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The Effects of Collaboration on Teacher Empowerment

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The Effects of Collaboration on Teacher Empowerment

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research project was to measure the effects that collaborative curriculum planning had on three early childhood classrooms in a private Montessori school. The study population included six early childhood teachers who collectively designed a curriculum and helped collect data for the first seven weeks of the intervention. Each participant filled out a teacher feedback form which was based on Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment scale to measure changes in perceptions of four different aspects of empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The primary researcher also analyzed data from individual teacher journals, notes from weekly discussions, and observations in all three classrooms. Analysis of the data indicated that collaborative curriculum planning led to a heightened sense of competence, self-determination and impact among the six participants. Further research is needed to determine the correlations between collaborative curriculum planning and student engagement.

Keywords: early childhood, collaboration, psychological empowerment, Montessori, Spreitzer

Introduction

Early childhood teachers in many cultures are not viewed as professionals in the societies in which they teach. The lack of prestige and compensation in addition to the demanding and difficult nature of working with young children often leads to high rates of burn out among early childhood teachers. (Adcock & Patton, 2001; Blank, 2008; Overton, 2009; Rinkevich, 2011; Rodgers & Long, 2002). This collective sense of undermined professional identity highlights an urgent need for new strategies to increase feelings of empowerment among teachers who instruct society's youngest and most impressionable learners.

Students in early childhood Montessori classrooms exercise autonomy from a very young age. An acquired trust between the teacher and student makes this model of early self-determination possible in Montessori classrooms. While Montessori schools often boast learning environments conducive to student empowerment, the teachers placed as guides in those settings too often feel like their interests and ideas are not valued. This can sometimes make the school environment as a whole paradoxically restrictive in spite of an instructional philosophy based on freedom within limits. Teachers who feel boxed in by administrative choices beyond their control can begin to feel discouraged in their jobs.

It became apparent to me that this was starting to be the case among the early childhood teachers at my school during an impromptu meeting on a teacher in-service day in the spring of 2017. I had been feeling frustrated about the fast pace of the calendar which was created monthly by the director of the school and given to each teacher with little advance notice – often only a few days before the start of each new month. The calendar not only dictated the lessons we gave during whole group circle time, but also dictated the materials we were to make available on the shelves for children to use. Prepping shelf work is a very time-consuming process, so not having

the ability to plan ahead was adding a lot of stress to a job that already demanded most of my energy and time.

During the informal staff meeting, I casually mentioned some of these frustrations and was surprised to find all of my coworkers not only shared my opinions but also shared several other frustrations. We were able to talk openly and constructively about possible solutions to some of the issues that seemed to hinder our sense of self-efficacy. The process of problem solving and collaboration was so empowering that we decided to meet as teachers once a week for the remainder of the school year to collaborate. I spoke to the director about the possibility of the teachers creating our own curriculum for the next school year. I explained we wanted to move to a three-year model which would take away the pressure of rushing to get through too many topics in a year, and we would put in the work to create it ourselves. The director was very supportive of this idea and we began meeting weekly to start planning out the new curriculum. We met on one Saturday, once a week after school, and several times over the summer to plan out all the whole group lessons and studies for the entire upcoming school year.

I began researching teacher collaboration strategies and about professional learning communities. There has been much research conducted in schools regarding the effects that professional learning communities have on teacher or student outcomes, but little research has been done on the correlations between collaborative curriculum planning and teacher empowerment. Also, most of the research focuses on teachers in traditional educational settings, which highlights a need for more research on collaboration and teacher empowerment in private schools and classrooms that use alternative teaching philosophies.

The teachers included in this study range in age from 27 to 68 years. Each participant holds an early childhood teaching credential from the American Montessori Society and the

teaching experience among the participants ranges from four to ten years. The private Montessori

school where the research was conducted consisted of three mixed age early childhood

classrooms, one mixed age toddler classroom, and one mixed age lower elementary classroom.

Each early childhood classroom had 33 students and a pair of co-teachers. The students ranged in

age from 2 ½ to 6 years old. Data was collected for seven weeks at the beginning of the 2017

school year during the implementation of the newly created curriculum. I created a teacher

feedback form based on Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment scale. This feedback

form was administered before the study began to collect baseline data and then again at the

conclusion of the seven-week implementation period. I also analyzed data from individual

teacher journals, notes from our weekly discussions, and observations in all three classrooms

conducted by myself as well as the other early childhood teachers. Each teacher, including

myself, was a participant in the study as well as a data collector. The purpose of my research was

to measure the effects collaborative curriculum planning had on the empowerment of six early

childhood educators across three classrooms in a private Montessori school.

A Review of the Literature

This literature review will explore methods of defining and measuring empowerment,

teacher identity, forms of disempowerment, and successful collaboration strategies, including

professional learning communities. A comprehensive review of the literature asserts that early

childhood teachers feel disempowered by a combination of psychological and environmental

factors, some of which include standardized curricula, lack of support, and disconnections

between personal theories of education and expectations from administration (Adcock & Patton,

2001; Blank, 2008; Overton, 2009; Rinkevich, 2011; Rodgers & Long, 2002). Over the last few

decades, the definition of empowerment in the workplace has evolved from a one-dimensional

concept based on one's belief of one's ability to succeed (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) to a

multifaceted concept, which also encompasses finding meaning in one's work, being allowed the

capability to perform, and a sense that one's contributions actually influence outcomes at work

(Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Subsequently the methods for measuring empowerment in the

workplace have also changed over time (Spreitzer, 1995). While most recent research on teacher

empowerment approaches the subject either from an environmental angle or a psychological one,

Lee and Nie (2014) argue that teacher empowerment is an integrated process that includes both

categories. Professional learning communities and other forms of collaboration among teachers

are examples of previously studied methods of increasing teachers' perceptions of empowerment

and work satisfaction, but little research has been done on collaborative efforts among teachers

in private Montessori school contexts. The aim of this study is to provide much needed

perspective on this neglected area of research.

Defining and Measuring Empowerment

In the 1980's and 1990's, interest in psychological empowerment increased among many

researchers in business contexts (Spreitzer, 1995; Drucker, 1988; Conger & Kanungo, 1988;

Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Drucker (1988) describes this era as a time when the concept of

empowerment in organizational research gained widespread interest because global competition

created an environment that required employees to be more innovative and independent. Later,

these same definitions of empowerment would be applied more widely in school contexts

(Arogundade, O., & Arogundade, A., 2015; Lee & Nie, 2014; Vartuli, 2005). Conger and

Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment as the concept of self-efficacy, or one's beliefs about

their ability to succeed. Self-efficacy is still considered an essential piece of empowerment

according to Vartuli (2005) who reviewed the relevant literature and concluded that teachers

with higher levels of self-efficacy involve children in decision making processes and help

children develop self-esteem and positive attitudes toward school. However, self-efficacy,

according to Thomas and Velthouse (1990) is only one part of a more nuanced way of

approaching empowerment. Building on the work of Conger and Kanungo (1988), Thomas and

Velthouse (1990) argued that empowerment is multifaceted. They redefined empowerment as an

increase in intrinsic motivation and furthermore posited that it is manifested in four cognitions:

meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Before an employee can feel competent,

or self-efficacious, in their work, that person must first find their work meaningful. Additionally,

according to Thomas and Velthouse (1990) competence alone means little without being allowed

the capability to perform (self-determination) or the ability to actually influence outcomes at

work (impact). All four dimensions together create a more accurate picture for grasping the

multifaceted concept of psychological empowerment.

     Using Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) multifaceted definition of empowerment,

Spreitzer (1995) developed a valid way to measure psychological empowerment in a workplace

context that is still widely used today. She created three statements regarding each of the four

dimensions of empowerment that were adapted from previous research to form one, 12-item,

four-dimensional psychological empowerment scale. In 2013, Lee and Nie used Spreitzer's

psychological empowerment scale to examine the relationships among teachers' perceptions of

administrator's empowering behaviors, psychological empowerment, and work-related

outcomes. They developed a scale to measure teachers' perceptions of their supervisors'

empowering behaviors and used it in tandem with Spreitzer's (1995) 12-item psychological

empowerment scale on a sample of 304 school teachers in Singapore. Results indicated that

teachers' perceptions of their administrators' empowering behaviors positively predicted

teachers' sense of meaning, autonomy, and impact. Arogundade, O. and Arogundade, A. (2015)

distributed Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment scale in conjunction with a career

satisfaction scale to a random sample of 300 employees from both profit and non-profit

organizations in Nigeria. They concluded that the dimensions of psychological empowerment

significantly predict employees' career satisfaction. Lee and Nie (2013) further expounded on

the notion of psychological empowerment by noting that most researchers have approached the

concept from two perspectives: social structural and psychological. By proposing an integration

of social structural and psychological views of empowerment, they formed a more

comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding teacher empowerment. Being able to

define and measure psychological empowerment accurately are necessary skills for

understanding early childhood educators and empowerment in the current context of education.

This is especially important because the literature indicates that many early childhood teachers

report low perceptions of empowerment (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2013; Jenkins & Hewitt, 2010;

Stipek, 2006).

