THE WASHINGTON INITIATIVE

CASES OF WI-SUPPORTED LEADERSHIP BY NBTCS

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INTRODUCTION

The Washington Initiative piloted the Leadership Grants Project in the spring of 2002. We at Inverness Research interviewed each National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) who received a pilot grant to learn about their projects and about their experiences leading them. From these interviews we gained some first impressions of the potential of these grants as a strategy to support NBCT contribution to educational improvement in Washington. With *NBCT leadership* as the focus of our evaluation study in 2003, we believed that case studies of grant-funded projects could serve two important purposes. First, cases of NBCT leadership can help document and portray for the WI and its stakeholders the nature of the work NBCTs are doing with WI support and the benefits of that work. Second, cases can serve as artifacts that yield insights and lessons about important phenomena and ideas, such as the particular nature of leadership that is part of teacher-initiated change, or the role of the WI as a network in fostering the leadership of NBCTs.

The guiding questions

In documenting the projects, we were guided by the following questions:

- What is the nature of the project?
- What is the nature of the teacher leadership the project involves?
- What supportive and challenging conditions affected the project's development?
- What is the value-added and contribution of the Washington Initiative to the project, and to its success?
- Who are the beneficiaries of the project? What is the nature of the benefits they receive, both immediate and potential long-term?
- What contributions does this project make, or is this project likely to make, to educational improvement?
- What are the questions raised and lessons learned from this project about issues that are important to NBCTs, to the WI, and to the teaching profession in Washington?

The three cases

We studied the following NBCT-led projects:

- the introduction, development, and spread of **Lesson Study** in a suburban intermediate school,
- the creation of a **teacher-administrator Leadership Team** in a small rural school district, and
- the development of a **ProCert course** for new teachers, involving a partnership between a district and a university.

These projects vary greatly from one another in the nature of the improvement-related activity they are generating, their scope, and the demands they make on NBCTs and those with whom they work. What they have in common is their strong potential to be illuminative *vis a vis* the focus of our study this year and the goals of the WI.

Conducting the research

To develop the cases, we conducted an initial interview with the NBCTs who authored the grant proposals. We then visited each site for 2 days to observe project activities first hand. On these visits, we interviewed the NBCTs, project participants, and key others relevant to the case, including school and district administrators and university faculty. We also examined documents relevant to each case, such as project materials, school or district background documents, participant evaluations, and project reports. The NBCTs who authored the grants served as our liaisons, for which they received a small stipend. The NBCTs, and any others they chose, reviewed drafts of our written cases to ensure their accuracy.

The written cases

The written cases are intended to serve as examples of NBCT leadership that can be examined and discussed among a very broad audience. Although those involved in the cases gave us permission to use the real names of their districts and schools, we decided to use pseudonyms for all individuals, schools, districts and universities. We believe this will emphasize what we believe are the universal appeal and relevance of these experiences. We begin with Lesson Study as Case #1; this account portrays NBCT leadership and teacher activity within the sphere of a school. The Leadership Team project, Case #2, involves teachers and senior administrators working in the sphere of a district. Case #3, the ProCert course, shows a project that links a district-wide effort to an institution of higher education (IHE) and to state policy.

Within each written case, we explain why we selected that project and what we hoped to learn from it. Following an account of the nature and evolution of the project, we examine its apparent benefits to participants and contributions to educational improvement, and we offer our reflections on the lessons the project holds for NBCTs, the WI, and others more broadly.

Major themes across the cases

The cases tell different stories of NBCTs in the role of change agents, and in many respects the lessons that each individual case holds are of primary interest. But when considered as a whole set, there are some cross-cutting themes:

- The projects took different approaches and targeted different groups: the Lesson Study project focused on teachers' development of lessons, the ProCert course focused on new teachers' reflection on their teaching, and the Leadership Team brought together people responsible for creating conditions that support high quality teaching. At its core, **each project aimed to improve teaching and learning.**

- NBCTs directly **applied their expert knowledge of effective teaching**, and their knowledge of how to **reflect constructively on teaching**, to their projects. In doing so they were tapping into their strengths as classroom teachers, who by virtue of achieving NB certification, have honed these kinds of knowledge. **This highly refined practitioner knowledge is a crucial resource for education reform in Washington**.

- The **teacher leadership** in these projects involved **collective work** (thinking, envisioning, developing, decision-making *together*) and / or **work in relationship** (e.g., with people in non-teaching roles and in other institutions). These features of leadership may be inherent to the work of NBCTs, given that the role of teacher carries little positional authority in the education system *vis a vis* reform.

- Each project **relied upon the multiple resources of the WI**. NBCTs drew upon—in quite different ways—WI members and leaders, the annual conference, educational resources and information, validation and encouragement, and funding to launch and carry out the work.

- **School and district administrators figure prominently** in these cases, though in very different ways. Because of their positional roles and responsibilities, administrators (and the priorities they respond to) inevitably have some kind of impact on projects that teachers initiate. It seems advantageous for **NBCTs to take consciously into account administrative perspectives**, and define and cultivate administrative relationships that are productive *vis a vis* their change projects.

- Having a clear and realistic **vision**, a well-thought-out but flexible **strategy** for accomplishing that vision, and the ability to **address inevitable challenges** that crop up helped NBCTs launch and shepherd productive projects. The WI can play an important role, as grant administrator, in helping NBCTs develop and refine their ideas.

- **Initiating change can make heavy demands on NBCTs**, for example, by calling upon them to use unfamiliar skills, relationships, and knowledge; and by asking them to take new and more visible risks. NBCTs need ongoing opportunities to

develop new skills and relationships, problem-solve about leadership, and **reflect** on their own lessons learned about effective teacher leadership.

- The **participants** in the projects report that they experienced **direct professional benefits** from the activity they experienced. Both participants and informed others want the projects to continue.

- The three projects are operating in different spheres of the education system. To varying extents, they all have **potential to contribute to the strengthening of the systems** with which they are interacting, i.e., schools, districts, universities, and even the state.

- To the extent that the WI supports a "feedback loop" and can learn lessons from these projects, the **WI, as a network, also benefits from NBCTs' leadership efforts**. All three projects we studied have potential to become adaptable and distributable models for NBCT change agency. In this way, the projects contribute to the **WI's cumulative reservoir of resources** for educational improvement, and the NBCTs' experiences contribute to a **cumulative capacity for teacher leadership**.

CASE # 1

PROMOTING *LESSON STUDY* AS A TOOL FOR REFLECTING ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

I. INTRODUCTION

Jim Houston[1], a NBCT teaching in a small suburban elementary school in a medium-sized district[2], introduced lesson study to his school colleagues. He received two rounds of leadership grants from the Washington Initiative to cover the costs of released time and after-hours work for the participants. Several NBCTs in other schools have also used WI grants to initiate lesson study with their colleagues.

What is "lesson study"?

Lesson study is a process in which small groups of teachers work together to design and reflect on lessons. It is an approach to improving teaching that follows a simple premise: "if you want to improve teaching, the most effective way to do so is in the context of a classroom lesson."[3] In a lesson study group, teachers jointly define a teaching problem they want to solve; jointly design a lesson meant to address that problem; select a group member to teach this "research lesson" while other members observe it; reflect together on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson; revise the lesson together; select a member to teach the revised version; jointly evaluate the lesson again; and share the results with their whole school staff or department. [4] Research on educational practices in Japan is credited with the emergence of lesson study as a strategy for teachers to develop their practice; in fact, it is often referred to as "Japanese lesson study."

For teachers in Japan, lesson study is a common and accepted approach to the improvement of teaching, and teachers have time built into their regular workdays for such work. In the U.S., however—where teachers' workdays are not structured to support ongoing improvement of craft knowledge, and where collaboration among teachers is more the exception than the rule—lesson study is very unfamiliar to teachers. To introduce lesson study to a school staff in Washington thus constitutes an effort of innovation.

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[1] A pseudonym. We use pseudonyms throughout the account.

[2] Serving several suburban communities, the district has 5 high schools, 8 middle or K-8 schools, and 20 elementary schools.

[3] Stigler, J. and Hiebert, J. (1999). *The Teaching Gap. Best Ideas from the World's teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom*. New York: The Free Press. p. 111. Stigler has become a very strong advocate of lesson study; the staff at this school refer to his work as their introduction to it.

[4] These steps are involved in the "pure" form of lesson study as observed in Japan.

Why study the introduction of lesson study as a case of NBCT leadership?

We decided to document a lesson study project for two reasons. First, lesson study has features that give it promise as an improvement strategy. Lesson study aims to foster teachers' critical reflection on teaching and learning, which is consistent not only with the principles of the National Board but also with accepted wisdom of the field. Because lesson study involves *collective* design of lessons, it can help depersonalize teaching and thus make analysis of practice less threatening and more inviting to teachers. Lesson study also follows a quite simple structure and thus is potentially replicable at some scale and in a range of contexts. Further, group members define the teaching problem they want to solve and they often do this through examination of student work and assessment data. Thus, lesson study ultimately has potential to serve as a model of teacher-centered and teacher-directed improvement within a framework of standards policy.

