

**Visiting Classrooms: A Design Study to Support Principals' Instructional Leadership**

by

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**VISITING CLASSROOMS: A DESIGN STUDY TO  
SUPPORT PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

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## ABSTRACT

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Principals are expected to be instructional leaders. Research on instructional leadership indicates that when principals visit classrooms they can positively impact student achievement, teacher practice, and teacher attitudes. The literature also indicates that principals spend little time on this instructional leadership activity. To address this issue, the superintendent of Skyline Unified School District (SUSD) mandated that all principals spend at least five hours a week visiting classrooms. This design study is an attempt to provide SUSD principals guidance in productively meeting the five-hour visit requirement. I developed a design to help principals lead classroom visits that support teacher development and indirectly contribute to a school wide learning community. The design emphasizes classroom visits to support teacher learning because there is extensive evidence that enhancing instructional quality is essential to improving student learning.

For this study, I developed a theory of action to guide the design. Drawing from the literature, I identified three key design elements of classroom visits with a learning orientation: reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback. I incorporated these elements into a classroom visit process that two SUSD principals engaged in at their schools. The principals also acted as co-developers of the design. During the course of this study I investigated the impact of the design on the principals' practice as well as the design process itself. Overall, the design contributed to the principals improving in leading classroom visits focused on teacher learning. Based on the findings, I argue that the design's theory of action is basically sound, although principal learning needs to be enhanced. There were also limitations to the impact of the design and to the principals' acting as co-developers. These findings inform potential design modifications to the classroom visit process as well as implications this study has for instructional leadership.

## **DEDICATION**

For Brenda – my teacher, my partner, my friend – and our wonderful children Ella and Cole.  
Your love and support made this “dickertation” possible.

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# **CHAPTER 1: DESIGN CHALLENGE AND THE PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Principals are expected to be instructional leaders. Research on instructional leadership suggests that classroom visits can be an important leadership activity that positively impacts student achievement (Andrews, Soder, & Jacoby, 1986; Heck, 1992), teacher practice (Frase, 1998; Teddlie, Kirby, & Stringfield, 1989), and teacher attitudes (Jo Blase & Blase, 2004; Chester & Beaudin, 1996). The problem is that principals do not typically spend much time visiting classrooms (Fuller, Loeb, Arshan, Chen, & Yi, 2006; Markow & Horowitz, 2003). To address this issue, the superintendent of Skyline Unified School District (SUSD) directed principals to be in classrooms for at least five hours a week. Yet school leaders received little direction and support in meeting the five-hour requirement. Principals in SUSD expressed a need for guidance on how to make this time productive. This design study attempted to address this need by developing a research-based classroom visit guide for SUSD principals so that the five-hour requirement would become a productive instructional leadership activity. Ultimately, the goal is for principal classroom visits to support teacher development and contribute to a school wide learning community.

A design study has several distinct features that make it well suited for this particular project. First, a design challenge guides the study, rather than a research question. The design challenge is in response to an established need in a practical context (van den Akker, 1999). Also, the professional knowledge base is consulted so that relevant research and knowledge from the field informs design principles (van den Akker, 1999). Since the design is intended for practical application, a theory of action, rather than a conceptual framework, establishes its logic (Richey, Klein, & Nelson, 2004). Finally, a research approach is selected to investigate both the design's impact and the design process (Richey, et al., 2004; van den Akker, 1999).

## **DESIGN CONTEXT: A NEW MANDATE, LITTLE GUIDANCE**

At our initial administrative meeting of the 2008-2009 school year, the superintendent, Dr. Nelson, issued an administrative mandate: all principals and district administrators must be in classrooms for at least five hours a week. Dr. Nelson briefly explained his rationale for this mandate, arguing that frequent classroom visits have a positive effect both on what happens in the classroom and the school wide learning community. He recognized the challenge in meeting this mandate, acknowledging the myriad demands placed on school leaders, yet he expected principals to make visiting classrooms a priority. In September of 2008 he e-mailed the details of the requirement and a classroom visit log that he expected us to complete electronically and return to him weekly. Since then, principals have received little guidance around this mandate.

Informal conversations with principals made it clear that productively meeting the requirement was a challenge. First, principals found it difficult to consistently visit classrooms. Reasons for this included fewer resources and support personnel due to budget cuts, parent demands, discipline issues, and excessive administrative tasks. New principals in particular seemed to find it challenging to prioritize classroom visits. Principals also were uncertain about what approach to take when visiting classrooms. Typical questions were whether to schedule visits or not, when to visit, on what to focus, and how to give feedback—in writing, with a checklist, or through a conversation. Additionally, the purpose of observing in the classroom was unclear, as there seemed to be numerous expectations around principals visiting classrooms.

Principals were expected to visit classrooms to evaluate teacher performance, monitor program implementation (i.e. using Everyday Math) or ensure compliance with district mandates (i.e. grouping for English Language Development). At the same time, principals also were expected to improve instructional quality, yet they had received little professional development on more substantive issues of teaching and learning. Finally, the teacher union had openly questioned the necessity and the efficacy of the classroom visit requirement. Although the dynamics at individual schools were unique, principals consistently noted the union contract as a barrier to discussing instructional issues, especially with more defensive teachers. The five-hour requirement did nothing to address these issues.

## **DESIGN CHALLENGE**

It is within this context that I formulated my design challenge:

**To develop a research-based classroom visit guide so that SUSD principals can productively meet the five-hour requirement by engaging in visits that support teacher development and indirectly contribute to a school wide culture of learning.**

This focus on teacher development and the school learning community is meant to orient principals' instructional leadership toward improving instructional quality and student learning. The design challenge emphasizes classroom visits to support teacher learning because there is extensive evidence that enhancing instructional quality is essential to improving student learning (Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Teddlie, et al., 1989). Similarly, there is a confluence of research that successful schools function as learning communities (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1991; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). I next turn to the professional knowledge base to identify the aspects of classroom visits that have this learning orientation.

## **CLASSROOM VISITS: HISTORY, EFFECTS, AND COMMON PRACTICES**

Visiting classrooms is a practice associated with instructional supervision or instructional leadership. In the traditional supervisory approach principals observe a classroom to evaluate the teacher's performance. This approach has dominated instructional supervision since the beginning of schooling in this country (Tracy & MacNaughton, 1993). More recently, the notion of clinical supervision has emerged as an alternative to the traditional approach (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004). In clinical supervision the focus is on the teacher's development rather than evaluation. In this model, classroom observations are meant to serve as the focal point of principal and teacher interactions which are collaborative, collegial, and focused on the complex task of educating students to a high level (Glickman, et al., 2004; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The emergence of clinical supervision coincided with a reconceptualization of the role of the principal from manager to instructional leader. In the school effectiveness research, being a visible presence, including visiting classrooms, is identified as a key leadership function (Andrews, et al., 1986; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Sheppard, 1996). Yet this research has been criticized for only examining instructional leadership related to goal-oriented effectiveness as measured by student achievement on standardized tests (Glickman, et al., 2004; Sheppard, 1996). Still, broader conceptualizations of

instructional leadership include being a visible presence or visiting classrooms as an important activity (Jo Blase & Blase, 2004; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Glickman, et al., 2004; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Classroom visits as a generic, informal, and routine leadership activity has its own place in the professional literature. Downey and colleagues offer a brief synopsis of the background on classroom visits. They refer to the practice as “management by walking around (MBWA)” (Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, & Poston Jr., 2004). MBWA emerged from the business community and was first formally practiced at Hewlett-Packard in the 1970s. The authors cite Peters and Waterman’s book, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies*, as sparking widespread interest in the MBWA process. The concept was formally introduced as an educational management theory in 1990. Since then, various processes for conducting classroom visits have been developed, including Downey’s own “Three-Minute Classroom Walkthrough” and the “LearningWalk,” developed by Lauren Resnick from the Institute for Learning.

While visiting classrooms emerges as an important element of instructional leadership and supervision, principals in general do not seem to prioritize this activity. Principals spend considerable time on non-instructional tasks such as interactions with parents, dealing with teacher concerns, and student discipline (Fuller, et al., 2006; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Kmetz & Willower, 1982). A comprehensive survey of school leadership finds that only 38% of teachers believe that their principal is excellent at being visible throughout the school (Markow & Horowitz, 2003). Only 18% of teachers report that their principals visit their classrooms on a daily or weekly basis, while 54% claim their principals only visit one to four times a year. Based on the studies in which some principals are found to be in classrooms on more a regular basis, there seems to be a concerted effort to do so (Jo Blase & Blase, 2004; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Although the literature on instructional leadership emphasizes being a visible presence and visiting classrooms as important activities, the latter do not seem to be practiced with much regularity.

When principals do visit classrooms, what is the result? Several studies find that visiting classrooms is positively associated with improved student achievement (Andrews, et al., 1986; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marzano, et al., 2005). However, the impact of principals visiting classrooms should not be overstated as this is often listed as one of many variables associated with improved achievement. Additional studies provide some evidence that classroom visits can contribute to improved student behavior (Joseph Blase & Blase, 1999; Keesor, 2005). There is a greater connection in the research on the impact of classroom visits on teachers than on students. Blase and Blase (2004) led an extensive investigation of teachers’ perceptions of principals’ characteristics by providing an open-ended questionnaire to over eight hundred teachers and found that visits enhanced teachers’ motivation, self-esteem, and classroom practice. Classroom visits seem to have a similarly positive impact on the efficacy beliefs of newly hired teachers in urban schools (Chester & Beaudin, 1996), teachers sense of efficacy (Frase, 1998), and teachers’ commitment, professional involvement, and innovativeness (Sheppard, 1996). Finally, there is evidence that not all classroom visits have a positive impact on teachers. While teachers and principals generally view the instructional supervision process favorably, interactions around classroom visits are often superficial and perfunctory (Jo Blase & Blase, 2004; Goldsberry, et al., 1984; Markow & Horowitz, 2003). A small percentage of teachers find the instructional supervision process threatening (Jo Blase & Blase, 2002; Blume, 1940; Goldsberry, et al., 1984). Classroom visits were not viewed as constructive in studies in which they were characterized as

interruptions (Joseph Blase & Blase, 1999) or were part of instructional reform efforts (Marsh, et al., 2005; Shulman, Sullivan, & Glanz, 2008). Overall, though, there is evidence that classroom visits can have a positive effect on students and teachers.

## **DIMENSIONS OF CLASSROOM VISITS WITH A LEARNING ORIENTATION**

What features of classroom visits might contribute to this positive influence on teaching and learning? While there are a myriad of professional texts on how to conduct classroom visits, there is little direct empirical evidence on what practices contribute to their productivity (Short, 1995). Thus, I turn to the literature on instructional leadership and schools as social organizations to identify some important dimensions of effective classroom visits. I also examine established models of classroom visits from the field that are based on validated principles and practices. The review of the research and professional literature is bounded by the purpose of this study—classroom visits to support teacher development and contribute to a school wide culture of learning. I exclude research and literature in which classroom visits are meant to monitor program implementation, ensure use of a particular instructional strategy or reform effort, or focus exclusively on teacher evaluation procedures. From the review, I identify three key dimensions of classroom visits with a learning orientation: reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback.

### *REDUCING DEFENSIVENESS*

Classroom visits occur within the context of the traditionally hierarchical relationship between principals and teachers. Principals have significant control over major aspects of teachers' work (Ingersoll, 2003). This control leads to teachers feeling particularly vulnerable in their relationship with their principal (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). A primary means of control is that principals are teachers' evaluators, resulting in the possibility that all interactions are viewed through this lens (Jo Blase & Blase, 2002). This asymmetrical distribution of power in schools can make leadership activities with a learning orientation difficult to enact. Even in informal interactions around issues such as collaboration and peer coaching, micropolitical concerns can dominate (Jo Blase & Blase, 2002; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Shulman, et al., 2008). When classroom visits seem control oriented, charges of "micromanaging" or "snoopervision" are likely to emerge (Jo Blase & Blase, 2002). Additionally, defensiveness is a common reaction to interactions that may be perceived as critical of a teachers' practice (Joseph Blase & Blase, 1999). Teaching can be a very personal profession. Bryk and Schneider (2002) note the importance of teachers feeling valued and respected by their principals. Also, teaching is often characterized as an isolating profession (Little, 1990). Teachers can go a long time without any feedback on their performance (Markow & Horowitz, 2003). If classroom visits are isolated or unconnected activities, then they may not contribute to positive outcomes for teachers (Jo Blase & Blase, 2004). Finally, defensive routines are also common in organizations that do not have a culture of learning (Argyris, 1990).

The literature indicates several characteristics or practices that might reduce defensiveness and contribute to teacher learning. Bryk and Schneider's (2002) seminal study on the social interactions in schools finds that high levels of teacher-principal trust are dominant in the top achieving schools. While the authors define relational trust as an organizational property, trust itself emerges from how members in the organization discern respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity from social interactions with each other. In their qualitative

investigation, the authors note that teachers at higher-achieving schools find their principal to be accessible, open to new ideas, and supportive of their practice in the classroom. In lower achieving schools teachers typically do not feel respected by their principal, and they do not respect the principal as an educator. Additional studies find that when principal/teacher relationships are characterized by trust, respect, or support it can foster innovation (Rosentholtz, 1991), teacher learning (Jo Blase & Blase, 2004), and contribute to a school wide learning community (Bryk & Schneider, 2004, Luis & Kruse, 1994). While these studies do not explicitly investigate teacher defensiveness in relation to classroom visits, they suggest that when principal/teacher interactions are characterized by relational trust, teacher learning is supported. In the professional literature, models of instructional leadership in general and classroom visits in particular invariably include suggestions for fostering trust and reducing defensiveness (Downey, et al., 2004; Glickman, et al., 2004). If principals intend classroom visits to be a learning experience, actively reducing defensiveness appears to be an important feature.

#### *TAKING A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH*

In addition to reducing defensiveness, the research and professional literature suggest that principals need to take a developmental approach for classroom visits to have a learning orientation. A developmental approach refers to the principal supporting the teacher in improving her classroom practice through collaboration and learning, as opposed to control and compliance (Glickman et al., 2001). When asked, teachers overwhelmingly prefer a collaborative approach to supervision (Goldsberry, et al., 1984; Grimmer, 1981; Markow & Horowitz, 2003). This is in contrast to the “directive control” approach that dominates supervisory practices (Glickman, et al., 2001). Many leadership texts recommend principals take a developmental approach and work in collaboration with teachers to improve their practice (Downey et al., 2004; Glickman et al., 2001). Considering the lack of empirical research on supervisory practices (Short, 1995), I turn to the research on teacher development to identify characteristics of learning opportunities that are more likely to lead to changed teacher practice. Amongst these characteristics are a focus on pedagogical content knowledge, a shared commitment to the goals of the learning process, opportunities for practice and feedback, active and applied learning, and a focus on students’ learning processes (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). There is much evidence that teacher support needs to be “job-imbedded,” meaning that it is connected to the daily work of teaching and relevant to the challenges and preoccupations of teachers (Acess, 2000; Borko, 2004; Wood & Killian, 1998).

In addition to working with teachers collaboratively, principals will need to be able to speak cogently about what they see in the classroom if they are to support teacher learning. Several studies indicate the value of principals being able to analyze instruction and diagnose teacher growth needs when visiting classrooms. Blase and Blase’s (2004) findings suggest that principals need to master classroom observation and data-gathering methods as well as teaching methods, skills, and repertoires to lead successful conferences with teachers. Kerrins and Cushing (2000) investigate how novice and expert principals analyzed classroom instruction and find that the expertise level of principals will qualitatively affect their ability to provide meaningful feedback. Nelson and Sassi (2000) demonstrate that the specific pedagogical content knowledge of principals will also affect their observations of a classroom. The authors found that after a year long math professional development principals were more likely to make

qualitatively different observations on what counts as mathematical knowledge, how mathematics is learned, the nature of student engagement, and the nature of teaching.

Research in instructional leadership also indicates that it can be problematic when principals are not skillful at analyzing instruction and identifying teacher development needs. Many current reform efforts focus on attaining measurable results through the implementation with fidelity of scientifically research-based practices (Protheroe, 2008; Slavin, 2003). Yet research suggests that when the focus is on monitoring, teachers may become frustrated and feel de-professionalized (Achtinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Joseph Blase & Blase, 1999). Shulman and colleagues' (2008) research on New York City's current reform effort find that most principals seem to have reduced the literacy and math instructional reform to checklists or monitoring of bulletin boards. They note that principals who are managerial leaders lacking in pedagogical content knowledge are considered less effective when visiting classrooms. Although the studies cited here are not explicitly on teacher development, this research in conjunction with the literature on teacher learning suggests that taking a developmental approach in which principals analyze instruction and identify teacher growth needs is necessary for classroom visits to have a learning orientation.

Current developmental approaches to instructional supervision and leadership provide models to help principals analyze instruction and diagnose teacher growth needs. These include Downey's "Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through" with an emphasis on instructional decisions (Downey et al., 2004), the New Teacher Center's instructional leadership model that helps principals focus on teachers' strengths with respect to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (Bloom, 2007), and the Research for Better Teaching (RBT) approach to supporting skillful teaching (Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000). In all of these approaches the emphasis is on using evidence from classroom visits to engage in interactions with the teachers about their practice to facilitate professional growth. As the research indicates, skillful analysis and diagnostic skills are necessary so that the principal can focus the feedback from classroom visits in a way that is helpful for teachers.

#### *PROVIDING MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK*

There is much evidence from the research in instructional supervision and leadership that meaningful feedback is necessary for classroom visits to support teacher learning. Meaningful feedback often occurs within the context of conversations between principals and teachers after a classroom visit. In an early study on principal classroom visits, 74.4% of teachers surveyed indicated that there were benefits from the teacher-principal conference (Blume, 1940). Blase and Blase (2004) consider the instructional conference to be a key leadership activity to support teacher growth. Although Goldsberry and colleagues (1984) found the supervisory process to be superficial, they note that when follow-up conversations were described as collaborative and involved jointly determined recommendations for changes they were perceived as helpful in improving teachers' practice.

As previously noted, feedback is considered an important activity within the literature on teacher learning. A study of twelve elementary school teachers' attitudes toward learner-centered evaluation systems found that teachers viewed feedback after a classroom visit as an effective avenue to enhance their instruction (Ovando, 2001). Another study investigated the impact of providing teachers specific, constructive feedback (Ovando, 2005). Teachers in the study were appreciative of the specificity of the feedback and found it valuable when the principal balanced the highlighting of positive practices with noting non-effective practices of

which teachers were not aware. Specific praise is often mentioned by teachers as particularly encouraging (Jo Blase & Blase, 2004; Blume, 1940; Markow & Horowitz, 2003). Praise, making suggestions, listening, and asking questions, are all helpful strategies to make feedback meaningful (Joseph Blase & Blase, 1999; Jo Blase & Blase, 2004; Goldsberry, et al., 1984). When principals relied on formal authority or situational criteria such as the place and physical arrangement of the conference, reference to rules and regulations, and topic control, then conferences were more likely to be perceived negatively by the teacher (Joseph Blase & Blase, 1999).

\* \* \*

In summary, I have distilled from the professional knowledge base a number of salient features useful for principals engaging in classroom visits with the intent to foster teacher learning and improve instructional quality. These factors are reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback. They serve as the key design elements of the classroom visit guide. Before introducing the design, I briefly examine current approaches from the professional literature with these elements in mind.

### **CURRENT APPROACHES TO CLASSROOM VISITS**

To this point I have referenced several established approaches to instructional leadership and supervision from the professional literature. These include Downey's "Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through", Glickman and colleagues' approach to clinical supervision, the New Teacher Center's instructional leadership program, and RBT's instructional supervision model. Each approach has its strengths for this design, yet none emphasize the three features of productive classroom visits in a way that is wholly relevant to SUSD principals.

Downey's approach seems to accommodate the busy principal. It is quick, informal, and encourages principals to visit with greater frequency. It presents a straightforward protocol for conducting visits and debriefing with teachers. However, a three-minute visit, even if conducted with greater frequency, is not enough time to meaningfully analyze instruction and diagnose teacher growth needs. Also, Downey and her colleagues advocate creating a power-free discourse, in essence ignoring the inherent issues of power and control that will inform any communication between the principal and teacher (Brooks, Solloway, & Allen, 2007).

The New Teacher Center's approach is also meant for principals who are visiting classrooms regularly. The principals' analysis and feedback is organized around the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). Their approach includes helpful question stems to use to provide feedback with a coaching orientation. However, the CSTPs, which focus on teachers' use of assessments, professionalism, and interactions with the community, are too broad to help principals narrow in on specific needs around classroom practice. The CSTP's thirty-six elements are not prioritized nor are they presented in a developmental continuum. Also, teachers in SUSD are evaluated using the CSTP so there is potential for conflating the New Teacher Center approach with the evaluation process.

Glickman offers the most comprehensive model for conducting classroom visits to support teacher learning. There are numerous strategies for analyzing instruction, diagnosing instruction, and giving feedback. However, this model is overly involved for SUSD principals. The various resources take significant time to learn how to use and put in practice. They are more appropriate for conducting in depth teacher evaluations than on-going classroom visits.

The RBT approach also offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing instruction and determining growth needs. The authors use the concept of skillful teaching to describe what principals should look for in the classroom. They organize the components of skillful teaching into a developmental framework. The framework begins with foundational skills such as classroom management and leads to rigorous and engaging instruction. The challenge in adopting the RBT model for this design context is that it imagines principals working with one or two teachers intensively for a year. It gives little guidance to SUSD principals for working more closely with a number of teachers while visiting classrooms five-hours per week.

These approaches all have valuable elements that support principals' in taking a learning orientation when visiting classrooms. Individually, no one approach takes into account the needs of busy SUSD principals trying to productively meet the five-hour requirement. However, various aspects of each approach can help SUSD principals lead classroom visits on an on-going basis to support teacher development. The RBT framework serves as an excellent starting point to provide a straightforward approach to analyzing instruction. The framework is expressed in general terms so it can be used across grade levels and subject matter. Downey's notion of having a simple protocol to follow when visiting and giving feedback is useful for busy principals who might not have time to plan every visit debrief. The feedback stems from the New Teacher Center give principals helpful language to use when talking with teachers about their lesson. I have adapted and integrated these resources and concepts into a classroom visit approach tailored to meet the needs of busy principals.



## **CHAPTER 2: THEORY OF ACTION**

Theories of action are conceptions of why a particular practice or policy ought to work (Argyris & Schon, 1978). The theory of action for this design is based on the notion that learning cannot be designed, but must emerge from the processes, experiences, and interactions the design prompts (Wenger, 1998). Thus, this design is not a program to be implemented with fidelity, but a process meant to facilitate learning for the participants. In this section, I describe the theory of action behind the proposed classroom visit intervention for principals (Figure 2.1). First, I discuss the problem and its causes as identified in the SUSD context. Next I incorporate into the design the elements of classroom visits with a learning orientation that I identified from the professional knowledge base. Then I provide a theory of change to describe what learning will need to be addressed in the design process. I continue with a description of the proposed intervention for principals and the minimal conditions necessary for its successful implementation. I conclude with a discussion of its intended outcomes.

### **PROBLEM AND ITS CAUSES**

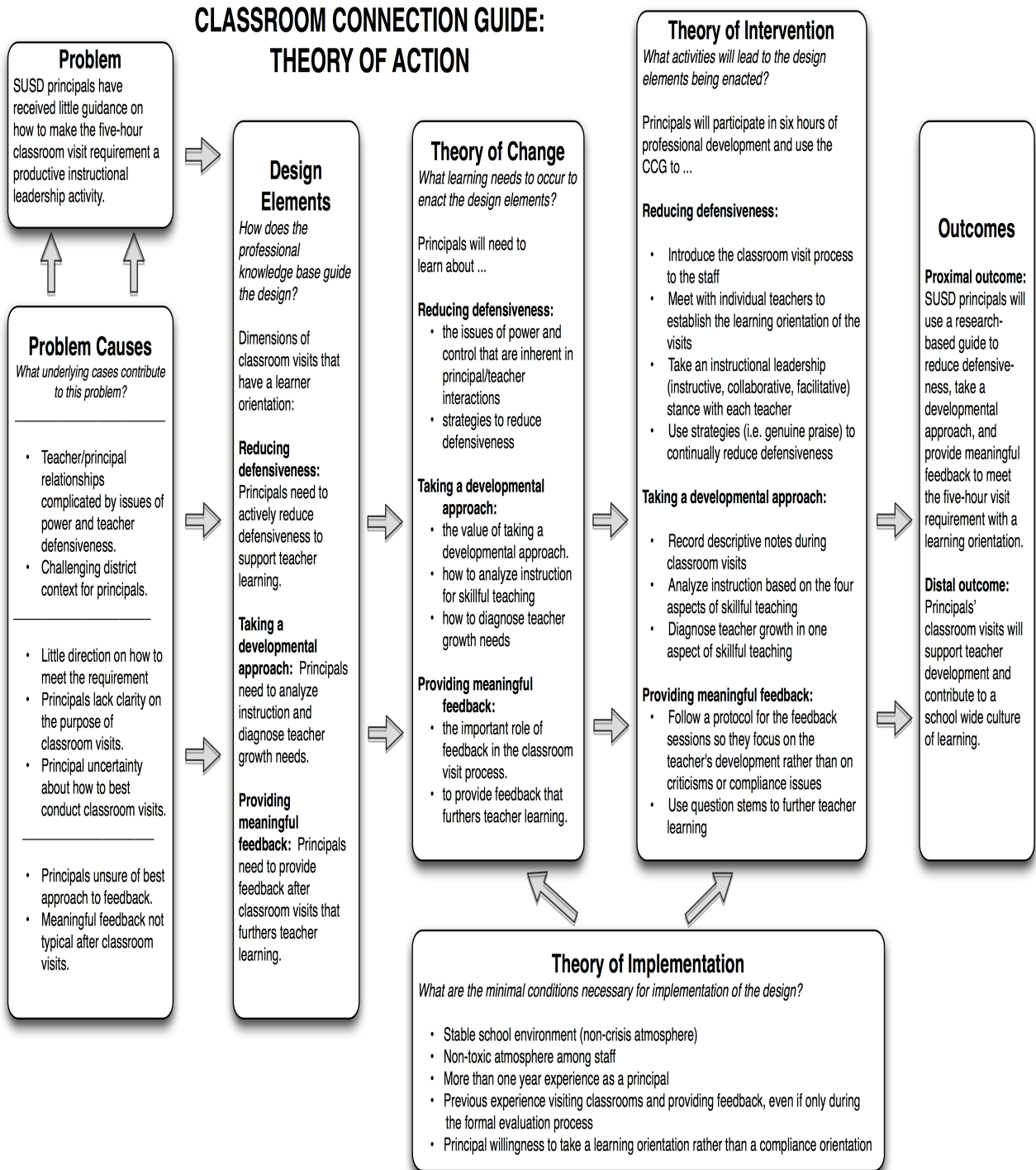
As previously discussed, SUSD principals were mandated to be in classrooms for five hours a week, yet they needed guidance on how to make this a productive activity. The policy itself had provided little direction. Principals noted the difficulty in prioritizing classroom visits among their many responsibilities. In education in general, issues of power and teacher defensiveness complicate principal/teacher relationships. This challenge was exacerbated by a district context in which there were teacher union issues and an emphasis on compliance and control. Principals were also uncertain on the purpose of classroom visits, how best to conduct the visits, and how to approach giving feedback to teachers.

