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ADAPTIVE SCHOOLS: INVESTIGATING IMPACT, CONTINUITY, AND
CHANGE IN ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

Winn Crenshaw Wheeler
B.A., Elon University, 1996
M.Ed., Elon University, 2001

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Curriculum and Instruction

Department of Teaching and Learning
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2016

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 5, 2016

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of my father, Thomas Franklin Crenshaw
and in honor of my mother, Miriam Hutchison Crenshaw.

You have loved, inspired, and supported me every moment of my life. You paved the way to this accomplishment through your unyielding faith in me. What a blessing it is to experience such tenderness, I am grateful beyond the sentiments that words can express.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:13 NKJV

I have no doubt that I have been strengthened for this journey through a lifetime of amazing opportunities and interactions. An accomplishment such as this is achieved on a foundation of support that seems invisible at the moment of ascent. Clearly, my parents set this work in motion as they taught me to love words before I could speak for myself; reading, writing, speaking, and listening were central activities in my life long before I entered a classroom.

Realizing that is impossible to thank everyone who built upon this moment, I am going to attempt to name the specific accomplishments of a few. I would like to thank my mentor and friend, Dr. Grace Bass who first said to me, “When you earn your doctorate...” I appreciate that she could see, what I could not and planted a seed that has finally grown to fruition almost twenty years later.

I would also like to thank my many friends and colleagues in Smith County. You have cheered for me, talked to me about your experiences, offered the generous gift of time, and helped me refine my teaching. If ever a group of people made the phrase, “together is better” true, it is all of you.

Special thanks are also extended to Dr. Lori Norton-Meier and Dr. Maggie McGatha who have helped me grow as a person, educator, learner, writer, and academic. Your energy and support are without compare. To the other members of my committee,

Dr. Tom Tretter, Dr. James Chisholm, Dr. Susan A. Peters, Anita Davis and Jean Wolph, you have each played an important role in catalyzing my thinking and helping me envision new possibilities. I appreciate your willingness to be part of this journey with me.

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude and many, many thanks to my family: my husband, David, my sons, Thomas and Matthew, and my mother, Miriam Crenshaw. In the book *The Princess Bride*, William Goldman writes, “If your love for me were a grain of sand, mine [for you] would be a universe of beaches.” The love you have shown me in this challenging and at times isolating endeavor is like that universe of beaches. Thank you for your encouragement, for doing extra chores, and for saying, “You can and you will,” when I wanted to stop. Thank you for giving hugs when I was grumpy and understanding when I was not able to help with homework, laundry, or a myriad of other tasks. I could not have done this work without your support; you have made my dream come true.

ABSTRACT

ADAPTIVE SCHOOLS: INVESTIGATING IMPACT, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE IN ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Winn Crenshaw Wheeler

April 5, 2016

This dissertation is an examination of the work of Adaptive Schools in Smith County Schools. It begins by explaining how the work of Adaptive Schools is relevant in the larger context of school reform. To explore this relevance, a qualitative analysis of Smith County was conducted. Smith County was selected based on systematic implementation of the work of Adaptive Schools. Analysis of interview data focused on: the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools within Smith County and the degree to which Adaptive Schools intersected with themes of continuity and change. Further analysis explores emergent questions about: (a) the function of Adaptive Schools as a paradigm or phenomenon and (b) significant contextual features of Smith County Schools. Theories of Dewey, Bandura, Vygotsky and Dweck were used in framing the study because of implicit and explicit connections to the work of Adaptive Schools. Ultimately, the study connects the work of Adaptive School in Smith County to the theory of Action Space. Findings are shared as a case study of the Smith County School district.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter situates the study within the field of education reform. Chapter two explores the research base supporting

Adaptive Schools and connects to relevant theorists. Chapter three includes description of the qualitative techniques that were used in constructing the case study. Chapters four and five explore patterns and themes which emerged from the study using the words of the seventeen interview participants. Chapter six synthesizes the findings of the study and makes suggestions about significance both for Smith County and the larger work of Adaptive Schools.

Findings indicate that Adaptive Schools provides a paradigm for schools to enact Professional Learning Communities. Within the context of Smith County, the work of Adaptive Schools functioned as both a phenomenon and a paradigm. Visionary leadership and commitment to extending professional learning are needed in supporting deep levels of understanding and application of the work. The potential of Adaptive Schools to be impactful is significant in light of research that supports the efficacy of capacity building in the context of collaboration.

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INTRODUCTION: FRAMING THE RESEARCH INQUIRY

The need for educational change has been evident for generations. Over a century ago, Dewey (1938) wrote of the work of American schools, “It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future world would be much like the past, and yet is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule and not the exception” (p. 3). Before a world of digital connectivity, personal computers, smart phones, satellites orbiting the Earth, and man setting foot on the moon, Dewey acknowledged an essential truth - that schools educate based on the past while *change* within daily life is more the norm than continuity. In this rapidly changing world, schools often remain stagnant. Given the rapidity of change at the current time, the traditional structures of schooling must also change in order to adequately equip students with necessary skills and flexibility to adapt to new and different possibilities.

Beyond the awareness that the world is rapidly changing, indicators in regard to current student performance point to the need for change. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from 2013, only 36% of both fourth graders and eighth graders scored at a proficient level in the area of reading (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Although results in mathematics are somewhat more promising with 42% of fourth graders and 36% of eighth graders scoring in the proficient/advanced range, there is still concern that more than 50% of the nation’s students lack competency in the areas of reading and math. Studies by the National Governors’ Association (2005) and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2006)

illustrate how these findings extend to high school graduates through research that indicated that 40% of graduates lacked the literacy skills needed to succeed in the workplace and that a third of college-bound high school graduates required remediation of some sort.

In what seems a dismal portrayal of the inadequacy of the American educational system, it is essential to be solution-focused and attentive to reform efforts which offer the path to substantive reform through positive change. Hope is found in research regarding the following: the power of the classroom teacher to impact student learning, the value of professional learning, and the synergistic effect of professional collaboration.

Barber and Mourshed (2009) point out the centrality of good teaching and strong leadership in promoting student learning, “Over three years learning with a high performing teacher instead of a low performing teacher can make a 53-percentile difference for students who start at the same achievement level” (p. 27). Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) corroborate this finding as they posit, “A teacher’s effectiveness is the most important factor for schools in improving student achievement” (p. 31).

Given the importance of effective teaching, it is equally important to provide support and learning for talented teachers in order to foster continued growth and development. One of the most potent ways of developing such talent is through “high quality collaborative, job-focused professional development” (Barber & Mourshed, 2009, p. 29). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are an example of the kind of professional development Barber and Mourshed suggest. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010) describe a PLC as “any ongoing process in which educators work

collaboratively in recurring cycles of inquiry and action research to reach better results for the students they serve” (p. 11).

The awareness of the power of professional collaboration and learning in such communities offers potential in terms of the transformation that is needed in an education system that has experienced myriad challenges in terms of adequately and appropriately meeting students’ needs. Teacher effectiveness coupled with structures to build professional capacity through collaboration are important avenues for bringing about student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1996); however, developing collaborative relationships is challenging even when there is a willingness and intent on the part of schools and individuals to create such relationships (Bezzina, 2006). Hence, there is a need for a vehicle and framework for developing capacity. Adaptive Schools (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a) - with its commitment to viewing improvement differently and through applying principles from diverse disciplines - offers the possibility of transformation through a focus on group development.

Adaptive Schools (2009a) fits into a larger body of work on school reform. However, the research from which Adaptive Schools springs is not just the research of school – it is on some level a synthesized response to findings and truths in a diversity of fields including biology, physics, organization and systems analysis, and cognitive psychology. From this fusion of ideas and lenses, a unique way of thinking about groups and their impact on student achievement emerges.

Although Adaptive Schools is built upon a large corpus of research data from different fields and disciplines, research is necessary to understand the nature and depth of its impact. In this research study, qualitative methods are particularly significant

because of the opportunities to explore and analyze numerous, rich data sources.

Adaptive Schools is centered on the need for schools to be adaptive, dynamical systems.

A consequence of the vision and mission of Adaptive Schools is a change in how schools think about their daily interactions and larger work and even more importantly their identity and purpose (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a). The research questions that follow are posed to understand the way in which Adaptive Schools comes to fruition within the context of a school system; they are further designed to explore the consequences within the professional context which happen as a result of Adaptive Schools.

Research Questions

The research questions defined in this study are:

- 1) How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School System?
- 2) How are the intended outcomes and accompanying framework supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the Smith County School System?

Definition of Terms

Adaptive School

An Adaptive School is one in which the organization and its individual members are working to develop strategies, skills, and concepts in order to sustain structures for thinking and collaborating that will result in increased student performance.

Furthermore, an Adaptive School is one in which there is a collective identity and a shared focus on building the capacity of individuals as collaborators, inquirers, and leaders.

Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar

The Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar is designed to further the understanding of individuals who have previously participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. There are concepts and ideas which are discussed and developed in the Advanced Seminar that are not discussed in the Foundation Seminar.

Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar

The Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar is a four day professional learning experience in which participants are exposed to the concepts, content, beliefs, and framework that are central to Adaptive Schools. For most people, the Foundation Seminar is the entry point into the work of Adaptive Schools.

Adaptive Schools Framework

The work of Adaptive Schools functions as a series of frameworks which support groups in exploring information, making decisions, resolving conflicts, and collaborating effectively. These frameworks include strategies and procedures (ways and processes of accomplishing different tasks) and concepts (ways of thinking about different situations).

Adaptive Schools Trainer's Path

The Adaptive Schools Trainer's Path is the experience that individuals who are working to become trainers for Adaptive Schools traverse. It includes participation in the Advanced Seminar, attendance at the Foundation Seminar beyond the initial experience, as well as additional professional learning experiences.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

In the context of this work, the definition of PLCs offered by DuFour, DuFour, Many, and Eaker (2010), “Any ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to reach better results for the students they serve” (p.11) is utilized. Though PLCs within Smith County are on a journey towards this notion, it is in this spirit that PLCs in Smith County have been developed.

Work of Adaptive Schools

Adaptive Schools is much larger than just the experience of the seminar. The work is articulated in the textbook, *The Adaptive School: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups* (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a). Information from the text comprises the content of the seminars. Some of the information is central to the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar while other information is central to the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar. The text is a way in which individuals can develop deeper understanding of the concepts, content, and theoretical underpinnings of Adaptive Schools in support of and beyond participation in the seminars.

Theoretical Framework

Learning and even living in a much broader sense are characterized by highly contextualized interactions. To the extent that Adaptive Schools works to create a system and organization that is conducive to learning, it is critical to consider the work from different theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, the heart of Adaptive Schools is “changing form, while clarifying identity” (Garmston & Wellman, 2014, p. 34). In essence, the notions of change and adaptivity are central ideas. Adaptive Schools is built

upon research; however, it is relevant and even beneficial to consider not only the theoretical frames which have a literal connection to Adaptive Schools, but also those which offer a relevant position and angle through which to view the Adaptive Schools work. Therefore, in addition to considering Adaptive Schools from the perspective of Bandura and his work on efficacy which is a foundational source for the Adaptive Schools work, I will also consider the work of Adaptive Schools through the theoretical lenses of Dewey, Vygotsky, and Dweck.

Through their research and theoretical frames, Dewey, Vygotsky, Bandura, and Dweck provided insight to the shifting definitions of the purpose of schooling and the very nature of learning, while at the same time offering grounding to Adaptive Schools which explores openly the need to enact appropriate change. Dewey (1938) pointed to the role of experience and education and offers a philosophical lens to the purposes of education in the broad sense and within the more confined context of school. Vygotsky (1978) explored deeply the social nature of learning. Bandura (1977, 1993) highlighted the specific connection between efficacy and successful outcomes and places this theory within the larger context of Social Learning Theory. More recently, Dweck (1999, 2006) has considered the relationship between views of intelligence and success.

Looking at the work of these theorists provides a lens for viewing the world and education in particular which considers the role of education on a much larger stage than just the role of academic knowing. The process of education is situated and it is through this situation that different experiences, beliefs, and attitudes are perpetuated and/or ignited for students. In realizing this, it is critical to contemplate aspects beyond the strictly academic which allow for a meaningful situation to be created within schools that

students may be able to transfer their learning to new and novel situations outside of school – in society, in the workplace, and in the world at large.

Summary of Introduction

Given the challenges that schools have faced in adequately addressing student achievement and the current rate of change in modern society, there is a need for transformation within the educational system. Adaptive Schools is a framework that has been introduced and shared throughout the Smith County School District. The purpose of this case study is to understand the impact and importance of this work within the Smith County School District. Additionally, I seek to understand how Adaptive Schools fits within the larger culture of the district and desire to understand its relevance in terms of continuity and change. The theoretical perspectives of Dewey, Vygotsky, Bandura, and Dweck will be used as lenses to analyze findings related to the work of Adaptive Schools. Furthermore, these perspectives will be used as organizing principles in terms of understanding the history, vision, and purpose of Adaptive Schools

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

This chapter begins with a description and rationale in regard to the work of Adaptive Schools. Because there has not been extensive research on Adaptive Schools, the review of the literature continues by exploring the disciplinary content that is foundational to Adaptive Schools. In spite of limited research on the framework, Adaptive Schools finds its genesis in research that was developed as a response to calls for reform in education. Further, the tenets, key concepts, and understandings advocated through Adaptive Schools build upon recommendations and findings within fields such as education, psychology, business, and science. Following the discussion of the defining attributes of the work of Adaptive Schools, I articulate specifically the pertinent aspects of theorists whose work is relevant both to the development of Adaptive Schools and how the work of Adaptive Schools is enacted.

Adaptive Schools: An Overview

Programs, plans, professional development, and curriculum abound in the world of education, yet none of these descriptors is adequate or revealing in thinking about the nature of Adaptive Schools. Adaptive Schools is not one more thing for school systems, administrators, or teachers to do; rather, it is a way of being in the world. In this sense, it offers a model and accompanying theory of core beliefs and goals that are replicable for schools across different contexts. Garmston and Wellman (2009a) wrote in the text *The Adaptive School: A sourcebook for developing groups*, “*The Adaptive School* is about developing strong schools in which collaborative facilitators are capable of meeting the

certain challenges of today and the uncertain challenges of tomorrow” (p. xii). In these words are an echo of Dewey’s (1938) who wrote, “[the educator] is obliged to see his present work in terms of what it accomplishes or fails to accomplish, for a future whose objects are linked with those of the present” (p. 91).

If the work of Adaptive Schools is about creating stronger schools that are prepared and aligned to meet the challenges of the future, then it is critical to consider the question: What is an Adaptive School? The answer to this question is twofold. The first is derived from the mission of its parent organization, Thinking Collaborative. The stated mission of Thinking Collaborative is, “to provide individuals and organizations strategies, skills, and concepts to support systems in establishing and sustaining structures for thinking and collaborating that result in increased performance and resourcefulness” (Thinking Collaborative, 2016). The specific role Adaptive Schools plays in this larger mission is to develop collective identity and capacity as collaborators, inquirers, and leaders (Thinking Collaborative, 2016). From these resources, a synthesized definition of an Adaptive School is one in which the organization and its individual members are working to develop strategies, skills, and concepts in order to sustain structures for thinking and collaborating that will result in increased student performance. Furthermore, an Adaptive School is one in which there is a collective identity and a shared focus on building the capacity of individuals as collaborators, inquirers, and leaders.

The work of Adaptive Schools is expansive. It is derived from various fields and articulates strategies, skills, and concepts for becoming collaborative. For these reasons, it is important to understand the way in which the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar

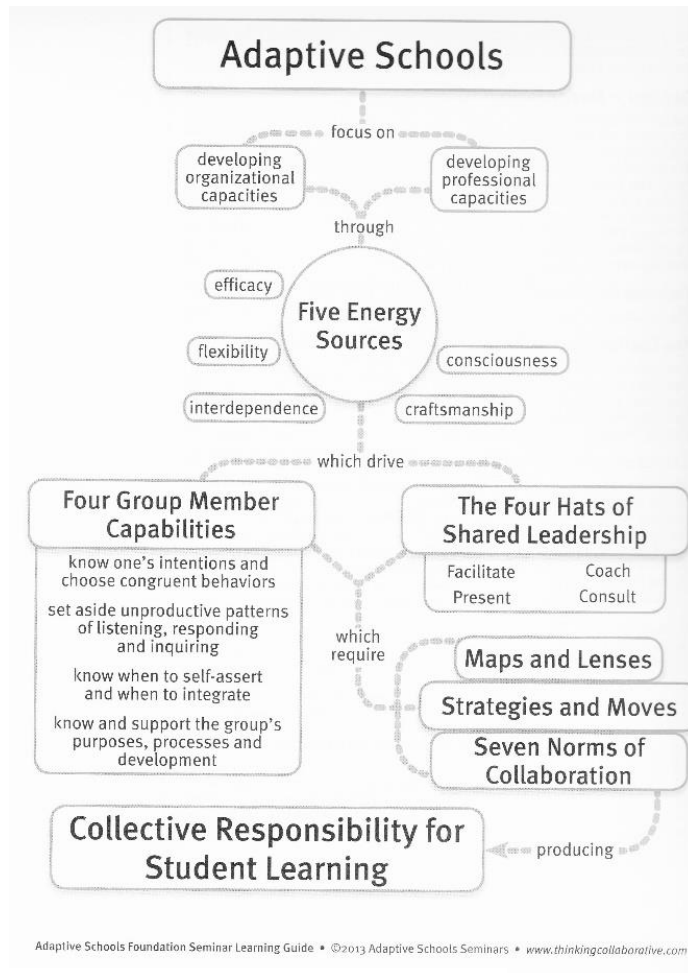
provides an entry point into the work of Adaptive Schools. The Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar focuses on three key areas in the development of productive groups: facilitation of groups, development of groups, and development of group member skills (Garmston & Wellman, 2014). What follows is a roadmap of the key features of the beliefs and behaviors that move the work from theory to thoughtful, intentional practice (see Figure 1).

The *Adaptive Schools* framework is grounded in three central notions that work in concert with one another:

1. Adaptivity – the belief that organizations must “let go of existing forms and continually clarify the core identities of the enterprise” (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a, p. 6).
2. Five Principles of Dynamic Systems:
 - a. More data do not lead to better predictions.
 - b. Everything influences everything else.
 - c. Tiny events produce major disturbances.
 - d. You don’t have to touch everyone to make a difference.
 - e. Both things and energy matter (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a).
3. Focusing Questions – to be asked by the organization
 - a. Who are we?
 - b. Why are we doing this?
 - c. Why are we doing this, this way? (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a)

The synthesis of these notions fuels an overarching goal, “to develop our collective identity and capacity as collaborators and inquirers” (Garmston & Wellman, 2014).

Figure 1. Graphic representation of the key aspects of Adaptive Schools.



Used by permission (Appendix A).

Hence, Adaptive Schools is a framework about transforming the beliefs, cultures, and organization of schools. Given the uncertainty of a future that we cannot fathom, it is not feasible, or even possible to equip students with solutions to specific challenges or problems they may face; however, schools can equip them with mental, social, and emotional tools for navigating these unknown waters. In this way, Adaptive Schools

offers insight about processes that could be productively used in schools rather than a program to be followed. This is not to diminish the value of curriculum and instruction, but to acknowledge that the effective use of curriculum and instruction are situated in the larger context of culture and community. It is in the fertile soil of collaborative, inquisitive community, that student learning is able to flourish.

In order to meet this goal, Adaptive Schools advocates simultaneous focus on development of organizational and professional capacities. These foci are realized through development of what Adaptive Schools calls the five energy sources, areas of strength through which a group gains positive momentum. The five energy sources recognized by Adaptive Schools are:

- 1) Efficacy – a group’s sense of that they can accomplish a given task successfully
- 2) Flexibility – a group’s capability to adapt and change in response to a given context and situation
- 3) Consciousness - a group’s awareness of its own behaviors and capabilities – this awareness encompasses a reflective component which comes from group members’ thinking about their own actions and those of others
- 4) Craftsmanship – a group’s sense of quality in work and ability to develop well-crafted assignments and lessons
- 5) Interdependence – a group’s sense of the value of each member’s contribution; the awareness that the whole is more than the sum of the parts

These energy sources are reported to drive group member capabilities which includes the group’s ability to act in ways that are conducive to the work in which the

group engages. They also impact the four hats of shared leadership. These hats of leadership – consulting, coaching, facilitating, and presenting - acknowledge the need for different types of leadership within a group setting in order to achieve different objectives. Like the group member capabilities, the shared hats of leadership are impacted by the energy sources. Successful use of the group member capabilities and the shared leadership require the following tools:

- 1) Maps and lenses – This includes ways of talking (discussion and dialogue), meeting success structures (to help meetings be successful by design), and domains of group development
- 2) Strategies and Moves – Strategies for engaging in the work of the group and moves that encourage focus and collaboration
- 3) Seven Norms of Collaboration - These are behavior that members of an organization agree to practice and develop so that the group may work more effectively – this includes such things as pausing, paraphrasing, posing questions, providing data, placing ideas on the table, paying attention to self and others, and presuming positive intentions (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a)

Each of the aspects described above interacts to develop a collective sense of responsibility for student learning. In essence, Adaptive Schools offers change analogous to the warm and long-lasting heat of embers on a fire rather than flashy quickly burning light of fireworks; the work of Adaptive Schools is structural in nature and finds its power from the heat that is created collectively and burns from within. As Garmston and Wellman (2009a) share, “Regardless of the nature of the issues, our premise is that the means for school improvement exist within the school community” (p. xi).

Development of Adaptive Schools

Adaptive Schools fits into a larger body of work on school reform. However, it is important to note that the research from which Adaptive Schools springs is not just the research of school. It is on some level a synthesized response to findings and truths in a diversity of fields including biology, physics, organization and systems analysis, and cognitive psychology. Through these different lenses a unique way of thinking emerges.

The need for change and reform has been evident for generations, but perhaps it is most clear in the climate of this rapidly changing world – where jobs and even tools of the future are simply inconceivable in this current age. In working to understand the vast amount of information that comprises the foundation of Adaptive Schools, two of which are essential: (a) systems thinking and success and (b) successful schools.

Systems and Success

“The conduct of schools, based upon a new order of conceptions, is so much more difficult than is the management of schools which walk in beaten paths” (Dewey, 1938, p. vi).

Adaptive Schools with its focus on clarifying identity while simultaneously changing form challenges schools to do much more than walk a beaten path; indeed Adaptive Schools calls for blazing a new trail, charting a new course. Ultimately, it advocates taking on this work armed with tools to support collaboration and inquiry while remaining fully cognizant of current issues and problems. Schools and school systems are not islands or independent contractors – they are part of larger organizations and certainly the larger structure of society. In this light, it is valuable to understand the nature of systems and what makes a system function well.

Gharajedaghi (2005) revealed the crux of schools' need to understand the principles of systems thinking. He shared that it is often when an organization has been successful and rewarded by success in the past that it becomes the most challenging to persuade it to embark upon a journey of meaningful change. This challenge is a core barrier in terms of school reform. Undoubtedly, school has failed many within American society, but arguably there are many who have encountered a large measure of success through the American educational system. There are stakeholders who have been successful and there are teachers who have certainly experienced success in their own classroom or within the structure of their own school. Because success has been present, it is challenging to develop a shared mission for change as well as a shared vision of the hallmarks of effective change. Gharajedaghi (2005) argued that successful organizations are willing to adapt and change over time – “Failure to appreciate the consequences of one's success and tenacity in playing the good old game are what tragedies are made of” (p. 7). Thus, a salient point for schools to understand is the need for continued growth and development even in the face of success.

A second principle that Gharajedaghi (2005) explored is the need for organizations to be multi-minded and multidimensional at the same time. This is best explained by the need to develop the skills and potential of the individual while simultaneously developing the individuals' capabilities to function as a team member. He suggested that as “the whole is becoming more and more interdependent, its parts increasingly display choice and behavior independently” (p. 9). Therefore, the system which is created is complex; however, the premise of systems thinking is to take that

which is complex and simplify it by “seeing through chaos, managing interdependency, and understanding choice” (p. 315).

In the *Seven habits of highly effective people*, Covey (1989) elaborated on a similar philosophy. The premise of this work is to support individuals in being more effective – those more effective individuals support the development of a successful organization. Through the habits, the simultaneous development of independence and interdependence is clear. The first of the three habits (Be Proactive, Think with the End in Mind, and Put First Things First) are considered the private victory. The truth in these is that taking care of self is a stepping stone to effective interdependence. The next three habits promote the paradigm of interdependence (Think Win/Win, Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood, and Synergize). The final habit (Sharpen the Saw) builds upon the need for personal renewal and rejuvenation. In applying this work to systems thinking, it is critical that organizations tend to the growth of the group as well as the growth of the individual.

In essence, systems are dynamic and complex; systems thinking is all about simplifying the complexity. The diverse elements of community and individualism are orchestrated through a spirit of openness, attention to purpose, and multidimensionality (seeing things through more than one lens). Within the structure of Adaptive Schools, systems thinking is obvious as the talents and energy sources of individuals are pulled together to work towards the common purpose of increased responsibility for student learning which ultimately leads to higher student performance. Within the framework, the need to develop individual skills (such as posing questions, pausing, and paraphrasing) in order to further the work of the group (bringing about student learning) is addressed

thoroughly. Foremost, Adaptive Schools builds on the work of systems thinking by making transparent the systems which can be at work within a school and clarifying ways of making these systems operational, efficacious, and effective.

Successful Schools

Adaptive Schools builds upon key ideas within the fields of business, psychology, and the sciences. At the same time, it looks at aspects and characteristics of successful schools and builds upon these, as well. In particular, research around the concepts of: (a) professional community and collaboration and (b) academic optimism are particularly salient. Furthermore, though the research on Adaptive Schools is limited, the research around these concepts is both extensive and compelling. What follows is a synopsis of some of these key findings and how they are evident within the work of Adaptive Schools.

Community and collaboration.

The National Research Council (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999) compiled the results of an extensive meta-analysis at the end of the 20th century documenting essential principles about how people learn. Among some of the principles documented were the ideas that “learning takes place in settings that have particular sets of cultural and social norms and expectations” (p. 4) and there is great learning potential for students and teachers where there are structures for collaboration and sharing the “wisdom of practice”. Embedded in this notion is the belief that community both in terms of culture and collaboration are important in terms of student learning.

Darling-Hammond (1997) suggested that work chronicling the successful restructuring of schools illuminated significant changes in culture. In such schools,

relationships that were qualitatively different from the pre-reform conditions emerged; new organizational structures allowed for and encouraged conversation between teachers, administrators, and parents. Logistical structures such as smaller class sizes and common planning made possible the development of more intensive relationships that would better meet the cognitive, social, and academic needs of students. Further, such structures made feasible the expectation for shared conversation. These structures provided for an increased sense of community. Such developments are cultural in nature – a culture that values community and relationships is central. Bryk and Schneider (2002) emphasized that “the quality of social relationships in diverse institutional contexts makes a difference in how they function” (p. xiv). Increased professional community is related to increased responsibility for student learning (Louis, Marks, & Sharon, 1996). The development of such culture is a step in the direction of becoming a successful school; it is the work of collaboration that deems essential the development of positive culture.

Through increased conversation, collaboration is able to thrive and through this structure student achievement is impacted. Longitudinal data indicated that increased responsibility for student learning and higher levels of professional cooperation were associated with higher levels of student growth (Lee & Smith, 1996). Two hallmarks of the collaborative communities were: achievement gains of students were consistent regardless of socio-economic level and the deprivatization of teacher practice. In collaborative cultures, teachers valued continuous improvement (for themselves and for students), they pursued opportunities to interact professionally, and they engaged in “critical practices” (such as faculty meetings, training sessions, planning meetings, grade and department meetings) throughout the work week (Little, 1982). Teacher learning

communities were also found to build and manage knowledge, create shared language and common expectations, and perpetuate a norm of instructional practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

It is through collaborative practices and building of community that a sense of collective responsibility emerges. Considering social models of learning, such as that provided by Vygotsky (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), it is logical that groups of teachers provide a scaffold for professional development which is separate from the work an individual is able to achieve. Pragmatic solutions, ways of fostering cooperation, and raising the sense of collective responsibility are offered through the work of Adaptive Schools. The presence of community within the model also provides for the scaffolding advanced within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978).

The emphasis on community within the work of Darling-Hammond (1997), McLaughlin and Talbert (2006), and Bryk and Schneider (2002) is evident in the development of Adaptive Schools. The work focuses on the development of collaborative groups. These collaborative groups are an important vehicle towards the development of student achievement.

Academic optimism.

Academic optimism has been recognized by several researchers as a significant construct in terms of the educational pursuit of high student achievement (Beard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2010; A. W. Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008; W. K. Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007). In essence, academic optimism is the collective belief of a school faculty that students have the capability to learn and achieve. Academic optimism is a construct

which is associated with academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and relational trust; heightened academic optimism has been associated with increased student achievement.

Academic emphasis is the “extent to which a school is driven by a quest for academic excellence” (W. K. Hoy et al., 2006, p. 426). Many reform efforts have centered on the need for schools to focus more specifically on academic content and higher standards of proficiency. However, in the scope of this literature review the need for academic emphasis will be assumed and the study will deal more specifically with the development of organizational community and structures to promote success in terms of academic emphasis. Structurally speaking, the other two legs of academic optimism will be explored in greater depth – collective efficacy and relational trust.

Bandura’s work on self-efficacy theory (1977a) framed much of the understanding of efficacy as a belief which has outcomes throughout an individual’s daily life (Wheeler, 2011). He defined efficacy in the following way, “People’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). Collective efficacy, a component part of academic optimism works in a similar way. Collective efficacy in the context of schools is the belief that the efforts of a faculty will have a positive impact on student learning and achievement (Beard et al., 2010; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000, 2004). Goddard (2001) found that collective efficacy was related to differences in student achievement when controlling for prior achievement and demographic information. Specifically, higher collective efficacy on the part of teachers was associated with higher student achievement. The work of Adaptive Schools works explicitly to support efficacy as an energy source of collaborative communities.

Relational trust is the third leg of the construct of academic optimism. Bryk and Schneider (2002) recognized “social trust as a powerful concept shaping the thinking and behavior of local schools” (p.12). Social trust is comprised of two different kinds of trust – organic trust (unquestioning trust and belief) and contractual trust (basic actions expected to be taken by parties involved). Relational trust deals more specifically with the trust relationships between different roles (teacher and administrators, teachers and parents, teachers with other teachers, and teachers with students). Specifically, it is an intermediary between organic trust and contractual trust. It is based on inferring the intentions of others through discerning motives relevant to role relationships. Increases in relational trust result in effective decision making, enhanced social support (i.e. teachers presuming the positive intentions of parents, parents trusting the decisions and actions of teachers), more effective social contract, and expanded moral authority (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Therefore, Adaptive Schools works to build upon this research through advocating systematic structures to promote community and collaboration through effective interaction (e.g. group member capabilities) and strong communication (norms of collaboration). Furthermore, through these structures, Adaptive Schools supports the development of academic optimism through intentional focus on the areas of collective efficacy and relational trust. Embedded in these structures are tools that promote inquiry, so members are better able to collaborate and improve student learning. It is through the development of individuals that have the identities of inquirers, collaborators, and leaders that the willingness to be adaptive find its nexus. In such an environment, all group

members are valued as assets to solve problems and offer innovative solutions. In this culture, adaptivity is the norm rather than the exception.

Theoretical Frameworks

In previous sections, it has been acknowledged that Adaptive Schools draws upon a vast base of both research and theory. In considering the work of Adaptive Schools, there are theorists in the fields of education and psychology which have clear points of connection. Dewey emphasized the centrality of authentic experiences in contributing to the education of students. A connection between Adaptive Schools and Dewey is noted as the entry point, as well as deep understanding of the work of Adaptive Schools is experiential in nature. Because of his work on the importance of learning in the company of peers and the value of collaboration in individual development, the theories of Vygotsky also have clear connection to the work of Adaptive Schools. The work of Bandura is significant because of its focus on both individual and collective efficacy; efficacy is specifically addressed as one of the energy sources in Adaptive Schools, but it is also critical in the sense that it is something that is developed internally and collaboratively. This twin focus is congruent with the framework presented in Adaptive Schools. A final lens is presented with the work of Dweck and colleagues who have articulated the theory of mindset; given its focus on the value of flexibility in thinking and the utility of adaptivity in different situations, it also has some clear connections to the work of Adaptive Schools. The sections that follow articulate the specific theories named above and also draw connection between the work of the theorists and the work of Adaptive Schools.

Dewey: Education as Essential Experience

Dewey has long been recognized not only for his work specifically in the area of education, but also through his philosophical writing which looks at education beyond the confines of school. His work, *Experience and Education* (1938) suggested the primacy of experience in education. He wrote, “there is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education” (p. 7). He explained that educators must have a clear view of what constitutes a valuable experience, that is to say, “the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (p. 13). In these words, administrators and educators must see the challenge to consider the systems and structures which set up experiences that will be meaningful and valuable in terms of students’ learning.

Dewey suggested that such meaningful experiences are continuous in nature. That is, experiences build in a way that extend and continue learning and development rather than arrest it. More precisely he suggested, “every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves towards and into” (p.31). In terms of the theoretical lens, this offers the researcher the opportunity to consider the value of an experience which is set up through education.

In working to understand the value of a framework such as Adaptive Schools, the researcher considers: what is the value of the situation that is put into place by these practices? To what extent do these practices allow for opportunities which continue rather than arrest the development of students? According to Dewey, a philosophy of education “is a plan for conducting education” (p. 17). The researcher might adopt this

lens and ask, “How is Adaptive Schools a plan for conducting education?” The researcher may further inquire about the degree to which the Adaptive Schools Seminar experiences are educative in the spirit of Dewey’s beliefs about continuity. Though the world may have changed dramatically since the initial publication of *Experience and Education*, the premise that sound education is tightly bound to the experience - created by the school, teacher, and school system - is certainly relevant in today’s world.

In this light, it is important to realize that Dewey did not view schooling as the point of education, but that education is the point of schooling. Further, he recognized education as life work rather than the limited work of teachers and schools. He acknowledged the importance of experience within the world and looked to these naturally occurring experiences to understand how the work within the four walls of a classroom could be impacted. Likewise, Adaptive Schools makes transparent the need to clarify identity while refining form. As Dewey urged educators to look beyond the immediate outcome, Adaptive Schools challenges convention in exchange for a broader view of meaning and purpose.

Vygotsky: Social Learning and the Zone of Proximal Development

Through his articulation of the zone of proximal development (zpd), Vygotsky (1978) placed particular emphasis on the importance of social interaction. He noted that it is through the zpd that learners can traverse the distance between independent problem solving and potential capability through collaboration and work with an adult or more capable peers. He further proposed that “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and process by which children grow into the intellectual life around them” (p. 88). Fundamentally, Vygotsky viewed learning as a social act – one that moved students from

the present state to a more developed state. In his view, quality learning only happens in the context in which it proceeds development. Rather than considering tasks that students could already competently complete (or that were “fossilized”), Vygotsky considered the changing and evolving nature of skills and processes in development.

In essence, Vygotsky proposed that learning was both revolutionary and evolutionary at the same time. Whereas other theorists pondered linear development, he offered a different lens (John-Steiner & Souberman, 1978). He challenged those in the fields of education and psychology to consider “the implication of the fact that humans are active vigorous participants in their own existence and that at each stage of development children acquire the means by which they can competently affect their world and themselves” (p. 123). Therefore social interaction through play, through dialectical discourse, and through instruction offer opportunities for the mind to develop and change.

Moll (1990) further emphasized the degree to which Vygotsky’s stress on the social context of intellectual development and educational change has important ramifications in terms of thinking about school as a social organization. In this line of thinking, the zone of proximal development is much more than a strategy or a tool. It is an important lens for understanding the nature of learning – “it is a key theoretical construct capturing as it does the individual within the concrete social situation of learning and development” (p.4).

Adults who are engaged with a community are better able to facilitate community in their own classrooms and to have the resources (from their peers) to plan and orchestrate the complex environments required for the social learning situations and

contexts advocated by Vygotsky. A primary focus of Adaptive Schools is development of productive work groups – through building facilitation skills, groups, and group member skills (Garmston & Wellman, 2014). A perspective drawing on the theories of Vygotsky considers how intentional development of such groups beyond serendipitous social alliances impacts the zone of proximal development. In addition, this focus on group development is embedded in the framework and philosophy of Adaptive Schools. The work of Adaptive Schools considers the learning of an organization, deeply. In the spirit of the zpd, adults who are learning in a collaborative setting are going to develop to a greater extent in their professional learning. The impact of this professional learning has impacts both individually and collectively. Therefore, it is logical to explore connection points between the work of Adaptive Schools and the social perspectives of learning articulated by Vygotsky.

Bandura: Self efficacy and Collective Efficacy – Engines for Accomplishment

Bandura's work on self-efficacy theory (1977) fits into Bandura's larger framework, Social Learning Theory. Bandura (1977b) wrote, "In the social learning view, people are neither driven by inner forces nor buffeted by environmental stimuli. Rather, psychological functioning is explained in terms of continuous, reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants" (p. 12). In looking at the personal determinants which impact outcomes, self-efficacy theory framed much of the understanding of efficacy as a belief which has outcomes throughout an individual's daily life. He defined efficacy in the following way, "People's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). His work proposed that efficacy was impacted by four

major sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977, 1993). Information received from these areas has the power to strengthen and hinder self-efficacy. In particular, performance accomplishments have the strongest impact on perceived self-efficacy. Successful completion of challenging tasks increases self-efficacy while failure can diminish self-efficacy. However, “a resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant efforts” (Bandura, 1995 p. 3).

His early work focused on efficacy in the realm of psychotherapy, but he argued that it could be generalized to situations outside of therapy. This belief was later confirmed in studies linking student levels of efficacy and achievement as well as teacher levels of efficacy and student achievement (Bandura, 1977a, 1993; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Notably, Bandura made clear that efficacy alone cannot propel achievement – individuals must have the requisite skills to accomplish a given task; however, lowered efficacy is powerful enough as a construct to prevent a person who does have necessary skills to fail in task/goal completion (Bandura, 1977a; Wheeler, 2011).