Identity and Forms of Disempowerment in Education

One explanation for why early childhood teachers report such low perceptions of

personal empowerment is they have a difficult time separating their professional lives from their

personal lives. This means feeling disempowered at work can also lead to personal identity crises

outside of work (Overton, 2009). Forms of disempowerment among teachers include

standardized curricula, lack of support, inadequate compensation, and disconnections between

personal theories of education and expectations from administration (Adcock & Patton, 2001;

Blank, 2008; Overton, 2009; Rinkevich, 2011; Rodgers & Long, 2002; Stipek, 2006). Spreitzer

(1995) lists "meaning" as the very first aspect of psychological empowerment because it is hard

to feel empowered in a work context where you feel as if your work has no purpose. Studies

show that as general teacher autonomy and administrative support increase so do empowerment

and professionalism (Adcock & Patton, 2001; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). A sense of

professionalism is closely tied to feeling a sense of purpose in your work, i.e., your identity or,

what Spreitzer (1990) referred to as, "meaning". The literature clearly conveys that early

childhood teachers in several parts of the world are generally not treated as professionals and this

has an impact on their identities and self-perceptions of empowerment (Overton, 2009; Pearson

& Moomaw, 2005; Lee & Nie, 2014; Adcock & Patton, 2001).

One review of the literature on preschool teacher well-being (Adcock & Patton, 2001)

concludes that well-being encompasses both personal and professional concerns, some of which

include: a sense of self-efficacy and empowerment, autonomy, the nature and quality of work

relationships, financial stability, and life satisfaction. In other words, it is especially difficult for

early childhood educators to compartmentalize their personal and professional identities. The

implications of this reality are that teacher empowerment or disempowerment in the workplace is

likely to affect a teacher's sense of personal worth outside the classroom as well.

Lack of administrative support has a disempowering effect on early childhood teachers

according to Overton (2009). She conducted a case study that consisted of open-ended interviews

with eight early childhood teachers in Tasmania and revealed that teachers were operating within

three distinct dimensions of power relationships, which impacted their personal and professional

identities. Overton (2009) categorized the power relationships as imposed power,

disempowerment, and empowerment of self and other. Transcriptions of the interviews revealed

that lack of support or feedback from leadership leads to professional self-doubt. Referring to

one of the participants of the study, Overton (2009) writes that because the teacher invested so

much of herself in her work, she was "unable to separate her worth as a teacher (professional) from her worth as a person" (personal) (ibid, p. 5). Overlaps in personal and professional identity of early childhood educators have also been noted and studied in Montessori contexts (Christensen, 2016). From the literature, we can conclude that teachers who feel more empowered will perceive themselves as more professional. Additionally, teachers who are involved in creating their own curricula have less stress. (Pearson & Moomaw 2005). Most proposed solutions to the ongoing problem of identity crisis among early childhood educators have included standardized instructional and assessment practices and increased accountability, but these kinds of solutions rarely have the intended effect and often lead to teachers having even less control (Ackerman, 2004).

Collaboration and Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities and other forms of organized teacher collaborations are generally recognized as valid ways to improve teaching satisfaction and practice and also student learning (Blank, 2008; Dooner, A.M., Mandzuk, D., & Clifton, R., 2007; Goddard, L., Goddard, D., & Tschannen-Moran, M.; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008; Watson, 2014). Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Stoll, L., Thomas, S. and Wallace, M., (2005) state that a professional learning community is effective when it has "the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals and other staff in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning" (ibid., p. 30). Watson (2014) theorizes that professional learning communities can help teachers be agents of change in their schools, but she cautions that they must do it by finding the right amount of collaboration. If schools do not have enough collaboration, then teachers feel isolated, but too much collaboration can paradoxically suppress new ideas because everyone adapts to the norm of the group. Goddard et al. (2007) conducted a

study that built upon the existing literature regarding the importance of collaboration in schools

as a means to school improvement. They administered teacher surveys in the form of

collaboration scales to 452 teachers in 47 elementary schools in a large Midwestern school

district. They set out to empirically test whether or not there is a correlation between teacher

collaboration for school improvement and student achievement on high-stakes math and reading

tests. They found that teacher collaboration does, in fact, correlate to higher test scores among

students. This finding was significant in that it was the first study that linked collaboration with

student achievement on high-stakes test scores. The authors note that the most important

outcome of teacher collaboration is that teachers learn how to improve their practice. Low levels

of collaboration can indicate an unwillingness to take risks, and according to Rinkevich (2011),

risk taking is one characteristic of creative teachers.

According to Dooner et al. (2008) the collaborative dynamics involved in developing and

sustaining a professional learning community are not only important, but also understudied.

Tensions in group dynamics are inevitable, but educational leaders are often underprepared to

help teachers navigate through these tensions when they arise. With this in mind, Dooner et al.

(2008) analyzed the social dynamics of a group of Middle School teachers who met once or

twice a month for two years for the purpose of enhancing their teaching practices through

forming a professional learning community. The study presented analysis of data from their

meetings, which were dedicated to studying and discussing Egan's theory of Imagination and

Learning and developing practical implementation strategies for their individual classrooms.

Dooner et al.'s (2008) work offers valuable insights for other educators trying to affect change

through collaborative processes. They analyzed the data from meetings as well as personal

interviews with the teachers involved in the learning community in the context of Weick's

(1979) means-convergence model which according to Dooner et al. (2008) suggests that

"conflict is inherently embedded in the collaborative process" (p 572). The authors noted that the

teachers participating in the study consistently emphasized that much of the success of their

learning community stemmed from the fact that each teacher was developing their own

theoretical application of the theories they were discussing. Trying to agree on one unified end

product would have heightened tensions significantly. The literature suggests that increased

collaboration in schools leads to positive outcomes for teachers and students and is a possible

valid solution to the problem of disempowerment among teachers (Dooner et al., 2008; Goddard

et al., 2007; Watson, 2014).

Conclusion

A review of the literature indicates that psychological empowerment is multifaceted and

measurable, (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), early childhood teachers struggle

with multiple forms of disempowerment (Adcock & Patton, 2001; Blank, 2008; Overton, 2009;

Rinkevich, 2011; Rodgers & Long, 2002), and collaboration among teachers leads to higher

levels of teacher satisfaction (Dooner et al., 2008; Goddard et al., 2007; Watson, 2014). There

has been much research conducted in schools regarding the effects that professional learning

communities has on teacher or student outcomes, but few studies have been done on the

correlations between collaborative curriculum planning and teacher empowerment. Also, the

majority of the literature focuses on teachers in traditional education settings, which highlights a

need for further investigation on collaboration and teacher empowerment in private schools and

classrooms that use alternative teaching philosophies. This gap in current research led me to

design an action research project in a private Montessori school setting with the intent to

measure the effects of collaborative curriculum planning on the empowerment of six early

childhood teachers.

<div align="center">**Description of Research Process**</div>

The first step toward implementing my action research project was a conversation with

the director of my school. I was careful to communicate clearly what the research would entail

because for her to agree she had to give up quite a bit of control. After discussing the pros and

cons, she agreed it would be better for everyone because not having to come up with the

curriculum each month would free up a lot of time for her and hopefully build a stronger sense of

trust between teachers and administration. I got a verbal agreement first, but ultimately got

written permission from the director to conduct the research in the school.

The director attended our first brainstorming meeting where we mapped out a three-year

rough outline of topics to study with the children. She felt comfortable with the direction we

were going and the remainder of our collaborative efforts involved only early childhood teachers.

We met several times over the summer and developed a fully fleshed out curriculum for the

2017/2018 school year. After that first meeting, I got verbal consent from all the other teachers

saying they were willing to not only participate, but help collect data. The week before school

started I asked each teacher to sign an active consent form (see Appendix A) which detailed the

expectations of each participant. Each teacher signed and returned the active consent form before

the implementation of the intervention.

During the first week of school a passive consent letter (see Appendix B) was sent home

with each early childhood student addressed to their parent explaining that each classroom would

be observed several times over a seven-week period and anonymous data on student activity

would be recorded. A list of pros and cons were included in the letter and each parent was given

the opportunity to sign and return the form if they wanted their child's data excluded from the study. No forms were returned, so we proceeded with the planned observation schedule.

Each teacher participant also filled out a Teacher Feedback Questionnaire (see Appendix C) before the school year began. They filled it out at the beginning of the 2017 school year, but I asked them to think about their experience the previous year when answering the questions. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather baseline data for the feelings of the teachers before the intervention had begun. Each statement in section one of the questionnaire was adapted from Spreitzer's (1995) scale designed to measure the four different aspects of psychological empowerment: self-efficacy, autonomy, meaning, and impact. Each participant circled a number 1-5 next to each statement to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed and to what extent. The statements in section one were as follows:

1. I find the daily activities of my job meaningful.

2. I consider the work I do very important.

3. I am confident in my ability to effectively teach using the Montessori Method.

4. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.

5. I am allowed independence and flexibility in how and what I choose to teach.

6. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.