These concerns reflect the challenge principals face in being instructional leaders at their schools. The literature indicates that principals in general lack analytical and diagnostic skills. Principals seem to spend little time focused on improving instructional quality (Fuller, et al., 2006; Markow & Horowitz, 2003) and take a directive “control” oriented approach to supervising teachers rather than a learning oriented approach (Glickman, et al., 2004). In SUSD there had been few professional development opportunities for principals to learn about improving instructional quality. With respect to visiting classrooms, the guidance focused on how to identify components of district-adopted programs (e.g. Open Court and Everyday Math) or monitor for compliance with state requirements (e.g. 30 minutes of English Language Development). SUSD principals lacked professional development on providing leadership to improve instructional quality in general and analyzing instruction and identifying teacher growth needs in particular. Their competence in these areas would only be based on personal experience rather than any systemic effort to support principals’ instructional leadership. These factors contributed to SUSD principals’ need for guidance to productively meet the five-hour requirement.

### **DESIGN ELEMENTS**

Earlier in the review of the research and professional knowledge base, I identified the lessening of defensiveness, a developmental approach to principals’ consultations with the teacher, and effective feedback as salient design elements for classroom visits with a learning

Figure 2.1: Theory of Action



orientation. Principals need to actively reduce defensiveness to mitigate the issues of power and control that are inherent in principal/teacher relationships. Without reducing defensiveness, it is unlikely that the classroom visits will result in meaningful learning on the part of the teacher. Additionally, principals need to take a developmental approach to support teacher learning. Principals must be able to analyze instruction and diagnose teacher growth needs. Finally, principals need to provide meaningful feedback after observing instruction that furthers teacher development.

The key is to orchestrate these functions within the realistic context of available time, energy, and skill of busy principals. Design elements are incorporated in a straightforward manner to accommodate the needs of principals. There are clear protocols for reducing defensiveness and providing meaningful feedback. They include specific research-based behaviors to help principals incorporate these design elements into their practice. Similarly, the design offers an uncomplicated approach to analyzing instruction and diagnosing teachers' growth. Focusing on these three research-based design elements addresses the underlying challenges principals faces in leading classroom visits to support teacher learning.

## **THEORY OF CHANGE**

In the theory of change I specify what learning needs to happen for these elements to be incorporated into principals' practice. With respect to reducing defensiveness, principals need to recognize the issues of power and control that are inherent in their own interactions with teachers. They also need to learn specific strategies to reduce defensiveness such as establishing and communicating the learning purpose of the visits. This learning is especially important as teaching tends to be an isolating profession (Little, 1990) and teachers generally do not get frequent feedback on their practice (Markow & Horowitz, 2003). While principals need to learn about these issues and how to address them, this design is not intended to change the fundamental dynamic between principals and teachers. If a negative dynamic exists between the principal and the teaching staff, then the learning embedded in the design will not address this type of situation. The design is only meant to help principals who already have a congenial relationship with teachers learn how to reduce the typical defensiveness that emerges when feedback is given on classroom practice.

In order to take a developmental approach, principals first must learn the value of conducting classroom visits with a learning orientation. This means reorienting principals around the purpose of their classroom visits. In SUSD, principals have primarily been expected to be in the classroom for evaluative, monitoring, or compliance purposes. Observing instruction to support teacher development will likely be a new focus for principals. Additionally, principals need to learn how to analyze instruction for skillful teaching. While almost all principals are teachers before becoming school leaders, they might not enter the position with a framework for understanding effective teaching and analyzing instruction. If they work in district contexts such as SUSD, they will likely not have had any support in analyzing teaching as opposed to monitoring for program compliance. Principals will need to become familiar with the framework of skillful teaching presented in this design. I expect that most principals already know the general concepts of the framework of skillful teaching (e.g. student engagement). The learning will be centered on deepening principals' understanding in these areas as well as on how they are organized developmentally. Once this understanding is established, principals will also need to learn how to place teachers on the developmental continuum to diagnose teacher growth needs. This diagnosis is important so that a developmental trajectory can be established for the

classroom visit process that will help teachers improve their instructional quality.

In relation to providing meaningful feedback, principals must learn about the important role of feedback in the classroom visit process. Principals need to be made aware of how teachers value feedback that positively reinforces effective practices and that is relevant to improving their instruction. Principals also need to understand the characteristics of meaningful feedback, such as making suggestions, to help teachers address challenges they face in their class and giving teachers discretion and choice on how to follow up on those suggestions. Once principals recognize the importance of feedback and what makes good feedback, they need to learn specific strategies that will help them debrief the visits in a way that furthers teacher development. These strategies include how to keep the feedback focused on evidence rather than judgment and specific language to use to support teacher reflection.

The learning described in this section is necessary on the part of the principals to lead classroom visits that support teacher development. Ultimately, the principals' learning should extend beyond the three design elements to considering how to orient their classroom visit practice as an important aspect of their instructional leadership.

## **THEORY OF INTERVENTION**

The theory of intervention discusses the activities and resources that I presume lead to the necessary learning on the part of the principal to engage in productive classroom visits. These activities and resources are incorporated into a design entitled the Classroom Connections Guide (CCG). The CCG includes a handbook for principals, a workbook to use when visiting classrooms, and three professional development sessions. The CCG handbook includes various resources and tools on each design element so that principals incorporate them into their practice. All resources are included in a CCG workbook for the principals to use during their classroom visits. The principals learn how to use these resources during three two-hour professional development sessions (Appendix A). A key resource is the developmental framework that is the basis of the CCG process. This framework merits further comment as it is an essential aspect of classroom visits with a learning orientation.

The design's developmental framework focuses on conventional aspects of skillful teaching. I adapted RBT's framework of skillful teaching to provide a general guide to help principals. This framework is based on the elements of instructional quality that have been well established in the professional knowledge base (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008). The intent of using this general framework, as opposed to current strategies or approaches that may be in vogue, is to help principals focus on what matters—instructional quality. Additionally, this framework does not require principals to be experts in a particular instructional approach or content area to help teachers improve their instruction. This is especially appropriate at the elementary level where teachers are more generalists than specialists.

What are the elements of skillful teaching to which I refer? RBT identifies four dimensions: classroom management, instructional strategies, motivation, and curriculum planning. For each dimension, the RBT approach identifies “framing questions” for principals to consider when analyzing a teacher's practice. Some questions ask principals to consider concrete indicators of skillful teaching (i.e. Does the teacher communicate the objective?) to more abstract ones (i.e. What principles of learning does the teacher employ?). For the design, I took this structure and its basic elements of instructional quality and distilled them into an accessible framework for SUSD principals (Appendix B). My framework for skillful teaching has principals examine classroom instruction on a developmental continuum, from the basics of

classroom management to lesson planning to student engagement and unit planning. A more detailed explanation of each dimension follows.

Classroom management refers to the way in which the teacher organizes her class, establishes routines and procedures, and manages student behavior. This is the first dimension for principals to examine, as instructional quality cannot exist where there is no basic order. Next, the framework focuses on the teacher’s lesson. By lesson, I mean the way the teacher organizes the learning experience. This includes the lesson objective, its logic, the clarity with which material or ideas are presented, and how the teacher checks for understanding. This is similar to RBT’s notion of instructional strategies, but explained in more specific terms for SUSD principals. Next, I refer to student engagement instead of motivation. Student engagement is both more concrete than motivation and is a concept with which SUSD principals were familiar from recent professional development. Student engagement is how the teacher involves the students in the lesson, from planning different modes of participation to finding accessible learning material. Finally, the framework highlights specific evidence of unit planning, meaning the grade level standards and thinking objectives that seem to drive the lessons. Since the intent is for principals using the framework to visit teachers regularly over a period of time, it will become evident if the teacher is engaged in day-to-day planning (a typical phenomenon with teachers) or has a sense of where s/he is going with the unit. While skillful teachers fully integrate these dimensions into their practice, organizing them along a developmental continuum is helpful for principals when considering how to support teacher learning. Appendix A includes the framing questions principals will consider when visiting classrooms. It is important to note that this framework is *not* for principals to check off the presence or absence of indicators of skillful teaching. It is meant to organize principals’ thinking when analyzing a teacher’s practice and planning how to support her growth.

This developmental framework is one important aspect of the design to help principals lead classroom visits with a learning orientation. In Figures 2.2 – 2.4, I summarize the additional CCG resources for each design principle and the professional development associated with it.

*Figure 2.2: Reducing Defensiveness – CCG Resources and Professional Development*

**REDUCING DEFENSIVENESS**

<b><i>CCG RESOURCE</i></b>	<b><i>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</i></b>
Research brief on the issues of power and control inherent in principal/teacher relationships (Appendix C).	Read and discuss brief. Reflect on current practice in light of the reading.
Classroom visit chart to introduce to staff the classroom visit process to make it clear the process is about teacher development and not evaluation or monitoring (Appendix D)	Review chart and modify to meet principal context
Chart of instructional leadership stances (instructive, collaborative, facilitative) to take with each teacher (Appendix E).	Learn how to take an instructional leadership stance as opposed to focusing on compliance and control. Determine which stance to take with individual teachers.

Protocol to ensure that initial meeting with the teacher establishes the learning orientation of the visits (Appendix F).	Role play using the protocol.
List of strategies (i.e. genuine praise) to reduce defensiveness (Appendix G).	Review and discuss list. Principals add additional strategies.

*Figure 2.3: A Developmental Approach – CCG Resources and Professional Development*

**TAKING A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**

<b><i>CCG RESOURCE</i></b>	<b><i>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</i></b>
Classroom observation chart to record descriptive notes (Appendix H).	Watch videos of lessons to practice recording observations using descriptive, not evaluative, notes.
Analyzing instruction protocol that includes general indicators of four aspects of skillful teaching: classroom management, the lesson, student engagement, and unit planning (Appendix A).	Review observation notes to analyze instruction.
Diagnosing teacher growth protocol that includes more detailed indicators and explanations of each aspect of skillful teaching.	After analyzing the video, use the protocol to diagnose teacher growth needs.

*Figure 2.4: Meaningful Feedback – CCG Resources and Professional Development*

**PROVIDING MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK**

<b><i>CCG RESOURCE</i></b>	<b><i>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</i></b>
Protocol for leading the feedback sessions so that they support teacher learning rather than compliance with programs or mandates (Appendix I).	Role-play following the protocol.
List of reflective question stems to use during feedback sessions to support teacher learning (Appendix J).	Practice using stems during the role-play.

Once the principals learn the CCG process, they begin their classroom visits. Figure 2.5 explains the structure of the classroom visit process that is recommended in this design. While on the surface the CCG may resemble more involved supervisory models, its implementation is specifically intended for SUSD principals. Principals only work with four teachers at a time so

that the process is manageable. There is no pre-observation conference, only an initial ten-minute meeting with the teacher to discuss beginning the classroom visit process. Classroom visits are brief and principals have the CCG workbook so that it is not necessary to prepare anything (such as observation charts) before the visit. The analysis and diagnostic tools are in the CCG workbook as well, making it easy for principals to reference quickly after the visit and before meeting with teachers. Again, these tools are not meant to be filled out after the visits. They are only intended to serve as mental organizers to consider when observing instruction and providing feedback. Feedback sessions should only last approximately ten minutes. It can be difficult to find time to meet considering a principal's busy schedule and a teacher's minimal amount of preparation time. The CCG makes suggestions for finding time for the feedback sessions (e.g. covering teacher's yard duty to meet during recess). Also, the feedback protocol and guiding questions are included in the CCG workbook for use when debriefing the visit with teachers.

Figure 2.5: CCG Structure

<b><i>PREPARING FOR CLASSROOM VISITS</i></b>	<b><i>CLASSROOM VISIT CYCLE</i></b>	<b><i>FEEDBACK</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce CCG to the staff using the classroom visit type chart.</li> <li>• Select four teachers to work with during the first cycle.</li> <li>• Briefly (10 minutes) meet with each teacher to introduce the classroom visit process, schedule the visits, and answer teachers' questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit each teacher twice a week for four weeks.</li> <li>• Visit for approximately 15 minutes visits.</li> <li>• Record descriptive notes in the CCG workbook</li> <li>• Analyze lessons based on aspects of skillful teaching.</li> <li>• Use more detailed chart to diagnose teacher growth need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give face-to-face feedback within twenty-four hours of each visit.</li> <li>• Follow the CCG protocol for giving feedback.</li> <li>• Discuss with the teacher overall learning at the end of the cycle.</li> </ul>

## **THEORY OF IMPLEMENTATION**

The theory of implementation explains the minimal conditions necessary for implementation of the design. A stable school environment is necessary for principals to use the CCG. Constant student discipline or school community demands will prevent the principal from using the CCG with the focus necessary to make it a helpful resource. Considering the challenges faced by first year principals in SUSD, school leaders should have more than one year of experience before using the guide. Additionally, there needs to be a non-toxic atmosphere among staff. If teachers call the union or refer to the contract on every issue, especially when the issue concerns their classroom practice, a developmental approach will have minimal impact.

Principals using the CCG must be willing to take a coaching orientation when conducting visits. If the principal only wants to monitor program implementation and compliance with mandates, the CCG is not an appropriate resource. If there exists the desire to make the five-hour requirement more productive, principals with even minimal experience visiting classrooms

and providing feedback should benefit from its use. The degree to which principals incorporate the design elements into their practice will vary based on skill and experience. However, the CCG should prove beneficial to the typical principal who works in a relatively stable school environment.

## **OUTCOMES**

CCG implementation is meant to have an immediate impact on principal's practice around classroom visits. The proximal outcome is that SUSD principals improve in their efforts to reduce defensiveness, take a developmental approach, and provide meaningful feedback to meet the five-hour visit requirement with a learning orientation. This outcome is developmental so that principals with varying skill levels and experience should benefit from using the CCG. This proximal outcome is the focus of the design study. The distal outcome is that principals' classroom visits lead to teacher development and contribute to a school wide learning community. The research and literature from the field point to the potential of classroom visits with a learning orientation in accomplishing this goal. Ultimately the aim is that principals will engage in an instructional leadership activity that will improve teaching and learning, yet this outcome is beyond the scope of the present study.



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this design study is to begin development of a research-based classroom visit guide for principals so that visiting classrooms becomes a productive instructional leadership activity. The study represents the first step of the development of a design that is ultimately intended to help principals engage in classroom visits that support teacher development and contribute to a school wide learning community. This design study has an action research orientation with two main research components: assessment of the design's impact and investigation of the design process. A design study with an action research orientation is appropriate because this study is concerned with developing practical knowledge to solve a problem; is research *in* action rather than research *about* action; is concurrent with action; and is collaborative (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007).

In this chapter, I explain the details of the research design. First, I identify the unit of analysis and the selection of cases. Then I discuss data collection strategies for each research component, followed by data analysis procedures. I conclude by addressing concerns around rigor and bias.

### UNIT OF ANALYSIS AND CASE SELECTION

The proximal outcome of the CCG was to improve SUSD principals' efforts to reduce defensiveness, take a developmental approach with teachers, and provide meaningful feedback. Since the focus was on principal learning, the principal was the appropriate unit of analysis. Future studies might analyze the impact of the design on teachers, principal and teachers together as a unit, or even the school community. Due to time and resource constraints, as well as the design being in the initial stages of development, the scope of this study was limited to principals.

I selected two SUSD principals to participate in the study and to contribute to the design development. The intent was for the principals to participate as co-developers since they were working with me on addressing the design challenge (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007; van den Akker, 1999). With the design in the early stages of development, their feedback and experiences using the CCG would be helpful in refining its features. While the principals were asked to be co-developers, their participation would also reveal the impact of the design. An advantage of selecting multiple cases was that studying more than one principal mitigated concerns about the uniqueness of a particular context for design development (Yin, 2009). A multiple-case design also allowed for the possibility of greater transferability, which may be hindered by a single-case design (Yin, 2009). The two principals began the CCG process from varied baselines, as the participating principals had varying levels of skill and experience visiting classrooms. Assessing multiple baselines enables me to track individual development (Benedict, Horner, & Squires, 2007).

The two principals were selected using criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involved reviewing all potential cases and narrowing the selection to cases that met predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 1990). The criteria to select the two participating principals were drawn from the theory of implementation. Participating principals needed to have more than one year experience as a principal, work in a stable school environment, have a working relationship with the staff, demonstrate a willingness to have a learning orientation when conducting classroom visits, and have previous experience visiting classrooms and giving feedback to teachers. Additional criteria included working at a Title I school, principal availability, and proximity to

my own work place. I included working at a Title I school as a criterion because this is where the need for instructional leadership is the greatest (Leithwood et al., 2004). Proximity to the school where I myself was a principal at the time and principal availability were necessary for research feasibility. Seven out of thirty-six elementary principals met these criteria. To make a final selection, I spoke to a district administrator, considered my personal experience with the principals, and informally spoke with the principals to determine their need for support in productively meeting the five-hour requirement. I ultimately selected two principals who met all the criteria and seemed to have a need for guidance around the classroom visit requirement. Based on the district administrator's recommendation and my experience working with them, they also seemed well matched to serve as co-developers of the design.

The selected principals led Mariposa Elementary and Edison Elementary in SUSD at the time of this project. The principal of Mariposa was in her second year, previously having worked at the school for almost a decade as a literacy coach and then as the vice-principal. Mariposa had approximately five hundred twenty-five students and twenty classroom teachers, half of whom taught in the school's dual immersion program. Mariposa was a Title I school where 67% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch. At Edison elementary, another Title I school, 100% of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch. The principal was in his second year leading the school, and his fifteenth as a school principal. He had also worked for a time as a principal coach in the district, coaching me when I first became principal. Edison had approximately 700 students with twenty-nine classroom teachers at the time of this study. As noted in my selection criteria, both principals managed their schools well and created a stable learning environment for students and teachers. These two principals were relatively skillful and experienced compared to the average SUSD principal, yet by no means atypical in terms of their instructional leadership.

## **DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES**

My research involved assessing the design's impact and investigating the design process. For each component, I explain my data collection strategy.

### *DESIGN IMPACT DATA*

Baseline and outcome data provided evidence to establish the feasibility and effectiveness of the intervention for the intended group (van den Akker, 1999). I collected baseline and outcome data to assess the impact of the CCG process on the principals' classroom visit practice. Specifically, I examined design feasibility and design effect, namely whether the design contributed to the principals' development in reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach to classroom visits, and providing meaningful feedback. Two types of impact data were collected: a teacher questionnaire and observations of classroom visits.

During the study, the principals visited a total of fifteen teachers while engaging in the CCG process. A questionnaire was administered pre- and post-CCG visits to those teachers (Appendix J). Several questions were included to determine the feasibility of the design (e.g. classroom visit frequency). The majority of the questionnaire involved teachers agreeing or disagreeing with statements on the substantive issues of the principal's classroom visit process—reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback. Teachers responded to the statements on a five-point Likert scale. Teacher agreement or disagreement with each statement was used to determine a baseline assessment of the principals'

practice for each design element. The questionnaire was re-administered after the principals and teachers participated in the CCG process. As this study occurred at the beginning of the design development process for the CCG approach, there was not an opportunity to pilot questionnaire items to determine their validity or reliability. Yet multiple items were developed for each design element to provide teachers various opportunities to share their perceptions on the principal's practice. Additionally, questionnaire data were collected simply to ascertain changes in practice rather than make statistical claims about the difference in pre- and post-responses. The results of the two questionnaires were compared to assess design feasibility and to infer the principal's growth in conducting classroom visits focused on teacher learning.

I also observed the principals' classroom visit practice before and after they participated in the CCG process. A structured observation protocol (Appendix L) was utilized to determine the extent to which the principals' classroom visit practice incorporated the three major design elements. Similar to the questionnaire, the protocol included indicators to determine feasibility as well as how the principals integrated the design elements into their practice. These indicators were drawn from the professional knowledge base and operationalized for the purposes of the study. Using the protocol, I noted the presence or absence of indicated behaviors associated with the feasibility of the CCG structure. Indicated behaviors related to the CCG's design elements were identified from the principals' feedback to the teacher. When feedback was given in writing, I collected copies. When feedback was given verbally, I observed the interactions and collected field notes using the structured observation protocol. I coded the written feedback and my field notes to identify specific behaviors that indicated design elements being integrated into the principals' practice. Outcome data were collected using the same observation protocol to determine a final assessment of the principals' practice after they had engaged in the CCG process. Differences between baseline and outcome observations indicated design feasibility and each principal's growth (or lack thereof) in substantively incorporating the design elements into their practice. Baseline data were collected in early January and outcome data were collected in May. These observation and questionnaire data served as the impact data for this study.

#### *DESIGN PROCESS DATA*

When collecting data to assess the impact of the design, I took a more removed stance typical of many social science investigations. For the design process data collection, I took an active stance in the research process as the lead designer of the intervention (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007; van den Akker, 1999). The design process refers to my on-going collaboration with the principals as they engaged in the CCG process and our efforts to adjust, adapt, and revise the design to make productive use of its main features. While our collaboration and their engagement in the CCG process occurred concurrently and were all part of the design process, I separated them analytically into two categories for the purposes of this research design. I first discuss my data collection strategies relevant to *design development*. Design development refers to what happened when the principals engaged in the CCG process and how the design evolved over the course of this study. I then introduce the *action research process* to investigate the various ways in which I collaborated with the principals during design development.

#### DESIGN DEVELOPMENT DATA COLLECTION

My investigation of the design development focused on determining which components of the design were practical and how principals integrated or did not integrate the design

elements into their classroom visit practice. The design development data served to logically link the impact findings to the design process. When gathering data on design development, the priority was on information richness to obtain salient and meaningful data (van de Akker, 1999). I used qualitative research methods such as interviews and observations to collect this rich information (Creswell, 2007). I collected data on the design development from the following five sources:

- the initial observations of the principals' classroom visit practice;
- an observation of the principal presenting the CCG to the staff;
- observations of the classroom visit process at the beginning and end of each cycle;
- post-classroom visit cycle interviews of the four focal teachers from each school;
- interviews with the two principals after completing both rounds of classroom visits.

Data from observations were collected through field notes with a semi-structured observation protocol, as efficiency of procedures was crucial in design development studies to ensure that the data were actually used in the development of the design (van den Akker, 1999). Teacher and principal interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Although the initial observation was used to establish a baseline understanding of the extent to which the principals already incorporated design elements into their practice, it also served as a starting point to understand *how* they did so. After the principals learned about the CCG process, they presented it to their staffs before beginning the first classroom visit cycle. I used a structured observation protocol (Appendix M) to assess how principals followed this first step in the classroom visit process. During the initial presentation, I looked for the principal to review the chart of different types of classroom visits, to introduce the classroom visit process, to emphasize that the purpose of upcoming classroom visits was to support teacher learning and development, and to respond to any questions and concerns about the classroom visit process. I also noted teacher reactions to the principal's presentation. This presentation took place at a staff meeting on January 11, 2010 at Mariposa Elementary and January 13, 2010 at Edison Elementary.

I then observed principals conducting classroom visits. I observed each principal conducting classroom visits and giving feedback to two teachers at the beginning and end of each classroom visit cycle. I used a semi-structured observation protocol (Appendix N) to take field notes of what the principal did when in the classroom and during the feedback session. Data were collected on whether the principals engaged in the CCG process as designed and what barriers might have prevented the principal from doing so. I also documented any unexpected events or interactions that were relevant to the design dimensions. By including in this study two iterations of classroom visits, I was able to observe principal growth from the first to the second cycle. These data were collected from late January to May.

After the principals completed a classroom visit cycle, I conducted a semi-structured interview (Appendix O) with the teachers. Data on feasibility were collected by inquiring as to whether the principals were able to follow the CCG guidelines, such as visiting with the intended frequency or providing feedback within twenty-four hours. To investigate the principals' development in incorporating design elements into their practice, I asked about the teachers' experience with the CCG process. Questions focused on what specifically occurred during classroom visits and feedback sessions, the principal's practice, and the teachers' perception of the CCG process. Interviews after the first cycle took place in early March, before the third professional development session with the principals. Interview and observation data were

incorporated into the professional development plan for the third session. Interviews after the second cycle were conducted in May.

Finally, I conducted an extensive interview with each principal after they completed both classroom visit cycles. I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix P) to prompt their reflections on the CCG process, their interactions with the teachers, their own learning from participating in this study, and how the design might be further revised to support SUSD principals in productively meeting the five-hour classroom visit requirement. I conducted these interviews with the principals separately in June.

The initial observation, observation of the introduction of the CCG to the staff, the classroom visit and feedback observations, and the post-interviews provided an in-depth picture of how principals and teachers engaged in the CCG process during the course of this study. These data were used during data analysis to logically link impact data findings with what happened during the design development. Next I discuss the action research aspect of this study.

### THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

To this point, I have described how I gathered data on the principals' participation in the CCG process. This data gathering occurred concurrently with my engagement in action research with the principals to develop, revise, and at times even support the CCG process at their schools. This action research component was "insider action research [which is] ... mechanistic-oriented action research that is framed in terms of managing change or solving a problem: it is directed at confronting and resolving a pre-identified issue" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2007, p. 65). The collaborative nature of my design process, with the participating principals serving as co-developers, was also typical of insider action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007). Together we engaged in the action research cycle of diagnosing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007). The major ways we engaged in this cycle were our initial conversation about visiting classrooms, the first two professional development sessions on the CCG, debriefing the staff presentation of the new classroom visit process, debriefing after each visit observation, jointly planning the agenda for the third professional development session, and my final interview with the principals.

