

2013

CONNECTING SCHOOL AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS TO STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE: AN EMPOWERING INTERVENTION

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CONNECTING SCHOOL AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS TO STUDENTS IN
FOSTER CARE: AN EMPOWERING INTERVENTION

BY

TONYA GLANTZ

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

AND

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

2013

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ABSTRACT

Barriers to collaboration between professionals in the school and child welfare systems are impeded by poor communication, a lack of cross-disciplinary language, and confusion regarding professional practices. This study, the Education Collaboration Project (ECP), addresses the importance of understanding school success for students in foster care through the voices and actions of the key constituent groups: students with foster care histories and professionals from the school and child welfare systems. Also included in a small component of this study were foster parents who participated via an anonymous survey. The theoretical framework combined critical pedagogy, elements of critical discourse analysis, adaptive change theory, and communities of practice (COP) theories from which an empowering intervention emerged. Within this study, the intervention was delivered through a graduate course, *Connecting Public School and Child Welfare Systems to Children in Foster Care* cross-disciplinary, where students with foster care histories and professionals from school and child welfare systems united in shared problem solving and action to promote school success. The methodology was predominately qualitative but was enhanced by the use of surveys and a modified Q-sort method. The study and its empowering intervention allowed for a transformative process where participants evolved from disconnected youth, school, and child welfare Education Collaboration Project (ECP) participants to collective ECP participants and finally emerged as members of the Education Collaboration-Community of Practice (ECP-COP). Perhaps the most important conclusion of this study is that cross-system collaboration is both an empowering intervention and an advocacy strategy, and is necessary for addressing the needs of students in foster care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my husband Jeffrey and our children, Jacob and Ella, for their support and many sacrifices during this long process. Without you, I would not have been able to finish this journey. All of the work I did is a testament to the strength of our family and our love for each other. I share this accomplishment with you. I also want to acknowledge my parents, Cheryl and George, and my in-laws, Muriel and Ronnie, whose cheerleading, phone calls, and encouragement kept me moving forward.

I want to express my appreciation to my graduate assistants Joshua Wizer-Vecchi, Morgan Fuchs, and Stephanie Blake whose dedication and commitment helped to make the Education Collaboration Project meaningful. This dissertation and the good that will come from it also merits acknowledgement of all the Education Collaboration Projects participants from the Voice, the Central Falls School System, and the Department of Children, Youth and Families. My research was further enhanced through funding from Casey Family Services and the resources of Foster Forward, both of which made it possible to provide stipends to the youth in my study. Additional thanks goes to the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School for awarding me a graduate research grant that afforded me the resources to purchase equipment and to meet the expenses associated with conducting my research through Rhode Island College's Continuing Education Program.

My research and personal growth during this process is a reflection of the excellent faculty who supported my dissertation through their participation on my committee. Sue Pearlmuter and Diane Martel, you have been mentors, friends and helped me to hold true to my social work values. Carolyn Panofsky, thank you for the

many lessons in doing good qualitative research and for being a wonderful role model. Vanessa Quainoo, your attention to the voices of the most vulnerable affirmed my commitment to this research and to future endeavors. Minsuk Shim, you have been a wonderful teacher and I have benefitted from your feedback and support over these many years. To all of my committee members, thank you for all of your support.

My last note of gratitude goes to David Brell, my committee chair. You have been a teacher, a friend, a voice of reason, and a great champion of my work. I can never repay your many kindnesses, your patience, or your honesty. For the past seven years, you have been a steady presence on this long journey and your presence has made all the difference. Because of your support and advocacy, I have grown tremendously and have been able to reach this very important milestone. Thank you for helping me to become a better writer, a better thinker, and someone who crosses the finish line. Everyone should be so fortunate to have a chair who gives as much as you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

See Me, Hear Me, Understand Me: Education Matters:

Maggie. Growing up in foster care and without support for academic success contributes to generational cycles of disempowerment and life-long struggles for youth.

After a long awaited return home to her mother, step-father, and siblings, Maggie leaves behind five foster care and residential placements and several schools. Maggie is excited to live the life of a child who is not in foster care. Her dream of living with her family and attending a community school is finally realized. Despite her emotional and learning needs, Maggie aspires to join the US Air Force and attend college. Unfortunately, the joy of Maggie's reunification is quickly replaced by the trauma of another removal when she discloses repeated instances of sexual abuse by her step-father.

Upon re-entry into the foster care system, Maggie spends over three months in a shelter, where her enrollment in a new school district is delayed by several weeks. The task of school enrollment is met with confusion regarding who, child welfare or the shelter staff, is responsible. Despite laws and policies allowing for Maggie's school enrollment, the school claims that Maggie lacks the correct paperwork to be enrolled. By the time Maggie is allowed to attend school, she is emotionally exhausted, worried about her family, and unsure of her future. Maggie's emotional trauma manifests in her special education classroom through claims of sexual activity with fellow students and pregnancy fantasies. School staff are unprepared for and uncomfortable with Maggie's

behavior. Just as Maggie begins to become stabilized, she is placed in a treatment foster home and moved to another state and a new school. Maggie will move to at least three more homes and schools before she ages out of care. She will have a baby before she turns 18; she will be forced to rely on public assistance to support herself and her child and inevitably, with no place to live, she will return to her family home where she was abused.

Tray. Growing up in care and without support for academic success isolates and shakes a youth's confidence in their future.

As a young man who grew up in care due to a combination of child welfare and juvenile justice challenges, Tray remembers feeling different. These differences were especially evident in schools where Tray's identity as a student in foster care was not always conveyed to school staff. When his foster-care status was discovered, more often than not it resulted in stigma and blame instead of support and understanding. Feeling different from peers is hard when all you want to do is fit in. Feeling different from other students is challenging when you want your teacher to understand the real reason you have trouble paying attention in school, why your homework is not done, or your need for more support. Communicating the reason for feeling different is even harder to do for yourself than it would be if your child welfare worker and school staff had a collaborative relationship and understood how to support your school needs.

Despite his desire to be successful in school, Tray ultimately gives up trying to find ways to fit in at his public school. His behaviors and educational needs cause him to be placed in a treatment program where he lives and attends school. Tray seems certain that what he was learning in his public school was richer and based on higher

expectations than the content taught in his program school. He is fairly certain that there will be consequences for missing out on a public school education. In the end, for Tray it is easier (maybe safer and less painful too) to be with other youth who do not live with their families and have similar worries. It is easier still to be surrounded by staff who are aware of his unique needs and are ready to offer support instead of judgment.

Ruby. Growing up in care and without support for academic success forces youth to find ways to get their needs met, even when it means breaking rules and risking personal safety.

When Ruby is removed from her family's home and placed in a group home on the other side of the state; she longs for the one place where she feels safe and good about herself. She longs to be back at her old school. Ruby is a hard-working student with aspirations of going to college. She had staff in her school who were invested in her academic and life success. Despite her best efforts to advocate for herself and the importance of staying in her same school, it is deemed to be in Ruby's best interest to enroll in a new high school. She researches bus routes from her new community to her old school and is willing to get up at 5:00 am to be ready for the first of two busses that it will take to get to and from school. However, the professionals in Ruby's life tell her the commute will be too hard on her and that it is best if she just attends the new school. Despite several additional efforts to advocate and offer plans in support of returning to her old school, Ruby's pleas go unanswered. In the meantime, Ruby's enrollment in her new school is delayed due to missing paperwork and misunderstandings about her right to be enrolled. During this time, Ruby is expected to remain in the group home and wait.

When Ruby is finally enrolled in her new school, her daily absence is reported to her group home staff. Instead of going to her new school, Ruby gets up every morning and takes two buses to get to her old school, where she is not allowed to enter because she is no longer a student there. Inevitably Ruby is given consequences for her behavior, but at every opportunity she will repeat the behavior. Eventually, the professionals involved with Ruby realize that she is serious and committed to doing whatever it takes to get to her old school, where she feels she belongs. Ruby returns to her old school briefly. Unfortunately, when her group home placement changes a few months later, she is moved to yet another school. Once at the new school, Ruby is exhausted and no longer tries to go back to her old school. Despite feeling somewhat defeated and lost, Ruby makes a connection to a teacher who understands why Ruby is behind in school, sees her potential and makes a commitment to catching Ruby up for her junior year and to seeing her graduate.

Evelyn. Growing up in care and without support for academic success causes youth to miss out on their potential and leaves them asking why no one cared.

As the oldest child of parents struggling with addiction, mental health illness, and criminal behavior, Evelyn spends most of her time running her home and caring for her younger sibling. Evelyn's sibling's special needs require special care and Evelyn rises to this challenge with great care and love. Unfortunately, Evelyn enters care shortly after the incarceration of one of her parents and a finding of abuse and neglect on the other. Being placed in a group home is difficult but nothing compared to Evelyn's sense of loss and worry due to her separation from her sibling. Despite being

enrolled in school, Evelyn's school activity consists of entering the front door and immediately leaving through the back door. The importance of school pales in comparison to Evelyn's need to make sure her sibling is alright and taking care of her mother, who is still living in their old apartment.

At the age of 18, Evelyn's reading level is that of a third grader and she has missed most of her high school education. However, on a warm day in June, Evelyn is awarded a high school diploma. It is not until a good three years later that Evelyn realizes the full impact of her lost education. In a group discussion, with a look of sadness and confusion on her face Evelyn says, "Do you know that some mothers read to their babies before they are even born, when they're in the stomach? No one ever did that for me. Why didn't anyone care or miss me when I wasn't in school? By myself, I was more worried about my brother than staying at school. But a grown-up should have cared. Now I'm twenty-something; I can only read as good as a third grader; I want to go to college and do things but I know my brain isn't as smart as other kids my age. It's just not fair."

The stories of Maggie, Tray, Ruby and Evelyn are but a few of thousands belonging to children and youth in foster care. While Maggie, Tray, Ruby, and Evelyn's losses cannot be undone, we can learn from them how to avoid losses and build opportunities for future children and youth in foster care through school success.

These stories convey a few of the challenges that youth experience when they cannot achieve school success is challenged due to their foster care status. The stories also raise these important questions:

What are the consequences for students in foster care when we fail to consider the importance of their school needs along with those of personal safety and permanence?

What are the consequences to the quality of life for students in foster care when professionals in child welfare and school systems lack a shared awareness and sense of responsibility for their school success?

Speaking broadly, the following study attempts to answer these two orienting questions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Collaboration between professionals in the public school and child welfare systems is impeded by poor communication, a lack of cross-disciplinary language, and confusion regarding professional practices. The resulting failure of these professional groups to collaborate has adverse implications for the educational experiences of students in the foster care system. The evaluation of school success for students in foster care is incomplete due to an excessive focus on traditional academic outcomes. This traditional focus fails to consider fully the processes, systems, and professionals that impact academic achievement. This study addresses the importance of understanding school success for students in foster care through the voices and actions of the key constituent groups: students with foster care history and professionals from school and child welfare systems. In this study, a cross-disciplinary method of training serves as the forum for joining students in foster care with school and child welfare professionals in shared problem solving and action to promote school success.

While many perceive the charge of professionals school and child welfare systems to be different, this study seeks to link the two institutions through their service

to an overlapping client group. While the public school and child welfare systems are separate, they do serve a shared population, students in foster care, and are thus linked. In January 2012, there were approximately 1,647 children and youth between the ages of 6 and 17 in foster care (RI Kids Count, 2012). Of the total number of children and youth in foster care, 59% were school aged. Nationally, students in foster care account for approximately 1% of the K - 12 school population (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007). Students in foster care are school-aged children and youth, the overwhelming majority of whom have histories of maltreatment (abuse and neglect) within their family. This maltreatment has resulted in child welfare involvement and placement in foster care. Students' emotional trauma compounds as a result of their maltreatment, removal from parents, and placement in foster care (Altshuler, 2003; Finkelstein, Walmsley, & Miranda, 2002). Unfortunately, placement in foster care often exacerbates traumatic responses, which in turn can affect students' emotional and behavioral reactions in both foster care and educational settings. These emotional and behavioral needs have profound implications for students' academic achievement and success in school (Wulczyn, Smithgall, & Chen, 2009). Students in foster care rank lower on academic performance, grade retention, and drop-out rates than their non-foster involved peers. These students are also over-represented in special education as compared to their non-foster care peers (Geenan & Powers, 2006; Finkelstein, et al., 2002).

Due to their heightened vulnerability, students in foster care depend upon the support of professionals from the public school and the child welfare systems for stability and access to education. Regrettably, recent studies of students in foster care

(Altshuler, 2003; Bronstein, 2003; Fast, 2003) suggest the absence of shared perceptions and responses by the two professional groups that students in foster care most depend on. These same studies identify issues of territorial behavior (one group values its perspective and practices over the other group) and poor communication as major challenges. In addition to school and child welfare challenges, the vulnerability of this student group is exacerbated by poverty, minority status, and membership in impoverished communities (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011). These challenges limit opportunities for collaboration and can adversely impact the availability of services and supports for this vulnerable group (Altshuler, 2003; Fast, 2003; Wulczyn, et al., 2009).

In light of the school and child welfare systems sharing this client population, it is important to understand the needs of these professionals as providers of services to students with foster care histories. Like their students, professionals working in school and child welfare systems are deeply, if indirectly, affected by issues of student trauma, poverty, and other socio-economic factors such as race and ethnicity (Lagana-Riordan & Aguilar, 2009; Wulczyn, et al., 2009). These factors introduce obvious issues of power and access for students and professionals in school and child welfare systems. A second layer of adversity exists in relation to legislative *reform* efforts in education and child welfare. Within the education and child welfare disciplines, there have been concurrent reform efforts that impact students in foster care directly: in education, the No Child Left Behind Act (US Department of Education, 2004); and in child welfare, the Child and Family Services Review (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Some of the unintended consequences of these alleged reforms within

these two systems include the disenfranchisement of professionals as experts in their fields of practice, the use of punitive measures and sanctions to mandate compliance with change, and the loss of professional and client voices to inform change (Cohen, Elena, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Public Education Network, 2006).

Attention to professional and student disempowerment in response to these collective socio-economic and political challenges is essential to exploring barriers to school success for students in foster care. Due to issues of constituent power and powerlessness, it was important to situate my research within theoretical and methodological frameworks that acknowledge the diminished status of these constituents and seek to promote their power. This study thus endeavored to insure attention to the needs of all three constituent groups and to afford opportunities to explore and develop collaboration across the three constituent systems.

INTERVENTION

The intervention was a graduate course at Rhode Island College, *Connecting Public School and Child Welfare Systems to Students in Foster Care*. Participants included professionals from school and child welfare systems who received three graduate credits for completing the process. Four youth with foster care histories also completed the course. These participants were ineligible for college credits; however, they received hourly compensation for their attendance. The intervention, referred to as the Education Collaboration Project (ECP), occurred over thirteen sessions. The purpose of these sessions and the related data collection was to evaluate changes in the groups' individual and collective perceptions of roles and responsibilities with regard to students in foster care. The facilitation of the training, oversight of data collection, and

analysis were my responsibility. Additional support for this project came from a combination of graduate and undergraduate assistants. The intervention was organized into three components (1) *defining group identities* (two training sessions), (2) *sharing and comparing group identities* (two training sessions), and (3) creating an *Education Collaboration Project-Community of Practice* (nine training sessions). Throughout the ECP intervention, it was hoped that the identity and function of participants would evolve from first, individual student, school and child welfare ECP participants, then to united ECP participants, and finally to an Education Collaboration Project-Community of Practice (ECP-COP).

Defining group identities: This initial component focused on defining the identities of student, school and child welfare ECP participants and was delivered over the course of two training sessions. Identities were defined within the context of Shor's (1992, p. 44) problem posing approach and informed by Wenger's *Communities of Practices* (1998), which used promoting school success for students in foster care as the target of the problem. Data gathered during these two sessions were transcribed, coded and analyzed.

Sharing and comparing group identities: The next component moved beyond a focus on student, school and child welfare ECP participants' perspectives toward a collective ECP participant awareness. It was delivered over the course of two training sessions and continued the information-building by allowing participants to acknowledge commonalities and differences among the three participant groups. Data were qualitative in nature and were transcribed, coded and analyzed. These sessions moved ECP participants toward a collective sense of knowing through the mutual

synthesis of information by all constituents (Shor, 1992, p. 202; Wenger, 1998, pp. 62-69).

Education collaboration project-community of practice (ECP-COP): The final component involved the creation of shared awareness and responsibility across the ECP-COP with an emphasis on action. This final aspect of the intervention was the most intense, and was delivered over the course of nine sessions. ECP-COP members began to work together to identify challenges and opportunities to improve school success for students in foster care. Data collected during this final step included discourse, post-*Collaboration Survey*, post-*Narrative Essay* and post-Q-sort responses. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Overall data analysis was enhanced not only by monitoring changes to ongoing discourse, collection of post-measures, and the ECP-COP's community presentation and recommendations to improve school success for students in foster care.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. In the absence of shared communication and collaboration, how did student, school, and child welfare ECP participants define their roles and responsibilities in relation to the needs of students in foster care?
2. Over the course of the training how did issues of group agency and empowerment evolve with regard to language, perceptions, and responses related to the needs of students with foster care history?
3. At the end of the interviews, focus groups, and training, how and to what extent did each of the student, school, and child welfare ECP participants' understanding of their roles, responsibilities, needs, and problem-solving

capabilities moved from away from distinct student, school, and child welfare ECP identities toward a shared or overlapping ECP-COP identity?

Given the exploratory and dialogical nature of these questions, this study employed a qualitative methodology. Its data collection tools included pre- and post- *Collaboration Surveys*, *Narrative Essay* responses and a modified Q-sort method. These data were further supported through the analysis of segments of discourse taken at key points in the intervention process, which served to triangulate these qualitative data. These combined tools helped to assess changes related to constituent identity, collaboration and action over the course of the intervention. Previous research on school success for students in foster care offers evidence of the diminished value and limited involvement of key constituents: students in foster care and professionals from school and child welfare systems, as resources for creating improvements (Altshuler, 2003; Finkelstein, Wamsley, Currie & Miranda, 2004; Geenan & Powers, 2006; Luder, Weinberg and Zetlin, 2004). Understanding the individual and collective experiences of youth, school, and child welfare ECP participants and engaging them as problem solvers was essential in moving toward improvements to school success for students in foster care. I intentionally selected theories and constructed a qualitative methodology to reveal and validate the youth, school, and child welfare ECP participants' experiences, which included issues of social, political, and economic injustice. Exploring the individual and collective voices of these key participants in relation to school success became possible through the combination of several theoretical constructs including (1) critical pedagogy (Freire, 1994; Shor, 1992) and elements of critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2005, Rogers, 2004; Scollon, 2001), (2) adaptive

change theory (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 2001), and (3) the communities of practice model (Wenger, 1998).

RATIONALE

After two decades of struggling to understand barriers to collaboration between school and child welfare systems and the resulting isolation of students in foster care, I wanted to be part of the solution. As a developer of child welfare training curricula, I spent the last decade designing and delivering a variety of collaboration-related trainings to professionals in varied human service and school settings. Through these experiences, I came to recognize professional development and training as a resource for the co-education of professionals from school and child welfare systems. This study offered me a more in-depth and research-driven approach for exploring training as a resource for connecting school and child welfare professionals to school success for students in foster care through a shared awareness and response. More specifically, by utilizing participatory action research (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Spradley, 1980), I was able to become directly involved in the research process as its facilitator and a partner in the intervention (participant) and an observer and documenter of the process (researcher). This dual role afforded opportunities for me to learn from the participants while modeling empowering and inclusive behavior to facilitate cross-system collaboration. As the participant-observer, I was careful to maintain an awareness of the challenges that emerge from being situated within one's own research, which I discuss in the section that follows.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations associated with this research include challenges to the trustworthiness of my research findings and their relevance to the broader issue. The first potential limitation is reflected in my dual role as researcher and participant-observer, which can pose threats to the neutrality of data (Guba, 1981; Stenton, 2004). My dual role was carefully managed to monitor researcher bias related to the facilitation of interviews, focus groups, and delivery of training, as well as the analysis of data. This limitation is unavoidable when conducting participatory observation and action research (Spradley, 1980). However, attention to this challenge was built into the design of the study. Specifically, through the collection of pre- and post-data measures and the ongoing collection of participant discourse, there were numerous opportunities to triangulate data. Data triangulation occurred through digitally-recorded audio interactions, photographs, and participants' written responses to the pre- and post-*Collaboration Survey*, *Narrative Essay* exercises, and modified Q-sort data, which were reviewed not only by me but also by my three research assistants. This collaborative review of data allowed for inter-rater reliability. Despite the challenge of being both researcher and participant-observer, my dual role was important for modeling relationship-building and communication through posing problems, re-presenting constituent discourses, and assisting with the synthesis of multiple discourses into a collective discourse. My decision to use participant action research (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Spradley, 1980) was necessary to form relationships with participants and to model the skills of inclusion and empowerment related by my eclectic theoretical

framework (Freire, 1994; Gee, 2011; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Rogers, 2004; Scollon, 2001; Shor, 1992; Wenger, 1998).

Second, sample size and selection methods are important factors to consider in qualitative research. Given my low sample size and use of convenience sampling there were obvious threats to what Guba (1981) terms "true value and applicability trustworthiness." Despite this potential limitation, the credibility of the sample of participants in this study was representative of other public, urban schools challenged by poverty, minority racial and ethnic over-representation, and high rates of child welfare involvement. In addition, school professionals included representatives from elementary, middle, and high school grades to insure a broader representation of school professionals working with students of differing ages. Despite stated limitations, given that demographic characteristics between the study's sample of students with foster care history and child welfare professionals mirrored those of other states, which may contribute to this research being used for joining other school and child welfare systems in support of school success for students in foster care.

Third, in support of the applicability, my data findings related to subject perceptions of others, of systems, and of barriers parallel those of previous research studies. This consistency upholds the legitimacy of these findings within my research and makes them relevant to similar populations. Because I have not encountered other research that has utilized my same empowering intervention or collective focus on problem solving, I must raise the question of applicability of findings related to the problem solving data. Given the applicability of the first segment of perception and

problem identification data, I would argue that the full complement of data are worthy of consideration by other researchers and settings.

Fourth, the final challenge to the trustworthiness of my data is represented by questions of consistency. Can my study be replicated with the same outcomes being sustained? At this time, I am unaware of any other study that mirrors my approach and data collection methods. Because of the intensity and duration of the training intervention and praxis process, replicating this study could be challenging. However, I intend to share my findings in the hopes of offering new approaches to colleagues in education and child welfare. I hope to replicate this study myself in the near future and look forward to evaluating the consistency of my findings.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The study, a lesson for how and why cross-system collaboration training supports school success for students in foster care, reveals itself over eight chapters. Chapter one offered an overview of school success and its impact on students in foster care. In this chapter the important roles of professionals from schools and child welfare along with those of students with foster history were identified as the core focus of this study. Chapter two offers a literature review on the professional and systemic factors impacting the academic success of students in foster care as well as an overview of the theories that inform my eclectic theoretical framework. Chapter three provides an in-depth explanation of the study's methodology. Chapters four through seven address data and analysis. Chapter four offers information in support of research methods related to the setting, recruitment, attrition, and participant demographics. Chapter five presents research findings with attention to the unique experiences and perceptions of students,

school, and child welfare ECP participants' understanding of school success for students in foster care, relationships and roles. Chapter six explores connections between the empowering intervention and the evolution of identity and collaboration for ECP participants. Chapter seven reflects on the emergence of a community of practice and the evolution of identity, the willingness to collaborate, and mutual confidence in the need for shared action. Finally, chapter eight provides a summary of consequences and implications from the study with suggestions for continued research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Understanding challenges to school success for students in foster care requires a comprehensive inquiry into the experiences of key constituents: students with foster care histories and the professionals from school and child welfare systems who serve them. This inquiry requires careful definition of terms and a review of the relevant research and literature relating to the individual overlapping roles of the three constituent groups. This combined information is essential to determining a proposed theoretical framework to fully understand and respond to the complexities related to school success for students in foster care.

OVERVIEW: TERMINOLOGY

An important starting point for this inquiry is the creation of terms or common language. The absence of terms whose meanings are shared by school and child welfare professionals was a contributing factor dividing the professionals and impeding efforts to school success for students in foster care (Coulling, 2000; Courtney, Roderick, Smithgall, Gladden, & Nagaoka, 2004; Leone & Weinberg, 2010; Wulczyn, et al., 2009). In this study, the terms *child welfare system*, *school professionals*, *foster care* and *school success* provide insight into the constituent groups and their connections to each other.

Systems and professionals. Shared terminology, or its absence, was a source of conflict as professionals attempted to jointly respond to the needs of students in foster care. The phrase *school professionals* represents the combination of teachers, administrators, school social workers, and guidance counselors who work in the state's

public school system. These professionals provide various school-based services to students in foster care. *Child welfare system* and *child welfare professionals* refers to the public child welfare (CW) system and its case management staff. CW is the state agency responsible for investigating abuse and neglect and insuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth who are in the custody of the child welfare system, which extends to insuring access to educational opportunities. Together schools and child welfare systems play an important role in stabilizing the lives of students in foster care and preparing them for their futures as adults in society.

Student experiences. *Foster care* is a child welfare phrase used to represent placement options for children and youth who have been removed from their parents or guardian's care due to maltreatment. Placement options can include relative foster care, non-relative foster care, group homes, shelters, clinical residential care, and, in some states, juvenile correctional facilities. Within this exploratory study, foster care was an inclusive term for all of these placement options. *School success* is the phrase that defines components of academic achievement for students in foster care. School success includes academic performance in reading and math; school attendance; matriculation to or retention of grade placement; progress in meeting these students' social, emotional, behavioral, and learning needs as reflected in Individualized Education Plans; and, especially relevant to students in foster care, the number of foster and school placements in a year (Altshuler, 2003; Finkelstein, et al., 2002; Wulczyn, et al., 2009;). These terms provide a context for understanding the constituent groups in this study: students with foster care history and professionals from school and child welfare systems.

STUDENTS WITH FOSTER CARE HISTORIES: THE ORIGINS OF THEIR STRUGGLE

Trauma. Understanding the academic experiences and outcomes for these students requires attention to the ongoing role of trauma from maltreatment and loss as it manifests in school settings. Students in foster care are school-aged children and youth who have histories of maltreatment (abuse and neglect) within their family, often at the hands of parents and/or caretakers. Maltreatment can result in child welfare involvement and students' placement in foster care. Student's emotional trauma compounds as a result of their maltreatment, removal from parents, and placement in foster care (Altshuler, 2003; Finkelstein, et al., 2002). While foster care settings vary, but they are not a child's family, home, or, in most cases, community, all of which are usually lost by the child upon their removal from home. Often among these lost connections is the child's ability to remain in the same school setting. While CW policies and practices include expectations that professionals will meet the educational needs of students in foster care, the reality often falls short of this expectation (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

These losses can contribute to students being characterized as distracted, withdrawn, or incapable. In Finkelstein et al.'s (2002) interviews with 25 children in foster care, participants described school distraction in relation to worries about whether family connections would remain and concerns about who would care for younger siblings. These participants identified fears regarding having their foster care status discovered as a cause for their social isolation from peers and teachers. When students in foster care are unable to manage traumatic histories, these experiences are likely to

manifest in either external aggressiveness or self-injurious behaviors, which further contribute to social and academic stigma (Finkelstein, et al., 2002; Smithgall, Gladden, & George, 2005). The lives of these students reflect histories of abuse, neglect, and loss that are exacerbated with their entrance into foster care and movement through school systems (Leiter & Johnsen, 1997; Wulczyn, et al., 2009).

Academic performance. Unfortunately, placement in foster care often exacerbates traumatic responses, which in turn can affect students' emotional and behavioral reactions in educational settings. These emotional and behavioral needs have profound implications for students' academic achievement (Leiter & Johnsen, 1997; Scherr, 2007; Wulczyn, et al., 2009; Zetlin, et al., 2010). Students in foster care rank significantly worse on academic performance, grade retention, and drop-out rates than their non-foster involved peers (Casey Family Programs, 2003; Smithgall, et al., 2004; Zeitlin, et al.). Studies indicate that approximately 75% of students in foster care perform below grade level; more than 50% of these students have been held back for a minimum of one grade (Scherr; Smithgall, et al.). These students are also over-represented in special education as compared to their non-foster care peers (Scherr,; Geenan & Powers, 2006; Finkelstein, et al., 2002). Clearly, the academic disadvantages for these students far surpass those of students who are not in foster care. Trauma related to students' emotional and behavioral needs manifests in school to negatively impact their school success.

Schools are often unprepared to deal with or respond to the emotional and behavioral fallout from a student's child welfare involvement, and the result can be devastating for students (Scherr, 2007; Wucyzn, et al, 2009;). When students act out or

engage in self-injurious behaviors, school professionals often lack the preparation to understand or respond to the behaviors without re-traumatizing or stigmatizing the student (Altshuler, 2003; Wulczyn, et al.). Instead, school responses are more likely to involve disciplinary actions, including school removal and labeling, further diminishing academic success (Altshuler; Scherr; Festinger, 1983).

