their roles as supervising/monitoring teachers (from a managerial perspective), most school- and district-level leaders in this project described their responsibilities as supporting teachers to collaborate and engage in professional learning, creating climates supportive of the literacy teams’ interests, and establishing hiring processes that might encourage new teachers to work with and from the interests of their colleagues (15/19). At the school-level, administrators described their support both in terms of the allocation of financial resources as well as their efforts to foster school-level investment. For example, AQ (P) described how she supported teachers who were engaged in the literacy initiative by providing funding.

Umm, certainly I’ve allocated money and resources to the project, we’ve pulled money out of other places to support TOCs, umm, that whole lesson study project, amazing. And what a fantastic opportunity for professional development, and so many staff were involve in it, but that’s a big cost because of TOC costs, so we stole money from all kinds of places.
She also described herself as a “cheerleader because it is a very strong team” and explained how: when we hired the new staff we told them that literacy is an important goal and it’s going to be an expectation that you will participate in it. So I guess, you know, in that way sort of creating the climate.

Similarly, ZB (P) described his approach to support.

Well, I think that we make this high profile and we talk about it. So, at the facilitator’s meetings or other meetings where we have teachers in the schools present we sort of, you know, we talk about it we give it a high profile. I think that people know the admin supports the goal and supports the team, and when we bring in new staff into the school we always, if they don’t already know about it, we always talk about it…So, I think that we front-end load and enthusiastically follow-up incoming staff members or the folks that want to join the team.

LS (VP, T) perceived her role as “supporting professional development as our literacy team would like to see it happen.” In these ways and others school-level leaders described their role as being responsible for supporting, not directing, the team to come together to achieve better outcomes for students.

District-level leaders also described their support in terms of providing resources, time, structures, and encouragement. Interestingly, AA, the district superintendent, downplayed the importance of providing monetary resources and emphasized the district’s symbolic support of teachers.

We’ve addressed this, not so much with structures like provide more resource teacher or something, we try to address this through understanding and attitude…So teaching a concept and propagating these values and encouraging people, it all fits together. At the
district level I think it’s the conceptual and the attitudinal we can directly address, the skills development is something that happens a little closer to the action.

However, JB (DoI) also outlined how they had supported the literacy project with resources. “So, we have invested our literacy grant over the past three years at the secondary level, we’ve called it the intermediate reading initiative.” She then described her support to teacher learning in complex ways as supporting “my teams, hiring good people and supporting them…I really have to advocate for positions like teacher consultants who have great pedagogy and great interpersonal skills with supporting teacher development and learning and make sure we keep supporting them.” She went on to describe district-level support as providing “professional development slash in-service as well as mentoring and other forms of teacher support such as, you know, lesson study.” IO (DLC) described her role in supporting the initiative by “creat[ing] the leadership in the schools and that the school have…distributed leadership.” These examples illustrate how in this project district-level leaders saw themselves as providing supports to the literacy initiative in ways that might foster professional learning and shared leadership in service of meeting goals related to adolescent literacy.

Almost all literacy leaders described themselves as a support to colleagues (4/5). For example, BL (LL) talked about how she had responded to teachers’ existing enthusiasm to share professional resources, strategies and lessons by building structured collaborative, learning time into their schedule:

And this is kind of just my push, ‘let’s meet regularly,’ And so, the whole notion of the literacy lunch and actually meet at that date, we put it on the calendar. So we just said, the last Friday of every month will be our literacy lunch and if we don’t make that commitment now and book time off, then other things will get in the way.
LC (LL) described the variety of support she perceived herself as providing to her school’s literacy team, as an advocate, facilitator and resource, but also in encouraging colleagues to participate in decision-making:

They use my units or I make units with them, I help them find texts…so it’s very collaborative…it’s a team. I don’t make the decisions how do we do the PBA, when are we going to do the PBA? What text are we going to use for the PBA?...I advocate for the, there’s a lot of that…I help them mark sometimes, like, just like they’ll call me over to just help them with something, ‘Did I assess this right? Am I looking for the right thing? Am I putting my own bias in?...Am I using the rubric properly?’ … I direct them towards other people.

These examples illustrate the ways in which literacy leaders supported others to make improvements in their practice, interpreting their responsibilities as including both colleagues’ learning/improvement and related improvements for student learning.

While school-level administrators described many ways in which they were working to support colleagues’ learning and practice development, only one participant explicitly described school-level administrative support as integral to the project. Here, speaking from the district-level (and likely thinking also of district secondary schools not included in this project), JC (DP) identified lack of school-level support as “one of the biggest barriers in the schools that we’ve seen struggling, when we don’t have … strong administrator presence.” In her case, it appeared that it was when support was missing that its importance was particularly evident. Other participants’ failure to single out school-based administrators as providing important supports suggests that these individuals may have occupied a bit of a ‘behind-the-scenes’ role in some cases, as supporters of the literacy teams in their schools.
In contrast, literacy leaders were identified as an important support by formal leaders at both the school- and board-levels (10/14) and teachers (5/21). ST (VP) perceived “that the lit lead is the key person, it’s not the principal, the vice-principal, or the English department, it’s the lit lead that’s the key.” In another example, CE (T) viewed “continued support for our lit lead so that she can continue to support us” as a structure that would help him in achieving his goals. He went on to describe her as “amazing and…that essential resource for all of us and we all count on her availability.

Participants also described researchers as providing important supports (5/40). When addressing one researcher/interviewer, QR (VP) stated:

I think, well, what your role and [primary investigator’s role] and [participating University’s role] supporting and sitting down with high school teachers and facilitating their learning of how to do a PBA, it – most people don’t know how to mark holistically, we’re not trained that way, and it’s – that was huge. I thought that was a big one in just providing some structure to it, or helping to facilitate the building of that structure.

LS (VP, T) saw “researchers, well people like yourself keep us motivated and always seeing for more.” Some board-level leaders (3/5), school-level administrators (2/9), literacy leaders (2/5), and teachers (2/21) identified district-level consultants and pro-d presenters as helpful structures. For example, LA (LL) described how a district-level consultant “came in and did a pro-d on lit circles.”

In terms of support from colleagues, a few board-level leaders and school-level administrators described colleagues as supportive (3/14). In contrast, most literacy leaders (4/5) and many teachers (13/21) described colleagues as supportive. IO (DLC) described her time with colleagues as being the source of building her knowledge. ZO (T) described “definitely
meeting with other teachers and kind of just touching base, seeing…what’s working in their
class” as supportive. FE (T) described a particular co-planning experience in that:

the beauty of it is that you’ve got somebody who maybe has a different way of looking at
it than you, or similar, but they can unwrap it differently, and right away it’s like
collectively it’s better. That’s why team teaching is just wonderful, I mean, you learn
more from your partner, I think, than what you have to offer.

In sum, most participants deemed people in various roles to be supportive of their
learning/improvement (34/40). Notably, classroom-based educators (i.e., literacy leaders and
teachers) were most likely to describe colleagues as supportive, which, when associated with the
finding that most participants shared goals related to students’ learning, suggests that collegiality
(a facet of professional responsibility) may have been fostered through common foci and shared
learning experiences.

Structures that supported learning and/or collaboration. When describing supportive
conditions, participants also identified a variety of structures as beneficial for their learning
and/or collaboration (see Table 5). Overall, all board-level leaders (5/5), many school-level
administrators (4/9), all literacy leaders (5/5), and just over half of teachers (12/21) described
some sort of structure that promoted collaboration and/or learning. As represented in Table 4.3,
participants’ descriptions of supportive structures could be grouped into four categories: team
meetings; pro-d/workshops; time/money; and conferences. Board-level leaders seemed to be
most keenly aware of formalized structures, perhaps due to their involvement in creating and/or
facilitating them. Literacy leaders were also centrally engaged as participants, designers, or
leaders of structured learning/collaboration time in connection with their responsibilities (e.g.,
district-level team meetings for literacy leaders; scheduling of classroom blocks during which they could provide support to colleagues).