Bandura’s work also articulated the presence of collective efficacy – a construct similar to self-efficacy, but within the larger context of a group or organization. Collective efficacy is an asset of strength, and lies in the group’s sense “that [they] can solve their problems and improve their lives through collected effort” (Bandura, 1982, p. 143). When placed in the instance of schools this means that staff members of schools who perceive themselves as capable of academic success with their students “imbue their schools with a sportive atmosphere for development” (Bandura, 1995 pp. 20-21).

Therefore in contemplating the development of successful schools in which there is shared responsibility for student learning (as Adaptive Schools works to do), understanding of efficacy as described by Bandura is important in two ways. The first way is individual efficacy – a teacher who believes that he or she can make a difference in terms of learning and achievement demonstrates personal efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Teachers with higher efficacy generally exhibited the following qualities: more effort invested in teaching, higher degree of goal setting, higher level of aspiration, greater levels of planning and organization, and increased levels of persistence when meeting challenge (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

A second factor connected to efficacy in the school setting is collective or group efficacy. Specifically, a one unit increase in a school's collective efficacy scale was found to correlate to an 8.62 point average gain in mathematics achievement and an 8.49 point average gain in reading achievement (Goddard et al., 2000). The same body of research suggested that the components of social cognitive theory – agency, vicarious learning, self-regulation (Bandura, 1977a) - work in tandem to raise collective teacher efficacy.

Even though there are different perspectives on the root causes for the need for school reform there is certainly overwhelming support for the notion that effective school reform should result in increased student learning. As this is the objective of Adaptive Schools, it is critical to examine the work of Adaptive Schools through the lenses of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Additionally, Adaptive Schools specifically builds upon Bandura's theories because of the emphasis on efficacy as an energy source for productive groups. Moreover, the research on teacher efficacy is central in the research

presented by Adaptive Schools as a part of its base. Therefore, considering data from the lens of efficacy is an important component to the development of relevant theory.

Dweck and Colleagues: Mindset and Theories of Intelligence

Closely connected to the work of Bandura is the work of Dweck (1999, 2006, 2007) and her colleagues (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Hong, Dweck, Chiu, Lin, & Wan, 1999; Miller et al., 2012; Mueller & Dweck, 1998; Rattan, Savani, Naidu, & Dweck, 2012; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). A range of studies around theories of intelligence, now widely termed “mindset,” considered an individual’s perspectives on the origins of intelligence. In particular, the work on mindset spurned from personal theories about whether intelligence is fixed (entity theory) or malleable (incremental theory) (Wheeler, 2013b). Significantly, an incremental theory is associated with the idea that work, effort, and remediation, when needed, impact positive performance and achievement; entity theorists hold the idea that high performance comes from innate ability and likewise poor performance is related to a lack of ability (Blackwell et al., 2007; Dweck, 1999, 2006; Rattan et al., 2012).

Studies indicated that students operating from different mindset lenses approached tasks differently. Those who hold an entity theory are comfortable with tasks in which they can prove their competence. Ideally, they prefer tasks which are slightly harder than what others in a group can perform, but are not so challenging that they cannot be successfully completed. In short, competence is valued over development. For these individuals, intelligence is something that is measured and quantifiable – it is an amount which individuals have or do not have (Dweck, 1999). When considering the socio-cultural perspective of Vygotsky it is easy to understand why learning and

developing could prove challenging for such individuals. Playing it safe or practicing skills which are “fossilized” does not yield new learning (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This work also connects to that of Bandura because it is through the vehicle of perceived capabilities that individuals will take on challenges. Thus, self-efficacy is tied to the development of a particular mindset. In terms of self-efficacy, these individuals experience diminished self-efficacy because it is through actual experience that efficacy is built most effectively (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 1982, 1993).

Conversely, individuals with an incremental theory embraced challenges and looked at difficult situations as opportunities to learn something new. Their sense of their own capability was not shaken when they met with a challenging situation – rather such a situation was viewed as a stepping stone to new learning. Specifically, they viewed intelligence and success as the result of work and effort. It is inferred that for these individuals, self-efficacy was able to flourish because they had benefited from the successful completion of challenging and difficult tasks (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 1982, 1993, 1995).

Further studies have indicated that students can be conditioned to respond and view tasks with a particular mindset. In addition, students are not typically dichotomous in terms of their mindset. Mindset is often tied to a specific situation and students’ experiences within that particular context and situation (Dweck, 1999).

Adaptive Schools is based on the premise that schools must be adaptive; that they are dynamical – that is, changing – systems. In the context of Adaptive Schools, communities of teachers come together to take responsibility for student learning; in that light they must be willing to accept responsibility for mistakes and make necessary

adjustments when they happen. Such willingness to grow and acknowledge the need for growth are hallmarks of the incremental mindset. The collective work which occurs in the context of Adaptive Schools raises questions about whether there may be evidence suggesting a collective view of intelligence – can an incremental or entity view be seen through the collective actions of group? How might the work of Adaptive Schools reveal this?

Summary of Chapter 2

Issues of continuity and change are at the heart of the culture of any community. Adaptive Schools works to be a transforming force; however, it is not about change for the sake of change. In thinking about change, Adaptive Schools is purposeful in identifying salient factors of successful organizations and principles of science. Adaptive Schools also draws upon the work of successful schools. Ultimately, the research points to specific kinds of contexts – contexts which value collaboration, innovation, communication, and relationship building. Adaptive Schools offers a guide for creating the kind of culture and system in which such qualities are central so that schools will have collective responsibility for student learning in order to support and increase student achievement.

In framing the importance of Adaptive Schools in the broader contexts of educational practices, this study will use theoretical frameworks described by Dewey, Vygotsky, Bandura, and Dweck as lenses for revealing significance. Though the work builds explicitly on Bandura's work in the area of efficacy, the work of Vygotsky, Dewey, and Dweck are also relevant in terms of the nature of the work of Adaptive Schools.

METHODOLOGY: SETTING THE STAGE

In the realm of this qualitative study, an explanation of methodology is both critical and complex. Methodology encompasses not only the qualitative methods which were used to conduct the work and the processes by which the work happened. It also requires description of the on-going and recursive data analysis that occurred. In the spirit of qualitative methodology, the foundation of this study emerged from earlier work I conducted around Adaptive Schools. Therefore, the chapter begins with a history of the previous work and the bracketing of my experience before transitioning into the more traditional elements of methodology including a description of qualitative methodologies used to frame the work and descriptions of the researcher, the research site, and the participants. This is followed by an explanation of the data collection procedures and data analysis process. The chapter concludes by examining the concept of trustworthiness in the context of this study.

Bracketing: My Personal Work Experience and Pilot Study

As I began my work as a doctoral student, I had been serving as a literacy coach at a middle school within the Smith County Schools for one year. Prior to that I served as a third/fourth grade teacher at an elementary school in the district. Within my context, my role as a literacy coach included providing coaching opportunities to support teachers in the integration of literacy into the fabric of their classroom instruction. During my first year as a coach, I participated in Cognitive CoachingSM. This led to an early interest in the intersection of instructional coaching models and student learning and achievement.

As I started my doctoral journey, my work as a literacy coach afforded me the opportunity to attend the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. This involvement with Adaptive Schools slightly shifted my early interest in instructional coaching. Cognitive CoachingSM was interesting to me because of its focus on the dynamics and interactions of one on one coaching situations. Even though it was early in my coaching career, I already had a sense of the significant work literacy coaches were expected to enact with groups. Hence, my interest in Adaptive Schools was piqued because of its focus on group development. Importantly, Cognitive CoachingSM and Adaptive Schools are connected to one another and both are part of an organization called Thinking Collaborative. Therefore, alignment exists between the principles and guiding ideas of both facets of the organization. The more I learned about Adaptive Schools, the more I was intrigued as an educator and researcher by the value placed on group development, systematic identity clarification, and adaptivity. Further, as I saw the reach of Adaptive Schools extend throughout the school system, I wanted to understand more about the nature of the impact.

I had the opportunity to explore my interest more deeply while taking a Qualitative Research Methodology class. As part of the work for the class, I had the opportunity to design a simple study incorporating aspects of qualitative data collection and analysis. In conducting the study, I collected interviews with several members of the Smith County School District who had participated in the training. Additionally, I engaged in an artifact review looking at meeting agendas from different groups to observe the extent to which Adaptive Schools had impacted interactions and work within my school district.

At that point, my research questions were:

- 1) Within a district adopting an Adaptive Schools initiative, how does Adaptive Schools Training influence the skills and perspectives of various school leaders?
- 2) How might Adaptive Schools training impact group (professional learning communities, inquiry groups, team meetings, department meetings, professional development opportunities) interactions in different school contexts?

Given the experience of the small pilot study and learning more about qualitative research design, the research questions have evolved to focus on acquiring responses which will shed light on the experience of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, allow opportunity to explore the culture of the district and allow for the emergence of insightful, rich description in regard to the nature of Adaptive Schools' impact.

I also had the opportunity to create an interview protocol (Appendix B) in order to better understand in participants' own words their experiences with Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and the work of Adaptive Schools. Through the experience, I had two central findings. The first was that I needed to work on developing my skills as an interviewer. As an instructional coach, it is common for me to paraphrase in a way that shifts the thinking of the person I am coaching. Sometimes this causes them to think more "big picture" other times this works them towards a "finer grained" interpretation. In either instance, the intentionality of the paraphrasing is to assume positive intent of the person being coached and to explore his/her thinking about the issue at hand. Although this sort of paraphrasing tends to be productive in a coaching situation, it problematically

influences the direction of an interview conversation. Hence, I learned that it would be necessary for me to work towards more literal paraphrasing and a more concerted effort to listen carefully (Wheeler, 2013a).

The experience with interviewing led me to revise some of the research questions. Further, I adjusted some of the questions within the interview protocol to elicit responses of greater depth and insight. Within several of the interviews, I was able to see that question 5, “If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training” made participants uncomfortable. I think this was probably the question that pushed at participants’ content knowledge of the training to the greatest degree and as some of the participants had not looked at the content recently this seemed to make them uncomfortable. In spite of this, there needs to be a way to support participants’ declarative knowledge about Adaptive Schools, so there is a need to edit the question, but not remove it altogether.

Other revisions to the interview protocol were the result of a later iteration of the pilot study. In preparation for my dissertation proposal, I experimented with an ethnographic technique called a stimulus response interview (Henry, 1956). Further, I wanted an opportunity to use discourse analysis (Gee, 2014) as a tool for considering the data. To complete this part of the pilot, I created a word cloud of the trainers’ responses to the interview questions. I removed obvious mazes in language (e.g. Umm, ahhh, uh, and like). Next, I created copies of the word cloud for the agency trainers to review. These were used as a springboard for a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C). Before entering the stimulus response portion of the interview, I reminded the participants of the earlier interview. I also gave them the opportunity to review the

questions and offer feedback about questions that might have been asked, but were not. One of the participants suggested that adding a question about the fit of Adaptive Schools in the larger picture of the district's mission, vision and other initiatives would be valuable. This was a consideration I had as well, particularly in wanting to understand Adaptive Schools in the larger cultural context of the school district.

In addition to supporting my development as a research interviewer, the two pilot experiences gave me the opportunity to further clarify the purpose of the study and determine the most useful methodology to reveal the purpose. My intention in carrying out the initial study was to craft a phenomenological case study articulating the impact of Adaptive Schools. At the conclusion of the initial study, I realized that my data was not cohesive enough to be articulated into a single or composite case study. Furthermore, the short term nature of the pre-study did not allow for the type of intensive study needed to craft a representative case study. As a result, I generalized my findings through coding and organizing the findings into themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I knew that these limitations were something that I would have to address in the dissertation study.

As I worked through the later iteration of the pre-study in which I specifically explored visual stimulus response as an interviewing technique and considered the utility of discourse analysis, I still imagined that my dissertation study would eventually take the shape of a case study. Specifically, I envisioned collecting data across the district from administrators, literacy coaches, and teachers in order to get a big picture view of the district. From this point, I expected to zone into the case of a specific school in which all lead teachers had participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. Through the process of data analysis in the second pre-study and the richness of information provided

both by the stimulus response and through discourse analysis, I realized that the study was shaping up differently than I had anticipated. My reflection on the topic of Adaptive Schools led me to think about the cultural aspects of the school system and the relationship these had to Adaptive Schools; it became clear that my study, rather than situating as a series of comparative cases or even as a single case study of a school's experience, was intrinsic in nature in which the Smith County School System represented the case.

In summary, the first pre-study revealed skills development that I needed to address in terms of interviewing. It also demonstrated the need for me to revise and edit the initial interview protocol. The second pre-study yielded possible revisions to the interview protocol and the utility of both discourse analysis and the stimulus response interview. It was also through this process that the overarching structure of the research methodology emerged.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodology is a tradition resulting in data “grounded in rich descriptions and explanations of human processes” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The methodologies within qualitative research are diverse and continue to expand (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014); however, all share the common thread of using words and description as tools to illuminate significance – whether that purpose is to offer theory (grounded theory), analyze impact of a thing or occurrence (phenomenology), illuminate culture and patterns of continuity and change (ethnography), or to explore in depth the characteristics of a particular case (case study). Though these represent but a small number of the possibilities which are abundant within

the wider field of qualitative research each represents a significant contribution to this study exploring the impact of Adaptive Schools through a district-wide implementation.

Creswell (2013) suggested that qualitative methods are appropriate in myriad circumstances including the following: when a problem or issue needs to be explored, when a complex or detailed understanding of an issue is needed, and when quantitative methods or statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem to be explored.

Additionally, the extended nature of data collection both in terms of what is collected and the time frame needed to collect data allows the researcher to “go beyond snapshots of ‘what?’ or ‘how many?’ to just how and why things happen as they do” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 11). Furthermore, because of the focus on “lived-experiences” the significance people place on events, rituals, and routines can be made transparent (Miles et al., 2014).

In the instance of this research study, qualitative methods are particularly significant because they offer the opportunity to explore the impact of Adaptive Schools in an in-depth and systemic way. Adaptive Schools is centered on the need of schools to be adaptive, dynamical systems. A consequence of the vision and mission of Adaptive Schools is a change in how schools think about their identity, purpose and ensuing effects on daily interactions. (Garmston & Wellman, 2009b). Such work is challenging and multi-faceted, thus necessitating the use of a research methodology which seeks to illuminate and analyze that which is complex.

The research questions defined in this study are:

- 1) How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School System?

- 2) How are the intended outcomes and accompanying framework supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the Smith County School System?

In order to adequately address these questions and synthesize findings in the most appropriate way, it is necessary to draw from the work of several different traditions within qualitative research. In this instance, the case study was selected as “the product, the end report of a case investigation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 43). Because of the interpretative intent of the case study in terms of developing conceptual categories, the constant comparative method of analysis associated with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed.

Additionally, the study sought to explore two aspects of Adaptive Schools: its impact as a phenomenon within different groups and its relationship to the larger cultures of the school and school system. Such exploration led to general theorizing about the significance of Adaptive Schools in terms of its existence as a phenomenon and its convergence with the culture of the school system. Hence, the methods and techniques associated with phenomenology and ethnography were utilized to illuminate this interpretive case study. In the sections that follow, the different qualitative methods employed are explored in greater detail.

Case Study

Case study research is designed to develop “an in-depth understanding of a single case or explore an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Merriam (1998) suggests that a case study can be: (a) particularistic in nature meaning that it can “focus on a particular situation, event, program, or

phenomena” (p. 29) (b) descriptive in nature meaning “that the end product of case study is a rich ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon under study” (p. 29) and (c) heuristic in nature meaning that it can “illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 30).

In the context of this dissertation, the case being studied is the Smith County School System and the phenomenon which is being investigated is the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools. Importantly, the Smith County School district over the course of the past ten years has shifted from being a “system of schools” to being a “school system.” The work of Adaptive Schools which entered the district about five years ago is being investigated to understand the degree to which the work has been supportive of such a shift.

This case study is important because it considers the impact of shifting from isolation to collaborative alignment. Further, the district is unique in its decision to use the work of Adaptive Schools in a systematic and far reaching way. The case study is particularly appropriate for synthesizing findings because of the way it results “in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

In constructing this case study, other qualitative methodologies were used to inform and enlighten the work. In particular the study draws from (a) grounded theory (b) phenomenology and (c) ethnography.

Drawing from grounded theory.

The process of data analysis from grounded theory was particularly relevant to this case study. The constant comparative method of analysis employs the processes of data collection and analysis concurrently (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss,

1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). In using the constant comparative method, the researcher begins coding data immediately after being collected and works to note important concepts within the data. Connections are drawn between concepts which are then organized into categories. Further, the formation of concepts and categories is deterministic in terms of subsequent data collection. Initially the researcher seeks to compare the concepts which appear in a similar case, later the researcher focuses on exceptional cases and how concepts noted in these instances are similar and distinct from earlier rounds of coding. Through this process the researcher is thus simultaneously immersed in the nuances of the research site and the analysis of collected data.

In the instance of this study, the constant-comparative method of analysis is particularly relevant because the work of Adaptive Schools encompasses a particular set of beliefs and values regarding how schools and school communities define their purpose and enact their missions. This richness calls for an analysis technique which allows for the many layers to be peeled away in a thoughtful and recursive manner. With the emergence of particular ideas or themes, it became possible to search for the replication of ideas within the data set and through selection of participants for future interviews.

Because of the nature of the research questions in developing understanding about the work of Adaptive Schools as a phenomenon or as an influence in terms of continuity and change within the Smith County School district, aspects of phenomenology and ethnography were also used in analyzing the data. These connections will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Drawing from phenomenology.

Moustakas (1994) wrote “phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge” (p.26). Further he pointed out the derivation of the word phenomena which means, “to bring light to place in brightness, to show itself in itself ...” (p. 26). In the process of bringing light, phenomenology seeks to describe and characterize deeply. The phenomenologist works back and forth between observation, description, and reflection and it is through this process that the essence of the phenomena is revealed. Rather than being assumed, meanings are derived through the iterative cycle.

Specifically, phenomenology draws upon the following principles and methods:

- 1) There is focus on the appearance of things. Embedded in this is the notion that insight is revealed through returning to the thing itself and observing it from a naïve perspective, separate from what the world or everyday routines would suggest.
- 2) The wholeness of things - exploring the whole from different angles and perspectives until a synthesized understanding can be articulated.
- 3) Meaning comes from observed appearances and understanding of essences comes from reflection of conscious observation.
- 4) Phenomenology is committed to description rather than explanation or analysis
- 5) Finds direction, focus, and meaning within the research question.
- 6) The researcher and the phenomenon are integrated – that is I report on what I see – but that observation begins within my perception.

- 7) Inter-subjectivity is important – but there is awareness that all observation begins within the context of the researcher
- 8) The thinking, intuition, and reflection of the researcher are the primary evidence of scientific investigation.
- 9) The research question should be intentionally and carefully constructed so that it is ever present in guiding the researcher toward clarity and awareness (Moustakas, 1994)

Adaptive Schools involves the training of teachers and leaders, however it is not representative of programs that are usually at the heart of such training. Indeed rather than being one more proverbial plate for leaders and teachers to balance, it is a different way to manage the plates altogether. The introduction of such thinking has the power to cause shifts within the group and the individual. Such a shift moves what would normally be thought of as an event to the realm of a phenomenon. As described by Creswell (2013), phenomenology is indeed a “quest for wisdom” which allows such a shift to be illuminated.

Specifically, the first research question, “How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School District?” is about impact; the impact being explored through the study is that which is enacted by the phenomenon of Adaptive Schools. Although phenomenology with its emphasis on description is insufficient to address the purpose of the study, the descriptive elements of the methodology are important in determining and making inferences in terms of idiosyncrasies and patterns within the context of this case study. I believe through describing the phenomenon well, greater opportunity will present in terms illustrating the

specific nature of the impact of work of Adaptive Schools in the Smith County School District.

Drawing from ethnography.

Ethnography is focused on finding the meaning of the behavior, language, and interactions of the members of a particular cultural group. Generally speaking, the unit of study is large and takes place over a considerable amount of time. The researcher (who is not typically from the culture) works to gain entry into the group and proceeds to observe and collect data over a long period of a time.

As with phenomenology, there is a focus on deep description; however, description is developed around culture rather than phenomenon. Within this type of study, the researcher looks for patterns within the group's thinking, conversation, and mental activity; a group has to have been together long enough for such patterns to exist. Additionally, the researcher works to illustrate how the culture-sharing group functions. In order to achieve these aims, the researcher must conduct extensive fieldwork and work to relay participant views through their own words (Creswell, 2013). Charmaz (2006) captured the essence of ethnography by suggesting that the work is about detailing knowledge of the lived experience and bringing to light rules and assumptions often taken for granted.

In terms of ethnography, I considered how Adaptive Schools is situated within the larger culture of the Smith County School District. This illuminated the degree to which Adaptive Schools proved to be congruent with other initiatives within the district. In addition, lines of questioning drawn from ethnography revealed practice and beliefs within individuals and school communities which may have been disrupted because of

the work of Adaptive Schools. In essence, the scope of the study and my particular stance as a researcher suggest that the study is not an ethnography. However, data sources (memos, personal observation, interviews) associated with ethnography are appropriate to the nature of the study and particularly to the second research question, “How are the intended outcomes and accompanying framework supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the school district?” which explores cultural questions of continuity and change.

The work of Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa (2009) in studying preschools across three cultures first during the early nineties and twenty years later, suggests how ethnographic methods might be employed within a study of shorter duration. Traditional ethnographic methods include the placement of the researcher for a long period of time within a culture. Within this study, my membership in the culture for thirteen years, as well as the techniques selected for data collection will provide a lens for considering cultural implications. The work of Tobin et al. (2009) addressed issues of continuity and change as a result of the natural progression of time. In this instance, issues of culture are as important as ideas which specifically promote innovation, adaptation, and new ideologies are presented to members of the school district. Asking interview participants to reflect on both continuity and change yielded something of an ethnographic lens.

The data collection process was designed to illuminate points of congruence with the district mission and vision and to provide examples of changes that occurred. Interviewing individuals and groups provided some insight into changes within the larger cultural group as well as points of continuity.

In essence, this case study was derived from research questions that are rooted in the traditions of both ethnography and phenomenology. Through constant-comparative analysis, I developed a case study of the phenomenon of Adaptive Schools and its impact on the culture of the Smith County School District.

Role of the Researcher

I am a literacy coach in the Smith County School District. When I first collected interview data the summer of 2013, I was serving at a middle school. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, I began work as the literacy coach of one of the elementary schools, where I currently serve. As a literacy coach, I was a member of the first group of individuals at the district level to attend the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. At that time, all schools within the district had a least one person attend the training.

Since the initial training, I participated in an independent study about Adaptive Schools as part of my graduate work. I participated in half of the foundational training again, as the elementary school where I serve was the first school to have all of its lead teachers and any others who were interested attend the training.

I have membership within the groups being studied in several aspects. Specifically, I am a member of the district literacy coach professional learning community. In addition, I am on the staff of the first school to experience more wide-reaching training.

School District

The research was conducted in Smith County, a school district located in the Ohio Valley. The school district has been recognized as high performing through state and federal measures. Ten years ago the district began an initiative to place literacy coaches

in each school building to support teachers instructionally, specifically through literacy (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Though each literacy coach is assigned to a school, the position is also considered a system-wide position because there are district as well as school responsibilities for the coaches to enact. The literacy coaches are part of a literacy coach Professional Learning Community (PLC) which meets twice monthly in k-12 configuration and within level groups (elementary and secondary). It has been suggested by district level personnel that the structure of the literacy coach PLC has been one of the means by which the school district shifted from being a system of independently operating schools to being a cohesive school system. Although there were district wide meetings of job alike individuals (principals, assessment coordinators, etc.) prior to the presence of literacy coaches in each school, a district level connectional PLC was embedded into the expectations and responsibilities of the role. Therefore, collaboration and professional learning with coaches from other schools was not only expected, but planned within the structure and responsibilities of each literacy coach.

Developing the capacity of the coaches included participation in the Foundational Cognitive CoachingSM Seminar. Like Adaptive Schools, Cognitive CoachingSM is one of the pillars of Renaissance Schools as discussed by Costa and Garmston (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Cognitive CoachingSM resulted in heightened efficacy for literacy coaches and administrators and led to the decision to provide access to the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar (Wheeler, 2013a).

The first opportunity for district personnel to participate in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar was during the 2011-2012 school year. There was at least one elementary school in the district in which three members (literacy coach, principal, and

instructional coordinator) of the school leadership team attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar before the district wide opportunity occurred in fall 2011. Literacy coaches who had already completed Cognitive CoachingSM were invited to participate in the seminar. In many cases, building level administrators also decided to attend the training. Currently, each school in the district has at least two members of the leadership team who have attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar; many schools have more than two. In addition, the district has two agency trainers who are able to offer the Adaptive School Foundation Seminar to new administrators, new literacy coaches, and school teams who are interested.

Participants

Participants in the study were drawn primarily from those in the district who had attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. Participants interviewed included: members of the Department of Instruction (the current and retired Chief Academic Officers, the Director of Curriculum and Staff development, and the Director of Specialized Academic Programming), the principal of an elementary school, a sampling of literacy coaches, and one teacher. Included in this group were the two agency trainers – each of which have a role in the aforementioned groups – one is a middle school literacy coach, the other is the Director of Curriculum and Staff Development. In addition, two individuals who had not attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar were interviewed, this included the Chairman of the Board of Education and a teacher who had served on the principal selection committee of a local high school by virtue of being an elected member of the Site Based Decision Making Council. Table 3.1 synthesizes the interview participants and includes information about their roles, years of

experiences within the Smith County School District, and experience with Adaptive Schools.

Interview participants were purposefully selected in order to establish unique attributes. The purpose of such sampling is to achieve maximum variation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998). In this case, maximum variation is still bounded within the larger structure of the school district, but interviews were conducted to represent the different viewpoints and perspectives of those who participated in the Adaptive Schools training. Variation was established through position (classroom teacher, school administrator, literacy coach, district administrator), years of experience (within the district, within the field of education, within the current position), job location (which school, district office), and level (elementary, middle, high, or prek-12).

Specific decisions about who to interview evolved throughout the data collection process. Key players were interviewed early in the process – this included the retired Chief Academic Officer who was instrumental in organizing the experience for district personnel initially and in subsequent years and the agency trainers who had received the most significant professional learning experiences themselves and had participated in facilitating the seminar for many of the personnel who have currently attended.

In this early interview process, I was thoughtful about asking for others that I might interview in order to employ the practice of snowball sampling (Miles et al., 2014). For instance, it was through the interview with the retired Chief Academic Officer, EG that I pursued an interview with the Director of Specialized Academic Programming, CW.

Table 3.1 *Interview Participants*

Participant	Gender	Years of Experience (in Smith County)	Role	Participated in Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar	Participated in Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar
MG	F	17	Elementary Literacy Coach	Y	N
KH*	F	16	District Intervention Coach; Director of Curriculum and Staff Development; Agency Trainer	Y	Y
SV*	F	24	Middle School Literacy Coach; Agency Trainer	Y	Y
SM	F	16	Elementary Literacy Coach	Y	N
RZ	F	20	Middle School Literacy Coach	Y	N
KR	F	8	High School Literacy Coach	Y	N
EG	F	10	Retired Chief Academic Officer	Y	Y
CW	M	2	Director of Specialized Academic Programs	Y	N
NG	F	14 (on BOE)	Chairman Board of Education	N	N
LR	F	6	Elementary Principal	Y	N
JW	M	7	High School Teacher	N	N
CE	F	22	Chief Academic Officer	Y	N
HF	F	17	Elementary Literacy Coach	Y	N
WM	F	12	Middle School Teacher	Y	N
CF	F	24	High School Literacy Coach	Y	N

*Note: *indicates that the participant was interviewed two times (during the pre-study and the dissertation study)*

CW had only been working in the district for a short time, but EG suggested that he was aware of the processes of Adaptive Schools almost immediately as he began interacting in the district. Although he had experienced the training by the time I interviewed him, he was able to speak to his experience of coming into the district and noticing that the interactions of the group members within the Department of Instruction were different from what he had experienced previously in similar groups and meetings. She also suggested that the teacher I interviewed (who had not attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar) would have interesting insights to share because of his participation in the principal selection committee at his school.

Further interviews were conducted in light of the constant comparative method described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). They advocated sampling based on the opportunity to retrace steps to see the degree to which concepts and categories which emerged initially in the data continued to emerge (or not) and to determine if additional categories or concepts emerged (Charmaz, 2006). In particular I used the constant comparative along with open coding to make sense of the data. Through this process, the patterns and themes which emerged from the work were the products of the data. I used further sampling to determine if patterns and themes which emerged initially continued to surface with later participants. For instance, when the theme of visionary leadership became apparent I went back to interviews and analyzed them for further specific evidence even if that idea had not emerged initially. Hence, this method of sampling grew from a process of open coding and the constant comparative method of analysis when I made the decision to interview certain individuals. Three such examples occurred within the context of interviewing a second high school literacy coach, the Chairman of

the Smith County Board of Education, and a teacher who had participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

In an early interview with one of the high school literacy coaches, it was revealed that the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar had not been deeply impactful; however, the coach was reflective about why this might have been the case. She wondered if some of her thinking might have to do with coming from a high school perspective, this led to my decision to interview an additional high school coach.

The decision to interview the Chairman of the Board of Education came after I completed an early phase of interviewing in which I spoke with the retired Chief Academic Officer (CAO), two literacy coaches, and one of the agency trainers. From the interviews that I had conducted, I had the awareness that I needed to interview someone that had a long term big picture view of the district. The retired CAO spoke with clarity about particular shifts that occurred in the district during her ten years working as an administrator. From this conversation, I wanted to speak to someone who had a long-term, big picture view of the district – one that would have encompassed the period before, during, and after the changes to which the CAO articulated. The Board Chairman was an appropriate choice because she served on the local school board for fourteen years. Through her tenure on the school board, she worked with four different superintendents and served on hiring committees for two of those four.

I made the decision to interview a teacher who had participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar during the 2014-2015 school year because in some interviews with literacy coaches, it was revealed that some of the teachers who had attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar had come away from the experience

primarily with strategies (e.g. for facilitating meetings, processing information, and building community). The particular teacher I interviewed offered a unique perspective because she moved to a new school during the 2015-2016 school year (the year after her experience with the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar). Further, the school that she moved to had a number of teachers participate in the Adaptive School Foundation Seminar, so I was interested to talk to her about her understanding and insights about the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools, both during the year that she experienced the seminar and in the context of others who were experiencing the seminar for the first time.

A similar line of thinking influenced my choice of a principal to interview. This individual had a unique perspective because she served as a principal around the time some significant shifts were happening in the district. She then decided to serve a school in an adjacent district and was there several years. At the start of the 2014-2015, she returned to Smith County to serve as a principal of another school. Her experience of having been present in the district, leaving the district, and returning to the district offered a unique perspective on the larger culture of the Smith County Schools particularly in light of themes of continuity and change.

Hence, through the interview process not every person who had experienced Adaptive Schools or the impact of Adaptive School was interviewed, but through intentionally interviewing varied subjects, multiple and significant viewpoints are represented by the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected primarily through individual interviews, group interviews, and memo analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012). These methods of collection supported the integration of triangulation into the research design and data analysis process. Miles et al. (2014) emphasized, “triangulation is a way to get to the findings in the first place – by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources by using different methods” (p. 300). Through consideration of the data collection procedures – two of five aspects (data source, method, theory, researcher, and data type) (Denzin, 1970; Miles et al., 2014) are demonstrated. Specifically, the data collection procedures embedded triangulation through data source and methodology. Although the primary source of data, individual interviews were collected to ensure a range of perspective including years of experiences, different roles and responsibilities, and different vantage points within the organization. Triangulation was used as a means to validate inferences, conclusions, and analysis in regard to the interview data. The use of group interviews also provided an opportunity for further triangulation as interview participants had the chance to dialogue in small groups arranged around role. The content of each group interview was compared to other group interviews as well as individual interview results. In total seventeen individual interviews from fifteen participants (the agency trainers were interviewed twice) and four group interviews from three different groups (the agency trainers were interviewed twice as a group) were collected.

Individual Interviews

Fontana and Frey (1994) argued, “Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways we have to understand our fellow human beings” (p. 361). Further in the life of the research, the interview is both tool and object. An interview is not only the object of the participant’s thinking, it is also a sociological act which brings the researcher into relationship with the participants of researched phenomenon or culture. Interviews can range from the highly structured to the unstructured (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Merriam, 1998). In the instance of this study, a semi-structured format was employed to allow the conversation to focus on the salient factors of the research study while at the same allowing for unique personal variations and perspectives.

Individual interviews were collected regarding personal responses and reactions to the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar (the interview protocol used in the portion of the pre-study conducted in summer 2013 may be found in Appendix B). Based on analysis of the interview responses and feedback from the group interview portion of the pre-study (Appendix C) (conducted winter 2015), the protocol was revised (Appendix D) to reflect the revised research questions and the decision to explore both the phenomenon and its cultural connections within the district at large. The protocol in appendix D reflects the general structure of the questions that were posed in each interview. However, because of the different roles of individuals who were interviewed and that some participants were interviewed who had not attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, a synthesis document of the base interview questions was created (Appendix E). The purpose of the interviews was multi-faceted, but with two primary goals: to understand the perceived impact of Adaptive Schools training on the individual

and to understand how participants view Adaptive Schools within the larger school district.

In order to analyze completely the data from the interviews, I transcribed each interview in its entirety and engaged in a process of open and theoretical coding. Additionally, through the transcription and interview process, I maintained a document of memos in order to track my thinking and the emergence of possible themes, and patterns. In keeping with the constant comparative method, the processes of data collection and analysis occurred as an iterative process of data collection, analysis, and decision making about further data collection. Because of this process, the original plan of who I intended to collect interview data from evolved through the data collection process. Whereas, my original plan was to interview all members of the Department of Instruction, three literacy coaches, three principals, and teachers who had participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, I realized that in some cases, patterns emerged from interviewing several members of a group. As I was able to note these commonalities, I realized the need to have greater variation in the voices of the individuals I was interviewing.

I also had the opportunity to interview the agency trainers during the pre-study and within the context of the current research. Through reading their earlier responses and comparing those to current responses and noting the evolution of their thinking, I realized the utility of obtaining permission to use the earlier interviews. I also realized that when I interviewed coaches who had attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar five years ago, that it was challenging for them to recount specific learning from their experience. In this way, I realized that the earlier interviews I had conducted with

coaches would be valuable simply because of their proximity to the initial learning experience. These realizations led me to write an amendment to my research proposal through the Institutional Review Board so that the early data I had collected could be used in developing a case study about the role and impact of Adaptive Schools in Smith County.

Memo Writing

In order to develop understanding about the interview process, memo writing as described by Charmaz (2006) was employed. This included a process of coding data and using writing to elaborate and support the data through empirical data. Furthermore, it allowed data to inform inferences and analysis of how the work of Adaptive Schools is unfolding explicitly (through the words and examples of the participants) and implicitly (through my inferences, analysis, and synthesis of ideas). The essential elements of Adaptive Schools including the seven norms of collaboration, group member capabilities, and ways of talking were used as elemental and/or deductive coding (Miles et al., 2014). Memo writing proved to be significant and prodigious use of such methods.

Group Interviews

A second iteration of data collection occurred in the form of group interviews. These served as a follow-up to the individual interviews, but were more open ended with discourse ensuing around a stimulus response (Tobin et al., 2009). Participants were placed in a job similar group for the purpose of these interviews. The groupings were created because each group represented a professional learning community – a group formed to collaboratively engage in professional learning for the purpose of improving student learning and understanding. Ultimately, three groupings resulted: Department of

Instruction Members, Literacy Coaches, and Agency Trainers. Table 3.2 shows the interview participants within each group interview. The agency trainer who is a member of the Department of Instruction participated with both groups; the agency trainer who is a literacy coach did not participate in the literacy coach group interview because of her role in facilitating the training of some of the participants and my sense that her presence could skew the results of the conversation due to the extent of her well-developed background knowledge of Adaptive Schools.

Table 3.2 *Group Interview Participants*

Group	Participants
Agency Trainers*	KH, SV
Department of Instruction	KH, EG, CE
Literacy Coaches	MG, RZ, CF, KR

*Note: Members of each group were invited to attend the group interview, but some were unable to attend. *indicates that the participants were involved in two group interviews (during the pre-study and the dissertation study)*

Within these groups, discussion developed around a visual stimulus. This stimulus was a word cloud generated from the responses about Adaptive Schools in the course of initial interview. This process has been validated through research studies in the fields of education, psychology, and sociology (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012). Tobin et al. (2009) were able to successfully use the stimulus response structure as an ethnographic tool as they studied preschools in the United States, China, and Japan. In each instance, they spent a day collecting video footage from a preschool and then put together an hour-long production from the collection in order to offer a focal point response both from the teachers and stakeholders of the school as well as to collect responses of members of other cultures. The stimulus response provided a focal point for

conversation and discourse that was revealing in terms of the identity and beliefs of the respondents. Of the visual response approach, Harper (1994) pointed to the ways in which asking a participant to discuss an image reverses the typical role of researcher and participant – “The researcher becomes a listener and one who encourages the dialogue to continue” (p. 410). Though in the context of this study, the image is in the form of a word cloud rather than a photograph, the word clouds in their various iterations became a synthesized image of the volumes each participant spoke through the context of his/her interview.

To create the word cloud (Appendix F), I first created a document of words from each participant’s interview. This process included removing all questions and comments that were voiced by me. Next, I narrowed the words to the responses that dealt specifically with Adaptive Schools. In general, this involved removing questions about the participant’s roles and responsibilities. Finally, I removed filler words such as “um” and other utterances such as “hmm” and “Uh-uh.” The remaining words were copied into the website, Tagxedo. In order to control for variables related to font and design, each word cloud was created with the same default settings – black print on a white background, Cairo font, traditional horizontal cloud shape, horizontal text, with approximately 250 words. The Tagxedo program allowed me to pull additional words from the data set and because it was not able to work with contractions, I removed word parts found in contractions (e.g. don, ve, nt). This also allowed me to removed utterance words that were missed in the initial creation of the word data.

In order to create a word cloud of composite responses, the steps as outlined above were followed. Next, I copied and pasted all the individual responses for a job

alike/job similar group into a composite document. The same procedures were followed for creating the word cloud as described above. I also used this process to create a composite word cloud for all participants who were interviewed that had participated in Adaptive Schools. This offered the opportunity for the group to see commonalities and differences between their own responses and those of the group as a whole.