The second reason we focused on lesson study is that it enables us to explore the potential of the WI to promulgate promising strategies for teacher reflection and improvement—and thus advance its goal of contributing to a stronger teaching profession in Washington.

Developing the case

In the spring of 2002, when we interviewed recipients of WI's pilot round of leadership grants, we learned from Jim about the genesis of lesson study at his school. To develop the case, we interviewed Jim again in fall 2002. In March 2003, we visited the school for two days. We observed one grade level team teach their experimental lesson and debrief it, and observed two other teams in group session as they were developing a lesson. We also interviewed eight individual teacher participants, the principal, the district superintendent, and two associate superintendents. This combination of direct observations and interviews gave us insight into the actual practice of lesson study as well as the perspectives of participants' and interested others.

NBCTs have also introduced lesson study in other districts with the support of WI leadership grants. To add another dimension to our portrayal of lesson study, we interviewed two NBCTs--Lorraine Adams, who teaches in a rural district, and Melissa Hong, who teaches in a private elementary school in suburban area. We also briefly interviewed the principal at Melissa Hong's school and reviewed participant evaluation sheets. Finally, we reviewed the final grant reports that the three NBCTs submitted to the Washington Initiative.

In this account, we discuss lesson study as it unfolded at Jim Houston's school and, more briefly, we describe how the other two NBCTs adapted it for their schools. Drawing from these accounts, we explore the benefits of lesson study for teachers and reflect on the promise it holds and challenges it faces as a strategy for strengthening classroom practice.

II. LESSON STUDY IN ONE SCHOOL

Jim Houston's school is a grades 3-6 neighborhood school that serves about 550 students from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds. The district as whole tends to score at or above

national and state averages on standardized tests; the school's scores tend to lie below the district average but have steadily improved in the last few years.

Lesson Study in Year 1: Supporting the school's priority for improvement, and starting small

In 2001 the school staff designated mathematics as the curriculum area on which to focus their improvement efforts, after collective analysis of their Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores. The school's mathematics improvement team, which included Jim Houston and several of his colleagues, went to a state mathematics conference. Jim had already encountered information about lesson study in his own professional reading, and the idea of collaborating on teaching in this way interested him. At the conference, the math team went to a session on Japanese Lesson Study. Lesson study did not immediately appeal to other members of the mathematics team because the focus on the *lesson* seemed too narrow. This focus did appeal to Jim, however: "Since I had been through NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards), I could see the similarities in the lesson study process. I knew that there was a spillover effect of doing this kind of work. You can't help but have it affect your entire practice as a teacher."[5] Though the school staff as a whole was not interested in lesson study, Jim asked his grade level team of four 3rd grade teachers if they wanted to give it a try, and they agreed. Just after they got started with their weekly after-school meetings, Jim heard about the WI grants. He wrote a proposal and received the funds, which paid for their meeting time and also for substitute teachers so they could be released to observe the lessons when they were developed.

To begin their lesson study, the 3rd grade team did a detailed analysis of WASL sub-scores for math and realized that "number" was a topic where students were especially weak. The group decided to design their joint lessons around that concept. It took them 15 hours of meetings to design the first lesson, then about 10 hours to design the second one, and 5 hours to create the third one. "It was hard at first. We spent a lot of time disagreeing. The work got easier as it went along because we got used to each other and knew more about where people were coming from. Each teacher brought their own philosophy to these discussions and sometimes there was disagreement about how we should go about designing the lesson. It was always challenging. We had to get consensus for everything." Jim and the group were very firm about taking whatever time was necessary to develop this consensus so that the lesson was an artifact of the group, not of any individual. "What is unique about this process is that you are evaluating a lesson that you all planned together so the teacher teaching the lesson isn't being judged, the lesson is."

Through this sometimes "long and drawn out" process of gaining consensus, as they surfaced their philosophies and confronted their differences, teachers were also sharing ideas and materials as they offered up ideas for the joint lesson. One teacher reflected back on it: "It is amazing. It is not just studying that little lesson. The best part of it is sitting down together and sharing what we do with kids and how we do it—together—and it is like synergy that bounces off of each other. It is one of the best things that I have seen and I have been teaching since '85.

[5] All quotations in this account are from telephone or in-person interviews with members of the staff at the school and the district office. Some have been lightly edited for clarity.

And you know, it is not like some big old thing, you know, it is like what we have all wanted and all of a sudden there is a format for it."

Spreading across the grades through teacher interest and administrator support

The 3rd grade group's work attracted some interest from teachers around the school. A teacher whose classroom is near two 3rd grade teachers said, "I heard them over and over again talking about the great conversations they were having." Another teacher said, "We went to the 3rd grade and we watched them do it. I felt really pretty envious. It was cool what they were doing, and when they had their times together to watch each other teach, it was like wow, this is neat. I think there was pretty much of a consensus at our grade—well, can't *we* do this?" When Jim moved from 3rd grade to 4th grade in 2002-03, he requested additional grant funds from the Washington Initiative to support the continuation of the 3rd grade group as well as to start a 4th grade group.

The principal, meanwhile, played a low-key but substantial role in encouraging the start-up and visibility of lesson study. He had heard about Japanese lesson study at a conference just a few months before the mathematics conference that Jim and his colleagues attended. He was intrigued because, as a building administrator in a district where teachers have no performance review after their 5th year, he felt that lesson study could serve as a fully teacher-driven process of peer review in the classroom. As a former teacher himself, he also understood its direct value to teachers as a strategy for sharing practical ideas. He thus applauded the 3rd grade team's initiative in starting lesson study. He was careful, though, not to "insert" himself into lesson study because he believes it should remain "teacher-initiated, teacher inspired, and teacher-directed." He encouraged the 3rd grade team to share their experiences and findings with the school's Learning Team, which functions as an executive committee for school decision-making and prioritizing, and with whole school staff at the end of the year. When other grade level groups expressed interest in trying it, he continued to support them—both through his encouragement and, ultimately, by helping them seek funding beyond what was available from the WI. As the principal, he sees his role not as mandating lesson study, but as helping to sustain it for those teachers who want to participate: "The Washington Initiative was going to fund the expansion from 3rd grade to 4th grade, but the 5th grade was saying, 'boy, we want to get in on this!' so I went looking for a resource."

Lesson study in year 2: Grappling with the teaching of writing and facing the challenge of lesson study as "process" or "product"

The school staff selected writing as their focus for improvement in 2002-03. They all agreed that writing was a weak area in the curriculum and that students were probably not as well prepared for the 4th grade WASL in writing as they could be. Teachers also had intrinsic interest: "We saw that our scores weren't great, and I think we also just felt like it was something that we felt would be fun to have conversations about. Not only did we think that we needed to do it, but I think we had some interest in it." With the WI continuation grant for the 3rd and 4th grade teams, as well as a new Education Services District grant for the 5th grade team, three of the four grade level teams were set to start lesson study. Before launching it, though, the teams agreed to administer a common writing prompt to students and assess the

writing together. Their hope was to get themselves more "in sync" with their assessment of student writing so that they could give students more consistent feedback. They invited in a guest consultant who had experience applying WASL-like criteria in writing assessments. After a day spent together discussing their students' writing, the groups "started to see things that we found were common problems. We saw that expository writing was an issue." The three groups then started lesson study with a commitment to focus on expository writing.

All three groups—even those with experienced members—found that they spent far longer deciding on what type of lesson to develop than the 3rd grade group had spent the year before, and spent many weeks coming to agreement on the details of the lesson design. In fact, by mid-March, the most experienced team was just teaching their first lesson for group observation, and the other two teams were still designing their first one. In working their way through to this point, the teams had had to confront a number of challenges. First, they found that because there was no common writing program in the school, they knew almost nothing about one another's writing curriculum nor about one another's beliefs about, approaches to, and materials related to the teaching of writing. They often struggled to find a common language to discuss the kinds of details about teaching that are necessary to lesson design. As one teacher put it, "we have various ways of approaching writing. I found it very interesting talking with the different teachers about how they have done their writing experiences with the kids, and we have really kind of fed off one another but it has been labor intensive. In putting it [the lesson] together we came up with a format, arguing, well, I won't say we argued, but we just deliberated and changed ideas, and we changed them again yesterday."

Even as the weeks passed in their search for common ground, the teachers picked up valuable new ideas from one another. One teacher said: "I don't feel a pressure to have a product. I could spend all year doing half of a lesson quite honestly, because it is just a process, just to be with other teachers talking about teaching. I love just the minutia of how to make a graphic organizer, we spent a long time on that and we are still not happy with it, or what examples we use. We talked about how we call on kids, how we put them in groups, how we do modeling and it turns out we're different on that, just that kind of stuff, what you think about on your way to work, but you don't talk about it with anybody, ever, really." When after several months, lesson study was in danger of becoming all process and no product, the teams began setting objectives for each meeting and made agreements about how to move the work forward. Nonetheless, they held to the agreement to arrive at consensus on all details of the lesson so that it would be jointly owned. It was as important to go at their own pace and to work their way through conflicts as it was to adhere to the structure of the lesson study process.