Many participants identified team meetings that occurred within schools (e.g., the literacy team) or at the district-level (e.g., all resource teachers together) as particularly supportive (14/40). For example, ZF (LL) described literacy leader team members as “supporting each other by giving each other ideas on, you know, these are the different examples of PBAs they’ve done” at a district-level team meeting. Participants also perceived pro-d activities, workshops, or a district-level professional learning group (i.e., Strengthening Student Literacy Network; SSLN) as supportive (17/40). For example, IO (DLC) perceived that “[her] practice has changed over time…hugely partly from SSLN and seeing people try things and coming back to it.” At one school, several participants described the lesson study process they engaged in as supportive of their learning and/or goal-directed trajectory. For example, KV (T) described it as “amazing” and “in the whole process of just talking about your teaching in that way, talking about the lesson, talking about the kids, having so many people watch you. It was amazing, like, it was really a pro-d.”

All board-level leaders (5/5), some school-level administrators (3/9), a few literacy leaders (2/5) and some teachers (4/21) explicitly identified time and money as necessary to create structures that allowed for collaboration and/or learning. In most cases, participants flagged the need for ‘bought’ time (i.e., provisions for a teacher-on-call) for them to collaborate with others (e.g., in scoring the PBA and LTRQ) and/or to attend structured learning events (e.g., team meetings at the district office). QQ (T) described “time” and “money” as supportive of “be[ing] able to share with each other.” Others conceived of monetary resources as providing literacy leaders with a block of collaborative time. LS (VP, T) described how their school used
additional funding to provide their literacy leader with an extra block of time (i.e., two blocks), an outcome that occurred due to the desires of the literacy team. LS stated that time and money were needed “and we learned this year money can buy time.” AQ (P) described how they had re-jigged their timetable by pulling three blocks of time out of resource (student services) “and that’s three blocks that could be co-teaching time. So, I would like to see more support in resource so that we can have more co-teaching.”

Speaking more generally from his district-level platform, AA (S) highlighted the role ministry funding played in terms of providing leverage for a literacy initiative for which there was already on-the-ground interest. He used the analogy of starting a fire by describing the funding as the match, “but all the tinder was already there. Somebody gives you a match and you’ve got tinder underneath, you can make something happen, but if there was no tinder then that’s really no good.”

Just two participants also identified conferences as a supportive structure (2/40). For example, MV (T) recounted the effect of presenting at district and provincial conferences.

So the fact that we were able to go as a team to present at the international reading association, even presenting locally within my own district, but also at [a local university] ... It’s just kind of an opportunity to see other colleagues that are out there in different districts. And then the provincial-level being involved with the [Province’s Teachers of English Language Arts] and having a better, a broader scope of what’s happening provincially and … learning a little bit more about the politics of education that I wasn’t really aware, I guess I was aware but I didn’t understand to what level.

While some structured times for collaboration were expected for participants given their roles in the district (e.g., literacy leaders were expected to attend district-level team meetings; in
some schools, all members of grade level teams were asked to participate in shared data 
interpretation and planning meetings), participants had the freedom to choose goals they 
perceived as most key for their own contexts and roles. Further, for the most part participants’ 
engagement in structured learning activities (e.g., lesson studies, meetings with literacy leaders, 
co-teaching with colleagues) was voluntary. Thus, the frequency with which participants took 
up opportunities to participate in structured learning/collaboration time reflected, not only their 
commitment to continuous learning/improvement, but also the value they ascribed to the 
opportunities afforded to them at the school- and district-level.

Supportive resources. Another supportive condition identified by participants was their 
ability to access resources, including data, to support their goal-directed learning and/or practice 
in order to better meet students’ needs (34/40). As represented in Table 5, participants’ 
descriptions of supportive resources could be grouped into three categories: data; data processes; 
and reading/resources.

Overwhelmingly, participants saw data as supportive of their learning or practice (32/40). Many teachers perceived data as supporting them in monitoring student needs, refining their 
planning and instruction in order to achieve better outcomes for students, and/or as a way to pull 
the team together to share goals and responsibility for students’ learning. For example, LA (LL) 
described it as “really informative” while others described how it “has focused our team.”

Participants also saw processes related to assessment creation and data use as supportive 
(14/40). For example, some participants linked the kinds of data collection processes used in the 
project with teachers’ sense of ownership in collaborative efforts to continuously improve. For 
in instance, MV (T) thought:
there is a lot of power in the group scoring in that teachers have an opportunity to talk and say, ‘Oh, I know that student, that’s interesting, why did that happen?’…So it was really powerful in the change aspect…and it also brought you together as a team, because then you know what you’re working on together or even if it’s different you know how to support each other in your learning together.

CL (T) missed the opportunity to build from data with colleagues to better meet students’ needs. She lamented that, because she was teaching senior level grades, and funding structures were aimed towards grade eight groups in that year, she was poorly funded to collaborate.

You need that time to be able to score, and then you need time to be able to talk about that and set the goals, and then you need time to look at, you know, what worked and what didn’t to make other goals, and then you need time to do that PBA again and compare it.

Overall, participants perceived that having opportunities to collect and interpret data enabled them to build from assessments to achieve better outcomes for students. Supportive conditions were established when participants’ engagement in creating, scoring, and interpreting data was supported by people (e.g., researchers, literacy leaders, colleagues), and initiative structures (e.g., “bought” time; team scoring meetings), and when data were aggregated and reported (e.g., in team meetings; by the research team) in ways teachers found to be meaningful and instructive.

Participants also accessed professional resources (i.e., reading or curricular materials), on their own or with support, in order to enhance their learning, improvement and efforts to meet students’ needs (7/40). BL (LL) described how she read in “the hopes of knowing what it is in our schools that the kids are struggling with.” She viewed part of her role as a literacy leader as:
finding suitable resources for the staff that I’m working with, so if I am aware of what’s out there, what’s current, what a good fit might be in terms of, ‘Let’s try this with your students,’ or, ‘here’s a book you might be interested in reading,’ then I’m able to kind of make those links for teachers and I’m able to help them develop and grow in their own – professionally.

Here, BL bridged her perceived responsibility as literacy leader to meet students’ needs in the school overall with her responsibility to equip her colleagues with the resources necessary to engage in professional learning so as to improve their practice.

**Support from different levels in the initiative structure.** Finally, when describing supportive conditions for their learning and practice development, some participants described the importance of school-, district- and/or provincial-levels of support (10/40). IO (DLC) was the only participant who described how school-level support was vitally important. She stated that, because the Ministry was “too removed,” and the classroom level was “far too black box,” then “if there’s support and encouragement from [school-level] administration and the team, and that the team members are then going… into each other’s classrooms and do that stuff … then you’re going to automatically get the classroom level still.”

Eleven participants overall (11/40), eight of whom were formal leaders (8/19), saw the district as an important support. ZF (LL) described the district support as “good because it can provide us with support if we need to have meetings or to plan or things like that.” CR (VP, T) thought that “the district support has been really, really helpful, really helpful, and as I say, just learning the strategies has been helpful” as was building a “network of people that you can help, help each other, and share information” through team meetings at the district level. AA (S) perceived the district leadership as “pivotal.” Of those who mentioned the support of the
ministry-level it was strictly with reference to funding that were used to provide supportive structures.

