

## Research Brief

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# Summary of: Research Study on *Examining the Connections Between Collective Teacher Efficacy and Lesson Study*

This brief summarizes the research study: Examining the Connections Between Collective Teacher Efficacy and Lesson Study. The report discusses findings from a study that took place during the 2023-2024 school year at one elementary school in San Francisco Unified School district. An in-depth qualitative case study was conducted, including observations of a complete Lesson Study cycle and semi-structured interviews with each member of the Lesson Study planning team. Observations included: team meetings, the research lesson day, and reflection meetings, with video recordings and detailed field notes. The interviews with team members focused on their experiences with Lesson Study and the enabling conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE). A codebook based on the enabling conditions for CTE guided the analysis. Themes such as trust, sustainability, and the balance between following the framework for The Lesson Study Cycle<sup>1</sup> and responsive leadership were identified.

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Lewis and Jacqueline Hurd, Lesson study step by step: How teacher learning communities improve instruction. (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2011).

## **Findings**

An analysis of the interviews and research lesson day revealed that the enabling conditions for CTE exist throughout all phases of the Lesson Study cycle.

### **Findings from the Interviews:**

- School site administrators and IRF create conditions to support teachers' engagement in Lesson Study such as logistical supports (scheduling research lessons, arranging substitutes, coordinating translation services) and professional supports (opportunities in the workday to engage in Lesson Study work, paying teachers for extra time).
- Trust among teachers and administrators supports this work. Trust is built when teachers are trusted by administrators to engage in true inquiry that is responsive to the needs of their students.
- The school-wide commitment over time has made the Lesson Study program sustainable. The sustainability of the program attracts "strong" teachers to come teach at the school.
- Even though teachers may experience the Lesson Study structure as "rigid," they feel that the inquiry based on their students' needs.

### **School Site Administrators and IRF Create Conditions to Support Teachers' Engagement in Lesson Study**

Donohoo et al.<sup>2</sup> sought to understand what conditions enable CTE in schools by producing a scale to measure the enabling conditions for collective efficacy. They argued that for school leaders to foster and nurture CTE, they must have knowledge of the enabling conditions for CTE within their schools in order to identify areas of strengths and opportunities for growth. The Enabling Conditions-Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale includes five subscales: Empowered Teachers, Embedded Reflective Practices, Cohesive Teacher Knowledge, Goal Consensus, and Supportive Leadership. At this school, the supportive leadership demonstrated by school administrators significantly contributes to the implementation and success of these enabling conditions. According to the interviews, the administrators at this school have a crucial role in lesson study. They handle logistical tasks such as scheduling research lessons, arranging substitute coverage, coordinating translation services, and preparing reflection tools. Additionally, they organize school-wide reflection meetings and ensure effective communication among teams, helping to consolidate and share reflections.

All five teachers on the planning team reported that Lesson Study would not be possible if it was not embedded in their workday. In addition, they emphasized the importance of compensating teachers for their Lesson Study work when it was not able to be embedded in their workday. Each teacher also mentioned that the Instructional Reform Facilitator at the school played a key role as a supportive leader. It was evident that her role is vital to the success of Lesson Study at this school.

### **Trust Among Teachers and Administrators Supports This Work**

Although participants were not explicitly asked about trust in their interviews, the concept was mentioned frequently. Teachers reflected on the importance of trust among colleagues as well as the trust between administrators and teachers, highlighting its significance in fostering a

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<sup>2</sup> Jenni Donohoo, Timothy O'Leary, John Hattie, "The design and validation of the enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy scale (EC-CTES)," *Journal of Professional Capital and Community* Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 147-166 (2020).

collaborative and supportive environment within the school. The Lesson Study cycle is based on the idea of teacher inquiry and teachers reported feeling empowered when trusted to engage in true inquiry that is responsive to the needs of their students. Two teachers reported an increased feeling of trust between one another during the second year of working together with their Lesson Study planning team.

### **The School-Wide Commitment Over Time has Made the Lesson Study Program Sustainable**

In their interviews, teachers emphasized the critical importance of sustainability in implementing Lesson Study as a lasting practice within schools. They shared insights on how to create an environment where this collaborative approach can thrive over time, ensuring ongoing growth and development for both educators and students. Embedded time, compensation, and trust are all essential components for ensuring Lesson Study continues to be a sustainable practice. The school's overall school priorities align with Lesson Study efforts, which allows Lesson Study to be sustainable. Teachers reported that the school has been able to recruit strong mathematics teachers due to their commitment to Lesson Study and this strong group of teachers helps to continue the Lesson Study efforts.

### **The Balance Between The Lesson Study Cycle and Teacher Autonomy**

One critique of Lesson Study is that it does not empower teachers due to its prescribed framework, which some interpret as rigid. In the interviews, teachers described the importance of balancing this prescribed framework with a responsive structure. They reported positive experiences with the structure of the Lesson Study cycle and shared that this structure helps support their work. Within the structured Lesson Study cycle, teachers expressed feeling empowered by being given the autonomy to select an area of focus that is responsive to the needs of their students.

### **Recommendations for San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)**

Based on the interviews with teachers at this school and observations of their Lesson Study cycle, I offer the following recommendations to support the implementation and sustainability of Lesson Study in other SFUSD schools:

- Leaders need to support the logistical structures of the Lesson Study approach: Ensure administrators continue to facilitate logistical tasks related to Lesson Study such as arranging substitute coverage and coordinating scheduling to minimize barriers for teachers.
- Encourage open dialogue about challenges and successes in Lesson Study to ensure teachers continue to have autonomy to select the inquiry that is responsive to their students.
- Embed Lesson Study activities in the workday: Schedule dedicated time within the school day for Lesson Study activities to ensure that teachers can engage without adding to their workload. Develop policies that compensate teachers for additional time spent on Lesson Study outside of regular hours, acknowledging their commitment and effort.
- Create a long-term plan for the integration of Lesson Study into the school culture and structures, emphasizing its alignment with overall school priorities.
- Balance following the Lesson Study Cycle and being responsive to the needs of teachers and students in their inquiry: Encourage teachers to make adaptations that respond to their specific classroom needs while maintaining the Lesson Study Cycle's integrity. Empower teachers participating in Lesson Study to select areas of focus that align with student needs, ensuring that the framework remains flexible and responsive.