Within the Department of Instruction and Literacy Coach group interviews, two different stimuli were presented over the course of the interview: a) a word cloud comprised of the individual's responses to the interview questions and b) a word cloud comprised of the responses of all the members of a job similar group (as described earlier). For the agency trainer group interview, the aforementioned clouds were included, as well as, a word cloud comprised of all participant responses from the individual interview. A protocol (Appendix G) has been developed to introduce the word clouds and provide questions to begin the conversation. As the interview is intended to be open-ended and response oriented, only a few questions are included. Data from the group interviews were transcribed fully.

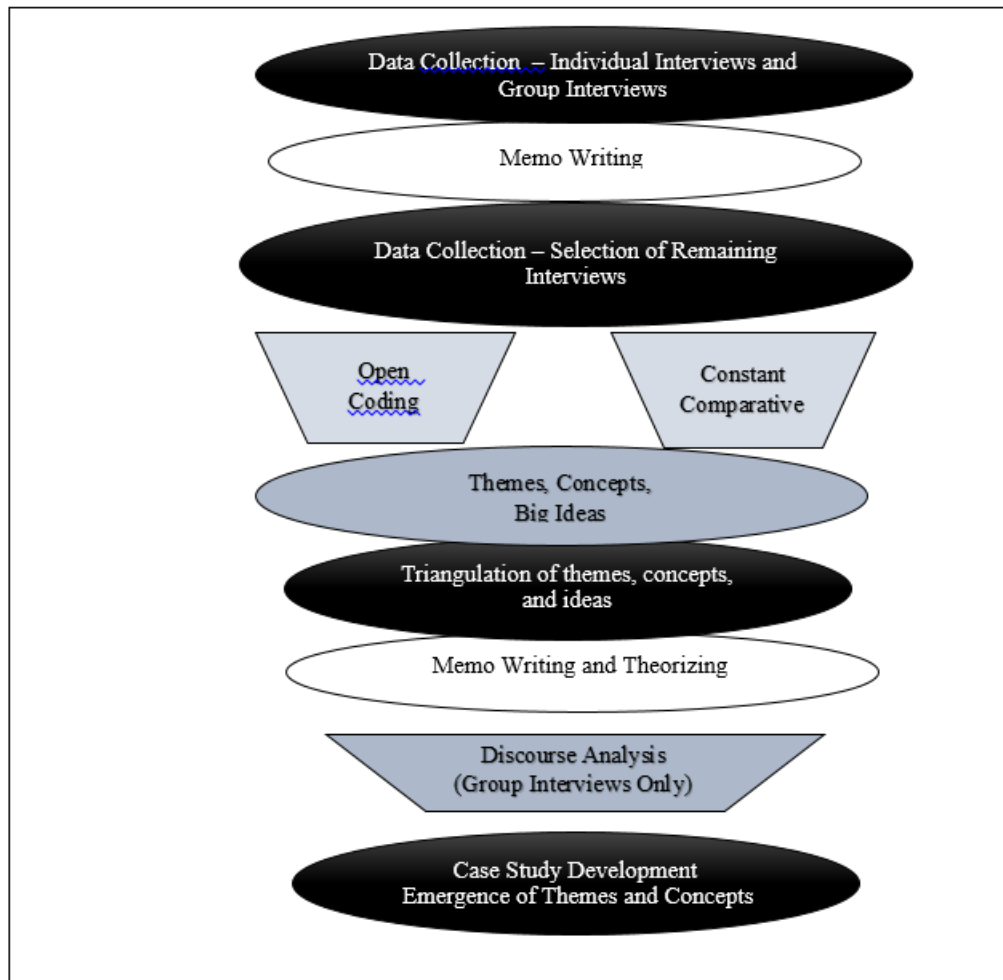
Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed through the employment of several relevant methods including: memo writing (Charmaz, 2006), constant comparative – including the process of open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994), elemental and theoretical coding (Miles et al., 2014), and discourse analysis (Gee, 2014). Data collection, somewhat like a play, occurred in two acts; each act was comprised of scenes. The first act of data collection occurred in the context of individual interviews; the second phase occurred in the context of group interviews.

Act I, Scene 1: Analyzing Individual Interviews

Through the first act, data was collected through thirteen individual interviews (see Figure 3.1). Even throughout the first act of collection, two scenes of the process

Figure 3.1 – Individual and Group Interview Collection and Analysis



were evident. As mentioned earlier, the interviews with the retired Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and one of the agency trainers helped me set a course for other individuals to be interviewed. Specifically, the decision to interview the Director of Specialized

programs and the teacher who had not attended Adaptive Schools were purposefully selected based on interactions the retired CAO had with these individuals.

Consistent with qualitative methodology (Charmaz, 2006), as more of these individuals were interviewed, I realized that there were others who I had thought initially that I would interview that would not need to be interviewed. Likewise, there were others who were selected because of their potential in filling out an emerging understanding or line of thinking.

Throughout the process of interviewing and transcribing, memos were written. In essence, the transcription process served as an initial opportunity for informal open coding, as I was able to make inferences and observations about what I was heard in the process of converting the audio files to text files. Codes which emerged through these initial interviews included: content codes connected with Adaptive Schools (e.g. seven norms of collaboration, dialogue and discussion, pausing, paraphrasing, questioning, group roles, and strategies), values and beliefs codes (e.g. collaboration, facilitation, coaching versus consulting, building capacity, PLCs, SC mission and vision), and in vivo codes (e.g. “system of schools to a school system,” “more collaborative,” “tradition of excellence,” “ensuring the learning of every child,” “the child in the chair.”)

Act I, Scene 2: Filling Out Individual Interview Data Set

This familiarity with the data allowed for clarity in terms of the need to collect further interviews. After conducting, transcribing, and writing memos about eleven individual interviews, a plan for filling out the data set emerged. This plan developed as a second stage within the first phase of data collection. The second scene included the decision to seek an amendment for the research protocol to include pre-existing data.

This data included interviews from two literacy coaches (one who is still a literacy coach and who is a principal within the school district) and the two agency trainers (one who is still a literacy coach and one who moved from the position of District Intervention Coach to Director Curriculum and Staff Development). Additionally, two interviews were sought – one with a high school literacy coach and one with a classroom teacher who had participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar in the summer of 2014.

The high school coach was selected for two purposes: to serve as a point of comparison to the first high school coach who was interviewed and also because of her long tenure in the district and service across three different schools. Before she was interviewed several individuals mentioned continuities and shifts within the district. Long standing continuities included a tradition of excellence and a reputation of high quality schools. Changes that were articulated included a shift from “competition to collaboration” and a shift from being a “system of schools to being a school system.” The decision to interview this particular coach was in part to see the degree to which some of these continuities and changes would be evident in her responses.

The classroom teacher was selected because at the time of her experience she was a lead teacher in her school community. At the end of the 2014-2015 school year, she decided to seek middle school certification and obtained a position at one of the district middle schools. Although no longer serving in the lead teacher capacity, the school where she took the position had a significant number of teachers participate in Adaptive Schools in the summer of 2015. This put her in the unique position of having served on two school faculties where a critical mass of teachers had participated in the Adaptive Schools Seminar.

Act II: Analyzing Group Interviews

Phase two of data collection occurred through the group interviews (see figure 2.1). This process mirrored that of the individual interviews except that discourse analysis was employed as a final step with the group interview before synthesizing the findings into the case

The first of the group interviews was conducted with the members of the Department of Instruction (DOI). One member of the DOI team who had been interviewed was unable to participate in the group interview. Therefore, the conversation included the current and retired Chief Academic Officers and the Director of Curriculum and Staff Development. The group interview time allowed time for reviewing the initial interview questions and reflecting upon potential answers. Participants were given the word cloud data of their individual responses and had the opportunity to reflect in writing about these before conversation ensued. This process of observation (of the word clouds), reflection, and conversation continued as the group considered their composite responses. In addition to providing the interview data, the situation allowed me to observe some of the normalized behaviors of Adaptive Schools including the use of the seven norms of collaboration.

The interview experiences with the literacy coaches and the agency trainers were structured as described above. One difference was that the agency trainers also had the opportunity to look at composite data from all Adaptive Schools participants I had interviewed. As with the DOI team, the interview opportunity provided a setting for less structured dialogue and a chance to see the degree to which some of the principles of Adaptive School have become part of normalized interactions within the organization.

Memo Writing: Music Throughout

In likening the data collection and analysis processes to acts in a play, it is appropriate to compare memo writing to the orchestral score – the background music ever present from beginning of the production to the end. Memo writing as described by (Charmaz, 2006) is at the same time data collection and data analysis. Essentially, it is an iterative process used in collecting data and in analyzing data. It is intended for the researcher to capture connections, reflections, and moments of insight. Memo-writing might also accompany field notes (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012) as a source of “thick description.” As a central aspect of grounded theory, memo writing is a way for the researcher to capture theory as it forms; further it allows opportunity for this theory to be explored in light of empirical evidence and experience (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Although this study was not shaped as a grounded theory, memo writing was relevant in the way that it provided an avenue for thinking about patterns and themes to emerge. Memo-writing is catalyzed by the experience of being in the field rather than being a judgment or belief being forced on the corpus of data.

In terms of my research, this experience of being in the field happens naturally as I am a part of the organization in which I am studying. Memo-writing became a way for me to step back from my personal experience and the formal experiences of the research to reflect about observations I was making about the data and to synthesize the understanding of the organization, the work of Adaptive Schools, and the interaction of the research experience and the daily lived experience. In short, the practice of memo-writing was used throughout the process to collect data in the moment, to analyze data

along the way, and to hold on to insights and possible theories as they emerged. Memo-writing was present early in the data collection phase and continued through every part of the journey through the theory development stages. This process is consistent with constant-comparative analysis in that it happens within the data collection process and can at times make clear the next move of the research process. In this vein, memo-writing was used as an essential source of data collection through the study.

Transcription: Script Creation

In the context of a theatrical performance, it is the script which determines the words to be spoken. In this way the metaphor diverges a bit from the data collection and analysis process. However, the words spoken and the actions conveyed by the participants became the data to be analyzed. In this study, these words and actions were captured through the process of transcription.

Mishler (1991) explored the process of transcription and paralleled it to taking a photo. In the same way that a photograph represents an aspect of reality that is not reality itself, a transcription is a reflection of reality. In raising this point, he suggested the need to raise transcription from a technical process to a transformative process. Ochs and Schieffelin (1979) underscored the need for transcription to “be consistent with the research goals and hypotheses of the researcher” (p. 44). In this light, I have transcribed the data from individual and group interviews as a basic transcript. After determining significant discursive events in the group interviews, I shifted these events into the columnar structure (Gee, 2014; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1979) which allowed me to better assess the presence of pauses and overlapping speech. Additionally, this allowed the opportunity to incorporate notes about the speaker’s tone at different points throughout

the transcript. Participants were given the opportunity to review transcripts as a measure of trustworthiness.

Constant Comparative: Analyzing the Script

Following the transcription process in both the individual and group interviews, the constant comparative method of analysis described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used. This method includes coding data – in order to triangulate the data, it can be coded numerous times by the researcher or by different members of a research team. In order to code and review the data on different occasions, I used hard and digital copies of the data. The process of open coding occurred as I responded to the interview experience, listened to audio files of the interviews, and worked through the process of transcription. Codes emerged in a variety of ways; some were connected tightly to the content of the work of Adaptive Schools (e.g. norms of collaboration, energy sources, dialogue, and discussion), others were tied to ideas, beliefs, and values (e.g. mindset, collaboration, trust, intentionality), and another series of codes emerged around applications of the work of Adaptive Schools (e.g. outcome focused agendas, inclusion, redistricting meetings, and the structuring of district-wide meetings).

Codes and ideas that emerged through this phase of the work were recorded in a memo document. These memos became the basis for emerging category codes. The memo document became a place that I worked on articulating the specifics of a particular set of codes. The following memo illustrates the nature of this work:

Two lines of thinking are swirling around in my head. I want to try to capture both before they are gone. The first has to do with how my codes are coming together – I am thinking that the concepts/action category that I struggled to articulate on the spreadsheet could be divided as follows: content (discrete items specific to Cognitive Coaching or Adaptive Schools), concepts and ideas (addressed in Adaptive Schools but transcend Adaptive Schools – trust, rapport,

collaboration), actions, and identities (teacher, coach, student, professional, collaborator, inquirer, leader, facilitator) – is part of the [work of] Adaptive Schools developing understand towards a broad view of what it means to be an educator and to be an educator one must be an innovator, an inquirer, a collaborator, a learner? (WCW, Personal Memo, February 6, 2016)

In order to work through the data in a systematic way, I made hard copies of each interview so that I could annotate them and make note of the presence of particular codes and ideas. Next, I organized and recorded the codes by interview into a data matrix. Based on the memo above, I divided the codes I had collected for each interview into three basic categories – content codes (specific content from Adaptive Schools), concepts (ideas, beliefs, and abstractions that were perhaps informed by but transcended the content of Adaptive Schools), and insight codes (some of these were “in vivo” codes, others represented insight or theorizing on part of the interview participant about the nature of a happening or belief).

Coding the data subsequent times included creating data matrices which emerged from the stated research questions, emergent research questions, and the chronicling of overarching themes and patterns. A spreadsheet with each category or code was created and data was collected from interviews in light of such categories. As theories emerged, (e.g. understanding after participation in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar is shallow, the need for catalyzing leadership to sustain the work, the desire to have tools and processes for having productive, effective PLCs) these were added to a theoretical matrix so that each interview could be explored in light of them. In large part, the data matrix became an index of the transcripts so that I had numerous tags for each interview and could locate specific information from the interviews to support lines of thinking as they emerged.

These coding processes were iterative in nature and while structured initially using the model of Strauss and Corbin (1994) and Corbin and Strauss (1990) they also allowed for the flexibility and responsiveness advocated by Charmaz (2006). Much as the picture on a tapestry emerges strand by strand, interviews, categories, and themes were constantly being woven together to see what patterns surfaced. Each interview was studied and brought to life through different lines of thinking. As new ideas or theories arose, these were integrated into the developing case study.

Congruent to the constant comparative method of analysis, which allows new ideas and theories to emerge, open coding (Miles et al. 2014) to explore concepts and content was employed. These methods were important as they allowed analysis of the topics and ideas which transcended multiple data sources. Early rounds of open coding and subsequent use of the constant comparative yielded information about the concepts, content, skills, and strategies that participants felt were important or salient through their experience with Adaptive Schools. Additionally, the interviews provided a perspective into the degree to which participants internalized the principles of Adaptive Schools.

Discourse Analysis: Analyzing Dialogue Within the Script

Through the process of the group interviews in the second phase (see Figure 3.1) of the data collection and analysis, similar methods of coding from phase I were employed. Primarily, the coding process was used to determine significant discursive events to be analyzed through discourse analysis (Gee, 2014). Significant discursive events were signaled by cognitive dissonance, a break down in the use of norms of collaboration or group member capabilities or content of the conversation. One exchange that was analyzed took place between the agency trainers. In the exchange, they shared

frustration about misconceptions about Adaptive Schools and the degree to which the misconceptions were being problematically identified as part of the work of Adaptive Schools. In a different instance, importance was found as much in what was not said than what was said as revealed by the subsequent memo:

Back to the group interview with the coaches, what was interesting to me was more about what wasn't said. Was the reason the stimulus response was not very effective because the depth of knowledge is shallow? This is interesting because in the general populous of people in SC who have Adaptive Schools training, the literacy coaches had it first and they have also more (albeit limited) follow-up than others. If their depth of knowledge is shallow, what might this suggest about others within the organization who have had the learning experience (KH and her thinking about the word training have influenced me). (WCW, Personal Memo, February 10, 2016)

Gee hypothesized that through language humans are able to interpret the world and that discourse analysis at its best is an interpretation of an interpretation. Further, he supposed that we “use language to enact or build” (p. 32) seven things within the world including: significance, practices, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems. Because of the complex nature of Adaptive Schools in terms of informing both content and conceptual understanding relating to collaboration and group identity, discourse analysis is a logical tool for understanding dialogue about Adaptive Schools. In the spirit of Gee's proposition that humans “use language to enact or build” (p. 32), the group interviews were planned with the hope of evoking thoughtful conversation within a PLC which shared in common a developing understanding of Adaptive Schools.

Gee's building tasks were used to analyze a sample of conversation to understand the patterns and themes which emerged. I made the decision to employ this type of analysis in order to get a different perspective and search for a different “edge” in terms of the meaning of the data. In many ways, use of this form of analysis is akin to looking

at a picture that shows two different images depending on the perspective of the person looking at it. Having a hint about an edge or aspect about the image that one does not see instantly can often be entry way into seeing a new perspective. In short, it was a data source that I had coded and analyzed in the way that I did the individual interviews, but discourse analysis offered the opportunity to see what extent new ideas emerged or pre-existing notions were confirmed.

The discourse analysis was conducted by formatting the transcript into a columnar structure in which each speaker's words were presented in a column. Line breaks were used to delineate separate ideas and stanzas were used to show the bigger structure of big ideas. A matrix including the building tasks was used to analyze the discourse and record findings and ideas (see Appendix H).

From the data that emerged from the discourse analysis, further understanding of important ideas emerged. This was demonstrated in light of the patterns generated from the individual interviews and provided further themes to be coded through the constant-comparative method. The discourse analysis of the group interviews supported the importance of building understanding of the work of Adaptive Schools over time and the need for a visionary leader around which the work within the PLC could coalesce. Further through the discourse analysis, the significance of misconceptions held by Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar participants surfaced prominently. The implication that was uncovered was that misconceptions could become paired with the term of Adaptive Schools creating a false sense of the values or work of Adaptive Schools. Essentially, the process of discourse analysis served as a means of confirming

or refuting lines of thinking about Adaptive Schools that emerged from individual interviews; it was also a way of identifying new insights to be pursued within the data set.

Insight Revealed: Analyzing the Emergence of Different Patterns and Ideas

In reviewing the data analysis procedure and through reviewing figure 3.1, it would seem that the data analysis process occurred in a direct, linear fashion. Although, patterns of action were applied to different steps within the work (e.g. looking across transcripts, memos, and the data matrix as different ideas emerged), the analysis process was iterative and recursive. The following example serves as a demonstration of how one insight that is described in the case study was derived.

As I analyzed the data in reference to research question 2: How are the intended outcomes and accompanying framework supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the Smith County School System, a line from Simon and Garfunkel's song, "The Boxer" (Simon, 1969, track 16) became significant in the analysis, organization, and synthesis of the data. In the context of research methodology, the example is used to reveal the recursive nature of the data analysis process.

This memo was written at a point in which I had finished transcribing all the individual interviews and was working to synthesize my understanding of Adaptive Schools and the words and thoughts of the interview participants. As ideas emerged, whether they were tightly connected to a code that had developed or they just came to me as insight, I used the memo process to sort out, explore, and clarify my thinking as evidenced in the following entry:

Trying to sleep and several things are rattling around in my head:

- A line from the Boxer
- Paradigm or phenomena

Going to try capture my thinking about these because I fear what I am thinking may be gone when I get up in the morning.

“After changes upon changes we are more or less the same.” This could be a really cynical way of looking at life – it could also be a great perspective on what adaptivity is at the core – to change form while maintaining identity – it’s knowing as a person, entity, or organization who you are at the core and refining that as conditions and contexts change – what does that mean for SC “good schools” At one time good schools meant good test scores – that has been revised along the way to mean – a place that is about “the child in the chair” and more recently refined to “ensuring the learning of every child.” How that is carried out has changed as well – at one point – there was a charge to do well - and that was a process that fostered competition, isolation, and nearly complete autonomy - - there was a change from being a system of schools to being a school system – there was a belief that teachers were a great resource/investment but that was approached individually at the school level versus collaboratively at the district level – it has become a place where each school has not only its own identity, but there is a vision and a effort for these to work as a synergistic whole – through these changes – what is revealed is clarity about identity – a good school as a place for ensuring the learning of every child versus a good school that is about getting high test scores – after changes upon changes, we are more or less the same- - like a microscopic lens that zooms in there is greater awareness of self though what is being investigated is at the heart what is was at the core – the study speaks to the need for school systems to know who they are and continuously seek means of revealing and bringing greater clarity to that meaning.

This of course bears the questions of what to do with the clarifiers as used as indicators of identity that are not really true to core – how do the “untrue” or extraneous parts get peeled away to reveal what is more true – (WCW, Personal Memo, January 30, 2016)

The night that I crafted this memo occurred after I had conducted a group interview with the Department of Instruction which included the retired CAO, EG, the current CAO, CE, and one of the agency trainers, KH. During the course of the interview they reflected about their individual and collective word clouds and ruminated about some of the words that appeared. They reflected about why some concepts were large (training, think, adaptive) and others were small (identity). The conversation about

identity was interesting as in the group interaction it focused on teachers and how teachers' understanding of their own identity in the classroom at times had to evolve or shift and that this was a source of challenge. KH suggested that it was particularly challenging when teachers envisioned their role as closing their door and teaching their students, yet the expectation for teachers had become one which assumed a high level of collaboration. This change could be a challenge for teachers and require flexibility.

The exchange which occurred around identity caused me to think a lot about identity as I left the interview. However, rather than thinking about it in terms of teachers, I considered it in terms of the Smith County School District. It made me wonder if identity had really changed in the context of the Smith County School District or if it had been clarified. As the memo reflects, it was in remembering the words of the song "The Boxer" (Simon, 1969, track 16) that I was able to find some clarity. From the song, I started thinking about how identity can remain central while extraneous things are peeled away or even as the ways in which identity plays out (forms and functions change) in order to be revealed more clearly. So, with this notion in hand, I was able to really look deeply at the core identity and see how that had stayed the same and that emerged in two prominent ways: (a) great schools with a tradition of excellence and (b) a belief in teachers as a the greatest resources.

The notion of great schools with a tradition of excellence came out in the interviews of high school teacher JW, high school literacy coach CF, and agency trainer SV. After this theme emerged, I continued to look for it across other interviews. Similarly, the belief about teachers as the greatest resource emerged in several interviews including that of high school teacher JW and current CAO, CE. Additionally, I went

through other interviews to determine the degree to which the themes were revealed in the comments of other participants.

I engaged in a similar process in thinking about changes that occurred in the school district. After finding ideas that were anchored in several interviews, I used the ideas as lenses for analyzing other interviews.

In short, the themes emerged through the constant comparative method. In transcribing the interviews, I came to know the text of the interviews. Through the process of writing memos, I was able to articulate my thinking about global ideas and themes that were emerging. This thinking was grounded in the words of participants and as I articulated the ideas into a pattern or theme, I was able to use the pattern or theme as lens to look at other interviews additional times.

As I confirmed the presence of particular patterns and themes, I collected quotes from the interviews which illustrated the thinking. Once I pulled the evidence together, I crafted the portion of the case study relevant to that theme or pattern and worked to write about it such that the words of the participants became evidence that illuminated the patterns or themes.

Although each theme did not emerge in the same way, this example illustrates the iterative nature of the process. As I engaged in the process of data analysis, I situated myself in the data. This included transcribing the data, reading through the transcriptions, thinking about what I had read, writing about what I had read, and being open to new ideas as they emerged. In the above example, insight occurred through a line of music stirring in my mind.

Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) wrote about the concept of trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry – a paradigm which is explored through the means of qualitative research methodology. His objective in writing about characteristics of trustworthiness was to propose a structure and system for conducting naturalistic inquiry. Through his work, he identified general characteristics of trustworthiness which are expected through both scientific and naturalistic inquiry – truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. He then explained how each of these qualities is revealed through naturalistic and scientific paradigms. This research is based in the stance of naturalistic inquiry, therefore, the characteristics are translated into the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Shenton (2004) further elaborated on each of these qualities and described in detail aspects of each kind of trustworthiness to be addressed through the design and planning of qualitative research studies.

Credibility

Credibility in naturalistic inquiry is associated with the concept of internal validity within scientific inquiry. The scientific inquirer is concerned with the central issue of the degree to which instruments and the study itself reveal the topic or focus in question. Similarly, the naturalistic inquirer works to understand the true nature of the phenomena being studied. Shenton (2004) advocated the use of a number of criteria in structuring for trustworthiness such as: adoption of appropriate research methods for the question under investigation, familiarity with the culture in which the phenomena is being explored, random sampling, triangulation, tactics to ensure honesty, iterative questions, negative case analysis, frequent debriefing session with members of the

research team, peer scrutiny, researcher's reflective commentary, explicit naming of the background experiences and experiences of the researcher, thick description of the phenomena under scrutiny under study, and examination of previous research findings.

In the context of this study, credibility was managed in a number of ways including: careful selection of research methods, familiarity with the culture being studied, triangulation, researcher's reflective commentary, explicit naming of background experiences and experiences of the researcher, thick description of the phenomena under study, and examination of previous research findings. The research methods have been selected in order to understand the impact of Adaptive Schools. Because of the limited research on Adaptive Schools and the slow nature of providing training throughout the structure of the school system, ethnographic and phenomenological methods were employed in order to develop theory. The description of the methodology also includes a section about my previous experiences with the research focus and the experiences of the researcher. Thus, it is through this section that not only is the methodology described in detail, but my experience, as well as, the description of the culture of the school system is embedded.

The process of triangulation was addressed through several different layers. Primarily, the selection of participants to reflect maximum variation in terms of employment context (level of school – elementary, middle, high - level of position – literacy coach, teacher, administrator) and level of experience with Adaptive Schools (recently trained, experience with advanced training opportunities, and trained early in the implementation process) and level of experience in education was the central vehicle for ensuring triangulation. Another layer of triangulation happened through the data

collection process which included individual and group interviews. Further there was the opportunity to analyze the evolution of thinking of the agency trainers who were interviewed individually spanning a period of two years. Likewise, they were interviewed in a group setting on different occasions (with a year spanning the two conversations). This allowed for the opportunity to notice continuity and change in their responses.

Because there has been little previous research about Adaptive Schools, I have conducted an extensive review of the literature in terms of the foundation of Adaptive Schools. In addition, as the research is conducted, I have described the results as well as the contexts in which the results happened with rich detail and thick description.

Transferability

Within the world of scientific inquiry, transferability is associated with external validity and generalizability. That is to say, researchers work to situate research questions and processes in such a way that they will be generalizable to the larger population or at the very least a similar population. Within naturalistic inquiry, this process involves providing rich description of contextual information so that consumers of research as well as other researchers could make reliable judgements of the applicability of the body of research to another context.

Through working to generate theory representing the different schools within the school district and being purposeful to interview and interact with members of different parts of the district, I situated the work in such a way that others will have a clear picture of the larger organization of the school system so that judgments about transferability can be made. Shenton (2004) cautioned, "It is easy to develop a preoccupation with

transferability. Ultimately the results of a qualitative study must be understood with the context of the particular characteristic or characteristics of the organization or organizations, and perhaps geographical area in which the fieldwork were carried out” (p. 70). Furthermore, the product of this research – the case study – offers the opportunity for other researches to explore the existence and application of themes and patterns in unique and similar contexts.

Dependability

This characteristic is the concept known as reliability in terms of scientific inquiry. Reliability encompasses the notion that within the same context and the same methods that a similar result would occur. In the realm of naturalistic inquiry, this quality has to with the notion that results are dependable for a particular context. Shenton (2004) suggested that this can be addressed by the researcher through research design and its implementation, operational detail of data gathering, and reflective appraisal of the project. Through this study I defined explicitly the research design and how it was implemented. Additionally, I provided a detailed description of the data collection techniques that were enacted. Consistent with the embedded expectations of the methodology, I took a reflective stance by engaging in the process of memo writing (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles et al., 2014).

Confirmability

The concept of confirmability is analogous to the concept of researcher objectivity in scientific inquiry. In the case of natural inquiry, this is addressed through triangulation, admission of the beliefs and assumptions of the researcher, recognition of the research’s shortcomings, and depth of methodological description (Shenton, 2004).

Several of these areas – detailed methodological description and triangulation have been addressed within the context of other aspects of trustworthiness. I have described my role within the research and how I am situated within the research context. A primary shortcoming of this research is that I am a part of the organization that I am researching; this provides the challenge of being objective while at the same time affording an opportunity for an insider view. The challenge presented is further balanced because none of the participants who were interviewed work in the same building that I do.

A benefit to my role as a literacy coach is that I am not in an evaluative role through my position. Within the literacy coach group and with the individuals interviewed I have collegial relationships characterized by high degrees of relational trust. In collecting interviews, I worked to maintain a balance between formality and approachability so that participants would be comfortable and at ease in providing their responses. Part of this balance included an effort to adhere to research questions and protocols when it would be easy to lapse into general conversation. This positioning helped circumvent some other possible limitations of my participation in the organization being researched.

Another possible of shortcoming of the study is associated with my personal ideas and beliefs regarding Adaptive Schools. My interest in Adaptive Schools emerged when I first participated in the training. This interest was based on my engagement with the subject and my belief that it would have a powerful impact on school communities. My further examination of the research on which Adaptive Schools is based led me to believe that it has the potential to positively impact school culture across boundaries of belief and socio-economics. In essence, before beginning the study I had preconceived notions

about Adaptive Schools and its impact on the Smith County School District. This challenge was addressed through processes of triangulation (as discussed earlier) and member checking. In order to maintain the confirmability of the research study, I have maintained regular communication with my research advisors at the university. I have shared my notes and memos with these researchers in order to check my objectivity in looking at patterns in the data. I have also shared observations about my findings with research participants to discern their reactions. Additionally, member checking through the verification of the interview transcription process was utilized.

To summarize, trustworthiness is a multi-faceted construct consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability - which considers how to ensure that the results of study can be trusted by the larger research community. Analogous to the systematic processes which are addressed in scientific inquiry, the qualities of trustworthiness in naturalistic research are designed to provide substantial and systematic measures of ensuring quality. This research study addresses these measure through the practices of bracketing, explicitly describing the methodological and data analysis processes, triangulation, and addressing areas of shortcoming within the context of the study.

Summary of Chapter 3

This case study has been designed to understand the phenomenon of Adaptive Schools within the Smith County School District. Additionally, the study considered how Adaptive Schools matches with cultural elements of continuity and change within the school district. Qualitative methods associated with the traditions of case study, grounded theory, ethnography and phenomenology were enacted to reveal the research

questions. Data was collected through interviews, group interviews, and memo writing. Trustworthiness of the research study has been explored through the lenses of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

DATA ANALYSIS: DISCOVERING THE STORY

Charmaz (2006) suggests, “Methods are merely tools” (p. 15). In the former chapter, the methodology for this case study was described. Through its reliance on emergent design and methodologies, qualitative research presented as the methodological tradition that would most accurately reveal the nature of the work of Adaptive Schools in Smith County. Although qualitative research often begins with the description of a problem rather than specific research questions, there were questions which served as a springboard for this study. This chapter and the next explore the data which was collected and tell the story of what emerged in two phases: what was illuminated through the original research questions and the development of emergent questions and big ideas that presented prominently in the data analysis process.

The Original Questions

The research questions framing this study were developed as a revision to questions which were posed in a pre-study. The questions which emerged as most pertinent to understanding the impact of Adaptive Schools in Smith County were:

- 1) How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School System?
- 2) How are the intended outcomes and accompanying framework supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the Smith County School System?

The sections which follow explore each of these research questions and what was revealed about them through the process of data collection, which included the collection of seventeen individual interviews and four group interviews.

Question 1 – How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School System?

During the summer of 2014, CW assumed the position of Director of Specialized Academic Programs – a department which oversees Exceptional Children’s Services, 504 plans, and intervention. He described his early work and experience in the department:

The special education department particularly was franchised; there wasn’t a real connection to a lot of the other work that was going on in the district. They were sort of off over here not really connected to the work of the district. I felt like that their vision was completely different than what the vision of the district was. There was a lack of communication between what was happening in special education and intervention and 504. They were all mutually exclusive and there was no crossover. My role was to bring all of that together and then to link up with what is going in the district, so we can make sure that we are a part of the vision and that we’re not going off in some separate direction. And so the entire last year was spent trying to realign and refocus what this department is doing. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

When hired, he was charged with making sense of the inner workings in the department he was directing. To develop the sense of all that was happening, he needed to research, to inquire, and “to seek to understand.” In the midst of this period of immersion, he also participated in professional development at the district level and worked as a team member of the Department of Instruction. His experiences his first year were illuminated as he reflected about the opportunity to participate in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar during his second summer serving in Smith County. His recollections of that experience and his experiences from his first year proved to be consequential:

It's funny because you know having come from outside of the district and not having had the training before and then having really a whole – a year's worth of trainings. Being in her (the Director of Curriculum and Staff Development) trainings and sort of seeing how she facilitates, I knew there was something. [I thought], *okay she didn't just come up with this – there's got to be something bigger*. And I remember them (Department of Instruction members) – they talked about it all the time – Adaptive Schools training and [saying] you'll get that next year. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

The heart of the first research question is simply how the Adaptive Schools Seminar and related learning experiences connected with and impacted professional collaboration in Smith County. The responses of CW revealed that the impact of Adaptive Schools was discernable to someone who entered the district as an outsider, but with over twenty years of experiences as an educator both as a teacher and an administrator. Equipped with the lens of experience, CW had clarity on the fact that the structures that were in place to support groups and professional learning at the district level were different than those he had experienced in other school districts and school settings. When questioning colleagues in the district about the structures that he sensed, it was attributed to Adaptive Schools. Further, he was told that he would have the opportunity to participate in the seminar as he entered his second year. His experience with the seminar helped him understand to a much greater degree the “difference” which he had sensed through his interactions the first year. This was evident as he expressed his thinking about one of the district agency trainers, “You know I have been in a number of meetings with KH and so I get to see her not only do the Adaptive Schools training, but in every other meeting I've ever seen her, she just personifies Adaptive Schools” (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

Through this vignette, it is evident that Adaptive Schools impacted the workings of the Smith County School District. This impact was discernable to varying degrees

through conversation with stakeholders throughout the district including: administrators, teachers, the school board chairman, and teachers. Within this group, most of the participants had attended the seminar, but two had not. Specifically, the impact of Adaptive Schools was seen in the district's focus on: (a) developing a collective, collaborative identity (b) establishing processes and procedures to support collaboration and collegiality and (c) enacting collaborative interactions in the context of district meetings, professional development opportunities, and community forums.

Collective, Collaborative Identity

The Merriam-Webster Online dictionary offers a simple definition of identity, "the qualities, beliefs, etc. that make a particular person or group different from others" ("Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary," 2015). Gee (2014) suggested that identity may be further defined as "Different ways of being in the world at different times and places for different purposes" (p. 3). Both definitions are relevant in considering the impact of Adaptive Schools on identity clarification and development. Adaptive Schools is transparent about the mission to develop individuals' identities as collaborators, leaders, and inquires towards the end of creating a collaborative organization with a shared sense of responsibility for student learning, the ultimate outcome of this accomplishment is to increase student achievement.

Evidence of the impact on identity surfaced in myriad ways: (a) at the district level through a shift from system of schools to a school system and (b) the development of collaborative culture in professional groups within the organization (literacy coaches and Department of Instruction).

Shift from a system of schools to a school system.

Traditionally, the Smith County School System has been recognized as an outstanding school system with great schools. Twenty years ago this “identity” was enacted through the work of individual schools – schools were given the autonomy to make choices about curriculum, programming, and educational philosophy – the common expectation, however, was to “be great.” Based on informal conversations and my personal experience teaching within the district, the measure of “greatness” was equated with high scores on standardized assessments.

Approximately twelve years ago, the district experienced high growth as new families moved into the county and the housing market boomed. Such growth warranted a rate of expansion at approximately one school per year. From 2004 to 2016 the student enrollment increased from 10,280 to 12,049 (Smith County Board of Education) – an increase of 1,769 students. This also accounts for a period of rapid growth between 2004 and 2007. During this period, one superintendent retired and a new superintendent was hired. In light of extensive growth, the need to have greater consistency within the district was evident. The Chief Academic Officer (CAO) from that time reflected about an early interaction she had when a group of teachers across the district was gathered to engage in curriculum work:

I came walking in and it was one of my first days on the job and I remember at lunch time being absolutely mortified that these people weren't talking to each other. It became apparent they had never worked together. And when I worked a little bit further with the group, I had teachers tell me, “We don't think we should share because other schools might take it and get better test scores.” I almost couldn't believe it and I remember talking to the superintendent at the time

because I knew he said that that existed, but I didn't know. I didn't fully realize the extent of it. So, anyway, that was my first challenge of seeing people in silos, competitive, not sharing and as I said earlier there was too much emphasis on . . . the ends justify the means, it doesn't really matter as long as people get test scores. Well, I think that's very short sighted – so I think those were the two challenges coming in –isolationism, competitiveness, and then coupled with this it's about test scores. (EG, Interview, September 4, 2015)

Based on the CAO's perspective, as recently as ten years ago, there was not a collective identity within the Smith County School System. Schools were isolated and the interactions between them were marked by competition. This was further articulated by a principal who was serving at an elementary school at the time and contrasted administrative meetings then to meetings in recent years:

It was operational for about 45 minutes and every member of the central office team would talk and you would hear from the building mods, to what we were doing well to what weren't doing well. Then we would break off and have an instructional session in that same horseshoe setting. At that point and time, there were nine or ten elementary schools; we would all kind of sit in our own little groups – you know kind of like the bad kids in the room . . . Now when we come in, strategically, they have placed us with different groups. I know that's strategic for a reason because we do the same thing with teachers. Sometimes we're with our friends I guess you'll call it, other times we're with schools that are very similar. It's our meetings now are more focused on instruction and unpacking exactly what that looks like and so the instruction is put up front and the operational is put at the end. (LR, Interview, November 15, 2015)

The shift articulated suggests one that moved from a group of schools that gathered to talk about operations and to some degree instructional practices to a group that gathers to collaboratively focus on instruction. The chairman of the Board of Education who has served the district for fourteen years notes a similar shift over her time in office, “Between our school administrators. I feel like there is less competition between our schools and much more collaboration. I also feel like apart from the security issue of leaving classroom doors open, the doors are open psychologically . . .” (NG, Interview, October 21, 2015).