In sum, overall, participants in this professional learning community described people, structures, resources, and/or levels of school, district, and/or ministry support as vital to the literacy initiative. The productive use of data, the role of supportive others and collaboration were prominent supports identified by participants. Supports were perceived as useful in facilitating teachers’ goal-directed activity in meeting students’ needs and promoting their capacity to act on their sense of professional responsibility (e.g., professional learning, focus on student needs, shared standards).

**Goal alignment.** As reported earlier (see Table 3), nearly all participants set goals related to students’ learning, suggesting that individuals working from across roles and positions perceived themselves as responsible for meeting students’ needs. In other words, in the context of this professional learning community, there appeared to be an alignment of goals across “levels” of the system (i.e., most participants set goals related to student learning).

Thus, as part of the data interpretation framework, attention was focused on participants’ perceptions related to goal setting, the alignment of goals across layers of the education system, and investment in goals. In analyzing the data related to experiences connected to goals, two broad categories emerged: 1) Describing and thinking about goal setting and/or goal alignment, 2) Perceived impact related to goal alignment. Table 6 represents the conceptual distinctions evident in participants’ responses.
First, when describing goal setting or goal alignment, many participants perceived themselves as sharing goals with others or the literacy initiative itself (19/40), in line with dimensions of professional responsibility that emphasize common goals. For example, CB (T) described how she chose to work with specific colleagues because:

we care about the kids, and their education is what we put first, and we want to be progressive and we want to help them learn, and we want to see them read. Like, it’s just we all have the same goal.
Other participants described the overall literacy team at their school as having common goals.

CR (VP, T) stated that they:

certainly have a lot of common goals now because we have some common themes through the assessment so it’s nice then we can go to different workshops and things together and if we can’t all go we share with each other when we get back.

Similarly, LC (LL) conveyed a degree of synergy and described how:

we’re all looking at many pieces of the practice all together…everybody’s working on assessment, everybody’s working on strategies, everybody’s working on planning, everybody’s working on diverse texts, you know, everybody’s working on all the pieces.

We’re working on pro-d really effectively in the school…there’s a real commitment to professional development through collaboration.

Some participants described how their personal goals were similar to those of the overall literacy initiative. AQ (P) oscillated between what ‘we’ want and how she personally thinks about literacy. In doing so, AQ clearly conveyed how she believes what they are working towards is fundamentally important for students:

Obviously we wanted the kids to have better skills, umm, because I believe that if the kids can read better they will achieve better, especially with, again, in the content areas, umm, because I think the reason that so many kids struggle with Science and Math and Social Studies is because they just can’t read the books and they’ve never been taught how to read a book, they don’t understand how to think critically, and so that was our goal, to use reading – to improve reading for reading’s sake but ultimately it’s to improve achievement.
CL (T) described how the data-driven nature of the initiative corresponded with her goal of monitoring her students’ achievement: “this project is intertwined with my overall goals because I need to know, I need some evidence of where they are and where they’re going and I need to know that I’ve done my job.”

Beyond just describing goals as “common” across participants or within the overall project, some participants specifically discussed how formal goals were aligned across two or more ‘layers’ of the educational system (16/40). All board-level leaders (5/5) and nearly all school-level administrators (8/9) made such an observation. For example, ZB (P) described the project as “[enabling] the school goals and the district plans” and being “at the epicentre of our school improvement plan.” OG (P) described how:

The school has been involved in some form of trying to enhance reading in the content areas for the past...five years I guess. Umm, and coincidentally that has been a district initiative too – reading initiative, so they are very congruent there.

Notably, administrators responsible for formal accountability mechanisms (e.g., school-level administrators setting school goals and accounting to the district) were more acutely aware of the congruency of goals across layers, despite the fact that nearly all participants, at all levels, had set goals. In contrast, only one literacy leader (1/5) and two teachers (2/21) explicitly commented on school- or district-level goal setting. This might suggest that teachers were able to focus on goals they had set at the classroom-level in response to students’ needs in ways that were unencumbered by the more formalized goal-setting structures at higher levels. The discrepancy between those who were, and were not, attending explicitly to whether and how goals aligned across levels is indicative of how formalized goal-setting processes at higher levels that allowed
teachers to *choose* meaningful goals may have been a condition from which teachers could create
goals in line with their perceived values and responsibilities.

Second, many participants’ described positive impacts associated with goal setting and/or
goal alignment. Seven participants (7/40) associated positive impacts with shared goals,
including three board-level leaders (3/5), three school-level administrators (3/9) and one teacher
(1/21). For example, ZB (P) commented that common goals “helped people change their
attitudes I think as far as teaching, learning is concerned because I think it’s more fun. I think
people feel good at the end of the day.” He went on to outline a shift he’s seen over time in the
profession from teachers working independently to more collaboratively. JC (DP) described
how having aggregated information about students’ needs across schools supported district-level
leaders to identify what might be beneficial to offer as support for teachers. LF (T) highlighted
outcomes for students related to common goals:

> with people here that we work with in the teams, and when we have that support and
we’re working with these people to focus on these goals then I think the end outcome is
going to be much more – it’s going to be much greater for the students.

Six participants described how they or colleagues were invested in shared goals. Nearly
all participants who described this investment were formal leaders (2/5 board-level leaders; 3/9
school-level administrators; 1/21 teachers) suggesting that although they were not mandating
compliance, they were aware of how their colleagues were responding to formal goals. For
example, CR (VP,T) described how, while she and her school’s literacy leader encouraged
participants to attend their professional development event, teachers attended both because they
were interested, and because the topic was linked to teachers’ sense of responsibility:
For professional development at the high school level, it’s quite a, not everybody always shows up, they are often doing their own thing. We have had really good turn out for everything to do with literacy, you know, we lobbied a lot beforehand. [ZF] and I, but we got a lot of people out there, so I think that there is interest in it, and honestly, how can there not be? It’s just, how can you be a teacher and not say, you know, something on literacy applies to you. You just can’t, you know, and justify it.

ZB (P) described how he maintained interest and investment in the project by encouraging connections between new and established team members, rather than creating ways to forcibly get more teachers ‘on board’:

And I think that we’ll just keep having the team kind of naturally grow with the infusion of new folks, and hopefully we’ll get some folks who have been here for awhile that are kind of – I mean it’s obviously one of the hottest topics on staff, I mean, everybody knows about it because it’s talked about…I see certainly not only new folks join, new staff members, but I see some of the incumbent members who might not necessarily be involved before. So, it is sort of a growing grass roots thing, sort of osmosis through the building.

Significantly, AA (S) described how recruiting involvement can backfire, if teachers’ sense of agency is negatively impacted:

In elementary we don’t have any comparable anything…I’m not a proponent of ‘Let’s have all thirty-seven elementary schools on the same train.’ I think that might be inevitably a bit of a forced fit and you would get some people who were really on the train and some people who were reluctantly and maybe just a little bit angrily on the train.
Sometimes participants associated investment with *how* goals were set. In doing so, they highlighted how they were sensitive to the conditions under which teachers may, or may not, take-up goals. In most cases, leaders described how they created goals in line with what teachers and literacy leaders were already invested in. ZB (P) described LC (LL) as straddling teacher/leader boundaries as she was involved in their accountability structure, even though teachers in the province had been advised by their union not to participate in SPCs or formal goal-setting (see Chapter 3):

[LC (LL)] gives us updates, and we actually start our school planning council meetings with the literacy update which [she] gives us…So, I think any school would be crazy to, sort of come up with a plan with a group of parents, and administrators, and one teacher and say, ‘Okay, there’s sixty teachers on staff. We’ve made this plan up, and this is what you’re going to do next year.’ You know, it’s funny business. So, we’ve designed it backwards to make up a school improvement plan…but we’ve got to come up with a plan that’s good for the kids, good for teachers, and the teachers going to want to implement it. So our last two school improvement plans have been sort of based on what the teachers are willing to do.