7. I have influence on school-wide decisions regarding curriculum teaching.

8. My impact on curriculum choices in early childhood classrooms at my school is large.

The other side of the questionnaire, section two, consisted of four open ended questions for each teacher to answer in writing. The questions in section two were as follows:

9. What is the most stressful part of your job? Why?

10. What is the most rewarding part of your job? Why?

11. What results are you hoping for from implementing the new curriculum?

12. What fears or hesitations do you have about implementing the new curriculum?

Another blank copy of this questionnaire was administered to each teacher participant at the end

of the seven-week period, but questions 11 and 12 were altered slightly to ask if the participant's

initial hopes and fears were realized or not.

After the active consent forms were signed and the questionnaires were filled out, I gave

each of the six teachers a tabbed binder that included multiple copies of three blank data tools.

The first tab on each binder was labeled "Journal" and included 30 blank reflection journal pages

(see Appendix D) for them to fill out daily over the seven-week period. Holidays and other

factors had to be taken into consideration when calculating the number of journal pages each

teacher would fill out. Week one was only a four-day week because Monday September 5 was

Labor Day and we didn't have school. Week five was only a three-day week because Thursday

October 5 and Friday October 6 were parent teacher conferences. Week seven was also only a

three-day week because school was closed for Fall Break on Thursday October 19 and Friday

October 20. Thus, over a seven-week period of 35 school days, the teachers were only expected

to journal on 30 of those days. The top half of each journal prompted the teachers to reflect on

their circle time lessons and work periods and then circle the number that most closely aligned

with their feelings regarding the nature of both. The numbers and associated statements were as

follows:

1. Today was highly unsuccessful

2. Today was somewhat unsuccessful

3. Today was neither successful nor unsuccessful

4. Today was somewhat successful

5. Today was highly successful

After circling the number that most aligned with their experiences in the classroom that day, the teacher was expected to offer a brief explanation of the number selected. The third section of the journal page provided space to reflect on personal successes or shortcomings for that day and any other reflections that may have been helpful to write down. These three sections took up the front of one page. The back side was left blank in case anyone needed more space for their reflections.

The next tab of the binder was labeled "Observation." This section included the master schedule which determined which classrooms would be observed by which teacher on each week. I designed the schedule conscientiously to ensure that each classroom was observed on different days and at different times, so we could get an accurate representation of each class over the seven-week period. Some of the teachers showed trepidation in engaging in so much observation at the beginning of a school year before the normalization had happened, but we discussed it and ultimately decided it would be beneficial for both the observer as well as the observed to proceed. We originally were going to try for 30 minute observations, but we settled on 20 minutes to cut down on the amount of time the co-teacher of the observer would be alone in a classroom. We also made sure that the purpose of the observation was not to scrutinize the teachers in the classroom and instead opted to focus on the students because current research indicates that empowered teachers lead to more engaged students with higher self-esteem (Vartuli, 2005). The classroom observation form (see Appendix E) had a spot for the observer to fill out the date, time, room they were observing, and how many students were present at the time. The beginning section was adapted from The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector's (2012) "Observing Work Engagement in the Primary Classroom" form. It provided six

categories: Engaging in work, Using work as a prop, Choosing work, Receiving help, Wandering/ Interfering, and Behaving disruptively. The observer was to scan the room upon arrival and tally mark how many students' activities fit under each category. The rest of the form consisted of three additional open-ended questions.

1. Have any students chosen shelf work that corresponds with the current curriculum focus area? If so, describe the work.

2. Are there any things you've observed that you would like to incorporate in your own classroom?

3. General comments/ observations.

At the end of the form, there was another area to tally a sample of the work engagement of students to compare to the first sample.

The third and last tab in the binder said "Meetings" and it included a list of questions to be discussed (see appendix F) as well as blank paper for teachers to take notes on during our weekly collaborations designed to elicit constructive dialogue. We deliberated the same topics at each meeting as we reflected back on the previous week. The questions brought up for discussion were as follows:

1. Did the order of the lessons flow smoothly this week? What worked well and what did not work well?

2. Is there anything we want to change in the curriculum?

3. How much time/energy/stress did you put into lesson planning this week?

4. How much time/energy/stress did you put into shelf work this week?

5. Do you feel your efforts led to success?

6. How is each teaching team choosing to share the responsibilities of lesson planning and teaching? What's working and what isn't working for each team?

7. What other comments or concerns do you have about this week?

At the conclusion of each meeting, I would reflect in a personal journal about how effective the conversation had been. I noted whether or not any of the questions caused venting or frustration and also whether or not any of them elicited especially productive feedback. At the conclusion of the seven-week research period, each teacher participant turned in their binder to me, the primary researcher. I then analyzed the data and looked for themes and patterns in hopes of discovering what effects our collaboration had on teacher empowerment among the participants.

Analysis of Data

Description of Data and Participants

The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of collaborative curriculum planning on empowerment as defined by Spreitzer (1995) on six early childhood teachers, including myself, the primary researcher. The participants in this study were volunteers and coworkers at a private Montessori school, ranging in age from 27 - 69. We collected data designed to measure perceptions of different aspects of empowerment over a seven-week period. After collaboratively designing a curriculum to be implemented during daily circle time lessons, each teaching team utilized this new curriculum beginning on the first day of the 2017 school year. Throughout the seven-week intervention period each teacher presented daily whole group lessons from the new curriculum, observed another teachers' classroom once a week, and attended weekly staff meetings where the curriculum was discussed. In addition to participating in these normal practices, each teacher participating in the study reflected on her feelings in a personal journal at

the end of each week for seven weeks. All of this data served to measure perceptions of empowerment.

Teacher Feedback Questionnaire

To gather baseline data, I developed a two-part Teacher Feedback Questionnaire (see Appendix C). I then administered it to each teacher before and after the intervention. Each participant read each statement, then circled the number that best corresponded with how strongly she agreed or disagreed with the statement. Five indicated "I strongly agree" and one indicated "I strongly disagree." I averaged all teachers' responses for each question both before and after the study. Figure 1 below displays this information. The statements found on the questionnaire can be found in Table 1, below.
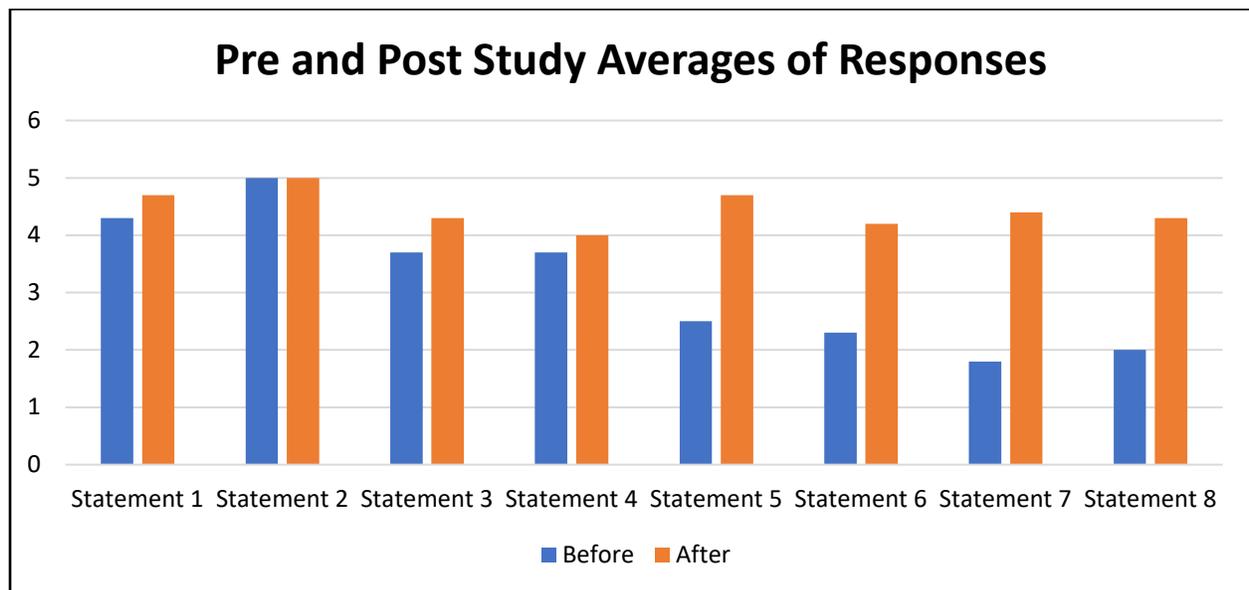

Figure 1: Pre and Post Study Averages of Responses

Teacher Feedback Questionnaire Statements	
Statement 1	I find the daily activities of my job meaningful. (Meaning 1)
Statement 2	I consider the work I do very important. (Meaning 2)
Statement 3	I am confident in my ability to effectively teach using the Montessori method. (Competence 1)
Statement 4	I have mastered the skills necessary for my job. (Competence 2)
Statement 5	I am allowed independence and flexibility in how and what I choose to teach. (Self-Determination 1)
Statement 6	I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job. (Self Determination 2)
Statement 7	I have influence on school-wide decisions regarding curriculum and teaching. (Impact 1)
Statement 8	My impact on curriculum choices in early childhood classrooms at my school is large. (Impact 2)