Poor academic achievement has implications for the future prosperity of students in foster care (Leone & Weinberg, 2010; Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004; Wulczyn, et al., 2009), and graduation rates for this population nationally stand at 46% (Walker and Smithgall, 2009; Scherr, 2007; Smithgall, et al., 2004). Students in foster care often exit child welfare and education systems without sufficient supports to help them transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency. Therefore, securing productive academic experiences and ensuring academic success are even more critical to the future of students with foster care histories (Courtney, et al., 2007; Geenan & Powers, 2006). When schools fail to be safe places and launching pads for students, they become one more place of uncertainty and risk (Finkelstein, et al., 2002). School success and completion of high school are recognized as essential pre-requisites for positive adult outcomes associated with economic self-sufficiency and the ability to meet one's other basic needs (Geenan & Powers, 2006; Leone & Weinberg, 2010; Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). As if the pain of maltreatment and school challenge were not enough, the demographics for students in foster care portray a picture of youth who are among the country's most disenfranchised due to poverty and/or racial-ethnic minority status (Leone & Weinberg, 2010; Walker & Smithgall, 2009; Wulczyn, et al., 2009; Chipungu and Bent-Goodley, 2004).

Over-representation. Students with foster care histories have been the focus of research for well over three decades. One of the earliest longitudinal studies (Fanshel & Shin, 1978) revealed the vulnerability of this student population in terms of their maltreatment, foster care experiences, and over-representation with regard to minority racial-ethnic status and poverty. Issues of over-representation have remained constant during the last 30 years and need to be recognized as an additional layer of challenge in the lives of students with foster care histories (Altshuler, 1997; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011; Dworsky, Cusick, Havelick, Perez, & Keller, 2007; Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004; Geenan & Powers, 2006; Leiter & Johnson, 1994; Luder, Weinberg, & Zeltin, 2004; Zeltin & Weinberg, 2004;). These challenges move beyond the individual experience of the student to manifest within public schools in urban communities.

PROFESSIONALS IN SCHOOL AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS:

VICTIMS IN THE STRUGGLE

The consequences of poverty and racial-ethnic inequality in urban schools has been showcased in many arenas. Authors (Kotlowitz, 1992; Kozol, 1991; Le Blanc, 2003) depict the bleak realities of families affected by poverty, minority status, and other social challenges. The premise of early public education as a source of equal access and opportunity (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) offers an ironic and sad contrast when held against the social inequalities that contribute to further loss of access and equal opportunity for many communities and schools (Ravitch, 2010; Kozol, 1991). Berliner and Biddle (1995) highlight the dynamic between poverty and challenges in education: “the larger the proportion of citizens who live in poverty, the greater the challenge for

public schools” (p. 220). We also know that there is a link between poverty, school quality, and student performance. According to Rhode Island Kids Count (2006), “Children in poverty are more likely to have health and behavioral problems, experience difficulties in school. Children in low-income communities are more likely to attend schools that lack resources and rigor” (p. 32).

Despite the evidence of these stark realities, decades have passed without any real social change or improvement for this growing population of students, which seems to signify a great divide between people, classes, and races. Current legislation guiding the school and child welfare systems not only impacts this vulnerable student group and limits the roles of school and child welfare professionals. The study of professional and student disempowerment in response to these collective socio-economic and political challenges is essential to exploring barriers to school success for students in foster care. Efforts at reform related to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) will continue to victimize those with no power, until reform in schools and the child welfare system reflects the voices of the least powerful (Anyon, 2006, as cited in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006, p. 30; Wulczyn, et al., 2009;).

LITERATURE REVIEW: PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND WHY IT IS NOT ENOUGH

A brief exploration of past research further frames barriers to school success for students in foster care and what appears to be an incomplete approach to addressing and resolving the issue. Dating back to the late 1970s, the earliest research on this subject, Fanshel and Shinn’s (1978) longitudinal analysis of child welfare data, identified the social, emotional, and political problems of over-representation and exacerbated

challenges to school success. This seminal research informs our understanding of the problem historically and today. Unfortunately, newer research continues to verify the existence of the problem and the barriers to progress without full attention to the role of the core constituents in (1) understanding the problem and (2) constructing meaningful solutions to the problem. By continuing to leave issues of constituent oppression and isolation unaddressed, past research unintentionally reinforces the underlying dynamics of power and oppression (Carroll & Minkler, 2000; Freire, 1994). For example, researchers whose studies use school records or child welfare files to document the extent of the problem and the professional and systemic barriers miss critical elements only obtainable from constituent voices (Geenan & Powers, 2006; Luder, et al., 2004). Given the power issues, the absence of constituent voices introduces a challenge to grasping the full nature of the problem from all the relevant perspectives. Equally limiting are those studies where the voices of key constituents do constitute a source for data collection but where the focus continues to be defining the problem without fully exploring the solutions. Finkelstein, Wamsley, Currie, & Miranda (2004) used interviews with adolescents and program staff to investigate the reasons for youth running away from foster care. Altshuler's (2003) focus-group research with students in foster care and professionals in school and child welfare systems came the closest to seeking out a full complement of feedback from constituents. However, while she succeeded in revealing mutual instances of disempowerment and power struggles among the core constituents, Altshuler stopped short of using these mutual discourses to co-inform constituents or to provide an opportunity for their empowerment or action.

The research cited here offers insight into important work that has provided valuable information about a problem. However, more work is needed to document models of empowerment and accompanying interventions for those constituents whose roles and experiences are defined by this issue, hopefully moving toward a more authentic understanding of the problem and its solution.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONSIDERING AND RESPONDING TO POWER AND OPPRESSION

The literature review supports the necessity of a theoretical framework that addresses the complex issues of oppression and professional practice across the education and child welfare systems. The heightened vulnerability of students in foster care and the resulting systemic and professional struggles experienced by professionals in school and child welfare system require a theoretical framework reflective of the power, oppression, and reciprocity among constituents. My theoretical framework reflects a synthesis of theories including (1) critical pedagogy (Freire, 1994; Shor, 1992) and elements of critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2005; Rogers, 2004; Scollon, 2001), (2) adaptive change (Heifetz, Gadshow, & Linsky, 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 2001), and (3) communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Together these frameworks provide important support for understanding and responding to school success for students in foster care.

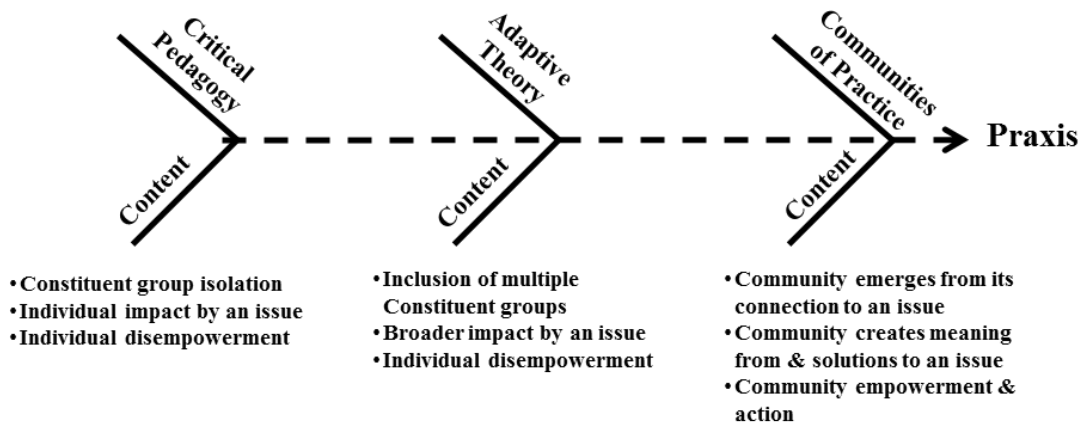


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework and Constituent Context Continuum

Figure 1 represents the three core theoretical frameworks at work throughout the evolution of the Education Collaboration Project (ECP) and its empowering intervention. The integration of these theories is intended to be progressive and to support changes to identity, empowerment, and agency among the ECP participants.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND DISCOURSE: UNDERSTANDING POWER AND OPPRESSION

Within this study, critical pedagogy became a resource for defining and building relationships among the constituent groups and engaging them in a process of re-defining their roles and relationships to one another. Equally important was the use of elements of critical discourse analysis as a tool for capturing the authentic voices of constituents, which in turn helped to insure that constituent voices informed an understanding of one another, the problem, and possible solutions (Rogers, 2004; Scollon, 2001; Maybin, 2001). Critical discourse analysis (Maybin, 2001; Rogers; Van Dijk, 1993) draws from critical theory and was the vehicle used to document the voices of each constituent group (Freire, 1994, p. 33; Shor, 1992, p. 22;). Because critical

discourse is particularly relevant to the methodology pursued in this study, it is explored in chapter three.

Freire's (1994) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provides a context for understanding and strengthening the intersecting relationships between the professionals in school and child welfare systems and the students with foster care history, all of whom are joined by a common theme of disempowerment. While it was my intention to pursue solutions to problems associated with school success, it would have been presumptuous of me to define the problem without attention to the concerns of those most impacted by the issue (Freire). Freire's work provides a foundation from which to identify roles and practices that emerge from the collective oppression of this study's constituents.

Freire's (1994) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* also provides a framework for understanding how oppression isolates and disempowers individuals. Freire offers steps for partnering with disempowered communities as they work toward their own empowerment. The overall process leads to what Freire refers to as liberation. Liberation marks an individual's awareness of her desire to take control in order to create justice in her life. Central to Freire's (1994, p. 31) work is the idea that this liberation is a component of a partnership, where the partner acts in solidarity with the oppressed, which promotes the sharing of the experiences of the oppressed with the teacher who becomes a partner in the oppressed person's journey to liberation.

Through the relationship that emerges, conversation or dialogue becomes the primary tool for reflection for the oppressed person to share and contemplate his experience and its relevance to the broader reality in his world. At the start of the journey, the oppressed person's level of awareness of her oppression and the inequities

in their life is submerged, buried below the surface of her ability to know. An individual's submergence is linked to the anti-dialogics sustained by those in power, an intentionally oppressive dialogue whose only purpose is to perpetuate oppression and keep the individual from becoming aware of and free from injustice (Freire, 1994, p. 27). It is the role of the partner/teacher to use dialogue, reflection, and problem-posing to invite the oppressed community into a process of deeper contemplation and challenging of past experience (Freire, 1994, pp. 61, 66). As this knowledge grows, Freire (1994, p. 33) uses the term *conscientizacio* in reference to the individual's growing critical consciousness of his life and relationship to his world.

The socially and politically unencumbered dialogue that transpires between the teacher and the oppressed person creates thematic, or patterns of experiences or individual truths that begin to expand and challenge the original constructs of the earlier submerged dialogue. Freire (1994) refers to the process by which thematic are refined into codifications. Over time, the individual's sense of knowing begins to fall away from what has constrained him and breaks through the layers of oppression to a place of understanding. This experience marks the *emergence* of the individual, who arrives at a place of personal truth and a desire to bring about justice through some form of action. Here dialogue does not simply represent the words of the oppressed individuals; instead, dialogue indicates a growing awareness of self and a commitment to one's own and others' liberation. Freire saw dialogue as a powerful force, one that equally contained the strength of language and the authority of action or praxis (transformation).

Most importantly to this study, Freire's critical pedagogy afforded a fundamental blueprint for using dialogue to deconstruct or shed light on mutual oppressed and oppressor experiences among the three constituent groups. Freire (pp. 53, 58, 61) talks about the reconciliation and authentic thinking that can only emerge when constituents are engaged in a shared exploration of what a common problem means to them. From *problem-posing* questions initiated by the teacher, constituents are invited into a conversation that has likely never before been available to them and which can result in a transformation through the reshaping of their sense of self and their place in the world (Freire, pp 109-118). In order to arrive at these important places, the use of constituent discourses is essential to creating an authentic picture of the issue. Freire (p. 33) links the emergence of constituents' new insights and sense of self with the surfacing of critical consciousness, whereby constituents emerge from a partial awareness to one that is complete and fueled by action or praxis. Freire's term, naming the world, captures the expansive impact that results from the liberation a person whose words and actions trigger change in him or herself and within the world. The idea that the impact of each person is bigger than themselves and that through each person's liberation the world can change for the better is central to Freire's message.

Ira Shor (1992, pp. 11-54) provides a concrete action plan for using Freire's (1994) critical pedagogy in a variety of contexts. Shor applies a six-part problem-posing method, which includes (1) questioning; (2) listening; (3) identifying and representing issues or problems; (4) sharing the wider scope of collective information; (5) exploring different perspectives; and (6) turning thoughts into action. It is in Shor's adaptation of Freire's work and through his work with disenfranchised students in an inner-city

community college that the more practical significance of critical theory within diverse contexts is revealed. Shor uses teacher-student partnerships and classroom dialogue as spring boards for exploring issues of student power, equality, and liberation. Shor gently provides otherwise disempowered students with a vehicle to express ideas and feelings that may have been out of reach for them. This experience affirms the student's existence and right to shape, and not simply be shaped by, the broader socio-political reality. It is from this experience that the student's self-empowerment and humanization emerge. I easily embraced Freire's passion and intensity were easily embraced for my research, and Shor's approach helped to simplify the process, which I believe was critical for my use and for the engagement of my constituent groups.

Adaptive change: Understanding the need for relationships and voice. The theory of adaptive change (Heifetz, Gashow, & Linsky, 2009; Heifetz & Laurie, 2001) represents a resource for (1) considering the implications of excluding constituent voices as sources for overcoming oppression and (2) considering the importance of using constituent voices to understand and inform change. Heifetz et al. propose that change occurs on two levels: technical and adaptive. Technical change reflects a leader-driven process, where the necessary steps for achieving change are already known and available for implementation (Heifetz et al, 2001). Within this first type of change, creating the change or addressing a problem is relatively easy to achieve, because it exists within the grasp of the organization and its constituents. Examples of technical change include creating a new form that staff are told to complete or telling staff that they must incorporate a new practice into their routine. These changes are implemented by administrators without direct input from those most impacted by the

change. Technical change is, therefore, relatively seamless and can be implemented directly by the organization's leadership with minimal loss of time or discomfort to the organization or its staff. However, failure to include the voices and ideas of the staff or clients who will be affected can and often does lead to unsuccessful implementation, directly linked to a lack of ownership by those most impacted. Furthermore, as Heifetz et al., 2009 point out, it is not uncommon for organizations or leaders to mistakenly employ technical changes for problems that require a more in-depth approach. It is for these more complicated problems that the theory of adaptive change becomes relevant.

Heifetz et al (2009) and Heifetz et al. (2001) relate adaptive change with challenges associated with constituent identity, personal competence, and issues of personal loss. In contrast to the relatively easy and direct fixes associated with technical change, adaptive change is intense and involves building and learning from diverse constituent relationships. Adaptive change relies on the diverse opinions, needs, and negotiations of each involved constituent group. These different constituent groups must jointly construct a shared vision of the problem in response to a yet unknown path to change (Fullan, 2001; Heifetz, et al.; Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). Here the process of relationship building is a primary characteristic of adaptive change.

Adaptive change focuses on inviting constituent voices in to co-inform and create a change that is reflective of multiple voices and needs (Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott, 2006). The path to adaptive change includes specific activities, which are defined by the principles of adaptive work (Social Research Institute, 2008; Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). There are six principles and corresponding actions that guide adaptive change. First, get on the balcony: a leader is encouraged to step away from the

issue in order to gain a more objective perspective of the wholeness of the situation. Second, identify the adaptive challenge: the leader's expanded perspective assists with identifying the relational contexts (competing people and systems) that obstruct progress toward resolving the issue. This knowledge permits the identification of those constituents who need to be invited into the problem solving process. Third, regulate distress: the leader, attentive to issues of power, gives the power to those affected so that they can determine the best way to resolve the issue. This third step is accomplished when all parties become partners in exploring and beginning to resolve the issue. Fourth, maintain disciplined action: because change is about action, the leader supports the group by insuring its forward movement. Fifth, give the work back to the people: the leader must resist the urge to dictate the outcome. The leader models this behavior to the other group members to insure that the change is for the people and by the people. Sixth, protect all voices: the threat of using technical fixes and drowning out the voices of those with less power is always present. Thus, a leader works hard to maintain equitable relationships and shared decision making processes (Heifetz & Laurie, pp. 3-8; Social Research Institute, pp. 64-70;). Adaptive change is linked to relationships between people and their surrounding environments and offers a resource for understanding power and oppression.

The integration of adaptive change theory within my research serves as a reminder of the need to have constituents inform every aspect of the research process. To operationalize adaptive change theory, I focused on relationship-building as a primary activity first between myself and the constituents, then between the constituent groups themselves. By using critical pedagogy to inform an adaptive change process,

the constituent groups were able to move away from the isolation of their independent experience and begin to acknowledge commonality and interdependence with each other. Freire (1994, p. 105) would refer to this evolution as a transformative event that emerged from the awakening and resulting action of the constituents. Building on this theme of transformation, Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory emerges as a more precise tool for uniting constituents as they act in solidarity within a Community of Practice (Freire, p. 31).

Communities of Practice: Overcoming oppression through shared solutions. It is from the integration of critical theory and adaptive change that Wenger's (1998) communities of practice (COP) becomes a theoretical and practical resource for taking action. Wenger's theory relies on the creation of meaning and resulting changes or action that arise when individuals come together to form a community of practice (COP). Wenger is careful to differentiate generic communities from communities of practice. A COP's formation evolves from members' commitment to a specific issue. It is in relation to the designated issue that members negotiate meaning, create their community, claim a shared identity, and consciously decide to embrace specific practice approaches (Wenger, pp. 51-57). Because there is a dynamic interplay of these different components it is difficult to say what comes first. Therefore, in order to support and sustain a practical course of action, a COP evolves in relation to the issue that originally brought members together.

I use the example of constituents involved in promoting school success for students in foster care to explore the formation and function of a COP. Within my research, students with foster care history and professionals from the school and child

welfare system all share a connection. It is this common interest or domain that initially draws these different constituent groups into the possibility of creating a COP (Wenger, 1998). A feature of a COP is its diverse membership. Members' diverse backgrounds and experiences must be reframed away from the individual to a collective context in order to shape the community, identity, and practice. Wenger (p. 53) uses the term *negotiated meaning* to capture the manner in which a COP makes meaning of its domain and members' inter-relationships to it.

Members take their pre-COP experiences and knowledge, both of which were framed within unique social and historical contexts. Because members can never unlearn their experiences or ways of understanding an issue, they contribute these pieces of information to the collective knowledge of the COP (Wenger, 1998, p. 54). It is from these multiple layers that a COP makes sense of or negotiates meaning for itself and its members. As a result of this collective consciousness, those pre-existing issues of power, role, and impact become a part of the collective experience and understanding of the COP. Therefore, when a COP forms from the disempowerment or desire of professionals from education and child welfare systems and students with foster care history to create equitable change for themselves and others, the negotiated meaning they produce is comparable to Freire's (1994, p. 89) general thematics and codification. The COP's exploration of and desire to pursue the issue of school success for students in foster care is consistent with problem posing and emergence from critical theory (Shor, 1992; Freire, 1994). The experience of negotiating meaning upholds members' connection as a community and affirms their identity.

A COP differs from a community in that it joins diverse people in a process of “mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of action” (Wenger, 1998, p. 137). Within a COP, community emerges as members mutually learn about and produce meaning about who they are as a group (engagement); what they accept as true (joint enterprise); and how they choose to act or practice (shared repertoire of action) with regard to their specific domain. From this process, the identity of members is further shaped. Unlike critical pedagogy’s tendency to focus on the individual’s growing awareness and evolution to self-empowerment, COP’s use of identity derives more of its meaning and strength from a social theory of learning and growth. Here, the power of the many produces the opportunity for reflection, meaning, community cohesion, and practice decisions. A COP enhances the potential for its members to mutually embrace struggles, express beliefs, and act on suggestions for change. This social source of motivation and empowerment does not exist for individuals who are unaffiliated and alone. Therefore, overcoming the struggles of students in foster care in a manner that equally considers the needs of diverse members, students, and professionals alike, is enhanced by the COP approach (Wenger, p. 56). The emergence of a social identity lends itself to a more dynamic codification or reification of the COP’s practice.

The practice in which COP members engage reflects a delicate inter-relationship between participation and reification (Wenger, 1998, pp. 64-65). Within Wenger’s model(pp. 57-60), practice represents a duality of participation -- membership in and involvement beyond the COP -- and reification -- the resulting production of negotiated meaning on behalf of the COP. The members of a COP co-exist within their COP as

well as within other communities. Members' interactions across diverse contexts invite learning, rethinking, and new ways to understand people and issues. The project on which this study is based, Education Collaboration Project (ECP), is an example of a COP. The ECP used training as the empowering intervention that united groups of isolated constituents to grow together as a community. Within the ECP, each member's affiliation with a school, child welfare agency, or foster placement represented a community apart from the COP. However, these external affiliations offered opportunities for reciprocal enrichment and continued negotiation of meaning both within and outside of the COP, which allows for the ongoing evolution of the COP. In order to create meaningful practice, Wenger (p. 58) emphasizes reification as the counterpart of participation. Wenger explains that participation and reification co-exist in equal measure.

Wenger (1998) describes reification as "giving form to our experiences by producing an object that congeals this experience into thingness" (p.58). Reification can be tacit, such as concepts embraced by members, or explicit, such as more tangible artifacts, analogous to Freire's (1994) codifications. Both tacit and explicit reifications exist as outcomes that re-affirm the COP. Reification allows the work of participation to take shape as it contrasts and connects the position of the COP to local and global contexts. The concept of practice with its participation and reification components aligns with critical theory's *naming the world*, *codifications*, and *praxis* (Freire, 1994). The Education Collaboration Project's May 11, 2010 public forum with its video testimonials and policy document, *Suggestions for Improving School Success for Students in Foster Care*, were the artifacts that stood as examples of practice within the

Education Collaboration Project's COP. From this example, the role and potential of practice to impact the COP and contribute to the discourse of the broader society is made clear.

As the final component of my theoretical framework, COP became a tool for joining my three constituent groups in the shared action of informing and transforming barriers to school success for students in foster care. I may have accomplished the same ends using Freire (1994) and Shor's (1992) processes alone; however, I believed that school and child welfare professionals would embrace COP more easily. Indeed, COP as a transformative practice already had a history within the two systems (Gee & Green, 1998; Wesley & Buysse, 2001). In this study, however, issues of oppression and barriers to the formation of a COP necessitated the preliminary engagement of a critical framework. Critical pedagogy was essential to building an understanding and validation of those elements of identity and meaning related to school success for students and professionals from the school and child welfare systems. It was from this foundation that the individuals were able to move forward to create a COP.

Perhaps the most important premise of this study is that cross-system collaboration as an empowering intervention and advocacy strategy is necessary for addressing the needs of students in foster care. The literature supports the importance of building awareness of students' issues of trauma and loss as resources for helping school professionals better serve these students (Staub & Meigan, 2007; Wulczyn, et al., 2009). Equally important is the education of child welfare professionals regarding students' academic needs, aims, and aspirations. While such separate efforts to educate school and child welfare professionals may be helpful, they represent an incomplete

approach. Considering the diverse needs of students in foster care, it appears that professional groups and students can benefit from a more comprehensive approach built on open communication and joint responses to the shared concerns of all three constituent groups (Wulczyn, et al.). This emergent theoretical framework offered an innovative method that allowed me to be directly informed by the constituents and it aided me in the engagement of ECP participants. Furthermore, this method facilitated the engagement of constituents in a process of self-empowerment. Previous research and scholarly writing established a history of understanding problems and suggested opportunities for addressing the problem, yet none moved actively toward creating a solution. Through a synthesis of critical theory, adaptive change theory, and the communities of practice model, this study introduced an innovative method for engaging constituents in a process of self-empowerment through which they began to support school success for students in foster care.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Elizabeth Alexander (2009) writes in her poem, *Praise Song for the Day*:

We encounter each other with words, words spiny or smooth, whispered or declaimed, words to consider, reconsider.

Troubled, low achiever, child-snatcher, home-wrecker, unqualified, uncaring....

These words circulate through, and in many ways define, the conversation related to school success for students in foster care. This study offered the opportunity to consider and, more importantly, to reconsider these words as resources for understanding and changing behaviors.

Because of words such as these, the struggle to improve school success for students in foster care becomes about much more than student achievement.

Alexander's verse jumps out as a truth about the potentially oppressive nature of words and language, which inform who we are, what we do, and how others perceive us (Rogers, 2004; Wenger, 1998). After more than two decades of practice, I have come to recognize communication, people's words, and their actions, as the keys to understanding and changing the problems related to school success for students in foster care.

When I reviewed the existing literature and reflected on my own practice, I saw that constituent disempowerment and the absence of constituent-led solutions reinforced the necessity to pursue a qualitative methodology. Previous quantitative studies had measured the adverse impact of foster care status on a student's school success (Fanshel & Shinn, 1978; Geenan & Powers, 2006; Luder, et al., 2004). Findings from these

studies may have substantiated the adverse impact of foster care status on student matriculation, academic achievement, incidence of special education, and impaired social-behavioral functions of students, but they have done little to resolve these challenges. Quantifying the incidence of impaired outcomes for students in foster care was helpful, created a resource for understanding the scope, dimension, and added components of the problem (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2005; Patton, 1990). However, the absence of a qualitative component meant that the full impact of this problem on the people involved was not captured and opportunities to improve the experience of students and professionals alike were not available.

When qualitative researchers invited the voices of students in foster care, professionals, and caretakers to share their stories and experiences, the problems associated with school success for students in foster care began to assume more authentic depiction (Geenan & Powers, 2006; Luder, et al., 2004). The works of Geenan & Powers (2006) and Luder, et al. (2004) utilized qualitative efforts through interviews or focus groups with key constituents to present the unique perspectives of each group framing the issue and the problem to be studied (Altshuler, 2003; Finkelstein, et al., 2004). The inclusion of this qualitative component was a positive development in informing the discourse associated with promoting school success for students in foster care. Despite this important step forward, these qualitative studies limited the voices of key constituents to defining the problem and thus missed the opportunity to join these voices in shared problem solving. Nonetheless, the inclusion of this qualitative component was a positive development in informing the discourse associated with promoting school success for students in foster care.

The progress made in recent qualitative studies to reveal mutual instances of disempowerment and power struggles among the core constituents offered important resources for advancing my own more empowering qualitative methodology. I recognized the need to employ a method that made it possible for professionals from the school and child welfare systems and youth with foster care histories to collaborate. My qualitative approach was critical to the constituents being able to shed light on their experiences of isolation and oppression, and to construct and embrace a collective identity that led to personal, collective, and practice transformation. Empowerment and transformation of the youth and professionals required me listening to their words. Their words and experiences became the tools that told the story of their shared predicament. Freire wrote (1994) “Who better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity for liberation?” (p. 27). Previous studies chipped away at the surface, defining and redefining the problem. I let the voices of those most oppressed guide a collective inquiry and, more importantly, to lead the way to a solution.

DATA COLLECTION

Prior to the commencement of this research, approval to conduct research with human subjects from vulnerable populations was obtained from the IRB Committee at Rhode Island College. Through the use of a qualitative methodology complemented by an adaptation of the Q-sort method, I created a multi-layered data collection and analysis process. As a social worker in child welfare, I had knowledge about child welfare professionals and had regular access to youth in foster care. However, I did not

have equivalent awareness of what it is like to be in a school as a teacher or staff person. Prior to the conducting my formal research, I conducted a five-month pilot study. I used the pilot study to enhance my awareness related to professionals in the targeted school system as well as with the youth group, *The Voice*. *The Voice* is a local advocacy group of and for youth with foster care histories. Pilot data were instrumental in helping me become situated in the environments and becoming familiar with the experiences of each constituent group. These overall experiences contributed to the authenticity of my role as a researcher, the integrity of my outcome measures, and the quality of my intervention (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Spradley, 1980). From this pilot study, I organized a more thoughtful research process to assist the constituent groups and myself to understand and improve school success for students in foster care.

My subsequent, more formal study took the form of an empowering intervention delivered as a graduate education course, cross-referenced as an elective for both social work and counseling psychology (Appendix A). The sole purpose of the course, *Connecting Public School and Child Welfare Systems to Students in Foster Care*, was to promote individual and joint awareness, build relationships, and inspire action in response to promoting school success for students in foster care. During the empowering intervention, the process was delivered using an adaptation of Shor's (1992) problem posing method (Appendix B). In my research the process began with (1) *defining group identities* and moved next to a process of (2) *sharing and comparing group identities* and culminated in the (3) creation of an *Education Collaboration Project-Community of Practice* (ECP-COP). During this process, I developed a number of qualitative data tools, framed chiefly by critical discourse analysis (discussed below),

were utilized. These tools included pre- and post-*Collaboration Surveys* (Appendix C); pre- and post-*Narrative Essays* (Appendix D); modified Q-sort protocol (Appendix E); periodic digitally audio-recorded, photographed, and sometimes videotaped observations of large and small group work as well as interviews and focus groups conducted during the pilot study. In addition to those tools developed prior to the start of the study, a couple of unplanned tools emerged as participants began to engage in the process. The two emergent tools were a *Power Scale* and *Digital Stories*.