ZB’s attention to teachers’ investment in “what’s good for kids” showed his sensitivity to the important role teachers’ sense of responsibility can play in improvement efforts. In a similar example, BL (LL) recounted how she:

actually crafted the school goals this year, even though I’m not supposed to. [AQ (P)] said, ‘Can you help me out?’ so I sent back the data and what we’ve learned and tried to represent the data in a more meaningful way.
These examples demonstrate how shared goals (i.e., student learning) provided participants with a perceived, valid rationale to work together in an improvement effort and overcome political constraints. CR (VP, T) reflected on the sequence of goal setting in her school:

It was a couple of years ago when we started doing it and I bet you a lot of teachers didn’t. No, it wasn’t a district goal. It wasn’t. I don’t think it was a school goal when we started…So for our school I don’t think we did it because it was a goal, I think it actually might have happened the other way. Which is actually how assessment for learning should work, right? You set your goals after your assessment.

MI (DLC) commented that “the direction that the ministry takes tends to be, or at least I’ve noticed over the last few years, tends to be a step behind the direction that [our school district] takes.” In these examples, participants asserted ownership over valued goals rather than attributing their origin to an ‘other’ who may have mandated specific goals.

In sum, goal alignment and the ways goals were set seemed to be related to participants’ investment in goals. Further, it was formal leaders who were most likely to comment on the investment they observed in others, suggesting they were attuned to how teachers and literacy leaders were responding to the change initiative and formalized school- and/or district-level goals as related to adolescent literacy.

**Formalized accountability structures.** Participants were necessarily part of an overall accountability structure. In this final section, I describe how participants perceived and experienced formalized accountability, as established in this context, as a condition that supported, or hindered, their exercise of professional responsibility. Of note is that questions pertaining to formal accountability structures were only asked of literacy leaders, school-based
administrators, and district-level leaders. However, because accountability was also discussed by participants in teaching roles, all findings will be reported out of forty (i.e., all participants).

Figure 6 shows the conceptual distinctions evident in how participants were describing their experiences of the formal accountability context. The main themes reflected in participants’ comments were: (1) process and participation related to formal accountability structures, (2) drawing meaningful data into accountability demands, (3) collegiality and accountability, (4) results/data as fostering accountability, and (5) problems with accountability.

*Figure 6*. Experiences and perceptions of accountability as described by participants
First, nearly all board-level leaders (4/5), school-level administrators (7/9) and two literacy leaders (2/5) described how they engaged in the process of meeting accountability demands. Notably, administrators were directly implicated in accountability mechanisms, but literacy leaders and district-level consultants did not have formalized responsibilities related to accountability structures. Second, two board-level leaders (2/5), five school-level administrators (5/9) and one literacy leader (1/5) described drawing from goals and data teachers, literacy leaders and administrators perceived to be meaningful, for teaching and learning, to satisfy accountability policies. In this way, administrators balanced their formal accountability responsibilities with attention to teachers’ sense of agency and professional responsibility. For example, in discussing the PBA and LTRQ, CR (VP, T) contrasted the “useful” data that supported teachers in planning to meet students’ literacy needs with the Foundation Skills Assessments (FSA; provincial, standardized assessments):

We’ve used both of them [PBA, LTRQ]...with our school planning council and just as part of the data we have to have. So, it was perfect, because we could use this data, which is meaningful to the teachers actually using it to plan and teach, umm, and yet because we have to have, we’re directed that we must have data it’s been perfect for that as well...the ministry is directing us to have data, because in your school goal, it has to be measurable...so this is okay because a lot of teachers would like to protest the accountability or the monitoring, and certainly protest anything that is directed to them from above, so this has been perfect for us, because they’ve all – they were involved with this before we started using this data for the school planning council. So, how do you all of a sudden protest it? You can’t, right?
CR perceived that, because teachers felt invested in the goals, they would not then protest them when the goals were incorporated into formal accountability mechanisms (i.e., school-level goals; data collection; reporting data to the district), as they might have had the sequence of goal setting been different. Here, she highlighted the importance of careful change enactment (i.e., the how of goal setting), as well as the degree to which investment and beliefs play a role in teachers’ attitudes towards change. Similarly, AQ (P) contrasted assessments that satisfy accountability demands and fuel improvement with assessments used simply to account to the Ministry:

Well it’s just that the data is so much more meaningful in that it’s broken down so well. Like, people can look at the actual details of the information … it so much more detailed and so much more meaningful than just the F.S.A. scores.

ZB (P) conveyed his excitement over analyzing the PBA and LTRQ data, emphasizing the degree to which it was meaningful to teachers. He stated that the data would:

Be my summer reading…this is exciting stuff because it was generated through the kids in the school and I think people take it seriously…So, I’m not sure how authentic those FSAs are but they have such a bad rap as far as the politics between the [provincial] TF and the ministry, so it wasn’t exciting data for us and this is exciting data for us because it was generated by our teachers, it was scored by our teachers …The FSA data and even the government exam data…the teachers it’s never really sort of a team or an esprit de corps towards it. Now there’s an esprit de corps towards embracing this data. So, we’re embracing it for the right reasons, we’re not trying to dot ‘I’s and cross ‘T’s for the ministry. We want to do this because if we think we have a good handle on this data it will benefit our students here at this school.
As part of their formal responsibility, administrators were required to commit to accountability contracts (i.e., set goals, collect and report data). In choosing their goals, administrators chose to capitalize on the flexibility of the accountability structure by building on shared interest (across layers) in meeting students’ literacy needs based on “meaningful” and “authentic” data. In these examples, administrators conveyed a preference to work towards goals their colleagues, and they themselves, felt authentically invested in due to information they valued. The flexibility leaders had in setting goals provided a condition to support teachers in building from, and acting upon, their sense of professional responsibility.

Third, a few participants saw collegiality as having the potential to promote a sense of accountability (3/40). ZF (LL) conceived of drawing teammates together as a way to promote accountability/responsibility for teachers to address weaknesses apparent in student data. CR (VP, T) described how:

You sort of feel this accountability towards your teammates and to the other people…you can’t let them down…which is why it would be nice if we did lit circles or something like that because you are accountable to your team you’re more likely, or hopefully more motivated to do it.

While not explicitly discussing accountability, LF (T) implied that collegiality might foster accountability or responsibility when he stated that:

We’re working with these people to focus on these goals then I think the end outcome is going to be much more – it’s going to much greater for the students and if everyone’s going in that direction I certainly do not want to have certain students that are left behind because I failed in any way to kind of employ these strategies that I see to be really beneficial too.
This shared responsibility for student learning and upholding of shared (professional) standards seemed to be motivated by collegiality, and in these instances the emphasis was on responsibility for student learning rather than formalized accounting to a higher-up.

Fourth, five participants perceived data as sources that inspired accountability (5/40). In these instances, the ‘inspired accountability’ was really an accountability to students’ learning (rather than a superior). For example, CR (VP, T) described how she thought:

When you do the assessment at the beginning it just forces you to be more accountable because how can you assess these students and find out this is what they need and then not teach that? So it kind of forces a bit of accountability there because you know you’re going do an assessment, well during, but also at the end so personally I think it makes us more accountable.