The action research process started even before this study took form with my personal need to make classroom visits more meaningful and productively meet the five-hour classroom visit requirement. I developed my own initial theory of action and CCG design from reviewing the professional knowledge base and reflecting on my own experience visiting classrooms. I also piloted the CCG design at my school, revising and refining the process based on the experience. The two principals in this project then joined me to engage in the next iteration of the design. Their participation began after my initial observation of their classroom visit practice. Although data collected during these observations were used for baseline assessment, the subsequent discussion served to identify specific guidance the principals needed to productively meet the five-hour requirement by visiting classrooms with a learning orientation. I asked the principals what they thought worked well with their classroom visits, their challenges in conducting productive classroom visits, and what they hoped to get out of participating in this design study. I shared my challenges in successfully meeting the five-hour requirement, my reasons for conducting this study, and responded to any questions or concerns they might have had about the study in general or what I observed during these visits in particular. These conversations helped me refine the CCG process to meet their needs and to integrate their knowledge and experience into the design. After each initial conversation with the principal, I

noted my thoughts in a reflective journal (Appendix Q). The journal consisted of two parts. In one part I noted key points the principals shared about their classroom visit practice. In the other part I shared my own reflections from the conversations and my participation in the process. This reflective journal was the primary source of data for the action research component.

After the observations and initial conversations, I led two professional development sessions with the principals. Each session lasted two hours and provided opportunities for the principals to reflect on their own classroom visit practice, learn about the CCG approach, and plan their upcoming classroom visits. During the session I shared my experience piloting this process at my school. Throughout the session the principals were encouraged to refine the guide to meet their needs. At the end, the principals were asked to share their learning, give me feedback on the session, and raise questions and concerns to consider when moving forward. The major ideas from their comments and participation were noted in my reflective journal, as well as my perception of the professional development session.

Having diagnosed their needs and planned their visits using the CCG, the principals took action by beginning their classroom visits. As previously noted, I observed each principal visiting and providing feedback to two teachers at the beginning and the end of each classroom visit cycle. Although I used a protocol to take field notes during the observations, I was not a detached observer. After each visit, I met with the principal to debrief. I asked about their perspective on the visits, shared my thoughts, and planned with them any necessary adjustments for the next visits. Again, I used the reflective journal to note the principals' ideas and my own reflections and interpretations of the events.

After the first round of classroom visits, there was another professional development session. The session was planned entirely based on the needs and challenges that emerged during the first round of classroom visits. After the session, the principals conducted their second classroom visit cycle with four new teachers. As before, I visited at the beginning and the end of the cycle and debriefed with the principal. I concluded this second round of visits with a final, semi-structured interview of each principal. I continued with my reflective journaling as the primary strategy for collecting data around my collaboration and participation in the CCG process during the third professional development session, subsequent classroom visits, and after the final interviews.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis occurred for each research component. Data analysis on design impact data followed specific procedures to establish baseline and outcome assessments of the principals' classroom visit practice. These were compared to determine the extent to which the principals incorporated the design elements into their practice after engaging in the CCG process. Design process data were analyzed in two ways. First, I conducted a structured analysis of design development data to logically link my investigation of the design process with the outcome data. This linking was necessary to determine which features of the CCG, if any, contributed to principal growth as identified by the impact data. Second, I reviewed my reflective journaling and re-analyzed the design development data to understand how my participation as the lead designer and action researcher shaped the CCG process. This analysis was important as projects of this type are particularly susceptible to advocacy bias due to the multiple roles of the researcher and designer (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007)

### *DESIGN IMPACT DATA ANALYSIS*

Impact data were analyzed to assess the extent to which the principals' classroom visit practice developed while engaging in the CCG process. Questionnaire data were analyzed as one aspect of the baseline and outcome assessment of the principals' practice. For this analysis, items associated with the CCG structure (e.g. frequency of visits) and how the principals incorporated design elements into their classroom visits (e.g. making suggestions during feedback sessions) were analyzed to identify differences in responses pre- and post-participation in the CCG process. Due to the small sample size, data analysis served only to determine whether the principals' practice changed when engaged in the CCG process, not to make statistical claims about the significance of the difference in pre- and post-responses. For example, the fact that teachers reported to what degree of frequency the principal visited or whether he or she made suggestions while giving feedback provided the necessary information to make conclusions as to the feasibility of the design and its impact on principals.

Observation data were analyzed using specific coding procedures to determine whether the principals followed the CCG structure and incorporated the design elements into their practice. Codes were based on nine operational indicators of the CCG structure, such as taking descriptive notes, and the three main design elements. The data were reviewed to determine whether the indicated behavior was present or absent. If the behavior was present, the principal received a rating of one. If it was absent, the principal received a rating of zero. The individual ratings from each observed classroom visit were totaled and then converted to a percentage (by totaling the number of times each indicator was present and dividing by the total number of possible times the indicators could be present) to establish a baseline of the principal's practice with respect to the design dimensions. As with the questionnaire results, the principals' baseline data were compared with the results from the outcome observations to determine development in conducting classroom visits with a focus on teacher learning.

### *DESIGN PROCESS DATA ANALYSIS*

Design process data analysis occurred during and after data collection. Analysis during data collection was necessary as this knowledge shaped the design development (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). After completing all data collection, I revisited the design development data for a more thorough analysis. For this in depth analysis, I generally followed Creswell's steps for analyzing data in a qualitative study. The first step was to organize and prepare the data for analysis (Creswell, 2007). Next, I read through the data to obtain a general sense of the findings (Creswell, 2007). I then reviewed field notes from each observation and the transcripts from teacher and principal interviews to organize the data based on their relevance to the design dimensions. This more detailed analysis allowed me to logically link design development data with impact data. I analyzed the data to identify critical incidents that represent evidence of the principals' practice in reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback. From the analysis I identified how the design was used and provided evidence of how the design might have contributed to or limited principals' growth in leading classroom visits to support teacher learning.

Action research analysis involved reviewing my reflective journal and re-analyzing the design development data to address potential concerns around my dual roles in this project: lead designer and researcher. With respect to my role as lead designer, I examined the data to determine whether I acted within the boundaries established at the outset of this process. I also

considered to what extent my presence as lead designer impacted the CCG process at the two schools. With respect to my role as researcher, I examined my research efforts to look for potential biases in my data collection and analysis, evidence of role confusion, and variations from my intended research plan. This analysis was necessary to ensure rigor and avoid bias when making conclusions about the impact and efficacy of the design. In the subsequent section I discuss in more detail these concerns and how they were addressed by my research procedures and protocols.

## **AVOIDING BIAS, ENSURING RIGOR**

Design studies by their nature are subject to accusations of bias and questions about rigor for several reasons. These include the tension in role division between development and research (van den Akker, 1999) and the potential for advocacy bias (Stake, 2006); my role as an “insider” in the district and as one who leads the design (Coghlan and Brannick, 2007); and reactions of the participants to the presence of the researcher (Patton, 1990).

My dual roles in this study (designer and researcher) meant there was a potential conflict between the desire to pursue an innovative design and the need to seek empirical proof of outcomes (van den Akker, 1999). This created the possibility of advocacy bias. Advocacy bias occurs when the values of the researcher affect the conduct of the study or the findings (Stake, 2006). Among the factors that can contribute to an advocacy bias are the researcher’s hope of finding that the program is working, the desire to reach conclusions that are useful to others, and the desire to generate findings that will stimulate action (Stake, 2006). I embarked on this design study with the intent of developing a classroom visit protocol that other principals could successfully use. I was clearly inclined to want to find it to be successful. I took active steps to avoid bias and address questions of rigor by sharing observation and interview notes with research colleagues to review for potential bias, conducting a preliminary data review to identify potential inconsistencies in data collection, and debriefing with research colleagues both on the design process and my potential influence on the principals’ use of the design (Creswell, 2007). Actively seeking in the data and presenting disconfirming information also helped avoid this potential bias (Creswell, 2007).

As an “insider” I brought to the design and research a perspective informed by the actual workings of the organization. I also drew on my own experience as an instructional leader trying to conduct classroom visits with a learning orientation. Coghlan and Brannick (2007) refer to this as “preunderstanding ... [that is] valuable knowledge about the cultures and informal structures of the organization” (p. 61) Yet this knowledge was potentially a disadvantage in that it might have led me to assume too much when conducting interviews and observing classroom visits. Additional challenges included the potential for role confusion since I was trying to solve a practical problem and I was a manager in the organization confronting the issue; detachment toward one of my roles; conflicted feelings toward my colleagues engaged in the design process; or a closeness to issues or people in the organization that might have made dispassionate inquiry difficult (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007). I used reflective journaling to collect data and monitor myself on these issues.

Finally, my presence as the design developer and evaluator had the potential to make a difference in how the principals engaged in the CCG process. I approached this study expecting a halo effect (Patton, 1990). A halo effect is when staff performs in an exemplary fashion and participants are motivated to “show off” (Patton, 1990). I expected to find this halo effect with both teachers and the principals. For the teachers, the principals served as evaluators and this



may have impacted teachers' responses to the process. Similarly, we were under pressure in the district to meet the five-hour classroom visit requirement in a meaningful way. We were expected to be instructional leaders and to create learning communities. The fact that I was publicly investigating our efforts to be instructional leaders might have led us to act differently. Continual reflection (i.e. through journaling) was necessary so that I was aware when these issues emerged (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007). Findings from these attempts to avoid bias and ensure rigor are discussed in the action research analysis section.

\* \* \*

This design study is an attempt to develop a research-based process so principals can conduct classroom visits that support teacher development and the school learning community. In this chapter I outlined the major data collection strategies I used to investigate the design's impact on the principals' practice and the design process. I also discussed my data analysis approach and the steps I took to avoid bias and ensure rigor. In the next chapter I present my findings from data collection and analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

To recall, the Classroom Connections Guide was designed to help SUSD principals productively meet the five-hour classroom visit requirement. The goal was for principals to lead classroom visits with a focus on teacher development. In this study, two principals partnered with me to help develop the CCG and engage in the process at their schools. I investigated our efforts by collecting two types of data during this study: design impact data and design process data. Impact data were collected to assess design feasibility and the principals' growth in leading classroom visits with a learning orientation. Design process data served to logically link the investigation of the design process with the impact findings. Design process data were also collected and analyzed to consider my role as both lead designer and action researcher in this process. In this chapter, I analyze each type of data and present my findings.

### SECTION I: DESIGN IMPACT DATA ANALYSIS

Design impact data were collected to determine if the design was feasible and whether it led to principals' growth in incorporating into their practice the design elements of classroom visits with a learning orientation. I collected baseline data on the principals' approach to visiting classrooms by administering a teacher questionnaire and observing principals' classroom visit process. The questionnaire included items on the principals' method for visiting classrooms, from visit frequency to the different ways principals gave feedback. There were also items on the principals' efforts to reduce defensiveness, take a developmental approach, and provide meaningful feedback. Observations provided data on the extent to which the principals engaged in specific practices associated with classroom visits that support teacher learning. After the principals participated in the CCG process, I collected outcome data by re-administering the teacher questionnaire and observing the principals again. I then analyzed the baseline and outcome data to assess design feasibility and principal growth. Below I present the findings—first for design feasibility and then for design impact.

#### *DESIGN FEASIBILITY*

Classroom visits can take many forms, such as an extended formal observation to evaluate teacher performance or a brief walkthrough to monitor program implementation. Principal classroom visits that focus on teacher learning have certain characteristics. The principal must visit with enough frequency to focus strategically on an area of growth for the teacher. Additionally, the principal needs to gather evidence about the teachers' practice to be used when providing feedback. This also means that the principal must stay for a meaningful instructional segment so that there is enough material to review with the teacher. Finally, the principal needs to give feedback to the teacher about what was observed.

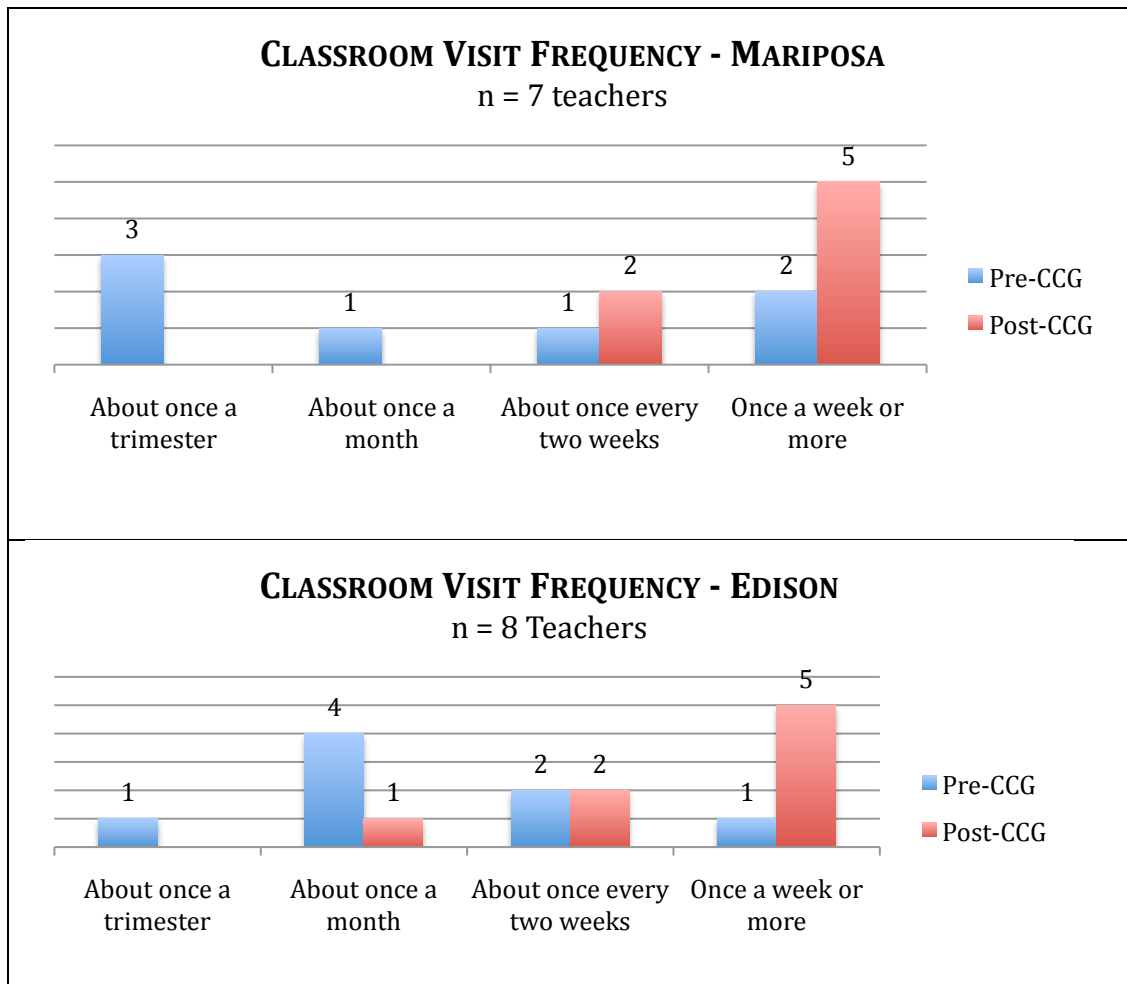
The CCG process was designed so that principals would conduct visits that included these characteristics. It was intentionally structured to take into account the constant demands of busy principals. Principals were to only visit a few teachers twice a week during two four to six week rounds of classroom visits, rather than the entire staff. Visits were meant to be brief (about fifteen minutes) and feedback sessions even briefer (about five to ten minutes). Principals were given a CCG notebook so descriptive notes and reflections from the classroom visit cycle could be kept in one place. Design feasibility was assessed based on the extent to which the principals

followed this structure. Impact data indicate that the principals were able to keep to the basic CCG structure, yet visit and feedback frequency were a challenge.

**BASELINE FINDINGS**

Baseline data indicate that the principals’ practices were wide-ranging in terms of visit frequency, feedback frequency, and the form of feedback. In the pre-implementation questionnaire, teachers reported that their principal visited their classrooms with varying frequency. Only six of the fifteen participating teachers reported being visited weekly or every two weeks (Figure 4.1)<sup>1</sup>. Questionnaire data also indicate that the principals were not consistent in their feedback to teachers after the visit (Figure 4.2). At Mariposa in particular, feedback soon after a visit was not the norm for teachers in this study. Finally, the form of feedback varied greatly (Figure 4.3). Teachers reported that neither principal held conversations as their primary method of feedback after classroom visits.

*Figure 4.1: Classroom Visit Frequency – Pre and Post*



<sup>1</sup> All baseline data are displayed together with outcome data in Figures 4.1 – 4.4 and are discussed in both the “Baseline Findings” and “Outcome Findings” section.

Figure 4.2: Frequency of Feedback – Pre and Post

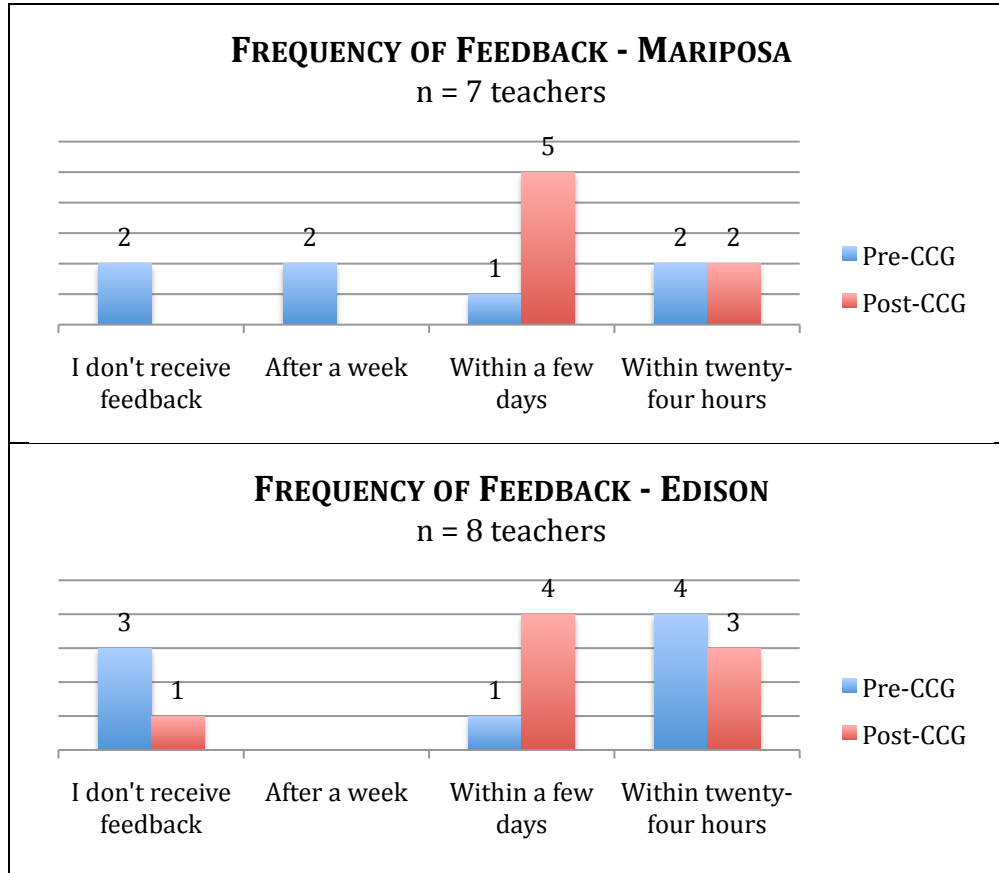
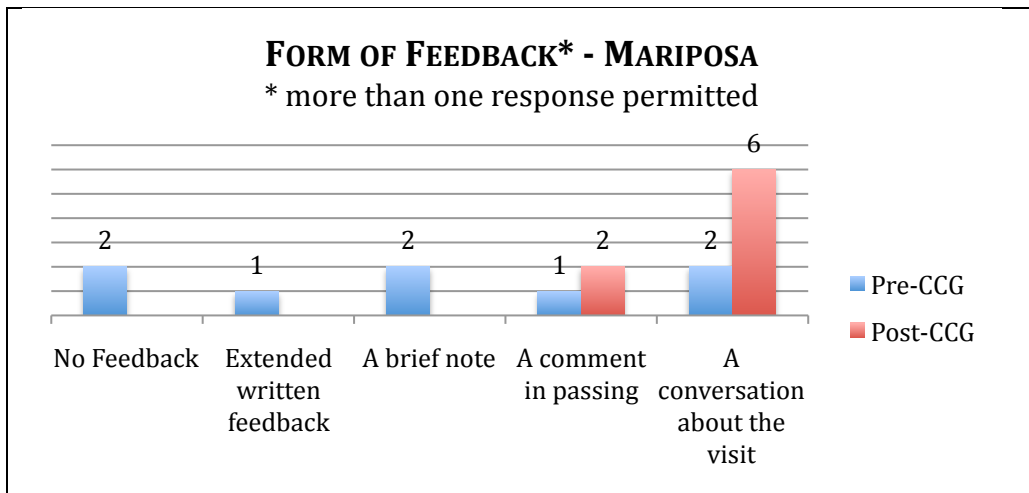
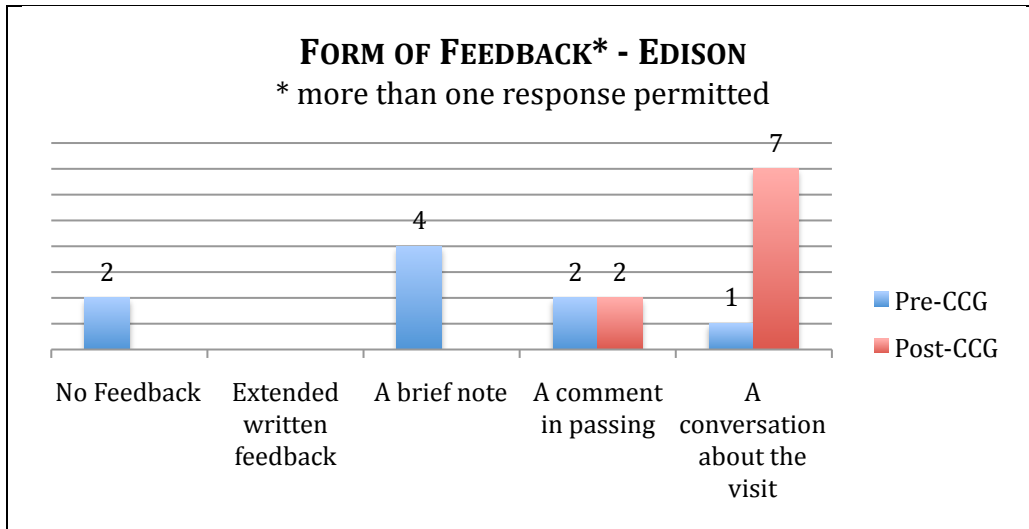


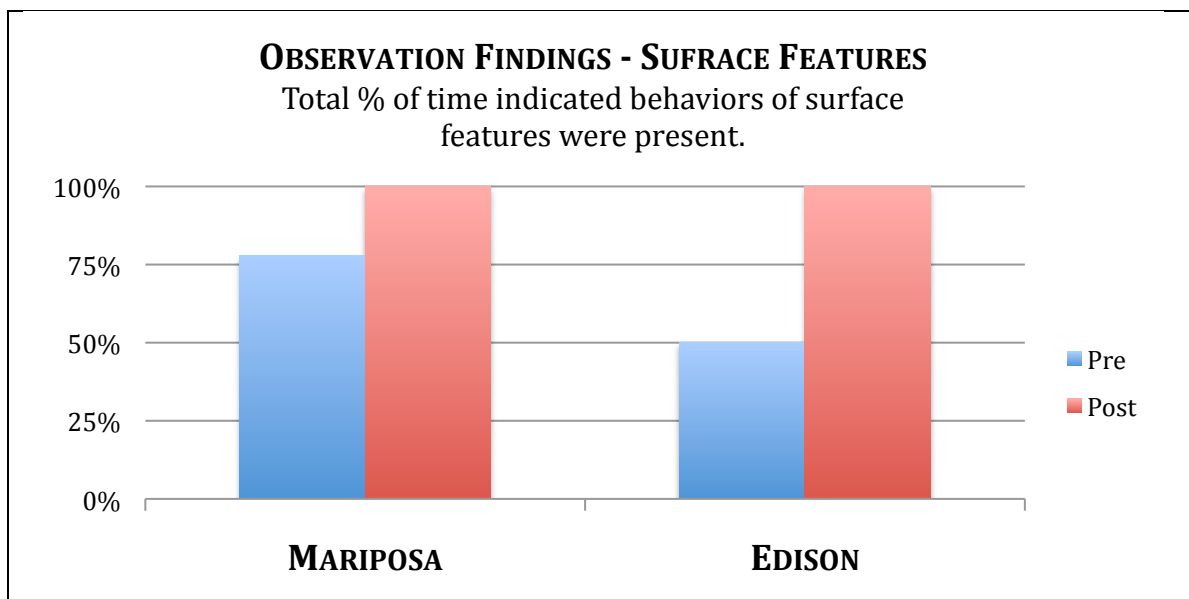
Figure 4.3: Form of Feedback – Pre and Post





Baseline observation data provide further evidence of the principals' practice before participating in the CCG process (Figure 4.4). During the observation, the principals were prompted to follow their normal routine for classroom visits. I accompanied the principal and looked for three indicated behaviors of classroom visits with a focus on learning: (1) the principal visited each teacher for long enough to view an instructional segment, (2) gathered evidence about the teacher's practice, and (3) gave feedback. I noted the presence or absence of these indicated behaviors for each teacher visited. I then converted my findings to a percentage (totaling the number of times each indicator was present and dividing by the total number of possible times the indicators could be present) to establish a baseline rating of the principal's practice with respect to the design dimensions.

Figure 4.4: Observation Findings – Surface Features – Pre and Post



At Mariposa, the principal visited three teachers' classrooms over a period of forty-five minutes. She spent approximately fifteen minutes in each classroom, primarily sitting and taking notes. At times she circulated the room, looking at student work or asking students questions. At the end of the day the principal brought one teacher to her office to debrief her visit. She did not give any feedback to the other two teachers.