In mid-March, the 4th grade team was ready for the first trial run of their first lesson. The whole lesson study group was in the classroom and circulated among the students, closely observing what they were doing, saying, and learning. The group then met for an hour to debrief; they followed a protocol they had devised for this conversation in which the person teaching the lesson spoke up first, then each person spoke by turn without response, then the whole group discussed freely. Each teacher identified elements of the lesson that seemed to serve a learning

purpose and those that seemed less successful. They ultimately agreed on some refinements to the lesson, and on who would teach the next iteration.

By the time in March, the 3rd grade team had become able to agree on the focus of their lesson, but they were still hashing out the details. Exactly how would the teacher model a paragraph? What graphic organizer would be best? What would the rules for student brainstorming be? What would be the exact prompt? Each teacher proposed strategies and materials as these questions arose, and the decision-making caused them to consider each person's theories, practices, and materials related to teaching writing. In the 5th grade group, meanwhile, the teachers were re-considering what the focus of their common lesson would be. This team was larger than the others, had experienced some turnover during the year, and had no member who was experienced with lesson study, and so they were harder pressed to move collectively toward one shared lesson. Nonetheless, they persevered. They did so in part out of commitment to the process, but also—as one teacher noted—"I hate to say it, but there are some dollars and cents attached to it, and I think it holds us a little bit more accountable too, because then we show up. Otherwise, if it is all volunteer, then all of this other stuff we have to do can chip away at it."

What does the future hold for lesson study at the school?

The school staff faces the question of how to sustain lesson study beyond the short-term WI leadership grants. The district staff would be happy to see lesson study continue at the school because it is consistent with their vision of the value of teacher reflection on practice. The school staff made a point of inviting a supportive district administrator to observe lesson study. However, formal support from the district is not forthcoming because the district has invested in offering teachers, district-wide, support for training in Critical Friends Groups, which is a different structure designed to support teachers' reflection on practice. Some district staff believe lesson study and critical friends groups could somehow mesh together at the school, but the teachers who have experienced both approaches do not share this view, and they believe lesson study is more valuable.

With continuing funding unavailable, the school teams plan to use built-in resources—such as their existing planning time instead of after-school time, and instructional aides instead of substitute teachers. They also plan to substitute lesson study for their normal grade level team meetings. Some of them believe the school culture has changed enough to support lesson study this way; others are concerned that it may suffer from the weight of "our packed schedules."

III. SPREADING LESSON STUDY THROUGH THE WI LEADERSHIP NETWORK

At the first annual leadership retreat for NBCTs sponsored by the WI in spring 2002, Jim Houston gave a presentation on lesson study and the experiences of his colleagues. A number of NBCTs became interested in lesson study and have adapted it to their own school settings. Below are just two very brief examples

Lesson study in a rural elementary school

NBCT Lorraine Adams saw that lesson study could be a way to help meet district goals of improving mathematics teaching and also meet her and her colleagues' professional goal to work more collegially. Lorraine gathered together teachers who do not ordinarily work together, but who all have a stake in students' learning, including grade level teachers, multi-age teachers, a counselor, an aide, a speech and language teacher, and others. They studied their WASL results and considered what areas they needed to improve. They held several 3-hour meetings over the year, following the basic lesson study structure of joint lesson design, teaching and observing the lesson, debriefing together and revising the lesson, and sharing with their colleagues.

The teachers found it immensely rewarding. As one teacher wrote on a survey, "This is a huge opportunity to FINALLY have time to talk, share, discuss, plan on a PROFESSIONAL level with each other…this gives us the opportunity to learn from our own expertise on staff." An important component of the Japanese model of lesson study is that the lesson is truly a "research" lesson, i.e., one that produces general knowledge of practice. In this spirit, the teachers at the school have collectively identified and shared with the staff a number of teaching strategies that better support students' learning in mathematics. Both Lorraine and the members of the group have also observed that teacher collaboration at the school is spreading well beyond the lesson study group. The district administration and school board have been kept informed about lesson study and are impressed with the results. Just as in Jim Houston's school, the challenge is how to sustain lesson study in the absence of grant funding. Lorraine's colleagues feel it is important to build it into their school day rather than to meet after school.

Lesson study at a private elementary school

Melissa Hong, an NBCT who came to Washington from California and was new to her school 2001, felt that lesson study would be a good structure to support collaboration that focused on practice. As a private school, the staff pay less somewhat attention than public schools to the state's formal content standards (Essential Academic Learning Requirements-EALRs); however, they agreed that writing was an area they needed to improve. The principal welcomed the opportunity for Melissa, as a teacher new to the school, to introduce lesson study to her colleagues, who were seasoned veterans. "It wouldn't have happened without the WI grant. Teachers already have a full plate. When a teacher has a good idea and follows it through and brings along the others, good things happen. If the administration had suggested this, it might not have had the same receptivity. I was thrilled that this project came from the teachers."

Melissa showed her colleagues a videotape of lesson study that she had received at the WI leadership conference, and also gave each of her colleagues a copy of Roland Barth's *Learning by Heart*, also from the WI conference. The teachers met once a month for 8 months. Like the groups at Jim Houston's school, this group spent several meetings sharing their overall "philosophies" before they were prepared to design a lesson together. They each taught the lesson they designed, some while being observed and some with the option of being video-taped, and then met to discuss and revise the lesson. Every teacher who participated felt that lesson study helped her expand and improve her teaching, and also that lesson study encouraged more team teaching.

IV. REFLECTIONS ON THE CASE

Lesson study is a relatively simple structure for dialogue about teaching and learning, and everyone we spoke with found it very beneficial. Lesson study is not necessarily simple to "implement" in schools, however. The fact that it took most groups months to design a lesson together is a sign that this type of professional dialogue was unfamiliar to them. Lesson study requires that teachers bring to the surface, and make public, theories and practices they may hold dear, and it requires individual and group change. Nonetheless, the fact that the teachers persevered, and that the groups made a commitment to addressing conflicts and striving for consensus, is a sign that lesson study is of real value. In this section we reflect on the benefits of lesson study that this case holds, as well as implications for NBCT and WI leadership in Washington.

Benefits of lesson study

Teachers' perspectives on the benefits to them

Without exception, the many teachers we spoke with have found lesson study valuable. These comments reflect some of the specific benefits they identified:

- Lesson study provides a simple structure that enables teachers to have the kind of professional dialogue that they crave

"It is what we have always wanted to do, but we never had a vehicle to do it."

"We all have our things that we do in the classroom, but in lesson study, it became important that you were able to explain *why* you did it—I do this *because*, or I do it *this way*. I know for me, it was putting words to things that perhaps I had never tried to articulate before. I think that is very powerful. And then we just did a lot of bouncing ideas off of each other—'that reminds me' or 'I do this' or 'I think about it this way.'"

"We saw a benefit to planning the lesson together, we just see the rich conversations that we have as being so valuable. It is the kind of thing that we typically don't have and it was nice because we had a focus, we knew when we were getting together and we agreed upon some norms about how we were going to talk to each other."

- Lesson study motivates teachers to change some work habits and norms so that they focus more on their teaching

"I think what everyone is wanting more of now is an opportunity to be in other teachers' classrooms, to participate more than once or twice in a year as we have been able to do with the Lesson Study. Because you can talk all you like about curriculum and management, but it is a whole other ballgame to see it in action."

"This grant has affected what occurs at our grade level meetings. It used to be more of a distribution of information and feedback type of session, and what we are finding and saying to

ourselves more and more is we don't want to use our time in that way. We want to use that time to really focus on curriculum, and that is truly what has been happening."

"I find that I have been more intentional in how I have gone about writing this year, knowing that this is something that we were all focusing on at our grade level."

- Lesson study supports new teachers in developing a repertoire of practice

Comments from 2nd year teachers:

"No matter how hard I am willing to work, there is just something about being able to sit down with someone who is so much more experienced and who has the expertise and is willing to share their ideas. So it was such a wonderful opportunity for me and I learned so much from them."

"It has really helped to listen to other people's ideas, how they do things… Of all of the meetings that we have to go to, it is the most beneficial one."

Lesson study is a "generative structure" that enables teachers to do much more than design a better lesson; it serves as a medium for dialogue that brings teachers into contact with an ongoing flow of theories, resources and practical ideas. Thus, it has potential to enrich and expand the scope of teachers' work lives and professional identities in a way that relates directly to what matters most to them—teaching their students. At a scale, lesson study and other opportunities for this kind of rich dialogue have potential to play a role in strengthening the profession.

A potential strategy for helping teachers link state policy to practice

Washington state has content standards that, to a considerable extent, teachers embrace as being reasonable; and further, has a performance assessment system that, along with other curriculum-based and closer-to-home measures, teachers find reasonably informative. [6] The schools involved in this study have developed ways to use WASL results for school-level decision-making, e.g., the decision of the staff at Jim Houston's school to make math improvement a priority. But teachers also need opportunities to link assessment data and school decisions directly to their classroom practice. We saw much evidence in this study that lesson study groups draw from analysis of WASL results to focus their lesson improvement efforts. Lesson study thus seems to be a professional context in which teachers can make sense of state-level standards and assessment results in their own terms, that is, in terms that enable teachers to take action related to those results.