In describing how she perceived teachers’ accountability related to professional development, JC (DP) stated that:

Accountability-wise what’s happening right now is the excitement and the momentum from the school that are seeing change in student learning is carrying and bringing some of these other people on board. So, if they actually do come up to one session they come back for another one because the energy is really positive…they can see this is the information based on my students and I can design professional development and get involved in this in relation to what the students at my school need.

Finally, some participants pointed to inadequacies or problems related to formal accountability (3/40; all formal leaders). AA (S) suggested that target-setting stipulations by the Ministry can be unfavourable:
The superintendents of achievement are supposed to come around with some kind of regulations or expectations about the achievement topic…they don’t know anything yet, they’ve been appointed…And I’m sure that those regulations will say things like, ‘Thou shalt set a target,’ unfortunately so we’ll have to figure out how to do that in a way that isn’t harmful.

AQ said that “if we want to be accountable I think we should be more accountable for things like the drop out rates.” IO (DLC) spoke about how there is too little accountability for teachers to commit to professional development and too little follow-up by administrators to check in to see if teachers are following through with their pro-d. “Ultimately teachers are accountable to themselves and to their supervising administrator, in terms of actual accountability. They’re not accountable to the union, they’re not accountable to each other, they’re not accountable to the board specifically.”

Notably, participants who relayed problems or inadequacies associated with formal accountability structures did not indicate that policies were deleterious of improvement efforts, as so often is the case in managerial accountability policies.

In sum, school- and district-level leaders who participated in formalized accountability demands described themselves as balancing meaningful and productive use of data with the necessity of using data to monitor and account for student learning outcomes (to superiors). Despite their participation in accountability structures, in this context, there did not seem to be an emphasis placed on the importance of accounting, nor did they associate stress or hindering effects with accountability policies.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This study aimed to build from literature suggesting a need to better understand how individuals experience change initiatives and accountability demands in relation to their sense of professionalism and responsibility in education settings (e.g., Camburn, 2010). Building from literature which suggests the promise of blending managerial and professional forms of accountability (e.g., Møller, 2009), this study specifically aimed to uncover how professional responsibility was evidenced within a professional learning community. Further, the current research sought to highlight how conditions may have fostered teachers for build from, and act upon, their sense of professional responsibility within the context of a larger educational accountability structure. To address these two research questions, secondary analyses were conducted on interview responses from forty participants engaged in a change initiative in one urban school district located on the West Coast of Canada. In chapter 4, results reported were based on participants’ descriptions of their perceptions and experiences related to their experiences of professional responsibility and potentially relevant conditions that may have afforded them to exercise their professional responsibility. In this chapter I will revisit the findings related to each research questions in relation to relevant theory. Subsequently, I will discuss this study’s contributions and limitations, and suggest directions for future related research.

RQ1: How was Professional Responsibility Evidenced within a Professional Learning Community?

The first research question in this study focused attention on how professional responsibility was evidenced within a particular professional learning community. This study was motivated by research citing inadequacies in popular reform agendas reliant on managerial
accountability (e.g., Jones, 2007) and the promise of professional accountability which may better address the inherent complexities in people-centered change initiatives (e.g., Debard & Kubow, 2002). Sole reliance on either form of accountability has been critiqued and has inspired calls for blended forms of accountability (e.g., Møller, 2009). The present study aimed to uncover evidence of professional responsibility in one professional learning community (PLC) working within an accountability framework. As such, the findings from this study have the potential to illuminate how, in the context of an inquiry-oriented PLC, individuals might experience accountability demands in ways that connected to their sense of professionalism and responsibility (e.g., Camburn, 2010).

Findings from this study indicate that participants were working in ways commensurate with held notions of professional responsibility. First, participants demonstrated improvement orientations as exemplified by their goal setting, commitment to continuous learning, and planned next steps. Specifically, findings were that most participants across roles set goals, and that of those who did, most common were goals related to student learning. Interestingly, goals for student learning spanned individuals’ roles and were not limited to those participants who were working directly in classrooms with students. Goals related to supporting colleagues and the literacy initiative were more likely to be set by participants in leadership roles. This finding suggests that participants conceived of their responsibilities in relation to their roles. The shared focus on students across roles, as well as support for others and the literacy initiative, was reflective of Møller’s (2009) interpretation of professional accountability which includes communally upholding and heeding to agreed upon standards. In this particular professional learning community, the “agreed upon standards” were overtly centered on meeting the literacy
needs of adolescent learners. Participants’ goals, both common and divergent, reflected their aims to support those standards.

In addition to goals focused on student need, participants also set goals related to improving their practice and/or learning. Not surprisingly, classroom-based educators were most likely to set goals related to their own practice and/or learning. That participants chose to set goals intended to foster their own capacity building in ways that might lead to improved learning outcomes for students indicates that they felt a responsibility to students and, relatedly, to improve. It seemed that, because they had the ‘space’ to participate in the literacy team voluntarily, participants’ engagement in goal setting, and subsequent or simultaneous inquiry processes, indicates they were acting as agents (Groundwater-Smith & Campbell, 2009). The ways in which these participants were taking up opportunities to act on their sense of responsibility were reflective of Vähäsantenen et al.’s., (2008) interpretation of agency, in which individuals are able to make choices related to one’s work that are in-line with one’s own motivations, interests, hopes and values. Exercising professional judgment to meet the needs of students represents an integral part of professionalism (e.g., Tschannen-Moran, 2009) as is doing so in ways commensurate with held notions of responsibility (Kelchtermans, 2011).

Findings also suggest that many participants demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning, this improvement-focused extension of goal setting indicates that participants saw themselves as responsible for increasingly effective practices over time. Findings also showed that participants were reflecting on practice and planning ahead to their ‘next steps’ in order to make future improvements. Commitment to continuous learning is a commonly held expectation of professionals (Webster-Wright, 2009) and participants’ seeming motivations to do so echo research citing that employees are fuelled by opportunities for growth, learning, and
responsibility (Deming, 1988; Senge, 1990 as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2004). Setting goals, monitoring progress, planning adjustments for improvement and committing to learning over time also reflects what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) called for: an orientation to change that encompasses inquiry as a stance.

Findings also suggest that in addition to setting goals related to student learning, participants across layers were focused on the importance of recognizing and/or responding to student learning needs. Participants across roles were equally likely to focus on student needs, suggesting a shared responsibility for student learning across members of the educational system. This is in contrast to more managerial accountability systems where teachers are positioned as most accountable to regulators, which Biesta (2004) has argued hampers connections between educators/institutions and parents/students that are rooted in a shared concern for a “common educational good…characterized by responsibility” (p. 249).

RQ2: What Conditions Supported Teachers to Build From, and Act Upon, their Sense of Professional Responsibility within the Context of a Larger Accountability Structure?

The second research question in this study focused on conditions that may have supported teachers to build from, and act upon, their sense of professional responsibility within the context of a larger accountability structure. This second research question was motivated by research citing the promise in improvement efforts of blending managerial and professional accountability approaches (e.g., Møller, 2009), and by the abundance of literature citing potential pitfalls within school improvement efforts (e.g., Gross, Booker & Goldhaber, 2009). In taking up the challenge of uncovering how participants in an apparently successful initiative (Camburn, 2010) experienced and perceived their roles and responsibilities related to a change initiative, the current study has the potential to illuminate how change can happen.
Findings from this study indicate that some participants saw trust as an element of their collaboration or viewed it as a necessary condition for professional learning to occur. These findings support Darling-Hammond’s (1994) assertion that the establishment of safe environments is a precondition from which professional learning can follow (see also Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cranston, 2011). Trust has also been implicated in fostering responsibility, which might be due to teachers’ decreased vulnerability in taking responsibility and being accountable for student learning (Lauerman & Karabenick, 2011). Leaders in this study did not broach the topic of trusting, or mistrusting, teachers when describing the ways they were supporting colleagues and/or the goals of the literacy initiative. Due to the degree to which managerial accountability approaches convey a mistrust of teachers (Codd, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Debard & Kubow, 2002; Helgoy & Homme, 2007) the absence of participants’ concerns about mistrust suggested that accountability structures in this context established trusting environments.