These collective measures, informed by the words of those most impacted, allowed my research to be fueled by the authentic voices of the constituents and driven by the insight and expertise of those most capable of discovering solutions: students with foster care histories and professionals from school and child welfare systems.

Critical discourse analysis. Throughout my pilot and formal studies, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) informed my collection and analysis of all verbal and non-verbal data. CDA (Rogers, 2004; Maybin, 2001; Van Dijk, 1993) is offered as a resource for revealing the needs and diminished power experienced across the three constituent groups. During the pilot study, interviews, focus groups, and narrative *Collaboration Survey*, the data served as the resource from which discourse data were critically analyzed for each constituent group.

Within my formal study, CDA framed the collection and analysis of data collected from what Rogers (2004, p. 88) refers to as “co-constructed and situation definitions.” Examples of CDA situations within my study include pre- and post-*Narrative Essays*, observation of weekly large and small group work, as well as data collection that arose from the emergent tools, power scales, and the creation of digital

stories. Throughout my formal study, CDA (Rogers, 2004; Maybin, 2001; Van Dijk, 1993) was useful for revealing issues of (1) *identity*: constituents' perceptions of self and (2) *agency*: those perceptions associated with access to one another and their respective professional systems. In keeping with my qualitative methodology, my use of CDA enhanced my ability to collect and understand verbal and non-verbal discourse captured through observation and documentation via digital audio-recording, photography, and videotaping (Krueger & Casey, 2001). These data were framed using transcription-based analysis (Krueger & Casey) and thematic coding (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2005; Patton, 1990). The works of Gee (2011, 2005), Rogers (2004), Maybin (2001), Scollon (2001), and Van Dijk (1993) helped to inform the discourse analysis methodologies for this study.

Participant Observation. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) discuss the benefits of participant observer research, the rewards of which stem from the researcher's dual objective and insider roles. Issues of historic division among the constituents in my study, compounded by their individual disempowerment, necessitated that I assume the role of participant observer. In this role, my knowledge of the subject matter was known; yet I was allowed to form individual relationships with each group, where they were the experts informing and confiding insider experiences to me (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2005; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Spradley (1980, p. 56) refers to this dynamic as the *insider/outsider experience*. While there are definite complications to occupying this role, I worked hard to avoid imposing my opinions on those participants with whom I was interacting or manipulating the discourse and collaboration. In the end, by serving as a participant observer, I gained access to the private thoughts and

experiences of each constituent group and served as a role model and bridge for creating cross-system relationships.

As my research progressed, I became increasingly confident that only through cross-system relationships could we understand and change the barriers hindering school success for students in foster care. The *participant observations* conducted in my pilot study were essential to revealing the unique realities that shaped the identities and roles of the youth, school and child welfare ECP participants. These observational data became the foundation from which I built my empowering intervention and engaged the participants.

My observations were enhanced by my periodic use of digital audio-recordings, photographs, and videotaped observations. The purpose of these data collection efforts was to capture group interactions over time. This manner of observation referred to as co-constructed activity (Rogers, 2004, pp. 90-91) has its roots in CDA and allowed for the introduction of group activities as the impetus of group interaction. These co-constructed activities were implemented on a developmental continuum to accommodate individual exploration of identity and awareness through the simultaneous emergence of collective identity and action. These activities were documented using field notes, photographic artifacts developed during the group process, and finally through the synthesis of these discrete data, which were re-presented to the participants, this serving the dual role of (1) member checking and (2) codification of the participants' emerging awareness and agency.

Field notes. In my role as a participant observer, documenting my observations via field notes enhanced my ability to comprehend linkages to the broader social,

economic, and political contexts. My field notes reflected the early ethnographic approaches set forth in the works of Spradley (1980) and Schatzman and Strauss (1973). More specifically, my data collection included drawings of room/space configurations, pictures, artifacts, documentation of people's statements, creating a context for interactions, and my own personal connections with the participants (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2005; Spradley, p. 70). In the pilot study, field notes supported observations collected during school meetings, classroom observations, and focus-group meetings. My use of field notes continued during my formal study as part of the empowering intervention. Furthermore, field notes became a resource for capturing changes in participant interaction over time, revealing an evolution in both explicit and tacit knowledge, which helped with data triangulation (Spradley, 1980, p. 70).

Interviews. Boulmetis and Dutwin (2005) explore the role and utility of interviewing as a resource for collecting information from diverse groups of people. Spradley (1980, p.123) offers interviews as a rich resource for harvesting the cultural meanings that people have learned and impose. Due to my lack of awareness of the education field, how schools function, and their impact on students, interviews with administrators afforded me access to rules governing the function and impact of schools. Interviews also provided me access to informal and formal policies, forms and practices associated with each administrator and their individual school. I employed semi-structured interviews where five open-ended questions were asked and allowed for the natural emergence of funneling or branching questions and responses based on the interviewee's responses to the original question (Boulmetis & Dutwin, pp. 107-108; Spradley, p. 124). Obtaining information from school administrators during the pilot

study augmented my knowledge of the school system and the role of the administrator in responding to and dictating practices related to students in foster care.

Surveys. Similar to my rationale for using observations and interviews, surveys afforded another opportunity to gain insight into the perceptions of staff from both the school and child welfare systems, as well as youth with a history of foster care. Boulmetis & Dutwin (2005) present surveys or questionnaires as tools for gaining access to an individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about a subject matter, where formats can include open-ended, multiple choice, and scale questions. Depending upon the intent, surveys can be distributed to participants in a number of ways. For my pilot study, I was interested in using information pertaining to the levels of knowledge and practice perspectives of school professionals, in addition to a smaller number of surveys from targeted child welfare professionals and youth with foster care histories. This type of surveying is referred to as *judgment sampling* or *convenience sampling* (Boulmetis & Dutwin).

Collaboration Survey data were collected as part of my pilot and formal studies. It was my intention to use pilot *Collaboration Survey* information to frame the initial course information used in my empowering intervention. Within my formal study, these same *Collaboration Surveys* were administered as pre- and post-measures for all study participants. Data from collected from *Pre-Collaboration Surveys* allowed me to capture participants' responses of their roles, perceptions of others, problems and solutions. These data were helpful in validating participants' experiences and were used later as a tool for co-informing participants across the three constituent groups.

Focus Groups. Krueger and Casey (in Krueger, Casey, Donne, Kirsch, & Maack, 2001) suggest focus groups as the preferred method for connecting with and inviting the voices of a targeted group of subjects as informants on a specific issue. In keeping with this idea, focus groups were used during my pilot study as a third step in the data collection process. After I had sent out surveys and conducted key interviews with school and child welfare administrators, focus groups allowed me to connect with those direct service providers in school and child welfare systems as well as with a group of youth with foster care histories. Coordination for and development of focus group protocols drew from Krueger and Casey's (2001) recommendation for creating questions, selecting participants, and holding repeated focus groups, enough to insure access to a diversity of responses. In keeping with qualitative methodology, data collection and analysis were aided by a combination of note taking and audio-recordings. My focus-group data were analyzed using transcript-based analysis and further expounded upon through content analysis (Patton, 1990, pp. 381-384) or thematic coding (Krueger & Casey, 2010, pp. 15, 17).

Pre- and post-Q-sort. Donner (in Krueger, Casey, Donne, Kirsch, & Maack, 2001) describes the Q-sort method as a tool for gaining insight into "a complex problem from a subject's point of view: in a Q-sort, participants weigh statements in response to a question in accordance with how they see the issue at hand" (p. 24). I originally selected this method as a resource for exploring patterns in constituents' perceptions of what they thought was needed to promote the school success of students in foster care before and after the intervention. Q-sort categories came from pilot data collected from the focus groups. The focus-group themes mirrored themes and findings from other

research methods (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Shor, 1992; Wenger, 1998). Twenty-eight Q-sort cards were grouped into four categories: (1) school success, (2) communication, (3) perception, and (4) providing supports and services. Participants were asked to order the 28 categories on a sheet of paper that contained spaces in the shape of a bell curve that ranged from most agree to least agree. From my own and others' data, I quickly saw that responses to school success for students in foster care reflected a tension between quick fixes to problems (create a form or policy; it's someone else's responsibility) and the awareness of cross-agency relationships as a mediating factor in addressing the problem of school success. My Q-sort choices reflected this continuum, which I believe to exemplify the technical (quick fix, no-relational) versus adaptive (process oriented change centered on creating dialogue and relationships) approaches to change.

My inclusion of pre- and post-measures related to the *Collaboration Surveys* and the Q-sort tool proved valuable in their ability to qualify what changed over the course of the training intervention. Ongoing critical discourse analysis of group transcripts provided another resources to triangulate findings. The participant pre- and post Q-sort responses were introduced for their value in conveying participant positions with regard to school success for students in foster care and related to technical and adaptive propensities. I adapted the Q-sort categories into scales and used frequency measures and nominal categorizations to explore changes in participant choices across the four Q-sort categories. The result was the creation of *pre- and post- practice perspective profiles*, which were used to learn from the journey of the collective ECP-COP members who completed the full intervention. *Practice perspective profiles* became

useful for depicting pre- and post-Q-sort response changes on a continuum of technical, neutral, and adaptive perspectives (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001).

Emergent data tools: pre- and post-power scales and digital stories. As mentioned, during the research process two emergent tools arose as the participants began to engage in the process. The *Power Scale*, inspired by the youth's narratives, and *Digital Stories*, which were inspired as participants sought a vehicle to share their recommendations for change are explained below.

Power scale. This tool emerged during the youth meeting in the second week of the empowering intervention. During a larger group exercise, the youth were asked to respond to these questions:

- Who are the people and systems (agencies, organizations, etc...) in the puzzle?
- What piece of the puzzle are you and what words describe your role/experience?
- How do the other people and systems in the puzzle impact your role?

Youths' responses included feelings of voicelessness, invisibility, and adult-centrism, which introduced issues of power and powerless into the dialogue. As a result of this development, youth were asked if it would be helpful to graph their statements as these related to where they and the other constituent groups fell on a Power Scale of 1 – 10. This resulting visual codification of their words was very powerful. The scale became an emergent tool that was repeated during the second-week meetings with the other two groups, and repeated again at the end of the empowering intervention.

Digital stories. During Weeks Eleven and Twelve, constituents engaged in the exploration and formulation of the goals and challenges they identified in relation to school success for students in foster care. Data from the previous weeks were presented,

and constituents were invited to participate in a democratic process of voting on their top three problems to target for change. During this process, some constituents prioritized their personal stories as tools for change. Some of the participants' personal stories were a part of the identity they brought with them to the ECP process. An example includes having been a foster child or a professional impacted by the absence of communication with other systems. Other stories were part of the participants evolving identity from a place of isolation toward becoming an informed member of the ECP-COP. As an evolving unit, the ECP-COP negotiated the creation of a twenty minute video synthesizing the collective stories of four team members: (1) a young woman in the foster care system; (2) a teacher with personal and professional experience with the foster care system; (3) a juvenile probation worker who grew up in foster care and with the help of teachers became the woman she is today; and (4) a case worker who began the process questioning whether or not disclosure of foster care status and school partnerships were necessary for all students in foster care. This emergent tool captured the voices of those most impacted by the disconnections and power inequities experienced by them all.

Together, these qualitative and quantitative artifacts were crucial to the study and also to achieving an intervention that engaged constituents in their own empowerment. These methods were built from previous research efforts and more importantly augmented my ability to work with ECP-COP members as they move away from a focus on the problem to one inspired by their praxis experience.

CHAPTER 4

FRAMING THE RESEARCH AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

This chapter contains information regarding the study's setting, recruitment, attrition, and participant demographics. This preliminary information is offered to provide a context for how the research was conducted and who its participants were. This study and its empowering intervention unfolded through an adaptation of Shor's (1992) problem posing method, which I represented as *defining group identities and school success; sharing and comparing group identities; and the creation of an ECP-COP*. In an effort to best capture the evolution of participants through this empowering intervention, I created separate results chapters for each component of the empowering intervention. The expanded chapters addressing data analysis and findings include: *Chapter 5 - Defining group identities; Chapter 6 - The evolution of identity and collaboration. Chapter 7 - Achieving praxis through a community of practice.*

SETTING

The primary setting for this study was a graduate course, *Connecting Public School and Child Welfare Systems to Students in Foster Care*. With the intention of promoting accessibility and neutrality for the constituents, the course was held in a human service agency located in the same community as the targeted school department. This location was equally familiar to the youth and child welfare professionals. The course was offered, at no cost, to a small group of professionals in education and child welfare systems. While not offered for college credit to youth with foster care history, youth participants in the course received a stipend for their participation. The course was jointly sponsored by Rhode Island College's School of

Social Work and Education-Counseling Psychology Program during the 2010-2011 academic year. The course was planned for fifteen sessions; however, due to two snow-day cancellations, the course was conducted over a total of 13 sessions. The design of the course and its empowering intervention required that I work with participants for a total of 21 sessions. The first four weeks of the course involved meeting separately with each youth, school and child welfare group. It took a total of 12 initial meetings before the first four weeks of the course were completed. The remaining nine weeks were conducted jointly with all the participants.

RECRUITMENT

The professional participants from school and child welfare systems were recruited using convenience sampling in the form of a training flyer distributed at agency meetings and through work email addresses. Participants from an urban school district and the state child welfare system were enrolled in the course on a first-come first-served basis. These participants received three graduate credits for their participation and were required to review and sign disclosure and consent forms to indicate their consent.

The next group of constituents to participate was comprised of youth with current or past foster care involvement. The youth participants were recruited from *The Voice*, a youth advocacy group within Fostering Forward (formerly, RI Foster Parents' Association) and the RI Council of Residential Programs. The youth also were invited through convenience sampling. A small grant from the former Rhode Island Casey Family Services made it possible to compensate youth for their participation. Students received written copies and engaged in a verbal review of the disclosure and consent

forms. Assent and caretaker information/consent forms were prepared to accommodate the participation of any youth below the age of 18. However, these forms were unnecessary, as all youth who participated in this study were 18 or older and were able to self-consent.

During the preparation of this research, I realized that there were constituents beyond those professionals from school and child welfare systems and youth with foster care histories. Other equally important groups impacted by this issue include birth parents, foster parents, and other placement providers. Due to time and resource limitations, I was unable to include these equally important voices. However, in an effort to add another dimension of discourse to my research, I was able to extend the collection of *pre-Collaboration Survey* data to a group of randomly selected foster parents. I included foster parents because of their role in caring for students in foster care, since a birth parent's direct role in education is likely to be diminished. I also selected foster parents over other placement providers because students in foster care are more likely to reside in a foster home than group homes or residential facilities (RI Kids Count, 2012). Given these realities, it seemed important to include, if only partially, the constituent group most likely to be involved with the education of students in foster care.

A randomly selected group of 150 Rhode Island foster parents received the confidential *Collaboration Survey* through the mail. Names and addresses were identified through the state child welfare system. Along with surveys and stamped, addressed envelopes for the return of surveys, foster parents received a written explanation for the *Collaboration Survey* and corresponding research. Foster parents did

not receive any incentives for their participation. Of the 150 surveys that were sent, 18 (12%) were returned.

ATTRITION

At the start of the research process and during initial data collection, there were four education professionals, nine child welfare professionals, and five youth with foster care histories. It is important to note that the school district selected for participation was involved in a very high profile local and federal debate regarding the student performance and outcomes, which had ramifications for the employment of teachers in some of the district's schools. This issue arose after the district was selected to participate in this study process. At the time of the final data collection, there were ten participants remaining: three school professionals, four child welfare professionals, and three youth. Within the two professional groups the decline in participation was attributed to personal and employment issues. One teacher decided to end his participation after the death of his pet and receiving a lay-off slip from his teaching position, which he had occupied for eight years without any history of lay-off notices. He shared that he felt overwhelmed by these events in his personal and professional life and thus was unable to continue the course. Within the child welfare group, one individual was promoted to a new position with conflicting work-hours. Three additional child welfare staff had to deal with unexpected issues related to health problems or child care. The final child welfare person not to complete the process was forced to discontinue due to an unpaid balance at the college sponsoring the course, which precluded her from taking classes until her balance was paid.

Within the youth group, issues of employment and the birth of a child impacted two participants. The third youth not to participate in the full process was concerned about not being able to meet the course reading and writing requirements. In anticipation of literacy factors for youth, all participants were given the choices of narrating responses into a digital recorder, providing them in writing, or working one on one with one of the ECP research assistants. However, this one youth may have felt too uncomfortable with her own limited reading and writing to continue her participation. Ironically, this same youth was very vocal in a focus group meeting during my pilot study. Her quote below provides a context not only for the educational losses youth in foster care experience but also the other comforts that are denied them:

...school was difficult for me because I did fall through the cracks. My reading and my spelling isn't all that good at all like I have a fifth grade level when I should be having a college maybe even a 12th grade level. I want to go to college. I want to be sitting at a college to further my education.

Like I put myself down for not being able to read or being able to spell and it's like my education should have been like everyone else's education where I went to school every day and got great education and had people at home to do like say, Alright you're having trouble with math? Let me help or you're having trouble reading let me read you a book...

Or like parents who from the time that their kid's in their belly up until the time they're like 12, 13. And like I never had that. Like my education fell off...I think it's insane how many people's reading level isn't where it should be and yet they still graduate, still move to the education system (Female Youth Focus Group Participant, June 4, 2010)

This quote offers support for this young woman's insight into her literacy challenges and more importantly to her realization that due to her foster care status she lost so much more than just the building blocks for her education.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Foster parents. As previously noted, the inclusion of foster parents in the study was limited to their confidential participation in the *Collaboration Survey*. There were 150 randomly selected foster parents. One survey was returned due to the person no longer residing at the address, which brought the initial sample size of foster parents to 149. Of the 149 surveys sent to foster parents, only 12% (n=18) were returned. Despite this low response rate, the data from the surveys were helpful in providing some insights into foster parents' perceptions. These data were also very interesting as they mirrored the responses, frustrations, and areas of success identified by the professionals in school and child welfare systems, as well as those of the youth with foster care histories.

What follows are data related to gender, race-ethnicity, and policy knowledge of foster parents who responded to the survey. These data are elaborated on in chapter 5 as a component of constituent narratives which create a context for understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with school success for students in foster care. From the 18 foster parent sample, decreased responses were noted in the narrative sections of the survey, where, on average slightly more than half of the foster parents did not answer the narrative questions. Among the reasons they cited for not responding to the narrative questions were not having a current placement, fostering non-school aged children, and that they did not know the answer and needed more information. I was disappointed by the lack of narrative responses from two foster parents who were fostering school-aged children and youth.

Collaboration Survey. The survey data from this sample included information related to gender, ages of children licensed to foster, and awareness of education laws and policies for children in foster care. Seventeen respondents (94%) identified as female, and one respondent left the question of gender unanswered. All but one (94%) foster parent identified as white. The non-white foster parent identified as biracial. Respondents reported differences in the age-groups of the children that they were licensed to care for. The foster parents were asked to check any and all categories that best defined the age status of children and youth they were licensed to care for. Only three foster parents (16%) were licensed to care for school-aged children exclusively and more than half were licensed to care for younger and school-aged children.

Table 1 Foster Parent Licensed to Care for Children based on Age

Age of children licensed to care for *(school aged children/youth)	%
Non-School Aged Children (Infants)	28% (n=5)
*Elementary Aged	5% (n=1)
*High School	11% (n=2)
*Other (Multiple Age Categories)	56% (n=10)

The data in Table 1 indicate that approximately 72% of the foster parents who responded had foster children who were part of the K-12 school-aged population. While almost two-thirds of respondents were licensed and trained to care for school aged children, only one-third (n=6) indicated an awareness of educational laws and/or policies for foster children. Of those respondents who were not aware of policies and laws, 22% were licensed to care for school aged children. Although two (11%) of the foster parents did not yet have a child in their home and five (28%) were licensed to

care for non-school aged children, I found this disparity in awareness concerning. It has been my experience that, in the field of child welfare, protocols for foster parent preparation are established and enforced by the state child welfare system. Furthermore, in my experience, the training and preparation of foster parents is generic and all, regardless of the age group they will be licensed for, participate in the same process. Why then were there differences in foster parents' awareness of educational laws and policies? Are foster parents not being made aware of the importance of education for children and youth when trained and licensed? Due to the limitations of the foster parents' involvement, there was no opportunity to explore how those foster parents who indicated an awareness of education laws and policies obtained this information. Was it through agency training and licensing, or did they learn as a result of on-the-job training as they fostered school aged children?

Education Collaboration Project (ECP) Participants. In November of 2009, the course, *Connecting Public School and Child Welfare systems to Students in Foster care*, began. Nineteen participants began: six youth with foster care histories; nine professionals from the state child welfare system (seven child welfare staff and two juvenile justice staff); and four professionals from an urban school district (two from elementary schools; one from a middle school, and one from a high school). By the end of the course, there were ten participants remaining: three youth with foster care histories; three school professionals (two elementary and one high school professional); and four child welfare system staff (two child welfare and two from juvenile corrections staff).

Explained below are data related to gender, race-ethnicity, and policy knowledge from the ECP participants' *Collaboration Survey* Data. These data are elaborated on in chapter 5 as part of using constituent narratives to create a context for understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with school success for students in foster care. Almost all of the ECP participants at the start (89%/n=17) and all of the ECP participants (100%/n=10) to fully complete the process were female. While there was some diversity among ECP participants, ten (53%) identified as white and five (26%) identified as Black or African American (26%/n=5).

Table 2 *Pre- & Post-ECP Gender Data*

Gender	Youth Pre/Post	Child Welfare Professionals Pre/Post	School Professionals Pre/Post
Female	66% (n=4)/100% (n=3)	100% (n=9)/100% (n=9)	75% (n=3)/100% (n=3)/0
Male	17% (n=1)/0	0/0	25% (n=1)/0
No Response	17% (n=1)/0	0/0	0/0

Source: Collaboration Survey

Analysis: T. Glantz

Table 3 *Racial-Ethnic Characteristics*

Race Ethnicity	Youth Pre/Post	Child Welfare Professionals Pre/Post	School Professionals Pre/Post
Black/African American	66% (n=4) / 66% (n=2)	11% (n=1)/0	0/0
Hispanic/Latino	16% (n=1) / 0	0/0	0/0
White	16% (n=1) / 33% (n=1)	66% (n=6)/100% (n=4)	75% (n=3)/67% (n=2)
Other	0/0	0	25% (n=1)/33% *n=1)
Bi-racial/ethnic	0/0	11% (n=1)/0	0/0
Multi-racial/ethnic	0/0	11% (n=1)/0	0/0

Source: Collaboration Survey

Analysis: T. Glantz

Tables 2 and 3 offer specific data related to the gender and racial-ethnic characteristics of the ECP participants at the time of both pre- and post-data collection.

These data appear to be consistent with state and federal data related to the average balance of minority/non-minority child welfare staff, which is slowly changing to include a more diverse workforce (National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, 2011). As for youth data, the ECP data are consistent with statistics at the state and federal level, where issues of over-representation of children who are racial and ethnic minorities typify the child welfare populations across the country (Child Welfare Information Gateway,). As for the limited diversity within the school professional sample, the education literature has long acknowledged the issues and consequences of the typical white, middle class workforce in the urban schools (Lawson, 2003; Mapp, 2003; Ramirez, 1999). Considering the similarities of the ECP participant sample to state populations, I would argue that, despite the small size of the ECP sample, there are opportunities for reflection from this research to the broader dialogue occurring across other school and child welfare systems.

Another important piece of data has to do with the ECP participants' perceived levels of awareness regarding education laws and policies for children in child welfare. This information is helpful in establishing whether or not the ECP participants felt informed on the subject, which might also have implications for whether or not they felt able to advocate for this issue or felt adversely impacted by it.

Table 4 ECP Awareness of Education Laws and/or Policies

Aware	Youth	Child Welfare Professionals	School Professionals
Yes	17%(n=1)	67%(n=6)	25%(n=1)
No	83%(n=5)	11%(n=1)	75%(n=3)
No Response	0	22%(n=2)	0

Source: Collaboration Survey

Analysis: T. Glantz

The low number of ECP participants with awareness of educational laws and/or policies regarding children in foster care represented an area of concern as well as an area of opportunity within this study. Less than half (42%/n=8) of the ECP participants indicated prior awareness of educational laws and/or policies for children in foster care, yet 68% (n=13) of the ECP participants were professionals from either the school or child welfare systems. The apparent absence of information especially across professional constituents but also the youth group, also represented a challenge. In the subsequent discussion I will argue that this challenge has a very tangible solution: cross-training of school and child welfare professionals accompanied by representatives of the youth they jointly serve. In the chapters that follow, the insights of professionals, youth, and foster parents will hopefully create a more authentic framing of the issue, as well as the steps needed to unite these constituents in the task of improving school success for students in foster care.

In the next three chapters, findings from the study are presented with attention to the impact of the intervention on identity, collaboration, and community formations. More specifically, chapter five addresses relationships and roles from the perspectives of students, school, and child welfare ECP participants' understanding of school success for students in foster care, relationships and roles. Chapter six explores the evolution of identity and collaboration among the ECP participants. Chapter seven documents the creation of a community of practice with attention to changes to identity, collaborations, and praxis. Together, chapters four through seven use the analysis of various data to capture the evolution of the ECP participants from isolated constituent groups to becoming their own community of practice.

CHAPTER 5 - DEFINING GROUP IDENTITIES & SCHOOL SUCCESS

In this chapter I explore the issue of school success by discovering how participants from the ECP and FP groups separately explained their experiences with school success for students in foster care. I then explored relationships and roles within the ECP and FP groups were explored through the ECP and FP's written narratives in the *Collaboration Survey*. Gee (2005) advocates the use of narratives for understanding how people see and convey their concerns and how they work to find solutions. The value of narratives became apparent when I analyzed data from the *Collaborative Survey*, the *Narrative Essay*, and the narratives from Week Two small group exercises. These narrative data helped me to gain access to the professionals, youths, and foster parents' perceptions of the challenges and opportunities associated with school success for students in foster care. Once the issue of school success was framed, I moved forward with using the data to discover how the ECP participants defined their individual roles and reciprocal experiences. This application of the data gave rise to constructs for the ECP professional and youth identities. From these data and analyses, answers to the question, "In the absence of shared communication and collaboration, how do constituent groups define their roles and responsibilities in relation to the needs of students in foster care?" began to emerge.

Changes to the sample size due to the attrition of ECP participants as well as the partial inclusion of FPs did not significantly diminish the data collection process. Instead this more expansive pre-data collection gave rise to a multi-dimensional picture of school success as perceived by professionals from the school and child welfare systems and youth with foster care histories. These pre-data reflected a broader

narrative beyond that of the ECP participants, one inclusive of social and political systems impacting the individual experiences of ECP participants. Therefore, despite the attrition of participants, the inclusion of all pre-data for the 19 ECP and 18 FP participants was necessary for delving into the complexity of the issues. Furthermore, as will become evident in subsequent chapters, these pre-data were critical to capturing the evolution of those participants who did complete the full process from a body of fragmented groups to a collective advocacy for change.

Framing the issue. While the ultimate purpose of my research was to explore cross-system training as a tool for promoting school success, I first needed to understand and engage a fragmented group of constituents. The *Collaborative Survey* provided a vehicle through which members of group could tell their story in the safety of their homogeneous groups. This activity allowed me to better understand and validate the unique perceptions of each group, which helped to facilitate trust and relationships between myself and each. This initial data source was critical later in the intervention when I began using individual groups' stories as resources for co-informing the three ECP groups. Chapters six and seven document the role of the intervention in moving the group identities from individual and separate to collective and shared.

It was during this first step in the intervention that components of Shor's (1992) problem posing method were used to frame the question, "What are the challenges and opportunities surrounding school success for students in foster care?" Of particular interest to me was discovering the extent to which constituents identified communication, relationships, and cross-system collaboration as challenges to

promoting school success for students in foster care. Both the ECP and FP groups participated in the pre-*Collaboration Survey* data collection. The *Collaboration Survey* was adapted to each ECP and FP group's role. Within this survey, a series of likert scale questions were used to gather information related to collaboration, satisfaction with collaboration, and cross-constituent awareness of the roles played by the school and child welfare systems and professionals. My decision to ask separate questions for both the system and professional perspectives arose out of my own professional experience and the existing research, where systems can either enhance or diminish the work of its own and other professional staff. I also consulted a colleague and fellow researcher who agreed that the two variables did indeed need to be addressed separately. Within the context of critical theory and based on the existing literature, I was curious to discover whether or not evidence of external, more powerful narratives were woven into those stories from the ECP and FP participants (Cameron, 2001; Rogers, 2004; Scollon, 2001). The data that follow offer evidence of how constituent narratives both overlapped and conflicted with each other and included external elements from socio-political sources. These complex and intermingled narratives had reciprocal impacts across the constituent groups.