The evolution of this shift started as the district worked to support schools in the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Embedded within this work was the introduction of lead teachers to facilitate grade level teams in the work of PLCs. The Board of Education also committed to this work by allocating early release days in which PLC teams could work together in creating formative assessments, analyzing student work, and developing instruction around observations. Professional collaboration was emphasized as an important priority in terms of further growth and development for the school system. This work was certainly in place and in action well before the district hosted an Adaptive Schools Seminar during the 2011-2012 school year. The way in which Adaptive Schools has impacted the work has been through helping clarify the identity of what it means to be a collaborator – a collaborative culture comes from a group of individuals who have the identity of being collaborators – individuals with identities that necessitate the action of collaborating.

Development of collaborative culture.

This collaborative culture was established through intentionality towards group processes and structures which authentically embed collaboration and interaction. For instance, if meetings and professional development were structured as traditional business meetings or lectures, there would be few opportunities for participants to collaborate, communicate, and construct understanding in the context of social interaction. Because collaboration was valued as a priority in Smith County Schools, the work of Adaptive Schools became central to group identity. This was evident in the way that participants developed understanding of: (a) member roles and capabilities and (b) meeting structures to support collaboration.

Member roles and capabilities.

The work of Adaptive Schools explores explicitly roles that individuals assume as they interact with others. Some of these roles stem from a leadership perspective and include: coach, collaborator, consultant, and presenter. Other roles stem from the roles that group members take on in the context of a given meeting or gathering. These include: engaged participant, facilitator, role or knowledge authority, and recorder (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a). In addition to drawing attention to the roles that individuals can enact in different contexts, Adaptive Schools identifies capabilities for group members to navigate as they interact with others. These capabilities consist of:

- 1) Know[ing] one's intention and choos[ing] congruent behaviors
- 2) Set[ting] aside unproductive patterns of listening, responding, and inquiring
- 3) Know[ing] when to self-assert and when to integrate
- 4) Know[ing] and support[ing] the group's purposes, topics, processes and development (Garmston & Wellman, 2014, pp. 35-37)

Within groups in Smith County, attention to both roles and capabilities was critical to successful collaboration and interaction within a group. CW, Director of Special Programs pointed to the impact of these intertwined threads as he described Department of Instruction (DOI) meetings.

It's a small group there's only eight of us and we've all had the training and when we meet it's incredibly professional. We all know when we are going to come together to talk what the parameters around that are. And when we have dialogue and discourse around whatever, we're in a whole other playing field as far as our capability of the kind of trust that we have as a group [and] on what we can accomplish in those meetings we're way past the development stage of our understanding of each other ...we're just in a whole other level of how we can communicate with each other in our meetings. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

In addition, the words of CAO, CE served to expound upon the ideas shared by CW. While discussing the planning of a DOI meeting, she shared:

We were talking through how to do that [facilitate]. We didn't go get out our Adaptive Schools book or manual, but we knew we had to declare set asides that needed to be put aside. Just like we knew that would be important, we knew we needed to have an anchor text and then provide time for dialogue, but see we don't have to define dialogue anymore . . . that's like a norm – so everybody understands that we're going to do that – so we needed to have time for processing. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015)

She went on to articulate the way in which the work of Adaptive Schools has impacted the culture of groups in Smith County.

I feel strongly that because so many people have been through it and it's just sort of become the culture. It helps us easily navigate difficult conversations better and at the very least if we're not sure, we'll go to our resources. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015)

MG, literacy coach (at the time of her interview) shared a similar perspective in articulating the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools on the leadership team at her school.

My whole administrative team was trained. It makes the biggest impact, especially if the principal will internalize it. We are all aware, even if we are not using our norms, we are all aware that we are not using our norms and we need to go back to it. . . Other than just thinking in general, it makes a huge difference. When our administrative team would meet, we were far more productive because we had all had the training, (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013)

Through these recollections, from directors of groups within the school system to a leadership team member within a local school, it was made evident that a concept of roles and perhaps even more importantly intentionality about behavior gave groups of individuals the capability to come together and work collaboratively. This importance was further shared in the words of KH, Director of Curriculum and Staff Development as

she reflected about her changing perspective of the individuals who would benefit from participation in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar:

At that point I was seeing it more as something that leaders who were facilitating groups needed to have – maybe more so than group members and now I am finding that the balance could be pretty equal. (KH, Group interview, March 20, 2015)

Meeting structures to promote collaboration.

The development of a collaborative culture was aided by developing understanding of group member roles and behaviors to support collaborative work. Beyond this, the understanding that meetings had to be structured in particular ways to allow for collaboration was critical, as well. In addition to moving away from lecture style meetings or agendas characterized by checking long lists of business items, there was a shift in thinking about how time spent within a group could promote a spirit of inquiry and collaboration.

WM, middle school teacher, discussed a shift that she noted in how meeting structures have developed in order to include the voices of all participants.

I see a lot more participation of the members. In fact, we had a meeting last week, a team member meeting, where two of our colleagues, who usually don't speak up in meetings, were more apt to share ideas and share things they had done in their classroom because they feel comfortable sharing now and comfortable knowing that everyone is going to value their opinion. I think the norms had a lot to do with that. (WM, Individual Interview, January 16, 2016)

KR, high school literacy coach, articulated how the awareness of roles and the intentionality about incorporating strategies to share voices was important for a PLC within in her building. She talked about the overall struggles of the group, shared the particular struggle of one of the group members, and highlighted the frustration of the lead teacher:

The PLC [meetings] were being run as department meetings so they were bogged down in talking about how to distribute books and how to collect books and how long was it taking you to do a particular unit and why do we have to teach this book and not that book? So it was kind of bogged down in minutia. And there was a particular voice in that group that was dominating; it wasn't the lead teacher voice; it was a voice that was – was not distracting so much as it was confusing – people weren't sure what this person wanted the group to do around some questions.... So, the lead teacher was struggling to figure out how do I stop this person who seems crazy and then how do I keep these jokesters in line and how do I find a way to talk about things that I'm really thinking these books really are the most important things we should be talking about right now. (KR, Individual Interview, September 3, 2015)

She went on to describe how she was able to support the lead teacher in structuring the meetings differently and shifting the conversation to more important content.

In meeting with the lead teacher over time, we decided that maybe the best thing to do would be to have a particular instructional question each PLC meeting. We pulled back out the five questions that we use in our district to sort of guide our work – so the lead teacher would say, well we're most of us at the end of our unit, so let's take our question around assessment – how do we know when students have learned? And let's let that be the focus of our lead teacher meeting– or our PLC meeting – so we did some work that way. And we did some work around breaking some of those groups up into smaller [groups, because] it was just all ten people trying to talk at one time, so then we broke it into three groups of three with one of four so that they could have more specific conversation . . . (KR, Individual Interview, September 3, 2015)

In considering the shift that occurred, it is also important to see how the “confusing” voice was able to more successfully integrate into the group.

We worked with her and figured out some different processes that she could take for emailing ahead of time some of her thoughts that she was having and then asking specific questions around those thoughts, but trying to wrestle all that within the framework of these questions that are going to sort of guide our PLC work.

Within the interview excerpts the need for a transformative process was revealed through description of: a PLC that was experiencing challenge in terms of engaging in meaningful work, group members who were not being mindful of their interactions and impact on the group, and a lead teacher responsible for facilitating who was experiencing

a great measure of frustration. The attention to the questions which focused the PLC work across the district, the decision to structure the meeting around important questions, and the decision to help a colleague have better awareness of her role within the group, led to greater efficiency and effectiveness within the group members.

We made some progress around that. Since then those meetings are considered more enjoyable for one, which is a big deal and they feel like they are getting more stuff done too. . . . In fact for the first time ever, last year, they did student work protocol and you would think that that would be what we're supposed to be doing all the time. It is – we should be focusing on that kind of stuff all the time, but they couldn't get past the – you know the minutia and the distraction and the confusion and the uncertainty about who was going to lead this conversation and who wasn't . . . (KR, Individual Interview, September 3, 2015)

In essence, becoming more focused on important work and collaborating, required attention to the structures which were used to guide the meeting. It also required that individuals within the group become more mindful of their own intentions and behaviors while interacting with the group. HF, elementary school literacy coach, noted that the PLC meetings of literacy coaches shifted as a result of the work of Adaptive Schools and participation in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

It [meeting structure before Adaptive Schools] would be like the order of business . . . Sometimes in the meeting it was like the here's what you need to know; here's what's going on, but I think that that's the dialogue that occurred. First of all there was no distinction between dialogue and discussion, so, it was vague conversation which is another thing that's different about professional developments. You know just the choices that are made. So, things would carry on a little bit and hopefully get to an end goal and then often did. I mean the structure was different. (HF, Individual Interview, December 7, 2015)

She shared further that in more recent meetings, a variety of strategies were employed to engage the participant and that clear understanding about the functions of both dialogue (talking to explore an idea) and discussion (talking to make a decision) has been established. The outcomes of these shifts in meeting structures and helping group

members understand their roles and capabilities within a group interaction supported groups in becoming collaborative.

The development of a collaborative culture has been found in intentionality to two things: attention to group member roles and capabilities and attention to the processes and structures that are used to promote collaboration in the context of a group. This culture has become a thread within which a fabric of a collective, collaborative identity are woven. An additional thread has been the shifting of collective identity from the notion of a system of schools to a school system. With these threads, a fabric of collective, collaborative identity is woven and it is within this fabric that the conditions to create collective responsibility and ultimately high levels of student learning and achievement are sewn.

Through this section, the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools has been explored in terms of the ways in which it was able to impact identity both for individuals and the organization as whole. This shift in identity, as seen in the way in which perceptions of the school system organization have changed over time and the development of a collaborative culture have aligned the value of collaboration with attitudes and culture which will support collaboration. In addition, to helping this identity shift, the work of Adaptive Schools has provided specific processes and procedures to support both collaboration and collegiality. The next section explores how the processes and procedures of Adaptive Schools have come to support collaboration and collegiality.

Processes and Procedures to Support Collaboration and Collegiality

As a cook needs utensils to cook a meal or a carpenter needs tools to build a shelf, a collaborator and his/her co-collaborators need tools to create a collaborative culture. In the previous section, the way in which meetings and group interactions shifted in order to bring about a more collaborative culture was discussed. This section will address specific strategies, techniques, and tools that were used in shifting meeting structures.

Through the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar many tools, concepts and practices were introduced to participants. It is perhaps through tools, concepts, and practices that the most obvious impact of Adaptive Schools on the Smith County School District was discerned. Processes and procedures that became evident through tools, concepts, and ideas include: (a) the norms of collaboration and ways of talking (dialogue and discussion) (b) the practice of inclusion (c) the concept of the sandbox makes transparent the process of decision making that might otherwise be vague and (d) the practice of developing an outcome focused agenda. These processes and procedures worked together to create a context which is characterized by collaboration, effectiveness, and focus on important goals.

Tools: Norms of collaboration and ways of talking.

In terms of collaborating, behaviors in large part determine the extent to which a group of people is able to work successfully. The norms of collaboration (pausing, paraphrasing, putting inquiry at the center, probing for specificity, posing questions, putting ideas on the table, paying attention to self and others, and presuming positive intentions) (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a) offer a roadmap for “normal behaviors” within the context of the group. The ways of talking – dialogue and discussion – offer

ways of thinking about discursive interactions. Dialogue is used as a tool for exploring topics; whereas, discussion is the talking tool that is used for making decisions after dialogue has been used. For many who have participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, these tools are revealed as significant to personal learning and important in terms of moving groups within the district forward.

MG, currently an elementary school principal (literacy coach at the time of her interview), reflected on how she used the norms of collaboration with a grade level team she was supporting while working as a literacy coach.

I had a team that I was working with and at the start of the year; it was very, very rocky. They had added some new group members so it was tough. After the first disastrous team planning meeting, I was like, okay, I gotta do something to get them all on the same page. So I started the next meeting out with the seven norms. We talked about them and had them each identify one at the beginning of their team meetings that they would be aware of in themselves. That really did make an impact in terms of how that team improved because it heightened their awareness that they needed to do this to be group members. (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013)

Through this interaction, it was revealed that when team members selected actions congruent with collaboration, that the collaborative success of the group was strengthened. A team that had a rocky beginning was able to use the norm to develop a collegial culture. This shift came from the group becoming informed about the norms of collaboration through their literacy coach. This illustrated that expectation of collaboration is not enough to ensure collaboration because individual team members may lack the skills needed to collaborate well.

Similarly, RZ, a middle school literacy coach pointed out that use of the ways of talking – dialogue and discussion proved profound for a group with which she worked.

People really latched on to dialogue and discussion very quickly – the differences. And from what we heard and what we observed it made a difference in the

effectiveness of the meetings when people understand why we're talking -what our purpose is. Here we're talking to solve something and here we're just kind of talking, but that really impacted a lot of our personality types . . . who benefitted from having that clarified. (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2014)

LR, elementary principal, extended the notion of using the structures of dialogue and discussion to bring clarity to the kinds of talk that would happen in a meeting. "I would be a frustrated member of a meeting when I felt like there was a lot of dialogue and there was not a decision made" (LR, Individual Interview, November 5, 2015). In these examples, participants revealed the frustration about collaboration which was expressed when groups failed to make a decision or the work seemed to lack direction or purpose.

The work of Adaptive Schools suggests that when decisions are made in haste they often lack the power to persist or they lack wide reaching support within the group or organization. Through dialogue and discussion there is intentionality both to process and product; there is time for exploring ideas, but also clarity about using that information to make decisions. Clarifying these purposes helps a diversity of group members understand how the pieces of the work are being accomplished and fit together. In essence, awareness of behaviors and structures to support collaboration helped groups have greater success as they collaborated.

CW, Director of Specialized Program extended this notion further by pointing out how the behaviors and choices to support collaboration have become normalized. He suggested that these norm and levels of awareness had positive impact in large group gatherings, as well as PLC meetings:

When all of your district folks have had the same exact training . . . you've set up a culture of dialogue and discourse and what that looks like and what are going to be your norms for interacting with one another – it just elevates the whole group

to a higher level of understanding on how we work together. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2105)

He continued this line of thinking when talking about a small group PLC:

Everything I just said would still apply to small groups like PLCs because you still have common norms, you have a way of interacting with each other that we are all calibrated around - this way that we are going to communicate with one another . . . And we can still disagree but there's a way that we do that . . . it doesn't matter how big the group is. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

Through these reflections, it is evident that awareness of the ways of talking and attention to norms of collaboration impact the behaviors of group members; attention to these behaviors raises the collaborative culture of the group which results in greater success in working toward a common vision.

HF, literacy coach, indicated that these behaviors also became normalized as teachers carried the strategies and behaviors into the classroom:

It's not just with the adult learners in the district, teachers are doing these strategies (practicing the norms of collaboration, pausing, paraphrasing, and probing) [with] students – many are. And so, it is working to foster the academic learning that occurs. (HF, Individual Interview, December 7, 2015)

Within the chef's kitchen, utensils may appear that most rudimentary of needs, but great chefs would argue that it is in these tools that the seeds of great meals are found. In the work of Adaptive Schools, the norms of collaboration and the ways of talking are the most basic of tools, but it is in the simplicity of these tools that the potential for effective collaboration is found. Intentionality to how a group is talking and for what purpose or how individual members are going to interact through pausing, paraphrasing, and posing question impacts the work of the group and offers venues for each member to both advocate and listen. Collaboration cannot be legislated, it does not occur as

serendipitous happen-stance; these tools from Adaptive Schools have provided concrete ways of making effective collaboration happen.

Practice of inclusion.

It is often said in education, “Kids don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Cliché though it may be, the quote gets at the fundamental need for community. Within the classroom, it could be said that community is a necessary, but insufficient element in supporting student learning. The same could be said in the creation of community among adults. The critical aspects of a PLC are the “learning” and the “community” – the vulnerability posed by authentic learning is a risk-taking affair. Thus, in order to build collaborative communities designed to inquire deeply about student learning, it is necessary to build community and relationships among the members. The work of Adaptive Schools suggests that inclusion “begins the process of moving a group from me-ness to we-ness” by “set[ting] norms, focus[ing] attention inside the room, generat[ing] energy, and help[ing] people understand who they are in relation to the group” (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a, p. 103). Many of the participants reflected on the use of inclusion within groups in their school and how it had been used to strengthen collegial relationships and trust.

WM attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar in summer 2014 as a lead teacher in a Smith County Elementary School. In the 2015-21016 school year she decided to shift into teaching language arts at the middle school level. This offered her the unique opportunity to observe how lead teachers at her new school worked to incorporate their Adaptive Schools learning after attending the Foundation seminar. She noted:

The very first time we met as a grade level team, this year and we were doing an inclusion activity and then we were having our discussion and we went over our norms. I think people were kind of a little bit taken aback . . . But, as we've progressed through the year, people are more comfortable with it. From what I understand, this year, we're being more productive. We're getting a lot more done in a meeting, than they used to last year. (WM, Individual Interview, January, 16, 2016)

She also generalized that the work of Adaptive Schools is effective in accomplishing two goals: "getting people to work together and [building] a sense of trust" (WM, Individual Interview, January 16, 2016).

Through these words, truth emerged – that the processes do at first seem awkward or different from normal modes of operation, but that over time the practices facilitated the building of trust, which is the precursor to an effectively functioning collaborative group.

MG, a literacy coach, also reflected upon the requisite need to build trust in creating an effective collaborative group when sharing about her work with the new teacher cadre at her school:

I always start with a grounding activity to ground us into our work or an inclusion activity because early on they don't know each other and I want them to have a network amongst themselves. You know for seven years there has always been a group of new teachers every year I start. So, anyway, I'm pulling them together, helping them get to know each other as well as kind of letting them know what the school is all about. I want them to get to know me as well, so they trust me and will utilize me. (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013)

Through this idea, it is clear that community was being established beyond the grade level PLC. Indeed the literacy coach worked to build trust among new teachers and to set up a culture of trust for the coaching relationship.

Retired CAO, EG, also spoke to the far-reaching nature of inclusion and grounding as she discussed a Leadership Academy Class (for Smith County educators

working towards a degree in administration) that she taught in summer 2014. “Every class started with an inclusion activity tied to the goal we were trying to accomplish ...”

(EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015). She shared:

I would use all of those techniques [grounding and inclusion] and it was amazing to me how many of those techniques they [Leadership Academy Participants] would talk to me about in their reflections at the end of the day – how much that meant to them and that they saw it – that they were coming together as a team. I was trying to be transparent with them as future leaders so that they could see the value of it, as they came together as a cohort. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

In these words was the belief that the practices of inclusion and grounding built more than just trust. Revealed was the idea that they built the trust that led to a sense of team. Through the identity of team there was the opportunity for individuals to become collaborators, inquirers, and leaders who were able, together, to have a profound impact on learning.

Concept of the sandbox.

Metaphors often serve to make concrete that which is abstract. The sandbox is a concept from the work of Adaptive Schools that serves to make the decision making process more transparent by grounding it in a metaphor. In general, the sandbox is symbolic of the territory that an individual or group holds. In the realm of school, decisions are often necessarily in the hands of administrators such as principals because they have a big picture view of the organization and how various parts are interacting. Often such leaders will seek input from individuals who will not actually make the decision. This can become frustrating for those individuals when the decisions that are made are different from solutions that may have been discussed. Because there is value in the discussion and the process of advising those who do have decision-making within

their purview, identifying the sandbox – what is in whose sandbox – can bring clarity and reduce frustration.

Literacy Coach, SV spoke of how the concept of the sandbox reduced frustration in terms of a needed decision at the middle school where she works:

My principal had a decision he needed to make . . . it was related to schedules and there was a group who was not going to be happy. It was going to affect the related arts teachers' schedules and they were going to get less planning time than everybody else and so he put it in the sandbox. "I need your feedback, I am the one that has to make the decision. I value your feedback and I want to hear what you have to say, let me explain the whole situation from my perspective, but let me hear where you are – let's dialogue, let's talk about this, let's look at all the options, again ultimately I have to make the decision." There was a lot of dialogue – a decision was made, their planning time was reduced, they may not have loved [it], but they supported it, they didn't sabotage it and there wasn't a lot of complaints. So, it was a decision that stayed made and was supported. (SV, Individual Interview, August 12, 2016)

Similarly, KR, high school literacy coach, shared that this notion was an important point in the structure of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, "I think for sure the trying to focus the conversation around what's in our purview and what's out of our purview" (KR, Individual Interview, September 3, 2015).

Through her words, KR revealed the power of knowing with whom a decision rests. In meetings, this understanding framed what did or did not need to be discussed in the spirit of meeting a collaborative goal.

Through providing background information, soliciting input, and making an informed decision, SV's principal created a situation that allowed a potentially divisive decision to be made within the school community.

Challenging decisions will always be part of the work of an organization. Providing structures to make them viable and transparent in the school community increases the potential to successfully make a decision that will positively impact students

from a “big picture” perspective. The work of Adaptive Schools addresses this challenging issue in a way that offers new perspective and clarity as demonstrated by the comments of the participants above.

Practice: Developing an outcome focused agenda.

In addition to highlighting behaviors, building community, making transparent abstract decision making processes, the work of Adaptive Schools offers insight to the literal aspects of planning for group meetings including developing an outcome focused agenda with strategies aligned to the stated outcomes. In thinking of outcomes, a group is necessarily considering where they should end up. Ultimately, these outcomes are the stops along the way for reaching the greater vision of the organization. Hence, meeting outcomes provide a means for aligning an agenda with the greater mission and vision of the district. In other words, outcomes are determined by selecting and prioritizing those activities and conversation which further the vision. In the following reflections, literacy coaches share the way in which the planning and content of meetings shifted as a result of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

HF, an elementary coach described how her learning from Adaptive Schools permeated her planning process:

[I ask myself] What strategy is going to help them move forward with their reading and gain what they need to read and talk in the way that they need to talk to then lift them up to the next part of the experience? So, then it would be a planning and maybe that planning would include another Adaptive Schools strategy which we’re doing or we’re having a discussion and then that reflection would probably be some sort of Adaptive Schools . . . We’re talking in very big terms – but I honestly use the strategies to plan each and every increment of time to be able to meet that end goal. (HF, Individual Interview, December 7, 2015)

Similarly, RZ, middle school literacy coach thought back to the immediate results of her learning experience, “They (agendas) started to become much more vision focused

rather than activity focused” (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2016). Her observation extended beyond simply meetings she was planning, but also connected to principles that the leadership team at her school was able to share with lead teachers.

SM, an elementary literacy coach, illuminated how the work of Adaptive Schools also impacted meeting of the district literacy coach PLC, “As coaches, we continually practice it during our meetings, just with simple things like the agenda – what to expect” (SM, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013). KR, high school literacy coach, elaborated on this to a greater degree by pointing out specific aspects of the agenda, “Here’s who’s in charge of it and here’s the outcomes we hope to see with that” (KR, Individual Interview, September 3, 2016).

The processes and procedures that have been discussed in terms of their impact on the Smith County School district were some of the most basic understandings and learning that emerged from the work Adaptive Schools; however, it is within the structure and routine that they offered that they made viable the more complex aspects of becoming adaptive, collaborative, and inquisitive can occurs. Furthermore, it is through some of these tools that discernable changes occurred in collaborative interactions throughout the district including district meetings, district led/facilitated professional development, and community forums with local stakeholders.

Collaborative Interactions

The process and procedures articulated in the previous section have become the tools with which meaningful interactions can be facilitated in myriad contexts throughout the Smith County school district. Gatherings and meetings which were noticeably

impacted included: (a) school and district meetings (b) professional learning (c) community forums and (d) student instruction.

School and district meetings.

School meetings include regularly occurring PLC meetings within a grade level or shared content area as well as faculty meetings or small committee meetings. Likewise, district meetings include a diversity of gatherings including: district wide PLC meetings of groups such as intervention chairs, literacy coaches, school administrators, or department directors (in the case of the DOI). SM, elementary literacy coach considered how she and her principal were able to use structures that they learned through the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminars to build capacity in their lead teachers

When CE was there, we both had gone. So, when she ran the team leader meetings, she would introduce Adaptive Schools strategies to them. One of the things we did with them was practice paraphrasing. It made such a huge difference to their meetings. They would come back to comment and say how it worked and they would say that their role was like that of a facilitator instead of team leader, team facilitator . . . (SM, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013)

RZ, middle school literacy coach, explained how her experience with Adaptive Schools empowered her as she worked with a group of teachers from her school to revise and retool the school's mission and vision. In particular, the group was looking at how to use a structure/class similar to student advising groups differently:

So we broke lead teachers up into groups and they all got chart paper . . . and did their chartings and drawings and all kinds of stuff. And I knew that at some point I was going to have to bring all those ideas together which can be kind of daunting in front of you know many of your leaders on staff. I remember going specifically to my Adaptive Schools materials to say – okay, I know there are protocols for this – what are they? And which ones? What pieces can I take? (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015)

After describing the process the members of the group used in naming their choices, she elaborated:

I had to stand up and help facilitate our final choices and I remember recalling – and that’s the organic part maybe - some of the things I had seen our instructors model for us in terms of setting things on the table or taking them off or the window was closing, some of those things. (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015)

In looking back at the experience, she expressed a sense of satisfaction because the work of crafting a mission and vision and having it be one that group members feel ownership around is challenging. In RZ’s words, “It really was effective – really when you consider that at the end of a couple of hours we walked out with a rebranded vision. I would call that a success” (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015).

RZ’s reflections revealed the power of effective facilitation. Further, her account demonstrated the application of strategy (brainstorming ideas), facilitator moves (closing the window), and norms of collaboration (putting ideas on the table). These tools were used in order for the group to collaborate and reach an appropriate outcome for the group

Additional evidence of how these same characteristics became apparent in district level meetings was revealed in the comments of middle school teacher, WM as she considered the evolution of district meetings:

Most of the meetings that I’ve gone to in the past 3-4 years have been with teachers who’ve attended Adaptive Schools and facilitators who have attended.... One thing I have noticed is I feel like when I go to a meeting, there is definitely a facilitator ... (WM, Individual Interview, January 16, 2016)

She further expressed:

I know that I’m not going to be judged when I go to meetings. I know that because I always felt . . . when I went to a meeting like that [that] I really had to watch what I wanted to say because I was thinking the person who is presenting, *They’re going to go back and they’re going to share this* and then I realized that that role of that person and my role; my role is to share. My role is to give my opinion. I think that the meetings are a lot more focused. I think knowing those outcomes – anytime I go to a meeting and, and being able to be a participant. I feel like I’m more of a participant in decisions that are being made. Even if what I am just doing is having this dialogue and sharing some of my ideas, I’m more

apt to do it because they can [take] those ideas then back to their meetings and share them. So, I do feel more like it's just a lot more – I'm a part of the group as opposed to just being somebody who is in the audience listening. (WM, Individual Interview, January 16, 2016)

WM's shared the clear sense that group members are expected to responsibly participate, listen, and engage in the work of the meeting rather than be passive recipients of information. Retired CAO, EG showed the degree that this group responsibility can be fostered as she talked about bringing together a newly formed Department of Instruction (DOI).

When I formed the Department of Instruction when I became Chief Academic Officer, I sat down and I studied all that [Adaptive Schools]. I brought it all back out. I was very intentional to move forward with this group of people who had never worked together before [through] talking about the norms of collaboration, [and] go[ing] through these steps to form who we were and our purpose and how we were going to interact and it was such a good idea for us. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

Beyond simply setting a tone for district meetings, Adaptive Schools has been important in establishing the outcomes for particular groups. EG, retired CAO, explained how she used Adaptive Schools principles in chairing a principal selection committee at a Smith County School.

The times I led those, I was very intentional about going in and trying to establish group identity. Spending time to bring them together to process what was important to them individually, but what was important to the group and to go through some exercises and I learned a lot about . . . I used the paraphrasing over and over again . . . because they had to come together about what they were looking for. They had to become like-minded to better inform their decision making. So I used all the techniques of paraphrasing, trying to build group identity with them . . . (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

She also emphasized the importance of high structure dialogue strategies which require the participation of each group member at the end of the process:

I always used that [high structure] at the end [of the process] when people are getting ready [to select the principal]. They've heard all these different things and

they are getting ready to make their decision. Well, I used a high structure method at the end to make sure they were using their own voice and not trying to be swayed or doing something like that. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

JW, a high school teacher who served on a principal selection committee with EG shared his perspective and reflections of the process. It is important to note that he had not attended the Adaptive School Foundation Seminar.

One thing that I'll say as far as the experience that I had is that we went through an intentional process of evaluating of where are we as a school, what are our priorities? Who are we? And we kind of had to hold the mirror up to ourselves at school and ask ourselves who are we as Smith County High School and how do we go about ascertaining that? We engaged in looking at what are the things that are considered to be most important the highest priority. What are the things people believe are of greatest need, you know in our community here at Smith? We sought to engage and invite input from a lot of the stakeholders – you know everyone involved. We sought input from teachers, we sought input from parents, of students both here at Smith and for incoming eighth graders from the middle school parents. Being able to reach out to the community and ask for them whether it be a community organization or individual business owners We solicited, reached out for, asked for input for some key driving elements of what's most important? What's identified as our greatest strength our greatest need? And just help give us a good read on what kind of leader do we need? We know and celebrate the amazing leadership of someone like JL and yet at the same time with her completing her tenure, where are we now? And not just where are we now, but where do we want to go? Who do we want to be as a school? And so being intentional through surveying and trying to solicit and get input and be very, very intentional to make sure we hear from and consider a lot of points of view in this process because it could be easy for it to be an open/shut kind of process. (JW, Individual Interview, November 19, 2015)

In this reflection, JW was clear about the process of clarifying identity that the committee went through. The value of inquiry and taking the stance of inquirer and collaborator was highlighted as he talked about the work of the committee to come up with a shared vision of the leader; he also pointed to the inquiry work that was done in terms of communicating with stakeholders in order to account for their thinking in developing a description of the “leader to be.” In his further comments, he made

transparent the facilitation techniques of EG and the degree to which her work made a potentially emotional and conflict ridden decision logical and neutral.

She was absolutely committed to making sure that she didn't try to inadvertently sway anyone, but that the process was truly open and the dialogue of trying to find the best possible description of the leader and it had very little to do with the resumes. It had very little to do with the who [specific identity] but it was about what does this leader look like?

I think it did help any of that kind of preference that people may have or part or bias that they would bring –I think it was by a very easy sense of consensus – and that's the beautiful thing I think about that, this process. It was built around consensus. It wasn't a matter of how many votes yeah or nay – it was consensus – I mean this was about pure respect for each other's point of view. And certainly bringing together – when we had that crystalized idea, through the dispositions of who were looking for, um of the what that we were looking for in a leader, then the who was able to be kind of narrowed down, fairly quickly, I think and without any real dispute, at all. (JW, Individual Interview, November 19, 2015)

These recollections indicated the degree to which the principal selection process became a truly collaborative one. By focusing on vision, in this case of the vision of the qualities that the new leader should possess and making every person's voice heard and respected, a decision was reached that each group member was comfortable with. In going back to some of the tools of Adaptive Schools that were enumerated earlier, this group participated in dialogue – having conversation to explore different viewpoints and then this dialogue segued into discussion about the qualities of a new leader. Ultimately, this discussion led the group to have the capability to make a decision about the candidates who applied for the position. The process embodied collaboration and respect of the different perspectives of the committee, as well as the larger stakeholder population they represented.

Through the preceding illustrations, it is demonstrated that the work of Adaptive Schools had impact on the nature of meeting in schools, at the district level, and through

district level PLCs. This impact came from a variety of factors, but included intentionality in terms of getting group members to engage, making decisions strategically, and employing norms and behaviors that would support collaborative behaviors in the group.

Professional learning.

Professional learning is a critical aspect of the collegial culture of the Smith County Schools. As collaboration is valued as an integral process in planning and developing instruction, it is also valued as an important aspect of the learning process. In the words of Vygotsky (1978), “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and process by which children grow into the intellectual life around them” (p. 88). Although professional learning in this context, is concerned with the learning of adults, Vygotsky’s point about human learning is no less important. Learning is a social construction. Hence, the work of Adaptive Schools with its emphasis on social interaction and collaboration has deeply impacted the way in which professional learning experiences are planned and implemented. Such professional learning experiences include: professional development experiences organized for school faculties by a literacy coach or administrator, the Smith County Reading Academy, and the Smith County Learning Institute.

HF, elementary school literacy coach, Smith County Reading Academy Instructor, and co-facilitator of the Smith County Learning Institute (SCLI) made visible how the work of Adaptive Schools impacted her planning and work and the planning and work of others:

SCLI is entirely structured with Adaptive SchoolsReally any district professional development that is given and or brought to a school or any

consultation that occurs and/or leadership that occurs – those who have been trained, go out into the schools, whether it be – directors of anything or principals, everyone’s had it, everyone does it. It’s the way we do business. (HF, Individual Interview, December 7, 2015)

Her sentiments were echoed in the words of CW, Director of Specialized Programs who articulated the importance of the learning of Adaptive Schools for the teams that he led as they worked to plan and support schools and teachers throughout the district.

It [meeting, professional learning] is always participatory. It’s never me just standing up there. I always try to use multiple strategies in my delivery right out of Adaptive School. I mean our department has become very good at or is becoming better at really naming the strategy and explaining why it’s important. We’ve all bought into that – everybody that went through training – and it was myself and our coaches. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

In the comments above, HF suggested that the work of Adaptive Schools has just become “the way we do business” (HF, Individual Interview, December 7, 2015). In thinking about professional learning, this was significant because professional learning is central to the work of the Smith County Schools. A strong belief exists that professional learning leads and precedes student learning. Therefore, understanding how the work of Adaptive Schools has been important to the planning and structure of professional learning was critical to understanding of the overarching impact of Adaptive Schools.

Community forums.

The Smith County School System is a public school system. As with any public entity, there is communication and relationship with the local community. Indeed community members are important stakeholders in the workings of the district. In light of this, it is important to highlight the way in which the work of Adaptive Schools was used to facilitate communication between community members and the school district in

the redistricting process that occurred several years ago. EG, retired CAO recounted the story of how she volunteered to be in charge of the public forums that needed to be held to discuss the redistricting process and plan.

[I felt], we need people who are skilled with Adaptive Schools and Cognitive CoachingSM to be leading this, to do some of those tenets. So, the whole re-districting plan, MW was dealing with the plans and then I developed and worked with the facilitators and we used those tenets [from Adaptive Schools] to lead the group – the parent break-outs and how we would structure and what we did. We used so many tenets there and at the end of the day if you look at redistricting, something in the past that had been terribly emotional, divisive, I'm telling you, it was the best situation you can have . . . And, here's the other part – it was because of us going through that process that way that we actually got good information from the constituents that helped come up with a better plan. . . . So, all those different things about being cognizant of conflict management, kind of acknowledging, all those things were built into that re-districting facilitation. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

In this interaction with the community, there was intention about using principles that had been learned through the work of Adaptive Schools and applying them in a potentially charged situation. RZ, middle school literacy coach, served as one of the facilitators at campus meetings that were held throughout the district.

When we did the redistricting and we were asked to help facilitate these groups of community members who came from all different areas in our community, some of whom were somewhat heightened emotionally (laughing) and others who just wanted information or just wanted to give input. To be able to mediate that, we used some very specific Adaptive Schools strategies and philosophies – and to me it was a great growth experience to have participated in that because you got to see it with non-teachers. And you got to see how it really diffused some of the emotional aspect of it that needed to be taken out . . . because really we were genuinely involved in hearing input and . . . sometimes emotion can cloud that and so certain people got a little bit irritated with us being so strict with our protocols and our processes, but I think that by the time most people walked out at the end of the hour, they understood why we did that and that is was able to let all parties become involved in discussion and they really did feel heard (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015).

RZ's sentiment is shared by MG, who was a literacy coach at the time and also served as a facilitator.

At the end of each session all of the parents [were] saying, “Thank you so much for listening to me,” they just want somebody to hear them. I think [that it] is going to diffuse a lot of the drama and negativity that can be associated with redistricting because the community sees it in a more positive light because they feel like they are being listened to. We’re paraphrasing what they are saying, we are capturing it, validating it We’re not trying necessarily to move their thinking but through the three rounds I can even in the introduction kind of understand why we are doing the things that we are doing. So, I think it’s diffusing some of the potential negative or hot topics. (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013)

In essence, the importance of Adaptive Schools in these community forums emerged as three-fold: the principles and tenets offered behaviors and structures that allowed community members to share and offer feedback, community members felt heard because their ideas were “put on the table” and their thinking was validated through paraphrasing, and through the ideas that were put on the table a better redistricting plan was developed than one that the district office proposed initially. Through this process, it was clear that attention to structure, attention to fostering idea sharing and communication not only reduced negative feelings and potential conflict, it also yielded a more positive result than would have been reached if the issue had been handled in a singular way by the district.

Student instruction.

With the emphasis on collaboration and inquiry, Adaptive Schools makes tangible the work of a professional learning community. However, it is significant that collaboration and inquiry are not just processes that are valued for adults. Indeed, they are processes that are valued for supporting student collaboration and problem solving, as well. Through several interviews, it was made clear that the work of Adaptive Schools had not only impacted professional interactions, but that it had also impacted student interaction and the processes used to support student learning, as well.

WM, middle school teacher, shared how her learning from Adaptive Schools has impacted her classroom instruction.

You know I use the norms for collaboration in my own classroom. And it's holding my students accountable, which is allowing me then to have more time to instruct because I'm not having to deal with behavior issues or I'm not having to remind students of – this is your role – this is what you're expected to do. I also think just the strategies, in general, will increase engagement which will be a lot more students making meaning of what they're learning as opposed to teachers just giving information out. (WM, Individual Interview, January 16, 2016)

In this response, two impacts on classroom instruction were made transparent: the impact on student behavior and student self-directedness and the degree to which the strategies (designed for many different kinds of work) were engaging for students. SV, middle school literacy coach, shared how the work was able to move beyond the walls of the classroom to support students from all over the district as they engaged in a project through the Smith County Junior Leadership Group.

We were trying to get them to come up with their one big service project that they were going to use and the focusing four worked beautifully . . . Every student had an idea that they came with that they were connected to and that they owned and they felt very passionate about, but because of that strategy we were able to get it down and really come up with one that everyone would be willing to support and were behind. I'm not saying we couldn't have gotten to a decision beforehand, without the Adaptive Schools training, but I don't think it would have been that clean, I don't think it would have been that neat and I don't think we would have gotten it down to something that everybody was behind that they were able to kind of depersonalize it and remove themselves from that process as they could using this one strategy that we'd been taught. (SV, Individual Interview, August 12, 2015)

Somewhat like the community discussions around re-districting, Adaptive Schools principles and strategies allowed for dialogue and discussion around a topic that posed the possibility of conflict. Rather than taking away the conflict, the strategy “Focusing Four” acted as a mediating force which allowed all ideas to be heard while at the same time yielding a decision that was acceptable to all parties involved.