At Edison, the principal visited six teachers in approximately forty minutes. He conducted "quick visits," his primary classroom visit routine. During the visits the principal observed from the back of the classroom, sometimes asked an individual student a question, and noted a key reflection or question on a feedback form he subsequently gave the teacher. During these visits he did not stay long enough to view an instructional segment. While the principal did give feedback to each teacher, his brief notes included little description or evidence about the lesson. For example, one note pointed out that students "seemed engaged" but didn't say why. Another note mentioned that "some [student] responses were deep" but didn't give an example of what that meant. These comments were too vague to lead to meaningful reflection on the teachers' classroom practice.

Overall, the baseline data indicate that if principals were to follow the CCG structure, it would mean a significant change in their practice around classroom visits. They would have to adjust their visit frequency, feedback frequency, and form of feedback with a majority of teachers. Design feasibility was assessed based on the extent to which the principals modified their practice to follow the CCG structure.

## OUTCOME FINDINGS

Outcome data indicate that principals did change their practice according to the dimensions that were the focus of the design: visit frequency, visit duration, evidence gathering during the visit, and form of feedback. According to questionnaire data, principals' visit frequency increased while participating in the CCG process (Figure 4.1). Five teachers at each school reported that the principal visited once a week or more while two at each school reported being visited about once every two weeks. The number of teachers being visited approximately once a week more than tripled and only one teacher at Edison noted s/he was visited less than every other week. This finding indicates a marked shift in both principals' practice. The principals visited with enough frequency during the CCG process to support teacher development. This is in contrast to the episodic nature of their visits before participating in the study.

The principals' frequency of feedback increased compared to baseline findings (Figure 4.2). Five teachers reported receiving feedback within twenty-four hours of the classroom visit. The remaining teachers noted that they received feedback within a few days, with the exception of one teacher from Edison. The number of teachers receiving prompt feedback at Mariposa more than doubled and increased almost by half at Edison. Teachers also reported that the principals provided feedback exclusively through conversations or comments in passing (Figure 4.3). The number of teachers with whom principals had conversations after visits increased almost fourfold from before the CCG process. The principals' prompt, in-person feedback during the CCG process indicates they changed their visit approach to reflect the characteristics of classroom visits with a learning focus.

The post-observations corroborate the principals' change in practice. These observations occurred at the end of the second classroom visit cycle. As with the pre-observation, I noted the presence or absence of indicated behaviors that occur during a classroom visit process focused

on teacher development. Whereas not all surface features were present during the initial observation, both principals fully incorporated them during the final visit (Figure 4.4). The Mariposa principal gave feedback to both teachers she visited. The Edison principal visited long enough to view an instructional segment, took descriptive notes using the CCG notebook, and held feedback conversations with teachers after the visits.

### DESIGN FEASIBILITY CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the CCG structure seemed feasible for both principals. The impact data demonstrate that the principals changed their practice with respect to visit frequency, visit duration, evidence gathering during the visits, and the frequency and form of feedback. During the CCG process they successfully incorporated these necessary characteristics of classroom visits with a focus on learning. However, the principals did have difficulty following the CCG structure as originally conceived in two ways: the principals did not consistently visit teachers on a weekly basis and they did not always provide feedback within twenty-four hours. In my design development data analysis I consider why these aspects of the design were challenging.

#### *DESIGN IMPACT FINDINGS: DESIGN ELEMENTS*

For classroom visits to have a learning orientation, principals need to do more than simply go to the classroom and provide feedback. Principals need to actively reduce defensiveness, take a developmental approach to helping the teachers improve their practice, and provide feedback that the teachers find relevant and helpful. Baseline and outcome data were collected to investigate the principals' development in incorporating these design elements into their classroom visit practice. Impact data indicate that the principals' practice progressed in these areas, with particular growth in taking a developmental approach and providing meaningful feedback.

### BASELINE FINDINGS

Baseline data indicate that both principals already incorporated CCG design elements to some degree into their practice, yet data also demonstrate there was opportunity for growth in each area. With respect to taking a developmental approach, questionnaire data indicated that teachers at both schools believed that their principals had a good understanding of teaching and learning in general (Figure 4.5)<sup>2</sup>. However, for many teachers this understanding did not lead to meaningful interactions about their instruction. Less than one third of teachers reported that the principals' classroom visits led to problem solving around instructional challenges. Only six of fifteen teachers reported that critical feedback was relevant and that the principals knew their broader goals for student learning. With respect to principals providing meaningful feedback, again the responses varied (Figure 4.6). Teachers reported talking to their principals about their practice and finding their general comments helpful. Yet the principals did not seem to engage in behaviors associated with meaningful feedback. Only one third of teachers reported that the principals made suggestions after visits, and even fewer noted that the principal asked questions. In reference to reducing defensiveness, all teachers but one reported having a collegial

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<sup>2</sup> All baseline data are displayed together with outcome data in Figures 4.5 – 4.9 and are discussed in more detail in the “Outcome Findings” section on pages 33 – 37.

relationship with their principal prior to participating in this study (Figure 4.7). In spite of this relationship, more than half of the teachers acknowledged being nervous during the principal's visits. Additionally, some teachers were unsure why the principal visited and what he or she was looking for.

Initial observation data reflect the findings from the pre-implementation questionnaire. During the observations, I noted the presence or absence of six indicated behaviors of classroom visits with a focus on teacher learning:

- providing specific praise after the visit;
- engaging in an exchange of ideas with the teacher about the visit;
- using analytical language to discuss what was observed;
- communicating teacher learning needs;
- making suggestions;
- providing choice and discretion about following suggestions.

As I did with the surface features data, I divided the number of times the indicated behaviors were present by the total number of times they could be observed to establish a baseline rating of the principal's practice. Since the Mariposa principal only gave feedback to one of the three teachers she visited, these features were present in less than one-third of total observations. With the one teacher she did provide feedback, the principal had a wide-ranging conversation during which five of the six indicated behaviors were present. At Edison, the principal did give feedback to every teacher, but the brevity of his visits and the lack of in-person communication limited the potential for teachers' learning. In some instances the principal did incorporate certain aspects of meaningful feedback. For example, in one note he used precise academic language to reinforce teaching behaviors he valued. ("Your lesson nicely matched the posted learning objective. Better yet students were in cooperative groups and you were using equity sticks.") Other notes contained generic compliments and vague suggestions ("It's good to see you using the WRITE program. When you ask questions, please make sure everyone is listening.") Without conversations after these visits, teachers were unlikely to know how to interpret or to act on the principal's written feedback. When these baseline observations are considered in conjunction with the teacher questionnaire data, it is clear there was an opportunity for the CCG process to facilitate the principals' development in leading classroom visits focused on teacher learning.

## OUTCOME FINDINGS

Outcome data indicate that the principals became more oriented towards teacher development than they had been prior to participating in the CCG process. Based on questionnaire and observation data, there appeared to be more progress in the areas of taking a developmental approach and providing meaningful feedback than in reducing defensiveness.

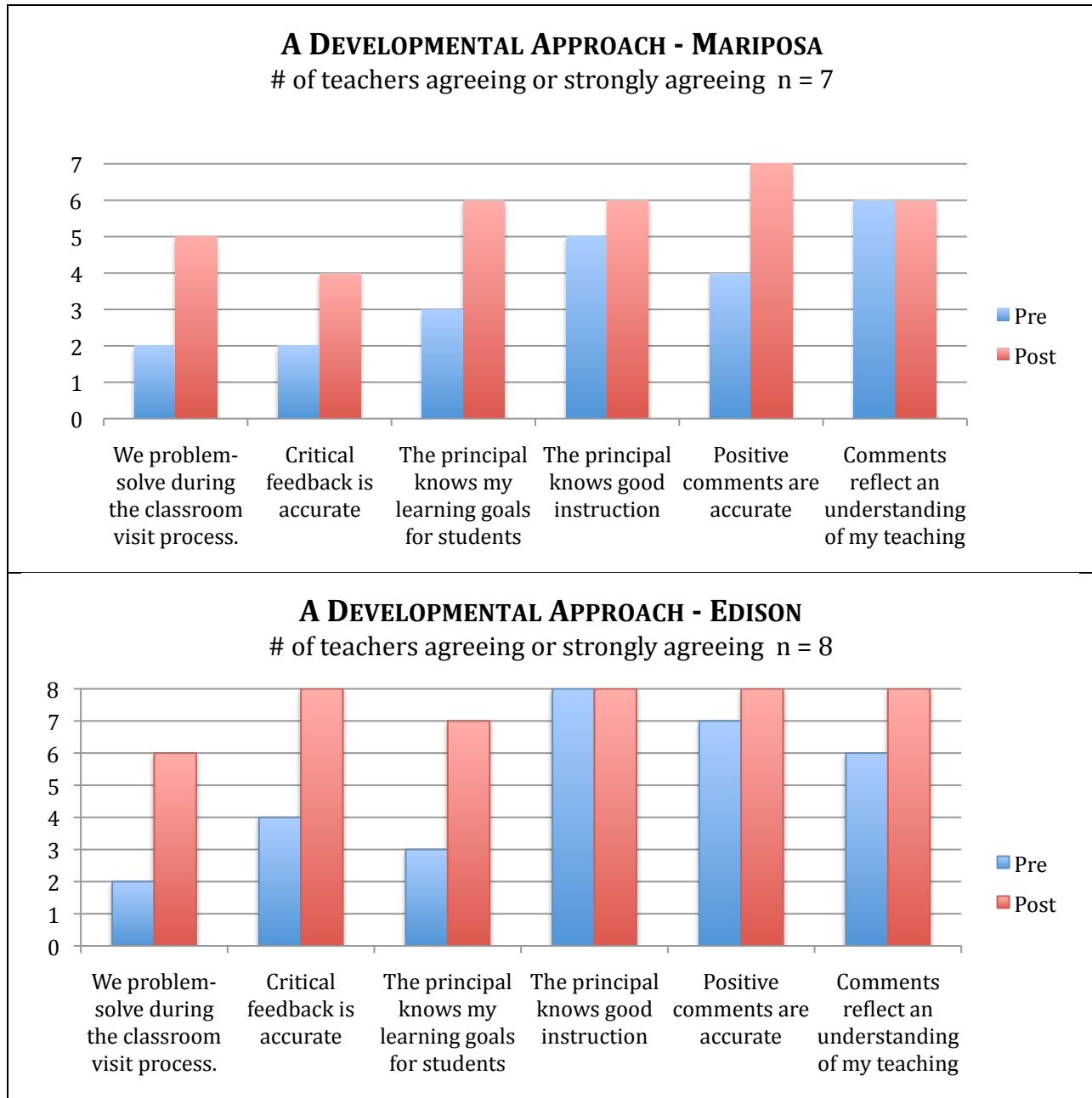
### *Taking a Developmental Approach*

Prior to the principals' participation in the CCG process, teachers believed their principals understood teaching and learning in general. However, teachers did not report that the principals had particular knowledge about the teachers' practice to support their professional growth. Outcome data suggest that principals developed in this particular area (Figure 4.5). At both schools the number of teachers who found the principals' critical feedback relevant to their growth doubled. Twice as many teachers in the post-questionnaire data also reported that



principals knew their broader unit goals. There was even greater growth at each school in the teachers' perception that classroom visits were a way to solve problems about their practice. Eleven teachers reported that this was an aspect of classroom visits after the principal engaged in the CCG process, compared to only four teachers initially noting this. These findings suggest the principals' approach to classroom visits became much more focused on the specific instructional practice of the individual teachers in the study.

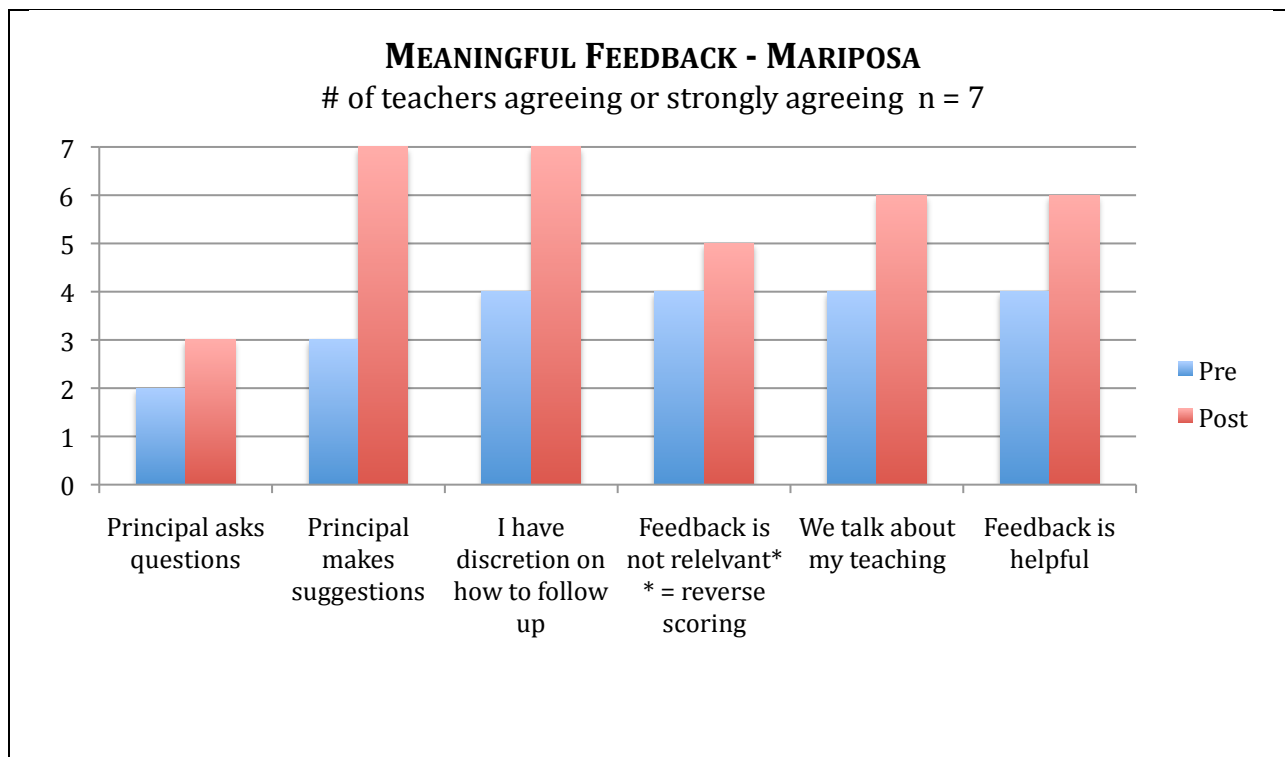
Figure 4.5: A Developmental Approach – Pre and Post

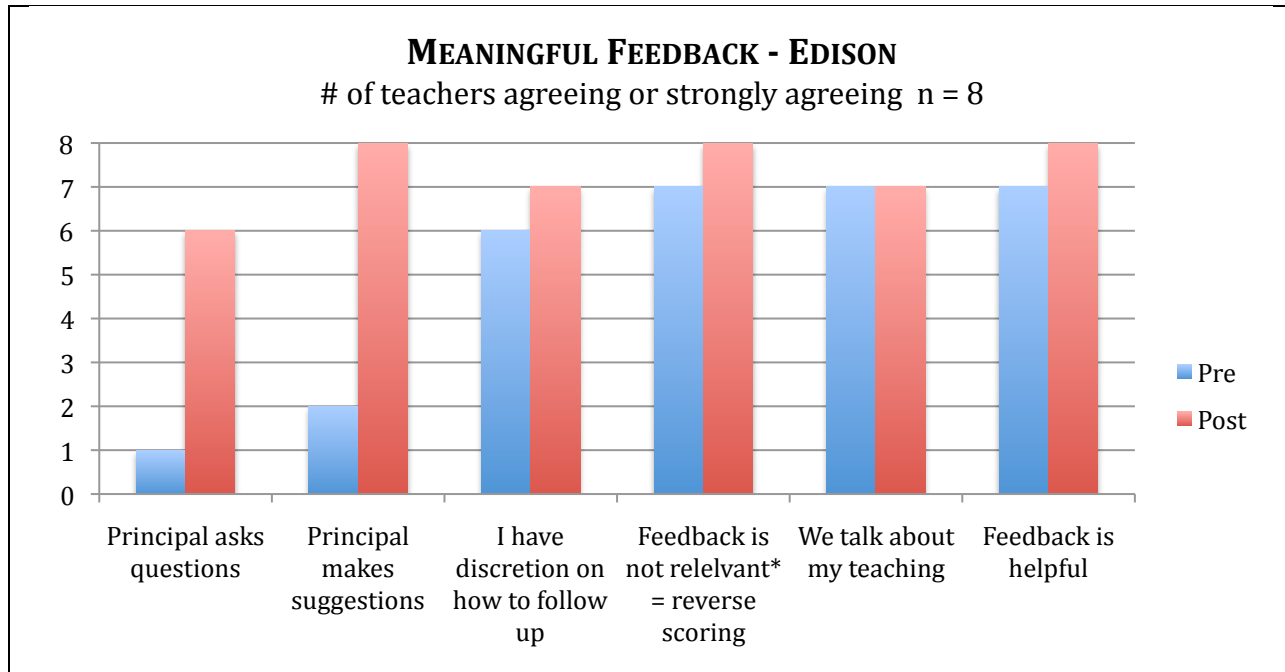


### Providing Meaningful Feedback

Baseline data in this area indicated that principals already had a foundation in talking with the teachers and providing feedback that was positive and helpful. After participating in a classroom visit cycle, the teachers reported that the principals now engaged in specific behaviors associated with more meaningful feedback (Figure 4.6). At Mariposa, all seven teachers in the study reported that the principal made suggestions and allowed for discretion on how to follow up during the classroom visit process. This increased from baseline findings by three and four teachers respectively. More teachers also reported that the principal talked with them about their teaching (two more), asked questions (one more), and made helpful comments (two more). At Edison, the principals' practice seemed to evolve in two particular aspects of meaningful feedback conversations: making suggestions and asking questions. Six more teachers than in the baseline reported that the principal made suggestions and five more teachers reported that the principal asked questions. These findings indicate that the principals' feedback looked markedly different when participating in the CCG process. The growth in making suggestions indicates the principals were much more attuned to the teachers' instructional needs. The fact that more teachers reported the principals asked questions or talked with them about their practice demonstrates that the principals' classroom visit approach became more dynamic and interactive. This is exactly the approach to principal classroom visits that the CCG process is meant to prompt.

Figure 4.6: Meaningful Feedback – Pre and Post





### *Reducing Defensiveness*

Figure 4.7 shows that teachers' perspectives about the principals' practice in this area generally remained consistent before and after participating in the CCG process. However, two data points are worth discussing. First, the number of teachers who knew why the principal was visiting and what she or he was looking for doubled at Mariposa and increased to all eight teachers at Edison. As Figure 4.8 demonstrates, more teachers also believed to a greater degree that the purpose of the classroom visits was to support their development rather than to monitor, to evaluate, or to ensure compliance. This was especially true at Mariposa. These findings indicate that the principals engaged in behaviors associated with reducing defensiveness, namely being explicit about the purpose of the classroom visits throughout the cycle.

In spite of principals being explicit about their focus on teacher learning, the teachers' anxiety while the principal was in the room did not lessen during the classroom visit cycle. At Edison, the same number of teachers reported being nervous during the principal's visits before and after participating in this process. At Mariposa, one *more* teacher reported being nervous during the visits after participating in the classroom visit process. Possible explanations for the lack of change in the teachers' attitude toward the visits include the teachers still being aware of the principal's evaluative role, the increased level of scrutiny of the teachers' practice, and perhaps even my presence during some classroom visits during the CCG process. These somewhat conflicting data points – that teachers were more clear about the purpose of the visits but similarly nervous about the principals presence in their classrooms – will be further explored in the design development data analysis.

Figure 4.7: Reducing Defensiveness – Pre and Post

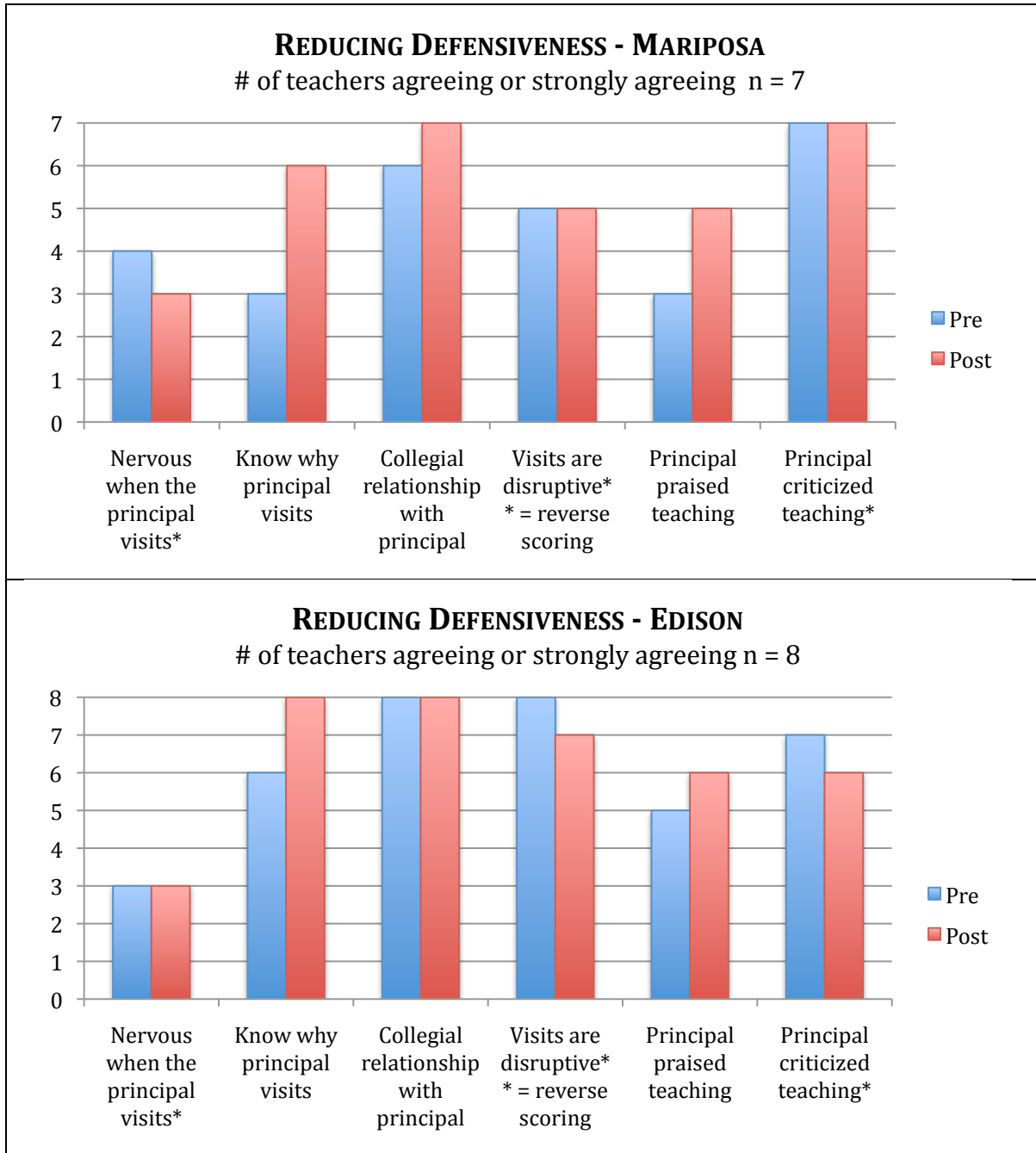


Figure 4.8: Purpose of Visits – Pre and Post

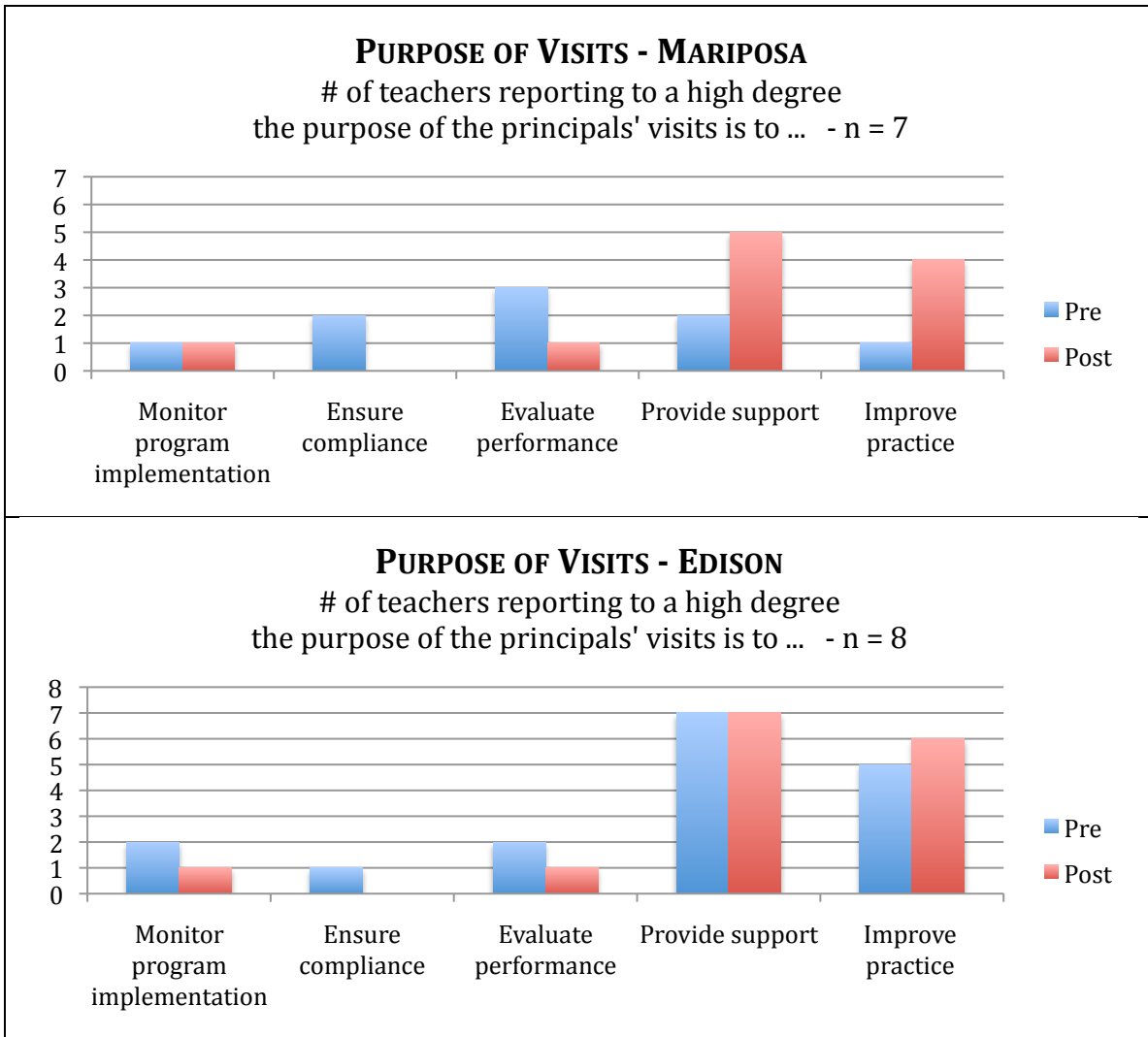
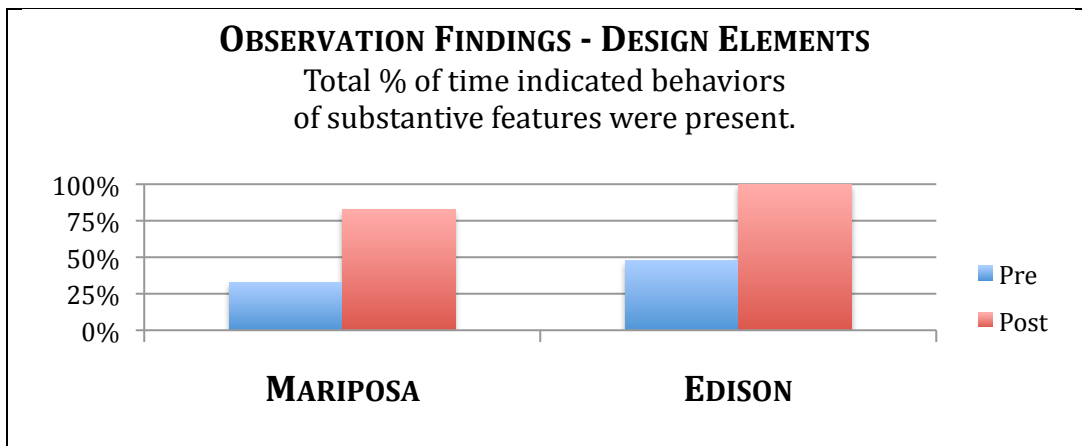


Figure 4.9: Observation Findings – Design Elements – Pre and Post



Observation data confirms the teachers' perceptions that the principals incorporated the design elements to a greater extent into their classroom visit approach after the classroom visit cycles (Figure 4.9). During the baseline observations, the six indicated behaviors were present less than half of the time for each principal. During the post-observation, these behaviors were mostly present during the Mariposa's principals visits and fully present during the Edison's principal's visits.