Accessing and triangulating constituent narratives became possible through the analysis of likert type scale questions in the *Collaboration Survey* (Yin in Green, Camilli, & Elmore (Eds.), 2006). All six likert scale questions included the dual focus on both system and professional roles and were constructed to include seven points or options. Within the *Collaboration Survey* scale questions, I elected to offer seven choices to maximize a participant's ability to find a choice that accurately represented

her position. In my experience this degree of choice can also lessen participant's inclination not to respond. However, within the *Collaboration Survey* and throughout the intervention, participants always had the authority to decide not to respond or participate. This option was exercised by some participants answering the *Collaboration Survey*.

During my analysis and in an effort to more clearly organize and understand the data, I collapsed the pre-survey data from seven choices into three core categories: (1) positive, (2) undecided, and (3) negative. The two choices at the positive end of the scale were converted into a general positive theme: agreement/satisfaction/informed. Likewise, the two choices at the negative end of the scale were converted to represent a negative response: disagree/dissatisfied/uninformed. Finally, the three center choices on the scale that included *somewhat* and *undecided* options, appeared to encompass a sense of ambiguity by participants. As a result, I assigned a general category of undecided to the three center options. These amended data categories are reflected in the tables that follow.

Dating back to the earliest child welfare research done by Fanshel & Shin (1978) up to the more current work done by Wulczyn, et al. (2009), there has been acknowledgement of the need for a shared response by the school and child welfare systems. These same researchers also raised concerns related to the quality of collaboration as a challenge adversely impacting students in foster care. These ECP and FP pre-data from the *Collaboration Survey* support the tension surrounding collaboration and the struggle for productive cross-system partnerships.

Table 5 *Importance of School-Child Welfare System Collaboration*

Perceptions	Youth	Child Welfare Professionals	School Professionals	Foster Parent
Agree	100%(n=6)	78%(n=7)	75%(n=3)	61%(n=11)
Undecided	0	11%(n=1)	25%(n=1)	11%(n=2)
Disagree	0	11%(n=1)	0	6%(n=1)
No Response	0	0	0	22%(n=4)

Frequency data are bolded for emphasis to particular items

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

Table 6 *Importance of School-Child Welfare Professional Collaboration*

Perceptions	Youth	Child Welfare Professionals	School Professionals	Foster Parent
Agree	100%(n=6)	78%(n=7)	50%(n=20)	66%(n=12)
Undecided	0	11%(n=1)	0	6%(n=1)
Disagree	0	11%(n=1)	25%(n=1)	0
No Response	0	0	25%(n=1)	28%(n=5)

Frequency data are bolded for emphasis to particular items

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

These collaboration data suggest that a high percentage of participants across all groups recognized cross-system and cross-professional collaboration as important variables in promoting school success. This affirmation of the importance of collaboration contrasts with participant satisfaction with system collaboration shown in in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7 *Satisfaction with School-Child Welfare System Collaboration*

Perceptions	Youth	Child Welfare Professionals	School Professionals	Foster Parent
Satisfied	17% (n=1)	11%(n=1)	0	11%(n=2)
Undecided	51% (n=3)	44%(n=4)	50%(n=2)	39%(n=7)
Dissatisfied	33% (n=2)	44%(n=4)	50%(n=2)	6%(n=1)
No Response	0	0	0	44%(n=8)

Frequency data are bolded for emphasis to particular items

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

Table 8 *Satisfaction with School-Child Welfare Professional Collaboration*

Perceptions	Youth	Child Welfare Professionals	School Professionals	Foster Parent
Satisfied	0	22%(n=2)	25%(n=1)	11%(n=2)
Undecided	67%(n=4)	44%(n=4)	0	39%(7)
Dissatisfied	33%(n=2)	33%(n=3)	50%(n=2)	6%(n=1)
No Response	0	0	25%(n=1)	44%(n=8)

Frequency data are bolded for emphasis to particular items

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate that between one-third and one-half of participants across groups were dissatisfied with current levels of systemic collaboration. Almost half of the foster parents (N=8, 44%) had no response to satisfaction questions and a quarter of school professionals had no response to the question about satisfaction with cross-system professional team collaboration. was worrisome to me. Despite the mutual agreement on the importance of collaboration, less than 25% of participants overall were satisfied with current collaboration at either the system or professional level.

Next, survey data for Tables 9 and 10 explored whether constituents considered themselves to be fully informed about the roles school and child welfare systems and professionals were playing in the lives of students in foster care.

Table 9 *How Informed Are You Regarding School-Child Welfare Systems' Roles*

Perceptions	Youth	Child Welfare Professionals	School Professionals	Foster Parent
Informed	33%(n=2)	22%(n=2)	25%(n=1)	22%(n=4)
Undecided	33%(n=2)	67%(n=6)	0	39%(N=7)
Uninformed	33%(n=2)	11%(n=1)	75%(n=3)	11%(n=2)
No Response	0		0	28%(N=5)

Frequency data are bolded for emphasis to particular items

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

Table 10 *How Informed Are You Regarding School-Child Welfare Professionals' Roles*

Perceptions	Youth (N=6)	Child Welfare (N=9)	School (N=4)	Foster Parent (N=18)
Informed	33% (n=2)	33% (n=3)	25% (n=1)	17% (n=3)
Undecided	50% (n=30)	67% (n=6)	0	55% (n=10)
Uninformed	17% (n=1)	0	50% (n=2)	0
No Response		0	25% (n=1)	28% (n=5)

Frequency data are bolded for emphasis to particular items

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: T. Glantz

These data indicate that participants across all groups were either uninformed or unsure of the information they possessed regarding school and child welfare systems and professionals' roles. Only 33% (n=3) of the child welfare and 25% (n=1) of the school ECP participants thought they were informed about each other's systems and professional roles. If the majority of professionals from school and child welfare systems did not feel informed, this lack of knowledge is sure to adversely impact communication and collaboration between their respective systems. Furthermore, if professionals are in fact uninformed, how does this influence their interactions with youth in foster care, caretakers, and service providers? This lack of certainty regarding the systemic and professional roles within the school and child welfare systems is suggestive of the absence or diminished quality of cross-system communication and relationships, which is consistent with the broader research on this topic (Altshuler, 2003; Finkelstein, et al., 2004; Geenan & Powers, 2006; Luder, et al., 2004;).

The narrative questions from the *Collaboration Survey* that follow add depth to the likert type scale data and are helpful in building a picture of what the ECP participants and foster parents felt was either missing or could be helpful to students in foster care. The collection of quotes that follow offers insight into the responses of the ECP participants and FPs.

... I strongly believe the relationship between DCYF and the school systems across the state needs to be improved. My personal experience leads to assume that there isn't enough effort being made by the individuals working with the youth (ECP Youth Member, Narrative Essay Week 1).

I think school officials are frustrated with her [reference to a youth she is working with] violent behaviors and prefer to socially promote her or move her school placement because it is easier than continued assessment, [DAS].... I have also found teachers and administrators inaccessible to her 'team' of people and less likely to communicate or engage the team (ECP Child Welfare Member, Narrative Essay Week 1).

Finally big changes need to take place at the policy level...foster kids should always be able to remain [in] their home schools with their peers and with the educators who have always knew them! It'll take a lot of doing and a lot of legislative work...but it can and should be done (ECP School Member, Narrative Essay Week 1)!

Some social workers at the DCYF get updates, provide information, etc., but I have found that I initiate most of that in either role (Foster Parent, also a school social worker, Collaborative Survey Narrative).

The schools do not take the time to speak with DCYF to see if there are any concerns with the children before something happens (Foster Parent, Collaborative Survey Narrative).

Both the ECP and FP participants were provided an opportunity to elaborate on current examples that demonstrated the school and child welfare systems' efforts to work together to meet the needs of students in foster care. Responses were coded into three core categories: (1) *Uncertainty*; (2) *Efforts are not working*; and (3) *Assets: Collaboration, Communication, and Special Education Services*. These categories highlight those efforts supported in the literature that enhance school success for students in foster care (Altshuler, 2003; Staub & Meighan, 2007; Wulczyn, et al., 2009). Responses to the category indicating that current efforts were not working indicated the absence of communication, the failure to include all parties in the process, and a lack of

commitment to and awareness of education as an equally important component for meeting the needs of students in foster care.

Table 11 *Current School and Child Welfare Systems/Professionals Efforts for Students In Care*

Theme	Youth Responses	Child Welfare Professionals *One person entered 2 responses	School Professionals	Foster Parents	Total
Unsure	0	0	25% (n=1)	22% (n=4)	13% (n=5)
Efforts Are Not Working	33% (n=2)	30% (n=3)	50% (n=2)	22% (n=4)	29% (n=11)
Collaboration, Communication & Special Education Services	67% (n=4)	70% (n=7)	25% (n=1)	17% (n=3)	39% (n=15)
No Response	0	0	0	39% (n=7)	18% (n=7)

Frequency data are bolded for emphasis to particular items

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

Table 11 provides evidence of the positive impact of collaboration, communication, and school services on school success. Specifically, through the insights of more than 60% of the youth and child welfare participants, we have access to data suggesting that some things are working and do make a difference. However, there is an equally appropriate realization across the groups that change is needed. Here, youth are the group most impacted by the issue, and it is encouraging that they instinctively know what they require to be successful in school. Similarly, the child welfare participants, as the primary party carrying out the removal, placement, and case management tasks associated with youths' experiences, also have a strong sense of what works. Frustration for these two groups comes from knowing what action is needed but

feeling unable to bring these actions into being. These two quotes afford a human context to the frequency data and Table 11:

As a caseworker I don't have time to follow-up as much as I would like. I miss calls from school and can't connect (child welfare participant, Collaboration Survey).

As a former youth in care I strongly believe the relationship between DCYF and schools needs to be improved (youth participant's Narrative Essay)?

In contrast to responses from the youth and child welfare staff, the experiences of school participants were less likely to identify current activities or resources that were working. An overwhelming number, 75%, were either unsure of things that were working or felt that current activities needed to change. These data may reflect poorly on how the school professionals experience their relationships with child welfare systems and professionals. Schools and their staff, especially teachers, often feel simultaneously excluded from yet impacted by the child welfare systems and its professionals due to: (1) removals of children from schools without discussion; (2) the absence of input prior to changes in school placement; (3) and encroaching child welfare practice related to early dismissals to attend appointments and visits with parents (Wulczyn, et al., 2009). Similar to these school professionals, 44% of the FP participants had difficulty identifying what was working. Instead, their focus weighted more heavily on a lack of certainty or a belief that improvements to current activities were needed.

In an effort to engage in deeper exploration of participant connections to this issue, the ECP and FP participants were invited to comment on their perceptions of those challenges preventing school and child welfare collaboration. Participant

responses to this question were helpful not only in revealing specific problem areas but also toward exposing ideas related to roles and relationships among the groups.

Table 12 *Challenges Preventing School - Child Welfare Systems/Professionals Collaboration*

Theme	Youth	Child Welfare Professionals	School Professionals	Foster Parents	Total
Failure to Collaborate	30% (n=3)	*15% (n=4)	0	5% (n=1)	11% (n=7)
Lack of Professional Investment	0	4% (n=1)	12.5% (n=1)	10% (n=2)	6% (n=4)
Pathologizing Foster Youth	20% (n=2)	8% (n=2)	0	5% (n=1)	8% (n=5)
Poor Communication	10% (n=1)	8% (n=2)	0	0	6% (n=4)
Stability with Placements & School Supports/Services/Resources (\$)	10% (n=1)	4% (n=1)	25% (n=2)	0	6% (n=4)
Systemic Barriers – ill-informed policies, attitudes of administration	20% (n=2)	19% (n=5)	12.5% (n=1)	5% (n=1)	14% (n=9)
Time/caseload Demands	0	4% (n=1)	12.5% (n=1)	5% (n=1)	5% (n=3)
Uniformed Professionals	10% (n=1)	15% (n=4)	0	20% (n=4)	14% (n=9)
Unsure	0	19% (n=5)	25% (n=2)	0	11% (n=7)
No Response	0	0	12.5% (n=1)	10% (n=2)	5% (n=3)
	0	4% (n=1)	0	40% (n=8)	14% (n=9)

Bold print indicates top rated categories

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

These data from Table 12 are helpful not only in shaping our understanding of contributing factors that impact school success but also in beginning to inform the roles and experiences of each group. Because youth represent the group most impacted by this issue, I found the relatively equal weight assigned to a number of categories meaningful. I was also surprised by the seeming absence of negative or blaming

statements. In contrast, the narratives of the child welfare staff were more likely than other groups to assign negative responsibility to groups other than themselves as an explanation for impaired school success outcomes.

Lack of expectations through school systems, not enough resources, not wanting to work with kids in foster care, not knowing [foster care] status...” (child welfare participant, Collaborative Survey)

This child welfare professional’s narratives suggest that school staffs’ lack of knowledge related to working with the child welfare system and schools’ negative perceptions of students in foster care posed barriers to supporting students in foster care. Likewise, the child welfare staff also cited birth parents’ delays in signing paperwork as a hindrance to child welfare staffs’ ability to obtain special education services for youth. Nonetheless, although to a lesser extent, the child welfare participants also demonstrated insight into the challenges within their own professional system. The narrative that follows suggests the absence of clear messaging and valuing of education as part of child welfare leaders:

“...the DCYF administrator’s attitude toward education... (child welfare participant in her Collaborative Survey)

However, overall the child welfare staff were more likely to externalize responsibility to others. These narratives acknowledged the need for the child welfare system and professionals to more closely examine their own views and attitudes toward education, because current practice and policies may not be supporting school success.

Unlike the child welfare group’s tendency to project responsibility onto to others, the school group’s narratives conveyed a sense of shared ownership between the school and child welfare systems. The narrative that follows suggests shared responsibility for making positive change.

...I believe the systems themselves need to take a look at what would make sense seeing the students most successful and put policies in place to enforce and make these things happen (school participant, Collaboration Survey)

School participants used language regarding the need to consider what students in care needed as well as the need for mutual commitment to these youth from both systems and professionals. One narrative included a belief that child welfare staff are not trained to focus on anything other than the family, resulting in the neglect of school issues.

Within the foster parent narratives there was an emphasis on the need for services and resources to better support students in foster care. Equally rated by this group was the perception that time constraints and caseload demands challenges the child welfare staffs' ability to meet the needs of students in foster care. In fact, the most frequently cited narrative responses from the *Pre-Collaboration Survey* by FPs conveyed empathy with regard to this challenge:

Caseloads are too large and unmanageable. There are only so many hours in a day. [I] Actually believe that the vast majority of professionals in schools and DCYF want to do the right thing by the children, but no one individual can balance all that is expected of them (Foster Parent, Collaborative Survey Response).

At the same time and on a smaller level, some foster parents expressed concern related to what they saw as a lack of investment by professionals. The most extreme expression of this concern was shared by a foster parent caring for school-aged children who wrote, "Nothing only laziness on their [the school and child welfare systems/professionals] behalf".

These collective scale data and their accompanying narratives support the perception and actual existence of barriers to miscommunication, the absence of professionals working together, and the need for policy change at the system level. In order to better understand how these challenges might impact or be internalized by the

ECP participants, a deeper exploration of the ECP responses to the narrative essay follows.

Roles, experiences, and identity. From how an issue is defined, especially attending to perceptions of what is not working, constituent roles and experiences begin to surface in a way that gives shape to the identities of the ECP participants. From a knowledge of those constituent identities, opportunities for empowerment and unity become feasible. Responses from the *Narrative Essay* and group work from the second class meeting were used to construct individual ECP group identities. The data shared included the interjection of external discursive sources related to policies, leadership, resource challenges, and the absence of synergy across systems and professionals. Gee (2011) refers to the situated meaning conveyed in every day discourse as the Big D, and Freire (1994) labels them the Thematic Universe. Within school success for students in foster care, the Big D and Thematic Universe narratives reveal contributing factors to the breakdown in cross-system communication that erode the kind of collaboration necessary to supporting students in foster care. This information affords an opportunity to better understand those stressors that may be experienced as oppressive to the individual ECP groups, thus hindering their work with each other and with students in foster care.

Turning attention to the specific roles of professionals from the school and child welfare systems, as well as students in foster care, the next two sections address only those data from the ECP participants during the collection of pre-narrative essay responses. The ECP *Narrative Essay* responses afforded participants a free flowing process where their words created a context for divulging and learning about personal

knowledge and experience. From these narratives, critical discourse analysis methods were used to develop thematic codes to understand both the commonalities and the unique roles of each of the three ECP groups (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2005; Patton, 1990). Participants from the ECP groups were given 15 minutes to write a response to a question that asked them to inform a fellow professional of what was needed to support school success for students in foster care. The responses offered connections to earlier data while allowing participants to move more deeply into their own roles and perceptions of others' responses to these roles.

The data in Table 13 create a picture of how each individual constituent group perceived its role in supporting school success for students in foster care. Interestingly, the prompt asked participants to imagine talking to a newly hired professional regarding what it takes to support school success for students in foster care. While respondents do offer suggestions for what needs to be done, I found the inclusion of mostly negative projections of self and others to be interesting.

Table 13 *ECP Role and Relationship Projections*

Youth (Y)	Child Welfare Professionals (CW)	School Professionals (Ed)
<p>Positive Projections (n=3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action to address issues by Leg Task Force (n=1) 	<p>Positive Projections (n=3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary schools are more receptive to working with CW and Y (n=1) • Positive collaboration & relationships between schools, CW probation & S (n=2) 	<p>Positive Projections (n=1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regard for CW reasons for removing children (n=1)
<p>Negative Projections (N=7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to improve CW-Ed Relationship (n=1) • Absence of professional (cw-ed) effort (n-1) • Professional (cw-ed) self-centeredness/lack of youth centered focus (n=1) • CW's lack of investment/caring (n=2) • CW –inconsistencies in foster care home (n=1) • Caretaker's lack of knowledge (n=1) 	<p>Negative Projections (n=9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Staff unresponsive, unprofessional, untrustworthy, uniformed, & biased re: matters regarding students with foster care history, birth parents, & child welfare (n=6) • School Dept not supportive of Y who have behavior needs – suspend & transfer them (n=1) • Negative characteristics of Y behavior/emotion (n=2) 	<p>Negative Projections (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for change within the school (n=1) • The need for strong staff ready to remove barriers (n=1) • Negative characteristics of Y behavior/emotion (n=1)

Source: *Collaboration Survey*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

These data seem to express a sense of conflict among the constituent groups. Youth expressed concerns about the absence of personal relationships and lack of effort on the part of the professionals from child welfare systems and schools, conveying a feeling of palpable despair on the part of the youth, since it is the child welfare and school professionals who are critical in setting up, monitoring, and supporting the youth's school process. To further complicate matters, four of the six youth described their relationship with the child welfare system in negative terms, especially when compared to their very high and hopeful expectations for what their relationship with child welfare should be. This quote from a young woman with foster a care history

compares the role and obligation of the child welfare professional to that of a parent.

She associates her own isolation with not having anyone, parent, school or child welfare professionals intervene on her behalf:

...like if you're a caseworker, be very involved

like call to see how the kids is doing... it's basically like a parent what can I do to make sure my kid is being successful just like a parent if they are struggling like me.

I never had anybody to go to my parent/teach conferences so nobody knew.

Among the child welfare staff there was a strong sense of the immensity of their tasks and responsibilities, where relationships with youth, birth family, caretakers, schools, and service providers all fall. Within this expansive list is a perceived need for child welfare professionals to be on alert against the attempts of schools and youth to *get one over* on them. Similar to the youth but on a very different level of disempowerment, the data reveal a sense of isolation for the child welfare role and an image of child welfare staff against the world, as evidenced by the following narratives:.

Assist with funding. Any service providers in the home or community should also be part of the team to assure messages from school, home and providers and are all on the same page (Child Welfare ECP participant, Narrative Essay).

Be sure that all TEAM members are on the same page. This is critical to show child that we are a team, child can't split us that way (Child Welfare ECP participant, Narrative Essay)!"

Working with teachers on HOW DCYF WORKS! So they understand that families can heal and get their kids back (Child Welfare ECP participant, Narrative Essay)."

Within the school data, the idea that any fault to better serve youth rests within their system and colleagues is very different from the youth and child welfare data, where the projection of responsibility is focused on others. These quotes from school participants captured the different sense of ownership by this constituent group:

I would discuss a culture change that needs to take place at our school. All educators in the building must knock down these barriers that are interfering with learning (School Participant, Narrative Essay).

Finally big changes need to take place at the policy level...foster kids should always be able to remain their home schools with their peers and with the educators who have always knew them (School Participant, Narrative Essay)!

From considering each ECP participant groups' narratives separately, distinct role characteristics begin to appear. Interestingly, school participants clearly see themselves as part of the system that exists to be part of other systems. Within the responses, there was support for self-blame, where school staff and systems fall short of promoting school success for youth in foster care because of internal systemic and staff characteristics. Child welfare participants projected an image of being the system that overlooks and manages, but not necessarily partners with, others. At the same time and despite apparent authority, this group's narratives suggested that they felt somewhat overwhelmed and wary of their interactions with youth, schools, and caretakers. Finally, the youth struggled with these two systems failure to claim them with a sincerity and commitment that they recognized to be lacking. From these data there is a preliminary context for understanding the school success for students in foster care. In addition, issues of individual identity and issues of power are revealed.

Additional support for the emerging identity characteristics across groups was apparent in the small group work that each ECP participant group engaged in during the second week of class. During this meeting, the metaphor of a puzzle was used to describe school success and all of its involved parts. In small homogeneous groups, participants were invited to talk about their connection to school success for students in foster care with attention to these categories: (1) *who are the people & systems (agencies, organizations, etc...) in the puzzle;* (2) *what piece of the puzzle are you and*

what words describe your role/experience; and (3) how do the other people and systems in the puzzle impact your role? Participant responses were collected from newsprint and transferred to PowerPoint for their review and editing. Tables 14 and 15 reflect the approved information from each ECP participant group in response to their roles and others impact on them. Bold lettering is used to identify negative comments.

Table 14 *Individual ECP Participant Groups Define Their Role*

Youth Role (Y)	Child Welfare Role (CW)	School Role (Ed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I should be the center but feels like the corner or last piece • Silence (no opportunity to express self or make decisions) • Rebel – you have to act out to get what you want/need • Uniformed or uninvited participant • To be directed by DCYF 	<p>It always changes & The order changes based on clients & roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nag (mosquito) - depends on people's perception & our personality • Coordinator • Cheerleader • Organizer • Connector of Systems (service systems as well as bio family, foster family, guardians) • Initiators & supporters • Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of hats – feel like a social worker (everyday demands, call home, getting evidence) • Not just an educator much more • Boo Boo fixer • Emotional – listen, get help, parent, nurse, confidant • Guidance counselor – go to guy • Grief counselor • Mediator – mediating behavior between students & parents sometimes

Source: Week 2 Group Work

Analysis: T. Glantz

Table 15 *Individual ECP Groups Describe the Impact of Others*

Youth Role (Y): Impact of Others	Child Welfare Role (CW): Impact of Others	School Role (Ed): Impact of Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can help you understand the system(s) better • Can keep a child out of trouble • They make plans for you without including you • They say/think they include you but don't or don't allow you to fully participate • They tell you what they plan to do • Ask your opinion but shut you down, rip your heart out, take your life away or disregard your plans/hope because they think you have too much on your plate • They make decisions for you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not neutral; help or hurt • Sometimes they make our job harder • Sometimes informative and helpful (agencies help with outreach & tracking; keep us informed re: youth) • Parents can be challenging • Navigating within the school systems can be challenging • (School & Ed Advocates) Serve as advocates/decision makers where we (DCYF) can't (ed advocates are closer to the issue) • (Sometimes) Does not feel like they (School, school staff & other players) are taking (or exercising) power [to meet youth's ed needs on individual cases] (advocates know process and school respects them) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication missing (in own and other systems) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of communication leads to bad decisions being made (in own and other systems) – The missing piece of communication impacts • Set on a decision – perceptions can be changed with more information/ more evidence puts the child on a better path • Emotionally - kills me (if you just went off on a kid and a consequence is given then you find out about foster care involvement) • Why do you keep fighting? Somewhere there is a light and a kid smiles • Not knowing certain info can impact everyone (kids in class, the kids, teachers, Teachers dealing with 25, etc...)

Source: Week 2 Group Work

Analysis: T. Glantz

The data in Table 15 emphasize the impact of impaired communication and collaboration on the interactions and roles of professionals in child welfare and school systems as they interact with student with foster care history. Historically, the role of youth in foster care has been to be subservient to the directives of child welfare, schools, and caretakers. Despite this historical role, youth ECP participants were aware

of their disempowerment and learned to use negative behaviors to advocate for themselves.

Table 16 *Summary of Inter- and Intra-ECP Group References*

Summary (-) negative references; (+) positive references		
Youth Role (Y)	Child Welfare Role (CW)	School Role (Ed)
CW implicated in 6 (-) projections by youth	School staff & Dept implicated in 7 (-) perceptions by CW	Schools and staff implicated in 2 (-) projections by school
School staff implicated in 3 (-) projections by youth	Youth implicated in 2 (-) projections by CW	Y implicated in 1 (-) projection by school
Caretakers/foster parents implicated in 1(-) projection by youth	Elementary schools and schools with Y on probation implicated in 3 (+) projections	CW implicated in 1 (+) projection by school
Work done under Ed Task Force implicated in 1 (+) projection by youth		

Source: Week 2 Group Work

Analysis: T. Glantz

At the close of the *Defining Group Identities* component of the intervention, there was evidence to support the absence of shared communication and collaboration among constituents. In response to these maladaptive characteristics, the perception and execution of individual roles became sullied. Constituent groups' definitions of roles and responsibilities are based on deficits in others and their own systems as opposed to reflecting the possibilities made possible through shared understanding and action. While these findings are onerous, I saw in them an opportunity to assist ECP participants in harnessing the potential that lay within what they instinctively recognized as a key tool for supporting school success for students in foster care. This tool is reflected in collaboration based on mutual awareness and a shared commitment to changing what is not working. In chapter six, the empowering intervention continues with a focus on the influence of sharing and comparing group identities on collaboration on movement toward a collective identity.

CHAPTER 6: THE EVOLUTION OF IDENTITY AND COLLABORATION

This chapter explores connections between the empowering intervention and the evolution of identity and collaboration of the ECP participants. The data presented in this chapter were collected over the course of seven weeks. During this time the intervention focused on shared learning, group dialogue, and creating a collective identity. Using Shor's problem-posing method (1992), I progressively implemented the steps necessary to facilitate *sharing the wider scope of collective information and exploring different perspectives*. The data sources that demonstrate changes to identity, collaboration, and pre-emergence of an ECP community include a combination of transcripts from the ECP group work and codifications or artifacts generated from the group process. Whereas chapter 5 portrayed the unique perceptions of the three separate groups' identities, roles, and responsibilities, chapter 6 offers evidence of the changes that emerged during this most intensive time of the intervention. At the end of this chapter, answers become available regarding the question, "Over the course of the training how do issues of group agency and empowerment evolve with regard to language, perceptions, and responses related to the needs of students with foster care history?"

SHARING THE WIDER SCOPE OF COLLECTIVE INFORMATION

Participant engagement in the first two weeks of the intervention produced visual and narrative representations of those problems and issues, or thematics, identified by each group (Shor, 1992; Freire, 1994). From these thematics the curricula and activities for Weeks Three and Four were developed. It was during Weeks Three and Four that the earlier information gathered and approved by each separate ECP

participant group was presented and shared in the safety of the participants' homogeneous groups. Through this process participants were exposed to the broader narratives of school, child welfare, and youth participants. As a result of this cross-exposure, the ECP participant groups began to consider themselves and each other from multiple perspectives. This dialogic process of using their and other groups exact words proved to be a powerful tool for co-informing individual groups, in no small measure because it forced each group to confront how they the others perceived them. From these exchanges, information regarding individual and collective identities became available.

The concept of identity is produced in an individual's reflections via speech, thoughts, and actions (Gee, 2011; 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In an attempt to understand identity, Gee (2011, p. 110) suggested the need to consider (1) what the speaker is attempting to enact or bring attention to; (2) how the speaker treats others' identities; and (3) if and how the speaker opens new positions for others to assume. Within this context, according to Gee, the integration and overlap of multiple discourses becomes a way in which individuals and groups make meaning of and modify their own and each other's identities. When exploring the evolution of the ECP participant identities it proved helpful to do so in the context of mutual impact on and the presence of the external discourses that had individual and collective impact. Multiple theorists in the field of critical discourse address the idea of identity as a socially situated construct that reflects the struggle of the individual with aspects of the broader society (Gee, 2005; Rogers, 2004; Scollon, 2001). This dynamic is relevant to the issue of school

success, where impaired awareness, communication, and collaboration complicate and cause trouble for school success for students in foster care (Wulczyn, et al., 2009).