In short, the work of Adaptive Schools was seen through collaborative interactions in meetings (at the school and district level), professional learning experiences, community forums, and instruction with students. As the adage suggests, “The proof is in the pudding.” It is through these collaborative interactions that it was made clear that the work of Adaptive Schools was impactful in tangible ways in the context of collaborative groups. Furthermore, its impact was greater still because of the way in which conflict was able to be navigated successfully (rather than being avoided) in collaborative situations.

Summary of Research Question 1

The first research question of the study, “How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School System?” is one which serves to explore the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools (including the experience of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and further learning in PLC groups or through personal and collaborative inquiry). Interviews with Individuals from the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, a classroom teacher in the district, and chairman of the Smith County Board of Education indicate that impact is discernable through (a) the development of a collective, collaborative identity (b) use of processes and procedures to support collaboration and collegiality and (c) collaborative interactions.

Question 2: How are the intended outcomes and accompanying framework supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the Smith County School System?

There is a line in the Simon and Garfunkel song, “The Boxer” (Simon, 1969, track 16) that gets at the dichotomy of continuity and change with precision and truth, “After changes upon changes, we are more or less the same.” Adaptive Schools can be challenging to define because the concepts and content related to it are vast and far reaching. In a real sense it deals with “a what” – what are we trying to accomplish? – “a how” – how will we go about accomplishing it? – “a why” – why are we doing this? and “a who?” –who is doing this work? The “who” is critical because working, thinking, innovating, collaborating do not happen without people to enact them; furthermore, that who must have understanding of personal and collective identity. So, in thinking about Adaptive Schools and the notion of being adaptive offered by Garmston and Wellman (2009a),” (p.xii), there is clarity about the line from “The Boxer” – rather than some pessimistic diatribe, it might be seen as a definition of adaptivity– changing to get at the true identity. And so it goes with the ideas of continuity and change.

Most notably, the identity of Smith County as “a great school system” or “a place with good schools” remained, but how that was revealed and what that looked like in day to day to interactions had changed. So there were important continuities, but also important changes as the district worked to have a more clarified and articulated collective identity. It was through this lens of identity that the continuities and changes within the Smith School district are considered most profoundly.

It is important to note that Adaptive Schools was not attributable to all sense of continuity and change present within the school district. Rather it was one influence among other factors including visionary leadership, a guaranteed and viable focus on curriculum development through Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), and a focus on the development of Professional Learning Communities. However, it was through considering the themes of continuity and change in the big picture of Smith County Schools that the synergistic interplay of different factors including Adaptive Schools was discerned. What follows is a description of each of the significant changes and continuities in the Smith County School system over the past ten to twelve years and the connections and contribution of Adaptive Schools within each. Two notable changes in the district included (a) a shift from being a system of schools to being a school system and (b) a shift from individual identities to collective responsibility. Significant continuities have encompassed (a) a tradition of excellence coupled with a strong reputation of “great schools” and (b) a belief in the value of classroom teachers – “teachers are the greatest resource.” It is through both continuity and change that identity was clarified and shifted so that through the process the Smith County School System developed an increasingly strong sense of both identity and purpose.

Change: Shift from System of Schools to School System

NG has served the Smith County School District as a board member for the past fourteen years. Of those fourteen years, she served as co-chair for four years and served as chair of the board for the past eight years. When talking about changes that had occurred in the district during her tenure, she spoke in particular about growth.

When I began in the district, we had about 8,000 students and the superintendent at the time – his philosophy was that we were a system of schools and we operate

that way giving our schools each quite a bit of autonomy. As we preceded through major times of growth, in which we received about 500 students a year for several years – which equates to about one school building a year . . . We were growing so fast. . . . We began to realize that we needed to adapt our philosophy to become a school system. (NG, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

Through her reflection she spoke further about some of the changes that were made as the district moved towards a “system” philosophy. “We began at that point to do a lot of things that were going to be similar across say k-5 and then middle school and high schools with much more collaboration. We put a focus on various things that resulted in the much better collaboration and classroom teachers opening doors to other classroom teachers” (NG, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, the retired CAO also spoke of the changing culture of the district. She remembered the vernacular at the time that she entered the school district, “When I came into the district, it was described to me as a ‘system of schools’ rather than a school system. That there had been too much isolation and that that needed to be addressed to bring people together” (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

The current CAO who has worked in the district for nineteen years, ruminated over changes, as well.

When I first came to this district, we were a district full of independent schools. Everyone worked in isolation as far as by school. Rarely did we come, we did not come together for professional learning. We did not come together except for business meetings and that’s what’s changed over time, really moving into an organization. We are Smith County Schools so every school in this district is working collectively on a shared vision. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015)

Additionally, she articulated a change in the vision and mission, “When I first came to this district . . . I don’t even know if I can tell you what our district’s vision was

because it was very much about our school. And I really have seen that shift” (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015).

These contemplations are also echoed in the words of CF who served as a high school English teacher for many years and has been a literacy coach for the past ten years.

I started in Smith County in 1984 and we probably had the quintessential mission statement, but no one would know what it was. We didn't really know what we were working towards and I don't know that we were all going the same direction. I think we had a lot of wild, wild west and it wasn't just in ELA, it was everywhere because everybody was doing the best they could with what they had and what they knew. (CF, Individual Interview, January 19, 2016)

Her words about her earlier experiences contrasted sharply with her sense of the Smith County schools in more recent history:

So when you think about the district mission and the rainbow, we all look at that now, we're all cognizant of that and could say, “Yes – I believe that we're all working towards this and so it doesn't matter what school, it doesn't matter what level we're all working towards that. (CF, Individual Interview, January 19, 2016)

The idea that identity shifted from a collection of isolated schools to a school system is documented in the words of these administrators and literacy coaches, some of who had teaching experience within Smith County. A key to making a shift from isolationism to community – from independent schools to a school system was a focus on collaboration. The development of PLCs at the school and district levels and the literacy coach initiative were two structures that supported the district in becoming more collaborative.

The notion of PLCs, teams of teachers working together with a lead teacher to focus on student learning, was championed by district leadership and supported by the local school board. To support this work, the Smith County School Board began

including six early release days into the school calendar each school year to provide extended periods of time for teachers to work together throughout the school year. This work included the funding for a number of lead teacher positions in each building to support and facilitate learning communities.

Through the literacy coach initiative, a literacy coach was hired for each building to support teaching and learning in the area of literacy. This group was different from instructional coordinator positions that had existed previously because of the system wide element; literacy coaches from each of the schools gathered as a district level PLC for the purpose of collaboration and professional learning. In short, the development of PLCs and the development of literacy coaches within each building was a way to give concrete structure to the goal of building a spirit of collaboration and community.

Adaptive Schools became important to the work of becoming more collaborative through the means it offered in terms of making collaboration and community operational. Adaptive Schools entered the scene of Smith County as a consequence of work that literacy coaches and administrators did with Cognitive CoachingSM. Individuals who experienced Cognitive CoachingSM were profoundly impacted by the work. Through conversations with MM, Cognitive CoachingSM trainer, retired CAO EG learned about Adaptive Schools. She reported that she was hesitant at first but there was something in MM's words that caught her attention and that combined with the trust she felt in MM led her to investigate Adaptive Schools further and ultimately attend the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

When I went I was hooked. It was about the power of moving groups of people – that whole establishing identity and it was about growing people and at the same time getting work done. . . That was like . . . a missing piece. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

In addition, she connected the work of Adaptive Schools to the operationalization of structures to support community development and collaboration as she reflected about one of her personal salient points from the experience, “It’s about growing people as a group, how to work together, how to function as a team, how to do that in a very intentional, purposeful . . . respectful way” (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

In the way that EG expressed the sense that Adaptive Schools seemed to be a missing piece in the move towards collaboration, RZ, middle school literacy coach expressed a similar sentiment, “I remember sitting at one of the early Adaptive Schools trainings and we all just looked at each other and said. ‘Oh, this is what we’ve been missing for PLCs or for groups of content leaders or team leaders or even administrators” (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015). She also pointed out that “it helps give structure to the vision” (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015).

CE, the current CAO of Smith County was a school principal when she first attended the Adaptive Schools seminar. She remembered that she was able to support her schools’ lead teachers in becoming more effective facilitators as a result of her experience with Adaptive Schools.

I was trying to build capacity in my PLC team leaders to lead in a new way and I couldn’t figure out how best to do that and so one of the first things I did was start establishing norms [norms of collaboration from Adaptive Schools] and we unpacked each of those. So, that was another huge aspect that helped me kind of get leverage...I feel like there was just this mindset and belief system that I was able to hold on to. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015)

Through these words emerged the overwhelming sense that Adaptive Schools supported the development of collaboration in concrete and tangible ways. In the words of EG, “it put wheels on the bus” (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

Change: Shift from Individual Identities to Collective Responsibility

Aristotle is attributed with the adage, “The whole is worth more than the sum of the parts.” The essence of this message gets at another significant change within the Smith County School system and that is the shift from individual identities to collective responsibility. This concept played out in many layers in many ways. It can be seen in the way that teachers shifted from thinking about the students in their own classroom to taking responsibility for the students within a grade level and within a school. Further, it can be seen in the way that schools shifted from being individual entities to being part of a larger whole. It is important to note that the process of becoming collectively responsible is just that, a process. Discussion with participants revealed that while there has certainly been a shift from individual identity to a collective sense of identity, there is indication that the sense of collective responsibility is developing.

In much the same way Adaptive Schools provided structures for supporting collaboration, it also supported and developed lines of thinking and ways of being that shift groups from isolation to community. The sense of isolation that pervaded the district is evident in words already shared – from CW’s comments about the fragmentation and separation of the Exceptional Children’s Department from the rest of the school system, to CF’s acknowledgement that teachers did not have a sense of direction or purpose beyond their classroom or EG’s alarm at the level of competitiveness and competition that she witnessed as she entered the district. In what ways did the work

of Adaptive Schools help open and support thinking in terms of collective vision? In particular, the thinking of Adaptive Schools supported the development of collective identity and community through: (a) offering common language and (b) making collaboration operable.

Offering common language.

Within studies of culture, shared language is an important cultural element – allowing members of the group to communicate and interact. In the culture of the Smith County Schools, Adaptive Schools provided a common language for communicating in a collaborative way. As discussed in the first research question, building understanding around the norms of collaboration, ways of talking, and ground member capabilities gave groups a way of naming the behaviors and practices in which they engaged in order to collaborate effectively. RZ reflected on the degree to which Adaptive Schools offered a label for practices and behaviors and how this built common understanding,

I think it [common language] has an important impact for us because ... it enables us to have structures and processes and a common understanding of working with people and helping move initiatives or values forward. I'm glad that we shared the training and I am glad that we share the knowledge. I think district wide anything that you do that helps get and keep people on the same page, you're going to see benefits from that. (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015)

In her role as CAO, EG had the responsibility of organizing and planning professional development in addition to being in charge of all academic programs. From this perspective of building capacity within organization members, EG shared her thinking about the value of the language of Adaptive Schools, “It helped me have something that we could kind of latch on to and an organized way to work through it, think it out, talk about it, train around it” (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

KH, current Director of Curriculum and Staff Development and Smith County Agency Trainer built upon this thinking, “a label allows people to move forward from it and often time that’s that personal part that you can’t label it yourself because you don’t necessarily see ...” (KH, Individual Interview, November 10, 2015). In these words was the implication that labels help bring actions and practices to the forefront of thinking. When an action or behavior has a name it can be both examined and illuminated.

CW, Director of Specialized Academic Programs, alluded to the importance of language in organizational communication and how the work of Adaptive Schools has pervaded that language within the context of Smith County Schools:

When we have sort of a common understanding and a common framework that we work from, it helps our message be more consistent to our stakeholders. . . . Problems happen when people are not articulating the message clearly. It all goes back to communication. Not always, but many times. When you have a common framework of understanding on how you’re going to communicate, it only enhances the message; the chances of you misarticulating the message or giving the wrong message are lessened when everybody’s on the same page. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

Hence, an important way that Adaptive Schools influenced the development of a collective identity in Smith County Schools was through the development of a common language around collaboration and a common framework by which to think about collaboration.

Making collaboration operable.

In the same way that language is an important commonality within a culture, behaviors are critical as well. The development of common behaviors and their place in shared identity can be seen in common expectations and practices within regularly meetings groups and professional development offerings within the Smith County School System.

In commenting about the impact of Adaptive Schools on Smith County, HF shared:

It's the way in which we engage anyone in anything . . . Smith County Learning Institute is entirely structured with Adaptive Schools . . . Really any district professional development that is given and or brought to a school or any consultation that occurs and/or leadership that occurs – those who have been trained, go out into the schools, whether it be – directors of anything or principals, everyone's had it, everyone does it. It's the way we do business. (HF, Individual Interview, December 7, 2015)

Similarly, CW shared the way in which the strategies and practices embedded within Adaptive Schools have become the standard bearer in terms of the facilitation of district meetings and district level PD. “It's everywhere – every time you go to a meeting you're going to see people using Adaptive Schools training to deliver. So – it's not like this thing that you went to one time and then you're kind of done with it – there's an expectation in the district that this is the caliber of excellence that we expect” (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

These behaviors and expectations also played out within the context of the district literacy coach PLC. CF who has been a literacy coach since the initiative began ten years ago, noted that one noticeable shift that occurred within the PLC occurred after Adaptive Schools was introduced:

After we went through Adaptive Schools training, we started having conversation and meetings where it was K-12. This is Smith County schools – this is not an elementary, middle, high thing – [it] unified us. It gave us common language. It gave us . . . We started to realize that even though our students are different ages, that we're all striving to do similar work and have similar impact and utilize the same skills and strategies. I saw it as a way for us to grow if you want to call it our pedagogy collectively. So, it was unifying and enabled us to grow in that capacity because we had all these other people to support us. (CF, Individual Interview, January 19, 2015)

KR who is in her third year serving as a literacy coach was not present to see a shift in the literacy coach PLC as a result of experience with Adaptive Schools, nevertheless articulated the discernible impact, “Voices are respected; people don’t talk over others. They seek everybody’s input around particular issues or questions” (KR, Interview, September 3, 2015).

Through her experience as a literacy coach, later the district intervention coach, and currently as Director of Curriculum and Staff Development, KH suggested that the behaviors and ways of talking and being within a group have come to influence what is acceptable normal behavior within the literacy coach or Department of Instruction PLC.

Then in each of those teams, whether it’s Department of Instruction or Literacy Coaches, you have people who are brand new to the role who are just going through it or have just been through the first four days of foundations and so it’s clunky in places, but that’s the ebb and flow of bringing new people into an already established community. So, I think it’s that they [new members] want to assimilate quickly. (KH, Individual Interview, November 11, 2015)

In fundamental ways, Adaptive Schools served to bring a more cohesive identity to the district through the development of common language and a shared expectation for normal behaviors and actions to promote collaboration. A further implication of this collective identity that was focused around a shared value in terms of collaboration was the development of the individuals involved in the collaboration.

In other words, Adaptive Schools worked to move people towards a collective, collaborative identity through intentionality rather than serendipitous happenstance. That is, there is the understanding that “many hands make light work”; however, what is lacking is often the mechanisms to support “many hands” in working together. As literacy coach and Adaptive Schools Agency Trainer SV suggested, “It’s called Adaptive Schools, but it’s not just about schools, it’s about how people work together to get things

done” (SV, Individual Interview, August 12, 2015). This point was echoed by KH (also an agency trainer):

The intent of Adaptive Schools is to build the functionality of humans that are doing the work. It’s focused on group development; it’s focused on people being effective facilitating, people being effective as group members, being able to effectively interact with one another and have that interdependence . . . [and] having efficacy. And we spend a whole lot of time creating task lists of what work needs to be accomplished and leave off developing the individuals that have to accomplish that work – so, what’s so important about AS is that if you don’t do that [develop the individuals accomplishing the work], the work does not get done well. (KH, Individual Interview, November 11, 2015)

RZ, middle school literacy coach cast this notion in a slightly different light as she suggested that, Adaptive Schools, “is the vision of what we are trying to accomplish with different groups” (Individual Interview, September 1, 2015). This is not to suggest that Adaptive Schools is the ultimate vision of the organization, but that it represents a vision and process for how groups within the organization will function in order to meet the organizational mission.

In effect, Adaptive Schools served an important role in being a vehicle to the collaborative culture that was sought as the Smith County School System transitioned from being a system of schools to being a school system. An important hallmark of the collaborative culture that was sought was a sense of collective responsibility. Although the sense of collective responsibility and even collective identity has not come completely to fruition, there was a sense of movement and progress along that journey. This perspective was expressed through a reflection of KH, “Shared identity within an organization this large is difficult to achieve” (KH, Group Interview, February 5, 2016). The fact that the district has not completely arrived at the sense of collective responsibility is not as important as the evidence that the district has moved from a place

of isolationism and autonomy to a more collective identity. As they move towards a place of collective responsibility, student learning and achievement will ultimately be impacted in the most profound ways.

Over the course of about twelve years, the Smith County School system has made some significant changes in terms of culture. These changes have included the development of common language and behaviors and the operationalization of common language and behaviors through meetings and interaction held at the district level.

Continuity: Great Schools

In light of changes that have occurred, it is equally important to explore continuities – it is important to pose the question, “What has stayed the same?” JW, a teacher who returned to a teaching career (after being an independent insurance broker) approximately seven years ago in Smith County describes his desire to work within the district, “I had been in the classroom over a decade prior and I had been out of the classroom quite some time, so I missed it and that’s what I was starting to try to get myself back into. . . I lived in Smithville and I had done my homework and I knew that Smith County schools was a quality school district that I would love to be a part of” (JW, Individual Interview, November 19, 2015).

This belief was echoed in data that demonstrated in the dramatic growth the district experienced prior to the global financial crisis of 2008. Prior to the growth that led to a need for more cohesive structures, each school had a great deal of autonomy in working towards their individual vision of greatness. This is found in the words of both the School Board Chairman, NG and EG, the retired CAO which were recounted earlier. From a district perspective, the standard for greatness in terms of the school district

expectation was academic excellence evidenced by achieving high test scores. The evidence of this is found in the account of EG's early experience in the district in which teachers expressed concern about sharing with teachers from other schools because "they might get higher test scores." The pervasive sense of competition which was felt between schools was also found in the reflection of NG when she discussed interaction between administrators (building and district level) at administrative staff meetings, "What I feel like I have seen is much more collaboration between our staff and between our school administrators. I feel like there is less competition between our schools and much more collaboration" (NG, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

This tradition of academic excellence has continued, what has changed has been the evidence that is considered viable in terms of determining the meaning of the goal. Further the mission and vision have come to encompass more than supporting students' academic success. The mission and vision of the Smith County School System reads:

All Smith County students supported by family, community, and schools participate in relevant engaging, quality learning tasks, in safe, well designed schools, guided by highly-skilled teachers and visionary leaders. Graduates pursue a life of continuous learning, contribute to their community, participate thoughtfully in the American democracy, and compete successfully in the local, national and international economy.

To support administrators and teachers in putting a face to this mission and vision, a particular way of talking about the district's purpose was to consider "the child in the chair." The idea of the child in the chair was simply the idea that if you considered a student entering the Smith County preschool who was going to travel through the system until graduation, what would the desired outcome be for the child? With this iteration of belief and values, system wide thinking about what it meant to be a great school shifted from simply achieving high test scores, but thinking concretely about the experiences of

the child in the chair – no matter the identity of the child. This line of thinking encompassed thinking about more than high test scores, but included the development of 21st century skills, creativity and innovation, and leadership. In essence, the phrase which came from a powerful symbol of a student’s k-12 experience became the concrete embodiment of the vision.

If vision is what the end in mind is, then mission is what is being done to reach the vision. If the “child in the chair” is indeed going to be able to do the things stated in the Smith County Schools vision (pursue a life of continuous learning, contribute to their community, participate thoughtfully in the American democracy, and compete successfully...) it is similarly necessary to articulate mission in a concrete and pithy way. Although how students will reach the vision that is stated in the mission/vision statement, a more recent development within the school district has been the development of a hedgehog statement (based on Isaiah Berlin’s essay “The Hedgehog and the Fox” and recounted in Collins’ (2001) book *Good to Great*). Collins points out the value of the hedgehog knowing one thing and doing that thing well. At the district level, this led to the development of a hedgehog statement – a statement that clarifies purpose through a singular statement. The purpose statement which developed was “Ensuring the learning of every student.”

In this progression, what was observed is that there continues to be a tradition of excellence and a commitment to fulfilling the reputation of having great schools. However, what is encompassed in the identity of being “a place with great schools” has been articulated and clarified to a greater extent. After changes upon changes, Smith County is who they were – but with a much deeper sense of purpose – a shared identity

about striving for much more than test scores, but rather striving towards life success for all students by ensuring the learning of every student.

Adaptive School supported this clarification of identity through the focusing questions: Who are we? Why are we doing this? Why are we doing this this way? (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a). So a continuity was evident in the identity of Smith County Schools as a place with great schools, but consistent with Adaptive Schools, there were necessary changes and shifts that occurred even as the identity was clarified. In this way, continuity and change worked like a yin and a yang – two sides of the same coin. While part of the identity was potentially powerful – Smith county – there was part of the identity – a focus on test scores and the accompanying competitive environment which stopped collaboration that prevented the system as a whole from serving the districts’ students as well as possible. Such realization necessitated the desire to refocus on practices and beliefs that would be good for all students served by the district. In fact, such a refocus was necessary to make true the reputation and identity – a place with great schools. An identity which remained the same also became further clarified.

Continuity: Teachers are the Greatest Resource

What’s always been in place is I feel like we’ve always had an understanding in this district that teachers are our greatest resource. And teachers are what impacts student learning and so we’ve always been invested in teachers. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015)

Chief Academic Officer, CE, made an important observation about a continuity in Smith County through this comment. She also suggested that ten or twelve years ago this work happened in the context of individual schools, but now there is a more collective emphasis on the ways in which this belief moves into action.

JW affirmed this thinking as he talked about the work of other professionals, “We in this profession of teaching are practicing the art of teaching just as doctors practice medicine and attorneys practice law” (JW, Individual Interview, November 19, 2015). Through his words, he pointed to an emphasis on building teachers’ practice of teaching. Further, he shared the value of participation in the Smith County Learning Institute (SCLI) a three day embedded professional development experience for teachers across the district to support the development of powerful pedagogy around community, cognitive thinking strategies, gradual release of responsibility, and discourse.

I guess having that re-initiating experience through SCLI for learning how to better teach and to be more aware of the role of me even as a co-learner – not the dispenser of knowledge is something that very much – I look back on and I – I am so grateful for that because it has shaped the focus of how I do what I do. (JW, Individual Interview, November 19, 2015)

In articulating the importance of such experience to his own learning, he points out that an investment in teachers is pervasive within the district (and has been over time), “I come back to that commitment of excellence for Smith County; it’s part of the DNA to help us [teachers] be the best at this thing called teaching and that is the continuity that I’ve seen” (JW, Individual Interview, November 19, 2015)

Through this line of thinking, two key ideas emerged: Smith County invests in teachers and the practice of teaching and that the experiences offered within the district level are valued by the teachers who experience them. In this specific instance, JW referred to SCLI. Other opportunities for learning which are offered at the district level include: Understanding By Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), Smith County Technology Institute (SCTI), learning cadres and cohorts (English Language Learner cohort, Gifted and Talented cohort, behavior cadre, Kindergarten cohort/Kindergarten

Academy) and graduate learning through the Reading Academies (Primary, Intermediate, and Content).

Adaptive Schools fits into this investment in building teacher capacity through learning focused on developing organizational capacity and developing professional capacity. Retired CAO, EG was largely responsible for bringing AS into the district and she shared that the commitment to building capacity was one of the ways in which the work was appealing (and congruent with) the vision and mission within Smith County Schools.

I made a personal leap forward in understanding, after I attended the Advanced Seminar. That's when things really clicked with me about the power of that [growing people and at the same time getting work done]. So, it fit into the bigger vision of bringing people together and building the capacity of people. . . At the end of the day, if you believe that you've got to build people's craft, make them better at doing their jobs, have positive presuppositions that they're there because they care about kids, they want to do the best they can do, but sometimes they just don't know how or they need to think about and reflect on it and you know be pushed cognitively . . . You can't just stumble around, if you have some training you can better facilitate that. And that's why wanted to invest in people, not programs, [not] quick fixes, you invest in your people. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

In these words was the belief that building capacity was not about quick fixes or program, but rather increasing the internal capacity of the members of the organization. In connection to the work with Smith County, there was a recognized need to move from isolation to collaboration.

Adaptive Schools with its focus on building identities of collaborators, inquirers, and leaders offered concrete ways of empowering individuals to collaborate. As with any transformation, collaborative culture is not something that emerges because it has been deemed valuable. To work at collaboration and working collaboratively individuals need to learn how to act and speak in ways that support collaboration.

The focused outcome of Adaptive Schools of forming collaborative groups with a shared responsibility for student learning also met a perceived need among teachers and coaches in the district. In the way that a math teacher needs to understand math in order to teach it, a lead teacher needs to understand facilitation and collaboration in order to be effective in leading a collaborative group. RZ pointed out the potential of Adaptive Schools to meet this need:

I feel like our leaders are always asking for not just content information, but how do I become a better leader? So, I would think that it would help address some gaps that we might have in terms of training leaders [lead teachers] to be leaders – training teachers to know how to be teacher leaders, that’s inherent for some people, but not as many as you would probably think. And even for people who do have sort a natural inclination towards leadership, you still need structures and processes and you still need learning yourself – so I would, I would think that it would bolster that leadership aspect of that whole teacher leadership emphasis. (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2015)

Likewise, KH, the Director of Curriculum and Staff Development reminded that even as teachers demonstrate potential for leading that it is still important to build the internal capacity to meet the new challenge that is presented.

We talk about building capacity in our organization and we think building capacity is giving someone a job to do and then by having them do that job they will naturally gain capacity. . . It’s the huge mistake that we have happening and I see it because giving you a leadership job to have without providing you the skills just puts work on your plate – and you haven’t grown at all, you’ve just become stressed out and overwhelmed. And so you first have to establish an identity that this is a role that you’re capable of and this is why and this is what about you and that you hold that identity. . . Then equip them with some skills, knowledge, understandings, moves as a facilitator or whatever it is - in order to do that well (Individual Interview, KH, November 10, 2015).

KH stated clearly that a danger in thinking about building capacity is the tendency to think that added responsibility is synonymous with building capacity. Rather she suggested that whatever challenge is presented, in this instance the challenge of leading, that is it necessary to equip the affected individual with the strategies and understanding

to successfully meet the challenges of the task; adding responsibility does not serendipitously yield to increased capacity.

The words of history teacher JW indicated that in his experience this assurance of support is clear. “The commitment is there – not only from our on-site administration, but I definitely sense a belief from our central office, from our board of education, that no matter what the changes are, we are not going to throw the changes at you without also providing you some guidance about how to implement and how to still be successful” (JW, Individual Interview, November 19, 2015).

Through its congruence with the belief that building capacity is critically important, Adaptive Schools is situated appropriately in the context of this continuity. Not only does it provide ways of thinking about professional development, collaboration, and meetings – which have the opportunity to develop the capacity and collective responsibility of groups, it also is explicit in building understanding around group development, ways of facilitating, and ways of engaging in collaborative talk. Furthermore, it offered a “how” to building capacity in light of collaboration and teacher leadership. It was a change in that it offered specific ways to support teachers, administrators, and coaches in developing skills, knowledge, and understanding in terms of being a collaborative organization that supported an important continuity within the organization – the belief that teachers are a great resource.

Summary of Research Question 2

When exploring the idea of culture the simultaneous concepts of continuity and change are significant. Over the course of the past twelve years, Smith County has experienced significant change through shifts in leadership, mission, and sense of

purpose. Notably, the district has shifted from structure of “a system of schools” to a school system and from a position of isolationism to a collaborative collective identity. Significant continuities include cohesiveness around a reputation and identity of “great schools” and a belief in the value of teachers as resources. Though Adaptive Schools neither precipitated the changes nor cemented the continuities, professional experiences with Adaptive Schools throughout the district have supported lasting change in terms of developing collaborative cultures and have supported the district’s journey to explore, articulate, and refine its identity. Further, as the district identified collaboration as a necessary focus of change, Adaptive Schools has provided concrete structures for supporting educators within the Smith County district as leaders, collaborators, and inquirers. This section has explored significant changes and continuities and explored the connections of Adaptive Schools to each.

Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 explored the answers to the original two research questions:

- 1) How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School System?
- 2) How are the intended outcomes and accompanying framework supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the Smith County School System?

In reference to research question one, interview data indicated that Adaptive Schools has impacted the Smith County Schools as evidenced by: (a) development of a collaborative, collective, identity (b) use of processes and procedures to support collaboration and collegiality and (c) collaborative interaction across the district. Data in regard to the

second question revealed two significant changes: (a) the shift from a system of schools to a school system and (b) the shift from individual identity to collective responsibility. Two significant continuities were also highlighted: (a) a tradition of excellence and great schools and (b) a belief that teachers are the greatest resource.

DATA ANALYSIS: THE PLOT THICKENS

At the committee meeting there were several issues that emerged but there are two that I have been contemplating. The first is Sue's question about my use of the terms of paradigm and phenomenon. The second thing I want to consider is the construct of Academic Optimism. In thinking about the construct of Academic Optimism, three things are central academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy. My hunch is that Adaptive Schools really gets at two of those: relational trust and collective efficacy. So as I consider this, I have to think about that I am playing around with the semantics of paradigm and phenomenon – is Adaptive Schools a paradigm that affects the phenomena of trust and efficacy within a school? (WCW, Memo Document, July 6, 2015)

Adaptive Schools occurred within the context of specific conditions: a shared interest in collaboration, strong leadership, a context with commitment towards mission/vision and long term goal – it worked because it fit with the work the district was trying to do. Can an individual attend the seminar and be changed – certainly – but there were particular conditions that led to AS having systematic impact – it was a how for a shared value – it was a “how” for getting to a what. Even within the district as training continues there is need to attend to the long term education and learning of participants – without follow-up, without intentionality about what is being learned, it will lose its impact. (WCW, Memo Document, January 22, 2016).

Qualitative research provides the opportunity to explore research question in the context of rich and detailed data. In framing the study, I wanted to understand the impact of Adaptive Schools on the Smith County School System. Further, I wanted to understand the degree to which Adaptive Schools interacted with changes and continuities within the school district. In my quest to understand the intended questions, new question arose. The memos above highlight two of the questions that became central to my thinking as the study progressed:

1. Does Adaptive Schools function as a phenomenon or a paradigm?
2. What conditions present in the Smith County School system caused Adaptive Schools to be impactful?

The chapter which follows examines each of these questions.

Emergent Question 1: Does Adaptive Schools function as a phenomenon or paradigm?

This question began during my dissertation proposal meeting. Throughout chapter 2, I had described Adaptive Schools as both a phenomenon and a paradigm. One committee member posed the question, “Which is it, a phenomenon or a paradigm?” Although I had an uncertain answer at the time – I posited that it was both – the question continued to linger in my mind as I interviewed participants and analyzed my data. I realized in this process that there was not a quick answer to the question and that it was one that I need to allow the data to reveal. The question was important to explore because it alludes to the significance of the professional learning that occurs in the context of Adaptive Schools. Throughout this section, I will explore definitions of the words phenomenon and paradigm. These definitions will be used as a lens to discern the nature of the impact of Adaptive Schools on four participants: EG, retired Chief Academic Officer (CAO), CE, current CAO, CW, Director of Special Programs, and SV literacy coach and Adaptive Schools agency trainer for the Smith County School District.

Phenomenon and Paradigm Defined

Moustakas (1994) shared that “phenomenon comes from the Greek *phaenesthai*, to flare up, to show itself, to appear” (p. 26). He also said, “Phenomenon are the building block of human science and the basis for all knowledge” (p.26). The definition offered by the Merriam-Webster (“Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary,” 2015) points to similar meaning, “something (such as an interesting fact or event) that can be observed and studied and that typically is unusual or difficult to understand or explain

fully” (accessed March 5, 2016). In a literal sense, a phenomenon occurs externally, but has internal ramification as it is perceived through the senses and processed by brain.

In contrast, a paradigm is an internal structure. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary suggests that it is “a theory or a group of ideas about how something should be done, made, or thought about” (“Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary,” 2015).

In light of the definitions of phenomenon and paradigm, there are aspects of Adaptive Schools which align with each. In essence, there is a large body of work that is Adaptive Schools. This work includes a 230 page book in its second edition and 95 page learning guide in its tenth edition. In addition, there are a number of articles which lay out the meaning of Adaptive Schools, the characteristics of Adaptive Schools, the values of Adaptive Schools, and strategies and behaviors for helping school move towards being adaptive. In this way, the work of Adaptive Schools is paradigmatic. Although there are actions and behaviors that are defined, these actions and behaviors are aligned with a framework – a way of thinking about things.

Additionally, within the work of Adaptive Schools there are seminar experiences: the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar. There are also additionally experiences for individuals who are working to be trainers and this is called the trainer’s path which includes additional learning and opportunities to observe and participate in the Foundation and Advanced Seminar several times. These seminar

experiences are immersive and they are just that – experiences. In the way that a phenomenon is experienced by the senses, participants begin to experience the work of Adaptive Schools actively. In fact, these seminars (Foundation and Advanced) act as threshold experiences. The Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar is an entry point to the initial work. Likewise, the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar is a threshold to greater understanding beyond the Foundation Seminar experience. In much the same way that experiencing personal loss yields an understanding of loss unobtainable through other means, the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar acts as threshold into the work of Adaptive Schools.

Given this information coupled with the meanings of both phenomenon and paradigm, the questions arise – how does Adaptive Schools function in terms of the experiences of participants of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, Advanced Seminar or trainer’s path? Is there a degree to which some individuals may experience the work as only a phenomenon, others experience it as a paradigm, while others internalize it as both phenomenon and paradigm?

Examination of the study participants provided insight about the degree to which they experienced Adaptive Schools as a phenomenon (more than a typical training or a typical day at work) and also the degree to which it was enacted within them as a paradigm. To explore these ideas, the thinking and reflections of four interview participants will be shared.

Participant Experiences

EG.

EG, the retired CAO of Smith County schools was transparent in describing the degree to which she valued the work of Adaptive Schools beginning with her initial participation in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. Of this first experience, she reported:

The initial training, I enjoyed it thoroughly. I remember very soon into it, going, *Oh my gosh there are so many things that I am taking away from this*. Things I had seen good facilitators do, but it was such an intentional way that CLH and some of them did that - to have it named, to be explicit, to really think about it and I can remember going, *Oh my gosh – this is just – yes, yes, yes*. So, I can honestly say I got one level of understanding that first seminar through. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

In these words, it was clear that even the first experience was impactful. This short description provided the sense that the work impacted her as a phenomenon. The seminar was experienced externally. Through listening and observing the facilitator, EG experienced insight into why certain methods of facilitation were effective. She noted what the facilitator did (naming the purpose, being explicit, really thinking things through) and considered how those actions would be impactful in her own work.

She also explained how her thinking deepened as a result of the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar:

When I went to the advanced one, it really deepened my understanding. I really got past the strategy part and some of the other things into that whole thing about identity, the group consciousness – that part of it It really deepened my understanding. . . . But I can remember, especially with the Advanced Seminar, I can say this - that that was probably one of the most powerful trainings I had ever been to in thirty years as an educator. I just remember being – I don't know – just hit over the head with some things and watching them – the individuals that led the seminar – masterful. I felt like I was in the presence of just so much wisdom and knowledge and it affirmed for me that the work – that it had to go forth. So, both good experiences, training that I still use. I used it every day after I had

them and I still go into situations today . . . [and] take some of those tenets with me into it. . . It [the work of Adaptive Schools] changed my practices and I was already well into my career. So, here I was 22 years in – I don't know how many - and it caused me to shift. And so, it changed me. I don't know how I can really say it. It changed me. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

In this reflection, the degree to which the Advanced Seminar deepened her thinking was evident. She reported specifically moving beyond strategy and considered deeply portions of the work that focused on identity development. Again, the experience of observing and noticing the work of the facilitators was impactful beyond just internalizing information. From the experience came the understanding that the work with Adaptive Schools in the district needed to move forward; there was also a desire and motivation to use what was learned in her daily interactions. Though retired now, she reported that the tenets, the strategies, and the work of the training continued to be useful in current situations when consulting or teaching graduate classes.

Through these vignettes, it was apparent that EG experienced the Adaptive Schools Seminar Experiences (Foundation and Advanced) as phenomena. Her final words, “It changed me” (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015) hint that a question to explore further is the extent to which these phenomena became paradigmatic in their impact.

When asked to characterize the shift she experienced in as cognitive or in terms of actions, she replied:

It was both. . . I feel like I am very intuitive, but it helped me name it. My practices changed from everything . . . even down to like being thoughtful about inclusion activities and group processing, the paraphrase. You know, I used the expression yesterday with someone about a shift in abstraction. It [the work of Adaptive Schools] helped me process things so differently, and so even in my personal life, I have it there, too, as well as my professional [life]. It shifted me - my thinking and most definitely it shifted what I did in my work. You could look at my agendas before and after training, you can look at the way I approach

training before and after. When I formed the Department of Instruction when I became Chief Academic Officer, I sat down and I studied all that [the work of Adaptive Schools]. I brought it all back out. I was very intentional to move forward with this group of people who had never worked together before about talking about the norms of collaboration, to go through these steps to form who we were and our purpose and how we were going to interact and it was such a good idea for us – doing that. So to your question – it did both – of course I'm not doing that every day like I used to, but I still think about it a lot in [my] personal [life]. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

In later comments, she contrasted the experience of the work of Adaptive Schools, particularly as it pertained to the seminar experiences, with other professional learning opportunities:

Some of it was intuitive to me, so I had a name for it. And then some of it pushed me to be ... better at some things. [I thought] don't ignore it, don't ignore it, slow down, slow down, do this, do this because there is value in it. Don't just recognize the value, actually make yourself do it. . . . I mean there's a lot of training you go to and you don't do that [realize the value and make yourself do whatever the training advocates]. Yeah, there's a good idea that was not my experience with these trainings at all. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

In these words, EG highlighted the tendency for participants in a learning experience to see value in the idea or strategies being introduced, but even with seeing this value, there is often little change in practice. She articulated that was not her experience in the case of Adaptive Schools. She saw the value in the work, but internally there was also a sense of engaging in the work – bringing the value to life through her own actions and work. There was also evidence that the work influenced behaviors and choices, but at the root – the work was paradigmatic; it shared a way of thinking about things and that thinking transferred to her own perceptions and thinking about the world, as evidenced in the following:

I think the big thing was it changed me. It made me better; it made me a lot better as an administrator, as a leader. I felt like I was better able to do the two jobs that

I had in Smith County because of that training. I think it helped me really make something that was a vision really – I call it putting wheels on the bus.