Table 1: Teacher Feedback Questionnaire Statements

Statements one and two measured each participant's sense of meaning. The first two questions display a minimal increase in ratings. This indicates the curriculum calendar was not a huge factor in teachers finding meaning in their job, as it was already quite high before the intervention began. Before the study, four out of six agreed their daily activities were found to be meaningful and two out of six strongly agreed. After the study, two out of six agreed and four out of six strongly agreed. The responses to statement two, "I consider the work I do very important," indicate all six teachers strongly agreed with this statement both before and after the study. Statements three and four were meant to measure each teacher's perception of personal competence. The overall responses to these statements were slightly lower than responses to questions one and two, but they were still fairly high both before and after the study, showing minimal increase.
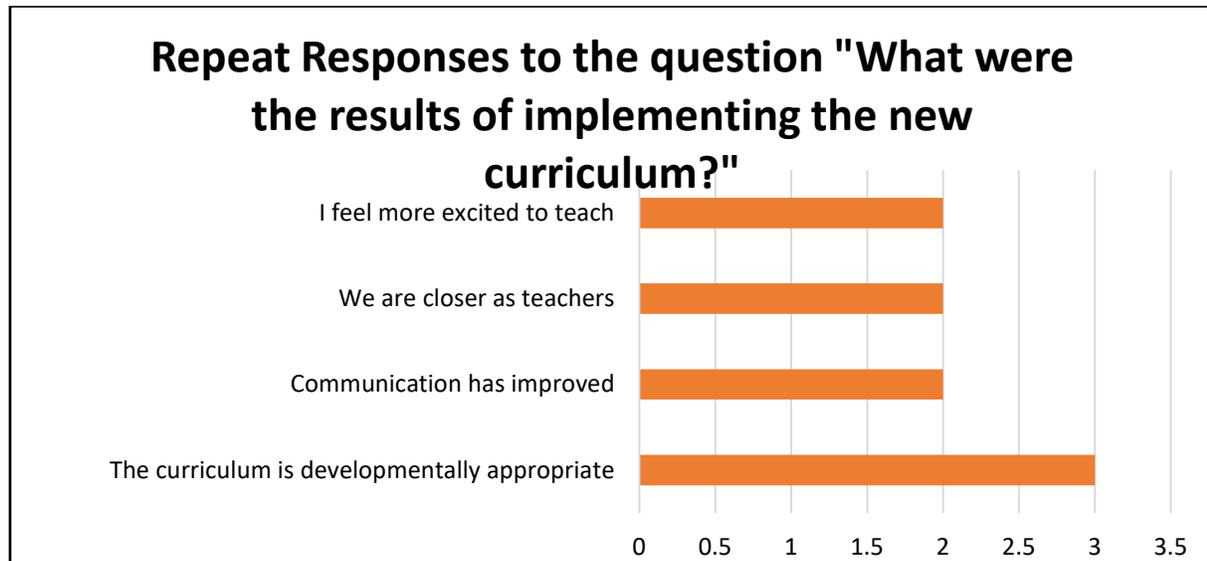
The responses to statements five through eight, which measured each teacher's perception of self-determination and impact, displayed the most dramatic increase. Teachers did not strongly agree with statements claiming they had freedom and flexibility in determining what and how they taught before the new curriculum was implemented. This is not surprising based on the original meeting in the Spring of 2017 where many teachers mentioned feeling boxed in and tightly controlled. The largest increase noted in responses was in the category of "impact." The average of all responses to questions seven and eight jumped from 1.9 in the pre-study questionnaire to 4.35 in the post study questionnaire, with a total increase of 2.45. The results of this data tool highlight the importance of measuring all four aspects of psychological empowerment. Thirty years ago, the consensus on measuring empowerment was limited to measuring competency, sometimes referred to as self-efficacy (Conger & Conungo, 1988). If I had limited the statements to such a one-dimensional understanding of the concept of empowerment, I would not have a full picture of the increases in each of the four aspects. Figure 2, below, combines like statements into a single category, showing the total increase in each of the four aspects of psychological empowerment, as defined by Spreitzer (1995).
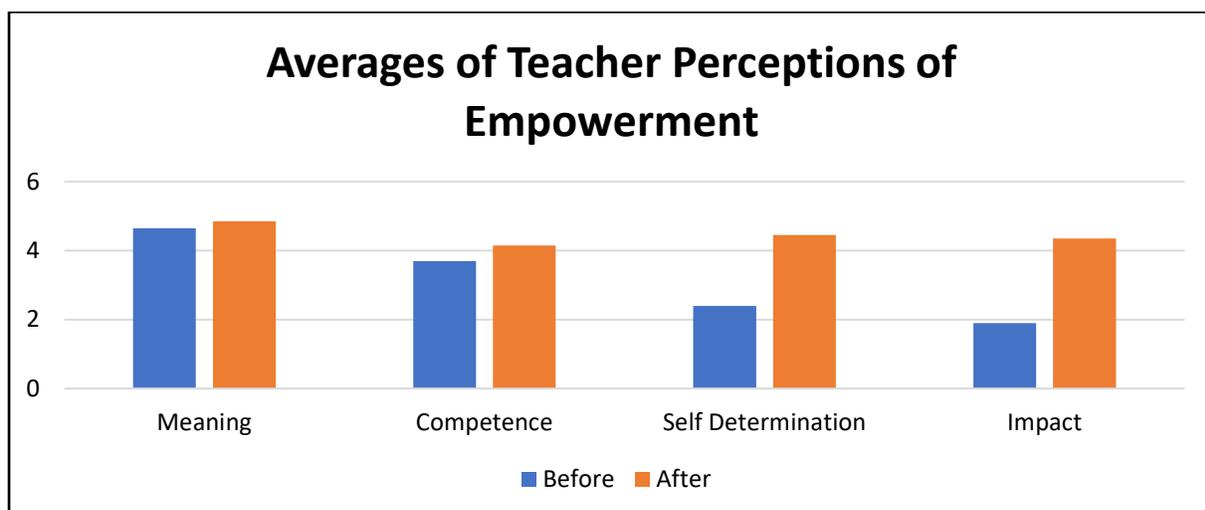
Figure 2: Averages of Teacher Perceptions of Empowerment

The second half of the Teacher Feedback Questionnaire consisted of four open-ended questions. These questions prompted each teacher to reflect on what the most stressful part of her job was as well as the most rewarding. The pre-study questionnaire asked each teacher what she hoped to get out of implementing the new curriculum as well as her fears or hesitations about implementation. At the conclusion of the post study questionnaire each teacher described the results she had seen during the seven-week intervention period, as well as any challenges faced. In addition to the fact that teachers were stressed about the curriculum, these qualitative responses revealed that the stressors mentioned most often were large class size/ratios and lack of prep time.

In section two, both pre and post study, every single teacher indicated the most rewarding part of her job was the relationships with the students and watching them grow and succeed. These answers are not surprising in light of the unanimous strong rates of agreement with the idea that the work they do is very important. When analyzing the answers written in response to what they hoped to get out of the new curriculum, two themes quickly emerged. Three of the teachers mentioned they hoped for more freedom to follow the child and the other three mentioned they hoped the new curriculum would be more developmentally appropriate and engaging for the students. At the conclusion of the study, when asked what results they had seen from implementation, the open-ended responses were overwhelmingly positive, but more varied than the original responses regarding the hopes. (see Figure 3, below) The number scale in the figure below indicates how many times the response was mentioned across all six questionnaires.

Repeat Responses to the question "What were the results of implementing the new curriculum?"

| Response	Value
I feel more excited to teach	2
We are closer as teachers	2
Communication has improved	2
The curriculum is developmentally appropriate	3

Figure 3: Results of Implementing the New Curriculum

The answers included positive results not originally considered, such as stronger communication and a closer community of more excited teachers. It is interesting, however, that none of the responses included "freedom to follow the child" even though that was a strong theme among pre-study responses to what teachers hoped for from the new curriculum.

Teacher Journals

Each teacher kept a personal journal throughout the seven weeks and rated the success of the circle times and work periods at the end of each day on a scale of one to five, one indicating highly unsuccessful and five indicating highly successful. I entered all the self assessment scores from each day into a spreadsheet and because there were two teachers in each classroom, I found the average number for each of the seven weeks for each classroom and then plotted them on the same chart to look for correlations (see Figure 4, below). I hoped to see a steady increase of perceptions of success as the weeks continued, but that is not what the data showed.