Power scales. Toward the end of the second week, each ECP group participated in a small group exercise where members were asked to think of school success as a puzzle made up of many pieces. In their small groups they were asked to document their thoughts about (1) who the people and systems (agencies, organizations, etc...) in the puzzle are; (2) what piece of the puzzle they were and what their corresponding roles and/or experiences were; and (3) how the other people and/or systems in the puzzle impact their role.

The youth ECP group was the first to participate. Together with my graduate research assistants, I met with the youth in a small room, where they were all sitting around a large table. Instead of breaking into small groups, the youth requested to have the discussion as one group, with the research staff as facilitators and documenters. As we approached the second question, “What piece of the puzzle are you and what words describe your role/experience?” the youth became very vocal and generated themes related to their feelings of voicelessness, invisibility, and lack of control of their lives. The excerpt of reflections from youth ECP participants offers authentic thinking by youth in foster care of the precarious position of they find themselves in.

Participant	Utterance/Content
R	<i>Well, I want to go first (laughter). I definitely think I'm not, I should...as a youth I should be at the center of the puzzle. Like our puzzle should be formed around me and my needs, but we know that's not how it happens. So the way it actually happens I'm like at the corner like that little inch of color, you know or the last piece of the puzzle (t: interesting). Like that's how, like, I saw it I felt going to school and even being who I am, like being extremely outspoken and boisterous you know what like I don't care what you say I know that's not in my best interests and it still...nothing got accomplished the way I wanted it or needed it to be. It was all in like</i>

through it's like I was living my life but someone else was living it for me I was just going along for the ride.

S I really agree with what you just said. That's exactly how I felt, like in care they just make your plans and DCYF they make it seem as though they involve you but they really don't.

N Yeah like they say it's your life and it's supposed to be your life, but it's like you have no control at all.

As a result of this conversation and in an effort to visually capture the essence of what had been shared about issues of power, agency and identity, I invited the youth to turn their words into a power scale. With gratitude to the youth for their insights and ability to reflect not only on themselves but also on the professionals and the broader systemic issues, the power scale was born. The impact of this scale was so intense that it became embedded in the Week Two meetings with the child welfare and school ECP participants as well. From the handwritten and drawn power scales created by each group, an adaptation of each power scale depicting those groups or systems identified and their corresponding power scores was reproduced for each group and collated into one three-part codification (see Figure 2), where the varied perceptions of self and others' power offer examples of conflicting and overlapping discourses.

During the meeting with the child welfare ECP group, the participants expressed a sense of hierarchy with regard to what different groups, in their different roles, contributed to school success. From their narrative, one gets the sense that they see theirs as a critical role of caring and commitment, in contrast to what they perceived as the absence of these important qualities in other groups. The narrative excerpts that follow help to convey the feelings of child welfare ECP participants.

Part Grp	Utterance/Content - Week 2 - Child Welfare Small Group1 & 2
T (g1)	<i>What else do we do? We are initiators and then</i>
So(g1)	<i>Can we call ourselves, um, a bridge between [4-all the providers]</i>
Sp (g1)	<i>Between all the providers</i>
So (g1)	<i>all the providers parties?</i>
T (g1)	<i>These are bridges, little crosswalks (referring to the drawing)</i>
Sp (g1)	<i>Great imagination</i>
T (g1)	<i>perfect</i>
C (g1)	<i>We are</i>
T (g1)	<i>Help students succeed by identifying needs that's what the school would do implement They are implementers</i>
C (g1)	<i>I think we support to</i>
T (g1)	<i>I think we do too</i>
C (g1)	<i>Cause a lot of times we're the only</i>
T (g1)	<i>(whisper) damn one that cares</i>
T (g1)	<i>laughter</i>
S (g2)	<i>Sometimes we're the connector between the kids and the school and the family</i>
J (g2)	<i>Connector of systems</i>
S (g2)	<i>We have to be the whole thing, what are the things the sticky things with the holes in them</i>
H (g2)	<i>Oh like the</i>
S (g2)	<i>You know like tink, tink, tinker toys, yea that's what we are, sometimes we have to be that</i>
S (g2)	<i>Yea yea just put that, were this</i>
S (g2)	<i>We're the tinker toys</i>
S (g2)	<i>Sometimes, sometimes</i>
? (g2)	<i>Ummm</i>
S (g2)	<i>If, if nobody else is doing it, that's our job right or else to make sure there is a person to do</i>

When meeting with the school ECP group, they projected a sense of themselves as occupying multiple roles or wearing many hats. These many roles did not seem to be the result of them seeking to act outside the function of their school identity. Instead, the school participants' feedback suggests that this expansion of roles tends to present itself spontaneously within the school, which they accept out of necessity. These narrative excerpts from small group work help to convey the school ECP participants' feelings:

Week 2 – School Small Group

Part	Utterance/Content - Week 2 - School Small Group
R	<i>There you go. Puzzle piece number 2.</i>
Ja	<i>Umm, roles? Teacher</i>
R	<i>Yup</i>
Ja	<i>And, there's like two parts of this question. And what words describe your role experience?</i>
R	<i>That can go in a lot of directions</i>
Ja	<i>Yeah</i>
M	<i>Oh yeah. Were a bunch of, we wear a bunch of hats. Technically were a teacher, facilitator, social worker, nurse, parent</i>
R	<i>Social Worker, confidant sometimes</i>
M	<i>Administrator</i>
Ja	<i>Alright, I'll put many roles and then we can collaborate</i>
R	<i>Yeah, I mean there's just</i>
Mi	<i>Various roles</i>
R	<i>You know, our certification, or our job-specific title is as a teacher, um,</i>
Ja	<i>And So</i>
R	<i>You know and when we say we're social workers, it's not that we're saying we go out and do what a social worker does, but the issues that are brought to us the roles, sometimes we just grandma, mom, dad,</i>
M	<i>It's true</i>

These combined narratives are powerful because they gave rise to the acknowledgement that each of the three groups is not only impacted by the issue of school success but also by each other. The depiction of this resulting impact was made possible through the creation of the power scales. From these scales, which are compared side by side, members of the youth group, which was perceived by everyone as the most disempowered, ironically had the greatest insight and awareness of themselves in relation to the professionals and systems. Based on their insights and awareness of where their disempowerment comes from, I would argue that, unlike the professional groups, youth did not enter the ECP process in as state of submergence but already had stretched their eyes open wide enough to have already begun to take in the big picture, with hopes for change. In the power scales depicted in Figure 2, the heading

for each group's scale can be found above it and an asterisk is used to capture what the group perceived to be their power on a scale of one to ten.

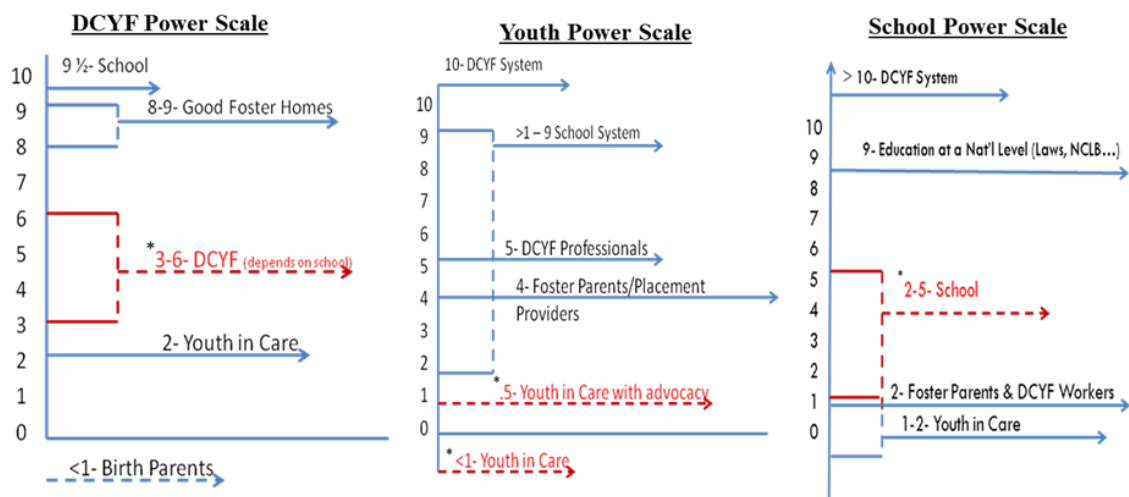


Figure 2. ECP Power Scales

From these scales, individual group identities began to be established with regard to their feelings of powerlessness and their representations of others power and identity. First, each of the ECP groups saw themselves as being less powerful than at least one of their counterparts in the other two groups. From this information, there seems to be a sense of powerlessness across all groups, not only with regard to how they see themselves but also in how they believe they are perceived by others. These data are consistent with the earlier narrative data collected during the intervention's *Defining Group Identities* process. Another interesting representation in the scales was the agreement across the professional groups that the youth had less power they did. The youth also saw themselves as having less power but created a distinction between the increased power of those youth with advocacy (connections within child welfare and school systems) as compared to those youth with none. This agreement around the youths' vulnerability afforded an opportunity to identify a commonality among all three

groups, which served as an initial step toward community building (Wenger, 1998). Although caretakers were not included in the formal ECP intervention, each group thought it necessary to include foster parents, which suggests awareness of the importance of this role in the school success discussion. This acknowledgement lends credence to the narratives offered by foster parents in the *Collaboration Survey* (see chapter 4). Interestingly, the child welfare staff added birth parents to their original power scale, with one participant adding that “birth parents were in the toilet.”

An interesting distinction arose in the youth discussion when they were addressing the power of the child welfare professionals. The youth saw professionals in child welfare as having less power compared to what they perceived to be a very powerful child welfare system. Interestingly, the child welfare group did not differentiate between themselves and their system; they addressed only their own feelings of low power. This raises an important question: was their lack of attention to systemic power and its potential impact on them a symptom of their submergence (Freire, 1994)? Unlike their child welfare colleagues, the school group recognized distinctions between professional and systemic power, both for themselves and for the child welfare staff. One of the premises of this study was that the presence of systemic power and its reflection in socio-political discourses must be acknowledged in order for the three groups to unite. Therefore, from the individual representations of their power scales, the codification of the collective power scales became critical for confronting groups with a visual representation of how they perceive themselves and how others perceived them.

In the end the power scale helped move all three ECP groups from discrete identities toward a collective one. First, this tool created awareness across groups of their feelings of mutual disempowerment. Second, the visual depiction of each group's feelings of power for themselves in relation to others brought with it the opportunity to consider one's unintentional impact on others. With this realization came a combination of justification and empathy. Finally, and most importantly, the comparison of power scales increased all the participants' ability to move toward the idea that *they are all in it together*.

Mutual challenges. Moving on from the expanded awareness that was facilitated by the power scales, during Week Three the groups were called on to consider and respond to three questions: (1) What areas of challenge/struggle do you have in common with other groups? (2) What are the benefits/assets/resources you receive from your interaction with the other groups? and (3) What areas of challenge/struggle does your group feel need to be addressed to improve school success? From this process the ECP participants were again invited to move beyond the limitations of their own experience toward the broader social, political, and economic contexts. The expansion of awareness in this group activity afforded the opportunity for Freire's (1994) concept of *conscientizacao* or critical consciousness to emerge (p. 53). The work created from this reflective exercise generated a list of shared challenges, which are documented in Table 17.

Table 17 *Mutual Challenges***Communication (Impaired or Non-existent)**

Within and across organizations

Impacts, delays support for school success for students in foster care

Lack of power

When communication isn't productive & when organizations/people feel overwhelmed, individuals feel disempowered

Feeling disempowered prevents us from knowing & understanding each other & from working together

Challenges to communication and empowerment negatively impact how we perceive each other

Don't understand or know how/why other organizations/people work - results in negative image of DCYF and other professionals' roles related to school success

The DCYF System's lack of focus on "education" of students in foster care or DCYF's role in promoting school success prevents good practice and adds to negative perceptions

Source: Week 3 Group Work

Analysis: T. Glantz

Again, as in the generation of the thematics during the individual group work, the words and ideas of each group were codified into a document that represented their individual experiences as well as those injustices that they believed they were equally subjected to (Freire, 1994). Thus, from this increasingly collaborative process and the power scales it created, a door was opened for the separate groups to join together in dialogue.

EXPLORING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The exposure to the authentic thoughts of other groups brought with it challenges and opportunities. Week Four was a difficult week due to the honest nature of reflections that were shared and the sometimes painful receipt of these messages. Despite my earlier assumptions that within the ECP process the youth ECP participants would be the most vulnerable, the data revealed that most hostilities and disappointment were projected onto the child welfare ECP participants by the youth and school ECP participants alike, as well as by foster parents through the survey data (see chapters four and five). This somewhat surprising realization was important to consider within the

group process, but it did not diminish the perceived differences in power between both professional groups as contrasted with the lack of power of the youth. While not yet developmentally at the place of becoming a Community of Practice, the ECP participants were moving in this direction. The process of expanding one's awareness and relationships often involves feelings of discomfort associated with moving outside one's self or community (Wenger, 1998). Rogers (2004) refers to those places where different discursive practices bump up against each other as *boundary locations*, noting that "boundary locations are exactly where the new knowledge is produced and identities can be transformed" (p. 120). Chapter Six thus offers evidence of the emergence of new knowledge, transformed identities, and the collaboration that results.

Forming a community. Starting in Week Five, the three ECP groups came together for the first time and would continue to meet together through the remainder of the course. During this initial joint meeting, the first group exercise took participants through a non-threatening introduction exercise. Participants were asked to take a sheet of paper, to interview their partner, and to document their responses on the interview sheet. Specific questions included: (1) What is your partner's name? (2) What is one strength of your partner's (something they are proud of or see as an asset in themselves)? And (3) If their partner could pick one thing to improve in relation to school success for students in foster care, what would it be? Once the information was collected, each pair then introduced their partner to the entire ECP group. From this exercise, it was hoped that the youth would begin to feel empowered by their egalitarian role in the interview process and that, conversely, the professionals would be able to recognize the strengths and insights of the youth. In addition, the questions were framed

to reinforce the idea from Week Four on that all the ECP participants were in this issue together and could all make valuable contributions.

The following excerpt from the group introductions offers examples of the comfort level, the feeling of shared participation, and the formation of cross-system relationships built on new meaning.

Week 5 – group introductions. Participants were intentionally matched with a partner from another group. Participants included: T – facilitator; Youth Participants – RO, D, MX and K; Child Welfare Participants – JU, TR, HE, SA, CH, and School Participants – RB and JO

-
- T ... And one of the things that we have been doing is we've been taking pictures of every single thing that you've done, all the work, and so when we start to get into doing all the work you're going to have pictures of every single thing that you've done to really help inform the work that you're doing in your groups. And it's really quite impressive, the amount of work and detail that you've put into every single step of this process. Alright? So, um, having said that, why don't we start on this side and go around. Alright? Mx, would you mind kicking us off?
-
- M Yeah, I don't mind. It's nothing. My partner is JU, (wonderful?)JU. She's ahh, a
 X probation officer, she's a juvenile probation officer. She's been a probation officer for three years, and she was a social worker prior to that for 8 years. Um, she thinks part of the improvements should be communication, I agree, and um, she says um, some schools communicate but it should be all across the board. Right? [unintelligible]
 Oh, her strength is...[laughter] [?: is what?]
-
- T Patience
-
- M Patience. She has a lot of patience. It gets tested every day. [laughter]
 X That's JU.
-
- JU This is Mx. Mx is, Mx is loud! That's a mouthful. His strength is he's outgoing. And he also told me he liked to talk, so I thought 'oh that could be trouble-we could be in trouble cause I could talk on and on and on and on and it could just go on forever. So that was good.
 Um, Mx was telling me a little bit about how he kinda came into the system. We went beyond your questions and all of that, and we came up with a lot of different questions for each other just based on our conversation.
 But sticking to your questions, um, also that communication, um, was a big issue, and he felt that guidance counselors in school were people who were already trying to improve communication in order to benefit the youth who were in foster care in the school systems.
-
- T Excellent, and next week hopefully we will have one of our guidance counselors, N will be here. Nice, thanks J.
-

From this exchange, there appears to be mutual exchange between these youth (MX) and the child welfare (JU) ECP participants. Furthermore, the effort to find

commonality of personal characteristics indicates to me that the child welfare participant made a conscious effort to equalize the role between herself and MX. This commonality exceeded the focus on the issue of school success to include shared personal identity apart from the issue at hand.

The following interaction between two school ECP participants (JO and RB) and a child welfare ECP participant (TR) offers a glimpse of merging values and the establishment of a cross-system relationship based on a belief that proved to heighten conflict within the child welfare group:

Week 5 – group introductions. Participants were intentionally matched with a partner from another group. Participants included: T – facilitator; Youth Participants – RO, D, MX and K; Child Welfare Participants – JU, TR, HE, SA, CH, and School Participants – RB and JO

JO *Hi. This is ah, Tr, and um her strengths, um she's very organized, she has great time management skills and her day is actually... ah wow. She does a lot um, in one day and she's very motivated, which is a-a great asset for herself and the children. Um, she wants to know if something can be mandated to know like, something can be passed where, ah, foster kids who enter your school, ah will be, like notified to the teachers and to the staff. So that, you know, if Johnny's having a bad day, we know why Johnny's having a bad day and we're not going to lash out on him you know for something that happens. Um, so, yeah, that's all I...*

TR *I'm taking a stand on that. Cause we go back and forth about if we think we should be notifying [about a child's foster care status] and how we should be notifying. And, I've declared my stance.*

JO *Yeah, and I really think we should be notified. I mean as a teacher...*

TR *And I have a supporter now.*

RB *You've got two, there's another one over here.[indicated RB herself as the other supported beyond JO]*

TR *I, I did it today actually, I did it today. It started with a duty to warn and it carried on to a, 'well actually while I have you on the phone... let me tell you everything you need to know. So um...*

This is Jo, she is a special ed inclusion teacher and she covers chemistry and English classes and she is in Central Falls at the high school [Jo: yup, grade 10] Grade 10. And she is, first year? [Jo: first year] first year, she is very organized as well and she prides herself on her communication skills. And she was very pleasant to speak with. Um, she would like to see some kind of a website for teachers and DCYF workers and I think more service providers to be able to communicate information that would include having contacts, email available, even like a chat system or a blog system. So that everything would be right there in front of you and it would be a little bit more easy to access. Because we talked a lot about technology and how we use those things and it would be really nice to have

something that would be like that.

The special ed people do have ah, (unintelligible) that they can use but she's not satisfied with the way that they use it. Because not everyone is available, not everyone uses it, it's not, may not even be connected in some places. So it doesn't serve as a good resource if not everybody is not available to use it. So, something like that would be really helpful, I thought it was a good idea too.

Within this exchange, TR vocalizes her opinion that the foster care status of a child should be disclosed to schools. In earlier conversations within the child welfare group, there were multiple perspectives regarding whether or not to disclose. I found TR's declaration to be a sign of her asserting herself in a different way, one that potentially challenged her standing in her child welfare group. In addition to TR's stand, to have two colleagues from the school group raise their voices in agreement accomplished a couple of things. First, it showed the potential for solidarity across the two systems. If the school participants had not offered their support, I believe TR's stance would have been weakened, which would have made TR's future expression of this same belief much more difficult. Second, this show of support is one of the first signs of the participants expressing a shared response to the issue with a colleague from another group. I believe this occurred because, at this point in the group's development, although newly integrated, the participants had recently gained prior knowledge of each other's strengths and struggles in relationship to the issue.

These narrative excerpts from the introduction exercise offer preliminary evidence of these values shared by the ECP participants as well as hints of the formation of a collective community. The next significant achievement during the integration of the three ECP groups came during small group work that same night. From three groups, two integrated groups were created and tasked with building on earlier work during Week Four's *Whole Child Puzzle* exercise (to be discussed shortly)

to include the impact of school success on school and child welfare professionals. This combined exercise created an opportunity for community building of community and the expansion of awareness related to the mutual impact of the issue across all three ECP participant groups.

My decision to begin the intervention's first four weeks with an intense focus on the youth was intentional. As a step toward creating a common ground, it made the most sense to focus on the most disenfranchised ECP group, the youth. This focus offered a way to set the tone for why the issue was so critical to their well-being. Furthermore, I wanted to provide the opportunity for both professional groups to consider their connections more fully to either ensuring or hindering, or perhaps both, school success for students in foster care.

This building of awareness was accomplished through weekly small group discussions and exercises, and it culminated with the completion of the Week Five activity that expanded the focus of *The Whole Child* activity completed by separate ECP groups during Week Four. In this Week Four activity, participants in their homogeneous small groups were given a sheet of paper representing puzzle pieces depicting the whole child in foster care. Figure 3 depicts the completed *Whole Child Puzzle*, which contains the collective feedback of the individual ECP groups.

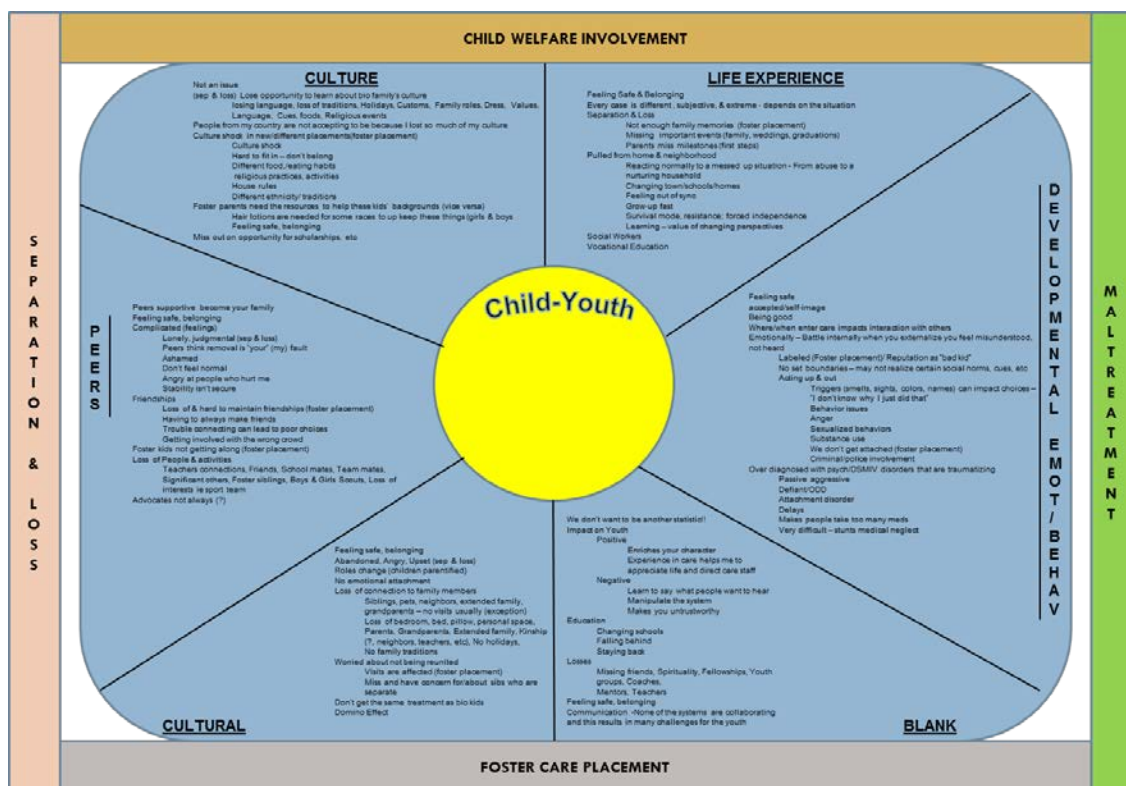


Figure 3. Whole Child Exercise - Week Four

In an effort to move toward community building and collaboration, the participants needed to be joined together by the knowledge that this issue and the struggle belonged to all of them (Freire, 1994). Following the introductory exercises conducted during Week Four, the youth, child welfare, and school ECP groups were integrated into two groups. These newly integrated smaller groups were invited to add another dimension to the *Whole Child Puzzle* that was created from all of their input in Week Four (see Figure 3). In their newly integrated mixed-small groups, ECP participants were given new puzzle pieces to fit around their puzzle from Week Four. These new pieces included the larger child welfare (DCYF) and school (School-Ed) systems as well as a generic system labeled *other*, which was intended to invite broader input from ECP participants about those other systems involved in and impacted by the

issue of school success. ECP participants were asked to use the three new puzzle pieces to get in touch with the role and impacts of professionals, the systems, and any other people who work with or are connected to students in foster care. Figure 4 depicts the youth-professionals newly expanded *whole Child Puzzle* complete with related external professionals and systems integrated into a new puzzle format.

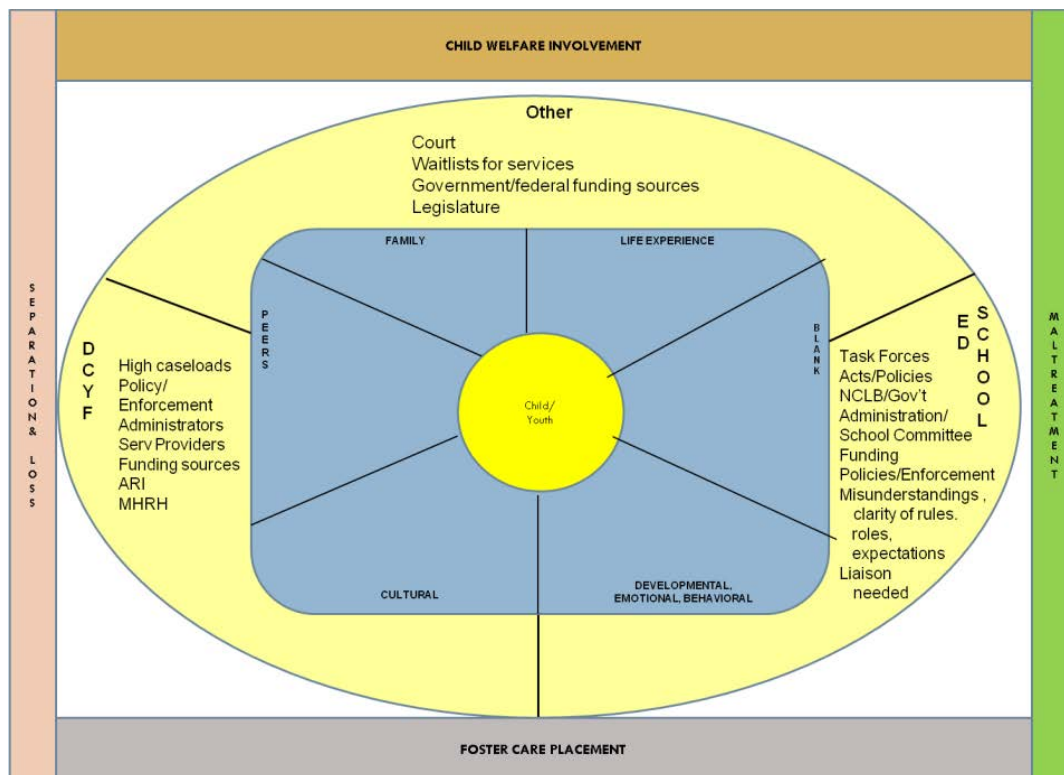


Figure 4. External Partners and the Whole Child Exercise -Week Five

During this exercise, I had the opportunity to observe and later to listen to the group interactions as they navigated the discussion and learned to work as an integrated group. This exercise represents an important step of the ECP participants' progression toward becoming a collaborative community. These excerpts from small group transcripts offer insight into the evolving awareness of issues that have shared impact

across the groups of ECP participants, especially the youth, as they tried to find their equal footing within the integrated group.