At Mariposa, the principal held feedback conversations with both teachers she visited, unlike during the initial observation. With one teacher, the conversation focused on the area in which the teacher asked for feedback—the lesson. The principal asked several reflective questions about different aspects of the lesson, particularly around checking for understanding. With the second teacher, the feedback session was less focused. While the principal and teacher had identified student engagement as an area of focus, the conversation mainly centered on the details of that particular lesson and the challenge of teaching after administering the state assessment rather than particular engagement strategies.

At Edison, the principal exhibited all indicated behaviors during the final observation. The principal visited two teachers at the end of a classroom visit cycle and discussed specific teacher learning that emerged from his series of visits. His conversation with one teacher focused on the appropriate use of visuals to engage the teacher's English Language Learners. The second teacher reflected on her progress in teaching lessons with a new component of the math curriculum that required her to have students work together in groups. During both feedback sessions the principal used precise academic language, prompted teacher reflection using question stems from the CCG, made specific suggestions, and inquired what support the teacher needed to continue his or her progress.

### *DESIGN IMPACT CONCLUSIONS*

A year and a half before beginning this study the SUSD superintendent mandated that principals visit classrooms for five hours a week. Beyond having to submit a weekly visit log, principals received little guidance about what to do during those five hours. The CCG design was developed to help make the five-hour classroom visit requirement a productive instructional leadership activity for principals. Specifically, its goal was to support principals in conducting a particular type of classroom visit—one focused on teacher learning. Three practices identified from the professional knowledge base—reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback—became the primary design elements of the CCG process. Two principals in SUSD put into practice the CCG process to guide their classroom visits with fifteen teachers. I collected baseline and outcome data before and after the principals participated in the CCG process to assess their growth in conducting classroom visits with a focus on teacher learning.

The impact data demonstrate the principals changed their practice to become focused on teacher learning while participating in the CCG process. The principals went from conducting infrequent, episodic, non-strategic visits to engaging in a process that involved frequent, meaningful interactions with teacher around their practice. At Mariposa, this change was significant in a few particular areas. The principal visited with more frequency and provided much more in-person feedback. These feedback conversations were characterized by more questions and suggestions than before she participated in the CCG process. Teachers found these conversations to be relevant to improving their instruction and solving problems about their

practice. Overall, teachers recognized that the purpose of the principal's visits were to support their learning to a much greater extent than before she engaged in the CCG process.

At Edison, the principal started with a higher baseline, but he too developed in a few key areas. A major shift in his practice was from leaving brief feedback notes to more in-depth conversations about what he observed while in the classrooms. Teachers believed that these conversations helped the principal better understand their goals for student learning and how he might support their practice. The principal asked more probing questions and communicated more pointed suggestions than when he left notes after his visits. These findings demonstrate that both principals made significant growth in leading classroom visits that supported teacher development.

While both principals' classroom visits shifted to become focused on teacher learning, outcome data does indicate limitations in their efforts. The goal of the CCG design was for the principals to incorporate the design elements to such an extent that all teachers reported a difference in the principals' practice and all observed interactions reflected this change. Yet outcome data show that this goal was not reached. For example, some teachers did not report that the principal asked questions, made suggestions, or provided relevant feedback. Almost half of the teachers at each site still reported feeling nervous about having the principal observe. These findings on the limitations of the impact of the CCG process on the principals' practice have implications that will be further explored in later sections.

In spite of these limitations, the major changes in the principals' practice mean that the CCG process helped the principals achieve the proximal outcome of the design—engaging in practices to reduce defensiveness, take a developmental approach, and provide meaningful feedback when visiting classrooms. By engaging in these practices, their visits led to new types of interactions with teachers from their classroom visits. These interactions were strategically focused on improving instruction. Considering that principals received little guidance on visiting classrooms before participating in this study, the CCG process helped them meet the five-hour visit requirement productively. In short, it worked.

In the next section, I analyze design development data to logically link my findings on design feasibility and impact with what actually happened during the design process when the principals used, reflected on, and revised the CCG design.

## **SECTION II: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT DATA ANALYSIS**

Every design has a story. From its inception to its ultimate implementation, a design goes through various iterations, with its designers tinkering and testing along the way. Design development research is an opportunity to investigate systematically what happens during the various phases of the design process. This particular design is in its beginning stages of development. It began as my personal response to the challenge of making my time spent meeting the five-hour classroom visit requirement meaningful. Informed by the professional knowledge base, I developed a theory of action for the design. I then began to put into practice this theory of action at my school. This experience led to the initial CCG design. I subsequently invited the two principals in this study to collaborate with me as co-designers while trying the CCG process at their site. Their participation in the design process marked the beginning of my design development research.

Design development data were collected to logically link my investigation of the design process with the outcome data on design feasibility and the principal's growth in leading classroom visits focused on teacher learning. With respect to feasibility, outcome data indicated

that principals did change their practice to follow the basic CCG structure. However, visit and feedback frequency remained a challenge. Design development data illustrate how the principals followed the structure, what contributed to their particular challenges in doing so, and what changes might still be necessary to improve design feasibility. In terms of principals' growth, outcome data showed that the principals improved in incorporating the CCG design elements into their practice, particularly in taking a developmental approach and providing meaningful feedback. Design development data account for this improvement, illuminating specific practices that helped principals focus on teacher learning. The data also highlights where their efforts to incorporate the design elements were limited. I begin design development data analysis with my findings on design feasibility and then continue to discuss principal growth.

### *DESIGN FEASIBILITY*

During one of my visits to Edison Elementary, the principal pointed out water stains on the wall from a broken pipe. A day earlier, he had arrived to school to find the second floor flooded with water. His morning was spent coordinating district maintenance staff, redirecting students from the halls, and even mopping up water. During other visits I observed him dealing with student discipline issues, directing traffic after school, completing paperwork for the state's categorical program monitoring process, and hosting in his office two young students who had delivered fresh enchiladas from a cooking lesson. The Mariposa principal faced similar issues, although she got cupcakes, rather than enchiladas, from her students. It was within this context that the principals participated in the CCG process. The daily demands on principals make feasibility a paramount design consideration.

The original CCG structure had four main components: (1) visits that lasted for an instructional segment; (2) descriptive note taking by the principal; (3) face-to-face feedback within twenty-four hours; and (4) twice weekly visits. The intent was for principals to follow this structure with four teachers during an approximately four-week classroom visit cycle. This meant the principals would spend approximately three and a half hours of their five weekly visit hours on the CCG process. Baseline data suggest that this structure would represent a significant change in the principals' approach to classroom visits; however, it seemed possible as it only accounted for a portion of the five hours the principals were supposed to be visiting classrooms. I collected design development data on feasibility issues from observations of each principal working with four focal teachers, interviews with teachers and the principals at the end of each classroom visit cycle, and comments from the principals after their visits and during our professional development sessions. Specifically, I investigated which components of the CCG structure were practical for principals, meaning, were they able to implement these components without too much strain or did they need to be addressed during the design development.

By the end of the first classroom visit cycle, it became apparent that some CCG components were more practical than others. It seemed fairly easy for principals to take descriptive notes during the lesson and to stay long enough to view an instructional segment. During both the initial and final observations of the classroom visit cycle, the principals stayed in each classroom at least fifteen minutes and used the CCG workbook to take notes. After the first round, the principals did not raise any concerns about these two components. Both principals noted that it was very practical to have one notebook in which to record their observations and reflections for each teacher in the cycle.

It was much more difficult for the principals to visit every teacher twice a week and provide face-to-face feedback within twenty-four hours. Teacher interviews and principal self-



reports confirmed that neither principal visited nor provided feedback with such regularity. At Mariposa, the teachers were only visited four to seven times during the cycle (as opposed to the intended eight visits), while the Edison teachers were visited five to six times. Interviewed teachers reported that principals consistently gave feedback, but not always within twenty-four hours and not after every visit. While the overall design of frequent visits with in-person feedback was feasible for principals, the specific structure outlined in the initial CCG design did not seem practical.

Considering these findings, the CCG structure clearly needed modification. At the professional development session after the first round, the principals and I discussed appropriate adjustments. They argued that visiting four teachers, especially for the first cycle, was too demanding. They preferred visiting fewer teachers in the second cycle to make the process more practical and to refine their learning. We also discussed the difficulty of trying to schedule two visits a week per teacher. The principals had too many commitments (e.g. district meetings) and faced too many school site issues (e.g. broken pipes) for them to schedule so many visits and feedback sessions in a week. We agreed that in the second round there would only be a weekly scheduled visit, with two to three unannounced visits during the round. This would give principals flexibility while they could still visit with enough frequency to focus on the teachers' development.

In the second round, the principals improved in giving feedback regularly. The principals and focal teachers reported that feedback was given after each visit. Visit frequency was still a challenge. The principals did not seem to visit teachers more than once a week. At Mariposa, the principal shared that she tried to visit with the expected frequency, but acknowledged that she may not have done so because "things were moving pretty fast at the end of the year" (INT<sup>3</sup> – 6/16/10). Both interviewed teachers reported only weekly visits. At Edison, the principal reported visiting the teachers weekly and also doing "in-between pop-ins, but not as religiously as the once-a-week's" (INT – 6/18/10). One interviewed teacher confirmed this, but a second teacher only remembered three visits in the cycle. He noted that two scheduled visits were cancelled. The Edison principal also remarked on the difficult timing of the second round. "I think things kind of get harder when the year goes on" (INT – 6/18/10).

The frequency of visits, number of teachers in each cycle, and the timing of each cycle should be considered in a revised theory of action and design. The primary question is, with what frequency and how often does a teacher need to be visited for development around their classroom practice to occur? At the end of this process, the principals argued that what matters most is the strategic interactions with the teachers rather than the precise number of visits during any given cycle. The Edison principal commented, "If ultimately the process's intent is to make classroom visits have a stronger impact on instruction, the once-a-week per round ... I guess I don't see that as being a key feature. It's more the ongoing dialogue" (INT – 6/18/10). The Mariposa principal agreed that it was the post-visit conversations that were most beneficial. "Really talking through the lesson from whatever perspective the teacher was looking for—lesson planning, classroom management, whatever it was—I think that's the most valuable part of this whole thing" (INT – 6/16/10).

These findings can inform future revisions to the CCG structure. Adjustments still need to be made so that all CCG components are practical for busy principals. A primary feature of the revised structure should be its flexibility. The principal's assessment of their teachers' growth needs should drive the frequency of visits and feedback rather than a prescribed number

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<sup>3</sup> INT = Interview

of participants in a set classroom visit cycle. At the same time, the CCG needs to maintain a structure that allows for the type of interactions necessary to support teacher learning. Two basic parameters should still guide a principal's classroom visit approach in this more flexible structure: visits over time so that a learning thread can be developed and in-person feedback so that the process is interactive and collaborative.

#### *DESIGN ELEMENTS: A FOCUS ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT*

In SUSD, elementary teachers are expected to implement the following programs or pedagogies: Open Court Reading, Everyday Math, ELD, SPARKS physical education, Response to Intervention with differentiated instruction, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Professional development for instructional leaders has often focused on learning about these various programs and instructional approaches so that principals could monitor their implementation. So while the concept of classroom visits focused on teacher development rather than monitoring or compliance is hardly a new one, classroom visits with this orientation in SUSD represent a different instructional leadership focus. Impact data demonstrate that for the Mariposa and Edison principals this focus on teacher learning did mean a shift in their approach to classroom visits. In order to understand this change, I collected design development data while the principals participated in the CCG process. I collected data from four different sources: observations of the principals presenting the CCG to the staff; observations of the classroom visit process at the beginning and end of each cycle with eight focal teachers; post-implementation interviews with the eight focal teachers; and post-implementation interviews with the two principals. I then analyzed the data to identify critical incidents that represent evidence of the principals' practice in reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback.

In the following section, I present my findings from my design development data analysis. For each design element, I first briefly highlight the principals' development as identified in the outcome data. I then examine the design development data for evidence of specific practices that might have contributed to this growth. I also identify at what point the principals' efforts in engaging in these practices were limited. I conclude from this data on strengths and weaknesses of the design.

#### A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Prior to participating in this study, the Mariposa and Edison teachers acknowledged their principals' general knowledge about teaching and learning; however, most did not find the principals particularly knowledgeable about their own personal growth needs or broader goals for the students. Baseline observation data in particular indicated that neither principal had a strategic approach to support teacher learning that focused on instructional quality. Outcome data demonstrated that they improved in this area. Design development data highlight two ways in which the principals improved in taking a developmental approach: analyzing instruction and focusing on a developmental trajectory.

#### *Improvement in Analyzing Instruction and Identifying a Developmental Trajectory*

There are innumerable ways to analyze instruction. Since the CCG process focused on the teacher's development rather than program implementation, it was important to take a

generic approach to analyzing instruction. At the first professional development session, the principals agreed to use the conventional aspects of skillful teaching as a frame for their analysis. Both principals decided to present the CCG's four aspects of skillful teaching to their staffs. They did this at their initial staff meeting when presenting the CCG process, with the Edison principal even handing out the CCG's "Analyzing Instruction" tool to the teachers. When the principals met individually with the teachers to schedule and plan the classroom visit cycle, they collaboratively identified a certain area of skillful teaching on which to focus. Each principal then went in the teacher's classroom with a particular analytical lens. The principals' comments during the feedback sessions demonstrate that they endeavored to collect evidence and analyze instruction on the agreed upon aspect of skillful teaching. Typical comments include:

- *I notice you have quite a few routines.* – Mariposa principal to a teacher focused on classroom management (FN<sup>4</sup> – 1/21/10).
- *I noticed several students weren't writing what they were saying about the picture.* – Mariposa principal to a teacher focused on his lesson planning (FN – 3/31/10).
- *You only had two students who passed [on solving a math problem].* – Edison principal to a teacher focused on student engagement (FN – 3/11/10).
- *You utilized student leaders. Alexis was a student leader in her group and got the other kids to do the problem.* – Edison principal to a teacher focused on her lesson planning, specifically small group instruction (FN – 5/10/11).

This evidence-based feedback led to teacher responses that stayed focused on the agreed upon area of skillful teaching.

The principals' more focused analysis on a particular aspect of skillful teaching supported their efforts to identify a developmental trajectory when working with the teachers. For example, the Mariposa principal worked with a focal teacher to identify her next steps around her classroom management. The principal offered feedback around various facets of classroom management such as classroom routines and participation protocols. In the post-visit interview, the teacher was able to identify a specific area of improvement that emerged from the classroom visit cycle. She noted, "I need to be more consistent with my expectations for students participating" (INT – 3/4/11). With another teacher, the principal identified early on that she wanted him to differentiate his student involvement. During one lesson, the principal observed two students engaged in an extended conversation about a math problem. In the next debrief (FN – 5/6/11), the following exchange occurred after the principal described the interaction:

Principal: *Does that [type of student interaction] happen often?*

Teacher: *Not as much as I'd like. It tends to disintegrate so fast. I ask them to talk to a neighbor, but after a minute it falls apart.*

Principal: *I wish more students could hear conversations like that. What could you do to help make that happen?*

Teacher: *You have to train them to sustain it.*

The conversation continued on how such interactions could be supported. After the classroom visit cycle, the principal reported that the teacher even requested her support at the beginning of the year to set up systems for small group and partner work.

The Edison principal had similar success in identifying a developmental trajectory. With one teacher he revisited the theme of lesson pacing throughout the classroom visit process. At the final feedback session, the principal shared evidence that the teacher often reviewed too many problems with the students. He recommended that the teacher, "slow down and make it

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<sup>4</sup> FN = Field Notes

about their thinking” (FN – 3/11/10). They went on to discuss the merits of depth over breadth. In the post-interview, the teacher was clear about his developmental needs. When asked about his experience with the classroom visit process he said, “It was the feedback that stood out. Quality versus quantity. Slowing down. Making sure I was modeling before putting it into their hands. Budgeting time during teaching and the lesson” (INT – 3/11/10). Another Edison teacher appreciated the opportunity to focus her growth in one area during the classroom visits. The teacher noted, “I choose the games from Everyday Math to work on [with the principal]. So I was motivated and ... so I learned a lot because it was the first time that I was actually trying to really follow [the lesson design]” (INT – 5/10/10). These examples illustrate how the principals’ classroom visits evolved to focus on more long-term developmental issues with the teachers.

### *Limitations in Analyzing Instruction and Identifying a Developmental Trajectory*

Although the principals did focus their analysis on the conventional aspects of skillful teaching and identified a developmental trajectory with the teachers, there were limitations to their efforts. At Mariposa, the principal was most effective in analyzing classroom management. However, her analysis seemed less cogent when discussing student engagement or lesson planning. For example, with the two teachers who focused on engagement, the principal’s comments were limited to pointing out examples of student involvement in the lesson. The conversation did not move onto more specific aspects of student engagement such as how to provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in whole class, in groups, and in pairs. In one post-interview, a teacher did not share any specific examples of how her practice around student engagement evolved, even though that was the stated focus of the classroom visit cycle. The other teacher admitted, “I had even forgot about what we were focusing on” (INT – 5/13/10). She went on to say that she wished the principal had provided a more rigorous analysis of her instruction. For example, the principal pointed out during a feedback session with the teacher that the lesson seemed “high interest.” The teacher did not agree, arguing that the students could have done better. During the post-round interview, this teacher commented, “She isn’t critical enough. I think [the principal] is too easy. You don’t want to be too critical about a petty thing. You want to have a real open dialogue about reaching a level or a standard that is where you want to be as a teacher and that person is helping you get there” (INT – 5/13/11). With these two focal teachers, the CCG design did not prompt this particular principal to deepen her analysis of instruction nor did it help her identify an appropriate developmental trajectory.

The Edison principal had a similar challenge providing a precise analysis of the teachers’ instructional needs. The principal and one focal teacher decided to focus on student engagement. After the first lesson, the debrief session centered on the use of visuals in the lesson. The principal pointed out that it was difficult for some students to read the overhead. He made suggestions for how the teacher could set up the overhead to make it accessible to all students. At the final visit, the teacher had similar issues using technology to make his visuals more clear and engaging. Afterwards the principal made three specific recommendations for how to set up technology in his room. Throughout the classroom visit cycle, principal-teacher interactions were more about *how* to make visuals more accessible to students than actually planning lessons to incorporate visuals to engage the students. Even though the stated focus of the visits was student engagement, they were actually working on classroom management issues, specifically how space is organized to promote student learning. This imprecise analysis was problematic because the teacher did not leave the process clear about his developmental needs. In the final interview, the teacher reported that he learned that he needed to be more “demonstrative.”

However, he qualified this assessment by saying, “I think that maybe that day it was something in it [the lesson] that I could have done, but I think I’m pretty good at it [using visuals and other demonstrations to teach a lesson]” (INT – 5/11/10). While he still might follow the principal’s recommendations for how to organize his visual presentations, he did not leave with a clear picture that classroom organization was a need for his continued growth. This is another instance when the CCG design did not seem to help the principal communicate his analysis of the teachers’ practice and the next developmental steps.

These challenges indicate the need for more robust professional development around analyzing the conventional aspects of skillful teaching and identifying a developmental trajectory. The CCG includes a more in-depth tool for analyzing each aspect of skillful teaching, but it was only briefly reviewed during the professional development. The Edison principal acknowledged not having referred to it when visiting the classrooms. “I have to admit that I didn’t use it that much, feeling like I had some familiarity with it, but I didn’t go back and look at it prior to a session” (INT – 6/18/10). In the subsequent chapter I propose modifications to the theory of action and design to address this limitation by adjusting the professional development to center on the developmental aspect of the CCG process. Much more time should be given to supporting principals in analyzing instruction, identifying developmental needs, and communicating these needs in a collaborative manner.

### MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

Impact data demonstrate that the principals showed growth in incorporating meaningful feedback into their practice. Specifically, more teachers cited that the principals made suggestions and asked questions. These practices seemed to contribute to the teachers’ sense that feedback sessions were helpful.

#### *Improvement in Making Suggestions and Asking Questions*

Since in-person feedback was not the norm for either principal, just having consistent conversations with teachers created a new dynamic. All interviewed teachers noted that they appreciated the opportunity to work closely with the principals when asked what they liked about the classroom visit process. Typical comments included ...

- *What it did for me is to tell me that [the principal] knows about my teaching. She just hadn’t really shared it with me [before].* – Mariposa Teacher (INT – 5/13/10)
- *[The visits] make me more aware to be a better teacher. There have been years when I had almost no visit from the principal. It was good to have her [the Mariposa principal] in my room.* – Mariposa Teacher (INT – 3/5/10)
- *It helped [the principal] and I get to know each other better.* – Edison Teacher (INT – 3/12/10)
- *It’s nice to know that the principal is wanting to come to the classroom to see what’s happening. It boosts my morale.* – Edison teacher (INT – 3/11/10)

The CCG process was specifically designed to promote these types of interactions among principals and teachers. When teachers describe their experience with principals in these terms, it is much more likely that learning can take place. Yet this new dynamic did not necessarily mean that teachers found the feedback content meaningful. In order to support teacher learning, the principal needed to make suggestions that teachers found relevant and to ask questions that

furthered their thinking. With respect to suggestions, all focal teachers except one identified helpful suggestions in the interview without prompting. Examples include:

- *I appreciated her suggestions in regards to students talking during the lesson and how to address it. I realized that I needed to think through when it was good for the kids to respond and talk a lot and when I needed them to listen. Like when I'm modeling, I need them to listen to me and not interrupt. But if it's the 'we do' time of the lesson, then it's okay – well not just okay, but I need to encourage them to talk and share their ideas before they go work [independently] – Mariposa teacher (INT – 3/4/10)*
- *Sometimes [she] offered suggestions like, "Don't forget – maybe you should walk around the room a little bit more," because I like – I love a reason to talk at the [document] camera. So I certainly have to remember just to kind of circulate a little bit more sometimes. – Mariposa teacher (INT – 5/12/10)*
- *He shared good tips like moving around the room, that certain kids were dominating. He noticed that Juan and Rafael were kind of like showing off and calling out to get my attention. Sometimes this meant other kids didn't get to share. I often wondered what to do then. Do I keep going on or address it? He suggested that since I have older kids, I open up it up to reflection. I could ask how that affected our learning moment. I tried this and it helped make them [the two boys] and everyone [in the class] more aware of what they're doing. Now I have a good strategy to deal with it [students dominating during a whole class lesson]. – Edison teacher (INT – 3/12/10)*
- *Something that he said at the last one [feedback session] was to try to teach the [student] leaders before the lesson. And I hadn't thought of that, I mean I could have taught them the game, but that wasn't what he was saying. He wasn't saying teach these kids ahead of time and then they teach the others, he was actually talking about leadership skills, which then ties into social studies. So I learned more about how to connect to other things besides the subject that I'm teaching. – Edison teacher (INT 5/10/10)*

In addition to making suggestions, principals incorporated asking questions into their feedback sessions. Both principals began their feedback by asking teachers about their thoughts on the lesson before sharing their own. The principals then often focused on specific parts of the lesson, asking questions to probe the teacher's thinking. Examples of these types of questions include:

- *Do you want them raising their hand at that time? – Mariposa principal (FN – 1/21/10)*
- *When you use the equity sticks, what do you do when they [the students] are frozen [when they are called on]? – Mariposa principal (FN – 5/13/10)*
- *Have you thought about why have the students correct all of them [the math problems]? – Edison principal (FN – 2/1/10)*
- *What are some factors you've found to be helpful when implementing the [math] games? – Edison principal (FN – 5/10/10)*

In response to these questions, the teachers reflected on their instruction. For example, the Mariposa teacher who was asked about hand raising recognized that she needed to be explicit about her expectations. The Edison teacher who was asked about having students correct all the problems realized that he did not need to go over every answer to check student understanding.