Participants identified several kinds of conditions that seemed to support their professional responsibility (i.e., their capacity to meet students’ needs; engage in their own learning/improvement; and/or support the PLC overall to better meet student needs). For example, teachers described supports they received from others in the system, particularly literacy leaders and colleagues. In contrast, leaders often described themselves as supports to building capacities across the system, in essence supporting the exercise of professional responsibility by others. Leaders often described their roles in creating supportive structures (e.g., team meetings, pro-D workshops, time/money invested in creating literacy leader positions or affording time for collaboration; conferences). Across roles participants recognized how those structures were supportive of their work to advance positive outcomes for learners.
In her critique of directives for change that are typically accompanied by an emphasis on performance, Darling-Hammond (2005) proposes developing policies that establish support for teachers’ and schools’ capacities to “be responsible for student learning and responsive to diverse and changing student and community needs, interests, and concerns” (p. 363). In this conceptualization, she emphasizes accountability as including “shared goals, norms and values [that] are translated into policies, organizational structures created to make the policies work.”

In the present study, participants’ described how their capacities to work towards shared goals were supported by organizational structures. However, policies, such as accountability protocol (discussed in detail below), seemed distant from the day-to-day, goal-directed pursuits of participants. Notably, the policies did not seem to distract participants from their perceived responsibilities. Leaders were able to focus on supporting capacity building while teachers were free to make decisions in order to meet students’ learning needs. The presence of supportive conditions, and the absence of performance directives, fit with Debard and Kubow’s (2002) distinction between “those who would exert external pressure to spur performance and those who would nurture internal motivation to assume greater responsibility” (p. 403). The present study shows how conditions can support a system’s capacity to act responsibly to meet student needs.

Through participants’ descriptions of supportive conditions (e.g., with literacy leaders or colleagues; in team meetings), it became clear that they viewed collaboration as a support to professional responsibility. The emphasis participants placed on collaboration in supporting their goal-directed actions is consistent with research linking collaborative environments with engagement in inquiry-oriented learning and shifts in practice (Birenbaum et al., 2009; Butler et al., 2013; Camburn, 2010) and increased capacity to meet the needs of diverse learners (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2004; Mullen & Schunk, 2010; Opfer et al., 2011). Participants linked
collaboration and professional responsibility (e.g., collaboration as supporting learning, promoting shared goals) in ways that were also consonant with Talbert and McLaughlin’s (1994) assertion that collaborative environments have the potential to boost professionalism by strengthening internalized standards as well as the sharing of those emergent standards. 

Findings were also that participants valued how data supported their capacity to understand and address student needs. The ways in which participants described data as useful corresponded to research citing data as key components of improvement efforts (e.g., O’Day 2002). Participants in this community built from data to engage in improvement efforts, positioning data as fuel from which they could autonomously make instructional decisions related to student need (Datnow, 2011; Hoyle, 1982), continually improve (Webster-Wright, 2009) and focus on student needs (Møller, 2009), which are important dimensions of professional responsibility (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2011). This findings was in direct contrast with the myriad of research suggesting the harmful effects of overemphasizing data in improvement efforts (e.g., O’Day, 2002). Thus, understanding how participants in this PLC were engaged in data use has the potential to shed light on productive use of data in systems change. In this study, participants not only described the value of data to supporting their practice development, but they also defined processes that made data valuable and influential. These included having time to collaborate and draw on supportive others in the creating, scoring and interpreting the assessments. This finding is in-line with research citing the importance of establishing supportive, learning-focused contexts (e.g., PLCs) in order to facilitate the productive use of data (e.g., Birenbaum et al., 2009; Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Datnow, 2011; Schnellert et al., 2008). Participants explained that having opportunities to collaborate extended the usefulness of data. They also valued how data were aggregated by the research team in ways
that could be used formatively, as opposed to assessments that might demonstrate performance but be poorly timed or summarized at too large a grain size to provide meaningful information for instructional decisions (O’Day, 2002). In this respect, too, the contribution to capacity building and student learning extended to the research team, implicating the important role researchers can play beyond disseminating research (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

In sum, participants described ways in which people, structures and resources from across the system supported their collective ability to advance literacy outcomes for learners. They also sometimes explicitly identified how supports from different levels of this initiative’s structure were helpful in supporting their work. Taken together, their descriptions suggested that responsibilities for improving outcomes for learners were felt across layers of the system. Multi-leveled responsibility contrasts with accountability approaches that dictate teachers’ responsibility for learning outcomes, leaving out the responsibility of other stakeholders in the system. For example, Leithwood & Earl (2000) question the validity of holding teachers responsible where there exists a “shared, causal responsibility” (p. 5). Similarly, Møller (2009) describes multi-leveled support to, and responsibility for, student learning as a component of improvement orientations that address change in ways more complex than demanding improved student outcomes. In contrast, approaches that support teachers to build from, and act on, their professional responsibility require that demands for increased student achievement levels be coupled with complementary investments in building human capacities. Møller advises too that investments should not stop at providing time and money, but should also extend to providing teachers with opportunities for competency building, which should fall within formal leaders’ realm of responsibilities. Findings indicate that participants deemed the district-level and time/money to be supportive, but did not address the ministry-level as supportive except in its
provision of monetary resources. It seemed that, participants differentiated between support and money. They did not equate money with support even though they had used money to put in place supportive structures. This seeming paradox illustrates Møller’s point, that money might be inadequate.

Findings also suggested how goals were aligned across layers of the literacy initiative. Teachers had the opportunity to choose the goals they set in relation to what they had learned about students’ learning as well as set grade-level goals with their school-based literacy team. Further, teachers’ involvement in the overall literacy initiative was voluntary to the degree that they participated in creating, scoring and interpreting assessments as well as attending school- and district-level meetings. In this context, the learning/improvement orientation exhibited by teachers seemed to have been supported by the degree to which they felt responsible, were invested and worked collaboratively as agents of change rather than receivers of knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Further, when teachers have the opportunity to work in ways commensurate with their beliefs about the purposes of teaching within larger change initiatives, they are more likely to have a sense of agency and feel invested in change (Ketelaar et al., 2012; Wallace & Priestley, 2011).

Goal alignment provided leaders with the opportunity to support teachers in areas of learning teachers valued. However, flexibility in accountability policies in this context seemed to allow for goal alignment to exist to the degree it did. School-level leaders seemed to capitalize on the freedom they had to choose school-level goals and did so in relation to teachers’ investments. Their stated sensitivities to teachers’ interests, beliefs and goals related to student learning seemed to shape school-level goal setting despite fractured goal setting committees (School Planning Councils; SPC). School-level leaders demonstrated a sensitivity to teachers’
professionalism through the ways in which they set goals and provided support to teachers. In doing so, formal leaders were connected to teachers in service of fulfilling their shared responsibilities to students, while at the same time satisfying overarching accountability demands.