[6] For this generalization, we are drawing in part on a previous study we conducted for the Stuart Foundation of a project called Focus on Standards, conducted by the National Writing Project in California and Washington. (See www.inverness-research.org.) We found that teachers in Washington hold quite positive views of state standards and assessments, compared to those in California. We also found that teachers rarely have opportunities to work collegially to link state standards to practice in constructive ways.

Reflections on leadership and the role of the Washington Initiative

The role and nature of NBCT leadership in supporting lesson study

NBCTs Jim Houston, Melissa Kang, and Lorraine Howell all recognized lesson study as a structure that could support the kind of reflection on teaching that they believe—in part because of their experience with the NBPTS—can be a powerful approach to ongoing improvement of teaching. What leadership strategies did they use? What behaviors did they avoid? They introduced lesson study into their schools in a collegial way, as an interesting and valuable activity that they themselves wished to pursue. They did not push or impose, but they did inform—through the use of video, books, and personal accounts. They demonstrated by their own example their interest in their ongoing learning and improvement. They avoided designating themselves as "facilitators" in their groups and underplayed that role if others expected it of them. But they did help make arrangements and secure resources, and they kept their doors open to any interested teachers. And while they offered their own ideas and certainly influenced the quality and nature of the discussion, they overtly sought out and listened to their colleagues' ideas. As leaders and initiators, in other words, they served more visibly as resource providers, supporters, and exemplary co-participants. As group members, they honored and adhered carefully to norms of full participation and consensus. When conflict among different teaching philosophies arose, they helped maintain a balance of process (dialogue) and product (lesson construction) so group members could work through their differences and still make progress toward their goal.

Reflections on NBCT and WI leadership

The role of administrators—and the "Catch 22" of teacher-initiated innovation

The principals we interviewed share the view that teacher initiative is to be encouraged, especially when it helps advance a school's agenda for improvement. They also believe that reflecting on practice helps teachers develop their craft. The administrators were thus more than willing to encourage participants and help create a forum in the school where lesson study could thrive.

Both the administrators and teachers we spoke to agree that teachers tend to respond more favorably to teacher-initiated and supported ideas than to administrator-directed ones. Several of the people we interviewed, in fact, cited the experience of a nearby district as an example of what *not* to do: "The district mandated it and just put everyone in lesson study groups and they got paid only for producing a certain number of lessons. That just tells me they don't get what lesson study is really about and it just isn't going to inspire teachers, and it kind of fell apart." On the other hand, administrators who are in favor of supporting lesson study when teachers introduce it are hard-pressed to say how they can help make lesson study truly sustainable.

Thus, while a teacher-initiated project may inspire greater participation by teachers and thus have greater potential for change, as long as it remains outside the core education infrastructure—not a built-in and funded part of teachers' work—it is very difficult to sustain. However, if the teacher-initiated innovation were adopted by the mainstream system, then the

teacher authority and intrinsic interest would be difficult to sustain. Herein lies a paradox, even a kind of catch-22, about this kind of teacher-initiated project.

The role of the Washington Initiative

The Washington Initiative's leadership network served as a conduit for NBCTs' communication about lesson study, allowing it to take root and spread to several places in the state. The network also served as a professional community that validated lesson study as a worthwhile approach to the improvement of teaching.

Our study suggests that lesson study has attributes that give it potential to continue spreading in Washington. In all probability, the WI (or a next-generation leadership network) would be a critical *system element* in the spread of lesson study. First, it provides a communication infrastructure and professional community in which NBCTs can create, learn about, share, and bring to fruition ideas for improvement in schools and classrooms. Second, the WI sits neither within the policy sphere nor the school sphere, but rather, at an intersection of the two. From this position, the WI has potential to help infuse such activities as lesson study into the education system without the activities being consumed by that system. In other words, if the WI (or something like it) sustains an active and powerful network of leading teachers, it may ultimately have the potential to create conditions in which generative structures such as lesson study can be both teacher-led *and* embraced in school systems.

CASE # 2

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS WORKING TOGETHER TO ADVANCE DISTRICT REFORM

I. INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2002, the Washington Initiative for National Board Certification awarded a Leadership Network grant to a small group of National Board Certified teachers (NBCTs) in the Green Valley School District[7]. The grant was initiated and written by teachers and included an ambitious list of objectives. As quoted in the grant proposal, the teachers sought to "*create a leadership team of principals, district administrators and NBCTs; support administrators' growth as instructional leaders; develop and implement school-wide improvement plans based on OSPI's Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*; *and encourage more Green Valley teachers to pursue National Board Certification*." To achieve their goals, the NBCTs proposed to establish a forum where teachers and administrators could meet together to discuss local school reform as well as educational best practice. Grant funds were requested to cover the cost of released time for teachers, expenses for resource materials (books / videos) and the cost of bringing an outside speaker to the district.

Why study the Green Valley School District case of NBCT leadership?

The grant proposal submitted by the NBCTs in Green Valley was of special interest to us for two reasons. First, the proposal offered an innovative and ambitious approach for teacher leaders hoping to influence local school reform. Often, a teacher leader begins working for change within their own school community, and then, if given support and encouragement, spreads his / her influence beyond the school to the district decision-makers. In this case, the teachers began by working directly with those people who they believed had the control and authority to implement change. Second, we wanted to learn how this model – structured, collegial dialogue between teachers and administrators—could contribute to local school reform.

Focus of the Study

To get a better understanding of the project and the participants' perspectives, we visited the site in March, 2003. During our 2 day visit, we individually interviewed the project coordinator and other teachers participating in the project, two elementary principals, the middle school principal and vice principal, the high school principal, and the district superintendent and four other district administrators. We also observed a scheduled group meeting where participants engaged in a discussion about teacher leadership. Later, while attending the annual Washington Initiative Leadership Retreat,

[7] A pseudonym. We use pseudonyms for names of people, schools, and districts throughout the account.

we had an opportunity to have informal conversations with the project leader and two teachers.

II. THE GREEN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Green Valley Schools

The Green Valley School District serves nearly 3,000 predominantly white students at two elementary schools, a middle school, and high school, as well as a community school serving students with special needs. Statewide achievement tests exhibit that the districts' students have scores well above the state and national average. Parents, students, and staff take pride in the local school system and believe that, with continued hard work and effort, children in Green Valley School District will be well served in coming generations.

The culture of the district

The "culture" of a district can best be described by the underlying principles by which the group operates, i.e., their belief systems, behaviors, values and attitudes. In the case of Green Valley, we learned that there is an unusually strong work ethic among staff members. Teachers work long hours and are willing to go the extra mile to support student success. As an administrator new to the district articulated "[the staff] are a group of unspoiled people. They work hard, but they are not whiny. They [don't say] 'I can't possibly get this job done because I don't have enough construction paper.' They get the job done whether they have the construction paper or not."[8] On the other hand, one administrator questioned whether some teachers might be extending themselves more than is needed: "The water cooler conversations around here are almost crazy in the sense that [someone will say] 'I was here until 11:30 last night, or I came in over the weekend.' There is some sort of pride about that."

Both teachers and administrators we interviewed described Green Valley as a "conservative" community with a fundamental attitude that it is "better to do with less." We learned that there is a concern among teachers and administrators that the district's frugality may limit teachers' capacity for growth: "I think our staff development has really crumbled in the last several years and so there really isn't an opportunity for teacher training unless you take the initiative yourself and go off on your own time with your own money." When asked what the most pressing needs are facing Green Valley, a participant said "Staff development is a big one. In order to see some changes and continuity in the program, we have to develop staff, in the sense that they need to know how to teach the best they can. "

Although the average tenure of teachers in Green Valley is 17 years, the district's administrative team has undergone significant turn-over in the past several years and continues to do so. Of the eleven senior administrators in the district, five were newly

[8] All quotations in this account are from in-person interviews with members of the Green Valley Leadership Team. Some of have been lightly edited for clarity.

appointed to their positions in the fall of 2002, including principals at one elementary school, the middle school and the high school. These new administrators thus began their new roles after the WI leadership proposal was written but before the project started. Beginning in July, 2003, Green Valley will have a new superintendent and a new principal at one of its elementary schools.

III. THE GREEN VALLEY LEADERSHIP TEAM: NBCTS AND ADMINISTRATORS WORKING TOGETHER TO ADVANCE TEACHING, LEARNING AND REFORM

Genesis of the project

The catalyst for the Green Valley Leadership Team project was a trip to the Washington Initiative's Leadership Retreat in Leavenworth (May, 2002) by the district's three NBCTs: Sue Mullen, a 2/3 classroom teacher; Joanie Hauser, also a 2/3 classroom teacher and Sue Mullen's teaching partner; and Belinda Robson, an art teacher from the middle school. Along with other Washington NBCTs, the three teachers were invited to attend a two day conference designed to support NBCTs in developing as leaders and promoting interest in the National Board Certification process.

The teachers tell us they were eager to network with other NBCTs as well as learn about new leadership opportunities from the WI. The conference provided an opportunity for teachers to attend sessions led by other NBCTs as well as by administrators interested in promoting school reform and teacher leadership. The teachers from Green Valley were especially impressed by one presenter –an elementary principal from a different district who shared her experience of using the "Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools"[9] as the basis for her school's improvement plan. From the teachers' perspective she embodied their vision of the "ideal instructional leader."