She continued:

So it changed me; it changed my practice and I feel like impacted people – some more than others, but it helped develop, create this culture that has now become more normal about everybody learning and growing together, that's what I think's happened. And that's a great thing to know (note?) – that those isolated walls that how it used to be has changed so much and that people want to go to training to increase their skill set. I've had so many people in the district say, I feel like this district values me more – it wants me to grow as a professional and that's the best thing to me that anybody could say. And that means that there is inside maturity and that the Adaptive Schools was a vehicle for us to be able to do that. So, you know, I don't hide it, I'm a huge fan. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

Hence, EG summarized the way that the work of Adaptive Schools changed her.

She shared that it changed who she was and it changed her practice. She described how that thinking and framework (language indicative of a paradigm) impacted the culture of the district a whole. Because of her experience with the phenomenon, and her understanding of the paradigm that Adaptive Schools offered and the way in which these things interacted to change her own paradigm, EG was able to act in ways that ultimately impacted the culture of the Smith County School District. Further, the shift in culture from isolation to collaboration led to the construction of new paradigms within the district about how to interact; how to collaborate.

CE.

CE is the current CAO of Smith County Schools. At the time that she experienced the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar she was an elementary principal. She went on to become the Elementary Level Director of Smith County School for three years before becoming the CAO. As she reflected about her experiences with the work of

Adaptive Schools, the gradual way in which it impacted her become evident. She began by discussing her role at the time of the initial training:

So, I was a principal at HC Elementary, I remember what I had on – if that tells you how impactful AS was for me. I was a principal in my first year and struggling to be quite honest. I was coming into a situation and seeing a multitude of needs that needed to happen and feeling overwhelmed. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015).

She then explained that she did not know a lot about Adaptive Schools at that point and that she didn't feel that she had time for the training given her current challenges. In this, there was the sense that the seminar certainly was enacted as an experience. There was also a sense of how it impacted her through the senses as she recalls the clothes that she wore that day as evidence of the importance the day eventually took on, but it is through her next recollections that it became evident that the experience moved beyond the realm of an ordinary training on an ordinary day.

I remember the whole piece about a culture of adaptability and change and again, I don't remember how CLH . . . led us through – I just remember feeling like, *oh, this is normal* – like okay – this is normal and I remember feeling a sense of clarity in how to go about the process of helping individuals and organizations be more adaptable and having tools. I remember walking away and there was comfort because the literacy coaches – my literacy coach and I were both in it together and both having these same kind of ah-has and then being able to go back in school and keep working on it together – certain aspects of that together. [It] was helpful or it was valuable to me. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015)

In these words, it is clear that CE moved beyond initial feelings of being overwhelmed and tight in terms of time because she reflected on the understanding that she developed. Next, she described how the process of experiencing Adaptive Schools with another person was important because of the insights that each had. In essence, they were able to process this thinking and take it back to the daily experience.

She also revealed a particular insight that she had about PLC groups within her school.

I was trying to build capacity in my PLC team leaders to lead in a new way and I couldn't figure out how best to do that and so one of the first things I did was start establishing norms and we unpacked each of those. So, that was another huge aspect that helped me kind of get leverage – those were the big things. What's funny, as I think about this is I feel like there was just this mindset and belief system that I was able to hold on to – (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015).

CE alluded to both the experiences and the thinking or paradigm and how it was shaping her. As she discussed actions that she was able to carry back to PLC lead teachers to build capacity, there was the sense that she was able to take an experience in order to create an experience. Beyond this she pointed to the fact that there was a mindset a set of beliefs to hold on to and this language was indicative of the presence of paradigmatic experience. That is to say, she sensed a paradigm that framed the professional learning experience. A question which might be furthered pondered in this regard is: to what extent did the paradigm or mindset become her own paradigm or mindset or become synthesized as an operating paradigm?

Some sense of how CEs understanding was built over time is illustrated in the following recollection in regard to the learning that happened in the context of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and the learning which followed.

[The way] their sessions are done is powerful. It's the way that they're modeling, so they're modeling as they're presenting. . . . It's heavy content – heavy, heavy content, but breaking it up over a series of days [is important]. Having the manual and the text separate is also another helpful piece of their training because . . . still to this day . . . I can go to my text when I know I am going into a difficult group to be reminded about conflict . . . So I think a big part of their training is balancing building background knowledge very simply. I feel like they do that very simply – simplistic – then they let you have a go or get with others and engage in dialogue – that's powerful. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015).

This excerpt illuminated the aspects of the experience that made it extraordinary. She pointed out that heavy content was covered over the days and that it was discussed thoroughly with partnerships and groups. Simple structures to promote conversation and dialogue helped the content make a lasting impact. Further, she suggested that the seminar materials became important reference points in the future. That is the content became something that she used as a tool to frame her thinking about different situations.

The degree to which the content became a support in framing her thinking and intentionality about different situations was also evident in the following passage.

We're in transition phase right now. I'm new into my position; we have an interim superintendent. We've gone through difficult, choppy waters and so I go to Adaptive Schools and Cognitive CoachingSM, both have sections about navigating change I've read and read and reread those sections to help me be intentional about structures and processes to put in place to help people connect past to present. I move on into the Adaptive Schools strategy section and I think almost every time I'm with that group I pull more adaptive, one of the strategies that are in the text to help me with group processing. So, Adaptive Schools has helped me in that way. (CE, Individual Interview, March 6, 2015).

Through these experiences, CE conveyed the degree to which the work of Adaptive Schools has framed her thinking about working with group in different situations and conflicts. Beyond just influencing how they interacted, she also considered how other dynamics were at play in a group whether those dynamics included conflict, transition, or change. From these comments, it was apparent that the impact of Adaptive Schools on CE was paradigmatic. Certainly, she experienced the seminar as a phenomenon and the strength of that experience transcended the day, but it also became a reference structure for thinking about groups and their interactions. The degree to which

the work of Adaptive Schools has interacted as a phenomenon and paradigm was particularly clear in her final reflection:

You know how in your journey through your growth as a professional, there are certain things you can say – oh this put me on a new course or this shifted me in my beliefs? Adaptive Schools and Cognitive CoachingSM both – really Cognitive CoachingSM first and then Adaptive Schools really helped me think about groups and on a larger scale. It put me on a new trajectory in how to build capacity in people, which is something that I'm passionate about, but I felt like – ooh – like this really works (chuckling). . . . These are powerful tools that have impact on – so it's just a foundational – I hate to call it training because to me it's not the training, but it is a belief that really can impact people. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015).

In these words she indicated the presence of a phenomenon as she talked about the “training” and her dissatisfaction with the word training. Early she articulated the value of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and in this exchange, she suggested that the work of Adaptive Schools sent her on a new trajectory. This is indicative of an experience that moved from the realm of the ordinary to the extraordinary – suggesting that it functioned as phenomenon. Beyond that is the sense that the work of Adaptive Schools was much more than just a powerful seminar experience, as she talked about how the work impacted thinking, behavior, and ways of interacting. This notion of a belief structure and the power of the structure to enact change signaled the paradigmatic impact of the phenomenon.

CW.

CW serves as the Director of Specialized Academic Programs which is the department that encompasses special education, intervention and 504. He came to the position two years ago after twenty years in education as a teacher and administrator. During his first year in Smith County, he noticed that meetings and professional development were facilitated in a particular way and he pondered the difference that he

was seeing in such interactions as compared to his experiences elsewhere. He remembered that as he questioned and asked about what he was seeing in terms of facilitation and promoting professional learning that he was told that it was Adaptive Schools and that he would get to participate in the seminar during his second year in the district. He reflected about his anticipation:

I knew that it was going to be great because I could see and was a participant in many of these meetings about what this thing was all about. So, I was really looking forward to doing the training. . . . And it's life changing; it really is and it's funny because many of the strategies I have used before in a previous life. But, I was never really able to name it. I mean I never named the strategy and I probably couldn't have even have told you the purpose of why I was using it. I just thought it was a good idea. But, this training really sort brought it all home. And you know I have a career of 20 years before I ever got to Smith County and I just think how different my trajectory would have been had I had this twenty years ago? It just would have been very different. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

In this reflection on the Adaptive Schools Seminar, several things emerged. The first was the degree to which the experience and the learning had been life changing – that they had become paradigmatic in his experience. Specifically, he shared that the experience was life changing, but that if it had occurred earlier in his career that it would have changed the work of his career. This type of thinking indicated the potential of Adaptive Schools to be impactful to individuals.

CW also explained some of the key characteristics that he sensed made the learning experience so powerful, “Well, the modeling, as I’ve mentioned . . . [and] the structure of the learning guide [and] the structure and organization of how it unfolds in the training . . .” From here he shared specific insights that he had:

I would say that it really opens your eyes – opens your eyes as to how to facilitate groups. I mean that's really kind of the crux of it – how to better facilitate the thinking of a group of people and how to maximize your time with them so that the experience of your participant is as rich as you can possibly make it. . . . That

would be one thing. I also think that it really helps develop a framework and a structure around just how to facilitate groups of people. It gives you that language and it gives you that background knowledge – a lot of which you thought about or I thought about, but it didn't all just come together. It really kind of came together for me – it's like my entire career, all the things that I've done and I can't even think of how many meetings that I have facilitated in my career, but it really just brought it all together – all those years of experiences, I guess is to bring it together and to take it to another level that I never would have been able to do. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

It was interesting to note in this reflection, that an intersection between the experience and the development of paradigmatic framework was seen. CW noted that there was knowledge, practice, and understanding within the framework that were familiar to him, but how the experience of the Foundation Seminar and the work of Adaptive Schools really influenced him was in the way in which the parts worked together to create an integrated framework. In these words, he implied that Adaptive Schools functioned for him as phenomenon and a paradigm.

It challenges your thinking. When you're a participant, it helps you think about things, whatever it is that's being presented in a different way. It also gives you the opportunity to do the strategies to articulate it with other people. You're never alone – you're always processing information as a group of people and so thinking about that experience versus if a person just stood up and talked to you the whole time – you can't – there's no way that that experience can compare to an experience to where you have the opportunity to dialogue with someone sitting right next to you or a very structured conversation with five people around the table or when you get up to move about – all those kinds of things you're activating so much more of your brain than when you're just sitting and getting – it's night and day – and there's really no comparison at all – (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

As he considered the impact of the reflective stance the experience caused for him, continued:

And it makes you uncomfortable. Sometimes it's uncomfortable and it puts you in places . . . sometimes there's value in that. It's because when you engage the emotional aspects of your brain, you're more likely to have a connection with it in some way rather than just the sit and get where you're not emotionally involved at all – you're not doing any work. The person who is standing in front is doing all the work. You're not doing anything. You're just being a passive participant.

I always felt like I did a pretty good job of facilitating meetings – quite honestly –but this just brought it to a whole other level of engagement and – just all the things to really make the experience of a participant being as rich as it possibly can be. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

Through these recollections, several things emerged: that the way in which the Foundation Seminar allows one to engage with others is important. Rather than just processing the information internally, there were opportunities to process verbally with others. He reiterated the idea that much of the learning was familiar to him, but the work of Adaptive Schools and the process of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, caused him to process the information in new ways. These insights demonstrated the degree to which the seminar experience took on the importance of a phenomenon. Additionally, there was a mental arrangement of ideas, an organization, a framework that was representative of a paradigm and a shift in his paradigmatic lens.

Through one of his final remarks, CW pointed out the degree to which Adaptive Schools had impacted the Smith County School System as both a paradigm and a phenomenon.

One of the things we need to stay cognizant of is not losing it [the learning from Adaptive Schools and Cognitive CoachingSM, but I know that's not going to happen in this district because we have embraced it. It's everywhere; Every time you go to a meeting you're going to see people using Adaptive Schools training to deliver. It's not like this thing that you went to one time and then you're kind of done with it. There's an expectation in the district that this is the caliber of excellence that we expect. So in that respect, I just want to stay fresh with it and I don't want to lose that. I don't want to forget it. I want to keep remembering. You know that's why I keep this book and that book [texts from Cognitive CoachingSM and Adaptive Schools] stay on this desk they don't get put away on the shelf because every time I walk in my office, I look at them and I see. All this stuff is there for a reason because I want to remember, I want to try to remember and remember as much of it as I can so I keep it out. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

In these words was the clear idea that it would be possible for the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar to be one amongst many professional development experiences through which educators cycle. However, CW, suggested that this experience was much more than an ordinary training on an ordinary day, that instead it had become part of the work of the Smith County Schools. This language indicated that the learning experience was embraced as a phenomena. He further pointed out that the impact of the work can be seen throughout the district and this suggested the presence of a framework or paradigm. Even to him, as he entered the district and before he attended the Adaptive Schools Seminar, he discerned the framework, the way of doing things. Additionally, as an administrator, he felt the expectation to use the work and keep it fresh in his mind as demonstrated by the strategic placement of texts in his office in order to be able to remind himself of the ideas, understandings, and content that had emerged from the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

SV.

SV is a middle school literacy coach in the Smith County School District and she is also one of two agency trainers within the district. Over the course of the past three years, she has participated in interview experiences four different times: twice as an individual and twice in a group setting with the other agency trainer.

Her comments over the course of time, revealed how her earlier experiences functioned as a significant phenomenon, whereas, her later experiences led her to have significant shifts in her thinking even in terms of the most salient points of the work of Adaptive Schools.

She remembered her first experience with the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and contrasted it with her later experience with Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar:

I remember when I left that time there were so many wonderful, foundational underpinnings – the theory behind it, the philosophy behind it - that did not resonate as easily with me because there were so many strategies, that it was a little easy to leave and kind of have this whole new bag of tricks. . . . In some cases, the strategies were the things that were really like the showy piece. (SV, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013)

She compared this with her later experience:

I did my second training and I revisited those foundational elements and they became even much more causal to me. I really started looking at those principles and what was laying underneath this. You know it kind of flip-flopped in my mind. The first time the strategies I have to say, I am embarrassed to admit were the biggest stand out. And the second time was when I recognized that it was the philosophy and the ideas behind it that were so, so, so much more important. (SV, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013)

There was the clear sense that the first experience was important and that it did have impact on the work that she was doing her school. In the words that followed, there was a better sense of how her first experience with the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar impacted her work. There is also some evidence that it was starting to impact her thinking about particular things.

Those strategies were right there at the finger tips and if I would go into to lead a professional development or a group I would pull strategies. But, I made the mistake of not always thinking about –Why is this strategy so effective? What is it that makes this strategy work? I focused more so on the strategies themselves rather than on why they worked or why they helped people to talk or to work together more effectively or to get people to you know be more open with each other, whatever it was that was accomplished through that strategy. . . . But even the first time around there were some things that did stick out to me. For example, the dialogue versus discussion – even the first time around that was a powerful idea that I remember leaving with and working towards. The norms of collaboration – the pausing, paraphrasing, and probing, - that tied right in with SCLI [Smith County Learning Institute]. I remember leaving with that immediately and trying to work toward that although I did a lot more with it after

I had more training in terms of being intentional, but even the very first time that I went there were some you know very important things that I did take away from it. (SV, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013)

In addition to the first experience with the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar impacting her work as a literacy coach, SV revealed her further sense of the value of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar in a later interview. At the time of this particular interview, she had traversed the trainer's path for Adaptive Schools and had worked in the context of teaching the seminar several different times within Smith County Schools.

As I was in it, I did see the power in the foundational principles. I think it was what I left with in terms of what I used [the strategies] immediately is what I was trying to say before But, even as I was going through it, I did realize the power, because I remember walking up the first or second day and saying, "I would love to be a trainer. This is really good." So I know that the power was there. I could see the benefits. It all made sense; I connected to it. I could see where they were. It was research based; it was grounded in reality; it was grounded in research. It made sense as we would implement and try things out and we would strategically make the connections to our own work. You know think about that triple track agenda – you know it all came together. So, I do remember thinking it was powerful. I just didn't get to take it back and put it in practice as much as I should have. (SV, Individual Interview, August 12, 2016)

Given SV's assertion that she knew early in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar that she wanted to be a trainer, it was clear that the learning experience moved beyond participation in a typical professional development workshop on an ordinary day. Though she reported that her initial actions based on the seminar were more strategy based, there were big ideas and themes within the work that she knew were important. A statement that she made in the later interview also pointed to the degree to which the work of Adaptive Schools began to frame her thinking:

It's such a big thing. It's one of those things I want to try to work at and get better all the time because obviously I do not think I am anywhere close to having arrived. . . .It does cross over because it applies to your everyday life; it crosses over into everything and in talking about it in the context of school, it's what you do in real life It's what you do anytime you are trying to understand or

collaborate and work with others – you find yourself paraphrasing when you talk to your child or you know when you are thinking about some of those ideas when you are working with a group at your church- it crosses over because it just makes sense. (SV, Individual Interview, August 12, 2016)

The indication that Adaptive Schools has transcended all areas of her life: work, parenting, and church specifically demonstrated that Adaptive Schools was not only an important series of phenomena (as she participated in the different seminars and the training path), but that it also had a paradigmatic impact on her thinking about the world around her because it embodied a set of values about how groups come together to work collaboratively and ultimately bring about student learning.

Summary of Emergent Question 1

Vygotsky suggested that learning was both evolutionary and revolutionary at the same time (John-Steiner & Souberman, 1978). In essence, he proposed that learning occurred in bursts (revolutionary changes in thinking and development) and slowly over time (evolutionary changes in thinking and development). In the realm of learning this is important because it yields the question, what is the evidence of learning? In relation to this research question, connecting the work of Adaptive Schools to a phenomenon (revolutionary change) and paradigm shift (evolutionary change) illustrates the potential for the work of Adaptive Schools to be significant in terms of professional growth and development.

Engaging, intensive, immersive, dense, thoughtful, insightful– these are just a few of the words that were used by participants to explain their initial experience with Adaptive Schools through the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. Such words indicated that the experience of the seminar was much more than a typical workshop or

training. These words communicated that the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar functioned as phenomenon on lives of these participants.

Participants also shared such phrases as, “it sent me on a new trajectory”, “it changed me,” “it changed my life,” and “How would things be different if I had learned about this 20 years ago?” These sorts of statements signaled a change in the way that participants were thinking about their work; they suggested that a different framework for considering the work at hand as well as life had come to play. Different participants shared this in different ways explaining the degree to which a practice of paraphrasing had become second nature. Analysis of the comments of these four participants highlight the degree to which the work of Adaptive Schools can function both as a phenomena and paradigm. In these cases, the participants were able to use the profound nature of their experience to lead and support others.

The degree to which the work of Adaptive Schools functioned as a paradigm or phenomena is closely related to contextual factors. In the case of Smith County Schools, there were conditions and contexts which caused the work to be impactful in a catalytic way. The next question explores the specifics of these conditions.

Emergent Question 2: What conditions present in the Smith County Schools caused

Adaptive Schools to be impactful?

In working to understand the impact of Adaptive Schools in the Smith County School district, I quickly came to understand that not only had the work of Adaptive Schools been impactful, but that there were conditions present that were integral to the particular impact that Adaptive Schools had. This section illuminates those conditions through the words of interview participants. Conditions that emerged as significant to the

impact of Adaptive Schools include: (a) visionary leadership (b) understanding of dynamical systems and (c) timing – the “right thing at the right time.”

Visionary Leadership

“So as with anything, it’s going to be as effective as the leader’s understanding of it”

(EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016).

Through these words, EG highlighted the key role that leadership played in bringing the work of Adaptive Schools to fruition in the Smith County School System. Specifically, visionary leadership was responsible for bringing forth the work of Adaptive Schools and visionary leadership propelled the work forward.

A visionary leader has a clear sense of where the organization is headed and also the path for working towards that place. On the path to the “vision” the leader is responsive to challenges, changes, and adapts as needed while keeping focus on the vision at all times. Actions, steps, behaviors are filtered through the lens of the vision.

In terms of Adaptive Schools in Smith County, visionary leadership was key to the impact discerned throughout the organization. Two examples of visionary leadership are portrayed, the leadership of EG, retired CAO who in her role served as a leader of leaders and CW who is currently the Director of Specialized Academic Programs for Smith County Schools. Following these accounts is a discussion of the implications of this work at the school level and a synthesis of the commonalities that characterized the visionary leadership of these two individuals.

EG.

The level of visionary leadership needed to cause the work of Adaptive Schools to be impactful was personified in retired CAO, EG. Over time the value of the work in

Adaptive Schools was joined by a deep understanding of the work. Because she understood that the work was important she shared what she knew with colleagues in other districts and importantly she made the work a priority within the Smith County School System. This was evident in looking at the transcripts of people who experienced the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. This was also evident in the decision to support the development of two agency trainers within the district so that the professional learning experience could have far reaching impact across the school district.

To understand the particulars of what made EG's leadership so visionary, it is necessary to chronicle briefly her experience within the Smith County School District. She worked in the Smith County District from summer 2005 until she retired summer 2015. Her early work began in the district as she gathered teams of teachers from across the district to work on curriculum frameworks. In describing that experience, she reported her astonishment that teachers were not talking to each other, the degree to which it was obvious that people had not worked together before, and the high level of competition that was present in the room.

When I worked a little bit further with the group, I had teachers tell me, "We don't think we should share because other schools might take it and get better test scores." . . . I almost couldn't believe it and I remember talking to the superintendent at the time because I knew he said that that existed, but I didn't know. I didn't fully realize it was that extent of it. So, anyway that was my first challenge of seeing people in silos, competitive, not sharing . . . (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015)

In these words was the evidence that Smith County Schools did function as a collection of autonomous schools. In these early years within the district, EG worked with the superintendent, school board, and others to articulate a vision and mission in

order to bring about greater cohesion. Furthermore, EG was a strong voice of the vision and mission.

Though the mission and vision has been revised slightly since the version created in 2006, the main points of it have remained the same:

All Smith County students supported by family, community, and schools participate in relevant engaging, quality learning tasks, in safe, well designed schools, guided by highly-skilled teachers and visionary leaders. Graduates pursue a life of continuous learning, contribute to their community, participate thoughtfully in the American democracy, and compete successfully in the local, national and international economy. (Smith County Schools, 2016)

In the process of bringing the mission to fruition, several initiatives were begun. One initiative was placing a literacy coach in each building. These individuals were to serve as peer coaches to colleagues and support embedded professional learning. Further the group was gathered at the district level to collaborate as a PLC. Additionally, work was initiated in terms of developing PLCs. This included the identification of lead teachers within each grade level or content to act as a facilitator for the group.

In her role of leading all things academic, she worked to put into place structures that would foster collaboration. Through her role, she worked with PLCs made of school representatives from across the district. This included such groups as: administrators, literacy coaches, and gifted and talented coordinators. In working with these groups, she worked to provide learning experiences which would support professional understanding and the balance between vision and short term goals. Some of the professional learning experiences included Understanding by Design (UbD) (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) and Cognitive CoachingSM (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Her leadership was such that she was able to get people to effectively attend to the vision while identifying the necessary steps to get there. Further, as she introduced different learning experiences and professional

development opportunities to the district, she intentionally connected the new learning to the mission and vision of the district. Furthermore, she was intentional about using structures that would contribute to collaboration within and among schools as she worked to lead schools in work that would ultimately support high levels of student understanding and achievement.

In essence, during the first half of her tenure in Smith County Schools, the district shifted from a “system of school to a school system” and from isolation to collaboration. Two salient concepts characterized the shift: the first was the creation of a unified mission and vision – schools moved towards working together as a team towards a common goal; the second was a focus on collaboration within and across schools. A comment from School Board Chairman, NG illustrated the degree to which EG supported the evolution of the Smith County through her work:

I think she (EG) served an invaluable purpose in terms of just developing many of these things we talked about today and really – really opened eyes, I think in terms of how much collaboration was possible and really helping people be more comfortable in terms of sharing . . . (NG, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015)

EG was also particularly skillful in helping individuals across the district understand the mission and vision in concrete ways. At one point, she helped groups conceptualize the vision by evoking an image of “a child in the chair.” This child was a preschool student entering the district. Then individuals were asked to picture that child at the end of his/her PreK-12 journey – the experiences that were desired for this child became a way for making the mission and vision concrete. CF, high school literacy coach, articulated the degree to which EG was so skillful and impactful in imparting this understanding

I think we had a vision, she (EG) just could see it, the big picture. She could see it district- wide and we could only see it in our little pocket, our little neck of the woods and she was able to open it up to all of us so that we could really see it. And when we did and when we understood it and we understood the role we're playing and we're each playing a role that works towards the fruition of the district mission in that, it really does come down to the child in the chair and ensuring learning for every student. (CF, Individual Interview, January 19, 2016)

This background and story was important because it sets the stage of the entry point of Adaptive Schools into the picture of Smith County Schools. It occurred about halfway through EG's tenure. At this point, literacy coaches had been in place for approximately five years. Literacy coaches and administrators participated in Cognitive CoachingSM, typically during their first year in the role. Through one of the Cognitive CoachingSM facilitators, EG learned about Adaptive Schools, She researched it and eventually participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

The previous section in this chapter explores the degree and depth to which she was impacted by Adaptive Schools. Perhaps one of the most important statements she made about it follows:

I think the big thing was it changed me. It made me better; it made me a lot better, as an administrator, as a leader. I felt like I was better able to do the two jobs that I had in Smith County because of that training. I think it helped me really make something that was a vision real. I call it putting wheels on the bus – you just can't talk about it. . . . So, it changed me; it changed my practice and I feel like impacted people – some more than others but it helped develop, create this culture that has now become more normal about everybody learning and growing together, that's what I think's happened. And that's a great thing to know - that those isolated walls that how it used to be has changed so much and that people want to go to training to increase their skill set. I've had so many people in the district say, I feel like this district values me more – it wants me to grow as a professional and that's the best thing to me that anybody could say. And that means that there is inside maturity and that the Adaptive Schools was a vehicle for us to be able to do that. So, you know, I don't hide it, I'm a huge fan. I think it's just made a tremendous impact and I advocate it strongly for leaders to pursue it and to stick with it. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

Through these words, the value EG placed in the work of Adaptive Schools was evident. She saw it as a way of operationalizing collaboration or operationalizing the vision. The result of this was that the district moved from the competition and isolation that was apparent when EG first came to Smith County and moved towards a culture that valued growing and learning together. She suggested that Adaptive Schools was an important part of this shift.

In recognizing that the work of Adaptive Schools was an important part of the shift that occurred, it is also important to recognize the actions that EG took in order to support the proliferation of the work of Adaptive Schools throughout the district. After attending the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, she made arrangements to host a training within Smith County. Literacy coaches who had completed Cognitive CoachingSM were part of this experience as well as some school administrators and instructional coordinators. In subsequent years, literacy coaches and administrators completed the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar after completing Cognitive CoachingSM. Learning from the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar permeated work in the district including agendas, structures for supporting professional learning, and intentionality in regard to building community and creating cohesiveness within a group through inclusion and grounding. EG also participated in the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar with the two individuals who were selected to become agency trainers for the district. In addition to these actions, Adaptive Schools updates became part of literacy coach meeting to strengthen, deepen, and extend understanding about the work of Adaptive Schools. In essence, once EG recognized that work of Adaptive Schools had deep value, she enacted many steps to ensure that the learning would pervade Smith

County Schools. Without this degree of intention, people would attend the training and some would transfer their learning into their work setting, but it would not have likely reached the level of systematic impact that it has had.

EG reported, “It just changed my practices and I was already well into my career. So, here I was 22 years in and it caused me to shift. And so, it changed me. I don’t know how I can really say it. It changed me” (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015). That awareness and self-reflection of how it had changed her caused her to be reflective about how to enact that change, that shift in others. In essence, it was her vision that made Adaptive Schools impactful to the extent that it was – the awareness of where the district had been, the assuredness that collaboration and vision would bring about positive change, and the insight to see that the work of Adaptive Schools offered pragmatic ways of bringing these actions to fruition.

CW.

CW, the Director of Specialized Academic Programs has a story that is different from that of EG, but also parallels it in significant ways. He came into the Smith County School District in the summer of 2014. His work in the district overlapped that of EG for one year. When he was hired he was given the specific charge (by EG) “to seek first to understand” (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2016). As he entered Smith County with a disposition to understand the department with which he was working, some of his observations were similar in nature to the observations that EG made about the schools’ relationships with one another when she entered the district. CW shared:

There was a lack of communication across really every department [Special Education, School Psychologists, ARC Chairs, Intervention, and 504] I just spoke about. . . . First of all, they didn’t even know each other. There were people that didn’t even know each other that worked for the same department. [There were]

people within the department didn't have a clear understanding of what other people did. The special education department particularly was franchised, there wasn't a real connection to a lot of the other work that was going on in the district. They were sort of off over here not really connected to the work of the district and so I felt like that their vision was completely different than what the vision of the district was. There was a lack of communication between what was happening in special education and intervention and 504. They were all mutually exclusive and there was no crossover and so my role was to bring all of that together and then to link up with what is going in the district and so how we can make sure that we are a part of the vision and that we're not going off in some separate direction. And so the entire last year was spent trying to realign and refocus what this department is doing. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2016)

These words reveal that even though Smith County had made an important shift from a "system of schools" to a "school system" that there were still areas that needed to become more collaborative and aligned with the district vision and mission. Part of his role within his new position was to be a visionary leader. This charge was important to the work of Adaptive Schools because of the degree to which CW used the work of Adaptive Schools to frame the work of the department he was leading.

In talking about his first year within Smith County, he recollected his observations that there was something different about the way that meetings and professional developments were facilitated. He recalled being told that the structures that he was noticing were part of Adaptive Schools – a seminar experience that he would have in his second year. He even shared that he started to pick up and apply part of the work of Adaptive Schools before he was a participant in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. As he saw it being enacted throughout the district, it became part of him even before the experience. He articulated his unique perspective in the following:

Com[ing] from outside of the district and not having had the training before and then having really a whole year's worth of trainings . . . Being in her [KH, agency trainer] trainings and sort of seeing how she facilitates, I knew there was something. Okay, she didn't just come up with this, there's got to be something

bigger. And I remember them [colleagues], they talked about it all the time – Adaptive Schools training and you'll get that next year . . . And so I knew that it was going to be great because I could see and was a participant in many of these meetings about what this thing was all about so I mean I was really looking forward to doing the training . . . and it's life changing; it really is. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

CW further reflects on the impact of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and the work of Adaptive Schools within the context of the department he leads:

One of the things that we [Department of Specialized Academic Programs] always do – we have a structure in my department so where if you're going to do a PD for somebody or a meeting, you will have the opportunity to pitch your whole agenda to the rest of the team so we can give you feedback. And so, I love the fact that we're able to do that, because you're never out on your own. So if you're getting ready to do a big training the expectation is that you are going to come in and you are going to pitch it to the rest of the team – talk about the strategies that you've selected, talk about you know all the reasons why behind that you've sort of arranged it in that way and then the rest of the team is going to give you feedback on what you've designed. And many times those same people are in those meetings and so then they can not only give them feedback on what they're going to do but on what they did So, I guess my point is that really try – we have embraced the Adaptive Schools way of thinking and methodology to deliver all of our meetings in our department. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

This reflection made it clear that CW used the work of Adaptive Schools to be a source of cohesion and commonality within the department. The members of the team have all participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, as has CW, but expectation to use the work was embedded within their daily responsibilities.

There is a Chinese Proverb that advises, “Tell me and I forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.” This is important in considering the above exchange about the Department of Specialized Academic Programs. CW was a strong leader by supporting the further learning and development of his team. One of the most important ways that he supported them was through the on-going expectation that they apply the principles of Adaptive Schools in their everyday work.

Though CW had been in Smith County for a short period of time, his work has been impactful. His work began with the understanding that he was to work as a visionary leader to bring his department cohesion and then to align the department with the mission and vision within the district.

Both EG and CW work[ed] at the district level as visionary leaders, EG's role placed her high within the system (just below the superintendent) but in a position to influence the directors of different departments and to touch members from the different schools (e.g. principals, assistant principals, literacy coaches); however, their roles varied. EG led individuals coming from different departments and schools and was able to use the structure to advance the work of Adaptive Schools, whereas, CW was both participant and leader – he was a participant in structures enacted by EG as CAO and he was the leader that advanced and championed the work within his own department. In short, visionary leadership heightened the impact of the work.

Leadership and local schools.

Though at the system level there is evidence of the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools and the ways in which it has trickled down to individual schools, there was not as much evidence to support the systematic impact of the work of Adaptive Schools within single schools. Rather there was evidence of small impacts. Such impacts were discussed in Chapter 4 and included: using the norms of collaboration, revising agenda structures, and using strategies and techniques to facilitate professional learning.

In interviews collected in summer 2013, several participants were excited about the potential and possibility of training several members of a school faculty. SM,

elementary literacy coach suggested, “I feel that if team leaders in our building had this training, I think it would just – I think our PLCs would be just much stronger.” (SM, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013).

MG, also a literacy coach shared this sentiment, “My whole administrative team was trained. It makes the biggest impact – especially if the principal will internalize it. Um - because we are all aware, even if we are not using our norms, we are all aware that we are not using our norms and we need to go back to it” (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013).

KH and SV, who became agency trainers in the district, also had the sense of the possibility and potential of having school teams participate in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. KH emphatically supported this notion:

I think every group and organization, every PLC team, or leadership team should participate in Adaptive Schools training and I am going to try to articulate why I think that. I guess it’s just the transparency of understanding how important it is that you monitor your behavior and that you monitor your participation within a group. It’s that awareness of being a part of a group that shares a common goal and I think often times, especially in schools and in any organization, we sometimes get hyper-focused on what we’re trying to accomplish and lose sight of the bigger picture. (KH, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013)

SV also voiced strong support of providing the experience to a team, such as lead teachers within a building:

I would love that because I think that you go with a group and they all get the same information and they all buy into it. Then you’ve got to build in support systems. You have the common language; you have the common experiences that you can build off of and come back to that with each other and support each other as you are trying things. (SV, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013).

In the more recent interviews, there was still a sense that providing the learning experience of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar to many people had potential power, but in this remark a sense of hesitancy became clear because of the awareness that

the experience alone was not enough to propel the learning forward. KR, high school literacy coach, hit upon this as she reflected on the possibility of more teachers experiencing the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar:

I think teachers would probably come away mostly with strategies. We had a teacher who was trained over the summer and this person is a lead teacher, but doesn't have any particular role outside of the classroom here at school. And when that teacher has talked with me, he has mostly shared strategies and in fact wanted to show me the strategy list on the website and remind me that I could pull up all of these things, so they would probably do what he's done and move towards, move towards that. (KR, Individual Interview, September 3, 2015)

She elaborated a bit about her own wonderings as she participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and considered further her experience with a teacher who attended summer of 2015:

When I did the training, I wondered why are we not using those techniques necessarily at our school? For example, the agenda stuff - you know the way that the agenda is supposed to be set up around accomplishable things? Here's what we're going to accomplish and here's who's in charge of it and here's the outcomes we hope to see with that. I haven't seen that trickling down in faculty meetings or even in some PLCs that's not happening and the school leadership is not necessarily holding people accountable for that thinking or learning. For example, nobody is saying to this teacher that I have referenced, I want to see you use some of these strategies in your PLC groups and what might that look like and so when I come in, what could I hope to see? You know, none of that stuff is happening, at our school at least. (KR, Individual Interview, September 3, 2015).

These words indicated that for some participants the experience leads to use of strategies but not some of the systematic structures that are in place at the district level.

KH, agency trainer, shared a similar sense of caution in thinking about having more and more people participate in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar:

So, if we stop that trying to get as many people as possible through the foundations training and don't find intentional ways to continue to deepen that understanding whether it's in the context of the one school who did it who has seen minimal impact maybe because they only did four days and they have not followed up really . . . it's a big responsibility (KH, Group Interview, February 5, 2016)

This was an important insight on the part of this agency trainer because there was for a period of time an emphasis on having as many people experience the training as possible. Over time, it has become clear that the experience alone is not enough to make the work impactful in a significant way. A question then to consider, is how can the work become powerful within the school community? The visionary leadership exhibited by both EG and CW offered indicators and characteristics that leaders could work towards in moving to make the work of Adaptive Schools impactful in their own school communities. The next section explores these characteristics.

EG and CW: Characteristics of visionary leadership.

In looking at the leadership of EG and CW it is clear that a leader with strong vision is needed to carry the work forward in a group of individuals. A visionary leader has a clear sense of where the organization is headed and also the path for working towards that place. On the path to the “vision” the leader is responsive to challenges, changes, and adapts as needed while keeping focus on the vision at all times. Actions, steps, behaviors are filtered through the lens of the vision. As the quote of EG at the beginning of the section suggested, “So as with anything, it’s [the work of Adaptive Schools] going to be as effective as the leader’s understanding of it” (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016). So in the case of EG and CW, an important question is: What about their understanding made them effective in advancing the work of Adaptive Schools. Three components surfaced as critical in the context of both their stories: (a) balcony view (b) value for the work and (c) commitment to extended learning (for self and the groups being led).

Balcony view: Seeing the big picture.

Both EG and CW exhibited big picture understanding of the organization as a whole and its challenges. In the case of EG, early in her tenure she was aware of the isolation and sense of competition and she worked along with the superintendent at the time to unify the district around a common vision and mission. An important part of that work was building collaborative PLCs. This work had been in place by the time that the work of Adaptive Schools came to the Smith County Schools; however, EG realized that the district was still working towards the shared vision and mission and that there was still a need to foster collaboration.

CW's story had some commonalities and distinctions. Once CW entered the district a common vision and mission had been established as well as an expectation for collaboration. In spite of that, the department that he was charged with leading continued to experience some of the same isolation and disconnection that EG saw between schools when she first started in Smith County Schools. In his case, the work of Adaptive Schools was firmly established, particularly at the district level and he was able to see this as a tool to meet the challenge of isolation and disconnection that were issues for the department he was leading.