Average Weekly Self-Assessment Scores of Individual Classrooms
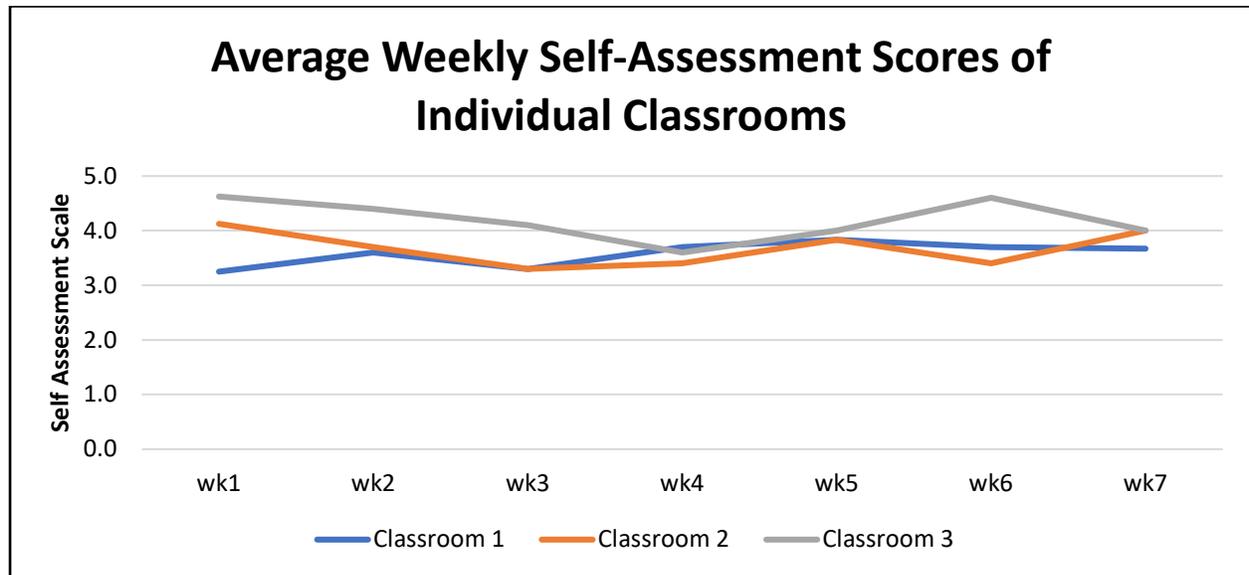
Figure 4: Average Weekly Self-Assessment Scores of Individual Classrooms

Classroom one started with the lowest average but increased into week two, while classrooms two and three started out much higher and steadily decreased into weeks three and four. In addition to rating the success of each day on a number scale, each teacher provided a brief explanation of the number selected, which gave valuable insight during the analysis process. All classrooms experienced some form of decline between weeks three and four which interestingly corresponds with the weeks we were doing academic assessments on the children in preparation for parent teacher conferences which took place on week five. Four of the six teachers mentioned stress from completing assessments during these two weeks. On September 19th, which landed on week three, teacher six wrote in her journal, "I felt stressed today and I think it threw off the classroom. We got a lot done, but it just felt hectic. Tomorrow our goal is to focus on the child and not the assessment."

Because of the week three trend, I decided to calculate the average self-assessment scores across all three classrooms for each week and plot the numbers on a line graph (see Figure 5 below).

Average Weekly Self-Assessment Scores across all Classrooms
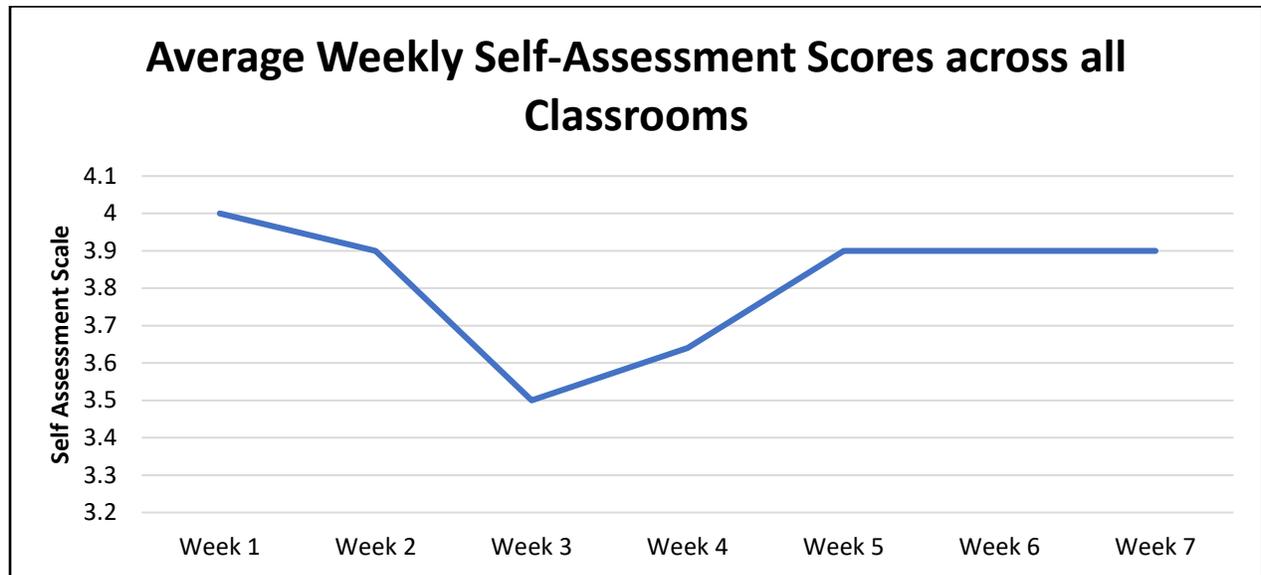
Figure 5: Average Weekly Self-Assessment Scores across all Classrooms

Interestingly, five out of six teachers also mentioned rainy weather and/or change to the normal routine as a cause for unsuccessful circle times or work periods during weeks three and four. From the teacher journal data, it is reasonable to conclude that outside factors beyond the curriculum itself played a role in perceptions of success.

Observations

Each of the six participants used the classroom observation form (see Appendix E) to spend time observing student behavior in their own classroom as well as in the other two classrooms over the course of the seven-week implementation period. Current literature suggests a positive correlation between teacher collaboration and improved student performance, especially on high stakes tests (Goddard et al., 2007) as well as a correlation between teacher empowerment and student engagement (Vartuli, 2005). During each formal observation, the observer would scan the room for two minutes or until she had counted each student once. She gave one tally mark per student observed and marked it under one of six general sections: Engaging in Work, Using Work as a Prop, Choosing Work, Receiving Help,

Wandering/Interfering, and Behaving Disruptively. Each observer tallied these categories at the beginning of the visit and then again at the end.

While analyzing all the data after week seven, I calculated what percentage of students observed were engaged. I decided to combine "Engaging in Work" and "Choosing Work" into one category of "Engaged" when finding the percentages because both of those categories indicate some level of engagement and independence on the part of the student. I then lumped the categories of "Using Work as a Prop," "Wandering/Interfering," and "Behaving Disruptively" as generally disengaged behavior. I opted to keep "Receiving Help" as its own neutral category since it was not specified whether children were receiving help in a way that was enhancing already engaged behavior or redirecting from disengaged behavior. Figures 6, 7, and 8 show the breakdown by percentage of each category in each classroom over the seven-week period. In classroom one, 59.7% of students were observed engaging in work. In classroom two, 62.8 % of students were engaged, and in classroom three, 51.3% of all students observed were reported as engaged in work. In each classroom, more than half of all students observed over the seven-week period were either engaged in work or in the process of choosing work.
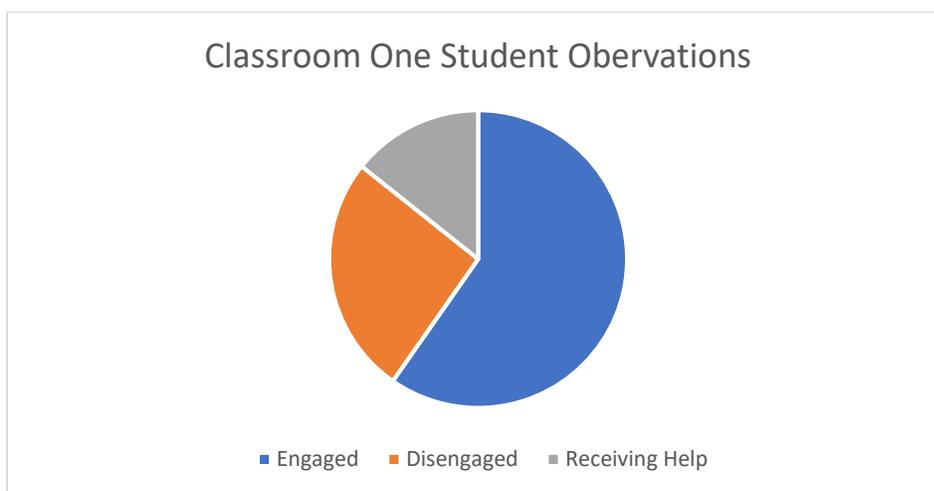