Findings related to participants’ experiences of formalized accountability structures suggest that administrators engaged in accounting to higher-ups (school to district; district to province), but were able to construct goal setting, monitoring, and accounting in ways that put little strain on teachers’ capacities to exercise their professional responsibility. Accountability in this context was differently perceived than responsibility, in line with Møller’s (2009) conceptualization that accountability typically involves answering to a higher-up, while responsibility relates to the obligations members of a professional group have to each other to uphold standards. There was, however, little emphasis on one’s responsibility to account to other members of the professional group in the current case study. Further, a focus on student needs across layers suggested that leaders were concerned with capacity building and improving outcomes for students out of a sense of responsibility rather than because of pressures imposed by governance structures. While administrators did seem to comply with accountability policies, they did so in ways that allowed them to build from meaningful data and incorporate supportive structures so as to promote improvements for students’ literacy. Student learning outcomes were not measured and analyzed for the current study, but teachers were engaged in trajectories of learning/improvement. Professional learning/improvement on the part of teachers appeared to be influenced by multi-dimensional conditions that promoted their ability to build from, and act upon, their professional responsibility.
This improvement-orientation is often sought after in the upsurgence of managerial accountability policies around the world. However, research has indicated sole reliance on such managerially-driven agendas as inefficacious. In addition to failing to stimulate changes for learners, Biesta (2004) argues that such policies emphasize accountability to regulators and remove stakeholders from the “accountability loop” (p. 240). In the current case study, stakeholders appeared very much engaged in being responsive to student needs, but governing bodies seemed removed from on-the-ground improvement efforts. Thus, this case appeared to establish conditions that exemplified Hargreaves and Shirley’s (2008) calls for responsibility to supersede and precede accountability in order to achieve effective educational change. It also avoided creating a culture of mistrust that comes from assumptions that governing (external) actors must do for education what educators cannot (Debard & Kubow, 2002).

**Contributions, Limitations, and Future Directions**

The goal of accountability regimes is typically to induce improvements, and the current study exemplified how conditions in a change initiative might support teachers to strive to meet student needs, without mandating compliance with outcome-oriented policies. Rather, ministry-level policies provided funding for structures, which district- and school-level leaders leveraged to help invested teachers build their capacities in order to work responsively to achieve desired outcomes for students. There seemed to be an overall emphasis on student learning, and on teacher capacity building in service of achieving desired outcomes for students. As such, the current case study contributes by providing a lens into an improvement initiative in which leaders were supporting teachers to build from, and act upon, their sense of professional responsibility. Revealing participants’ experiences and perceptions related to this change initiative suggested how improvements might be affected in an accountability context. In
particular, this study strengthens notions that an emphasis on professional responsibility, rather than regulation, is key in accountability and/or improvement efforts (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2012).

This thesis project also contributes to literature citing the need to address problems associated with the use of data as stimulants of change. Managerial accountability often stipulates what should change (i.e., student achievement scores) but does little to support teachers to build from data in order to effect needed changes (Anderson et al., 2010; Nagy, 2000; O’Day, 2002). Further, testing is often inappropriately scaled or timed and fails to provide relevant information from which teachers might build instructional responses to student learning needs (O’Day, 2002). In the current study, findings suggest that participants across layers found data to be integral to improvement efforts. Data were valued across layers, and while data were used by leaders pursuant to formalized accountability mechanisms, it was teachers and literacy leaders who were directly positioned in classrooms to positively shift their understandings and practices in ways that might effect changes in student learning (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Schnellert et al., 2008).

Thus, this project provides a lens into understanding how attending to teachers’ professionalism (e.g., providing them the freedom to make decisions about individual students; supporting their commitment to learning/improvement) can position teachers to usefully take up key information about students in ways that have the potential to promote improved learning outcomes for students. Further, because of the flexible nature of the provincial accountability context (i.e., relative freedom related to goal setting) this research sheds light on how data that are useful for teachers might be used to inform system-level decisions about students’ needs and satisfy accountability demands. In this context, participants at each layer were able to invest in generalized valued and shared goals (i.e., adolescent literacy) while district- and school-level
leaders could take those same goals and build from teachers’ interests in supporting learning through reading (LTR), and teachers could more specifically tailor the aims of LTR to address students’ needs (e.g., strategically finding main ideas and details in non-fiction texts).

This study responds to concerns related to the negative effect managerial accountability policies have on teachers’ levels of investment in improvement efforts. In the current context, participants were able to work towards goals they were choosing to address, indicating they were likely working towards goals they valued and felt responsible for achieving. Ethical and moral responsibility have been found to contribute to teachers’ intrinsic motivation and professional commitment (Day et al., 2005, O’Connor, 2008). Thus the ‘space’ teachers had to make choices related to their inquiry-oriented learning (e.g., choosing goals) allowed them to act as agents of change, likely contributing to their level of investment in the improvement initiative.

Limitations associated with this project stem in part from conducting secondary analyses. Most glaring of issues is the fact that not all participants were prompted to discuss their experiences related to the formalized accountability structure. Future research in this area would be greatly strengthened by seeking to understand all participants’ experiences and perceptions of agency as related to accountability policies. Further limitations are associated with claims made that participants seemed to be invested in continuous learning/improvement over time, while data collection occupied only a one year period.

Research into understanding this case study would be strengthened by following-up with participants over time to better understand how commitment may have been supported or constrained over time. Finally, future research in this area might be strengthened by engaging professionals in a discussion about their professionalism and responsibility more broadly as related to their experiences in a change initiative within an overarching accountability structure.
Such dialogue might better uncover how professionals critique and understand shared norms, standards and responsibilities related to current educational contexts.

In conclusion, this study investigated how participants across layers in a change initiative might experience professional responsibility, in relation to accountability demands. Interviews from key players in the initiative across layers identified how a change initiative might be structured to mobilize and coordinate efforts to reach commonly valued goals. By identifying both ways in which professional responsibility was experienced in this context, and conditions that supported participants’ exercise of responsibility as related to their respective roles, this case study might inform further efforts to inspire and sustain systems-level change.
References


Appendix A

Fall Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions

1.
   a. Can you describe your professional development goals for the coming year in relation to this project?
   b. What personally do you hope to achieve by participating in this project?
   c. Do you have any ideas about what kinds of support might help you in achieving these goals (colleagues, school, district, researchers)?

2.
   a. To date, has participating in this project impacted your thinking about teaching and learning?
   b. If so in what way?
   c. What aspects of the project have had the most impact on your thinking about teaching and learning?

3.
   a. How does what you have learned about your students and the goals you have set for them relate to your professional development goals?
   b. What did you learn about your students and their perceptions about reading to learn activities from the data you have collected?

4.
   a. Have you used any other methods to get a sense of how students are thinking about and engaging in reading in your courses?
b. What have you learned from those?

5. What goals have you set for your students based on your various data sources?
   a. What are you doing with your students to achieve these goals?
   b. What do you hope to enact in practice to make a difference this year?
   c. Do you have any examples you could show me?
   d. How will this practice you’ve described help in achieving that particular goal?

6. 
   a. Can you describe your planning process? How does this help you to achieve your goals?
   b. How has participating in this research study influenced your planning and instruction?

7. 
   a. How has working with others assisted you in achieving your professional goals (school, district colleagues, researchers)?
   b. How has working with others shaped your thinking about your instructional goals?
   c. About your practice?
   d. What has changed?
   e. What has stayed the same?

8. 
   a. Can you describe the process of working together?

9. 
   a. What are your next steps individually and as a team?
10.  
   a. How do you see this project fitting into grade, school or district goals or plans?

11.  
   a. Are you seeing changes in practice that are arising because of yours or others’ participation in this project?  
   b. Do you think changes might sustain over time?  
   c. What kinds?  
   d. Why or why not?