In post-interviews, several teachers specifically noted the principals' reflective questioning:

- *Sometimes – like – if a student wasn't getting it – [she] would ask, "I noticed that so and so didn't get it. What are some things that you do to make sure that they might – that they don't slip through the cracks or miss it?" – Mariposa teacher (INT – 5/12/10)*

- *So he asked good questions that led me to think about, “Okay, did that work?” And, “What would I do differently next time.”* – Edison teacher (INT – 5/10/10)

These comments indicate that teachers did find the feedback sessions meaningful, particularly with respect to the suggestions principals made and questions they asked.

### *Limitations in Making Suggestions and Asking Questions*

While teachers appreciated the suggestions and questions, a closer analysis of the feedback conversations identifies where the design was limited in developing the principals’ practice. The CCG design includes question stems to prompt reflection. Although the principals at times asked reflective questions, their feedback sessions also included questions that potentially limited reflection. Examples include:

1. *Are you working on that [in reference to students getting up without permission]?* – Mariposa principal (FN – 1/21/10)
2. *Is it fair to say that you weren’t prepped?* – Edison principal (FN – 3/25/11)
3. *Do you feel it [your classroom management] has changed?* – Mariposa principal (FN – 3/4/10)
4. *Are you pleased [with the lesson]?* – Edison principal (FN – 3/11/10)
5. *Here’s the thing. There is so much going on. I just wonder, was that [the number of review questions] too much?* – Mariposa principal (FN – 5/6/10)
6. *Did you think you had a good balance [of review questions]?* – Edison principal (FN – 3/11/10)

The first two questions appear to be statements in the guise of queries. The Mariposa principal clearly wanted to communicate that the teacher needed to work on limiting students getting up without permission. The Edison principal wanted the teacher to acknowledge he was not prepared for that aspect of the lesson. If principals wanted to promote reflection on these issues, the Mariposa principal might have asked *how* the teacher is working on students getting up without permission and the Edison principal might have asked *how* the teacher prepares for his lessons. At a minimum, it might have served the principals better to state directly what they were thinking rather than frame it as a yes or no question.

Examples three and four are questions that compel the teacher to guess what response the principal wants to hear. Asking the Mariposa teacher if she thinks her classroom management had changed is a leading question. The principal stated later on in the feedback session that she had seen changes in the teacher’s practice. Since she believed this, it would have been more appropriate to state this up front and then ask, “In what ways have you seen your classroom management change?” When the Edison principal asked for the teacher’s perspective using a value laden term such as “pleased,” he was unlikely to receive an authentic reflection on the lesson. A more specific invitation framed in non-judgmental terms such as, “How do you think the lesson went, and why?” would likely prompt more reflection.

The final two examples are questions that can lead to unclear communication. When the Mariposa principal asked, “Is that too much?” she believed that it was too much. (She shared this with me during our debrief.) Yet the teacher argued no, because “it was truly a review [of previously taught content]” (FN – 5/6/10). In this case the principal might have taken two different approaches—she could have stated that it was too much and asked the teacher what he might have done differently. Or she could have used a coaching stem such as, “by what criteria do you determine how many review questions to ask” as an entry point into the teachers’ thinking. Similarly, the Edison teacher responded to principal’s query about the balance of

review questions by saying he thought he had a good balance. By communicating in this way, the principal did not share his intended feedback.

With respect to making suggestions, the principals sometimes focused on surface features of teachers' practice. At times, suggestions during a feedback session stayed at the level of management, such as recommending how to organize visuals or circulating during a lesson to keep students' attention. This was the case even when teachers asked to focus on more substantive issues of student learning like student engagement. For example, the Mariposa teacher who claimed the principal was not "critical enough" shared, "I really want to know where it [the lesson] went awry ... [and get] honest feedback that will help me be a better teacher" (INT – 5/13/2010). Teachers seemed to notice when suggestions did not provide meaningful direction or were absent from the conversation.

The design is intended to support principals in making meaningful suggestions and asking reflective questions. The developmental framework can serve as a focal point for principals' suggestions. The CCG workbook also contains reflective question stems for principals to refer to in preparation for their feedback sessions. At times the principals made substantive suggestions and framed questions in similar ways to ones included in the workbook. Yet they made superficial suggestions and asked non-reflective questions with enough frequency that further support in this area seems warranted. Similar to analyzing instruction, additional professional development specifically focused on this aspect of the design appears necessary.

### REDUCING DEFENSIVENESS

Prior to beginning this study, the principals for the most part seemed to have incorporated this design element into their classroom visit approach. Baseline data demonstrated that principals had a collegial relationship with teachers, generally provided specific praise after classroom visits, did not overtly criticize teachers, and placed a minimal emphasis on compliance and monitoring. Still, the principals did show growth in one practice meant to reduce defensiveness: being explicit about the purpose of the visits.

#### *Improvement in Communicating the Purpose of Classroom Visits*

During the initial professional development, I introduced the importance of communicating the purpose of the visits as a strategy to reduce defensiveness. We discussed the need to be explicit that the classroom visit cycle is not evaluative and is meant to support the teachers' individual development. I also included a "Classroom Visit Type Chart" (Appendix D) for the principals to present to put the design-related visits in context with their other informal and formal observations. When the principals shared the CCG process with their staff, they explained that their goal was to support teacher learning.

The principals also referred to their focus on support rather than evaluation during several observed interactions. In the feedback sessions, the principals consistently reminded the teachers on which aspect of skillful teaching they were focused. Typical comments include:

- *We said we'd focus on student engagement. What did you think [about the students' level of engagement]? - Mariposa principal (FN – 5/6/10)*
- *You said you wanted me to look for student engagement in your lesson. – Edison principal (FN – 3/26/11)*

Such comments helped keep the visits grounded in teacher learning rather than on compliance or evaluation. Teachers recognized this in their remarks about the process.



- *Before we began this cycle I did not know why [the principal] was coming into my classroom nor did I know what he was looking for. I feel that by having this cycle of visits I have a much better understanding of what he was observing. I also recognize now that my principal – and I cannot speak to all principals - was not evaluating, but really just observing with the intent of helping and strengthening my practices and the overall school's success. – Edison teacher (INT – 5/10/10)*
- *It's important to know that it's not an official evaluation ... to know that the purpose of it is really to try to improve instruction. That's the goal. It's not—there's time to evaluate and there's time to coach really. – Mariposa teacher (INT – 5/12/10)*

Each principal also cited the non-evaluative nature of the visits in response to a teacher's expressed concern about the process. At Mariposa, a teacher talked at the final visit about wanting to “put on a good show” (FN – 5/6/10). The principal then reminded her that the visit was not an evaluation. Similarly, an Edison teacher mentioned during his initial visit debrief that he had told the students to do well because the principal was coming. At that point the principal told the teacher, “This is not an evaluation,” and explained that he wanted to see what was really happening in the class (FN – 3/26/11). These are a few examples of how the principals seemed to become more intentional during the CCG process about communicating the purpose of their visits.

### *Limitations in Communicating the Purpose of Classroom Visits*

While these incidents illustrate that the principals were explicit about the purpose of the visits, they also highlight a potential limitation in this area of the design. Based on some teachers' responses to the visits, there was a need for the principals to be more proactive in continually reinforcing the non-evaluative nature of their visits during each interaction. For example, the Mariposa teacher made her comment about putting on a show at the final visit of the classroom visit cycle. Presumably, then, she was concerned about being judged throughout the whole cycle. At Edison, in spite of the principal's reminder that the visits were not evaluative, the teacher still remarked in his post-interview that he felt the need to perform. “Then the second one [visit] is coming and it's being set up. So I get my dog and pony show all ready and I'm bitching and moaning about how I have to do it and complaining about why did I do this thing” (INT – 5/11/10).

These interactions might help explain why teachers' anxiety about the principals' visits did not change in the impact data. Although the intent of the CCG process is supportive rather than evaluative, the power dynamic between principals and teachers means that there is always some potentially evaluative element to their interactions. This is true even if the interactions fall outside the scope of the formal bureaucratic evaluation process. As the Edison teacher who complained about preparing for a visit noted, “As always given the inherent power structure where a principal can try - and has tried to - ruin your life, I, as most teachers, was nervous” (INT – 5/11/10). While the principals were clear up front about the purpose of their visits, they only pointed out the visits were non-evaluative in reaction to teachers' concerns. Whereas the Edison teacher did go on to acknowledge, “I got over it [his nervousness]” (INT – 5/11/10), this is not the optimal mindset for learning. Also, both principals had identified these teachers as likely to be defensive about the process. Such teachers doubtlessly need additional reassurance that the visits are non-evaluative. How principals communicate the purpose of their visits should be further considered in future design iterations. Specifically, the process needs to be more

intentional about how principals might approach teachers they believe will likely be defensive about the classroom visit process.

### *DESIGN DEVELOPMENT CONCLUSIONS*

Design development data were collected to logically link the investigation of the design process with the outcome data on design feasibility and the principals' growth in leading classroom visits focused on teacher learning. In order to improve the design throughout this study and for its next iterations, it was important to understand which aspects of the design seemed to contribute to the principals' growth and where the design was limited in prompting the principals to integrate the intended practice into their classroom visit approaches. By accompanying the principals on their classroom visits, observing their feedback sessions with teachers, debriefing after each visit, and interviewing teachers about their experience, I was able to conduct an in depth investigation of how the design was put into practice by the participating principals. Findings from this investigation identify many ways in which the design seemed to support the principal's development in leading classroom visits that support teacher learning, as well as a few ways it fell short.

Overall, the CCG structure, processes, and protocols guided the principals to incorporate the three design elements in specific ways. Principals adopted a new framework for analyzing the teachers' instruction. While the conventional aspects of skillful teaching were not new to the principals, using this as their lens when visiting classrooms was. This enabled them to stay focused on a particular area of the teachers' classroom practice. For the teachers in this study, individual areas of focus generally seemed to be ones in which they saw a need to develop. Observing the teachers and principals engage in thoughtful conversations about their practice helps explain the design outcomes. For example, I observed teachers work with principals to solve problems of practice and principals give critical feedback that teachers found relevant to improving their instruction. The findings in this section about principals' feedback make a clear connection between the CCG design and changes in principals' practice that were both observed as well as reported by teachers. Data from the feedback sessions and teacher interviews demonstrate that making suggestions and asking questions became prominent features of the principals' classroom visit approach with most teachers. Additionally, design development data show how the principals tried to reduce defensiveness by communicating the purpose of their visits. Teachers recognized the learning orientation of the process even when they noted the principal's role as their evaluator.

Design development findings also point to where the design was limited in promoting the principals' growth. Analyzing instruction tools were not fully utilized to provide a substantive assessment of the teacher's growth needs, particularly in the area of student engagement. Both principals had varying success in identifying and communicating a clear developmental need for teachers. Although reflective questioning techniques were included in the design, they were not always put into practice. While principals noted that certain teachers might be defensive about the process, the design did not prompt them to be sufficiently proactive in addressing possible concerns. Instead, principals had to react to certain teachers' comments about "putting on a show."

In spite of these limitations, the CCG design shows much promise in guiding principals to lead classroom visits with a focus on teacher learning. Design development data tells a story of principals and teachers engaged in a classroom visit process markedly different than what either group had experienced before participating in this study. The principals' classroom visit

practice evolved from being episodic and non-strategic to being focused on the developmental needs of their teachers. The design development data demonstrate the particular ways in which the principals' practice grew, and also point to how the design might be strengthened. Before considering the implications of these findings, it is important to discuss the action research aspect of this study. In the following section, I report on the findings from the action research data collection, specifically on my roles of designer and researcher.

### **SECTION III: ACTION RESEARCH**

As stated in Chapter 3, the study was planned as a design co-development with an action research orientation. In this section I address two main concerns on which such projects need clarity: my role as designer and researcher. My concern around "design" is that I carried out the role as intervener and co-developer within the bounds of the planned design. My concern around "research" is that I did not skew my data collection and interpretation due to unreliable procedures, or the well-known success bias typical of these types of studies.

Careful re-analysis of the design role I played in this study clarified that I mostly acted within the parameters established at the outset of this project. However, I found that at times I inadvertently participated in the CCG process and that the co-development relationship with the principals developed differently from what I envisioned. I also re-examined data collection and data interpretation using the self-reflection tools of action research enumerated in Chapter 3. Overall, I believe that the interpretations were sound and rigorous by the standards of action research. I did find that I had to consciously safeguard against the propensity to overestimate design effects. In the subsequent sections I show how I arrived at these conclusions.

#### *CONCERNS AROUND THE ROLE OF DESIGNER*

When planning this study, I intended my primary roles in the design development process to be that of lead designer and collaborator with the principals. I expected to work closely with the principals on all aspects of the CCG process. I planned on observing their presentation of the CCG process to the staff and debriefing afterwards. Additionally, I expected to debrief their interactions with teachers when I joined them on their classroom visits. I believed these conversations would be necessary both to support the principals in their efforts and to reflect on and revise the CCG design based on their experience and my observations. I did not plan on participating while the principals were engaged in the CCG process with their teachers. When they were working with their teachers, I intended solely to be in the role of researcher. In addition to having thought through my various roles in this study, I intended for the principals to take on the role of co-developers as the study progressed. I particularly expected them to shape the CCG design at the professional development session after the first round, during their second round of visits, and in our conversations after completing both cycles.

Although the design unfolded broadly according to these expectations, deviations from the plan did occur. When I initially presented the CCG process to the principals and the teachers, I described my role as a researcher and observer. At the same time, the principals and most teachers already knew me as a colleague and fellow district employee. I was not explicit that I would absolutely not engage in any way during the CCG process. Without having communicated this clearly, I inadvertently participated in two ways: by helping the principals frame the CCG process to their staff and interacting with the teachers during the debrief session, primarily to reduce defensiveness.

My unplanned participation began at the first meeting with the staff when the principals presented the CCG process. In my role as researcher, I had met with the staff without the principal present to provide a brief introduction of the study, distribute the consent forms, and administer the baseline questionnaire. I did not give any particulars about the CCG process so that the teachers' responses to the baseline questionnaire accurately reflected their thoughts on the principal's visit classroom practice. After the teachers completed the questionnaire, the principal joined us to present the CCG process. At this point, I had intended to just observe the presentation. I had my observation protocol at the ready, but it quickly became apparent that the principals expected me to participate. At both schools, the principals turned to me during their presentation to either confirm statements or elaborate on the process. As their colleague, I found it difficult to remain aloof even though I had explained that I would just be observing the meeting.

After presenting the CCG process to the staff, the principals began the classroom visit cycle with four teachers. I joined the principals on their initial visits. Again, I intended to just be an observer of the principals' visits and interactions with the teachers, and then shift to my role as colleague and coach during our debriefing. Yet there were times when I did engage in conversations with the teachers. For example, at Mariposa a teacher talked to me about her lesson while we waited for the principal to join us. Her focus for the visit was classroom management, and she made a point to share that she had a number of "squirrely" students. Sensing she wanted reassurance, and not comfortable just nodding, I talked with her about the challenges of first grade. In effect, I was engaging in actions meant to reduce defensiveness, such as listening and making a connection to her challenges. At both schools I had several other interactions such as these, mostly when entering with the principal to start the debrief session. In each case the teacher appeared to need reassurance about my perception of her practice.

Did these departures from my original action research plan affect the impact data? When reviewing the evidence, I do not think my actions had a material affect on the principals' or teachers' experiences. My participation at the staff meeting was tangential. Both principals had already communicated the key elements of their new approach to classroom visits before turning to me for further explanation about the CCG process. During the feedback sessions, the principals led the conversations. My comments were only peripheral. My interactions with the teachers occurred mainly because I wanted to instill a sense of collegiality so that they would accept my presence more readily.

The way the principals participated in the design process was another divergence from the original action research plan. After initially presenting the CCG design to the principals, I intended for their participation to become more collaborative and for them to take on the role of co-developers. As experienced principals, I expected them to have their own ideas about how to best support teacher development. Upon review, I found that the principals primarily acted as design implementers rather than co-developers. This was evidenced by their focus on the surface features of the CCG and a shared mindset of design fidelity.

I had anticipated that at the outset of the study the principals would be more in the position of learners than collaborators and co-developers. This dynamic played out during the first two professional development sessions and the first round of visits as evidenced by the feedback the principals gave. During the professional development session, they learned about the CCG process, its framework for analyzing instruction, and protocols for giving feedback. During the professional development and the first round of visits the principals were mainly concerned with issues of feasibility and implementation of surface features of the design. For

example, we spent a significant amount of time discussing how they could fit in a feedback session after each classroom visit.

After going through a classroom visit cycle following the CCG design, I expected the principals to step into their roles as co-developers. The principals' comments and suggestions did become a bit more focused on the substantive elements of the CCG design. For example, the Mariposa principal suggested that the feedback form include a section to capture the lesson objective, as this was something she was paying attention to when visiting the classrooms. Still, their comments predominately remained focused on feasibility concerns and the surface features of the CCG design. At the final interview, this pattern continued. When asked what they would change about the process, both principals mentioned issues like the frequency of the visits or the timing of the cycle. Both principals also acknowledged that their participation and follow through with this project was in part based on wanting to do it "right" and "for me." The Mariposa principal shared that it was more difficult to continue visiting toward the end of the school year, but "I really, really wanted to do this for you" (INT – 6/16/10). When discussing the difference between the first round and the second round of visits, the Edison principal noted, "I was pretty unsure of myself in the first cycle as compared to the second cycle. I was still learning the process and getting a handle on what [to do]. Knowing the expectations of your design was completely different in the second round" (INT – 6/18/10). These comments indicate that my presence was essential to the principals' follow through with the CCG process. They are also illustrative of the implementation mindset that the principals had throughout the CCG design.

What might have contributed to this implementation mindset? One possible explanation might be SUSD's culture of compliance. Principals are expected to ensure that they are meeting innumerable mandates, including the superintendent's five-hour visit requirement. The Mariposa principal acknowledged her compliance orientation in response to the mandate. "Dr. Nelson wants us to be in there for five hours a week. Okay, fine. So I run around and do my little administrative things, and count all that time." This culture of compliance might have made it difficult for the principals to enter into a co-development mindset.

Another explanation might be role overload. As principals with many demands on their time, they are afforded little opportunity to engage on a substantive level around any issue. As the principals noted in their final interviews, textbook ordering, state testing, and other administrative concerns made following through with the CCG process challenging. It was unrealistic to expect these principals to take the necessary time from their busy schedules to think deeply about the CCG process. Frankly, my participation in this doctoral program was what gave me the space to develop the CCG in the first place.

A final explanation might be my own susceptibility to the district's culture of compliance and principals' role overload. I discovered in my review of the design development data that I did not necessarily prompt the principals enough to address substantive issues of the design. I might have also stayed focused on surface features because, as a colleague, I know how important these practical concerns are for principals.

The principals' implementation mindset revealed a compliance orientation rather than an instructional leadership orientation to this project. The CCG process in some ways seemed to contribute to their role overload. For the most part, there was little evidence that the principals connected this activity to other aspects of their role as instructional leaders. The Edison principal mentioned that this process could be helpful in identifying teachers working in similar areas of skillful teaching to visit each other. The Mariposa principal mused during the final interview, "If

we [principals] could find enough time in the day, every day, to visit a couple rooms, bring those teachers in, and have a quiet, relaxed conversation without the intercom going ‘Ms. Newsome.’” If we could do that, I think elementary schools maybe, at least, would be better places. You could get as a principal your message out individually very clearly” (INT – 6/16/2010). These remarks were typical of the principals’ reflections on the project. They found it a valuable process for working with teachers, but struggled to envision how it could really happen on an on-going basis. In the end, they did not seem to recognize it as a new way of organizing their instructional leadership at the school. This was reinforced during member checking of these findings with the principals the subsequent school year. The principals again shared how this project had greatly informed their practice. However, they admitted that they were not using the CCG process at their schools anymore.

In summary, I noted two departures from my original action research plan. I inadvertently participated in the CCG process and the principals did not take on the role as co-developers. In reviewing my action research data, I found that neither did I fundamentally influence the way the design was presented to the teachers nor did I unduly distort the unfolding relationship between the principals and their teachers. I also found that the principals primarily acted as design implementers, with more of a compliance orientation than a leadership orientation. While this indicated my presence in this project were necessary for the principals to stay engaged in the CCG process, this did not likely affect the impact data.

#### *CONCERNS AROUND THE ROLE OF RESEARCHER*

My concerns around action research involve the potential biases I might have brought when collecting and analyzing data. As lead designer, advocacy bias is possible as I am invested in the success of the design. In an effort to distance the impact data from the influence of the design developers (i.e. the principals and myself), I included teacher responses on confidential, anonymous questionnaires and low-inference observations of the principals’ classroom visit practice. When collecting design process data I followed procedures to maintain a research orientation. These included reflective journaling, following the research protocols, discussing data collection and analysis with research colleagues, seeking disconfirming evidence when conducting data analysis, and member checking my findings. From a review of these procedures I found that I followed research protocols as planned with respect to the impact data. When collecting and analyzing the process data I identified several departures from my data collection plan. During design process data analysis, I particularly had to guard against a success bias. This involved an on-going effort to countervail a tendency to wish for depth of effect. In this section I review in more depth some of the issues that emerged during data collection and analysis, how I responded to these issues, and the conclusions about the rigor of the research process.

When collecting impact data, I acted in a more traditional researcher role. Impact data collection was designed with a number of controls to maintain objectivity. During baseline and outcome data collection, the design developers were not put into a position to influence the teachers’ responses or principals actions. When doing the initial observation, I did not tell the principals any details of the design. As their colleague, this was more difficult than it might seem because the principals directly asked about the design and wanted to know if it matched what they were doing. I felt awkward at times having to deflect their questions until after collecting the baseline data. However, it was necessary to maintain the integrity of the baseline data. When collecting the outcome data I had a different challenge during the observation. The

principals were interested in discussing what I found from the research. As before, I did not engage with the principals about the design, possible findings, or other reflections that might influence their behavior. With respect to the teacher questionnaires, I only introduced the study in general terms before the teachers completed the baseline questionnaire. The teachers completed the initial questionnaire only in my presence. Neither the principals nor I were even present to make any comments when they completed the final questionnaire. After impact data collection, I went through the analytical protocols established in Chapter 3 to analyze the observation and questionnaire data to determine the baseline and outcome assessment of each principal's practice. The inclusion of low inference indicators into the observational process and the independent verification provided by the teacher questionnaire made impact data analysis relatively straightforward. Following my research protocols during impact data collection and analysis ensured rigor.

Design process data collection and analysis was a more involved endeavor. These processes were shaped by the action research orientation of the study. To maintain the research orientation of my involvement, I had research protocols, as described in Chapter 3, to ensure rigor and integrity of data collection during design development. For each event I followed the research protocol described in Chapter 3. In most cases, I followed these protocols exactly as planned. Yet there were departures that merit comment.

As noted in the previous section, I at times inadvertently participated in the CCG process. This participation sometimes interrupted my data collection. For example, at the staff meeting I had to stop taking field notes when responding to the principals' questions. This also happened at times during the principal-teacher feedback sessions. In order to minimize the impact of these interruptions on my data collection, I reviewed the structured observation protocol immediately after each interrupted data collection session to ensure that I captured the necessary data on the design development. I also used reflective journaling to consider the implications of my actions on the CCG process. These disruptions were noteworthy, but not significant since I had structured observation protocols to collect data focused on certain aspects of the design. If design process data collection were intended to be more exploratory, these interruptions might have been more problematic.

When beginning data analysis, I re-examined the interview transcripts to look for evidence of bias or lack of rigor. I found that I followed my semi-structured interview protocols as expected. I asked each participant the pre-designed interview questions to elicit their perceptions of the CCG process. I also followed up on their responses with further questions to clarify their reactions. However, I noticed a tendency to converse with the participants, particularly toward the end of the interview. Sometimes the conversations were just part of the typical research process of establishing rapport and familiarity between the researcher and the participant. However, other aspects of the conversations can be attributed to my active involvement as an action researcher in the design process. At times, I blurred the role of designer and researcher. For example, I sometimes made connections between the teachers' experience with my own piloting of the CCG. Second, I had collegial relationships with the participants, particularly the principals whom I expected to act as co-designers. At times the interactions in the interviews reflect the collegial relationship. It is possible that my comments about my experience with the process and the collegial conversations I had during the interviews influenced how the participants described their experience. Yet I did not find a meaningful pattern when reviewing my participation during the interviews that might have led to similar responses by the participants about the design.

Design process data analysis involved reviewing evidence to logically link the design development with the impact data. This was also when success bias was most likely, as I might have analyzed data with the intent to “prove” the success of different aspects of the design. I countervailed this tendency by re-analyzing the data with this success bias in mind. In doing so, I noticed a pattern of assigning more depth to certain interactions than was warranted. For example, I identified from field notes and teacher interviews numerous suggestions the principal made to teachers about their practice. In my initial analysis, I did not distinguish between superficial and more substantive suggestions. A second reading of the data revealed that a number of recommendations were about surface issues of teaching and learning. I also had assumed that the principals had taken on the role of co-developer because my field notes and reflective journaling indicated that they shaped the CCG process. This second reading of the data with my bias in mind revealed to me that they primarily commented on surface structures of the design, acting more as implementers than co-developers.

This preceding review of my research data and collection was necessary to address concerns inherent to participating in an action research project. With respect to collecting and analyzing impact data, I acted within my intended role as a more traditional researcher collecting and analyzing data on a phenomenon. During the design process data collection and analysis, I found that several issues surfaced. These included interruptions of data collection due to my participation in the CCG process, engaging in conversations at times during the interviews, and a propensity to overestimate design effects. If left unaddressed, these issues might have led to attributing greater success to the design and minimizing its limitations in promoting the principals’ development. However, my final analysis takes into consideration these concerns and ultimately meets the necessary standards of rigor.