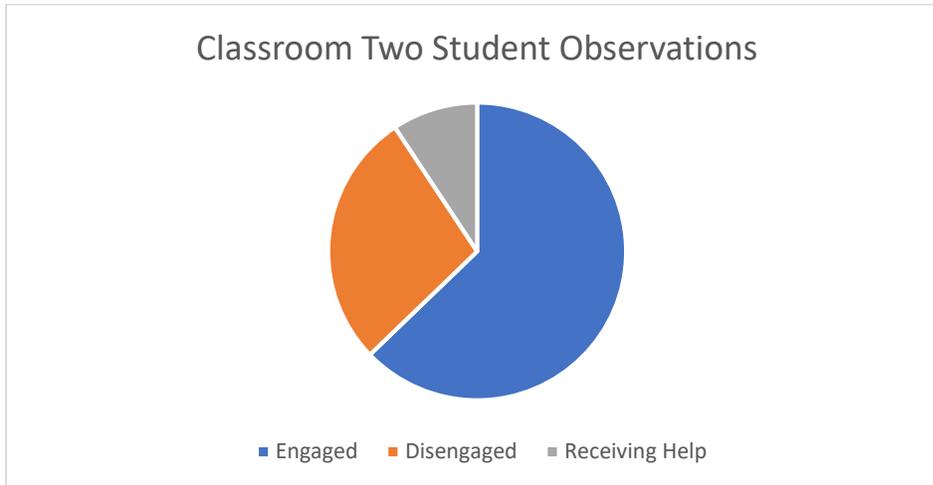Figure 6: *Classroom One Percentages of Observed Student Behaviors*

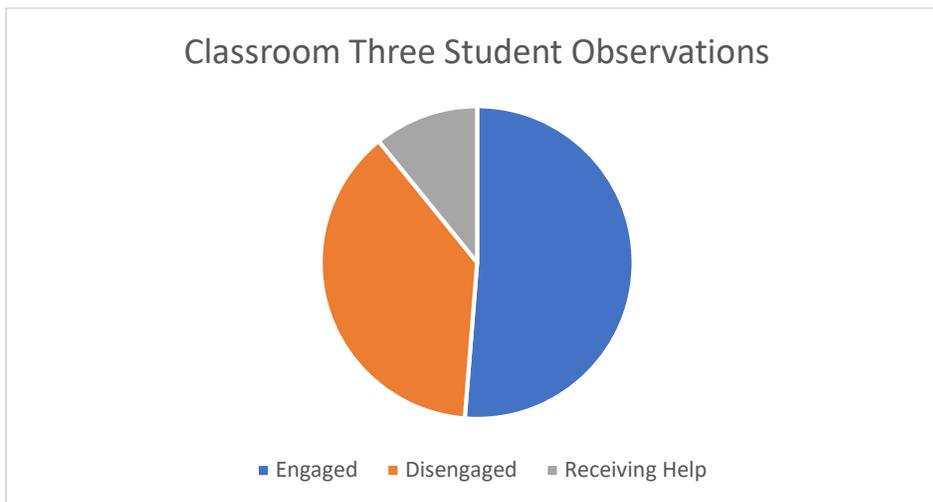Figure 7*: Classroom Two Percentages of Observed Student Behavior*

Figure 8*: Classroom Three Percentages of Observed Student Behavior*

In future studies, it is recommended to collect baseline data of students from a previous year before any collaboration has occurred as a point of reference when analyzing the student data. It also would have been better to collect a sample from each classroom each day to create a more accurate picture of the whole, but the reality of our schedules allowed each classroom to be observed only once a week.

I originally was going to do all the observations myself, but decided it might be better to gather observations from all the teachers to get a more balanced picture of each classroom

through more than one set of eyes. However, I think it would have been helpful for us to collaborate before the study and make sure we were all on the same page about what constitutes "engaged" and what constitutes "disruptive." This occurred to me while entering the observation data because I noticed that certain teachers were more likely to consistently report disruptive behavior than others. Teacher 5, for example, did not report a single child as acting disruptively during any of her observations in any of the classrooms, including observations in her own classroom. This same teacher also had the highest feelings of success according to the daily self assessment scores in her journal. Noting that her perception of success was generally high, I then wondered if there was any correlation between journal self assessment scores and student engagement data. I ran these correlations, but because the data was non-linear, the results were not very helpful. By finding the mean and standard deviation for each data set, I was able to standardize the data and run correlations again. While the correlations were not exact, there were interesting patterns in the line graphs plotted from this data (see Figures 9, 10, and 11 below).
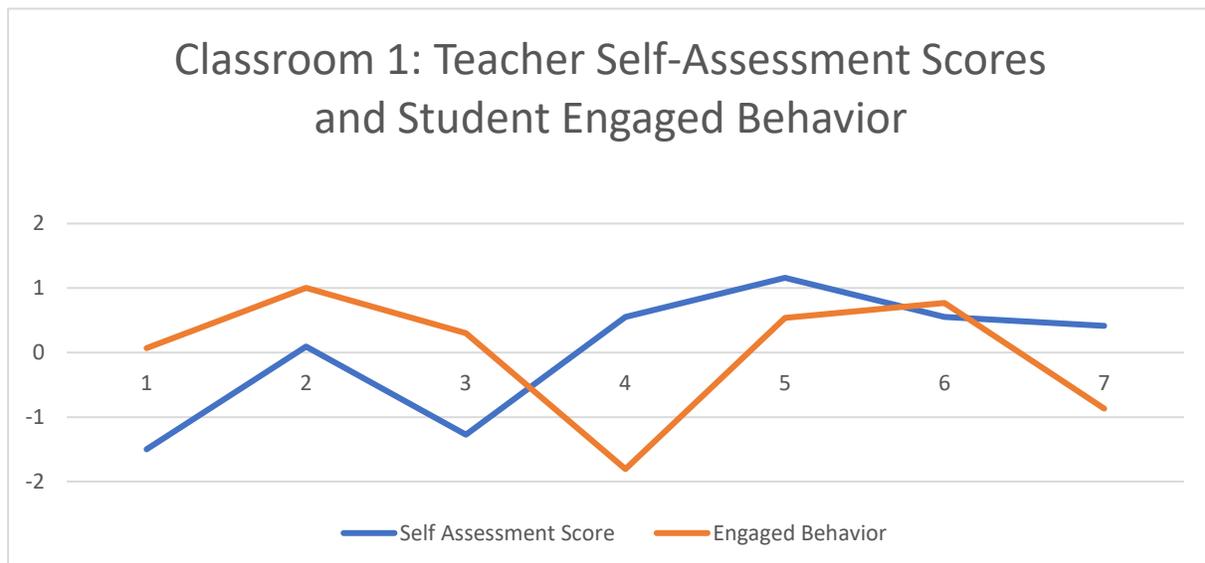

Figure 9: Classroom 1: Teacher Self-Assessment Scores and Student Engaged Behavior
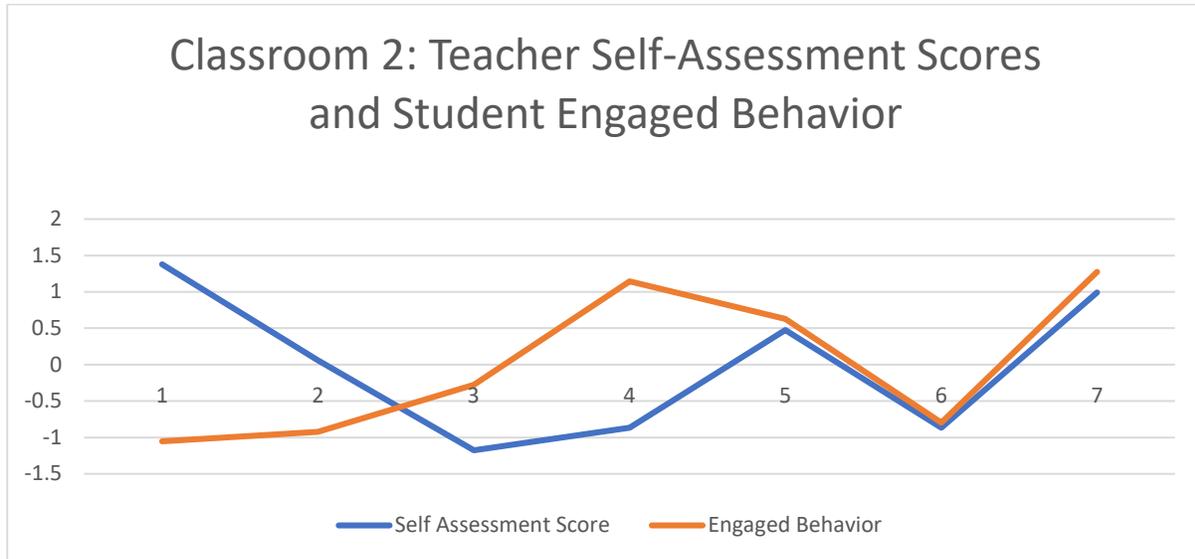
Figure 10: *Classroom 2: Teacher Self-Assessment Scores and Student Engaged Behavior*
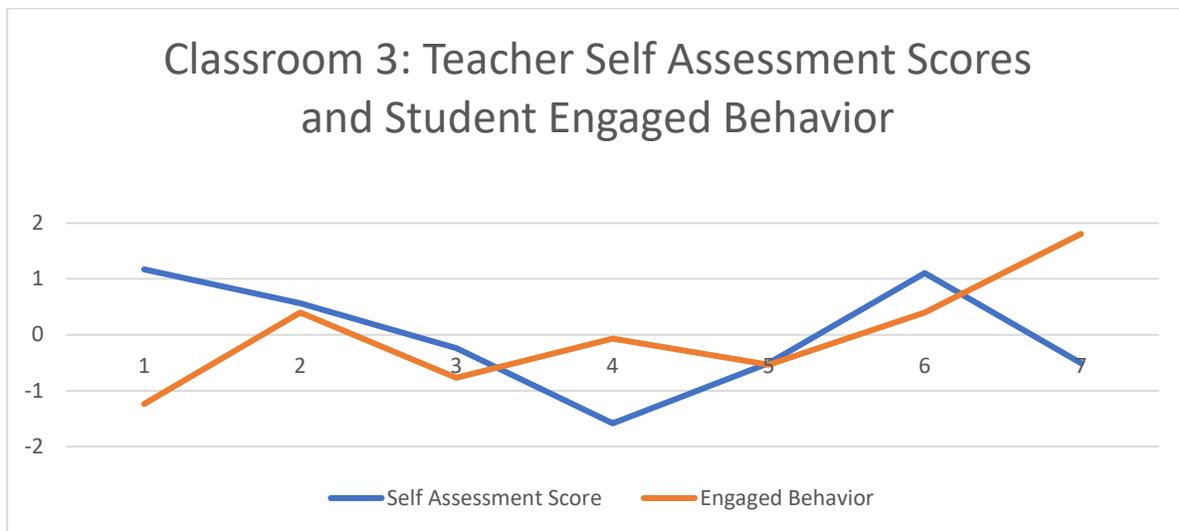
Figure 11: Classroom 3: Teacher Self-Assessment Scores and Student Engaged Behavior