The long ride home from Leavenworth provided ample time for the teachers to reflect on and share what they had learned from the retreat. They believed that there were many highly capable and creative teachers in Green Valley and yet the district was not "at the cutting edge" of school reform. Although schools in the district had adopted new curriculum programs and recently initiated a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, the teachers felt too little had been done by the district to foster change.

The teachers brainstormed ways they could initiate school reform in their district. They wondered if it was possible to find a "cooperative, helpful kind of way" to team with their principals and district administrators. The idea to form a teacher/administrator leadership team quickly evolved into a grant proposal and by the time the teachers returned home, they were set to write a first draft.

With a short period of time between the conception of the project and the deadline for submission for the grant, the teachers prepared the grant in haste. For the few

[9] Published by OSPI.

administrators with whom the teachers shared the original proposal, it triggered a variety of responses. Some were curious and willing to support the opportunity to have philosophical conversations with teachers. Others felt that the wording implied a "we can fix you" or "we will show you how" [to be instructional leaders] tone, a tone that one administrator told us "undermined the whole project." At the request of the superintendent, the teachers revised the wording of the grant, hoping to provide clarity of their intent and ease the concerns of administrators. The grant was awarded in late spring of 2002, and the teachers began to think about how they might go about implementing the project in the coming fall.

Designing and Implementing the Project

Participants

One NBCT assumed the role of the project's coordinator, working closely with the other two. Two other teachers joined the team, both strong advocates of change and one NBCT, new to the district. All of the district's administrators—principals, vice principals, the superintendent and other senior district administrators were invited to participate in the project.

Forming the Leadership Team

Prior to the opening of school, the teachers attended a district open house for new administrators. At this gathering, they circulated a copy of the grant proposal and an invitation describing the project and inviting all administrators to the orientation. Early in the school year the teachers hosted a short breakfast meeting where they answered questions about the project. The orientation was well attended and according to the teachers, most of the administrators seemed genuinely interested and supportive.

For the kickoff meeting, the teachers invited the Director of the Washington Initiative to elaborate on the National Board Certification process and hopefully, lend some credibility to the NBCTs. The WI director asked the NBCTs to share their individual portfolios, hoping to expand administrators' knowledge and understanding of the documentation and reflection required to become a NBCT. A copy of the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools was given out to participants as well as a copy of Barth's *Learning By Heart*. [10] Also included in the fall agenda of meetings was a visit from the principal whom the NBCTs had heard at the WI retreat.

Initial format

The initial format for the project consisted of bi-weekly discussions lasting two to three hours, generally during the morning hours. Carving out time for lengthy meetings without adding to an already full plate of responsibilities was a consideration for all of the participants and therefore they decided to schedule the meetings during the school day. Using grant funding, substitutes were hired to cover the teachers' classes.

[10] Roland Barth, *Learning By Heart* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

Ultimately this schedule proved to be a major impediment for some of the administrators who found it difficult to be away from their schools for three hours at a time. After several months, the schedule was changed so that they met after school for 90 minutes.

To create a context for dialogue for the early fall meetings, the teachers selected two key readings: OSPI's list of Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools and Roland Barth's *Learning By Heart*. Each member of the group was given a copy of the book and other selected articles to read. The teachers hoped to use the readings as a springboard for discussion and inquiry focusing on topics of interest to the group. Guest speakers were also included in the fall agenda.

In these first few meetings, the format followed a fairly simple structure: participants were asked to read a chapter of the book and come prepared to share ideas or questions with the group. Often the discussions led to new topics or pressing issues facing some members of the district. Paired and small group activities were included in the format as well as whole group discussion. At the closing of each meeting participants were asked to write a reflection about what they had learned and how they might apply the theory to their own school sites. Sue and Belinda reviewed and used the data collected from the participants to plan for subsequent meetings.

Experiencing growing pains, or "storming and re-forming"

A period of conflict

As often happens when teams are forming, especially if its members are not yet accustomed to in-depth dialogue, some of the issues that arose in discussion produced conflict. This conflict soon seemed to threaten the functioning of the group as a whole. For example, a ripple of discontent surfaced when some administrators questioned the selection of an upcoming guest speaker. On the day of the visiting speaker's presentation, the teachers were surprised by the marked difference in the dynamics of the group. A participant offered this snapshot of what happened:

> "The speaker was sitting at the end [of the Board Room conference table] and we [teachers and administrators] were grouped around the table. By lunch time, except for a couple of administrators, they [administrators] sat by the door, they didn't come back to the table."

Following this meeting, some administrators stopped attending. The teachers became increasingly discouraged by philosophical disagreements in the group. They debated privately whether or not to continue the project, and in a subsequent meeting, they told the administrators who were still attending that they were thinking about abandoning the project. The administrators praised the teachers' efforts and encouraged them to continue with the project.

Based on our interviews with participants, this period of time was the most difficult for everyone involved. There were fundamental differences in the participants' perspectives – especially regarding the purpose of the project; the role NBCTs should

play in initiating district wide reform; and the reason why administrators were not attending meetings. These differences persisted throughout the year and, to our knowledge, have yet to be resolved.

As is often the case when a rift begins in a group, membership splintered. From this point on, a core group formed of four administrators and the five teachers. Occasionally other administrators dropped in but were not considered part of the core group. While there is no doubt that this phase of the project represented a major challenge to the members and to the project's goals, it also provided an opportunity to "re-form" the group and build cohesiveness among the core members.

Transforming the team

As the core group continued to read and think together, they developed a deeper understanding of each other's roles. Teachers learned about the demands placed on administrators to manage the day-to-day business of schools, often leaving little time for philosophical discussion or long-term planning. Administrators recognized and appreciated the courage required of teachers to step out of their comfort zone and take an active role in school reform. As mutual respect and admiration for each other's roles developed, the walls separating teachers from administrators continued to dissolve.

Participants told us that during this period, discussions stemming from the selected readings were thought-provoking and at times, controversial and challenging. In one instance, a principal discussed with a teacher his concern about whether he could meet the expectations of "instructional leader" as described in Roland Barth's book. During the meeting we observed in March 2003, the group viewed a video tape of Barth discussing "shared leadership," and then brainstormed a list of possible gains or losses for administrators and teachers when leadership is shared. These examples illustrate how participants were engaging with the material individually and collectively, and used it as a tool and springboard for professional growth

By this time—several months into the project, with the meeting time shifted to 90 minutes after school—the core group remained actively engaged in the Leadership Team work, with some of the other administrators attending sporadically. Given the un-addressed conflicts, this shifting "membership" produced a level of ongoing tension.

The future of the Green Valley Leadership Network

The Green Valley Leadership Team has made a request of the Washington Initiative to continue funding for the project for the 2003-2004 school year. In an end of year survey all participants were asked to prioritize the group members' goals for the coming year. According to the results of the survey, the participants selected a workshop on "Lesson Study" and revising the teacher evaluation instrument as the most important objectives to accomplish.

IV. BENEFITS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM PROJECT

Although the Leadership Team struggled in its formative period, the creation of the team and the work of its members produced notable benefits during the year.

The Value of Engaging in Professional Dialogue

Administrators and teachers unequivocally agreed that having the opportunity to engage in philosophical conversation with colleagues was the number one benefit of participating in this project. They valued the dialogue for three reasons: 1) it provided time for thought-provoking, in-depth discussion of ideas relevant to their work; 2) it allowed for an opportunity to broaden their perspectives as members shared their convictions and beliefs; and 3) it provided a foundation for working together in creating a shared vision for Green Valley schools. On an end-of-year survey, one participant summarized the hope expressed by all: "I believe that more honest communication between teachers and administrators will lead to stronger schools."

Developing the Skills of a Teacher Leader

For some teachers, sharing knowledge and ideas about best practice with administrators was more than a little intimidating. With time and increasing rapport with core members, teachers began to develop more confidence in expressing their point of view. One of the teachers was pleased to report that she had successfully mediated the reversal of a decision made by an administrator through professional and honest dialogue – dialogue that she claimed was a result of relationship-building in the group.

As facilitator of the meetings, Sue cited examples of ways she had learned to improve the structure of meetings. For example, after several participants mentioned that the group "needed to have more fun together" she included an energizing activity at the beginning of each meeting.

Teachers on the Leadership Team have a history of serving in leadership roles in the district. For example, they have served on district committees, led district-wide professional development and partnered with principals to advance school site reform. Creating the Leadership Team has made these teachers more proactive in contributing their knowledge and expertise to the district.

Contribution to district reform

Participants on the team, who hold out ambitious goals for the project, have somewhat mixed feelings about the amount of impact the Leadership Team is having in its first year. Some participants told us that the discussions were not having as much impact district-wide as they had hoped. As one administrator said, "it's rich conversation but it is rhetorical…it doesn't seem to be bleeding out to the school site." Another administrator said that he "wasn't exactly sure what he had gained from the conversations." However, we also heard stories which lead us to believe that steps

toward change and reform are occurring. The following examples were cited in the end of year report which demonstrates the impact of the project:

- Two teachers facilitated a committee to review the elementary report card using the EALRs as a framework.
- A principal initiated a recognition program for his staff based on ideas discussed from the Barth book.
- A principal started a book study group at his school.
- Teachers are working with administrators to redesign the district's teacher evaluation instrument, using the Five Core Propositions as a framework.
- Two teachers transferred to a school where they will be working with an administrator who is a "core" team member.
- At least one principal has encouraged staff to participate in National Board Certification.
- Teachers had an opportunity to share the NBCT process with administrators.