\* \* \*

In this section I reported on the action research aspect of this design study. With respect to concerns about my role as lead designer, I found that I generally acted in expected ways. A review of the impact and design development data indicated that my participation did not affect those findings. I also found that the principals acted more as implementers than co-developers. This has implications for the use of the design and for a broader scope of instructional leadership activities that I discuss in the next chapter. With respect to my concerns around action research, I found I generally followed my research procedures to ensure rigor and avoid bias. I noted several instances when I had to reanalyze the data to mitigate potential biases in my findings.



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

As the instructional leader of a school, the principal is expected to visit classrooms on a regular basis. In the SUSD, this expectation took the form of a mandate by the superintendent that all principals visit classrooms five hours a week. However, SUSD principals had been given little guidance on how to meet this requirement productively. The CCG process was developed to help principals conduct classroom visits to support teacher development and contribute to a school wide culture of learning. In this study, I investigated two principals' efforts to engage in the CCG process at their schools while also collaborating with me on design development. The findings indicate that the CCG design contributed to their growth in leading classroom visits with a learning orientation. In this chapter I argue that the CCG's theory of action and design are basically sound, although how principal learning is addressed needs to be enhanced. I identify four key features of the design that contributed to its success. I then identify limitations to the design and propose several modifications. I conclude by relating the study's findings to our common understandings of instructional leadership.

### MEETING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

In response to this study's design challenge, I developed a research-based classroom visit guide. From the professional knowledge base I identified three key dimensions of classroom visits with a learning orientation: reducing defensiveness, taking a developmental approach, and providing meaningful feedback. These dimensions were the primary design elements of the CCG process. The findings indicate that overall the design was successful in moving the two participating principals toward incorporating these elements into their classroom visit practice.

Before participating in this project, the principals' classroom visits were episodic and non-strategic. Feedback was inconsistent and teachers had mixed reactions about the visits' relevance to improving their practice. The principals themselves were uncertain about how to best meet the superintendent's mandate and responded with a compliance orientation. As the principals participated in the CCG process, their classroom visit practice markedly shifted. The principals visited the teachers in this study with greater frequency and regularity. Feedback was provided consistently and focused on an agreed upon area of skillful teaching. The principals incorporated into their practice specific behaviors meant to reduce defensiveness, take a developmental approach, and provide meaningful feedback.

The feedback conversations after the classroom visits stood out as being an especially important aspect of the design's success. There was a preponderance of evidence from various data sources that the participants valued these conversations. From the teachers' perspective, the face-to-face feedback seemed to strengthen their relationship with the principal. Teachers also appreciated the specific suggestions principals made to improve their practice. The principals learned much about the teachers' classroom practice from these feedback sessions, particularly the areas in which the teachers wanted to and needed to develop. Both principals and teachers valued the emphasis on certain aspects of skillful teaching.

While the CCG was intentionally designed to ensure principals acted in ways to reduce defensiveness, take a developmental approach and provide meaningful feedback, its success was not guaranteed. During the study, the principals were expected to visit and give feedback to teachers with much greater intensity than typically occurred at their schools. The principals could have acted in ways to increase teachers' anxiety, reverted to an evaluative rather than collaborative approach, or addressed issues other than skillful teaching. The design could have

resulted in teachers feeling threatened by the process, confused by what the principals were looking for during the visits, and resentful of the principals' feedback. The data show that this did not happen and point to several reasons to explain the positive findings. These include the design's structure, its accessible framework for analyzing instruction, a coaching approach to feedback, and on-going support of the principals' development.

As noted in Chapter 2, principals typically do not spend much time visiting classrooms and providing feedback. The intrusion of non-instructional issues makes it difficult for principals to consistently spend time observing instruction. This seemed to be the case for the two principals in this study. Before beginning the CCG process, the principals did not have a clear plan for visiting classrooms. The Mariposa principal admitted to often visiting classrooms on Friday to comply with the superintendent's mandate. The Edison principal acknowledged that his Instructional Specialist typically took the lead on issues of teaching and learning. The CCG design included specific guidelines for how frequently principals would observe instruction, when they would give feedback, and in what form. This structure seemed to help the principals focus on this instructional leadership activity. They started each week knowing whom they were going to visit and in what areas they would give feedback. As unexpected demands arose, the principals made adjustments to their plan, but they still followed the basic CCG structure. Without this structure, the principals would likely have reverted to an ad hoc schedule of visiting classrooms.

The professional knowledge base suggests that it is important for principals to be able to analyze instruction and diagnose teacher growth needs when visiting classrooms. Considering the demands on the principals' time, they needed a framework for analyzing instruction that was user-friendly, broad enough to use across subjects and grade levels, but specific enough to capture the essential elements of effective instruction. I adapted the Research for Better Teaching's conceptualization of skillful teaching to make it a straightforward resource for principals.

Before beginning this project, neither principal had such a framework for analyzing instruction. The Mariposa principal described teachers' instruction in general terms. The Edison principal referred to engagement strategies and lesson objectives during the initial observation, but his feedback did not reflect any particular focus. The CCG's approach to instruction gave the principals a clear, accessible lens through which to observe in the classroom. This was evident from their first classroom visit during the CCG process. They entered the classroom looking for specific aspects of skillful teaching. Their feedback sessions centered on the aspect of skillful teaching the principal and teacher agreed would be the focus of the visit. The principals continued to use this frame for analyzing and discussing instruction throughout the CCG process. The CCG's analytical framework laid the foundation for principals to take a developmental approach and provide meaningful feedback.

The CCG design also included a collaborative, rather than evaluative, approach to giving feedback. The professional literature indicates that teachers appreciate a collaborative approach to supervision. Strategies that support a collaborative approach include providing specific praise, making suggestions, listening, asking questions, and noting non-effective practices of which teachers were not aware. The CCG's feedback process was based on these strategies. The design also incorporated reflective questions from the New Teacher Center's mentoring model. The findings demonstrate that principals did take a collaborative approach to their classroom visit process with positive results. They learned about the teachers' goals for instruction and made suggestions that met the teachers' needs. They provided specific praise and worked with

teachers to address challenges about their classroom practice. They asked more questions about the teachers' lessons than before engaging in the CCG process. Both principals used the feedback stems included in the guide. Although the principals already had collegial relationships with their teachers before beginning this study, their classroom visit approach prior to participating in this project could not be characterized as a sustained collaborative endeavor. While engaging in the CCG process, this was an apt description of their practice.

Finally, the principals had support in incorporating the design elements during their classroom visits. The research literature indicates that when principals have professional opportunities to observe lessons and provide feedback their skills improve in these areas. Professional development in these areas was an important feature of the design. The first two professional development sessions gave the principals the initial knowledge and skills to engage in the CCG process, particularly with respect to setting the purpose of the visits and using the framework of skillful teaching to analyze instruction. The principals reflected on their practice and revised their approach during the professional development session after the first round. Opportunities for support also emerged throughout the course of this project. I acted as a coach through my debriefing sessions after each classroom visit. Additionally, the principals noted how valuable it was to talk with each other about their classroom visit approach. This professional support seemed to play an important role in the CCG's success.

In spite of this success, there were limitations to the impact of the design. Reflecting back on my theory of action, I expected principals to be familiar with the aspects of skillful teaching identified in the design. I theorized that by organizing these familiar concepts into a developmental framework and introducing it to principals, this would prompt the necessary learning to take a developmental approach. I expected that the initial professional development sessions would suffice in developing the principals' understanding on the aspects of skillful teaching, the developmental continuum, and diagnosing teacher growth need. Considering the principals' classroom visit practice before beginning the CCG process, I underestimated the extent to which the design needed to support these principals in taking a developmental approach. This likely contributed to the limitations I identified in Chapter 4 of the principals' development. For example, the principals' analysis and feedback conversations at times lacked depth. The principals were not always clear about the teachers' developmental needs around particular aspects of skillful teaching, especially when visits focused on student engagement. While the principals made suggestions for improvement, their recommendations were sometimes superficial. In the end, the theory of action reflected an overly optimistic assessment of the necessary learning by the principals on taking a developmental approach.

Of more significance, the CCG design did not seem to reorient the principals' understanding of classroom visits as an instructional leadership priority. The research literature is clear that principal visibility in and out of the classroom is an important aspect of successful instructional leadership. The superintendent's five-hour visit requirement was designed to promote this aspect of instructional leadership. However, both principals took a compliance orientation to this mandate. An important goal of this study was for the principals to become co-developers in the design of the CCG and engage in the question of how to best organize this instructional leadership activity. The notion was that they would take ownership of the process and internalize the goals of the CCG to support teacher development and the school wide learning community. This only happened to a limited degree. During the course of this study the principals did prioritize visiting classrooms to support teacher learning. However, the push and pull of other administrative demands was constant. These issues surfaced throughout this

project—during the professional development sessions, the principal debriefs after the visits, and the final reflection sessions. The principals focused much of their feedback about the CCG process around practical concerns. As noted in the findings, the principals acted as implementers rather than co-developers. This orientation was unsurprising considering the current focus in education in general and SUSD in particular on compliance, monitoring, and implementing programs with fidelity. Still, the intent was for the principals to understand the connection between the design and the task of changing the culture of the organization in regards to instructional improvement.

If such an understanding had been developed, this might have led to different behaviors and reactions to the process by the principals. For example, the principals' focus might have shifted from feasibility concerns to more probing questions around the analytical frame or the feedback stems. The principals might have engaged more in the co-development process as they realized that refining the design elements would be instrumental to their efforts to improve instruction. Their analysis of the teachers' developmental needs might have been more precise and their feedback to teachers might have been more substantive. Most importantly, the principals might have continued with this process after completion of this study. During member checking the principals claimed they were using elements of the design to inform their classroom visit approach this school year, but they were not visiting specific teachers regularly with a focus on their development. Ultimately, their classroom visit practice was still more about compliance than leadership.

In spite of these limitations, there is evidence that warrants the connection of the narrow effects of the process to the broader goals of the design. As noted in the design challenge, the ultimate aim of the design is for principals to engage in a process that supports teacher development and contributes to a school wide culture of learning. The principals at times did make the connection between their participation in this study and the potential for the design to support instructional improvement in the school. For example, the Edison principal recognized this connection when he hypothesized how this process could lead to him releasing teachers to visit each other to focus on particular aspects of skillful teaching. The Mariposa principal reflected on how this process could help make the school as a whole better. Many of the activities in which the principals engaged (being visible, visiting classroom visits, instructional conferences, a focus on agreed upon instructional priorities) are found in schools that are described as professional learning communities. In Chapter 2, I referred to the design not as a program but as a means to facilitate emergent learning. Learning did emerge for the two principals in this study, even if not to the desired extent. Although limited in scope, this study points to the potential of the design in meeting its overarching design challenge: supporting principals in leading classroom visits that focus on teacher development and strengthening the school's professional learning community.

In summary, the evidence indicates that the CCG's theory of action and design were basically sound, although principal learning on the developmental approach needs to be enhanced. Key features of the design helped principals incorporate the dimensions of classroom visits that support teacher learning into their practice. Its limitations in prompting more sophisticated analyses of instruction, more substantive feedback, and a reorientation of the principal's instructional leadership do not seem to merit a wholesale redesign. In the following section I propose several refinements to the design to address its limitations. Later I discuss the implications of this study on how instructional leadership is supported and conceptualized.

## POTENTIAL DESIGN MODIFICATIONS

Although I have argued that the CCG design is fundamentally sound, it could become more robust in a number of areas. First, the development-oriented component needs to be strengthened. Additionally, on-going support needs to be an explicit component of the design. Finally, the CCG process needs to be situated for principals in the broader work of instructional leadership.

As noted in the findings, I underestimated the extent to which the principals in this study would need to be supported in taking a developmental approach. I had intentionally designed a framework for analyzing instruction that would be straightforward and accessible to principals. The framework includes general aspects of skillful instruction (i.e. classroom management) that are likely known by most administrators. The principals in this study were familiar with these aspects of skillful teaching, but had not considered them in a developmental framework. This meant their instructional analysis and understanding of teachers' growth needs were sometimes superficial. Considering these findings, I propose strengthening the development-oriented component of the design. This could mean that more professional development time needs to be devoted to the dimensions of skillful teaching. The design could include videos of multiple lessons for principals to calibrate their analysis of instruction. The professional development could also include videos of teachers at different stages of skillful teaching so principals could start visualizing the growth trajectories of their teachers. Other ways to strengthen this aspect of the design might be for principals to visit classrooms together to share their analysis or bring back notes from classroom visits and analyze them together. The design itself could also incorporate more detailed resources on analyzing instruction from the professional knowledge base into the professional development.

Why focus modifications on this component of the design? This component is critical to achieving the design's ultimate outcome of supporting teacher learning and contributing to the school wide learning community. Reducing defensiveness is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for learning. Providing meaningful feedback is important, but the feedback can be perceived as meaningful even if it does not contribute to teacher development. Analyzing instruction and diagnosing teachers' growth needs are essential skills if principals are going to help teachers improve their practice and if we want schools to approach improvement with a developmental orientation towards instruction. Given that the two principals in this study were more experienced and skillful in the spectrum of a typical district, challenges in taking a developmental approach encountered in their cases warrant a reexamination of this aspect of the design. The research base indicates that most principals are not visiting classrooms and providing this type of developmental feedback on a regular basis, reinforcing the need for further development of this design component. Although transferability is admittedly limited due to the small scale of this project, the findings and the evidence from the literature point to the need to help principals take a developmental approach. The CCG design needs to be strengthened in this area to provide that guidance.

Additionally, on-going support needs to be made explicit in the design. The professional development and on-going support I provided, as an instructional leader with a background in visiting classrooms, was important in this process. While the professional development sessions were planned as part of the design, my support was more a function of being the lead designer and researcher rather than an identified resource in the design. The design needs someone to fill the role of support provider for principals who are intent on following the process. The CCG is not a guide that can be picked up and implemented without support along the way. A support

provider can help principals with the both technical implementation issues and normative issues around learning and defensiveness that will likely emerge. The principals in this study faced practical concerns with the process that we addressed throughout the project. They needed on-going guidance in developing the knowledge and skills to engage in classroom visits with a learning orientation. In addition, the principals needed support in addressing normative concerns that emerged, such as teachers feeling the need to “put on a show.” If the CCG design were implemented in another context, someone would need to take on the role of support provider to help principals manage these issues. This role seems critical, yet it need not be extensive. Thus, a necessary additional component of the CCG design is an identified support provider with experience visiting classrooms to support teacher learning.

Finally, the CCG process should be more intentionally connected to the principals’ overall instructional leadership at the school. When introducing the design, I presented a research brief on the potential positive impact of classroom visits. This brief gave principals the context for the superintendent’s mandate. However, we had little discussion on how the design could and should connect to their broader efforts of organizational and instructional improvement. The connection between the CCG process and their instructional leadership should be made explicit. This could be done in several ways. More guidance could be given to principals on how to communicate with the staff about their classroom visit process. Whereas the principals discuss the CCG process with the staff at only one staff meeting in the current design, they should continually revisit the elements of skillful teaching with the staff throughout the process. Additionally, principals could share with staff key learning and ideas about skillful teaching from their walkthroughs on an on-going basis. The principals could also eventually have teachers visit each other to further support their learning. The main purpose of these activities would be to ensure that the CCG process is not an isolated practice, but one that is connected to the principals’ instructional leadership and the school’s broader efforts to improve instructional quality.

These proposed modifications to the CCG design follow from the findings in this study. Further design development is necessary to investigate the potential impact of these modifications. Below I discuss how future design studies might extend the work started in this project. I then consider the limitations of this study before turning to its implications for instructional leadership.

## **FUTURE DESIGN STUDIES**

Overall, the design’s theory of action was found to be basically sound based on this study with two principals, although the theory of change minimized the necessary principal learning around a developmental approach. The design had a positive impact on the principals’ classroom visit practice. Additional research is needed to investigate whether the CCG process would have a similarly positive effect on other principals. An initial implementation study with a larger cohort of principals incorporating the suggested design improvements would further establish the efficacy of the design. A longer research project would help determine how the CCG design impacts principals over time. In later stages of the design development, research on the design’s impact on teacher growth and the school community would also be valuable.

## **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

A primary limitation of this study is its scope. Due to its duration, the study could only address the first aspect of the design challenge – principals conducting classroom visits with a focus on teacher learning. The investigation did not consider how the design impacted the principals’ practice with respect to improving the school learning community. Also, the design is intended to support principals’ classroom visits in general, yet transferability claims are difficult to make. Besides only working with two principals, the investigation of the design took place in two similar school contexts with principals who had a comparable orientation toward visiting classrooms. This similarity was partly intentional due to the case selection criteria. Yet conducting this investigation in another district context or with principals with a different leadership orientation might lead to different results. Additionally, the short-term nature of the data collection limits our understanding of how sustainable this process might be for principals over the course of a school year or several years. Transferability is further limited due to the action research orientation of this study. Action research is a dynamic, context driven process in which on-going reflection, planning, and modifications are the norm. If the lead designer were not present or if participating principals were not asked to be co-developers, this type of reflection and investment in the process might not emerge. Without this dynamic, the design might yield different results.

The strength of design study research is that it addresses concerns from the field, thus making findings relevant to practitioners and organizations facing similar challenges. Despite the limitations discussed above, this study did address the design challenge through a rigorous investigation of both the design’s impact and its development. This project was enhanced by a theory of action based on the professional knowledge base that established the logic of the design. I also fully explored my role of lead designer and researcher so that readers could assess potential biases and concerns around rigor. As a result, this study has important implications not just for the design, but also for how instructional leadership is supported and conceptualized in the broader education community. Having already discussed the implications for the design, I conclude with a consideration of what this study means for instructional leadership in schools.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

The study is situated within the domain of instructional leadership in education. The design incorporated numerous elements associated with effective instructional leadership to help principals lead classroom visits to support teacher development and indirectly strengthen the school wide learning community. The design intentionally emphasized classroom visits with these aims because there is extensive evidence that enhancing instructional quality is essential to improving student learning. The design itself proved to be useful in guiding the principals in this study to engage in classroom visits centered on teacher learning. It did not seem to reorient the principals so that this type of instructional leadership activity would become central to their work. So this design, while potentially transformative, led to modest rather than fundamental changes in the principals’ instructional leadership. While the proposed modifications to the design might strengthen its impact on principals’ practice, the findings from this study suggest that the design alone – no matter how well constructed – cannot address underlying concerns about how instructional leadership is supported and conceptualized. One such concern is an organizational context in which instructional leadership activities become isolated events. A second concern has to do with the way we conceptualize instructional leadership. I argue that the

literature is often highly normative without taking into account the practical challenges principals face. In this section, I discuss these concerns in more detail.

Classroom visits, this study suggests, need to be part of a broader district focus on instructional leadership. Without such a context, this – or any other individual instructional leadership activity – potentially becomes one more thing to do rather than an essential practice to improve teaching and learning. In SUSD, there was minimal framing of the five-hour classroom visit requirement for principals. The superintendent initially explained its purpose and how it would be monitored. After this, little guidance, support, and attention was paid to principals' classroom visits, besides weekly reminders to turn in visit logs. It is unsurprising that for the principals in this study, visiting classrooms became an additional administrative task to complete during their busy week. My design intended to elevate visiting classrooms from a compliance driven activity into a meaningful instructional leadership practice to support instructional and organizational improvement. When engaged in the process, the principals did find it meaningful. Yet the design still existed within an organization focused on compliance, monitoring, and implementation. As such, neither the principals nor I seemed to shift from an implementation orientation to a leadership one.

How might a district context be organized around instructional leadership so that classroom visits become an essential activity to improve teaching and learning? Findings from this study point to how this design could be embedded in a broader context of instructional leadership. First, a district should consider establishing a conceptual framework for effective instruction that helps guide principals' classroom visits. The power of having such a framework is evident from this study. Identifying aspects of skillful teaching helped make the principals' visits strategic by providing a focus for their on-going work with teachers. A shared understanding of effective instruction is a common feature of successful school districts such as Long Beach (Austin, Grossman, Schwartz, & Suesse, 2007) or Community School District Two in New York City (Elmore & Burney, 1997). Second, a district would do well to provide opportunities for principals to collaborate with each other around their instructional leadership. Both principals noted the value of working with colleagues on this project. A district could intentionally bring principals together to discuss, reflect on, and learn about each other's instructional leadership approach, including how they conduct classroom visits. Finally, a district should consider providing on-going professional development and coaching support on instructional leadership. Although professional development was an important aspect of this design, the principals received a modest six hours over the course of this project. Still, this limited professional development contributed to meaningful change in the principals' practice. On-going professional development and coaching focused on core issues of instructional leadership might help principals prioritize leadership practices such as visiting classrooms. If principals such as the ones participating in this study were situated in an organizational context that provided a framework of effective instruction, meaningful opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, and on-going professional development on their instructional leadership in general and their classroom visit approach in particular, it seems much more likely that the CCG design would become an integral aspect of their instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning. None of these supports, the study suggests, would have to be overly extensive.

Ultimately, the study highlights what may be a fundamental challenge to our conception of instructional leadership: the tension between what principals ought to do and what principals are able to do. The principals in this study seemed to live this tension throughout their participation in the CCG process. They noted on numerous occasions the potential of this process



to improve teaching and learning. The Mariposa principal wistfully commented that if principals could just spend some time every day visiting classrooms, then elementary schools would be better places. Even when acknowledging the design's potential to improve teaching and learning at their school, the principals struggled to fit in classroom visits to support teacher development. In the end, they did not seem to recognize how the design could be central to their work as instructional leaders, even after participating in this project for five months.

The feasibility of this type of instructional leadership activity was expressly considered in the design. Although the design itself proved feasible, practical concerns still dominated the process. The research literature clearly establishes that principals spend much of their time on non-instructional issues. The principals in this study were no different, even when participating in an instructional leadership activity that they themselves recognized as potentially transformative. What does this mean for our conceptualization of instructional leadership? When we think of principals as instructional leaders, we typically do not take into account mundane matters such as how principals will manage textbook orders and state categorical program monitoring. While these issues are not central to improving instruction, they do seem to dominate principals' time and energy. Eliminating the administrative responsibilities of principals is not an option in our current education environment. This means that how we conceive of instructional leadership must take into account principals' challenges in managing these non-instructional issues.

Much of the instructional leadership literature describes the work of principals in normative terms – what they should do to improve teaching and learning. The research cited in this study notes numerous practices essential to effective instructional leadership—in one case listing “twenty-one leadership responsibilities” (Marzano et al., 2005). In most of these lists, supporting teacher development and the school learning community is at the center of the work. What is lacking is an acknowledgement of where the managerial and administrative demands of the job fit into the role of instructional leader. What might a reimagining of instructional leadership look like if these practical concerns were taken into consideration? It seems that we need to reconsider how improving instructional quality can be at the center of principals' work when they are asked to do so much. This means taking into consideration the managerial capacity of principals. It might be necessary to reconsider the numerous roles principals are expected to take on at a school. Perhaps district and school staff can better support principals in managing issues such as state program monitoring or ordering instructional materials. It might also mean reconsidering how principals are prepared for the position. The two principals in this study, though experienced, were not developmental thinkers oriented toward improving instruction. Perhaps a stronger foundation for principals needs to be developed on what it means to be instructional leaders and how to balance this with the demands of the position. These are a few examples of how the practical challenges principals face in being instructional leaders might be addressed.

Besides neglecting the principal's capacity to address the practical concerns of the position, the literature seems overly focused on technical, managerial advice on how to be an instructional leader (e.g. visit classrooms regularly, develop a system for monitoring student learning, establish a structure for teacher collaboration) without accounting for the organizational culture issues that will likely surface for principals. As discussed in the literature and seen in this study, it is not the norm for principals to focus their time and energy on improving instructional quality. If they were to do so, they would likely act in ways that are not typical of the school and district cultures in which they work. This was the case in this study as the CCG process was

distinct from how SUSD principals seemed to approach visiting classrooms. While the two principals changed their practice during the project, neither they nor I seemed to rise above the district's culture of compliance. At the school level, the principals had many positive interactions with teachers, but the principals also had to address questions and concerns about why they were engaging in this process. If they had initiated this approach without having their participation in this study as an explanation, such concerns would likely have intensified. Addressing these normative issues in the literature might mean an increased focus on developing principals' understanding of organizational culture and dynamics. It might mean considering to a greater extent how change occurs in an organization and the leader's role in that process. If only technical concerns are emphasized and these issues are not considered, then principals may just go through the motions of instructional leadership, as the principals in this study did, without deeply engaging in a process that is meant to ultimately affect change throughout the organization.

The previous discussion is meant to prompt reflection on how we might reconsider our expectations for principals. The end result of such a reexamination might be a more limited conceptualization of instructional leadership, but one more rooted in what principals can do than in what they ought to do.

## CONCLUSION

This study could be taken as a cautionary tale about the potential of principals to be instructional leaders focused on improving teaching and learning. Indeed, the previous discussion is a sobering reminder of the challenges we face in education to support meaningful instructional leadership. And yet I believe that this study merits a more optimistic reading. After all, a design for visiting classrooms with a learning orientation was developed that proved to be theoretically sound and have a positive influence on principals' practice. For a period of five months, the two principals in this study were able to integrate into their practice the dimensions of classroom visits that support teacher development. These dimensions were grounded in the instructional leadership professional knowledge base, and as such demonstrate that the principals could engage in the type of leadership associated with improving instructional quality and the school learning community. This investigation also identified key features of the design – its structure, analytic framework, collaborative approach, and on-going professional development – that contributed to its success and can serve as valuable resources to support principals' classroom visit practice. While the principals' development was modest and might not last beyond this project, the evidence warrants hopefulness about the potential for this process to become a transformative experience for principals. In the end, this study should be read as a promising start toward meeting the design challenge of supporting principals so that their classroom visit approach focuses on teacher development and the school wide learning community – or more simply put, so that they become instructional leaders.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: CCG PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### SESSION 1 (2 HOURS)

*Goals:*

- Understand the potential benefits of on going, purposeful, strategic classroom visits with a learning orientation.
- Become familiar with the CCG and the rationale for using this guide.
- Prepare for classroom visits using the CCG.

#### SESSION 2 (2 HOURS)

*Goals:*

- Develop skills to analyze classroom instruction on conventional aspects of skillful teaching.
- Learn how to provide meaningful feedback by using the CCG tools to analyze videos of lessons.
- Address any questions or concerns before implementing the CCG.