Figure 9 shows classroom one's perceptions of success, rose in tandem with observed student engaged behavior from week one to two and then declined in tandem from week three to four. Week four is interesting since perceived success peaks while observed engaged behavior reaches an all-time low. Classroom two's correlation seems totally random until week five when the lines are almost on top of each other into week seven. A decrease in student engagement

corresponded to a decrease in teacher perceptions of success, which makes sense. Classroom

three's graph is interesting because if the trends continue, student engagement is increasing at an

all-time high in week 7, yet perceptions of teacher satisfaction is sharply declining. This could

possibly be explained by the fact that week seven was a short week and teachers were observing

in their own classrooms that week.

Conclusion

During the final collaboration meeting, we discussed what we had learned from the study

and how it had affected our teaching practices. Many teachers mentioned feeling more in control

as well as a heightened sense of freedom to follow the child. Teacher six showed a clear sense of

empowerment, specifically impact, when she said,

> "Once the communication started flowing it just kept flowing! I feel more in
>
> control because I feel like before I would have frustrations but never wanted to
>
> complain about it because I didn't want to be the squeaky wheel, but finding ways
>
> to talk to our director about things and actually make changes… it's an exciting
>
> feeling!"

While the methods used to collect the data may not have yielded the most objective results, the

fact that we worked together to collect it was a form of collaboration in itself and seems to have

been an empowering process. At the very end of that same meeting, teacher four said,

> "I feel like we've really been able to come together. There's never been a year
>
> since I've been here where it felt like this, where everyone's collaborating. It's
>
> been a really, really nice change."

In this study population during the limited time period available, the data shows that

while there may not have been a conclusive correlation between student engagement and teacher

collaboration, our collaborative efforts yielded a strong increase in three of the four aspects of psychological empowerment among the six participants. Specifically, each participant reported a strong increase in perceptions of self-determination and impact. All three classrooms anecdotally expressed increased feelings of empowerment which is strongly corroborated by the before and after results of the teacher feedback questionnaire. In this study population, it is safe to conclude that collaborative curriculum planning led to higher levels of reported teacher empowerment.

<div align="center">**Action Plan**</div>

Indications from the Results

A thorough data analysis indicated collaborative curriculum planning led to a heightened sense of self determination and impact among all six participants. In the pre-study questionnaire, a majority of teachers mentioned they hoped the curriculum would be more developmentally appropriate. Journal entries along with notes from our weekly meetings suggest students were more engaged with subject matter presented in circle time lessons than in years past. Further analysis of the data also exposed some limitations and other variables that should be taken into consideration for similar action research projects conducted in the future as well as possible further areas of study regarding teacher empowerment.

Effects on My Practice

I began to notice the effects of this action research project before we even started teaching from the new curriculum. This is because the collaboration process began in May 2017, three months before the study officially began. As teachers, we were used to meeting briefly once a week with the other teachers and staff for basic announcements and upcoming calendar items. These meetings were not very collaborative in nature, so when we began to meet once a week with the specific intention to collaborate, it was a very new and exciting experience for us.

The communication flowed easily. It felt like once we allowed ourselves to question one aspect of our job, it naturally led to a healthy questioning of many other aspects as well. The collaboration process yielded many positive but unexpected byproducts, such as parent education, a new record keeping system, and a change in the general structure of the day which allowed us more freedom to follow the needs of our children.

       We decided that not only was the old curriculum developmentally too advanced and fast paced, but that we were expecting our early childhood students to sit through too many formal circle times in a day. Through careful consideration and consulting with our director, we chose to alter the structure of the day to rectify this concern. We decided to eliminate the first circle time lesson of the day which usually focused on the days of the week and the weather. Additionally, we asked parents to say goodbye outside and then took turns as teachers walking the children in ourselves, allowing them to go straight to self-directed work in the classroom as opposed to having playground time first thing in the morning. This made for less separation anxiety from parents and eliminated a major whole group transition time in the morning as well. We still took our students out on the playground in the morning, but it was on a case by case basis according the needs of the students in each class. The circle time where we presented the lesson from our new curriculum took place before lunch and then we had one final circle time to review the lesson right before the children were dismissed at the very end of the day. Through open communication and collaboration, we were not only able to improve what we taught the students each day, but also how we taught them. This effect on our practice was an unanticipated, but positive result of collaboration.

Variables in the Research

One downside of implementing so many changes was the difficulty of being able to pinpoint causations and correlations. It was exciting that so many changes came as a direct result of the collaboration, but the data would have been more reliable if we had only introduced one new thing at a time. While the introduction of several changes complicated the data analysis, it is obvious that a collective sense of empowerment is what sparked the questions which led to the new changes in the first place.

The biggest variable that likely affected the collection of data was the fact that the study was being conducted by very busy, full-time teachers during one of the most stressful times of the school year. I was grateful for the opportunity to engage in action research because it gave me the ability to improve my practice as an educator, but finding time to meet the demands of the data collection while also meeting the demands of 33 early childhood students, some of which were not yet potty trained, was a challenge. On top of introducing new demands on teachers who were already spread thin at the beginning of a new school year, there was the fact that we had a limited seven-week window of time to collect data. I likely would have been able to conduct a more definitive analysis if the data could have spanned a longer period of time.

Another obvious limitation of this study was a limited amount of baseline data. Because we needed to start implementing the new curriculum on the first day of school, I was unable to collect any baseline data on student engagement before the study began. For this reason, the observational data gathered on student engagement was difficult to analyze. I ended up looking for correlations between perceptions of success in the teacher journal responses and observed student engagement. The problem with that correlation is that teachers were journaling daily, but observations were only happening once a week. In future studies of this nature, it is

recommended to have each teacher observe her own class daily in addition to journaling daily so the correlations could be calculated more accurately and authentically.

Future Action Research

The most prevalent theme that kept popping up in reading through the teacher journals and meeting notes was class size as a major factor on perceptions of empowerment. It is clear to me that although the intervention did have positive and empowering effects on us as teachers, the unanimous stress factor among the participants both before and after the intervention was feeling like they couldn't get to all their students due to large class sizes. It is also clear that freedom to plan your own curriculum cannot change an outside factor like enrollment decisions. Further research topics could include studying the effects of class size on feelings of teacher empowerment, especially in early childhood Montessori classrooms. Another area for further research would be to study the effects of whole school collaboration on collective perceptions of empowerment. As early childhood teachers, we became a strong support system for each other. For collaboration to be the most effective it needs to include as many decision makers as possible, otherwise it can run the risk of creating a cliquey culture. Some of the toddler and lower elementary teachers would occasionally sit in on our meetings, which leads me to think that it would be beneficial to replicate the study but expand the study population to include more than one level of teacher and even administration.

Contributions of the Research

Much research has been conducted to measure the effects of collaborative professional learning communities on teacher and student outcomes in public schools, but this action research project contributed to the body of research on teacher empowerment by measuring the effects of collaboration on teachers in a small private school setting. This research focused more

specifically on collaborative curriculum planning which bolstered an area in the general body of

research which was lacking. Although the sample size of participating teachers was small, the

message from the data was clear. A strong support system and freedom to collaborate led to

increased feelings of empowerment.

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Appendix A

Collaborative Curriculum Planning and Teacher Empowerment
Active Consent Form

Dear Colleague,

As you may know, I am a St. Catherine University student pursuing a Masters of Education degree. An important part of my program is the Action Research project.

As an early childhood teacher of students at Little Miners Montessori, I have chosen to learn about strategies for increasing collaboration and autonomy among teachers because current research has shown correlations between collaboration, autonomy, and teacher empowerment. I am working with a faculty member at St. Catherine University and an advisor to complete this particular project.