Although participants may have differing views about the overall impact the project has had thus far, it appears that working together has provided an opportunity for administrators and teachers to initiate some new efforts as well as build a core of common principles – principles which may eventually lead to developing a model for shared leadership in the district.

V. ISSUES AND LESSONS FROM THE GREEN VALLEY CASE STUDY

> *"A precondition for successful reform is interdependence. You must want to work together; that is you must have the will. And you must know how to work together; that is you have to have the skill. Yet most of us in schools are not very good at collaborating." -Roland Barth, Learning By Heart*

Teachers and administrators participating on the Leadership Team had a wide range of experiences in the project, ranging from emotionally difficult experiences of controversy and unresolved conflict, to empowering experiences of individual and collective professional growth and of taking steps toward positive change. The combination of challenges and successes of the Green Valley project highlight three dilemmas inherent to teacher leadership and reform in many schools and districts. We do not believe the Green Valley district or case is atypical. In fact, we believe their experience, and the lessons it holds, will be germane to many who are interested in engaging teachers and administrators together in dialogue and leadership.

Teacher-initiated reform as cultural shift

Like that of many schools and districts, Green Valley's culture seems to be one in which there is little history of collegial dialogue about educational problems or of teachers acting as leaders and initiating change. Changes in roles and relationships involve changes in culture, and cultural change is inherently conflictual. Also, the initiation of professional dialogue creates a context in which group members discover that they have different, often competing, ideas and experiences related to education; when these

surface for the first time in a professional community unaccustomed to such dialogue, they typically generate conflict.

When conflicts arise that threaten group cohesion, one of four results typically occurs. The group avoids the conflict and continues to function at a superficial level, often becoming unable to change; or the group avoids the conflict by abandoning the effort altogether, also leading to lack of change; or the group becomes splintered and sub-groups continue to pursue change, without participation of the whole; or the group as a whole embraces conflict as inevitable, develops the skills to address it, and ultimately accepts conflict as one process of "dissonance" that is as necessary to whole-system change as cognitive dissonance is to learning.[11] The ability to expect, accept, manage, and resolve conflict is very rare in schools and districts.

In the case of the Green Valley group, the "core group" splintered off and ultimately became a quite functional and empowered group. They experienced some degree of controversy and challenges inherent to the process of change, but little deep conflict. For these group members as individuals, the split had a positive function: they had new learning experiences and initiated new improvement projects. For the core group as a whole, the split had the positive function of enabling them to take on some reform-related work.

The potential downside to this "splintering" result is that a good proportion of other administrators are no longer engaged in the change process. Thus, for the system as a whole the split may mean that a real cultural shift is limited in scope. Developing the skills and taking the time to work through the conflict might have been far more painful for individual members and may have delayed a sense of "progress" toward reform activity, but it may have had greater potential to shift the system culture, albeit more slowly. In cultures where there is little tradition of teacher leadership, there may be inherent trade-offs between two goals—quicker actions among like-minded members on the one hand, and slower movement through conflict toward cultural change on the other.

Mutuality as the foundation of collaboration

From the beginning of the project, there were important differences in the perspectives of teachers and administrators about the Leadership Team itself. On a fundamental level, the teachers entered into the project from a perspective of impatience and frustration (they also had optimism and courage). Their participation in the WI retreat inspired them to imagine new educational possibilities for Green Valley; and they felt that existing conditions in Green Valley were limiting, rather than enhancing, their potential to achieve these possibilities. They saw the Leadership Team project less as a process of mutual work, and more as a means of initiating changes they wanted to see.

[11] See Achinstein, Betty. *Community, Diversity, and Conflict Among Schoolteachers: The Ties That Blind.* (New York: Teachers College Press. Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought Series, 2002.)

The language they used in their first draft communicated this intention to administrators and caused some concern.

The administrators entered into the project from a perspective of some skepticism about the extent to which teachers ought to be taking the lead, and they had concerns about the teachers' intentions (they also had good will). Even after the proposal was changed, administrators felt left out from having a voice in setting the agenda for the conversations. It was only when the "core group" was formed, and some trust established, that the dialogue became mutually directed so that teachers and administrators alike shared their different perspectives and challenges related to their roles. Indeed, Barth's ingredient of "interdependence" may have been missing in the early stages.

The challenge of introducing "3rd party" ideas into a conflictual system

Bringing external ideas into a system can be invigorating, and it is certainly necessary to individual and system change in the long run. However, to introduce external ideas and elements very quickly—before there is some appetite for them and before there is a tradition of dialogue about ideas—frequently produces conflict. This is true whether administrators or teachers introduce them. The Barth book and the guest speakers were both very high quality external resources, and the core group ultimately developed strong abilities to use them as a springboard and inspiration for constructive dialogue about their own internal conditions and goals. Yet at the beginning, the group's lack of cohesion and the lack of mutual participation in selecting resources of interest meant that these external elements served unintentionally as wedges that drove members apart rather than inspiring collective dialogue.

A final reflection

Of the three cases we studied, the experiences and work of the participants in the Green Valley project were most complex, varied, and difficult to portray in succinct fashion. The case reveals both challenges and successes that so often accompany change efforts. The Green Valley project reminds us that change efforts that can seem relatively small in scope and complexity—starting a study group involving both teachers and administrators—can actually bring very powerful forces into play because of norms, habits, and roles that are often deeply embedded in schools and districts. We have studied change in schools for many years, and feel that this case may be especially instructive because it is reflective of the experiences of so many schools and districts.

CASE # 3

CLOVER SCHOOL DISTRICT[12] – THE PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION COURSE

I. INTRODUCTION

The Clover Professional Certification program is a case of two NBCTs – Hannah Bowen and Kate Ryan – creating and leading an effort to meet the needs of their district's new teachers by applying knowledge and skill gained from their National Board experience through the creation of a Professional Certification course. The "Pro Cert" program is also a case of a well-intentioned and visionary but vaguely-written state policy "made real" by uniquely qualified individuals, providing districts and universities a working implementation model. A high degree of support and cooperation from the district and two grants from the Washington Initiative have provided the seeds for Hannah and Kate to plan years 1 – 3 of the program, and facilitate one group from the first through the second and third years. The hope is that the program will continue through additional internal and external funding and the participation of newly board-certified district teachers.

Why study the professional certification course in Clover as a case of NBCT leadership?

We chose the Clover Pro Cert course for two reasons. First, it provides an example of how teachers with distinctive skills, experiences, and knowledge can interact constructively with state-wide policy. Second, and related to the first, the Pro Cert program illustrates how *relationship* can be a key factor in *leadership*, i.e., these teachers were not only capable and qualified to lead, but they were also recognized, supported, and accepted by a number of people and structures, allowing their leadership to take shape and flourish.

II. CONTEXTS AND PROGRAM PARTNERS

Political context for the creation of the Professional Certification

In Washington State, the Education Reform-Improvement of Student Achievement Act was adopted in 1993. This piece of legislation, along with recommendations from the State Board of Education and the Governor's Council on Educational Reform and Funding resulted in a new, two-tiered model for teacher certification. At around the same time, the Washington Advisory Council for Professional Teaching Standards (WACPTS) was formed to develop the second tier. It was decided that a seamless, performance-based certification process would best serve the needs of schools, as well as comply with upcoming local and federal legislation and policy changes (e.g., No Child Left Behind-NCLB). The first certificate, or first tier, called the "residency," is earned by completing a bachelor's degree and a pre-service teacher education program at any one

[12] A pseudonym. We use pseudonyms for names of people, schools, districts, and universities throughout the account.

of 22 institutions of higher education (IHEs) offering this program. The second certificate, called the "professional certification," is now required by all new teachers completing their residency on or after September 1, 2000. How they choose to fulfill this requirement is up to them. In most cases, the only choice is to enroll in the program offered at a local IHE, where they would take courses (15 quarter hours) approved by the candidate's professional growth team (described below). Teachers have 5 years to obtain their professional certification from the time they complete their residency.

At the time the Clover Pro Cert project began, information about the details of the requirements for completing the professional certification was sketchy, at best. What was clear was that each candidate must put together a "professional growth team" which includes the candidate, a teacher colleague, a district representative, and a university representative. In many cases, a district representative on a team is the extent of district involvement – it is ultimately the universities that determine whether or not a candidate has met the state's requirements, not the districts. Currently, all 22 IHEs are grappling with the meaning of this policy in practice, and how to best facilitate programs for new teachers in the state. The OSPI (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction) recently in spring 2003 posted rubrics on its website to help universities and professional growth teams make sense of the required standards and products.