In both cases, CW and EG were able to see the big picture. Not only was there keen awareness of the mission and vision, there was also deep awareness of the particular needs of the groups being served and the degree to which the work of Adaptive Schools could address the needs.

Understanding of the value of the work.

Both EG and CW had a strong sense of the value of the work. CW talked about his excitement of participating in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar because of

his experiences in the district in the year proceeding. Going into the experience, he already appreciated the way that it had influenced facilitation and professional learning within the Smith County School System.

Similarly, EG reported the degree to which she saw the work of Adaptive Schools as an opportunity to make collaboration operational. She points out how through the tenets of Adaptive Schools that a collaborative, thoughtful community could be created. Through her discussion, she emphasized the degree to which she was able to apply the work to most every situation she experienced within the school, community, and even within her personal life. Her words really point out the value she placed on it through the myriad ways she applied the work.

Commitment to extended learning opportunities.

In both the stories of EG and CW, it is clear that further learning was valued both for self and others. EG references her participation in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar. Both she and CW reference going back to the texts of Adaptive Schools over and over again. Specifically, CW reports keeping the books close at hand so that he can read a page when he has a spare moment.

This commitment to learning also carried over to supporting the learning of others. In the case of EG, she was instrumental in getting two agency trainers in place in Smith County so that many teachers and administrators could experience the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. Likewise, she was intentional in the planning of meetings with groups such as literacy coaches to offer extended learning opportunities and updates to keep the learning alive.

Summary: Visionary Leadership

As suggested by EG, the effectiveness of the work of Adaptive Schools is only as effective as a leader's understanding of it. In EG and CW are models of how leadership were used to support the work of Adaptive Schools in transcending the fleeting experience of a four day training and move into the paradigms of a community. Qualities that each exhibited included: (a) balcony view (b) understanding of the value of the work and (c) commitment to extended learning opportunities.

Beyond visionary leadership, two other characteristics were important to the context of the work in Smith County Schools: application of dynamical principles and timing. Each will be explored in subsequent sections.

Understanding and Application of Dynamical Principles

Within Adaptive Schools, there is much discussion of the fact that "schools are non-linear dynamical systems in which cause and effect are not tightly linked. In nonlinear systems, the parts do not add up to the same sum each time they are combined. Fresh combinations result in different outcomes" (Garmston & Wellman, 2009a, p. 8). Further Garmston and Wellman suggest that there are principles which guide dynamical systems. Of the five that are identified, two are particularly significant in understanding how the work of Adaptive Schools was able to be impactful in Smith County. They are: (a) everything influences everything else and (b) you don't have to touch everyone in a system to make a difference.

KH, Director of Curriculum and Staff Development and Agency Trainer for the Smith County Schools discussed the degree to which the work of Adaptive Schools has influenced different learning communities in the district. Because the principles of the

Adaptive Schools have become normalized, individuals who are new to the group begin to assimilate to the norms even before they have had the opportunity to experience the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

From a community perspective, I think there's just a deeper understanding of a realization that as a community we bring different strengths and different weaknesses to the table. And so that intentionality and understanding of other perspectives and in drawing upon the strengths that other people have that you don't have kind of speaks back to that interdependence. It's become more of a norm –the two groups that I work in because so many of us – if you are speaking of literacy coaches and DOI, because so many people have been to Adaptive Schools and we value it and try to honor it regularly and have taken it on as an identity that we try to hold. It's become the norm of how we behave with one another. (KH, Individual Interview, November 10, 2015)

She further clarified:

Then in each of those teams you know, whether it's Department of Instruction or Literacy Coaches, you have people who are brand new to the role who are just going through it or have just been through the first four days of foundations and so it's clunky – in places - you know – I mean that's just – but that's the ebb and flow of bringing new people into an already established community. So, I think it's that they want to assimilate quickly. (KH, Individual Interview, November 10, 2015)

Hence, Adaptive Schools changed the way particular groups interact with each other. Those groups have accepted those behaviors as normal and dislike being in groups where the behaviors have not become normalized. Additionally, these behaviors impacted new members of the group. Even without having the experience of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, members who are new to the group work aligned their actions and behaviors with the norms of the group. This illustrated the way in which parts of the organization were able to impact one another.

EG, retired CAO alluded to dynamical principals as she talks about the creation of the Department of Instruction:

I think there are a couple of people that honestly got selected to do the jobs that they're in now because they had these skills – they had these skill sets [from the work of Adaptive Schools]. When I had the opportunity to choose them, I wanted people who brought this to the table. Now we can't be preaching about building capacity and then not hire people at the district level who don't do that. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2015).

In this contemplation, was the idea that one thing influences another. That is, there was a need for leaders who would build capacity and who would live that out. If they had not had that belief, negative impacts would have ensued. With the belief in the value of capacity building, there rested a foundation on which future opportunity could be built.

Conversation between agency trainers, SV and KH also illustrated an awareness of dynamical principles. In this example, awareness of the degree to which misunderstanding and miscommunication can ripple throughout the organization was evident. This is comparable to the way that positive practices of Adaptive Schools can travel through the organization, as well.

Someone made a comment to me the other day, someone who'd been through the training and been using strategies with a group said to me, "You know, I don't think those Adaptive School strategies are working. My group is starting to see through them. 'And they're like – yeah, yeah fine, we've all talked now, let's get down to the meat of it.'" (SV, Group Interview, February 5, 2016).

In response, KH shared an example of erroneous thinking about paraphrasing:

I do think there are people who think it's about saying, "So what I hear you saying is..." which is totally inaccurate and wrong and yet I watch people do it. I hear them do it all the time. And so when you parrot back at someone like that, it's annoying and then people think –oh there you go again with that - you know - annoying norms of collaboration and it's because the person doing the thing is not doing it well . . . There gets to be this like – underlying current of "Yeah, cut it with all the Adaptive Schools stuff and let's just get to work." (KH, Group Interview, February 5, 2016)

In this exchange, was the understanding that misunderstanding can work through a system as well as understanding. Understanding the role of misconceptions was

important in terms of considering how to support groups in understanding the work of Adaptive Schools. Understanding this meant supporting groups and individuals with further information and appropriate modeling. It also meant being intentional about providing the learning experiences which would bring about deep rather than shallow understanding.

In essence, the dynamical principles were used to set the stage for the work of Adaptive Schools in Smith County. There has been an understanding that starting small and working out from that place would cause ripples in the pond so to speak. As literacy coaches, Department of Instruction (DOI), and administrators experienced the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar they applied their learning to their work situations. Sharing information and modeling different actions prompted others to try the strategies and behaviors and in some cases seek further information. In short, everyone did not have to be touched by participating in the seminar to be touched by the work of Adaptive Schools. However, in many cases being touched by the work piqued curiosity about having the opportunity to participate in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar.

Timing: The Right Thing at the Right Time

I look at how this [literacy coaches, Cognitive CoachingSM, Smith County Learning Institute, Adaptive Schools] has all snowballed and I'm thinking you know certain things wouldn't have been as successful and worked as well if we hadn't done in it in the timing that we did it. (CF, Individual Interview, January 19, 2016)

High school literacy coach, CF pointed out another critical feature about the context in which the work of Adaptive Schools was able to take root in Smith County and that is timing. When Adaptive Schools was first offered in Smith County, several other initiatives including placing literacy coaches at each school, providing administrators and

coaches training through Cognitive CoachingSM, and designating lead teachers to facilitate grade level and content-specific PLCs had been underway for several years. In that atmosphere, there was a need to hone, refine, and develop deep understanding to facilitate continued growth in these efforts. Adaptive Schools was uniquely positioned to offer such richness. As seasoned coaches reported their thoughts about the work of Adaptive Schools and participation in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar two central ideas emerged in terms of how Adaptive Schools addressed a particular need of the time: (a) Adaptive Schools supported the work of PLCs and (b) Adaptive Schools offered opportunities for participants to further hone their skills in leading and participating in groups.

Supporting the work of PLCs.

PLCs became important to the collaborative work of the Smith County School district as the emphasis on a common vision and mission became central to the work of the district. The PLC with its many possibilities and layers both within the school and the district focused on the need to learn and grow professionally around topics and issues which were pertinent to students' identified needs. Student work analysis, the development of common formative assessment, and collaboration among job-alike peers were identified priorities in this work. Although schools were in different places in the evolution of their PLC teams, each school was actively working on developing them. Literacy coaches who participated in the interview process suggested that an important application of the work of Adaptive Schools was in the information and means that it offered to develop strong PLCs and stronger PLC leaders.

SM, elementary literacy coach, reflected on how she and her principal (at the time), CE were able to support lead teachers in their building:

When she [CE] ran the team leader meetings, she would introduce Adaptive Schools strategies to them. Like one of the things we did with them was practice paraphrasing. It made such a huge difference to their meetings. They would come back to comment and say how it worked and they would say that their role was like that of a facilitator. Instead of team leader, team facilitator, and they would say, everybody said, I can't remember a specific comment. One I can remember [was] that they felt like team members -actually ones that they might not have felt as – as heard before – they felt heard and even mentioned that. They [the team leaders] didn't even tell them [team members] what they were doing, so just by gradually giving the team leaders strategies we'd used already made a huge difference. (SM, Individual Interview, July 18, 2013).

In these words was evidence to suggest that the work of Adaptive Schools filtered through school leadership team members to support them in being more effective in leading their teams.

MG, who was an elementary literacy coach at the time of her interview, reported on a similar occurrence.

I had a team that I was working with and at the start of the year, it was very, very rocky. They had added some new group members . . . It was tough. So, after the first disastrous team planning meeting, I was like-, *Okay I gotta do something to get them all on the same page*. So I started the next meeting out with the seven norms. We talked about them and [we] had them each identify one at the beginning of their team meetings that they would be aware of in themselves. And that really did make an impact in terms of how that team improved because it heightened their awareness that they needed to do this to be group members. (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013)

In the case of MG and SM, both saw the work of Adaptive Schools and specifically some of the tools and strategies as a means of helping lead teachers and even entire PLCs become much more effective in their interactions with one another.

RZ, middle school literacy coach, shared how lead teachers noticed how they work from Adaptive Schools impacted leadership meetings and their annual leadership

retreat. From this work, lead teachers started using the content and the techniques within their own PLC teams.

It was a very cool thing because at the time, I was taking a larger role in our staff retreats for leadership and for the whole staff and was able to immediately share some of the thinking behind norming - even though we haven't done as much as we could with it. I saw that it had an immediate impact, especially with our leadership team because of the things that I was modeling for them. And then I remember it was a very cool thing to see the very first grade level group whose leaders began to construct agendas that were reflective of some of the Adaptive Schools type agendas that I have used with them. (RZ, Individual Interview, September 1, 2016).

In this example, RZ shows the degree to which team leaders were able to use tools such as the seven norms of collaboration or an outcome based agenda to strengthen the work and routines of the PLC.

Given the way in which Smith County had identified and focused on developing collaborative PLCs, the work of Adaptive Schools was timely in that it offered a vehicle for moving towards the goals. Whereas many educators valued the work of PLCs, there were challenges in bringing the work to fruition.

Refining skills of leading and participating in groups.

The focus on building capacity through embedded professional development through such individuals as literacy coaches had been underway in Smith County Schools for approximately five years when the first Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar was offered. There had also been a focus on developing the capacity of literacy coaches and administrators to lead through a variety of professional learning opportunities. Further, coaches had the opportunity to apply these skills in leading professional development and planning and facilitating such experiences as the Smith County Learning Institute.

Among these experienced individuals, there was a strong sense of the degree to which the work of Adaptive Schools refined their practice.

CW, Director of Specialized Academic Programs, shared his thinking about his experience, “I always felt like I did a pretty good job of facilitating meetings, quite honestly, but this just brought it to a whole other level of engagement and . . . all the things to really make the experience of a participant being as rich as it possibly can be . . .” (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015). He also shared:

It’s funny because a lot of - not a lot – many of the strategies I have used before in a previous life. But I was never really able to name it. I mean I never named the strategy and I probably couldn’t have even have told you the purpose of why I was using it; I just thought it was a good idea. But this training really sort brought it all home. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

Two things emerge here: 1) that CW had developed expertise in facilitating and leading groups, but the work of Adaptive Schools took that to a deeper level and 2) the some of the strategies and techniques were familiar, but Adaptive Schools was effective in terms of situating and aligning strategy and purpose in a way that he had not contemplated before.

MG, elementary literacy shared a similar observation:

I was probably feeling in some ways a little stuck in terms of the strategies that I was using. I had some that actually are even mentioned in the Adaptive Schools book, but I only had a very small bank. When I got to Adaptive Schools, I’m like, “Aww” and “I could and there’s” and I didn’t have a name for them. (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013).

She further articulated:

It just kind of helped me push my coaching techniques to the next level. I got Adaptive Schools about five years after I had started coaching, I mean if you count being assistant principal even seven years, for me it was the right thing at the right [time] – but maybe it would have been better early on. And I had - some of the things I had learned just going through, it really helped me refine what I was doing (MG, Individual Interview, June 2013).

Like CW, MG reported that Adaptive Schools helped her refine techniques that she used previously, but she also shared that it carried her coaching to a whole new level even though she had seven years of combined experience as an administrator and a coach.

Similarly, SV shared that her experience came at a time that was feeling confident in her coaching:

I was much more confident in my role [as a literacy coach]. I had relationships that I had built at that point. So, I feel like I was making a difference as a literacy coach; I feel like I was being effective in my job, but at the same time I am a growth mindset type person and I always reflect and think about what I could be doing to make a much greater impact. (SV, Individual Interview, August 12, 2014).

It is important that this individual became an agency trainer for the district. The decision to do the work to become a trainer and demonstrate the competency with the work of Adaptive Schools illustrates that there was great value placed in this work and that the work that was valued by the individual. However, it was important to realize that the leaders in the district who experienced the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar were skillful and accomplished in their given roles. Even with the level of experience and understanding they had, Adaptive Schools proved to be a refining and catalyzing experience.

Summary of Emergent Question 2

Emergent question 2 posed the question: What conditions present in the Smith County Schools caused Adaptive Schools to be impactful? Three conditions emerged as central: (a) visionary leadership (b) understanding and application of dynamical principles and (c) timing – the right thing at the right time. In exploring the conditions,

two visionary leaders were described EG, retired CAO and CW, Director of Specialized Academic Programs. The application of dynamical principles and the notion of timing are explored through the words of interview participants.

Summary of Chapter 5

This case study was built on two research questions steeped in traditions of ethnography and phenomenology. Through interviewing participants and talking about the work of Adaptive Schools in Smith County, two further questions emerged:

1. Does Adaptive Schools function as a phenomenon or a paradigm?
2. What conditions present in the Smith County School system caused Adaptive Schools to be impactful?

This chapter explored answers to each of these questions through the words of participants. Evidence suggested that the work of Adaptive Schools functions as both a phenomenon and a paradigm. Exploration of the second question revealed that there were three conditions that made the work of Adaptive Schools particularly impactful including: (a) visionary leadership (b) understanding and application of dynamical principles and (c) timing – the right thing at the right time.

Chapter 6 explores the implications for these findings in terms of Smith County Schools and other school districts that are working towards a collaborative model to support student learning and achievement.

DISCUSSION: ACT III

What is really, really important about Adaptive Schools (one salient point)...that professional community, a collective group of people working for a common purpose and developing shared experiences, is one of the most critical resources available for impacting school change, culture and student learning. Adaptive Schools provides the skills, practices and theory for cultivating effective collaborative groups. (CE, Email Communication, March 9, 2016)

This is a story comprised of many stories. It is the story of how the work of Adaptive Schools came to impact the Smith County School District; it is the story of a school district that embraced the work of Adaptive Schools in a systematic and holistic way; it is the story of a school district that evolved from being a system of schools to being a school system. It is the story of a school district that looked deep and long at purpose and went on a journey to fulfill that purpose. It is in this bigger story of developing a collaborative school system with the purpose of ensuring the learning of every child that Adaptive Schools became a player. Given the isolation and culture of competition that existed just over a decade ago in Smith County, the power of CAO CE's words ring out with strength and truth.

The purpose of this dissertation was to discern the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools on the professional collaboration in the Smith County Schools. Further, data collection was used to reveal the degree to which Adaptive Schools interacted as an agent of continuity and change. Chapter 4 explored the following research questions related to each of these purposes:

- 1) How has Adaptive Schools impacted professional collaboration and learning within the Smith County School System?

- 2) How are the intended outcomes and accompanying paradigm supported by Adaptive Schools connected to themes of continuity and change within the larger culture of the Smith County School System?

In response to question 1, I claimed that professional collaboration and learning had been impacted as evidenced by the district's actions in (a) developing of a collective, collaborative identity (b) establishing processes and procedures to support collaboration and collegiality and (c) enacting collaborative interactions within schools and between the school system and local community.

The evidence surrounding question 2 supported two important changes in the district that were influenced by Adaptive Schools as well as two important continuities. Although the changes were in the context of other actions that happened at the district level over the course of several years, Adaptive Schools worked as an important force in shaping these changes: (a) a shift from a system of schools to a school system and (b) a shift from individual identities to collective responsibility. Two important continuities also were supported and strengthened through the work of Adaptive Schools: (a) a tradition of excellence coupled with a strong reputation of "great schools" and (b) a belief in the value of classroom teachers – "teachers are the greatest resource."

Because of the emergent nature of qualitative research, two additional questions surfaced through the course of the study. These two questions were:

1. Does Adaptive Schools function as a phenomenon or a paradigm?
2. What conditions present in the Smith County School system caused Adaptive Schools to be impactful?

In response to emergent question 1, I argued that Adaptive Schools has the potential to serve as both a phenomenon and a paradigm. The experiences of the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar serves as an important threshold experience to the larger body of work called Adaptive Schools. The effect of the phenomenon on thinking and the deepening of the understanding of the content which comprises the Adaptive Schools body of work is a framework for thinking about collaboration and school change; hence, it is a paradigm and can have a paradigmatic impact on participants.

Analysis of the data in regard to emergent question 2, led me to argue that three contextual features of the Smith County District caused the work of Adaptive Schools to be particularly impactful. These conditions included: (a) visionary leadership (b) application and understanding of dynamical principles and (c) timing – the right thing at the right time.

Within the analysis of emergent question 2, I explored the particular characteristics that were present in the Smith County Schools that made the work of Adaptive Schools effective. At this point, I want to consider the context of Adaptive Schools in Smith County using a theoretical lens. In order to do this, the discussion begins by exploring the concept of action space and the degree to which Adaptive Schools interacted as part of an action space within the Smith County Schools District. This model is then used as a springboard to highlight implications for the Smith County Schools and other school districts who are seeking to develop a more collaborative culture. The discussion concludes with a model proposing how organizations and individuals interact with the work of Adaptive Schools to develop deeper understanding.

Action Space and Adaptive Schools

In beginning this work, I considered the theoretical frameworks of Dewey, Vygotsky, Bandura, and Dweck. This choice was based on congruence that was evident between the theorists and the work of Adaptive Schools. However, in examining the interview data, it is the theory of action space which has been most illuminating in terms of exploring the work of Adaptive Schools in Smith County from a theoretical perspective. MacDonald and colleagues (2014) in working with the Cities and Schools Research Group used action space as a theoretical frame for studying school reform in urban areas. They suggested the following about action space:

Action space is exceptional space. Although it pops up from time to time nearly everywhere, it is not ordinary work space. It is endowed with extraordinary resources pulled together by luck and pluck. These provide the margin that makes reform conceivable. Action space disturbs the equilibrium of schooling-as-usual in a way that policy and professional education cannot manage to do. In the process, it offers inspiration to policy and professional education and provides exemplars and cautionary tales to guide more routine and ongoing improvement efforts. (McDonald et al., 2014, pp. 22-23)

The authors proposed that within the creation of an environment promoting school reform three resources conjoin: professional capacity, money, and civic capacity. Each of these act as a corner of the action space which develops in the greater context of beliefs (encouraging and discouraging), political influences, and cultural influences. As an organization moves through an action space there are inputs (capacities – building it, searching for it, and storing it, beliefs – particularly attending to negative ones, and arguments), throughputs (setting goals, aligning intentions, and designing towards them) and outputs (changes to policies, institutions, behaviors, as well as, polemics, politics, and cultures).

In the case of Smith County, the space in which change occurred certainly was exceptional. Change started as there was an identified need to move from a loosely organized system of schools to an aligned and collaborative school system. There was professional capacity involved in this in terms of leadership at the system level and there was focus on highlighting that capacity within local schools. Additionally, the School Board acted as a community partner in supporting the alignment of schools as a measure which would ultimately support higher levels of student learning. Finally, money was a factor as resources were used to support professional learning (opportunities to participate in such experiences as the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, Cognitive CoachingSM Foundation Seminar, Understanding by Design, and the Thinking Strategies Institute) and to invest in positions that would support professional growth and collaboration (literacy coaches in each building and training experiences for those who became agency trainers for the district).

In the context of this action space, Adaptive Schools played a role as an input, throughput, and output. As an input, the work of Adaptive Schools is about developing internal capacity, it about developing the identity of being an inquirer, collaborator, and leader. This work then becomes part of the throughput as individuals and groups within the organization work collaboratively to set goals, align intentions, and make conscious design decisions in regard to these things. Finally, Adaptive Schools has a role in outputs as individuals develop understanding and become more capable group and organization members. Discernable changes in behaviors change the organization's capacity to make decisions and interact within the larger community. Adaptive School is particularly

powerful in light of action space because of the degree to which it influences the input, throughputs, and outputs an organization goes through as significant change occurs.

Implications for Smith County Schools

Adaptive Schools entered the scene for Smith County Schools at the right time. Already, important work had occurred in terms of establishing a mission and vision for schools and groups with the organization to align. Further, collaboration was prioritized at the school level as PLC groups were formed across grade levels and content areas teams. As this work unfolded, what was needed was support to develop team leaders and teacher leaders to support the work of collaboration. Further, there was a need to develop the skill and behaviors of the individuals making up teams. It was in this context, that the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar was hosted in Smith County. In words of several of the interview participants, “it was the right thing at the right time.”

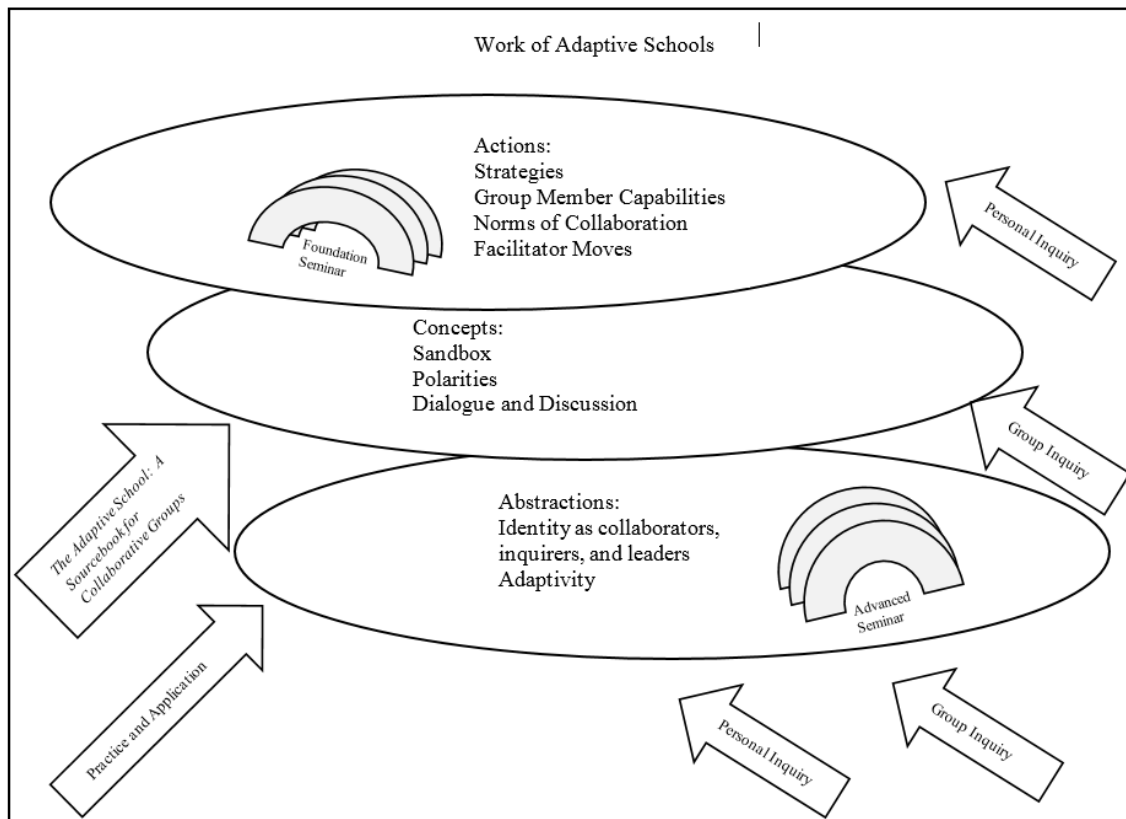
Certainly, the experience of participating in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar and the developing understanding around the larger body of work surrounding Adaptive Schools has impacted individuals in the Smith County School district. More importantly, this work has impacted the work of the Smith County Schools at the system level. That is evidence of the work is apparent at the district level in how groups interact, how meetings are planned and carried out, and in how the district consider its mission and vision and how this translates into clarity about collective identity. At the system level value has been placed upon developing individuals who are collaborators, inquirers, and leaders.

However, there is also indication that work has transferred to the school level in varying degrees. Throughout the district, literacy coaches, administrators, and good

number of lead teachers and classroom teachers have attended the seminar, but degrees of understanding are varied. For the work to carry forward with greater intention, there is need to focus in three areas: (a) development of deep understanding among participants of Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar (principals, literacy coaches, other school members who move between school and district responsibilities) (b) application of learning at the district/system level to the microcosm that occurs within the school and (c) build understanding of the work of Adaptive Schools with School Board Members.

Development of deep understanding

Figure 6.1 Work of Adaptive Schools



Interview data revealed that participants had varying levels of understanding.

Figure 6.1 represents the varying degrees of understanding that is revealed. In essence, there is the work of Adaptive Schools and this includes actions/behaviors, concepts, and

abstractions (theory and philosophy) that are revealed in this work. For the majority of participants in the study, the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar was an important threshold into this work. (A notable exception is CW, who was well aware of the work before the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar because of his observations of how groups within the Smith County Schools operated. Because of this experiences he was anticipating accessing to the threshold experience). In some cases this threshold led only to an understanding of strategies. For others it let to understanding of concepts and behaviors associated with Adaptive Schools (e.g. norms of collaboration, dialogue and discussion, the sandbox). The degree to which there are varying depths of understanding associated with the work was revealed in the words of EG, retired CAO, and agency trainers SV and KH. These three individuals participated in the Foundation Seminar multiple times and also had the opportunity to participate in the Advanced Seminar. In reflecting back on the earliest experience, they all report that their initial understanding revolved around strategies primarily. It was through future experiences in the seminar setting (Foundation and Advanced) that they came to understand the work more deeply. For these individuals, there was clear application of strategies and behaviors and understanding of content; however, in thinking about the purpose of Adaptive Schools, their conversation focused on the abstractions associated with the work, particularly the importance of identity development and how this connects to adaptivity.

Within other members there were varying depths of understanding. As Figure 6.1 suggests there are many entry points into gaining depth of understanding. These include: group study, application of the principles, and study of the textbook and learning guide. Some participants were in situations to further support their thinking about the work of

Adaptive Schools through update meetings at district level PLC meetings. The group this impacted most notably was the literacy coach PLC. Through further exposure, through presenting to others, these individuals were able to move slightly beyond the content and concept understanding.

CE, current CAO also experienced the threshold experience because of a personal decision to read more deeply and converse with others about her learning, she developed understanding about the overarching framework and beliefs of Adaptive Schools.

Three individual who were interviewed, EG (retired CAO), KH, and SV (both agency trainers for the Smith County Schools) had the additional threshold experience of participating in the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar. In their interviews, they each talk about how this particular experience moved them beyond the strategies and concepts and into understanding about the themes and framework of the work of Adaptive Schools. This evidenced in their interview as they discuss in particular understanding of the work of Adaptive Schools in developing individuals' identity about being collaborators, inquirers, and leaders.

Figure 6.1 illustrates several important points about the work of Adaptive Schools: (a) that there are different levels of understanding (b) that the seminar experiences are critically important for entry into the work and (c) that the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar is insufficient to support deep understanding and that participants need to engage in the work through other means (professional reading, application of the work, and/or study with a PLC) in order to move towards deeper understanding.

As the district considers how to further extend the work of Adaptive Schools, it is important to consider what structures are available to help participants move the learning from just the four day seminar experience. This could include opportunities for individuals to participate in the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar.

Less formally, it might include updates and study around topics pertinent to the work of Adaptive Schools. This could take the form of practicing behaviors, studying components of the work, and applying the behaviors, work, and content in increasingly complex situations. Examples of sophisticated application include the way the EG used the work of Adaptive Schools to facilitate a principal selection committee and to plan for community meetings about redistricting. To be clear, much has been said about participants who come away from the training with a bank of strategies and intentional strategy use represents a much deeper level of understanding than just using a strategy. The participant who is using strategy with intentionality and with an understanding of how the strategy helps support the identity development or work of group is exhibiting more complex understanding.

Importantly, it is not that one of these strategies is the key to success, but rather that participants have many outlets and opportunities to explore further the work of Adaptive Schools and to apply their understandings. Like a muscle that atrophies from lack of use, the understanding needs to be used in order to be developed and strengthened. It is important that the district identifies the means through which this strengthening occurs and realizes that participation in the threshold experience alone is not enough to keep the work moving forward.

Application of System Level Learning to School Level

Several conditions have been identified at the district level which made a path for the work of Adaptive Schools to be established. In the context of application at the school level, the one which is the most salient is visionary leadership. As Adaptive Schools was brought into the Smith County district, found in EG was a leader in which there was deep understanding. In her role, she had clear understanding of the district mission and vision and she also saw the degree to which Adaptive Schools would help move the district along the journey towards mission and vision. Because of this, she committed to understanding the work deeply and she also committed time and resources to the learning of others.

Literacy coaches and administrators initially engaged in the work of the Adaptive School Foundation Seminar. In addition to this, as a leader, EG worked on being transparent of the application of her learning in contexts within her work. Concepts such as dialogue and discussion, the sandbox, and behaviors such as the norms of collaboration were used in meeting and professional learning contexts. Further, agency trainers for the district were selected so there would be opportunities provide a greater degree of training to other employees of the district. In additionally, she allocated time within meetings such as literacy coach meetings to develop further understanding of the work of Adaptive Schools. These actions represent a commitment to personal learning and application on part of the leader, as wells as willingness to use time and money in order to further the work.

Within local schools, there is a need for a leader who is a coalescing force for the work. This leader needs to have deep understanding as well as a willingness to apply that

understanding. Through observation and experience with the intentional application of the work of Adaptive Schools, participants at the school level will have greater opportunity to transfer their own learning to their personal and professional practices. Beyond the work of application, there also need to be a commitment to continue growing in understanding of the work. This could include book and article studies or perhaps an update structured utilized by the literacy coach. Without concrete plans for how the work will be applied and expectation for the work to be applied, it is doubtful that the four day Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar will be much more than a great professional development experience.

Build Understanding of the Work of Adaptive Schools with School Board Members

A further implication of the work is to consider the power of having school board members participate in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. In large measure, the greatest concern of the school board is to systematically impact student achievement and raise that to the highest levels conceivable. In talking with NG, the school board chairman, she had awareness of some of the changes and processes that were attributable to Adaptive Schools though she knew nothing of Adaptive Schools except for what had been shared with her through the course of our conversation. Given the role of the Board of Education in the local community, it seems that having them access and develop understanding about Adaptive Schools would be yet another way to integrate the work through the school system.

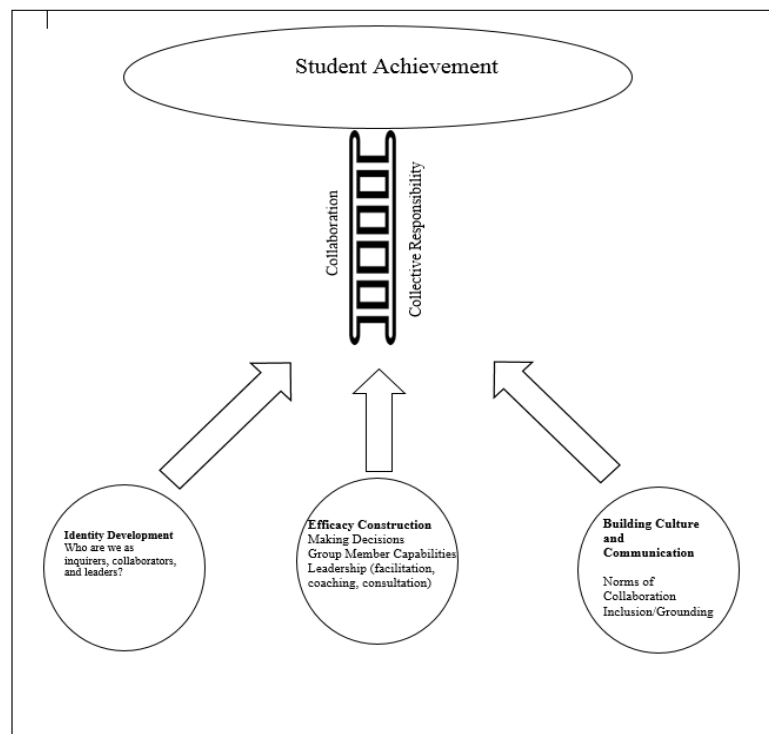
In reflecting about further implications in Smith County, it is important to note that Adaptive Schools became a vehicle for working towards the mission and vision, As the district has shifted from isolation to collaboration, Adaptive Schools has helped

support that shift. However, there are areas in which Adaptive Schools has not been as impactful as it might be. Considering ways of transferring the model of learning that has taken place at the system level to the school level is an important way to further the learning. Additionally, offering school board member the opportunity to experience the Adaptive School Foundation Seminar is another important way to build collaboration, congruence, and alignment across different facets of the school system.

Implications Beyond Smith County

The focus of this dissertation was the impact of the work of Adaptive Schools in the Smith County School System. However, there is the potential for the findings of the study to transcend the confines of Smith County. In analyzing the data, I have worked to understand what makes the work of Adaptive Schools both important and significant. Because the work is vast, it is challenging to reduce to a statement or even a paragraph.

Figure 6.2 Interactive Elements of Adaptive Schools



To this end, I have created a figure to illustrate the purpose of Adaptive Schools and how pieces of it interact in order to reach the end goal. (See Figure 6.2)

Supporting student achievement (beyond test scores in terms of equipping students with the skills, dispositions, and needed understandings to meet life goals and participate in society as successful, productive citizens) is an oft named purpose of schooling. To this end, the work of Adaptive Schools serves to increase student achievement by building the capacity of the individuals who make up school faculties. The Adaptive Schools paradigm supports the development of collaborative groups with a strong sense of collective responsibility. The spirit of collaboration through collective responsibility is created through focus on three areas: identity development (understanding who we are and what needs to change in order to achieve the determined vision), efficacy construction (developing skills and dispositions to support leadership, decision-making, and collaborative participation), and through building culture (through identifying behaviors that provide collegial support and interdependence, common language and understanding, and developing trust through inclusion and grounding).

When the Smith County Schools originated as a district, it was a collection of rural schools serving small, farming communities. At the current time, it could be perceived as a bedroom community of large urban city situated in an adjacent county. As neighborhoods developed across the county, the population increased dramatically and this eventually led to the need for more schools and ultimately the need for alignment between schools in serving the needs of students. Currently, the district is within the ten largest school districts in its state; however, it is quite different than the large urban districts that top the list. Furthermore, it faces some of the financial challenges posed in

smaller districts because of the limited corporate tax base within the district. So, on the one hand there has been the need to develop the systems based thinking that is often associated with larger organization while at the same time there are congruencies with much smaller rural districts. In essence, because of its unique position between rural and urban, and small and large, the work from this study may find application in places that are quite different.

There are two great implications for districts outside Smith County: that it is possible to shift from a place of isolation to collaboration on a system-wide level and that as schools consider professional collaboration to an even greater extent that there is a way to build capacity of individuals in terms of collaboration. Realizing that professional collaboration is a key to building professional capacity, it is also important to realize that attending to building the capacity of educators to collaborate is as critical as building the capacity to teach content such as math, science, or social studies.

These implications work in tandem with one another. In the case of Smith County, the shift occurred over time through many means and the deliberate action of the leadership team at the time. Actions included the development of a mission and vision, developing the literacy coach PLC, building collaborative groups across the district to work together, and developing understanding of PLCs at the school level. The work of Adaptive Schools became an important way to make the desired outcome operable. It is true to say the people understood the importance of collaboration, what was difficult was how to collaborate and how to act in ways to support collaboration. Therefore, this work has the potential to help other districts in this way.

To bring this work to fruition, districts must consider leadership. The work of Adaptive Schools in Smith County grew around the understanding of the CAO, EG. She realized the importance of the work and then worked to understand deeply herself as well as put in place practices and structures that would support the learning of others. Hence, a leader with a clear plan for developing and applying understanding is crucial.

Need for Further Research

The data that was collected for this study is rich in content and possibility for further study. In light of this, it is important to identify focus areas for further research, both within the realm of possibility for the collected data and in light of possible new studies. Three areas which warrant further study: (a) varying levels of understanding among those who participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar (b) a case study of the work of Adaptive Schools in a single school setting and (c) longitudinal ethnographic research of the impact of Adaptive Schools over time.

Varying Levels of Understanding Among Participants

In analyzing the data, it was interesting to see the degree to which different participants demonstrated different levels of understanding both in terms of the work of Adaptive Schools. Answers to the same interview questions varied considerably based on the participant's experience. Notably, those who had attended the Adaptive Schools Advanced Seminar and the training path talked about substantively different things than those who had only attended the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar. The conversation and comments of those who had the Advanced Seminar and trainers path focused on identity development and the ways in which Adaptive Schools functions as a means of clarifying purpose as collaborator, inquirer, and leader; whereas, other tended to

speak about strategies or specific content from the learning experience. This work was outside of the scope of this dissertation, but would be worthwhile in developing a more fine grained description of how the work impacts different individuals and the degree to which their experiences impact their personal learning and application.