Week 5 Small Group Exercise - Challenges faced by professionals working with foster youth and child welfare

Group February 9th, 2011. Group 1

Youth – MX and K; School – RB; Child Welfare – CH, SA, and HE

RB	<i>Cause even at the dept of ed I was online looking for stuff recently and there was a person who's in charge of the homelessness act McKinney Vento act and okay so big deal see that someone from the department assigned but as that person in contact with this agency and their staff or in this agency and his staff</i>
CH	<i>Cause it's like the bare minimum we have to him into school so we will get him into school period but that's all we are going to do</i>
RB	<i>we got these laws so we can have a mission statement or whatever that looks like but</i>
SA	<i>(talking over multiple people) But you know there are I have to say there were people in schools that let me know I mattered let me know I mattered and there was no system for that was all done very informally are you raising your hand (said in an awkward and uncomfortable tone to k)</i>
K	<i>ye yeah I was just a waiting .. what about interstate agreements like when you're in a ya have to wait forever thank you we need to move the kid to another state like so you waiting to go to Florida</i>
RB	<i>Like a pre-adoptive placement</i>
K	<i>Yeah</i>
HE	<i>we don't have any control over that because it depends with the interstate that goes between the administrators from each state and some states are quick to respond and others are not -- no set policy</i>

Here we see a youth participant (K) taking a more subservient role in the discussion, where her action of raising her hand to enter the discussion indicates a lack of authority to speak without being invited by the professionals in the group who are deep in conversation. This behavior was reminiscent of early Week Two narratives, where the youths' lack of agency is marked by their voicelessness and inability to act on their own behalf. K's narrative does not, however, necessarily signify a continuation of the seeming disempowerment of youth by professionals, especially those in the child welfare system. Instead it suggests the residual scar of previous feelings of disempowerment that Freire (1994) attributes to a lack of critical consciousness or

ability to liberate oneself from what has been internalized and accepted as a lack of agency by both the oppressed and oppressors. When the child welfare participant SA recognizes the continuation of K's feeling of disenfranchisement, she invites K's voice into the conversation. It is interesting to me that SA, who grew up in foster care herself, was the professional to recognize and invite K in. It is worth noting that during the Week Five introduction exercise SA and K introduced each other and expressed a mutual respect for one another. I believe SA's inclusion of K evoked SA's past feelings of isolation and afforded her the opportunity to share her liberation with K and to model this practice for the members of their small work group.

In these next examples, I offer transcript excerpts that capture the small group members entering into a shared dialogue that validated the mutual relevance and impact of school success on all three ECP groups.

Week 5 Small Group Exercise - Challenges faced by professionals working with foster and child welfare

Group February 9th, 2011. Group 1

Youth – MX and K; School – RB; Child Welfare – CH, SA, and HE

SA *(talking over multiple people) But you know there are I have to say there were people in schools that let me know I mattered let me know I mattered and there was no system for that was all done very informally or you raising your hand (to K)*

K *ye yeah I was just a waiting .. what about interstate agreements like when you're in a ya have to wait forever thank you we need to move the kid to another state like so you waiting to go to Florida*

RB *Like a pre-adoptive placement*

K *Yeah*

HE *we don't have any control over that because it depends with the interstate that goes between the administrators from each state and some states are quick to respond and others are not -- no set policy*

K *Yet I know*

HE *No set policy*

SA *Yet **there is a policy***

HE *How is there that says that no transferability*

RB *No accountability.*

SA *Kendell like say you were on my caseload and you were moving to Massachusetts I couldn't directly call Massachusetts and talk to them I'm not*

	<i>allowed to do that</i>
K	<i>Yeah and say I'm moving back to Florida it's Florida Florida's late discretion like so that when I was going into the year</i>
CH	<i>That's pretty typical</i>
HE	<i>and Florida is one of the slowest states to get home studies</i>
K	<i>And then they moved me back in late two months</i>
CH	<i>matrix where you think</i>
MX	<i>I'm just listening I like what she said about the liaison in clarity of rules</i>

This exchange offers a sample of discourse where representatives from each group contribute and create a richer understanding of the challenges associated with transferring students in foster care from school to school. The exchange also brings to the surface how each group perceives, and is impacted by, this one aspect of the school success issue.

Week 5 Small Group Exercise - Challenges faced by professionals working with foster and child welfare

Group February 9th, 2011. Group 1

Youth – MX and K; School – RB; Child Welfare – CH, SA, and HE

MX	<i>I'm just listening I like what she said about the liaison liaison that was a good idea in clarity of rules</i>
SA	<i>And it's got to be someone who can really do that really liaise you know really go back and forth</i>
MX	<i>Yeah</i>
SA	<i>and bring the concerns from everybody your concerns my concerns your concerns so that we have an understanding so I don't say those super schools they don't do that get out because that's what happens we do a lot of finger-pointing</i>
CH	<i>And I think it's not I think we don't pay enough attention to the fact that when kids are stable and they're well doing well in school it trickles over and we don't need as many other resources there's no there's no is there any data to prove that that's accurate as anyone even ever looked into that to see that you know</i>
SA	<i>If the kid has a form where they're successful that make a difference...money wise</i>
CH	<i>But I mean there's no there's no</i>
RB	<i>No tracking for it</i>
CR	<i>there's no tracking for it so it kind of gets it the most like you have to attach it to dollar signs somehow bring it to the attention and I mean there's just a mean</i>
RB	<i>and let's face it more people stand up it's like the kids when they want the attention they can figure out how to get it sorted they do they get loud and boisterous and guess what they get the attention in these 15 kids who aren't I'm missing it because now we are focusing on that such the same thing we need to cry a lot louder and in higher louder and higher than the others are and say you</i>

	<i>know this needs to be because just because the kids in foster care does not mean that child is not stable as far as their own mental health</i>
SA	<i>It doesn't mean their needs are being met either</i>
RB	<i>But enough the other part they still need that support as much as the kid whose mental abilities are unstable and are acting out their education is impinged just because they're fine if you will... so called on the outside not acting out their educations okay they still need as much advocacy and as much on support to get through what they need to get through as those kids who are acting acting out</i>
SA	<i>And even those kids who are acting out your dealing with the behavior not dealing with that child you're dealing with the child you spend all your time addressing the behavior he won't stay in this scene we don't have any time to work with the kid</i>
K	<i>(tries to interject)</i>
RB	<i>Why is he not staying in his seat that so we lose sight of is that why</i>
CH	<i>What were you going to say (to K)</i>
K	<i>Like in school like I think for certain kids like kids that are have late great brains that are in DCYF like they still get treated differently and liked when I I had all A's and they still said oh because you're in DCYF we still think for support reasons you need to be in us at least one IEP class and they just had my eye like wanted to be in my AP class for advancement purposes because the need they made me go to St. Mary's and I missed a whole year of school so I wanted to catch up and they made me go to that class and I had to sit around and do nothing for all. Just because I was in DCYF</i>
HE	<i>And that goes</i>
SA	<i>Things haven't changed much I remember the day took me out of my advanced chemistry and advanced science class and made me take typing laughter okay because it was a practical course and maybe I could get a job in no</i>
CH	<i>Was that because you're a woman</i>
SA	<i>It was because in that day and those day</i>
RB	<i>Think in those days too it was called the mill mentality that in schools and in being a product of schools of the time you even attract college where you attract users can go to work and even then</i>
K	<i>No it's still like that</i>
RB	<i>They do need to invoke it they still do it but now more kids are allowed more choice</i>
SA	<i>I clearly get the message I get employing class because I was a system kid</i>
K	<i>I did the same thing in certain models AP advance place and CP college prep and then there's like with that general and before that it's it's like remedial for kids who are just going to go to just go get a job</i>
RB	<i>What happens now as compared to what would have happened when we were in junior high</i>
K	<i>And you have special ed before that</i>
RB	<i>Right well those kids start probably getting services way before that hopefully but before it truly was a line you were for you were not in my and my case they push me into the were not and I said why not just because I'm one of 10 kids in a number nine to the feeding chow and nobody has made it through high school I can't go here what's up with that in no but that's if they did they did family base placement</i>

In this exchange, there is an energetic interaction that incorporates ideas for improvement paired with pieces of professional and personal knowledge. Here, while the youth, child welfare, and school ECP participants retained those experiences specific to their identities, they also worked to weave them into a collective narrative. The exchange depicted in this small group conversation supports the evolution of the separated ECP groups that initially defined school success by their own single perspective and relationship. As the ECP group becomes more than the previous discrete groups with their separate identities, they begin to construct meaning about their new collective relationship from those historical identities that they brought to the integrated process (Wenger, 1998). The exciting outcome is that the meaning they constructed through collective participation and negotiation of meaning brought forth a stronger awareness and identity of a community empowered by mutual membership within the emerging Education Collaboration Project (Wenger). These narratives from the initial integrated group work experience provide evidence of the individual ECP groups' departures from the isolation of their lone experiences to the expansive awareness, or emersion, of themselves as members of a community that has power and agency (Freire, 1994). From this point of development, I began to see the individuals involved in the intervention as less participants in an intervention and more members in the ECP community.

The following narrative from Anthony Barros's guest lecture during Week Six is the final narrative I offer in support of the creation of collective identity and collaboration. Anthony Barros, a consultant with the federally funded New England Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors Program, spoke to the ECP group about

their roles in supporting school success. In his presentation he challenged participants to reflect on past and current beliefs and practices and to answer the questions, “Why does disclosing foster care status matter? and Does it help or hurt youth in care?” This speaker was already known to the youth who had worked with him on the *Sibling Bill of Rights*, but he was a new figure for the participants from the school and child welfare ECP groups. An added dimension to Anthony’s child welfare consultant role was the fact the he had also grown up as a foster youth. In his role as guest speaker he consequently wore two very important hats and was able to identify easily with both the professional and youth participants. I have used bold font to emphasize parts of the exchange that captured evidence of group formation and identity.

Week 6 transcript – guest speaker Anthony Barros engages ECP participant in a reflective conversation about professional practices.

AB – guest speaker; youth – K*, D, RO, MX (*K was the only vocal youth in this part of the transcript but all youth participants were present); child welfare – JU,TR, SA, HE and CH, and school – JO, RB.

AB *So what I guess what I’m hearing from you beyond defining people’s jobs there is just an info gap there where not being aware a person has all of these professionals in their life has services or is in need of services really impedes you from maybe giving them everything that you need or could use*

JO *Right cause if we don’t know how are the kids supposed to know and then it’s just a vicious cycle where they feel like they’re being neglected but wait I didn’t know this was available oh but wait I didn’t know you were in foster care so it’s yeah*

AB *Yeah right And let me challenge you with one thing um by assuming that disclosing a young person’s in foster care um will stigmatize them are we not thereby attaching stigma to the fact that they’re in foster care*

It’s not a secret to the young person that they’re in foster care um it’s not a secret to their foster parents or their residential home, to their group home to their sw so why are we dancing around the topic that’s common knowledge to everyone else just just a question for you to consider

TR *That’s exactly my point in Joana speaking honestly from a first year teacher and new teacher’s perspective however, all the things that she just requested are out there the paperwork goes to every child with the interstate card when the kids are registered. The people oh this contact person for ever school that’s called a social worker in the school the problem is the Dept doesn’t have a standard policy for what we do when a child comes into foster care and enters school it’s based on an individual person’s perception of what should be done and their own opinion on what and how they want to run their cases so that’s*

one problem and secondly it's the communication gap doesn't need to be there it's as if the teachers shouldn't know these things bec people fear the confidentiality issue that you talked about in the beginning so that's the problem all of these things exist it's just that they are just not being utilized because from the beginning from top down the Dept [DCYF] doesn't have a standard on what should be done.

I said this last week that I am taking a stand and putting it out there that my opinion is and what we should be doing is we should be telling people we should be telling teachers , social workers the fact the a child is in foster care should not be a secret to anybody.

I am not perfect and by any means do I keep confidentiality 100% of my life probably not nobody does [interruption?] I try I always change names and change situations but you know what things slip it happens we're only human people , So to say that I'm not going to tell them because I'm afraid the teachers are going to talk in the lunch room not good enough bec what you were talking about before the risk vs the benefit the benefit of that teacher knowing outweigh the risks of that child being stigmatized , stigmatized outcast any of those things that could potentially happen here are the things that will happen if you don't know and these are the things that can happen if you don't know so my opinion they need to know

CH *But I think there's a difference too in knowing this child's in foster care and knowing the whole ...*

SA *details*

CH *details of it*

TR *absolutely*

CH *You know so I'm supportive of the foster care part but it comes down to ..*

TR *The history and case history I agree with you*

CH *There are certain things the school should know about the triggers and so on and so forth*

AB *So..*

C *but I'm I'm protective I am (voice raising)*

AB *So I encourage you to think about confidentiality as filter rather than a seal um so confidentiality things can get through you know if we respect confidentiality to the letter of the law there's still plenty of stuff we can say that's useful uhh so it shouldn't it shouldn't be thought of as this cork where nothing comes out*

CH *No I agree but it is I'm not how to say but we are protective I am very protective you know when you go out and you **break up a family and you tear those kids apart** you know*

-
- TR *Absolutely I had to speak with a sw at an elementary school the other day because of a court ordered duty to warn bec the child had been charged with 1st degree sexual molestation and just getting there was hard enough bec she covers 3 schools 3 elementary schools so I had to wait a day before I could get someone bec I asked for the principal he wasn't avail I asked for the VP she wasn't avail so the run around the sw is the best you can we don't even have a guidance counselor in our elementary school she'll be back in tomorrow. I said well you know it's really imp't this kid is in your school and no one he could be in the bathroom right now unsupervised with children and working the court order so whose fault is that is it mine that I'm trying to do my job to make these phone calls or is it yours for not having somebody available to take this information.*
-
- AB *And it sounds like what is happening is that there are 2 cultures rather clearly don't know how talk to each other adequately*
-
- K *Um I do agree that um certain people in the school do need to know about a youth's frisk um foster care status but on the point of **the benefits outweigh the risk um there needs to be a training for people in school if they're going to know bec the benefit doesn't always outweigh the risk** bec the kid can be hurt if the teacher is like talking to people she shouldn't be about that student's status or like things that have happened to them bec kids aren't as nice as teachers like if they find out they there is a huge stigma bec I have definitely experienced it and there like there needs to be training with how those professionals handle it too bec I've gotten treated a lot differently by professionals too and not in a good way not in like oh you're in foster care so you don't need to do this and that it's like something just happened so you must have been the person that did so let's call all the kids that are in the group home down to the office like*
-
- ? *umhmm*
-
- TR *I agree with you completely*
-
- K *yea*
-
- AB *So just to ask the question then is the I guess I'll make a statement and you can react to it how about that is it true then that the problem isn't necessarily that people know you're in foster care but they have faulty info about with that means and what the implications are//*
-
- K *yea*
-
- AB *So that's what I want us all to remember the stigmatization of young people in foster care is the problem of stigmatization people in foster care um and so what we need to do collectively regardless of our role si to reverse that stigma there ought'n be one generally it's not it's a caregiver or a system not a young person that's been flawed to have it result in being in care and we don't send that message often enough um it's not embedded enough for people to understand so I'll just put that out there*
- So other thoughts other reactions to this stuff um one thing that I keep hearing people say is something that I alluded to which is the fact that um people are protective people almost possessive of young people you know when I was a sw you know I called them my kdis too right um and I hd teachers who called them my kids the young people in your classrooms um **and so what I want to challenge the professionals in the room to think through is how that protectiveness possessiveness can lead you to making bad decisions** um and*
-

-
- that's just the truth we can be overly protective and what is really indicated for young people in foster care is to have broader community and larger selection of supports to draw on and not to cleave tightly to one person or one set of people. So what we know about doing permanency work about what is happening in RI natural supports is that better results come from broadening the net not from restricting it and so when we're resisting other people who are just doing their job which is to reach out to you in the interest of a young person. When we're restricted and conservative about that again we're guaranteeing harm rather than preventing risks so that we just need to be sensitive to that it's just a reality um*
-
- K** *Well that's why I think we need to develop a personalization between each other first before we get all defensive and well poor you and why are you talking are you talking to me like this that's my kid you're talking about like we need to it would be nice to have um I don't know some kind of training where we would meet each other and know who we all are and what we do so that when the time comes up to tell the child um or the children that part had already been taken care of and we do what we need to do to help them those children bec that's huge*
-
- CH** *And I think there's a difference between protective and being cautious and am protective and I I won't apologize for that um I own it but I think it's because I've seen bad things happen I I gotten burned and I've seen kids get burned um so it's it's lesson learned*
-
- AB** *sure*
-
- CH** *(interrupts) As far as you know ..i support parents and I can't say that enough bec I am the biggest advocate for parents being involved in schools I push them to schools the point where ..i will carry an edge bec of the the the getting screwed in the past*
-
- CH** *I guess just being a little more cautious about finding out who is the right person in the school to talk to um you know when you get this has happened more than once in different systems where one school you talk to the principal one you're talking to the psychologist and you're giving them all this information and its no no no I don't need this give it to them and walk in and the secretaries are kinda talking openly about it um I was waiting to pick up a child and I overheard other teachers in the hall way talking about the kids I'm picking up and there were kids in the hall and you know so and I can't tell you it just happens so often where I feel like I'm divulging the same information to 3 or 4 people in the school and no no there not here it's just and I have kids complain to me why did you tell my why does my teacher know x y & z and why its like you can't please everybody no matter what we (DCYF) do we can't win*
-
- SA** *I do think that we have to make a concerted effort to change people's perception about what it means to be a system kid I work in probation and when I first started working in Eprov um it ws very clear to me the people I talked were absolutely horrified they thought I was working with a bunch of I don't know Charles Manson or somebody – I don't know most of my kids got stupid for a minute they're adolescents you know and I don't get that kind of reaction anymore and I think it's partially bec I work very hard to help people understand (raises voice) they're just kids you know and yea their my (probation) kids but they're just kids there are kids that I have special concerns about and I I do what I need to do with that regardless but that whole thing about kids when they live in a foster home I mean if we don't educate people*
-

they're always gonna be (uses whisper voice) Kids in dcyf down the street bec people don't understand what it means to be fostered

AB *So i guess what I the biggest and most impt tool that we can do to reverse all of this is to young people's voices bec when you have young people that have been part of the system or are part of the system talking about their experiences presenting themselves as the capable human beings they are people's minds change people's understanding of the system changes so you know putting a reality on something that is very abstract um is an excellent way to combat this...*

But I do need to insist that we need in child welfare to caution ourselves about getting to conservative in our practice um and another trend in child welfare an education but deeper in child welfare coming all across this country is to tolerate a lot more risk in placement decision removal decisions um and the it's the truth so what we've learned um by doing lots of juvenile research is that though removal itself is more traumatic in marginal case not extreme abuse and neglect cases in marginal cases the removal it self is worse in the long term for young people and their families

What this means is that the conservative tradition that we have been embraced of remove at all costs immediately be very protective is no longer the case and beyond

During this exchange, the stand taken by child welfare participant TR is important to her independence from her former lone identity as a child welfare professional. I find her reminder to others that she made this same statement in her Week Five small group narrative to be significant and to show the augmentation of her identity and role. I believe the show of support that TR received from two school professionals was liberating and allowed her to now take this stand before and within the entire ECP group. The fact that she had to challenge a child welfare colleague with whom she has a pre-existing relationship became less of an issue because her stance was not about her child welfare identity but the evolving identity of all the ECP participants. Equally important are the revelations made by CH regarding her fears of herself or youth on her caseload being mistreated. As Anthony delves further in to the

conversation with respectful problem posing, we uncover a truth that CH's fear is really about her own loss and mistreatment.

This delicate exploration and confrontation was made possible because the groups had come together in a trusting interaction in the hope of discovering solutions. Both Rogers's (2004) and Wenger's (1998) work understands what occurred in the Week Six meeting as an outcome of the establishment of a new Community of Practice (COP). At the beginning of this COP, these ECP participants attempted to negotiate and create a common understanding that holistically captured their collective experience related to school success for students in foster care.

At this point in the intervention, the formation of a community moving toward what Wenger (1998) refers to as a community of practice becomes evident based on three factors. First, through the establishment of *domain*, a place of shared interest where unique knowledge and experience converge, the ECP members begin to expand their identity and awareness beyond themselves to a more encompassing and collaborative place of knowing and acting (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, pp.19-20). Second, as the previously discrete groups joined together through this domain, they also connected through their individually and now collective experiences. Examples of individual practice are seen in their first four weeks of the ECP groups' exercises of self-discovery. Third, in Weeks Five through Nine, the increasing integration of the youth, school, and child welfare ECP groups shifted their practice from individual to collective, as they began sharing a classroom and dialogue space. The combined mutual investment in the domain and overlapping practice experiences helped to convey the shared sense of identity of these different members. As the ECP

participants joined together as an integrated group, they began to move away from the idea of themselves as separate groups and toward a community of diverse participants committed to improving school success. Thus, their *community* was constructed from the members' diverse, shared, and complementary historical knowledge and experiences as well as the new meanings negotiated by members (Wenger, et al., 2002, pp. 40-41). It is from this mutual identification of the domain and shared practice that they were able to form the beginning stages of a community of practice (Wenger).

In sum, the evidence in this chapter supports the positive impact of an empowering intervention as a tool for individual exploration of identity and power as the participants search for broader understanding of their efforts to promote school success for students in foster care. With this increased access to information and multiple perspectives, the ECP participants' language, perceptions, and responses evolved to form a collective group whose agency and empowerment was strengthened by their unity. Within this intervention, the training became a vehicle for individual group exploration of their and each other's unique relationships and identity with regard to school success. From this new knowledge, the participants experienced their own empowerment, thus enabling them to join with equally invested participants in a thorough exploration of the problem as they prepared for collective action. I would argue that, when considered through the lenses of critical theory and COP, the narratives shared in this chapter do in fact begin to offer evidence of changes in language, discourse, group perceptions, and power relations. In chapter seven, the culmination of the empowering intervention concludes with a focus post-*Collaborative*

Survey data and a Q-sort application that supports the achievement of collective action by the ECP Communities of Practice.

CHAPTER 7

ACHIEVING PRAXIS THROUGH A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The ultimate goal of my empowering intervention was the creation of a Community of Practice (COP), with the ECP participants taking on the role of leaders. As I began this intervention, my intent was to unite the disconnected youth, child welfare, and school individuals into their own, unified COP. In light of the struggles presented in chapter two and the emergence of individual group perceptions of oppression by their respective systems, I began with an empowerment approach informed by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1994; Shor, 1992;). Specifically, the first two weeks of the intervention began with Shor's *problem posing* and *listening* methods, which became tools for individual ECP group engagement and affirmation. Next, in an effort to move individual groups beyond their own roles, experiences, and identities, I augmented the individual focus of my intervention to include broader attention to other groups and systems. This approach included Shor's *identifying & representing issues* and *sharing the wider scope of collective information*, which began during the third week and continued through to the ninth week. This collective engagement increased access to new knowledge and diverse perceptions. It also contributed to changes in the ECP participants' perceptions of themselves. I observed an awakening or call to action by participants as they began to claim the task of addressing opportunities to promote school success for students in foster care. At the end of the ninth week, there was evidence of community formation, which enhanced the expansion of individual group identity, *the me*, to reflect something bigger, *the we*. During the final weeks of the

empowering intervention, the ECP participants did in fact form a Community of Practice (ECP-COP).

Within the ECP-COP, the new collective identity was informed by the members' shared knowledge and commitment to improving school success for students in foster care, which represented the *domain* of the COP (Wenger, 1998). Within this ECP-COP, participants opened up to each other to share ideas, negotiate differences, and to produce an identity for the emerging community, which reflected the *practice* component of their COP (Wenger). An additional element of their *practice*, and the heart of the ECP-COP's *community* (Wenger) was solidified when the ECP-COP advocated for improvement to school success at a community forum hosted in their honor. This activity represented the *praxis* or the opportunity for participants to put their thoughts into action (Shor, 1992; Freire, 1994). As Cameron (2001) writes, "The emergence of new kinds of discourse is not only a *consequence* of social change, but also an *instrument* of social change" (p. 130). The work of the ECP-COP reflected a commitment to improving school success for students in foster care. This action not only sought to empower and provide equity for students in foster care, but also sought to free the professional groups from the burden of their isolated roles and the disconnected systems. Evidence of the empowering developments of the ECP-COP is documented through the multiple sources of data detailed in this chapter.

THE EMERGENCE THE EDUCATION COLLABORATION PROJECT- COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Comparisons of the pre- and post-*Collaborative Survey* and *Narrative Essay* data accompanied by intervention artifacts, *ECP Policy Forum Invitation* and *ECP*

Suggestions for Improving School Success, document the emergence of a community of practice from the previously separate ECP groups. My original methodology included the use of the Q-sort method as a tool for conducting a quantitative analysis of the variability and patterns emerging from participants' forced organization of Q-sort responses (Doner in Hrueger, Casey, Donner, Kirsch, & Mack (Eds.), 2001). However, despite attempts to load Q-sort software and related ECP data on multiple computers, I was unable to gain full access to the software, which impaired the software's functioning. In an effort to overcome this setback, I adapted the Q-sort categories into scales and used frequency measures and nominal categorizations to explore changes in participant choices across the four Q-sort categories. From these data, pre- and post-*practice perspective profiles* were created for the ECP-COP. *Practice perspective profiles* became useful for depicting pre- and post-Q-sort response changes on a continuum of technical, neutral, and adaptive perspectives (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001).

In addition to these data, I offer the ECP-COP's May 11, 2010 Community Forum on School Success as evidence of their achievement of a praxis event. The praxis data are provided through artifacts produced for the event. At the close of this chapter and from the inclusion of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1994; Shor, 1992), Heifetz et al.'s (2001) theory of change, and Wenger's (1998) COP, I answer my final research question, "At the end of student, school, and child welfare interviews, focus groups, and training, how and to what extent have each of the groups' understanding of their constituent roles, responsibilities, needs, and problem-solving capabilities moved from away from distinct constituent identities toward a shared or overlapping identity?"

DOCUMENTING THE EVOLUTION OF THE ECP-COP

Pre- & post-narrative essay analysis of the final ECP-COP participants.

During Week one as part of the *defining group identities* stage of the empowering intervention, the ECP-COP participants wrote individual responses to a *narrative essay*. The essay prompted their response to a question regarding what they would say to a newly hired professional in their organization regarding how to meet school success for students in foster care. The following narratives comprise the full range of responses from the ten ECP-COP participants who participated in the entire process. These pre- and post-narratives offer opportunities to observe and hear changes in themes and participant voices. Pre-responses are depicted with a gray background and post-responses with a white background.

As a Former youth in care, I strongly believe the relationship between DCYF and the school systems across the state needs to be improved. My personal experience leads to to assume that there isn't enough effort being made by the individuals working with the youth. Obviously this differs on a case basis, however this is a great place to start and a stepping stone towards greater changes. Communication is definitely] a key in this initial step. The initial convo [conversation] should be with the youth and then bring in the individuals. There is a huge lack of knowledge on the part of caretakers and inconsistency.
I think with the education task force these issues are beginning to be addressed
 (Youth Participant 1Y Pre-Response)

To create an education plan/goal with youth; Take time to visit youth at school; Do homework with youth; Get involved; Do not allow youth to become discouraged (Youth Participant 1Y Post-Response)

Hmmm to begin get to know who you're working with because once you get to a sense of who the child is you can help them with a like a child might not like school because they might not know what they want to do in life so if you kinda know the type of person you might do some suggestions so maybe that will lead them to the right path. Ummm let's see what else to do be very involved like if you're a case worker be very involved like call to see how the kid is doing what can you, it's basically like a parent what can I do to make sure my kid is being successful just like a parent if a they're struggling like me I never had anybody go to my parent/teacher conferences so nobody nobody knew, ah they're just seeing what I'm getting on paper they don't know why I am getting that bad grade or nothing like that cause they're not there they're not asking questions cause truthfully some of them didn't care or they don't think that they had to do that you know they just

think all they had to do was provide me with the home you know heat and that's it and that's all they have to provide me with and school was everybody else's deal soo um (Youth Participant 2Y Pre-Response)

Things I would like the professionals to do in order to promote education success. I would first to engage the youth, engage the youth meaning um engage them into the education process um ask them what they want to be don't just automatically assume or tell them what they can become of themselves . If you are a social worker go go through college orientation process with them [youth] if they have questions let yourself to be open to help them with the questions. Um I would also like the professionals to engage guidance counselors and teachers without breaching any privacy um policies um. Let's see I would like them to listen to the youth um but don't tell the youth what they should be doing just make suggestions to the youth so it doesn't seem to the youth that they have no voice in their process (Youth Participant 2Y Post-Response)

They should make sure that every youth has an educational advocate and that there is a trained professional for every youth in DCYF to have someone to talk to. They should also know the proper measures to take if a child is reporting abuse or Improper treatment at a foster home. They should advocate or the youth to be able to stay after school or help or extracurricular activities too. They should also be very patient and understanding because some youth act out because of abuse they've gone through or just to receive attention. And if they see that a child is not getting the medical care they need or getting their needs met they need to call RICHILD or DCYF directly and not where the child is living; visits from social workers shouldn't be planned either otherwise they won't be seen in their natural environment and everything will be staged (Youth Participant 7Y Pre-Response)

I could go on and on for days telling someone what it takes to promote school success for foster youth, but the things I find most important ate telling the students foster care status to the educational professionals that work with them, including their former schools and subjects, their unique needs and triggers from traumatic experiences that they have. Also, the student should have a specific person they can to talk to when their having a problem. And they need to have transportation to school. And equal expectations while in school (Youth Participant 7Y Post-Response)

Some of the major issues kids in FC face include having to change school frequently. When they change FHs not having a support system in the home (because it changes) or in the school system (because they are new and sometimes no one knows they are in FC). And lastly struggling with psycho social issues in their life that makes learning a concentrating in the school hard or impossible. Some of these issues would be worrying about their bio families (parents & Sibs), mental health issues, substance abuse issues, neglect and undiagnosed learning disabilities. Their concerns are general for kids in FC but I have personally seen more individual concerns and issues that severely affect a kid's ability to perform in school.