There are three standards for completing the professional certification: Effective Teaching, Professional Development, and Leadership. For each standard, two to five products meeting certain criteria must be completed. The standards and products were created by the WACPTS after consulting a number of models. Significantly, one was the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Clover school district context

The Clover school district serves approximately 8,000 students living in a semi-rural area approximately 15 miles from a large metropolitan area. The district has a history of, and propensity toward, being "ahead of the curve" when it comes to educational innovation. In particular, the leadership in the district highly values professional development. In fact, it recently decided to devote money designated for class size reduction (Initiative 728) to assigning 1-2 professional development specialists to each school. In addition, the district-level professional development specialist, Rachel Martin, has a strong presence in the schools and commands respect and credibility among the teaching staff.

The superintendent of Clover believes that there is a strong link between leadership and student learning. He works with building principals on a framework he developed for the Hershey Foundation called "Leadership for Learning." At monthly, four-hour sessions with principals, the group studies district and school culture and ways to support their teachers. He strives for structures that will enable him and his school leaders to support teachers' long-term reflection and improvement, and for ways teachers can inform his leadership strategies.

Support for NBPTS

Clover school district leaders value the National Board. The superintendent expressed two major reasons why he champions National Board certification. First, he believes the experience of going through the process is the best kind of professional development available – ongoing, site-based critical reflection of one's own teaching and student work. Second, he sees Clover's NBCTs as an excellent marketing tool to attract and retain good teachers, as well as an important public relations strategy. Twenty-percent of Clover's operating budget is provided by a levy run every 4 years, and with an already high tax rate in the district, he counts on positive attention that comes with the National Board to bolster support for the schools.

There are 9 NBCTs in Clover – a large number for such a small district. The district supports and nurtures teachers who choose to pursue National Board certification in a number of ways. Book studies, in which teachers are invited to read and learn about the National Board process, are open to any interested teacher. If a teacher decides to pursue certification as a result, she receives assistance in filling out and submitting an application for a scholarship from the WI. For teachers who do not receive a scholarship from the WI, the district creates its own facilitated support group. These teachers also are given a special party where they receive a basket of "goodies," including blank videotapes and "sub day" certificates. When a teacher receives certification, the district celebrates. According to the superintendent,

> When they get their national board certification, we throw a big party. We call the newspapers up and we make a huge deal out of it. It is a big deal, and it is the only thing, as a teacher, it is your professional certification. It is like getting your architect's certificate or passing the bar. That is a big deal.

Clover and the "Pro Cert"

Clover is serious about attracting and retaining good teachers. Because of this commitment, it has also been proactive in addressing the new professional certification requirements. As a result of the new policy, it has, through the leadership of NBCTs and WI Leadership Grant recipients Hannah and Kate, planned and implemented a program whereby teachers affected by the policy can earn their professional certification in five years, for $500, and with a great deal of support and mentoring. Great Northwest University (GNU), their sponsoring institution of higher education, has assisted in the development of the courses and participates in much of the planning and ongoing reflection on and refinement of the course.

The superintendent and others in the district view this program as a win-win for all involved—Clover retains teachers who are developing important habits and skills that they will need as professionals; new teachers receive various supports for fulfilling a state requirement; NBCTs Hannah and Kate receive an opportunity to fulfill a leadership role in the district and an opportunity to shape state policy. GNU also wins—they learn from what transpires in Clover to inform their own Pro Cert program, and they build relationships with the district's teachers who may choose to pursue a master's degree or other programs at the university. Finally, other districts around state

of Washington win because they learn from the model Clover has created; the superintendent reported receiving several inquiries about how to set up professional certification programs like the one in Clover.

Hannah Bowen and Kate Jones, NBCTs

Hannah, certified in 1999, and Kate, certified in 2000, both learned a great deal about teaching, learning and themselves as professionals as a result of the NB process. They emerged different than when they entered, and they wanted to share what they now knew and believed. When the opportunity to apply for leadership grants through the WI arose, Hannah approached Rachel Martin with the idea of creating a project to work with the district's teachers. Like all school districts in Washington, Clover had begun to think about how it was going to contend with the new professional certification requirements. In fact, Clover had participated in a pilot project with GNU a few years prior, the results of which informed the current policy. Clover also had been working on recruitment and retention issues. At that meeting, the parallels between the requirements for NB certification and the new professional certification were discussed. With leadership from Hannah and Kate, financial assistance from the grant (and eventually the district), and support and approval from representatives of GNU, a Clover district professional certification program was created. Who better, they thought, to guide new teachers through the Pro Cert than experienced teachers who had just completed a very similar process?

Since becoming certified, both Hannah and Kate have been engaged in a variety of leadership activities. The Pro Cert program, however, has stretched them both well beyond what they had done before. In particular, the Pro Cert created a real challenge and opportunity for Kate who, until achieving NB certification, had been less visible and less confident as a leader:

> Getting certified has opened a lot of doors for me that weren't open before. National Board certification brings prestige. People now want to know what I have to say, and they wouldn't have asked me before. This is one of the unexpected results of the process. There are exciting opportunities that come up now, even though I sometimes choose not to take them. I enjoy the network of NBCTs; there's a lot of energy there. Before I was certified, I didn't speak up very much, I felt it was not my place. However, getting my National Board Certification made me think I did have something to say, that I should step forward. I'm now more comfortable giving my opinion or taking things on.

For Hannah, who had been active in many arenas over the years – including the teachers union and research studies – the Pro Cert provided an opportunity for her to share her knowledge and enthusiasm about the National Board process with new teachers. Receiving the grant and implementing the course has expanded her professional role: She planned to present at the May WI conference at Sleeping Lady, was summoned by the Governor to attend a press conference during his campaign year, published work in one book and has decided to write her own book about parent involvement in secondary education, has worked for the Washington Education Association, and was featured in a book written by a University of Washington doctoral student studying reflection in

teaching. As Hannah put it: "Nobody asked me to do these things before. Nobody ever cared before, and now with the initials after my name, people call."

Great Northwest University

Great Northwest University, located about 12 miles from Clover, has a history of collaboration with the Clover school district. Like all other IHEs, GNU currently runs its own professional certification program for any teacher wishing to complete the requirements through this university. In addition, GNU participated in a state-run professional certification pilot program that included Clover as a participating district. The results of this pilot ultimately informed the current state Pro Cert requirements.

While the official role of GNU as a partner in the new Clover Pro Cert program is as arbiter of quality and rigor, in practice it is much more than that. Ann Fuller, Director of the Center for Professional Development in the School of Education, participates in course planning, attends sessions, and reviews documents produced by the teachers. In addition, the work and support of GNU is essentially donated as a service, since the $500 that is paid by the teacher candidates goes directly toward the low tuition rate of $50/credit for a total of 10 credits.[13]

GNU values teachers and believes its programs can benefit from teacher knowledge, experience, and input. The partnership with Clover and their involvement with the NBCTs has led to other opportunities. For example, Hannah and Kate (along with five other teachers from neighboring districts who worked as facilitators for GNU for new NB candidates) were invited to participate in a GNU education faculty retreat in May 2003 where they discussed restructuring their pre-service teacher education programs to align more closely with National Board standards.

III. THE CLOVER PRO CERT COURSE AND ITS IMPACT

Background

The state was mandating a new professional certification program, but it was under-specified and no district had figured out its meaning. Hannah and Kate saw that there was a need to help teachers understand, and that the standards and products appeared to be very similar to the National Board portfolio entries.

The WI grant provided the seed money and the impetus for planning and implementing the first 3 years of an envisioned 5 year Pro Cert program. Hanna, Kate, Rachel and Ann met to plan the format and content of the course. It made sense to them that the course would be run very much like a National Board support group, as both Hannah and Kate had experience doing this. In their planning, Hannah and Kate examined the information provided by the state, wove in what they saw as the appropriate

[13] A substantial savings: some universities charge upwards of $6000 of tuition to complete the process (AF).

connections to the National Board process, and created a curriculum for the first 3 years of the program. They are currently working on plans for years 4 and 5.

The Course

Hannah and Kate spent a week in the summer, and several days throughout the year while the course was running, poring over the state documents, interpreting their meaning, and then transforming their interpretations into a curriculum for new teachers. They both realize that as the state refines its goals and begins to flesh out the original vision, their program will have to be flexible enough to change. However, the current plan is for the course to address up to 2 requirements per year, resulting in the completion of all 10 in 5 years.

One evening per month for 7 months during the school year, Hannah and Kate facilitate a meeting of approximately 25 teachers in their 2nd year[14] of teaching to study, discuss, and complete the Pro Cert requirements. Depending on the product they are addressing, Hannah and Kate introduce the product and its meaning, and then the teachers work in small groups to discuss what they produced, or how they were approaching a particular assignment. For one product, the "CLIP" (Comprehensive Learning / Instructional Plan), Hannah and Kate asked teachers to videotape their teaching; they examined and discussed the tapes at a course session.