Adaptive Schools Within a Single School Setting

This case study focused on the work of Adaptive School in case of a school system that shifted from a system of schools to a school system. Given the implication that an area for further growth of the work of Adaptive Schools within Smith County is transferring the work to individual schools, it would be illuminating to examine the case of a school in which a number of members had experienced the Adaptive Schools Foundation Experience in the context of strong leadership around the work as well as structured opportunities to extend and apply the learning. A comparison case study in which positive contextual factors (leadership, extended learning opportunities) were present in contrast to a school in which faculty members only participated in the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar could also reveal differences between the understanding and application of members of each school faculty.

Longitudinal Ethnographic Research on the Impact of Adaptive Schools Over Time

Though this study drew upon methods that are used in ethnography, the time span of the study was too short to fully understanding long term impact. Observing the work of Adaptive Schools in a district over a duration of time would provide the opportunity to see how understanding impacted the culture over time. It would also provide insight to how cultural components impacted by Adaptive Schools changed and remained constant over time.

The work of Adaptive Schools is based on a large body of research from diverse fields including education, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. In spite of rich theoretical foundation, there has been limited research on the work of Adaptive Schools in school settings. This research was exploratory in nature in order to discern the possible impacts of the work of Adaptive Schools in Smith County. This research provided insight about further work to be explored and suggests great richness in terms of both topics and possible methodologies.

Summary Chapter 6

This chapter summarized major findings about the work of Adaptive Schools in the Smith County School System including information about the impact on professional learning and collaboration and the connection to changes in continuities within the district. In addition, findings surrounding two emergent questions were discussed.

In order to frame implications of the study, a comparison was made to the action space and the theoretical framework it offers in terms of thinking about school reform. Implications for the Smith County School District as well as other districts were discussed. The chapter concluded with suggestions about possibilities for further research.

Epilogue: Looking Back, Looking Forward

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about”
(Wheatley, 2002, p. 48-49).

As this story began, I shared the words of Dewey (1938), “It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future world would be much like the past, and yet is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule and not the exception” (p. 3). Taken together these quotes capture the essence of the work of

Adaptive Schools in Smith County. Approximately a decade ago, Smith County was at a critical juncture in which the status quo – of schools working in isolation was no longer meeting the needs of students or the larger community. The days in which school existed as separate and parted entities that worked in fierce competition for being the “best school” in the county no longer offered the prized promise of providing the strongest, educational experiences for students that was possible.

In the space of this realization, an action space was created. Specifically, an *exceptional* space was created in which the school system worked to articulate shared values by way of a vision and mission. In this space, the transformation from “a system of schools to a school system” begin to occur. Several actions brought about such change. In particular, a focus on developing PLCs at each grade level or content specific group was enacted. By name, PLC emphasizes two key characteristics – professional learning and community. These qualities are not things that are simply spoken into being – rather they are commitments and at the heart they require that specific identities are assumed by participants. Participants in a PLC do not simply learn and collaborate – rather these things define who they are as people – participants in true PLC must become learners (inquirers) and collaborators. Adaptive Schools worked as a phenomenon and paradigm for individuals in Smith County School to come together as collaborators. When PLCs became the vision for professional learning for the benefit of student learning, the work of Adaptive Schools provided a means, a vehicle for actively working towards that goal.

Through its focus on developing inquirers, collaborators, and leaders, the work of Adaptive Schools helped Smith County in working towards the change that Wheatley

advocates when she suggests that “there is no change more powerful than a community deciding what it cares about.” In many ways, this story all about a community figuring out what it cared about and the tools that catalyzed the process. Two important discoveries happened in this vein: (a) that the Smith County district is about ensuring the learning every student in Smith County and (b) that as professionals, it is critically important to grow, learn and collaborate in order to reach this end. In this way, the work of Adaptive Schools worked as a way to focus on a shared mission while at the same time providing means for identity development both individually and collectively.

The results that emerged are the structures that have been enacted at a system level to support collaboration and professional learning. This has impacted culture, processes and procedures, common language, and leadership. Though seemingly simple, those who have internalized the tenets of the work of Adaptive Schools and become inquirers about the work have been transformed in terms of their leadership and collaboration.

What remains is the need for the work that happened in this exceptional space to transcend the disintegration of the action space – action spaces do not last forever (McDonald et al., 2014). In this truth, Dewey’s words about change are echoed again – change is the thing that is inevitable – so it is natural that the exceptional action space cannot remain indefinitely. However, what can remain, are the lessons learned – the value of being collaborative rather than competitive; the value of assuming the identity of inquirers and collaborators because of the way in which it empowers student learning.

So in considering the action space that was deeply impacted by Adaptive Schools, it is important to point out the powerful role Adaptive Schools had in the lives and

leadership of educators in Smith County. These words serve as benediction and challenge. They remind readers of the power of the work of Adaptive Schools. Further, implicit in them is the challenge for other school systems (as well as Smith County) to be both inspired and empowered to share the learning and carry forth the work of Adaptive Schools as new action spaces are created and eventually fall way. In these words, there is evidence of the transformation that occurred and the transformation yet to come. In these voices is the logical end to this story . . .

I think the big thing was it changed - it changed me. It made me better; it made me a lot better- as an administrator, as a leader. I felt like I was better able to do the two jobs that I had in Smith County because of that training. I think it helped me really make something that was a vision reality. I call it putting wheels on the bus. . . So, it – it changed me; it changed my practice and I feel like impacted people, some more than others, but it helped develop, create this culture that has now become more normal about everybody learning and growing together, that’s what I think has happened. And that’s a great thing to know – that those isolated walls - that how it used to be - has changed so much. (EG, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016).

It’s life changing – it really is. And it’s funny because . . . many of the strategies I have used before in a previous life. But I was never really able to name it. I mean I never named the strategy and I probably couldn’t have even have told you the purpose of why I was using it. I just thought it was a good idea. But, this training really sort brought it all home. And I have a career of 20 years before I ever got to Smith County and I just think – oh my – how different my trajectory would have been had I had this twenty years ago? . . . It would have been very different. (CW, Individual Interview, October 21, 2015).

In your journey through your growth as a professional, there are certain things you can say – oh this put me on a new course or this shifted me in my beliefs – Adaptive Schools and Cognitive CoachingSM both – really Cognitive Coach first and then Adaptive Schools really helped me think about groups. And on a larger scale– it put me on a new trajectory in how to build capacity in people, which is something that I’m passionate about, but I felt like – ooh – this really works (chuckling). These are powerful tools that have impact on –so it’s just a foundational – I hate to call it training – because to me it’s not the training. Um – but it is a belief that really can impact people. (CE, Individual Interview, December 10, 2015).

“It’s called Adaptive Schools, but it’s not just about schools it’s about how people work together to get things done.” (SV, July 18, 2013).

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APPENDIX A

Email Correspondence Granting Permission to use page 8 of the *Adaptive Schools Learning Guide* (Garmston & Wellman, 2014)

Hi, Winn,

I remember how much I enjoyed having you in the seminar. I am delighted you will be adding to the research base on our work. Please accept this email as permission to use either of the pages you referred to in the Adaptive Schools Learning Guide. It is good to know it was useful to you.

Please know we regularly synthesize research on Adaptive Schools and Cognitive Coaching. We look forward to adding your findings to our research bank. Do stay in contact as the work progresses.

With best wishes,
Carolee

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APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol (July 2013)

Note: The general structure of the interview is borrowed from Peters (2009) Interviewing Schedule – Context Interview II: VARIATION.

1. SET UP

Prior to the interview, digital recording material will be set-up and organized.

Interviews will be recorded provided that participants offer verbal consent.

2. Introduction

Goal: To establish rapport with the participant and help the participant feel comfortable before beginning the interview. This time will also be used to reiterate the purpose of the interview – as data collection for a qualitative methods class.

Greeting: Hi, I am Winn Wheeler (if applicable). Thanks so much for agreeing to speak with me about your experience with adaptive school training. I want to remind you that I am using this interview as data collection for a research paper that I am completing as a requirement of a qualitative research methods class. The data collected will not be used beyond that purpose and you will not be identifiable within the writing I do.

Through my research I am hoping to discern the impact, if any Adaptive Schools training has had on your work, your school community, or you personally. I will be asking you questions about your experience with the training and how you might have applied that training in your respective context.

If you are not comfortable to answer a question, please let me know and we will move forward accordingly.

So that I may concentrate on your responses fully, I would like to digitally record our conversation. May I begin recording now?

What further questions do you have before we begin?

If the participant asks about the length of the interview, respond that it will take 45-60 minutes.

Interview question 1: Please begin by describing your role within the school and your job responsibilities.

As pertinent, ask the participant to provide evidence or elaborate on his/her thinking about what was said. For instance, if the participant says something about facilitating professional learning community meetings, the following question might be asked:

You mentioned your role in leading plc meetings; please talk a bit about what these meetings look and sound like and how you work to facilitate them.

If the participant does not elaborate specifically on his/her leadership roles, ask the following question . . .

Tell me about your leadership responsibilities within your school.

Interview Question 2: Take a moment to think back to when your first began your role as (literacy coach, instructional coach, etc.), discuss some of the challenges that you encountered through your work.

3. Body

Goal: To understand specifically the participant's experience with Adaptive Schools and its impact on his/her work

Note: However the participant responds, pausing, paraphrasing, and specifying thinking will be used as strategies to elicit further thinking and commentary (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Interview Question 3: Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.

- **To what extent had you addressed initial challenges in your work, what new challenges had emerged?**
- **How many people from your school attended Adaptive Schools training?**

Interview Question 4: Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.

Note: Specify the participants thinking about general impressions, important themes that emerged, and clarification about how the process of the training also informed the participant of the content.

- **What general themes emerged?**
- **What were your general impressions?**
- **How did the process of the training enhance your understanding of the content of the training?**

Interview Question 5: If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training?

Note: I anticipate that participants will talk about two distinct aspects of the training – the content (how group interact, developing norms for communication, understanding the difference between dialogue and discussion) and the practical aspect (strategies to employ when working to get groups to interact collaboratively)

Interview Question 6: Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?

Interview Question 7: How did Adaptive Schools training impact you and your work?

If the participant believes his/her work was impacted,
What specific examples illustrate this impact?

If the participant believes his/her work was not impacted,
What might be some reasons that you felt the training was not impactful?

Interview Question 8: Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.

Reflect a bit on how Adaptive Schools impacted your work with this group.

Interview Question 9: What role, if any, do you think that training a team of individuals (a school's administrative team, lead teachers, etc.) from a setting has on impacting the use of Adaptive Schools?

Note: This question may lead to further questions about how the training might influence a setting such as a school or it could lead to comments about impact of the whole organization (e.g. central office, school board, school system)

- **In what ways do you see Adaptive Schools impacting the school system as an organization?**
- **How do you think the principles of the training could impact the work of small groups such as grade level PLCs or departmental PLCs?**
- **How might the principles of the training enhance communication between the school and parent communities?**
- **How might the principles of the training enhance communication between the school system and the community?**

Interview Question 10: What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?

4. Conclusion

Thanks so much for taking the time to discuss your thoughts about Adaptive Schools training. This ends our session today. I am not planning to contact you further, however, if you have other thoughts at a later time that you would like to share please contact me through email or by phone. Once again, thanks for your participation.

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol Adaptive Schools Training Participants Follow Up Group Interview (April 2015)

Introduction

Note: Participants in the interview are school system employees (literacy coaches, instructional coaches, or administrators) who participated in Adaptive Schools™ Training.

I. SET UP

Prior to the interview, digital recording material will be set-up and organized.

Interviews will be recorded provided that participants offer verbal consent.

II. Introduction

Goal: To establish rapport with the participants and remind the participants of the earlier interview process.

Greeting: You will remember that I interviewed each of you about your experiences with Adaptive Schools Training. Our time today is going to be an opportunity for you to be reminded of the questions you were asked and look at a synthesis of your answers to explore your response given the time that has passed and your further experiences with the training. I want to remind each of you that I am using this information as data collection for a research paper that I am completing as a requirement of a Discourse Analysis class and my comprehensive exams. Beyond that, I am using the process as a pre-study for my dissertation. The data collected will not be used beyond these purposes and you will not be identifiable within the writing I do.

The purpose of my research was to discern the impact, if any Adaptive Schools™ training has had on your work, your school community, or you personally. Today you will have the opportunity to complete some reflective writing about your thinking and participate in a discussion responding to your initial data and sharing your further thoughts.

If you are not comfortable to answer a question, please let me know and we will move forward accordingly.

So that I may concentrate on your responses fully, I would like to digitally record our conversation. May I begin recording now?

What further questions do you have before we begin?

If the participants ask about the length of the interview, respond that it will take about 45 minutes.

Note: The general of structure of the interview is borrowed from Peters (2009) Interviewing Schedule – Context Interview II: VARIATION.

III. Body

To begin, I would like to for you to review the general questions you were asked during your interview two summers ago. Once you read the questions, take a moment to jot down a list of ideas or concepts that you think would have emerged as important in the initial interview.

Note: Make clear to participants that they may choose to answer through a narrative response or through a lists/snatches of text.

In looking at the questions that you were asked, what questions might have been added?

Visual Stimulus

I have taken your responses from the initial interview and placed them in a word cloud (if need explain word cloud), in looking at the word cloud of your words what thinking emerges?

I have two versions of each word cloud, one with mazes such as –um or like and one with the mazes removed.

I also have word clouds of their combined responses and word cloud of all the responses combined with and without mazes. Depending on the pace and rhythm of the interview more of these may be presented. I am certain that I won't share all of them, but some of them could be relevant. It may even be relevant at some point for all of them to be placed out for the participants to see and reflect upon.

What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools™?

IV. Conclusion

Thanks so much for taking the time to discuss your thoughts about Adaptive Schools. This ends our session today. If you have other thoughts at a later time that you would like to share please contact me through email or by phone. Once again, thanks for your participation.

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol (Revised August 2015)

Note: The general structure of the interview is borrowed from Peters (2009) Interviewing Schedule – Context Interview II: VARIATION.

I. SET UP

Prior to the interview, digital recording material will be set-up and organized.

Interviews will be recorded provided that participants offer verbal consent.

II. Introduction

Goal: To establish rapport with the participant and help the participant feel comfortable before beginning the interview. This time will also be used to reiterate the purpose of the interview – as data collection for a qualitative methods class.

Greeting: Hi, I am Winn Wheeler (if applicable). Thanks so much for agreeing to speak with me about your experience with Adaptive Schools training. I am using this information in my dissertation which is about the impact of Adaptive Schools on the Smith County School district. All names will be replaced with pseudonyms and your information will not be personally identifiable.

Through my research I am hoping to discern the impact, if any Adaptive Schools training has had on you professionally and personally. I am also wanting to understand how Adaptive Schools fits into the larger vision and mission of Smith County Schools. I will be asking you questions about your experience with the training and how you might have applied that training in your respective context.

If you are not comfortable to answer a question, please let me know and we will move forward accordingly.

So that I may concentrate on your responses fully, I would like to digitally record our conversation. May I begin recording now?

What further questions do you have before we begin?

If the participant asks about the length of the interview, respond that it will take 45-60 minutes.

Interview question 1: Please begin by describing your role within the school system and your job responsibilities.

As pertinent, ask the participant to provide evidence or elaborate on his/her thinking about what was said. For instance, if the participant says something about facilitating professional learning community meetings, the following question might be asked:

You mentioned your role in leading PLC meetings; please talk a bit about what these meetings look and sound like and how you work to facilitate them.

If the participant does not elaborate specifically on his/her leadership roles, ask the following question . . .

Tell me about your leadership responsibilities within your school.

Interview Question 2: Take a moment to think back to when your first began your role as (literacy coach, instructional coach, etc.), discuss some of the challenges that you encountered through your work.

III. Body

Goal: To understand specifically the participant's experience with Adaptive Schools and its impact on his/her work

Note: However the participant responds, pausing, paraphrasing, and specifying thinking will be used as strategies to elicit further thinking and commentary (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Interview Question 3: Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.

- **To what extent had you addressed initial challenges in your work, what new challenges had emerged?**
- **How many people from your school attended Adaptive Schools training?**

Interview Question 4: Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.

Note: Specify the participants thinking about general impressions, important themes that emerged, and clarification about how the process of the training also informed the participant of the content.

- **What general themes emerged?**
- **What were your general impressions?**

- **How did the process of the training enhance your understanding of the content of the training?**

Interview Question 5: If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training?

Note: I anticipate that participants will talk about two distinct aspects of the training – the content (how group interact, developing norms for communication, understanding the difference between dialogue and discussion) and the practical aspect (strategies to employ when working to get groups to interact collaboratively)

Interview Question 6: Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?

Interview Question 7: Tell a story about a time that you facilitated or participated with a group before Adaptive Schools Training. Consider that group after Adaptive Schools training, tell a story that illustrates changes that might have happened in terms of the work of the group as a result of the training.

What are some ways that the stories are similar?

What are some ways that the stories are different?

Interview Question 8: Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.

How has work associated with Adaptive Schools impacted the work of the group?

Interview Question 9: A significant number of members of your job alike group have been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your group? Within your building?

Interview Question 10: Imagine that a school arranges for a significant number of teachers to attend Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this would have?

Or

A significant number of staff members in your school have been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?

Or

The staff at your school has been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think that this has had on school culture and professional collaboration within your building?

Note: This question may lead to further questions about how the training might influence a setting such as a school or it could lead to comments about impact of the whole organization (e.g. central office, school board, school system)

- **In what ways do you see Adaptive Schools impacting the school system as an organization?**
- **How do you think the principles of the training could impact the work of small groups such as grade level PLCs or departmental PLCs?**
- **How might the principles of the training enhance communication between the school and parent communities?**
- **How might the principles of the training enhance communication between the school system and the community?**

Interview Question 10: Within the Adaptive Schools Seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic Optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.

In thinking about the factors relating to Academic Optimism, to what extent do you sense the characteristics are present within the Smith County School System?

In thinking about the Adaptive Schools Seminar, how do you think the training helps support factors connected to Academic Optimism?

Interview Question 11: As you consider your experience with Adaptive Schools and within the Smith County School District, how do you see the ideas of the training fitting with the vision and mission of the district?

How do you see Adaptive Schools fitting with other initiatives within the school district?

Interview Question 12: What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?

IV. Conclusion

APPENDIX E

Interview Synthesis Document

General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
<p>Please begin by describing your work experience in Smith County.</p> <p>How long have you worked in the district?</p> <p>What are your early impressions and observations in regard to the school district?</p> <p>What are the different experiences you have had?</p> <p>As you think about your time, what has remained consistent through your time and what has changed?</p>	<p>Please begin by describing your work experience in Smith County.</p> <p>How long have you worked in the district?</p> <p>What are your early impressions and observations in regard to the school district?</p> <p>What are the different experiences you have had?</p> <p>As you think about your time, what has remained consistent through your time and what has changed??</p>	<p>Please begin by describing your work experience in Smith County.</p> <p>How long have you worked in the district?</p> <p>What are your early impressions and observations in regard to the school district?</p> <p>What are the different experiences you have had?</p> <p>As you think about your time, what has remained consistent through your time and what has changed?</p>	<p>Please begin by describing your work experience in Smith County.</p> <p>How long have you worked in the district?</p> <p>What are your early impressions and observations in regard to the school district?</p> <p>What are the different experiences you have had?</p> <p>As you think about your time, what has remained consistent through your time and what has changed?</p>	<p>Please begin by describing your work experience in Smith County.</p> <p>How long have you worked in the district?</p> <p>What are your early impressions and observations in regard to the school district?</p> <p>What are the different experiences you have had?</p> <p>As you think about your time, what has remained consistent through your time and what has changed?</p>	<p>Please begin by describing your work experience in Smith County.</p> <p>How long have you worked in the district?</p> <p>What are your early impressions and observations in regard to the school district?</p> <p>What are the different experiences you have had?</p> <p>As you think about your time, what has remained consistent through your time and what has changed?</p>	<p>Please begin by describing your work experience in Smith County?</p> <p>How long have you worked in the district?</p> <p>What are your early impressions and observations in regard to the school district?</p> <p>What are the different experiences you have had?</p> <p>As you think about your time, what has remained consistent through your time and what has changed?</p>
<p>Take a moment to describe your current role within the school district and your job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Take a moment to describe your current role within the school district and your job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Take a moment to describe your current role within the school district and your job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Take a moment to describe your current role within the school district and your job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Take a moment to describe your current role within the school district and your job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Take a moment to describe your current role within the school district and your job responsibilities.</p>	<p>Take a moment to describe your current role within the school district and your job responsibilities.</p>
<p>Take a moment to think back to when you began your current role as _____ discuss some of</p>	<p>Take a moment to think back to when you began your current role as a central office administrator,</p>	<p>Take a moment to think back to when you began your current role as a school administrator, discuss some of the challenges that you</p>	<p>Take a moment to think back to when you began your current role as a literacy</p>	<p>Take a moment to think back to when you began your current role as a lead teacher, discuss some of</p>	<p>Take a moment to think back to when you began your current role as a teacher, discuss some of</p>	<p>Take a moment to think back to when you began your current role as a teacher, discuss some of the challenges that you encountered through your work</p>

General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
the challenges that you encountered through your work	discuss some of the challenges that you encountered through your work	encountered through your work	coach, discuss some of the challenges that you encountered through your work	the challenges that you encountered through your work	the challenges that you encountered through your work	<p>What supports in terms of collaboration or human resources were helpful you in addressing those challenges?</p> <p>Think about your collaborative work with other teachers, administrators, and parents, what factors, contexts, or skills would address concerns that you have about collaboration?</p>
						<p>Professional collaboration is an expectation of work within the district. Take some times to characterize opportunities you have to collaborate with other professionals including professional development, faculty meetings, and professional learning community meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you characterize these meetings? • What rituals and routines are evident in different meetings? • How do norms and working agreements impact your collaborative work? • What role do structures, routines, norms, and working agreements play in the effectiveness of meetings? • How would you describe the effectiveness of different group of which you are a part? What evidence

General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
						supports your thinking?
Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.	Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.	Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.	Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.	Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.	Discuss your working context at the time you participated in Adaptive Schools training.	NA
Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.	Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.	Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.	Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.	Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.	Please discuss your recollections of Adaptive Schools Training.	
If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training	If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training	If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training	If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training	If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training	If you were asked by a colleague who had not been to training, what would you say were the most salient points from the training	
Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?	Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?	Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?	Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?	Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?	Earlier I asked you to describe challenges that you faced in your work, to what extent did Adaptive Schools training address any of the challenges that you experienced early in your work and/or around the time of the training?	
Tell a story about a time that you facilitated or participated with a group before Adaptive Schools training. Consider that group after	Tell a story about a time that you facilitated or participated with a group before Adaptive Schools training. Consider that group after	Tell a story about a time that you facilitated or participated with a group before Adaptive Schools training. Consider that group after	Tell a story about a time that you facilitated or participated with a group before Adaptive Schools training. Consider that group after	Tell a story about a time that you facilitated or participated with a group before Adaptive Schools training. Consider that group after	Tell a story about a time that you facilitated or participated with a group before Adaptive Schools training. Consider that group after	As you think about your work in collaborative groups through your work, discuss learning experiences in which you have participated that have developed your skills and understanding as a professional collaborator.

General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
<p>Adaptive Schools training tell a story that illustrates changes that might have happened in terms of the work of the group as a result of the training.</p> <p>What are some the ways that the stories are similar?</p> <p>What are some of the ways that stories are different?</p>	<p>Adaptive Schools training tell a story that illustrates changes that might have happened in terms of the work of the group as a result of the training.</p> <p>What are some the ways that the stories are similar?</p> <p>What are some of the ways that stories are different?</p>	<p>have happened in terms of the work of the group as a result of the training.</p> <p>What are some the ways that the stories are similar?</p> <p>What are some of the ways that stories are different?</p>	<p>after Adaptive Schools training tell a story that illustrates changes that might have happened in terms of the work of the group as a result of the training.</p> <p>What are some the ways that the stories are similar?</p> <p>What are some of the ways that stories are different?</p>	<p>Adaptive Schools training tell a story that illustrates changes that might have happened in terms of the work of the group as a result of the training.</p> <p>What are some the ways that the stories are similar?</p> <p>What are some of the ways that stories are different?</p>	<p>Adaptive Schools training tell a story that illustrates changes that might have happened in terms of the work of the group as a result of the training.</p> <p>What are some the ways that the stories are similar?</p> <p>What are some of the ways that stories are different?</p>	
<p>Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.</p> <p>How has work associated with Adaptive Schools impacted the work of the group?</p>	<p>Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.</p> <p>How has work associated with Adaptive Schools impacted the work of the group?</p>	<p>Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.</p> <p>How has work associated with Adaptive Schools impacted the work of the group?</p>	<p>Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.</p> <p>How has work associated with Adaptive Schools impacted the work of the group?</p>	<p>Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.</p> <p>How has work associated with Adaptive Schools impacted the work of the group?</p>	<p>Describe the functioning of a group with whom you work.</p> <p>How has work associated with Adaptive Schools impacted the work of the group?</p>	
<p>Imagine that a school arranges for a significant number of teachers to attend Adaptive</p>	<p>A significant number of members within your job alike group have been trained in Adaptive</p>	<p>A significant number of members within your job alike group have been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or</p>	<p>A significant number of members within your job alike group have been trained in Adaptive</p>	<p>A significant number of staff members in your school have been trained in Adaptive</p>	<p>A significant number of staff members in your school have been trained in Adaptive</p>	

General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
<p>Schools, what impact or effect do you think this would have?</p> <p>A significant number of staff members in your school have been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>Or</p> <p>The staff at your school has been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think that this has had on school culture and professional collaboration within your building?</p>	<p>Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>Imagine that a school arranges for a significant number of teachers to attend Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this would have?</p>	<p>effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>Imagine that a school arranges for a significant number of teachers to attend Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this would have?</p> <p>or</p> <p>A significant number of staff members in your school have been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>or</p> <p>The staff at your school has been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think that this has had on school culture and professional collaboration within your building?</p>	<p>Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>Imagine that a school arranges for a significant number of teachers to attend Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this would have?</p> <p>A significant number of staff members in your school have been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>or</p> <p>The staff at your school</p>	<p>Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>or</p> <p>The staff at your school has been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think that this has had on school culture and professional collaboration within your building?</p>	<p>Schools, what impact or effect do you think this has had on the school community and professional collaboration within your building?</p> <p>or</p> <p>The staff at your school has been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think that this has had on school culture and professional collaboration within your building?</p>	

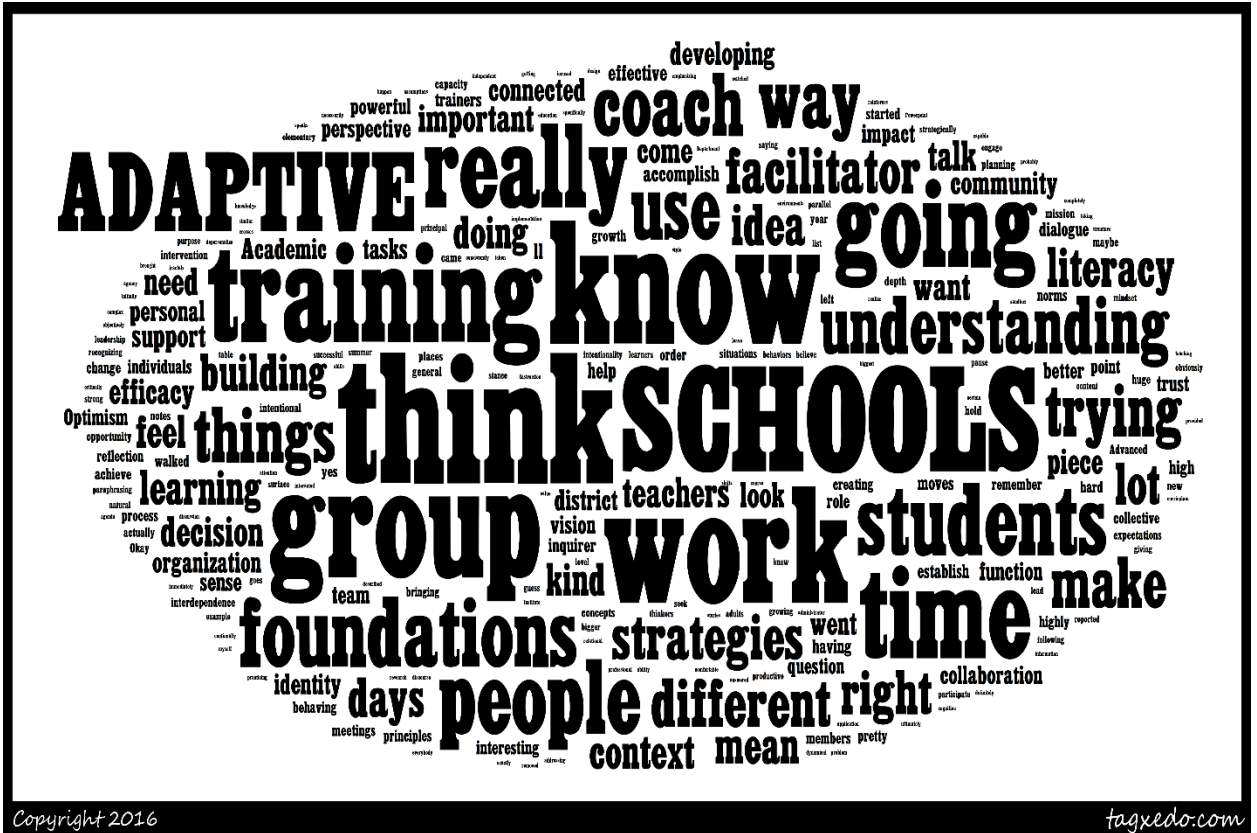
General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
			has been trained in Adaptive Schools, what impact or effect do you think that this has had on school culture and professional collaboration within your building?			
<p>Within the Adaptive Schools seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p> <p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense</p>	<p>Within the Adaptive Schools seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p> <p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense</p>	<p>Within the Adaptive Schools seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p> <p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense that the characteristics are present within the Smith County School system?</p> <p>In thinking about Adaptive Schools training, how do you think the training helps</p>	<p>Within the Adaptive Schools seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p> <p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense</p>	<p>Within the Adaptive Schools seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p> <p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense</p>	<p>Within the Adaptive Schools seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p> <p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense</p>	<p>Within the field of educational research, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p> <p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense that the characteristics are present within the Smith County School system?</p>

General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
<p>that the characteristic s are present within the Smith County School system?</p> <p>In thinking about Adaptive Schools training, how do you think the training helps support factors connected to Academic Optimism?</p>	<p>that the characteristic s are present within the Smith County School system?</p> <p>In thinking about Adaptive Schools training, how do you think the training helps support factors connected to Academic Optimism?</p>	<p>support factors connected to Academic Optimism?</p>	<p>that the characteristi cs are present within the Smith County School system?</p> <p>In thinking about Adaptive Schools training, how do you think the training helps support factors connected to Academic Optimism?</p>	<p>that the characteristic s are present within the Smith County School system?</p> <p>In thinking about Adaptive Schools training, how do you think the training helps support factors connected to Academic Optimism?</p>	<p>that the characteristic s are present within the Smith County School system?</p> <p>In thinking about Adaptive Schools training, how do you think the training helps support factors connected to Academic Optimism?</p>	
<p>As you consider your experience with Adaptive Schools and within the Smith County School District, how do you see the ideas of the training fitting with the vision and mission of the district?</p>	<p>Within the Adaptive Schools seminar, there is discussion of the construct Academic Optimism. Academic optimism is connected to the academic emphasis, relational trust, and collective efficacy present within a school. Heightened academic optimism has been associated with heightened student achievement.</p>					<p>About five years ago, Smith County embarked upon a journey to provide professional learning in the area of leadership and collaboration through offering training through the Adaptive Schools Seminar.</p> <p>What awareness do you have Adaptive Schools?</p> <p>In what ways have you noticed similarities or changes in the ways that collaborative meetings are conducted and supported throughout the district?</p>

General Questions (for those who have attended)	Central Office	School Administrators	Literacy Coaches	Lead Teachers	Teachers	Questions for those who have not attended (will be modified based on the role of the person being interviewed)
	<p>In thinking about the factors relating to academic optimism, to what extent do you sense that the characteristics are present within the Smith County School system?</p> <p>In thinking about Adaptive Schools training, how do you think the training helps support factors connected to Academic Optimism?</p>					
What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?	What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?	What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?	What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?	What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?	What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?	What other thoughts or insights might you provide in terms of your professional collaboration in the Smith County Schools district?

APPENDIX F

Example Word Cloud for Stimulus Response Interviews



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APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol Adaptive Schools Training Participants Follow Up Group Interview (Revised June 2015)

Introduction

Note: Participants in the interview are school system employees (literacy coaches, agency trainers, or department of instruction members) who participated in Adaptive Schools Training.

I. SET UP

Prior to the interview, digital recording material will be set-up and organized.

Interviews will be recorded provided that participants offer verbal consent.

II. Introduction

Goal: To establish rapport with the participants and remind the participants of the earlier interview process.

Greeting: You will remember that I interviewed each of you about your experiences with Adaptive Schools Training. Our time today is going to be an opportunity for you to be reminded of the questions you were asked and look at a synthesis of your answers to explore your response given the time that has passed and your further experiences with the training. I want to remind each of you that I am using this information as data collection for my dissertation. Pseudonyms will be used in the finished research and your information will not be personally identifiable.

The purpose of my research was to discern the impact, if any Adaptive Schools training has had on your work, your school community, or you personally. Today you will have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with others in order share your further thoughts and insights.

If you are not comfortable to answer a question, please let me know and we will move forward accordingly.

So that I may concentrate on your responses fully, I would like to digitally record our conversation. May I begin recording now?

What further questions do you have before we begin?

If the participants ask about the length of the interview, respond that it will take about 45 minutes.

Note: The general of structure of the interview is borrowed from Peters (2009) Interviewing Schedule – Context Interview II: VARIATION.

III. Body

To begin, I would like to for you to review the general questions you were asked during your interview. Once you read the questions, take a moment to jot down a list of ideas or concepts that you think would have emerged as important in the initial interview.

Note: Make clear to participants that they may choose to answer through a narrative response or through a lists/snatches of text.

Visual Stimulus

I have taken your responses from the initial interview and placed them in a word cloud (if needed, explain word cloud). I removed maze words such as –um or like from the body of the interview transcript before generating the word cloud. In looking at the word cloud of your words what thinking emerges?

What other thoughts or insights might you offer about your experience with Adaptive Schools?

IV. Conclusion

Thanks so much for taking the time to discuss your thoughts about Adaptive Schools. This ends our session today. If you have other thoughts at a later time that you would like to share please contact me through email or by phone. Once again, thanks for your participation.

APPENDIX H

Data Analysis Matrix Using Gee's (2014) Building Tasks

Building Tasks→	Significance	Practices	Identities	Relationships	Politics	Connections	Sign Systems and Knowledge
Analysis Notes							
Connection to the Tools							

CURRICULUM VITA

NAME: Winn Crenshaw Wheeler

ADDRESS: 1105 Meadow Court
Goshen, KY 40026

DOB: Columbia, South Carolina – February 4, 1974

EDUCATION

& TRAINING: B.A., Elementary Education and History
Elon University
1992-1996

M.Ed., Elementary Education
Elon University
1997-2001

Ph.D., Curriculum and Instruction
University of Louisville
2011-2016

AWARDS: National Board Certification, Middle Childhood
2002, 2011

Graduate Dean Citation, University of Louisville
2016

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES: Louisville Writing Project
Kentucky Writing Project
National Writing Project
National Board Certified Teacher

PUBLICATIONS:

Wheeler, W. (2006). Reflective Writing: Worth a Season Pass. *Louisville Writing Project Journal for Literacy Leaders*, 2(1), 4-9.

Wheeler, W. (2007). Letter to the editor: Spelling Still Assessed in a Variety of Ways. *The Oldham Era*. February, 2007.

NATIONAL MEETING PRESENTATIONS:

“Reclaiming Portfolios for Teaching, Assessment, and Professional Development.”
Presentation (with J. Wolph) at the National Writing Project Annual Meeting,
2008. San Antonio, TX.

“From the Ivory Tower to the Real-World Classroom: Does it Make a Difference?”
Roundtable discussion (with G. Bass) at the Eastern Educational Research
Association, 2001. Hilton Head, SC.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

“Preparing Students for Socratic Circles to Learn Content.” Presentation given at
Louisville Writing Project Mini-conference, Spring 2011, Louisville, KY.

“Photostory in the Classroom.” Presentation given (with G. Watson) at Louisville
Writing Project Technology and Learning Conference, Fall 2010, Louisville, KY.

“Write Now! Ready to Use Organizational Strategies.” Presentation given (with S.
Shelby and M. McCarty) at Louisville Writing Project Mini-conference, Fall
2010, Louisville, KY.

“Building Community with Photostory.” Presentation given at Louisville Writing Project
Mini-conference, Spring 2010, Louisville, KY.

“Informational Writing in a Workshop Setting.” Professional Development (led with J.
Wolph) over seven days for the Louisville Writing Project, Summer 2010.
Louisville, KY.

“More than Surviving: Successful Teaching for Your First Year and Beyond.”
Presentation given (with S. Shelby, G. Watson, and M. Wheeler)
Louisville Writing Project Mini-conference, Fall 2009, Louisville, KY.

“Meeting the Needs of Struggling Writers.” Professional Development (led with E. Best)
over eight days for the Louisville Writing Project, Summer 2009. Louisville, KY.

“Teaching in the Writing Workshop.” Professional Development (led with M. Wheeler)
over eight days for the Louisville Writing Project, Summer 2008. Louisville, KY.

“Teaching in the Writing Workshop.” Professional Development (led with A. Grimm)
over eight days for the Louisville Writing Project, Summer 2007. Louisville, KY.

“Writing Notebooks and Writing Workshop” Professional Development (led with A. Grimm) over three days for the Louisville Writing Project, Summer 2006. Louisville, KY.

“Personal Writing.” Presentation (with A. Grimm) Louisville Writing Project Mini-conference, Spring 2006, Louisville, KY.

“New Eyes for Old Strategies.” Louisville Writing Project Mini-conference, Fall 2005, Louisville, KY.