#### SESSION 1 AGENDA

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>10 min</i>	Welcome Background on LEEP dissertation.	This will be the first time we're together as a group, so setting the context is important.
<i>5 min</i>	Brief overview of CCG.	I will present the chart that explains the three key components of the CCG: preparing for visits, classroom visits, and feedback. This is just to give them a picture of where we're going.
<i>20 min</i>	Read "Classroom Visits: An Important Aspect of Instructional Leadership" and discuss. After reading, the principals will be asked to respond to the following three reflective prompts: (1) Describe some ways, if any, your classroom visits have a learning orientation. (2) Describe some ways, if any, your classroom visits have not had a learning orientation. (3) What do you want to learn about classroom visits with a learning orientation?	Beyond a few comments in e-mails and at district meetings, Dr. Harter hasn't shared much about his rationale for classroom visits and their potential impact at the school. This is an opportunity for participating principals to learn about the research on classroom visits, be introduced to the elements of effective classroom visits, and understand their own classroom visits within the broader context of instructional leadership. The reflective prompts will help principals diagnose their own growth needs around conducting classroom visits with a learning orientation.
<i>10 min</i>	Present modified Theory of Action to explain how I developed the CCG.	The intended outcome of these visits needs to be very clear for principals. This provides the "big picture" of the CCG in straightforward terms.

<i>10 min</i>	Review “Types of Classroom Visits” chart and modify accordingly.	Principals will need to set the context for their visits with their staff. The chart I developed is meant to reflect “typical” practice around classroom visits. The principals will modify the chart based on the types of visits they do at their schools.
<i>25 min</i>	Review “instructional leadership stances” and discuss principals’ strategic approach for working with teachers. Use CCG workbook to identify initial approach for all staff.	Having a strategic approach for each teacher is key if the visits are going to support their development needs. The coaching stances are straightforward, but discussion will be necessary to make sure there is common understanding. This is important to help ensure the visits have a learning orientation.
<i>20 min</i>	Discuss CCG visit process, specifically the main characteristics of the visits and subsequent feedback sessions.	During this section the principals will get a complete picture of the process. They will start to learn the specific practices to incorporate in their visits. The second session will provide further pd on the two key components of the CCG—analyzing instruction and providing meaningful feedback.
<i>20 min</i>	Feedback, questions, and concerns.	By the end of this first session, principals will have a clear understanding of the CCG. It is imperative that they share their impressions of the process, specifically if it is feasible and seems beneficial. Feedback can be incorporated into the design and presented at the second session.

### SESSION 2 AGENDA

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>5 min</i>	Welcome Revisiting the CCG.	Quickly review all aspects of the CCG to get back into the work.
<i>45 min</i>	Watch ten minute video of classroom instruction. Use ATP to analyze the video. Discuss analysis.	By watching a video together we’ll begin to develop a sense of how to analyze instruction based on the conventional aspects of skillful teaching that are included in the ATP. This also allows principals to try to use the CCG tools within the safe context of a professional development.
<i>45 min</i>	Discuss successes and challenges principals have had giving feedback to teachers. Watch a ten minute video of my giving feedback to teachers. Use the feedback recommendations from the CCG to analyze my feedback.	Participating principals will have surely met with teachers to talk about their instruction and drawing on this experience is important. Similar to watching the classroom video, principals will have a chance to consider the CCG tools in action. By sharing a video of myself I share some vulnerability, as the make the complex task of meaningful feedback accessible—not by showing a perfect model (for it will not be) but by demonstrating what an attempt to integrate the CCG recommendations into conversations with teachers looks like.



## APPENDIX B: ANALYZING INSTRUCTION

Use this cover page during your first few visits to help determine the focus of your classroom visit cycle. This list is not a checklist to be used to monitor implementation of certain practices, but a tool to help collect evidence about the teacher's instruction. Based on your observations, note whether or not you see evidence of these key aspects of skillful teaching.

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
*Overall Analysis 1 2 3 4*  
(1 = area of need 4 = area of strength)

### CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- **Attention:** Does the teacher have the attention of the student?
- **Organization:** Does the teacher have materials well organized and available for use in an efficient way during the lesson?
- **Discipline:** Does the teacher have a solid system of discipline?
- **Routines:** Does the teacher have work procedures and housekeeping routines that are taught, trained, and tested for?
- **Time:** How much time is allocated for student learning and how efficient is the teacher in ensuring that during this time students are actually working or attending?
- **Space:** Is the physical space conducive to good discipline as well as instructional objectives?

### THE LESSON

*Overall Analysis 1 2 3 4*

- **Objectives:** Does the teacher specifically communicate the learning objectives for the lesson?
- **Pacing:** Does the lesson flow well so that an appropriate amount of learning occurs?
- **Connections:** Does the teacher connect the daily objective to the students' previous learning and experience?
- **Anticipating:** Does the teacher anticipate and plan for student confusion?
- **Clarity:** Does the teacher present the material in a clear manner for student? Does the lesson follow a clear logic?
- **Understanding:** Does the teacher check for understanding?
- **Feedback/Praise:** Does the teacher provide specific feedback of a positive nature and is negative feedback constructive and specific?

### STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

*Overall Analysis 1 2 3 4*

- **Climate:** Is there a positive learning environment for learning where there is cooperation, self-discipline, and respect?
- **Relationship:** Does the teacher build mutual feelings of regard and respect?
- **Expectations:** Does the teacher communicate high expectations by sending messages of confidence, encouragement, and belief to students?
- **Participation:** Does the teacher provide multiple opportunities for students to participate whole class, in groups, and in pairs?
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Does the teacher publicly value, incorporate, and include students' culture into lessons?

### UNIT PLANNING

*Overall Analysis 1 2 3 4*

- **Content Knowledge:** Does the teacher demonstrate an understanding of the content knowledge necessary to teach the subject matter effectively?
- **Standards:** Does the teacher address key grade level standards in systematic ways?
- **Learning:** Does the teacher address basic skills and thinking objectives (i.e. Bloom's Taxonomy) in her lessons?
- **Unit Design:** Are there unit goals (or longer term goals) and is the lesson a building block toward those goals?

## **APPENDIX C: EXCERPT FROM RESEARCH BRIEF**

### **CLASSROOM VISITS: AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

As principals, we are encouraged and exhorted to be instructional leaders. Visiting classrooms is considered an important leadership activity. Dr. Nelson has made it a priority for district leaders by mandating that we be in classrooms five hours a week. He shared his rationale behind this mandate (one of just a few that he has made during his tenure as superintendent) by noting, “Classroom visits are a key instructional leadership activity.” Further investigation of the research on classroom visits supports Dr. Nelson’s claim of the potential positive impact on student learning, classroom practice, principal and teacher relationships, and teachers’ attitudes and beliefs. The literature also provides an indication of what practices with respect to classroom visits contribute to their productivity.

Numerous studies demonstrate being visible and visiting classrooms can positively impact teachers’ sense of efficacy, motivation, focus, and attitudes toward professional development and evaluation. For example, Sheppard (1996) surveyed over 1200 teachers and found that maintaining high visibility was one of the three most influential behaviors by elementary school principals in fostering teacher commitment, professional involvement, and innovativeness. Blase and Blase (2004) collected open-ended questionnaires from over 800 teachers on which they wrote detailed descriptions of principals’ characteristics that affected them and their performance in the classroom. According to the authors, “the successful principals described in our study made informal visits to classrooms, and although these visits were usually unannounced, teachers viewed them very positively” (2004, p. 107). Their data suggests that “wandering around enhanced teachers’ motivation, self-esteem, sense of security, and morale” (p. 112).

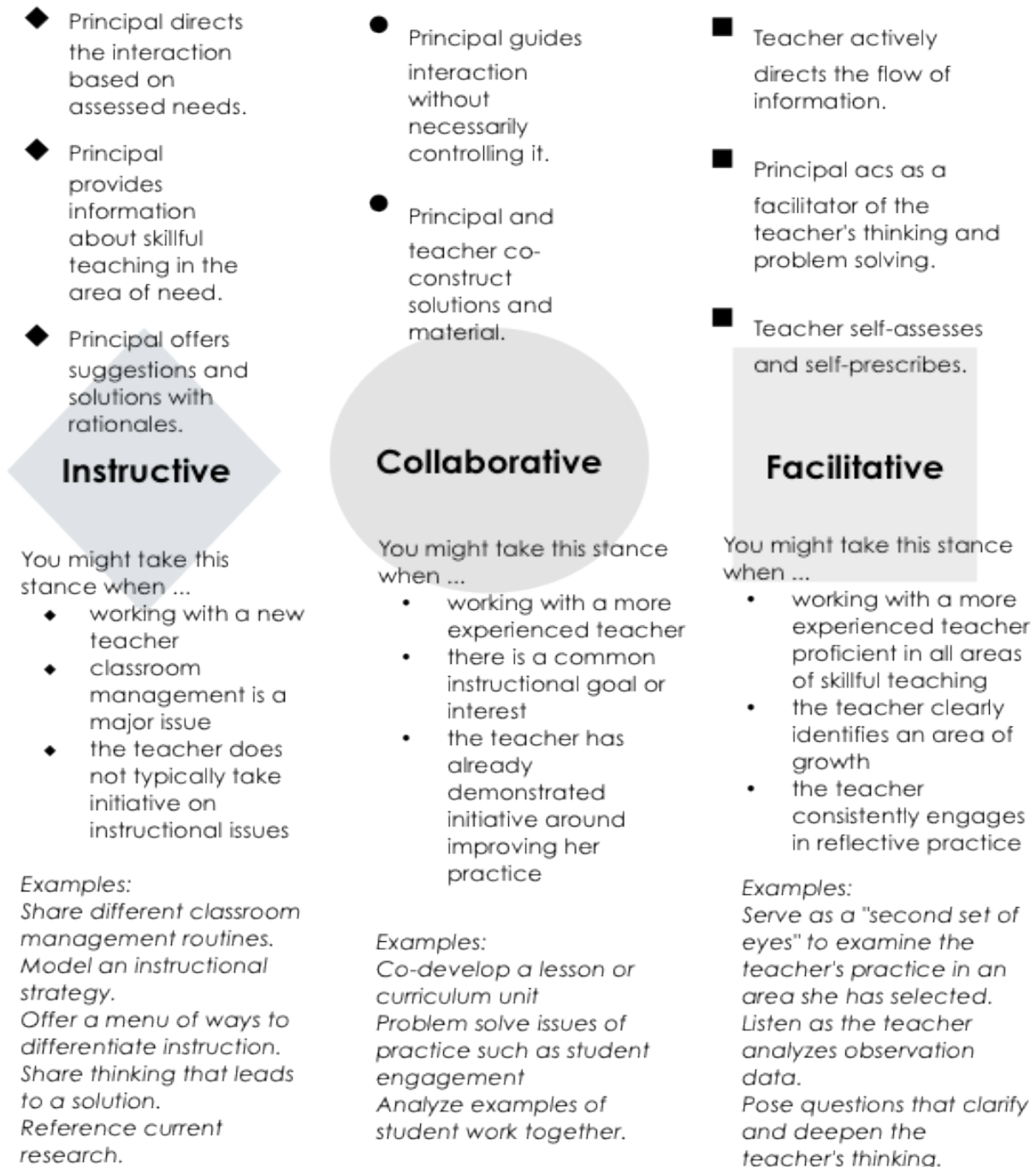
## APPENDIX D: CLASSROOM VISIT TYPE CHART

<i>TYPE OF VISIT</i>	<i>QUICK VISIT</i>	<i>STRATEGY SUPPORT/ MONITORING</i>	<i>FORMAL OBSERVATION</i>	<i>TEACHER DEVELOPMENT</i>
<i>PURPOSE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be a visible presence in the school.</li> <li>• To speak knowledgably to the community about the teaching and learning in the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support a school wide area of focus or a particular instructional strategy.</li> <li>• To monitor implementation of a program or school wide strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide official assessment of teacher performance as part of the evaluation process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support teacher's individual growth.</li> </ul>
<i>DESCRIPTION</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unannounced.</li> <li>• Approximately 5 minutes.</li> <li>• Informal conversation afterwards, brief note, or no feedback.</li> <li>• No news is good news.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preceded by professional development or an update on the area of focus.</li> <li>• Scheduled or visit parameters established.</li> <li>• Written or verbal feedback.</li> <li>• Examples:</li> <li>• GLAD strategies</li> <li>• ELD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preceded by pre-observation conference on CSTP standards.</li> <li>• Lesson plan submitted beforehand.</li> <li>• Post-observation conference guided by CSTP standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial informal connection about the classroom visit cycle.</li> <li>• Visits approximately twice a week for a four-week cycle.</li> <li>• Brief feedback conversations within twenty-four hours of the visit.</li> <li>• Reflective/ learning orientation.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX E: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STANCES

### Taking a Strategic Approach INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STANCES

Figure 4



## **APPENDIX F: PROTOCOL FOR INITIAL TEACHER MEETING**

Below are six steps to make the initial connection a comfortable and inviting experience for the teacher. This first conversation with the teacher should take no more than ten minutes:

- 1) Meet in the teacher's classroom.
- 2) Start the conversation informally—ask how things are going in general.
- 3) Remind the teacher about needing to visit classes for five hours per week and wanting to make them learning experiences for teachers.
- 4) Ask the teachers what they have been thinking lately about their practice.
- 5) Ask the teacher to tell you when to visit and why.
- 6) Set a schedule for the visits.

## **APPENDIX G: STRATEGIES TO REDUCE DEFENSIVENESS**

Incorporating these behaviors and communication strategies throughout the classroom visit cycle will help reduce teacher defensiveness.

- Use accessible body language when talking with the teacher (i.e. don't sit behind the desk, cross arms, frown, etc.)
- Listen during the feedback session, especially before making suggestions.
- Ask questions.
- Share your own professional experience to encourage teacher reflection.
- Use language that is non-evaluative and non-judgmental.
- Keep the feedback session focused on whatever issues emerge from the classroom visit.
- Give suggestions that allow teachers choice and discretion. Even when more directive, try to actively engage the teacher in thinking about decisions around her practice.
- Provide evidence of authentic interest—praise should be based in data and suggestions should be connected to challenges the teacher wants to address.

## APPENDIX H: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHART

<i>Time</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Students</i>
<i>Descriptive Example</i>	States objective – to learn how to add fractions.	About 75% of students begin the task without additional instructions.
<i>Evaluative Example</i>	Good job stating objective.	The students seem bored.

## APPENDIX I: FEEDBACK PROTOCOL

When meeting with the teacher to provide feedback, you will generally want to follow the same structure:

- 1) Describe what you observed during the visit, sticking only to evidence without sharing any conclusions.
- 2) Ask the teacher what she thinks about the lesson having heard your description.
- 3) Share your own analysis of the lesson. If it does not happen naturally, lead the teacher to the aspect of skillful teaching you want to develop.
- 4) Based on the teacher's response and your own analysis, explore one or two key concrete features of that aspect of skillful teaching. (Since it might take a few visits to determine the teacher's developmental needs based on the ATP chart, you might not do this step until later in the cycle.)
- 5) Conclude with planning your next visit, making sure to build on what you've discussed in the feedback session.



## APPENDIX J: FEEDBACK QUESTION STEMS

The following is taken from the New Teacher Center approach to mentoring teachers.

Use paraphrasing statements to communicate that you *hear, understand, and care*. Some possible paraphrasing stems include:

- So...
- In other words...
- What I'm hearing is...
- What I hear you saying...
- From what I hear you say...
- I'm hearing many things...
- As I listen to you, I'm realizing that...

Use clarifying statements to *improve understanding, develop focus, and seek connections*. Some possible clarifying stems include:

- Would you tell me a little more about...?
- Let me see if I understand...
- I'd be interested in hearing more about...
- It'd help me understand if you'd give me an example of...
- So, are you suggesting that...?
- Tell me what you mean when you say...
- Tell me how that idea is like/different from...
- To what extent...?
- I'm curious to know more about...
- I'm intrigued by/interested in/I wonder about...

Use mediational questions to help your colleague to *hypothesize* what might happen, *analyze* what works, *compare* plans with outcomes, and *imagine possibilities*.

Some examples of mediational questions include:

- What's another way you might...?
- What do you think would happen if...?
- How was....different from/similar to...?
- What sort of impact do you think...?
- What criteria do you use to...?
- How did you decide...?
- How did you come to the conclusion that...?
- When have you done something like...before?

Offer open suggestions to *provide choice, encourage* without overwhelming, and *encourage independence*. Some open suggestion stems might include:

- One thing I've noticed is...
- A couple of things to keep in mind...
- From my experience, I've learned...
- Some teachers I know have tried a couple of different things in this situation and maybe one would work for you...

- What I know about \_\_\_\_\_ is...
- Sometimes it's helpful if...

Follow suggestions with tagging questions to *invite* a teacher to *imagine* or *hypothesize*.

- How might that idea work in your classroom?
- Which of those ideas might work best with your student(s)?
- What do you imagine would happen if you were to try that?
- To what extent might that work in your situation?

Offer non-judgmental responses to *build trust*, *encourage reflection*, and *foster risk-taking*.

Some examples of non-judgmental responses might be:

- I noticed how when you..., the students really...
- It will be interesting to see which of your ideas work out the best...
- How do you think the lesson went, and why?
- What did you do to make the lesson so successful?

## APPENDIX K: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

The pre-implementation questionnaire will be administered to teachers before the principals present the CCG to the staff. The questionnaire will be anonymous and confidential. The questions are categorized under the design element for which it will provide data. For the actual survey, the questions about each element will be mixed throughout the questionnaire. Since it will be administered electronically, it is not currently formatted.

### REDUCING DEFENSIVENESS

The following questions will be answered on a 1-5 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree):

1. I have a collegial relationship with the principal.
2. I talk with the principal about my classroom practice.
3. The principal has provided specific praise about my practice within the last month.
4. The principal has asked questions about my classroom practice within the last month.
5. I get nervous when the principal visits my classroom.
6. I know why the principal visits my classroom and what s/he is looking for.
7. I find the principal's visits disruptive to my teaching.
8. The classroom visit process is one way the principal and I solve problems or address challenges I face in my teaching.

### TAKING A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Based on your experience, to what degree are the principal's visit meant to ...

(Each item will have a scale of 1 = low degree 2 = some degree 3 = high degree 4 = don't know):

1. To be a visible presence.
2. To support my development as a teacher.
3. To check-in on student learning.
4. To improve my classroom practice.
5. To monitor program implementation (i.e. Everyday Math).
6. To ensure compliance with mandates (i.e. ELD blocking).
7. To evaluate my performance.
8. To hold me accountability to school goals.
9. To know what is going on in the school.

10. What was the purpose of the most recent visit? Select all that apply.

- To be a visible presence.
- To support my development as a teacher.
- To check in on student learning.
- To improve my classroom practice.
- To monitor program implementation (i.e. Everyday Math).
- To ensure compliance with mandates (i.e. ELD blocking).
- To evaluate my performance.
- To hold me accountability to school goals.
- To know what is going on in the school.

The following questions will be answered on a 1-5 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree):

11. Positive comments after visits reflect areas of my instruction in which I feel successful.
12. I find the principal's comments after visits helpful
13. The principal has a good sense of what might make me grow in my instructional practices.
14. Comments after visits reflect an understanding of what I am trying to do as a teacher.
15. From classroom visits, the principal has a good sense of my broader unit goals.
16. The principal has a good understanding of teaching and learning to know what to look for in my classroom.

### FEEDBACK

1. After classroom visits, the principal gives me feedback in the following ways. Select all that apply.

- A brief note.
- Extended written feedback.
- A comment in passing.
- A conversation about the visit.
- No feedback.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was the most recent form of feedback you've received from the principal after a classroom visit? Select only one.

- A brief note.
- Extended written feedback.
- A comment in passing.
- A conversation about the visit.
- No feedback.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. After each visit, how soon do you *typically* receive feedback? Select only one.

- Within twenty-four hours.
- Within a week.
- More than one week.
- I don't receive feedback.

The following questions will be answered on a 1-5 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree):

4. Feedback from the classroom visit is evaluative.
5. I learn about my teaching from the principal's feedback.
6. The principal makes suggestions after classroom visits.
7. The principal's suggestions set me on the right course for making improvement in my classroom.
8. When the principal makes suggestions s/he gives choice and discretion about how to follow up.



## CODING PROCEDURES

### FEASIBILITY

#### **Indicators:**

- 1) Visit duration is enough to view an instructional segment.
- 2) Takes descriptive notes or refers to evidence when discussing the visit.
- 3) Provides feedback.

#### *Rating*

1 = If all indicators are present, the principal incorporates the surface features of classroom visits with a learning orientation.

0 = If one or more indicator is absent, the principal does not incorporate the surface features of classroom visits with a learning orientation.

### DESIGN ELEMENTS

Field notes will be coded to identify the presence or absence of the following indicators. For some indicators, a negative behavior will be noted.

## REDUCING DEFENSIVENESS

**1) Indicator:** Specific praise = SP

**Operational definition:** The principal makes positive comments to the teacher after the classroom visit. The comments are based on evidence from the visit (You really involved all the students in answering the question by having them talk in pairs.)

**Negative behavior:** Criticism = C (You are not good at lesson planning.)

*Rating:*           0 = absence of SP or presence of C  
                      +1 = presence of SP

**2) Indicator:** Provides choice and discretion about suggestions = CD

**Operational definition:** If a principal makes a suggestion, it is presented in a way that gives the teacher choice and discretion on how to follow it. (You might consider having students talk in pairs during the lesson or work in small groups.)

**Negative behavior:** Gives directives = GD (Next time I visit I expect to see ... )

*Rating:*           0 = absence of CD or presence of GD  
                      +1 = presence of CD

## TAKING A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

**3) Indicator:** Uses analytical language = AL

**Operational definition:** The principal describes what s/he observed using professionalized, analytical language. Examples of this language are found in the analyzing instruction tool (i.e. lesson objective, clarity of presentation, checking for understanding)

**Negative behavior:** Imprecise language = IL (Your class is a warm environment, you are student-centered, you use a lot of strategies, etc.)

*Rating:*        0 = mix of AL and IL  
                     +1 = a majority of comments use AL

**4) Indicator:** Communication of teacher learning needs = TLN

**Operational definition:** Through the conversation, the principal communicates specific areas in which the teacher needs to develop. This is done by focusing on certain aspects of the visit and establishing next steps with the teacher. (I noticed that throughout the lesson only three students responded to your questions. What do you make of that? How might you elicit more responses?)

*Rating:*        0 = No communication of TLN or communicates too many areas of TLN  
                     +1 = Communicates one or two areas of TLN

#### **PROVIDING MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK**

**5) Indicator:** Principal makes suggestions = MS

**Operational definition:** Principal makes suggestions related to the TLN. (You might develop a procedure for calling on students to elicit more responses.)

*Rating:*        0 = No suggestions or makes various suggestions unconnected to TLN  
                     1 = MS

**6) Indicator:** Exchange of ideas = EI

**Operational definition:** The principal and teacher both participate in the conversation. The teacher has an opportunity to share her own ideas about her practice, her learning needs, and possible next steps. (P = I noticed that throughout the lesson only three students responded. T = Yes, this is something I saw as well. Usually I have more students responding. P = What do you think was different today? T = I'm not sure if the students understood the story. I think that if I had ... )

**Negative Behavior:** Principal dominates the conversation.

*Rating:*        0 = Minimal teacher talk, or some teacher talk, but only in response to principal  
                     1 = EI

**OVERALL RATING:** Points from each indicator will be totaled to give an overall rating of the substantive aspects of the principal's classroom visit.

**APPENDIX M: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FOR  
PRINCIPAL PRESENTATION OF CCG TO STAFF**

School:

Principal:

Date:

Time Presentation Begins:

Time Presentation Ends:

CCG Task	Task Completion	Notes
Present and explain different types of classroom visits.	Yes	
	No	
	Partial	
Introduce CCG classroom visit process.	Yes	
	No	
	Partial	
State and emphasize the purpose of the visits—teacher learning.	Yes	
	No	
	Partial	
Respond to teachers' questions and concerns.	Yes	
	No	
	Partial	
Teacher reactions and questions.		



**APPENDIX N: CLASSROOM VISIT PROCESS  
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL**

Below is the protocol with sample data to illustrate its use. I will use this protocol for each principal classroom visit.

CCG Guide Process	Principal Implementation	Observations of how the principal implemented this step?
Take descriptive notes.		
Visit for one instructional segment (approximately 15 minutes)		
Followed feedback session protocol.		
Field Notes		

**DATA ORGANIZATION BY DIMENSION (COMPLETED DURING DATA ANALYSIS)**

Sample data included.

Reduce defensiveness	Take a developmental approach (analyze and diagnose)	Meaningful feedback
+ Offered specific praise for presenting the objective.	+ Commented on the objective.	- Told teacher what to do instead of making suggestions.
	- Did not stay for an instructional segment.	

## APPENDIX O: POST-CCG PROCESS TEACHER INTERVIEW

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Matt Wayne

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee: Teacher

1. How many times in total and with what frequency did the principal visit during this classroom visit cycle?
2. How soon after the visits did the principal typically provide feedback?
3. Describe your experience with the classroom visit process?
  - a. What did the principal do during the visits?
  - b. What happened during the feedback sessions?
4. How do you feel about the classroom visit process?
  - a. How did you feel when you first met with the principal and learned you would be participating in this classroom visit process?
5. What did you like about the classroom visit process?
  - a. You mentioned learning. What exactly did you learn from the classroom visits?
6. What did you dislike?
7. What would you change if principals were to continue using this classroom visit process?

## APPENDIX P: POST-CCG PROCESS PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Matt Wayne

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee: Principal

1. How many times did you visit each teacher during the second cycle?
2. How many times did you give feedback after each visit?
3. What did you work on with each teacher?
4. Did you do any unannounced visits? If so, what do you think about the announced visits versus the unannounced?
5. Describe the first cycle compared to the second cycle.
6. You mentioned that you think everyone got something from this process. What do you think they got from it?
7. Talk about a time that was challenging with this process?
8. What do you think was your most successful cycle? Why?
9. What was your least successful cycle? Why?
10. Did a particular feedback session stand out?
11. What themes, if any, emerged when working with the teachers?
12. To what extent did you use the prompts and the aspects of skillful teaching tool during your visits?
13. How do you see the process?
14. What do you take away from the process?
15. How can we do it better?

**APPENDIX Q: ACTION RESEARCH REFLECTION JOURNAL**

Key points from principal interactions	My reflections from the interactions