I will be writing about the results that I get from this research, however none of the writing that I do will include the name of this school, the names of any staff, administration, students, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular teacher. Only I will have access to the identifiable data for this study. I will keep all data confidential, but I recognize that the nature of this study relies on your contributions. If you would like to be recognized for your contributions to this research, you will have an opportunity to indicate as such at the end of this form.

When I am done, my work will be electronically available online at the St. Kate's library in a system called SOPHIA, which holds published reports written by faculty and graduate students at St. Catherine University. The goal of sharing my final research study report is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

The benefits of participating in this study include the opportunity for increased support in your teaching practice by participating in collaborative curriculum planning as well as the opportunity to observe your colleagues' classrooms. Other benefits include opportunities for professional improvement by reflecting on successes and failures of teaching practices both independently and collectively. There are no foreseeable risks from participation in this study.

Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to briefly answer prompts in a personal journal at the end of each week for six weeks to provide individual experiences that will be analyzed for patterns or trends at the end of the study. This is not meant to be time consuming and I am the only one who will read the answers you write. In addition to the journaling, you will be asked to verbally answer questions about your perceptions regarding different aspects of empowerment before the study and then again at the end to provide data which will be analyzed to determine if perceptions of empowerment were altered by the intervention. You will be expected to observe one other colleague's classroom as well as have your classroom observed by a colleague once a week during circle time lessons for a total of six weeks. Finally, at our weekly staff meetings, you will be expected to participate in a discussion of whether or not the curriculum is working

effectively for each teaching team. This study will take approximately six weeks at the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year.

This study is voluntary. If you decide you do want to be a participant and/or have your data (journals, observation forms, and transcriptions from interviews and meetings) included in my study, you need to check the appropriate box(es), sign this form, and return it before the first day of school. If at any time you decide you do not want to continue participation and/or allow your data to be included in the study, you can notify me and I will remove included data to the best of my ability.

If you decide you do not want to participate and/or have your data included in my study, you do not need to do anything. There is no penalty for not participating or having your data involved in the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, at bkfeinauer578@stkate.edu. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, you can ask me or my advisor Alisha Brandon at ajbrandon@stkate.edu. who will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Opt In

If you would like to be recognized for your contributions to this research, please write your name on the line below as you would like it to be included.

_____

Please check all that apply. I DO want to:

☐   participate in this study.

☐   have my data included in this study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant in Research   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix B

**Collaborative Curriculum Planning and Teacher Empowerment
Parental Permission Form**

Dear Parents,

In addition to being a co-lead early childhood teacher in classroom one at your child's school, I am a St. Catherine University student pursuing a Masters of Education. As a capstone to my program, I need to complete an Action Research project. I am studying strategies for increasing collaboration and autonomy among teachers because current research has shown correlations between collaboration, autonomy, and teacher empowerment.

While my research is not focused on the students, one component of my research involves teachers observing in other classrooms where students will be working. As student satisfaction and engagement is an indication of empowered teachers, we will be collecting anonymous data on the activities of students during their daily circle time lessons and regular work periods. Throughout this study your child's daily activities and expectations will not be altered. While having observers in the classroom is normal for our school, your child may notice more observers than normal, but this will not impact your child's daily routine. In order to understand the outcomes of the increased collaboration among teachers, I plan to analyze the results of these classroom observations as one component of the research project.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of this research and to allow you the opportunity to exclude your child's data from my study.

> **If you decide you want your child's data to be in my study,** you don't need to do anything at this point.

> **If you decide you do NOT want your child's data included in my study,** please note that on this form below and return it by September 1, 2017. Note that your child will still participate in the daily circle time lessons and work periods but his/her data will not be included in my analysis.

In order to help you make an informed decision, please note the following:

- I am working with a faculty member at St. Kate's and an advisor to complete this particular project.

- Your child's data will benefit my research, which aims to create a more cohesive and empowered body of teachers at Little Miners Montessori. Your child is not being asked to participate in anything outside of his/her regular routine in the classroom.

- I will be writing about the results that I get from this research. However, none of the writing that I do will include the name of this school, the names of any students, or any

references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular student. Other people will not know if your child is in my study.

- The final report of my study will be electronically available online at the St. Catherine University library. The goal of sharing my research study is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve their teaching.

- There is no penalty for not having your child's data involved in the study; I will simply delete his or her data from my data set.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at bkfeinauer578@stkate.edu. You may ask questions now, or if you have any questions later, you can ask me, or my advisor Alisha Brandon at ajbrandon@stkate.edu who will be happy to answer them. If you have questions or concerns regarding the study, and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

_____   _____
Brittany Feinauer   Date

OPT OUT: Parents, in order to exclude your child's data from the study, please sign and return by September 1, 2017

I do NOT want my child's data to be included in this study.

_____   _____
Signature of Parent   Date

Appendix C

Teacher Feedback Questionnaire

Date:_____

Teacher's Name: _____

In section one, please rate the 8 statements provided using the following scale:

1 – I strongly disagree with this statement.
2 – I disagree with this statement.
3 – I feel neutral about this statement.
4 – I agree with this statement.
5 – I strongly agree with this statement.

SECTION ONE

1. I find the daily activities of my job meaningful.   1   2   3   4   5

2. I consider the work I do very important.   1   2   3   4   5

3. I am confident in my ability to effectively teach using the Montessori method.   1   2   3   4   5

4. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job. 1   2   3   4   5

5. I am allowed independence and flexibility in how and what I choose to teach.   1   2   3   4   5

6. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.   1   2   3   4   5

7. I have influence on school-wide decisions regarding curriculum and teaching. 1   2   3   4   5

8. My impact on curriculum choices in early childhood classrooms at LMM is large.   1   2   3   4   5

SECTION TWO

9. What is the most stressful part of your job? Why?

10. What is the most rewarding part of your job? Why?

11. What results are you hoping for from implementing the new curriculum?

12. What fears or hesitations do you have about implementing the new curriculum?

Appendix D

Teacher Reflection Journal

Please circle the number associated with the statement that most aligns with your feelings regarding the circle time lessons and work periods in your classroom today.

Date: _____

1. Today was highly unsuccessful

2. Today was somewhat unsuccessful

3. Today was neither successful nor unsuccessful

4. Today was somewhat successful

5. Today was highly successful

Please offer a brief explanation of the number you selected:

Other Reflections:

Appendix E

Classroom Observation Form

Observer:_____ Date:_____ Time started:_____ Time ended:_____

I am observing in (Circle One) Classroom: 1 2 3   Number of students present:_____

Sample of Work Engagement of Students
- **After the initial transition from circle time to work time**, observe for two minutes or until you have counted each student once
- Tally each category observed; one tally mark per student

Directly after circle lesson Time_____	**Engaging in Work**	**Using Work as a Prop**	**Choosing Work**	**Receiving Help**	**Wandering/ Interfering**	**Behaving Disruptively**
	Engaging in age-appropriate and concentrated work independently or in presentation	Not engaging with material in front of him/her	In process of selecting and/or setting up work	Consulting with or receiving direction from a teacher	Moving aimlessly or conversing without focus	Yelling, defiant, leaving room, obvious misuse of materials
Tally Marks						
Totals						

Have any students chosen shelf work that corresponds with the current curriculum focus area? If so, please describe the work.

Are there any things you've observed that you would like to incorporate in your own classroom?

General Comments/ Observations:

Sample of Work Engagement of Students (Repeated)

- **Approximately 30 minutes after transition from circle to work time** or at the conclusion of your observation, observe for two additional minutes or until you have counted each student once.
- Tally each category observed; one tally mark per student

30 min. after circle lesson Time_____	**Engaging in Work**	**Using Work as a Prop**	**Choosing Work**	**Receiving Help**	**Wandering/ Interfering**	**Behaving Disruptively**
	Engaging in age-appropriate and concentrated work independently or in presentation	Not engaging with material in front of him/her	In process of selecting and/or setting up work	Consulting with or receiving direction from a teacher	Moving aimlessly or conversing without focus	Yelling, defiant, leaving room, obvious misuse of materials
Tally Marks						
Totals						

Appendix F

Teacher Discussion Group Questionnaire
(Questions to be asked at the end of each week during the intervention)

1. Did the order of the lessons flow smoothly this week? What worked well and what did not work well?

2. Is there anything we want to change in the curriculum?

3. How much time/energy/stress did you put into lesson planning this week?

4. How much time/energy/stress did you put into shelf work this week?

5. Do you feel your efforts led to success?

6. How is each teaching team choosing to share the responsibilities of lesson planning and teaching? What's working and what isn't working for each team?

7. What other comments or concerns do you have about this week?

Post Teacher Discussion Group Questionnaire Reflection
(Questions to be answered by the primary researcher in a personal journal after each focus group)

Date of Meeting: _____ Time Begun: _____ Time Ended: _____

Circle who was in attendance at today's meeting:

SS   KR   BF   LB   BV   EE   AT

1. Circle which questions were discussed at this week's meeting 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Did any questions cause venting or frustrations? Which ones? Explain the concerns.

3. Did any questions elicit productive feedback? Which ones? Explain the feedback.

4. Did any questions spark a change for next week's curriculum? Which ones? Explain the changes.

5. What other reflections do you have about the meeting?