12.  
   a. What if “leaders” at any level change? (e.g., a pivotal teacher moves schools; a district consultant leaves).  
   b. Can momentum keep going?  
   c. When/how

**Literacy Leader Questions**

1.  
   a. Can you describe your professional development goals for the coming year in relation to this project?
   
   b. What personally do you hope to achieve by participating in this project?
   
   c. Do you have any ideas about what kinds of support might help you in achieving these goals (colleagues, school, district, researchers)?

2.  
   a. What are your goals as a literacy leader?
   
   b. What do you hope to achieve?
c. How do you hope to anticipate achieving those goals?

3.

a. To date, has participating in this project impacted your thinking about teaching and learning?

b. If so in what way?

c. What aspects of the project have had the most impact on your thinking about teaching and learning?

4.

a. How does what you have learned about your students and the goals you have set for them relate to your professional development goals?

b. What did you learn about your students and their perceptions about reading to learn activities from the data you have collected?

5.

a. Have you used any other methods to get a sense of how students are thinking about and engaging in reading in your courses?

b. What have you learned from those?

6.

a. What goals have you set for your students based on your various data sources?

b. What are you doing with your students to achieve these goals?

7.

a. What do you hope to enact in practice to make a difference this year?

b. Do you have any examples you could show me?

c. How will this practice you’ve described help in achieving that particular goal?
8.
   a. Can you describe your planning process?
   b. How does this help you to achieve your goals?

9.
   a. How has participating in this research study influenced your planning and instruction?
   b. How has working with others assisted you in achieving your professional goals (school, district colleagues, researchers)?

10.
   a. How has working with others shaped your thinking about your instructional goals?
   b. About your practice?
   c. What has changed?
   d. What has stayed the same?

11.
   a. Can you describe the process of working together?

12.
   a. What are your next steps individually and as a team?

13.
   a. How do you see this project fitting into grade, school or district goals or plans?
a. How do you interpret “accountability” in relation to professional development?

b. Is there accountability at different levels?

c. To whom?

d. How do you see your role in addressing various levels of accountability?

15.

a. Are you seeing changes in practice that are arising because of yours or others’ participation in this project?

b. Do you think changes might sustain over time?

c. What kinds?

d. Why or why not?

16.

a. What if “leaders” at any level change? (e.g., a pivotal teacher moves schools; a district consultant leaves).

b. Can momentum keep going?

c. When/how?

School- and District-level Leader Interview Questions

1.

a. Can you describe your professional development goals for the coming year in relation to this project?

b. What personally do you hope to achieve by participating in this project?

c. What are your next steps related to your goals?
a. What goals did you set this year in relation to learning through reading with students at the classroom, grade, school, or district level?

b. How are you addressing these goals?

3.

a. Have the data we’ve collected impacted on your school in terms of identifying student needs, setting goals, planning and achieving goals, instruction?

4.

a. Has participating in this project impacted your thinking about teaching and learning?

5.

a. How do you see this project fitting into grade, school, or district goals and plans?

b. How do you see this project fitting in with district accountability issues around literacy?

6.

a. Do you see changes in teachers’ practice?

b. How do you see us maintaining those changes in practice over time?

7.

a. What do you think it will take to keep a focus on adolescent literacy going in the upcoming years?

b. What structures are currently key to keeping momentum going?

**Spring Interview Questions**

**Teacher Questions**

1.
1. a. What goals did you set for your students this year in relation to learning through reading for your students?
   b. How have you been addressing those goals?

2. a. How have the data we have been collecting helped you in fostering learning through reading?

3. a. What impact have you had in terms of promoting learning through reading by your students?
   b. How do you know this?

4. a. Given the various successes and challenges what will you keep doing and what will you do differently to support students’ learning through reading?

5. a. How are you working with others to enhance students’ learning through reading?
   b. Can you describe the process of working together?
   c. Who are you working with, and why are you working with those people or groups?

6. a. Can you take a step back and think about your own goals as a learner?
   b. Were there things that you really wanted to learn about this year?

7.
a. Has working with others shaped your thinking about learning through reading, and/or how to support it?

8.

a. What does it mean to learn in [subject taught]?
b. Where does learning through reading fit in with [subject taught]?
c. What do you have to know to support LTR in [subject taught]?
d. What more do you have to learn about LTR or working with kids in Humanities [subject taught]?

9.

a. Have you been gathering resources and ideas about how to support learning through reading?
b. Where have you been getting those ideas and resources?

10.

a. What have you been doing that’s effective, new or different?
b. Did you see improvement?

11.

a. What more do you think you need to learn?

12.

a. Considering that literacy is a goal at the provincial level, the district level, the school level, and in your classroom, where do you feel like you’re having an impact and why?
Literacy Leader Questions

1.  
a. What goals did you set this year, in relation to learning through reading for students at the classroom, grade, and/or school level?
b. How have you been addressing your goals?

2.  
a. How have the data we have been collecting helped you in fostering learning through reading?

3.  
a. What impact have you had in terms of promoting LTR by students at each of these levels?
b. How do you know?

4.  
a. Given the various successes and challenges, what will you keep doing and what will you do differently to support students’ LTR?
b. How are you working with others to enhance students’ LTR?
c. Can you describe the process of working together?

5.  
a. Now, take a step back and think about your own goals as a learner. What it is that you have really wanted to learn about this year?
b. Has working with others helped you to learn more about this?
c. If so, how?

6.
a. Has working with others shaped your thinking about LTR and/or how to support it?

7.

a. Who are you working with and why are you working with those people?

8.

a. What does it mean to learn in Humanities?
   b. What are the big ideas?
   c. Where does LTR fit into the Humanities/Science?
   d. So, what do teachers have to know to support LTR in the Humanities/Science?

9.

a. Have you been gathering resources or ideas about how to support LTR?
   Where have you accesses those ideas and resources?

10.

a. What you been doing to encourage, or encouraging others that might be effective, new or different?

11.

a. What more do you have to learn?

12.

a. Considering that literacy is a goal at the provincial level, the district level, the school level, and at your classroom level, where do you feel like you and your colleagues are having an impact, and why?

13.
a. Where can you see the impact or what’s the evidence of that impact?

School- and District-based Leader Questions

1.

a. How do you see this project fitting into school and/or district goals or plans?

2.

a. What goals did you set this year in relation to LTR for students at the classroom, grade, school, and/or district level?
b. How have you been addressing these goals?
c. How have the data we have been collecting helped in fostering LTR?

3.

a. What impact have you – you being as a school, as a team – had in terms of promoting LTR by students, at each of those levels?
b. How do you know?

4.

a. If you think about the call to monitor and account for outcomes at the classroom, school, and district and provincial levels, where do these kinds of data fit in?
b. How do the data (PBA and LTRQ) relate to the other kinds of data that you guys are using as a school around accountability?

5.

a. What do you think teachers need to know about in order to support LTR in various subject areas?
a. What are you doing to support others to be more effective in fostering LTR?

7.

a. How would you describe the learning community in your school and/or the district related to adolescent literacy?

b. From your vantage point, how do you see it functioning or not functioning?

8.

a. Given the various successes and challenges, what will you keep doing, or do differently to support as a school?

9.

a. Do you see changes in practices associated with this project that might sustain over time?

b. Why or why not?

10.

a. What do you think it will take to keep a focus on later literacy going in the upcoming years?

b. Which structures currently are key to keeping the momentum going?

11.

a. What if leaders at any level change? A pivotal teacher moves schools, or a district consultant leaves or your admin team changes. Can the momentum keep going?

b. How and why?