While living in a group home, a 14 year old has been changed to 3 different programs in 3 different schools in Providence to manage her behaviors. She has a parent involved but no educational =advocate and the school system insists they can provide an education without sending her to a specialized school like the Providence Center to also meet her mental health needs. This child entered care because she smokes marijuana frequently

runs away and was violent in the home. She is on her second group home now and has violated probation and spent 2 weeks at the RITS. I am certain throughout the school year so far she has not learned a single lesson, made a single new friend, worked towards her goal of becoming a pastry chef or improved on her learning skills/welcome any known disabilities.

I know some of this is contributed to the stigma She carries as a child in foster care living in a staff-secure group home with staff transporting her and making her decisions instead of a parent.

I think school officials are frustrated with her violent behaviors and prefer to socially promote her or move her school placement because it is easier than continued assessment, [DAS], etc. I have also found teachers and administrators inaccessible to her 'team' of people and less likely to communicate or engage the team.

I have had better luck with kids in FC in elementary school. As long as teachers/administrators know the kids are in FC they seem more interested in helping and more likely to invest in the child. This elementary population is more likely to communicate with DCYF, other schools, "the team" and they never have the sense that they might "give up" or move a kid unless it's necessary. School SWs have been more helpful in the elementary schools and seem more readily available with a smaller population to serve (Child Welfare Participant 10CW Pre-Response)

As a DCYF social worker, we have a responsibility to safety, perm, and well-being. However, as professionals who have the opportunity to better the lives of children in our care, we need to value education as a priority. Ways we can do this include promoting communication between professionals including the school department and other direct care workers. We should also be disclosing the foster care status of kids on our caseloads under appropriate confidentiality guidelines. Lastly we should continue to encourage and engage kids on our caseloads to have expectations and goals for their education. This is a gift that no one can ever take away from them regardless of the challenges and hurdles they may face in life (Child Welfare Participant 10CW Post-Response).

I think one of the primary goals we have is to ensure that youths on our caseloads have access to quality education. In my opinion this is a team based process and one of the most important things I can do to advocate for youths on my caseload is to be a member of that team and always facilitate the development of that team. Also essential is that the voice of the youth is heard, encouraged and validated throughout this process. Although some of our youths have educational advocates, it is essential to attend as many school meetings as we can to become recognized by the school as a person who can help facilitate quality education. In addition, I believe that a quality education team should include foster parents or residential staff, the family of origin and the youth as well as the school and that we have a mandate to add to the process of developing and overseeing the needs of our youth. As a team member we need to be sure the roles and responsibilities are clear to everyone while ensuring that all members have input into the educational plan (Child Welfare Participant 12CW Pre-Response).

Make the first move introduce yourself as a team member who wants to work towards school success with them. Support the parents – foster & bio – get to know their concerns. Talk with youth about hopes aspirations and how to build a foundation.

Realistically assess what the system has to offer. Don't be afraid to use grass roots to accomplish goals. Stress all positives never give up. Talk to co-workers about things that work for them. If plan A doesn't work why? What's plan B and how is it different (Child Welfare Participant 12CW Post-Response)

I believe that communication is a very important component to ensuring school success for youth in foster care. The communication should include the youth, bio parents, foster parents, social workers, probation officers, teachers and any relevant service providers. It's important for the youth to have an appropriate academic plan and people in school and out of school who support that plan. Youth and their caretakers should also be provided with info relevant to services and supports available to them. If I was talking to a newly hired person regarding school success for foster children I would suggest that they make contact with and establish a relationship with school personnel. I would share my positive experiences within different school systems.

I recently attended a meeting at a high school which was held at my suggestion. To my surprise there was an Italian teacher who asked to be present in order to support the student and work towards a successful outcome. I find that schools have been receptive and welcome input and assistance from the Dept. The connections that I have established which may have been initially for one particular student have helped me when I have encountered problems with other students in the same school. I also think it is important to listen to what the youth is articulating and provide supports as needed. It most definitely needs to be a collaborative effort (Child Welfare Participant 13CW Pre-Response).

Promoting school success for students in foster care requires communication, collaboration and commitment on the part of the student and those associated with that student. I would tell a new hire to advocate for the student and empower that student to have a voice and be heard. Make the necessary connections in order for that student to be successful and have a support system (Child Welfare Participant 13CW Post-Response)

RI Law states that all public schools must accept and enroll foster children into their school system. Foster Parents/Caretakers are provided an intra-state educational card, which allows the school to request the school records from previous school. No child may be denied an education. DCYF social workers should obtain signed release from parent/guardian so that information may be shared between school and DCYF. Social Worker should attend any/all school meetings. If parent is unable or unwilling to be child's educational advocate, Social Worker must refer (case/child?????) for an educational advocate. Foster children should not be treated differently than non-foster children. Social Worker should encourage foster children to attend school during and become involved/active in their school. Foster children should have same expectations of all students be actively involved in educational planning, advocate for appropriate courses, graduate from high school (academic or vocational) and plan to attend college (further their education. Foster children are eligible for educational (financial) assistance. Foster children are eligible for teen grants so they can attend proms, join band/buy musical instruments, plan sports/buy uniforms + buy books + other school related items. SW should partner w/ foster parents/ caretakers to role model + be supportive of child's educational experiences. Receiving an education is important and should be a priority (Child Welfare Participant 15CW Pre-Response).

Patience! Perseverance! Foster kids deserve the same educational opportunities as other students

Communication. Collaboration. Consistency .Make your presence known without stigmatizing the foster child (Child Welfare Participant 15CW Post-Response)

I would begin by telling them that they first had to be sensitive to the fact that these students are currently living with someone other than their parents. I would go on to explain that children are removed from homes and placed in foster care for very serious reasons. DCYF does not remove children from their homes for frivolous reasons. I would continue to explain that these children have been through a lot emotionally and/or physically so they may have difficulty concentrating on school work. These children may outwardly express how they feel or they could be withdrawn. I would stress that we need to be sensitive to these needs and may have to be flexible when it comes to school work. By this I mean we may have to be flexible on due dates, provide materials that they might not have, provide extra tutoring. These students may need someone to talk to in school – school counselor, social worker, school psychologist. It would also be beneficial for the school to have a good rapport with the foster family. This partnership will be beneficial in helping the student to be successful. I would end by reiterating that everything I mentioned are a series of strategies that can be used to make foster kids successful in school (School Participant 16ED Pre-Response).

- *I would tell them everything that we suggested in our presentation ☺*
 - *Ed equality*
 - *Maintain school place*
 - *Child welfare-education communication*
 - *Child welfare-education relationship -team*
 - *Education-youth relationship (id support person)*
 - ☺
 - *No need to repeat the whole process here*
 - *I believe in it and want to be part of any work to make it happen in the future*
- (School Participant 16ED Post-Response)

Students in care vary in their school experiences so much that ensuring success means that they have to become “connected” to an individual in school. These students need to sense that school can be safe, nurturing and stimulating. They need to be able to feel free to “release” themselves from worries and focus on learning. Until they “feel” the can “let go” of worries for a few hours, school can be rough. Once they acclimate, they can achieve success educationally but most importantly socially/emotionally.

*Teachers who have foster children in their classrooms need to be **cognizant** that these students do not usually want unnecessary attention, but will crave consistency, fairness and opportunity. Some foster youth will try to “play victim” it is their effort to protect themselves and try to see if their effort to protect themselves and try to see if their teachers are gullible or if the teacher is “strong.” Some wish to sit back and do nothing because they have experienced so many interruptions with schools and frequent moves that they no longer see a “need” to do anything in school. If teachers can try to “connect” with these students and spend some additional time focused in the students’ needs (without making it obvious to the other students) the teacher will “see” the changes...they will be small changes at first (sometimes just a quick glance or little*

smile)...eventually, if the child is able to stay in place...the changes become great. Being firm, yet fair, consistent yet flexible will ensure that a relationship between the teacher and school is established. Additionally, making sure to include the caretakers as often as possible enables the student to “see” that education is something to “value.” Contacting caretakers often with positive reflections will raise self-esteem of the students. Finally big changes need to take place at the policy level...foster kids should always be able to remain their home schools with their peers and with the educators who have always knew them! It’ll take a lot of doing and a lot of legislative work...but it can and should be done (School Participant 18ED Pre-Response)!

- *My video says it all!*
 - *Legislative action*
 - *Maintain placement at school*
 - *Communication education-child welfare*
 - *Education-child welfare - work together*
 - *Communicate*
 - *Close gaps – don’t create them through disrupting educational placements*
- (School Participant 18ED Post-Response)

For someone who has just been hired in my organization, I would formally introduce myself to them in person and informally introduce myself through an email. i would make that person feel welcomed and develop a professional meeting with him or her. Once established, I would set up an appointment to discuss and present what it takes to promote school success for students who are open to DCYF and living in foster care. I would compare and contrast two different children (make believe of course) with various background home living styles, same age, same grade. One student will be described as having an ideal home life w/both mom and dad in the house, nice home, good food, bathes every night and has family care. The other student will be described as one who lives with foster parents who have other foster children in the house. The home the child lives in is not a bad home but it’s always changing depending on the specified situation. Once the home lives have been presented orally and visually to my new supervisor, I will show this person how these children perform in school. My evidence will be backed by research and appropriate references will be made to those people. After all that, I will propose the idea to get each individual child to meet with who is in charge and let them know that the school supports them and all kinds of services such tutoring, staying after school for help, speaking with counselors or psychologist are available. Foster parents and whoever needs to present will be available as well. This way, this new person can understand individuals better as to why they act, speak or learn the way they do. Communication is crucial (School Participant 19ED Pre-Response).

Working in CF there are so many various situations that involve children who are in DCYF due to parent neglect, parent/guardian deportation, families who get caught up in drugs and alcohol, teen pregnancy, crimes committed that result in guardians bouncing in and out of jail etc. All these elements are a product of what goes into our school and classroom. Therefore what do you do when a child in care ends up in your classroom?

- *Let me tell you based on my and other experiences*
 - *Make the child feel like he/she is at home*
 - *Make them feel comfortable*
 - *Include them in every decision that involves them*
 - *Document on your end anything that seems out of the ordinary such as outbursts, the way they eat, socialize*

-
- *Always LISTEN!*
 - *Follow up with the child*
 - *Let them know you care, encourage and can do whatever they want*
 - *The sky is the limit*
- (School Participant 19ED Post-Response)
-

From the above narratives and with my three research assistants, we reviewed all the narratives and identified common themes. Once the themes were identified, pre- and post-narratives were analyzed using frequency measures. While there is a significant amount of commonality between the pre- and post-themes, some interesting changes emerged. Table 18 offers a comparison of responses before the intervention and those submitted at the conclusion.

Table 18 Thematic Analysis of ECP-COP Pre- and Post-Narrative Essays

PRE-DATA		POST-DATA	
Pre-Thematic Categories & Sub-Categories	Total (N=10) (54 statements)	Post-Thematic Categories & Sub-Categories	Total (N=10) (47 statements)
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22% (n=12) • 42% (n=5) • 17% (n=2) • 25% (n=3) • 8% (n=1) • 8% (n=1) 	Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% (N=10) • 40% (n=4) • 40% (n=4) • 20% (n=2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cw-Ed • Cw-Youth • Ed-Youth • Ed-Ed -Mentor • Ed-Caretaker 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cw-Ed • Cw-Youth • Ed-Youth • Ed-Ed -Mentor • CW-CW Mentor • Ed-Caretaker • CW-Caretaker 	
Lack of Effort/ Investment/ Consistency/ Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4% (n=2) 	Benefits of Effort/ Investment/ Consistency/ Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% (n=7)
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13% (n=7) 	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11% (n=5)
Team Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% (n=8) 	Team Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8% (n=4)
Youth Voice/Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9% (n=5) 	Youth Voice/ Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11% (n=5)
Supports & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9% (n=5) 	Supports & Services (new focus on transportation & identification of support person in school for youth to connect with)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11% (n=5)
Placement/School Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4% (n=2) 	Placement/School Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6% (n=3)
Educational Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% (n=3) 	Access to Equal Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6% (n=3)
Policies to Guide Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% (n=3) 	Policies to Guide Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% (n=1)
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13% (n=7) • 14% (n=1) • 71% (n=5) • 28% (n=2) 	none	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
None	None	Disclosure of Foster Care Status with attention to confidentiality policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8% (n=4)

Source: Pre- and Post-Narrative Essay

Analysis: T. Glantz

As noted in Table 18, almost all of the themes carried through the pre- and post-responses. However, despite being among the higher scored themes in the initial data, the post narrative data exclude training as a category. In response to this change, the

results may suggest less emphasis on traditional or a more *technical* fix for practice or organizational problems, i.e. training or professional development. I can argue that training can and should be reflective of more *adaptive* strategies; however, people may experience training as one dimensional and lacking their perspective. This perception could cause someone to experience it as more reflective of Freire's banking concept (1994); in other words, people usually attend trainings where they are told what needs to be done, information goes in, and practice behavior changes in the hope of remedying the problem. Is it possible that after going through this empowering intervention participants came to value the relational aspect of problem solving, in contrast to traditional training, as a more concrete strategy for overcoming challenges to school success and community building? My sample size limits me from using traditional statistical analyses to draw substantive conclusions. However, I do find the increase in the relationship score from 22% to 42% to be a significant, potential indicator of the positive impact of adaptive methods combined with critical pedagogy and COP.

Related to the importance of relationships, I found the reframing of the *effort/investment/consistency/commitment* theme to be important. More specifically, participants' isolated perspectives at the start of the intervention appear to change into more inclusive ones at the conclusion. Within the pre-data, this theme was presented from a *deficit*, "what's missing view": it happens because professional do not expend effort or commitment. However, the post-data reflect this theme from an *assets* standpoint, where it is characterized as creating *benefits*. The migration of thematic perspectives from deficit to benefit viewpoints offers further evidence of the presence –

and preferability – of more adaptive approaches. The increase in frequency from 4% to 15% suggests that this theme came to be valued by the ECP-COP.

A new theme to emerge in the post-data, and one that truly was a result of negotiation and reification (Wenger, 1998), was that of *disclosing a student's foster care status within the limits of confidentiality*. Here confidentiality served to remind ECP-COP participants of appropriate parameters related to sharing information about the youth and their family. It also suggests the navigation of the child welfare-youth relationship to reflect respect and care or *doing with* instead of *doing to*. Furthermore, the inclusion of language associated with disclosing foster care status in the final *narrative essay* suggests a recognition of the value of using communication to build connections and support to empower the youth.

Other post-themes receiving lower responses – *placement/school stability, educational equity, and policies to guide practice* – carried across both pre- and post-responses but did not receive overwhelming attention. I am unsure if the low responses are related to the more technical context of these themes, which may not weigh as heavily as the more adaptive themes. It is possible that attending to these themes is perceived as part of the adaptive process of being in the ECP-COP, where child welfare-education and professional-youth relationships guide the process. Interestingly, these themes did emerge during the praxis event and will be addressed later in this chapter. Building on the assessment of narratives and linkages to technical and adaptive inclinations, the Q-sort *practice perspective profile* analysis becomes another resource for exploring this ECP-COP and the potential relationship between the empowering intervention and changes in practice perspectives.

Q-sort-practice perspective profiles. I selected this method as a resource for exploring patterns in constituents' perceptions of what is needed to promote the school success of students in foster care before and after the intervention. Within my own and others' data, attitudes about school success for students in foster care reflect a tension between quick fixes to problems (e.g., create a form or policy or it's someone else's responsibility) and the awareness of cross-agency relationships as a mediating factor in addressing problems with school success. My Q-sort choices reflect this continuum of tension, which I believe to be a reflection of technical (quick fix, no-relational) versus adaptive (process oriented change centered on creating dialogue and relationships) approaches to change. Within the Q-sort process participants ordered different categories from least agree to most agree. In support of using the voices of those most impacted, my Q-sort categories were developed from pilot focus groups data and mirrored current research (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Shor, 1992; Wenger, 1998).

Due to difficulties with the Q-sort software and in an attempt to still learn from the pre- and post- Q-sort responses, I chose to modify the tool. The Q-sort included twenty-eight cards that corresponded to four categories: (1) school success, (2) communication, (3) perception, and (4) providing supports and services. Each of the categories included seven related options. These options were ordered, unbeknownst to the ECP-COP participants, along a continuum of *technical to adaptive practice perspectives*. In analyzing the technical versus adaptive position of participants before and after the intervention, I applied the same consolidation technique used with the *Collaboration Survey Scale*. In the case of the Q-sort categories, the two technical options at the far left of the scale were coded *technical* and the two adaptive options at

the far right of the scale were coded *adaptive*. The three center options, which were more ambiguous, were coded *neutral*. In addition to these three primary categories, additional combinations of the three categories emerged to reflect more complex *practice perspectives*. While my analysis pales in comparison to that of a traditional Q-sort, I do believe the data provide additional support for changes to participant identity and their connection as a community with attention to the impact of Heifetz et. al's (2001) theory of change. The Q-sort categories are available in Appendix X. The Q-sort data collection came at the end of the pre-data collection, which followed the *Narrative Essay*. Considering the lack of exposure to Q-sort categories, I found the overlap between concepts across the Q-sort categories and the narrative responses to be affirming of the tools used in this empowering intervention.

The four Q-sort data tables that follow can be understood using this key:

Category	Technical (T)	Neural (N)	Adaptive (A)
Technical (T)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T - > technical %; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TN = 50% technical with 50% neutral 	
Neutral (N)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NT => neutral % with >% unimportant adaptive or • > neutral % with > technical%; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N => neutral %; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA => neutral % with >% unimportant technical or • > neutral % with >adaptive %.
Adaptive (A)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AN = 50% adaptive paired with 50% neutral; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A => adaptive %;

Table 19 Q-sort Pre- and Post-School Success Data

School Success Q-Sort Options	Pre A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Post A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Analysis
school success <u>technical</u> -3 - (Q1) Students in foster care often have many issues to deal with, which makes promoting their school success difficult.	IA- 40% N - 60% (NT)	A - 20% N - 80% (N)	Neutral - Movement away from valuing technical toward center
school success <u>technical</u> -2 - (Q2) It is the responsibility school teachers and staff to promote the school success of a student in foster care.	A - 0 N - 60% D - 40% (N)	A - 0 N - 80% D - 20% (N)	Neutral - Little change
school success <u>technical</u> -1- (3) It is the responsibility of DCYF to promote the school success of a student in foster care.	A - 0 N- 70% D- 30% (N)	A - 0 N - 80% D - 20% (N)	Neutral - Little change
school success <u>neutral</u> 0 - (4) Because every situation is different, it is difficult to identify an organization or person that is responsible to promote the school success for students in foster care.	A - 0 N - 60% D - 40% (N)	A - 0 N - 60% D - 40% (N)	Neutral - No change
school success <u>adaptive</u> 1- (5) I initiate contact with other organizations to promote the school success of students in foster care.	A- 20% N - 60% D - 20% (N)	A - 30% N - 60% D - 10% (NA)	Neutral-Adaptive - Movement toward the center with more adaptive quality
school success <u>adaptive</u> 2- (6) School Teachers and staff routinely connect with DCYF staff to form teams that promote school success for students in foster care.	A - 0 N - 70% D - 30% (N)	A - 0 N - 40% D - 60% (NT)	Neutral Technical - Movement away from adaptive toward center with more technical quality
school success <u>adaptive</u> 3 - (7) School teachers and staff, DCYF, caretakers, and other professionals routinely work together with students in foster care to promote the student's school success.	A - 10% N - 50% D - 40% (NT)	A - 0 N - 50% D - 50% (NT)	Neutral Technical - Movement away from adaptive with more technical quality

*Data in bold represent response where there were changes between the pre- and post-response.

Source: Modified Q-sort

Analysis: T. Glantz

The ECP-COP pre-responses to option 1, a *technical* category, reflect language that highlights the vulnerability of students in foster care as a reason that promoting their school success is so difficult. This framing is self-fulfilling, and one could argue that it blames the victim for the inability of others – the school and child welfare professionals/systems – to make progress. Based on the progression of dialogue cited in the pre- and post-*Narrative Essays*, the movement from the *Neutral-Technical* practice

perspective to one that is *Neutral* may be related to changes in the ECP-COP members' awareness of the strengths and needs of students in foster care. This awareness may make it more difficult to embrace the more technical generalizations leveraged in option 1. Furthermore, as a result of the cross-disciplinary teaching, learning, and shared problem solving, I wonder if it becomes harder for professional groups to make excuses for their lack of action. Because the ECP-COP process equally draws participants in through a sense of shared responsibility, it becomes less acceptable to abdicate responsibility for embracing one's necessary role in promoting school success for students in foster care.

Within this same Q-sort category, there was a slight change from *Neutral* to *Neutral-Adaptive* for question 5, which used "I" language to indicate individual responsibility for initiating relationships. While the change was small, it may indicate the collective responsibility of members of the ECP-COP to ensure that they play a role in creating supportive relationships and a collaborative approach. Within this same category, there was a change from *Neutral* to *Neutral-Technical* for option 6, which identifies school staff as the initiators of routine contact with child welfare professionals/systems. In the case of this response, is this disagreement with the school's role a reflection of the belief that the role of initiator resides with child welfare professionals? This response seems to suggest that 60% of the respondents recognize the responsibility of connecting with the *team* to be a primary responsibility of the child welfare staff. If so, this response may offer evidence of how child welfare roles can contribute to the ECP-COP while still maintaining distinct external responsibilities for promoting school success for students in foster care.

The second Q-sort category, *communication*, was the category reflecting the most change across pre- and post-responses. Of the seven options within this category, five, reflected changes, almost entirely in the adaptive direction.

Table 20 Q-sort Pre- and Post-Communication Data

Communication Q-Sort Options	Pre A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Post A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Analysis
Communication <u>technical</u> -3 - (8) Communicating a student's foster care status with a school code numbers is essential to promoting their school success.	A - 0 N - 40% D - 60% (NA)	A - 10% N - 70% D - 20% (N)	Neutral - movement toward the center
Communication <u>technical</u> -2 - (9) Communicating a student's foster care status results in stigma and negatively impacts school success.	A - 20% N - 60% D - 20% (N)	A - 0% N - 50% D - 50% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - Movement away from the center toward adaptive
Communication <u>technical</u> -1 - (10) Communicating federal/state guidelines for education and foster care make it easy for school teachers and staff and DCYF to promote the student's school success.	A - 10% N - 80% D - 10% (N)	A - 0% N - 90% D - 10% (N)	Neutral - almost no change
Communication <u>neutral</u> -0 - (11) Communicating the foster care status of a student should only be done on a case by case basis.	A - 10% N - 70% D - 20% (N)	A - 0 N - 60% D - 40% (N)	Neutral - almost no change
Communication <u>adaptive</u> 1 - (12) Communicating a student's foster care status is essential to promoting the student's school success.	A - 11% N- 66% D - 22% (N)	A- 30% N - 60% D - 10% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - Center - with adaptive leaning
Communication <u>adaptive</u> 2 - (13) Communicating a student's foster care status and their special needs is essential to promoting the student's school success.	A - 20% N - 70% D - 10% (N)	A - 50% N - 50% (AN)	Adaptive Neutral - adaptive leading center
Communication <u>adaptive</u> 3 - (14) Communicating a student's foster care status, strengths and their emotional, behavioral and social needs is essential to promoting the student's school success	A - 40% N - 50% D - 10% (NA)	A - 60% N - 40% (A)	Adaptive - Movement from center toward adaptive

*Data in bold represent response where there were changes between the pre- and post-response.

Source: Modified Q-sort

Analysis: T. Glantz

Within the two technical options, numbers eight and nine, the idea of telling a student's foster care status to promote school success is presented. In option 8, the idea of using a code to convey status is offered; here, respondents changed their *practice perspective* from Neutral-Adaptive to Neutral. In option 9, the notion of stigma and negative school impact is linked with disclosing a student's status, and respondents changed the practice perspective from Neutral to Neutral-Adaptive. These changes are interesting in light of the exploration of foster care status by the ECP-COP participants and indicate to me their grasp of the complexity of the issue. The option at the far adaptive end, options 13 and 14, and the adaptive-oriented neutral option, option 12, reflect a continuum that moves toward the most adaptive interpretation of what disclosing foster care status looks like. Here the responses progressively move to become more and more adaptive, where option 14, the most adaptively frames option, moves from Neutral-Adaptive to Adaptive. At the end of the intervention, it would appear that the ECP-COP participants recognized the disclosure of foster care status as an issue that is multi-dimensional and built on interactions and relationships. The result is a strong endorsement for using an adaptive practice approach to resolve different *practice perspectives*. It is worth noting that at the start of the intervention process, this issue posed significant challenges within homogeneous ECP groups as well as across the collective ECP groups. This response change represents an important development in the ECP-COP's awareness and sense of action that I believe to be attributable to the intervention. It also provides evidence of the ECP-COP's ability to negotiate meaning to inform their collective position and practice on this issue.

The third Q-sort category involves the topic of *perception*, where perception focuses around practice priorities of competing safety, permanency, well-being, and school success. Here the responses are a bit complicated, and they challenged my expectations of a progressive movement toward adaptive *practice perspectives*.

Table 21 Q-sort Pre- and Post-Perception Data

Perception Q-Sort Options	Pre A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Post A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Analysis
Perception technical -3 - (15) The safety and permanency of a student in foster care is the most important priorities in their life	A - 50% N - 50% (TN)	A - 30% N - 40% D - 20% (N)	Neutral - Movement away from technical toward center
Perception technical -2 - (16) School success for students in foster care requires attention to student's academic experience.	A - 10% N - 90% (N)	A - 30# N - 70% (NT)	Neutral Technical - Movement toward technical away from neutral
Perception <u>technical</u> -3- (17) Because of their losses and other experiences, students in foster cannot make their school success a priority.	A - 0 N - 40% D - 60% (NA)	A - 0 N - 20% D - 80% NA)	Neutral Adaptive - low value for technical
Perception <u>neutral</u> 0- (18) Every student's situation is different and addressing their school success should be made on a case by case basis	A - 30% N - 60% D - 10% (N)	A - 10% N - 80% D - 10% (N)	Neutral - little change
Perception <u>adaptive</u> 1- (19) Because of their losses and other experiences, students in foster care need professionals from schools and DCYF and caretakers to help them make school success a priority.	A - 40% N - 50% D - 10% (NA)	A - 30% N - 70% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - center with adaptive leaning
Perception <u>adaptive</u> 2- (20) School success for students in foster care requires attention to student's academic, social, emotional and behavioral experiences.	A - 40% N - 60% (NA)	A - 40% N - 60% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - No change
Perception <u>adaptive</u> 3- (21) Promoting a student's school success is equally as important as insuring their safety and permanence	A - 60% N - 40% (A)	A - 70% N - 30% (A)	Adaptive - little change with strong adaptive

Data in bold represent response where there were changes between the pre- and post-response.

Source: *Modified Q-sort*

Analysis: *T. Glantz*

Option 15 states that safety and permanency for a student in foster care is the most important priority in the student's life. The pre-response was categorized as Technical Neutral, which would be consistent with ECP group's perception at the start of the intervention; however, at the post-response, there was only minimal change, with the concluding response being categorized as Neutral. Next, option 16, narrows attention to school success by suggesting that it solely involves a student's academic experience. With this option the response changed from Neutral to Neutral-Technical. I was surprised by the absence of an adaptive quality in these two responses. Yet, these responses caused me to reflect on whether or not school success had to be an absolute technical or adaptive proposition. Is it possible that safety and care are most important and that, when attending to issues of school success, distinct attention to the full school experience, a more concrete concept, could co-exist and be received as acceptable by the ECP-COP? Does this more concrete response suggest an opportunity, when people are co-informed, for mutual respect for those distinct tasks associated with individual school and child welfare tasks to be fulfilled and recognized as a part of the whole? The responses in this category opened up a new way of considering the technical-adaptive continuum, which I came to recognize as critical to solving the problems associated with school success. *Perhaps it is not about an entirely adaptive approach but more of a balanced one, where technical changes naturally evolve from the foundation of pre-existing and newly built relationships. i.e., good adaptive work may well pave the way for productive technical fixes.* In the case of this intervention, there is some evidence to support this idea.

The final Q-sort category includes the topic of *supports and services*. In this set of seven options, there was little change in what appeared to be an overwhelming adaptive orientation. However, response changes within options 26 and 27 assisted me in gaining insight into the importance of relationships as an essential ingredient for change.