Teachers' reactions to the course

Teachers we talked with who are enrolled in the current program were of two minds about it, one very positive, the other more questioning. On the positive side, they greatly appreciated the efforts of Hannah and Kate, and understood that they were very lucky to be teaching in Clover, where a Pro Cert program is in place and where it is being run by NBCTs. They are grateful even though it feels like an extra burden. A few examples of the teachers' comments:

> What Kate and Hannah are doing is taking the state requirements for this program and asking, "What in the world are you talking about?" So they take that and they break it down, and it is like suddenly the light goes on, and it makes sense. We gripe and moan about doing it, but I was just saying to them, if they didn't do all of this pre-work, the leg-work for us, this process really would be excruciating.
>
> I think it is a great reflective piece for all of us. It makes you a better teacher, and I am not resentful of that at all. All kidding aside, it makes you look at what you are doing and put it into perspective. What can I do to make me better, what am I doing that makes me as good as I am? How does it all fit together?

[14] All first year teachers in Washington State are encouraged to enroll in some form of TAP (Teacher Assistance Program) paid for by the state. In Clover, this is the year after completing the residency requirement, and the year before they start their professional certification. In this year, teachers receive special training for beginning teachers, receive materials related to the Pro Cert, begin some reflective analysis, and create their professional growth plan. They are also required to develop and write a case study from their teaching experience.

> [Clover school district] is very committed to helping you with this whole process, and the whole GNU process. There are people out there in other school districts that have no clue what the expectations are at the end of that 5 year period, and God bless Clover for giving us this opportunity. People moan and groan because we do have to come after school, and yes it is work, but we know what the expectations are. We know that if you come here and you do this, you are okay. We have great direction.

The teachers recognized and greatly appreciated the fact that NBCTs, not university professors, were facilitating their Pro Cert process. They believe Hannah and Kate bring experience and knowledge that they can relate and aspire to, which is what kept them coming back (only two teachers had dropped out at the time of our visit). The teachers felt that Hannah and Kate understand where they are coming from and what they are facing in their attempt to complete the requirements. In the course we observed, it was clear that the teachers respected and valued what Hannah and Kate were trying to do, and felt that the feeling was mutual.

On the other hand, the participants questioned whether or not the timing for this kind of intensive reflection and documentation is right, even if it is important:

> Last year, I was constantly reflecting because I was doing all of this stuff for the first time. Trust me, a first year teacher reflects! It is not until when I have my lesson plans, my big packet of stuff -- that is when I would be concerned with getting apathetic, not right now.

> I can see it being really, really useful, in awhile, but when we first came to the district, we had this long orientation and they had all of these different classes and stuff. I had just gotten out of college and I did not need that right then. After a year maybe, after 2 years, 3 years, yeah, great, but right then, it was just more clutter in the brain, and when you first start teaching, there is just so much of that.

What's more, being a new teacher is difficult, and there are plenty of reasons new teachers feel like they aren't doing enough. The Pro Cert process puts a very high demand on new teachers, which in some cases has triggered fear and frustration. The teachers are required to engage in critical reflection, which has brought into sharp relief just how difficult teaching can be. The process points out ways they are falling short of the mark.

Overall, the gratitude seemed to outweigh their frustration with the process, and their frustrations were more with the new state requirement and not with the Clover Pro Cert Program.

A final note about the teachers' experience: at one school, the participating teacher observed that other teachers at her school were taking notice of the kinds of things she was doing to complete her Pro Cert. She said she thought that more teachers have been talking about reflection, that her experience has been "turning on a light bulb" with her colleagues.

A remaining challenge

Having board certified teachers facilitate the course seems an obvious choice to Clover—these teachers are highly respected, uniquely skilled, and have special knowledge to bring to bear. Hannah and Kate created a course based on their own experiences of the national board certification process, and their interests and skills related to working with new teachers. These teachers have deep, first-hand knowledge of what it is like to formulate and present demonstrations of teaching competence. However, it would be impossible for the two of them to teach every course to every cohort. The current plan to address this is to cycle other national board teachers in the district through, so that each year a new pair of NBCTs would start a new cohort of teachers. This means that they need a total of at least 10 interested NBCTs. Currently, there are 9 NBCTs in the district, but their level of interest in participating is unknown. Ultimately the district would like additional teachers who have successfully completed Board certification to participate as a facilitator, thereby building the district's internal capacity to sustain the Pro Cert program. This unknown factor raises the question of whether or not the program can be sustained as purely NBCT-led. The district may well have to consider alternatives because of the natural limit on capacity.

IV. RESULTS, IMPACTS AND BENEFITS

All of the collaborators in this project benefit from the work of Hannah and Kate. The state, in defining the requirements, expressed a real interest in seeing National Board standards as the foundation of this Pro Cert, but that they, as a policy entity, cannot realize their vision. They thus benefit from having NBCTs such as Hannah and Kate lead the way in designing and testing Pro Cert courses, and Clover is an informative example that could become a model. In other words, the **State of Washington** benefits by learning how teacher leaders can inform and make real new policy in ways that are meaningful and useful to teachers. It also provides a low-cost example for professional certification of new teachers for other districts to learn from and emulate.

GNU benefits in a number of ways. First, it benefits by its partnership with Clover and the accompanying access to schools and teachers for student-teacher placement and potential future master's degree students. Second, the collaboration with Clover is recognized as a model of how to create and sustain a good and productive relationship with a local school district. Finally, it learns from the Clover program to inform its own tuition-based professional certification program. In fact, Ann Fuller stated that GNU has now "borrowed" the idea of employing NBCTs in its program to increase its effectiveness and impact.

The benefits to the **Clover district** for the most part are yet to be determined. However, we can infer based on our conversations with participants in the Pro Cert course and others we spoke with that when the five years are up, their new teachers will be certified and it will have happened in a well-supported, coherent manner, where those teachers will be inducted into a district that values reflection. Another anticipated benefit is the increased ability of the district to recruit and retain new teachers. In particular, as stated by Rachel Martin, the program ensures that from the start teachers gain the right skills

and learn good reflective habits, thereby saving them (and the district) from a mediocre career:

> [The Pro Cert program] will get their minds focused less on surviving day-to-day with their own lesson plans, and focus more on student achievement, more on effective strategies, more on really teaching kids something, rather than always moving them from activity to activity. It is really to open their minds about what teaching really is all about, from the beginning, while the clay is still wet, rather than letting them teach for 20 years and then getting bad evaluations when they get a gutsy administrator that kind of talks turkey to them.

As Hannah put it, "preparing our teachers to be good teachers is the bottom line." In a sense, the Clover program provides another pathway for the district to "grow their own" teachers with leadership potential. There is also some hope that teachers who successfully complete the Clover professional certification program will pursue their National Board certification.

The **new teachers** in the district benefit by having access to an inexpensive, job-embedded professional development experience led by local expert teachers. They get the opportunity to reflect on their practice and receive feedback on their progress. The collaborative nature of the course design, as well as the cohort structure of the program, provides the teachers with a level of support that would not be available had they obtained their professional certification via other means.

What are the benefits to **Hannah** and **Kate**? For these teachers, the creation and implementation of the Pro Cert program is an opportunity to apply knowledge and skill from their NB experience to benefit teachers in their district. They both had an interest in working with new teachers, and feel they have something to offer. Further, the Pro Cert, and NB in general, has given them new eyes with which to see themselves and their professional roles. As Kate remarked:

> I have learned that [leadership] is complicated but 'doable.' If you asked me 5 years ago if I would have been part of an educational reform project, I would not have thought it possible. This project has opened my eyes [to the fact that] people like me [create reform projects]. I learned that I had the skills.

V. LESSONS LEARNED, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

In the case of the Clover Professional Certification program, there are multiple roles, motivations, and interests at play. Policy-makers at the state level are visionary and well-intended and responding with their best ideas to other mandates. They can outline a policy that has NB at its foundation, but it is the NBCTs, as leading practitioners, who have the special knowledge and skill to make that policy vision real; it is the teachers who make it concrete and actionable.

The Clover Pro Cert project is also a case of collaboration among many different kinds of institutions and roles. Here, the idea for the project did not come directly from the NBCTs but the right context and practical knowledge was necessary to make it happen.

The context of the district, with its commitment to teachers' professional growth and investment in retaining new teachers, the culture of honoring what teachers have to offer to benefit themselves and other teachers, and a history of good relations with a local university, made for fertile ground for testing this idea.

The Clover case raises the question of the location of authority when teachers are leaders. As mentioned, the vision for the project came not only from the teachers but (primarily) from a concern about recruitment and retention within the district, a desire to improve the skills of new teachers, and in response to a new state policy that would surely impact the district's efforts in both areas. The NBCTs and their access to the WI Leadership grants presented an opportunity to take the lead in making the new policy concrete. However, this case highlights the fine line that can exist between teacher initiative and teacher contribution to another initiative because of special knowledge.

It appears that teacher leadership in this case is directly dependent on multiple and connecting partnerships. Because of the landscape of power in schools, leadership for change takes many different forms and sits in relationship to other dynamics. The Pro Cert program in Clover could not have been achieved in the absence of supportive context or relationships. Because Hannah and Kate are teachers, the skills and knowledge they have to offer must be recognized and accepted before leadership can occur. In Clover, administrators and teachers work on problems together, supporting each other in their contributions to schools. There also exists a foundation of mutual trust and respect—teacher leadership is valued and counted on to provide the best possible educational experience for their students.