Table 22 Q-sort Pre- and Post-Supports and Service Data

Supports & Service Q-sort Options	Pre A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Post A - Agree N-Neutral D - Disagree	Analysis
Providing Services & Supports <u>technical</u> -3- (22) The federal/state laws that are in place are sufficient to insure that services and supports to meet the educational needs of students in foster care.	A - 10% N - 40% D - 50% (NA)	A - 0 N - 20% D - 80% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - Movement away from valuing the technical
Providing Services & Supports <u>technical</u> -2- (23) Services and resources in education and child welfare are sufficient for meeting the needs of students in foster care.	A - 10% N - 50% D - 40% (NA)	A - 0 N - 60% D - 40% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - little change Movement away from valuing the technical toward the center
Providing Services & Supports <u>technical</u> -1- (24) Professionals in schools and DCYF have sufficient awareness of each other's work to be able to meet the needs of students in foster care.	A - 0 N - 60% D - 40% (NA)	A - 0 N - 50% D - 50% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - Not much change - center
Providing Services & Supports <u>neutral</u> 0 - (25) Because every student's situation is different, assessing and providing services and supports that promote school should be made on a case by case basis	A - 40% N - 60% (N)	A - 10% N - 80% D - 10% (N)	Neutral - Not much change
Providing Services & Supports <u>adaptive</u> 1 - (26) Professionals in schools and DCYF need more opportunities to learn about each other's work to be able meet student's educational needs.	A - 30% N - 70% (NA)	A - 50% N - 50% (AN)	Adaptive Neutral - little change with adaptive leading center
Providing Services & Supports <u>adaptive</u> 2 - (27) Students in foster care require a designated person in the schools to turn to as a support	A - 40% N - 40% D - 20% (N)	A - 40% N - 60% (NA)	Neutral Adaptive - Movement toward the center with adaptive leaning
Providing Services & Supports <u>adaptive</u> 3 - (28) Federal/state policies, schools, DCYF, caretakers, and student needs to join together to assess and develop access to appropriate services and supports to meet the educational needs of students in foster care.	A - 70% N - 30% (A)	A - 80% N - 20% (A)	Adaptive - Strong adaptive

*Data in bold represent response where there were changes between the pre- and post-response.

Source: Modified Q-sort

Analysis: T. Glantz

In option 26, respondents were asked to what extent they agree that school and child welfare professionals need opportunities to learn about each other. The pre-response indicates a Neutral-Adaptive stance, but the post-response increases to an

Adaptive-Neutral Response. I would argue that the movement toward shared learning as a resource for promoting collaboration represents the ECP-COP participants' value of the intervention. From this awareness of the role of co-education to promote shared practice, the ECP-COP participants were better able to relinquish territory and power when posed with option 27. This option asked for levels of agreement regarding students' need for a designated school support person within their school. In response to this option, respondents changed from Neutral, where 20% disagreed, to Neutral-Adaptive, where 60% were neutral and 40% agreed. This change in response offers a possible indicator for how using an empowering intervention can help participants navigate historically tense and taboo topics in a productive and holistic manner.

My intention when charting the Q-sort categories and their corresponding technical, adaptive, and neutral ratings was to explore the ECP-COP participants' perceptions at the start and finish of the intervention. At the start of the intervention, I suspected that the absence of what Heifetz et. al. (2001) term *adaptive* approaches, that is, inclusive, relationship-focused strategies, was contributing to difficulties with school success. Furthermore, I anticipated a dramatic increase in adaptive practice perspectives and a leaving behind of technical perspectives at the close of the intervention. However, in a manner similar to the previous Q-sort category of *perception*, I discovered what appears to be an important relationship between adaptive and technical combinations of problem solving. The Q-sort data did not contain the dramatic adaptive metamorphosis that I predicted. Instead, there appeared to be a more centrist perception that, depending upon the focus, included elements of both adaptive and technical perspectives. In short,

I believe the participants' ability to meet in the middle or to move away from extremes evolved from the empowering intervention.

Pre- and post-*Collaboration Survey* scale data. The data in table 23 provides an analysis of pre- and post-*Collaboration Survey* scale data for the ten ECP-COP participants who completed the full intervention process. I applied the same consolidation technique used with the pre- *Collaboration Survey* scale, where the seven choices were collapsed into three core categories: (1) positive, (2) undecided, and (3) negative. This conversion was done in an effort to more clearly organize and represent the data. The table that follows offers a comparison ECP-COP participant's response to scale questions related to the importance of collaboration, satisfaction with collaboration, degree of cross-system awareness.

Table 23 ECP-COP Pre- and Post- *Collaborative Survey Scale Data*

Category	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
Importance of CW-Ed system collaboration			
Pre (N=10)	10% (n=1)	10% (n=1)	80% (n=8)
*Post (N=9)	22% (n=2)		78% (n=7)
Importance of CW-Ed prof collaboration			
Pre (N=10)	10% (n=1)	10% (n=1)	80% (n=8)
*Post (N=9)	22% (n=2)		78% (n=7)
Satisfaction with System Collaboration			
Pre (N=10)	55% (n=5)	33% (n=3)	11% (n=1)
*Post (N=9)	56% (n=5)	44% (n=4)	
Satisfaction with Prof Collaboration			
Pre (N=10)	40% (n=4)	40% (n=4)	20% (n=2)
*Post (N=9)	50% (n=5)	51% (n=4)	
Informed re: CW-Ed System Roles			
Pre (N=10)	30% (n=3)	40% (n=4)	30% (n=3)
*Post (N=9)	22% (n=2)	11% (n=1)	67% (n=6)
Informed re: CW-Ed Prof Roles			
Pre (N=10)	30% (n=3)	20% (n=2)	30% (n=3)
*Post (N=9)		44% (n=4)	56% (n=5)

One participant did not turn her survey in
 Source: Pre- & Post-*Collaborative Survey*

Analysis: T. Glantz

From these data, it is clear that systemic and professional collaboration were highly regarded by the participants. The ECP-COP participants began the process with

the knowledge that collaboration was an important component in school success. They took this knowledge with them throughout the intervention. When compared to the continued value placed on professional and systemic collaboration and the exposure to collaborative processes within the ECP-COP, there were slight increases in dissatisfaction with regard to current, existing systemic and professional collaborative practices. The growing dissatisfaction may be the result of the expanded awareness, or awakening, that each ECP-COP participant gained as they deepened their understanding of the complexities surrounding school success for students in foster care (Freire, 1994). Increases in dissatisfaction may also reflect the ECP-COP members' growing recognition of the levels of collaboration that need to exist across systems and between professionals as they navigate this multifaceted issue. The positive experiences with cross-system collaboration within the ECP-COP did not appear to generalize to those external experiences beyond the ECP-COP. This reflection does not diminish the ECP-COP intervention; instead, *I see it as reassurance of the participants' minds being open and ready to confront the realities ahead of them as they advocate for school success for students in foster care.*

The last piece of scale data focused on how informed the ECP-COP participants perceived themselves to be with regard to the roles of child welfare and education systems and professionals. The post-data indicate increases in levels of awareness of each other's professional and systemic roles, with more than half of the ECP-COP members agreeing that their counterpart members were informed. Equally interesting was the absence of participant disagreement and the increase, 20% to 44%, between those participants who were undecided about their level of awareness. Was the increase

in undecided responses the result of the ECP-COP participants' in-depth exploration and awareness of how much more there was to learn regarding school success? Did exploring and confronting the complexities of and discovering the mutual responsibility for promoting school success contribute to confusion about what was known or increase awareness of what is yet to be known? If the ECP-COP process did contribute to this response, I see it as an opportunity to further support the continued emergence of participants' awareness and responsibility as they take an active role in deciding what they need to know to inform their action. However, a long term hope of mine would be for ECP-COP participants to move toward a place of mutual awareness, where they play an active role in defining what is to be known and sharing this information with others.

Overall the responses were enlightening. While satisfaction levels doubled, still one third or more of participants identified themselves as *being uninformed* or *undecided*. My first reaction was to question the impact of the training and intervention on failing to more fully elevate satisfaction levels. However, upon re-review of the narratives and group exercises from weeks five through thirteen, I realized it might be possible to see evidence of the success of the intervention with that one-third of self-identified uninformed and undecided participants. It occurred to me that Freire's (1994) concept of critical consciousness and liberation may well have given rise to the awareness of what is still unknown or unchanged. Here, the oppressed person or group may be unwilling to accept meager answers when true change through the achievement of liberation is pending. Therefore, is it possible that one-third of the ECP-COP participants have come to expect more from those systems and professionals surrounding school success and will not accept less than what they know to be possible?

The praxis experience of the ECP-COP participants offers possible confirmation of this hypothesis.

PRACTICE PROFILE PERSPECTIVES

Creating an ECP-COP. The final step in the intervention involved *creating a student/school/child welfare team (SSCWT)*. Its focus was to invite the constituents into a collective process of reflection and action in response to challenges to school success for students in foster care and the professional groups serving these students. The work done to uncover and understand social, cultural, economic, and political challenges within each group during weeks one through four helped to move these separate groups away from the isolation of their lone roles and perceptions. As the groups began to understand school success from multiple perspectives, they became aware of shared experiences, struggles, and their mutual impact on one another. This growing awareness offered an opportunity to unite the constituent groups together as they began exploring school success for students in foster care as a whole group. It was here that I moved to include Wenger's (1998) theoretical framework for Communities of Practice (COP). During the final four weeks, the ECP-COP participants began to work together to identify challenges and ways to improve school success for students in foster care. Data collected during this final step were enhanced by monitoring changes to ongoing discourse, the collection of post-measures, and in the group's community presentation of SSCWT recommendations to improve school success for students in foster care.

In preparation for this praxis event, the ECP-COP participants used their personal experiences, meetings with special lecturers, and their collective problem solving to move toward action. Through their efforts to frame the issue, strategize

solutions, and to publicly promote their ideas to a wider community of practitioners, leaders, and community members, the ECP-COP achieved praxis. This final section of chapter seven details the work done by ECP-COP participants that enabled them to achieve praxis.

Framing the Issue and identifying solutions. Following the eighth week, a small representative group of ECP participants volunteered to meet with Senator Rhoda Perry, co-chair of the Joint Task Force on the Education of Children and Youth in the Care of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families. The group included one school professional, one child welfare professional, and two youths with foster care history. In addition to the ECP-COP participants, I attended the meeting along with my three social work research assistants, and Lisa Guillette, co-chair the Child Welfare Advisory Boards' Education sub-Committee and Executive Director of Foster Forward (formerly Rhode Island Foster Parent's Association). On March 15, 2011, this group met with Senator Perry to share members' insights and suggestions for change. Senator Perry preferred that the conversation not be audio recorded, but she did allow photographs to be taken. She also took extra care to invite the two youths to frame the conversation from the perspective of the most vulnerable group. The conversation included information about the ECP process and the plans of the ECP participants to publically unveil recommendations to support school success for students in foster care. At the end of the meeting, all participants expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to meet with a Rhode Island leader with the authority to impact school success for students in foster care.

This meeting energized the ECP-COP participants and reinforced their confidence and ability to frame the issue and to begin to identify strategies for change. The smaller ECP group reported back to the larger group at the next meeting. The discussion naturally paved the way for the use of a democratic approach for setting the ECP-COP's priorities for their work for the May 2011 community forum. As the ECP participants moved into the final three weeks of the intervention, they embraced their role as agents of change in defining how school success should be secured for students in foster care. This role, in many ways an emerging component of the ECP-COP's identity, was reinforced through the creation of ECP-COP priorities, the production of digital stories, and the implementation of the May 2011 community forum.

Setting ECP-COP priorities. Throughout this final part of the process, participants worked to share concerns and to define and re-define areas in need of change. From these final weeks of data collection and through a process of *identifying & representing issues* and *sharing the wider scope of collective information* (Shor, 1992), a consistent set of concerns emerged. It was from these six frequently-emerging themes that ECP participants were invited to vote on their top three priorities. The Six concerns documented in Table 24 represent one of the ECP-COP's artifacts that was taken from ECP-COP's language and reflected back to the participants.

Table 24 ECP-COP Challenges - Artifact 1

-
- 1. Absence of DCYF Educational Policy - where is education on its priority list?**
 - Needing time to follow through with or initiate contact with schools; and
 - Addressing time constraints that make it hard to initiate contact from the beginning (of enrollment) & throughout the school year - (for example) within 1st 2weeks of school aged children's enrollment in school, expectation should be for DCYF to contact school to ID worker (placement provider can do this too) to insure DCYF prioritizes education and to open lines of communication (help good workers/raise the bar for others).
 - 2. Absence of School Policies to Support School Success for Students in Foster Care**
 - Needing consistency across education policies & schools; and
 - Needing continuity & consistency for credits, classes, procedures, graduation requirements, course outlines across Rhode Island's schools to help students with moving from school to school and to help students be successful in graduating. This issue includes the worry that standardized testing is a setup for failure for students in foster care.
 - 3. Having unequal expectations - we don't have the same expectations for students in foster care as they do for student who are not in foster care**
 - Schools & DCYF don't have the same expectations for school success for students in foster care; and
 - Keeping youth in school is not a priority for DCYF
 - 4. Having a lack of awareness - challenges to communication & empowerment negatively impact our perceptions**
 - Don't understand or know how/why other organizations/people work - this results in a negative image of DCYF & other professionals' roles related to school success; and
 - The DCYF System's lack of focus on "education" of students in foster care or DCYF's role in promoting school success prevents good practice & adds to negative perceptions.
 - 5. Lack of Power**
 - When communication isn't productive & when organizations/people feel overwhelmed, individuals feel disempowered;
 - Feeling disempowered prevents us from knowing & understanding each other & from working together; and
 - When making policy/practice decisions, leaders don't ask people who do the work every day – DCYF, Kids, Educators.
 - 6. Impaired or Non-existent Communication**
 - Within and across organizations; and
 - Impacts, delays support for school success for students in foster care.
-

Source: Combined Group Work

Analysis: T. Glantz

From these six re-occurring concerns, the ECP-COP participants worked to identify their top three priorities and also worked to reformulate the essence of these concerns into three core categories of need. From their work, they produced the following three categories: (1) policy, (2) communication, and (3) unequal

expectations. This reframing of concerns and the negotiation it required among the ECP-COP participants impressively demonstrates the evolution of the participants from separate groups into a COP, where elements of Wenger's (1989) COP's domain, practice, and community become more apparent. Within each of these three categories, the ECP-COP-created solution framed goal statements to accompany the group's expressions of concern. The use of solution focused framing was modeled throughout the ECP process and offered ECP-COP participants a model for evolving their own narrative of possibility, which was in stark contrast to the narratives of isolation and deficiency evidenced at the start of intervention.

Table 25 ECP-COP Goal Statements - Artifact 2

- **Policy** - Create policies that will promote school success for all youth in care.
 - **Communications** - Create a system of communication across disciplines enabling direct care workers to effectively collaborate on behalf of youth in care.
 - **Unequal Expectations** - Develop and implement a dedicated system which enables and encourages youth in care to remain in school.
-

Source: Weeks 9, 10, & 11 Group Work

Analysis: T. Glantz

From these positive goal statements, ECP-COP participants worked as a single group to expand goal statements to include objectives, tasks, resources needed, and methods for evaluating success. I continued to use those approaches identified by Shor (1992) to promote critical thinking, empowerment, and action, which allowed participants to work within their COP to negotiate the meaning behind their plans and to rely on each other to problem solve. The ECP-COP diligently worked to prepare their positions on how to best promote school success for students in foster care. Using blank group worksheets that were loaded onto a laptop, the group worked collectively to frame goal statements, objectives and action steps needed to achieve change. They emailed their work to me and I inserted comments and feedback in support of their

work. Table 25 offers excerpts of the work of the ECP-COP and my feedback and support of their process.

Table 26 ECP-COP Group Worksheet and Feedback Document - Artifact 3

Challenge #1: Policies

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GOAL - Create a definition or vision statement to describe the focus of your challenge:
 Create policies within the various service systems (RIDE, DCYF, LEAs) that will promote school success for all youth in care.

Objective # 1 : (assets/challenges/supporting evidence)
 Identify placements by region (or counties within the state) and develop policies within DCYF that will regionalize the placements in order to keep the youth in care close to their community of origin.

Suggested Action Step # 1 :	Resources (access to people, information, agencies/ organizations, etc...):	Monitoring/Evaluation
Identify available foster placements by region/county	DCYF (CPS, Probation, FSU & Placement Unit) RIFPA	DCYF Policy/Program Monitors – to ensure this begins/continues Deb Drury Houghton – monitor for DCYF
Suggested Action Step # 2 :	Resources (access to people, information, agencies/ organizations, etc...):	Monitoring/Evaluation
Recruit Foster Placements from regions/counties with lower	DCYF RIFPA	DCYF Policy/Program Monitors – to ensure this begins/continues Deb Drury Houghton – monitor for DCYF

1

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Comment [T1]: GOALS Symbolize a desired end point or outcome – look at your words. Do they sound a little more like an objective or action step? Think about the GOAL as the end result of all your good suggestions. Are you saying your goal is "RIDE, DCYF & LEAs will create policies within their service systems to promote school success for all youth in care"?

Comment [T2]: In other places you use region/counties – try to be consistent and use whichever wording you like best.

Comment [T3]: I think this might also fall under the DCYF's Lic unit under Kevin Savage

Suggested Action Step # 2 :	Resources (access to people, information, agencies/ organizations, etc...):	Monitoring/Evaluation
School Level Provide/establish a "team" approach to ensure all incoming foster students are provided with an initial team meeting to enable all service providers/content folks to learn the facts of the case – whether or not the student is special ed eligible.	LEA's [Team membership depends upon each school's personnel/ issues of the youth]	
Suggested Action Step # 3 :	Resources (access to people, information, agencies/ organizations, etc...):	Monitoring/Evaluation
LEAs of origin will provide transportation to any foster youth who becomes a student in another community due to necessary foster placement *define community: within region/county	LEA's Resources from RIDE to enable these policies to take effect	

3

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Comment [T8]: This is great – makes me think of Frank Pace's PHS presentation and those school that are already doing things to respond to vulnerable students.

Comment [T9]: Are there other contacts or issues that might relate to students in foster care that you want to include here

Comment [T10]: This action step might also require legislative support through Perry Naughton's Task Force. I expect their group to receive your recommendations with open arms.

numbers f available placements		
Suggested Action Step # 3 :	Resources (access to people, information, agencies/ organizations, etc...):	Monitoring/Evaluation
Provide incentives to foster families /mandates to residential providers to provide transportation to/from school when necessary	DCYF RIFPA	DCYF Policy/Program Monitors – to ensure this begins/continues Deb Drury Houghton – monitor for DCYF
Objective # 2 : (assets/challenges/supporting evidence)		
(RIDE/LEAs) Create a procedure for incoming foster care students that is uniform across schools/school districts to ensure continuity of education for student success.		
Suggested Action Step # 1 :	Resources (access to people, information, agencies/ organizations, etc...):	Monitoring/Evaluation
Identify specific contact person in each school district to foster communication between DCYF caseworker and educational staff (suggestions: special education director who will then identify/train school specific contact person)	RIDE LEA's	

Comment [14]: Do you also mean... regions/counties with higher rates of children in care (such as our urban core communities)?

Comment [15]: When Lisa & Mike visited class, she mentioned that there was a memo about to do exactly this and that a stipend is being offered for immediate risk foster homes – does someone want to contact Lisa Gallette at RIFPA to get the skinny on this and to use info to inform your action step here?
Here is info if you want it: 401.438.3900 x 104; Lisa_Gallette@rifpa.org

Comment [16]: Great Objective & action steps – I noticed that there is no mention on how status of student in foster care is or isn't to be conveyed. This issue has been raised throughout our classes. I'm not sure where it fits in if it fits but it occurred to me as I read through this objective – what do you think?

Comment [17]: While students in foster care are over represented in special ed, not all are in spec ed. How will you do a primary school person to designated school person for those kids who are not in care?

During this development process, it was gratifying to see the extent to which the ECP-COP participants took ownership of the process. Their awareness of their own expertise and power to define problems and, more importantly, solutions was strengthened by the creation of *Digital Stories*.

Digital stories. As the ECP-COP moved into its preparation for the community forum, the group began to explore ideas for communicating the importance of their concerns and suggestions for change. There was consensus that the story needed to be told with their voices. The group had been exposed to the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections' Digital Stories from the Field (http://www.nrcpfc.org/digital_stories/) and wanted to use the same approach in their May forum. The group discussed their ideas and explored the interests of participants, carefully selecting who among them would create a digital story. In the end one person from each of the original youth, child welfare, and school groups volunteered to be videotaped. The result of this process is a compelling twenty-four minute video that complements the ECP-COP's identification of challenges and the solutions associated with promoting school success for students in foster care. Within the Digital Stories, all three ECP-COP participants share personal accounts of how this issue impacted them and celebrate their hope that change can occur.

Praxis: Connecting School and Child Welfare Systems. The ECP-COP's May 2011 community forum represents the culmination of the participants' work and the final stage of the intervention. In preparation for the event, the ECP-COP turned the information they had entered into the worksheet during weeks ten through twelve into a PowerPoint presentation. The creation of the PowerPoint and the division of labor

among the ECP-COP participants was the result of shared decision making and allowing participants to use their strengths (1) to capture and document the group's problem solving process, (2) to participate in the Digital Stories process, (3) to give feedback to the creation of the PowerPoint and event handouts, and (4) to elect who was to present at the forum. In the end, each participant's contribution made the praxis event a reality and contributed to its success.

The materials produced for this event offer concrete evidence of the ECP-COP and those values that gave meaning to their community and their targeted practice. These items also serve as artifacts validating the formation and function of the ECP-COP and the successful praxis event. This forth artifact comes from the invitation that was sent to members of Rhode Island's K-12 school systems, public child welfare system, community based organizations, lawmakers, judges, and community members connected to foster care.

Education Collaboration Project

**Please RSVP by May 6th
Space is limited**

This important *Policy-Practice Forum* provides the opportunity to explore the complex challenges associated with promoting school success for students in foster care. The Education Collaboration Project, a CWI initiative – www.ric.edu/cwi/ecp.php, convened a work group of youth with foster care history and professionals from child welfare and school systems. Together these three groups worked to build an awareness of issues related to school success for students in foster care, its impact and opportunities for change.

This *Policy-Practice Forum* is appropriate for all human service and education policymakers, program directors, direct service staff and individuals working with school-aged children and youth who are involved with the Rhode Island's child welfare system.

The Rhode Island Child Welfare Institute
is pleased to invite you to a

***Policy-Practice Forum:
Connecting Public School and Child Welfare Systems to
Students in Foster Care***

**May 11, 2011
4 – 6 pm**

**School of Social Work
Rhode Island College
600 Mt. Pleasant Ave, Bldg #9**

Presentation by

Members of the Education Collaboration Project:

- Youth with foster care history
- Department of Children, Youth & Families Professionals
- Central Falls School Professionals
- The Child Welfare Institute

**Please RSVP
by May 6, 2011
by faxing the attached form
to 401-456-4628**

For more information,
call Tonya Glantz at 401-456-4626

Figure 5. ECP-Policy Forum Invitation - Artifact

More than fifty people attended the ECP policy-forum. The audience represented a combination of people from child welfare, schools, higher education, community based organizations, the state legislature, the family court, and the foster care community. The event began with an acknowledgement of all the contributing parties: The Department of Children, Youth & Families; Central Falls School District; The Voice; Casey Family Services; Rhode Island Foster Parents Association; Rhode Island College's Counseling Education Program, Office of Continuing Education, and School of Social Work; the University of Rhode Island's Graduate Student Grant Program; and the Child Welfare Institute. Next, continuing to model the practice of creating shared awareness and meaning, the terms *foster care* and *school success* were defined as a tool for engaging the audience. Engagement efforts increased as the audience was further informed regarding the facts surrounding students in foster care. These facts included: national and statewide numbers of children and youth in foster in care; issues of over-representation in special education; low grade and academic achievement rates; multiple foster and school placements; and emotional needs due to trauma and loss. This section of the presentation closed with attention to compounding factors related to systems and cross-system challenges and difficulties emanating from professional role confusion. While this beginning may seem a bit daunting, it reflected the journey, albeit abbreviated, that the ECP-COP participants experienced. In further demonstration of the existence of mutual feelings of disempowerment, misunderstanding, and impaired collaboration, the ECP-COP shared their *Power Scales* from week two.

Using these harsh realities as a foundation, the ECP-COP participants demonstrated their efforts to move beyond the problem to the create for themselves this praxis opportunity. The ECP-COP participants shared their initial uncertainty regarding professional roles and organizational positions as the related to balancing educational needs with the emotional-social-behavioral needs experienced by students in foster care. From these challenges, the ECP-COP informed the audience of the impact of the existing system on communication and constituent power and voice. In response to the adverse consequences of disempowerment and poor communication that impede school success for students in foster care, the ECP-COP invited the audience to acknowledge the mutual impact of the issues on everyone present and their collective desire to better understand this issue. In an effort to improve the existing situation, the ECP-COP participants offered two areas of action as crucial to change. These areas included: (1) equal treatment of students in foster care, and (2) policy development to support and promote communication and collaboration among child welfare, education, caretakers, and legislators with students in foster care. As representatives from the ECP-COP spoke, they wove together the impact of the challenge with the mitigating effect of their proposed recommendations.

Equal expectations. First, the impact of not having *equal expectations* was presented as projecting a stigma, blame, or misunderstanding onto students in foster care. The ECP-COP suggested that, in order to promote *equal expectations* for students in foster care, efforts must be made to educate professionals from the child welfare and education systems, the care providers, and the larger communities about foster care students' strengths and potential. In addition, efforts must be made to unite

professionals in supporting the school success for students in foster care. To demonstrate the importance of this recommendation, *Sandi's Digital Story* was played. Sandi, a Juvenile Probation and Parole Officer and a former foster youth, shared her journey through foster care to becoming the woman and professional she is today. Her story was compelling because she occupied the youth and professional roles and could speak eloquently to the critical impact that informed and empowering educators and child welfare professionals had on her life and success. At the start of the process, no one, including me, knew of Sandi's foster care history. Her presence in the ECP-COP was powerful. The recommendation supporting *equal expectations* included these ideas:

- Child Welfare and School systems will operate with equal expectations for the school success of foster care students;
 - All foster care students will have equal access to all educational resources and opportunities;
 - Child Welfare and Educational staff will meet to discuss/document the academic/social progress of the foster care student each grading period; and
 - Support will be put in place to provide foster care students the opportunity to engage in extra curricula activities.

Stability. The next ECP-COP representative explained that students in foster care suffer greatly due to removals from home and changing schools, often multiple times. In further support of this claim, stability in a student's living arrangement and school placement was identified as critical to promoting school success. In support of this recommendation, Roberta's *Digital Story*, was played. Roberta, a member of the original school team, is a math specialist. Halfway through the ECP process, Roberta shared with the group that she spent a short time in foster care as a child when her mother became ill. Although in care for a short time, Roberta shared that the worst part

of this experience came when adults made the decision that it would be best if Roberta did not attend school for the few weeks she was in care. Roberta felt the loss of school very profoundly, as it isolated her from a place where she was supported and flourishing. Roberta's story reminded the audience of the collective impact of instability in school placement for the student in foster care and their teachers and fellow students. Roberta's story also advocated for communication across professional systems and the use of policy and legislation to insure school stability by maintaining a child in her home school with transportation supports. The recommendation supporting equal expectations included these ideas:

- Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), & Local Education Agencies (LEA) have policies within their various service systems to promote school success for all youth in care;
 - identify foster care placements by region and develop policies within DCYF that will regionalize the placements in order to keep the youth in care close to their community of origin;
 - identify available foster placements by region;
 - recruit foster placements from regions with lower numbers of available placements; and
 - provide incentives to foster families and mandates to residential providers to provide transportation to/from school when necessary.

Information sharing and communication. The ECP-COP established connections between the emotional suffering of students in foster care due to maltreatment, the resulting separation from family, and the disclosure of foster care status as a mitigating variable. The idea of making a student's foster care status known was very controversial throughout the first half of the ECP process. However, as the group coalesced to form the ECO-COP, negotiation around how and what to disclose came to represent the first step in supporting students and ensuring cross-system

communication and collaboration. Kendell's *Digital Story* was used to support this idea and its recommendations. Kendell, a youth who grew up in foster care, shared her own gripping story of the adversity she experienced not only as a result of multiple school changes but also due to a combination of inconsistency in curriculum and assumptions about the academic inability of students in foster care. The recommendations for *information sharing and communication* included these ideas:

- RIDE, DCYF & LEAs needs to develop/implement policies within the various service systems to promote school success for all students in foster care.
 - Intrastate education card must be presented at the time of enrollment & maintained in the student's school file not the district file.
 - Use a color sheet of paper to draw attention to the presence of this form, which will alert school staff to a student's foster care status.
 - Identify a specific school contact person whose role is to
 - monitor receipt of intrastate education card; and
 - immediately initiate notice to the student's teacher in preparation for the planning of a team meeting.
 - When a student exits foster care the school contact person is responsible for removing the intrastate education card from the student's school file.
 - Changes in a student's foster care status can be monitored at team meetings
- DCYF, RIDE, LEAs have a system of communication across agencies to allow those directly involved with students in foster care to efficiently communicate & collaborate.
 - Identify a specific contact person in each school to whose role is to foster communication between child welfare and education staff
 - The District will identify specific contact person in each school who will foster communication between DCYF caseworker and educational staff
 - All School Contact Staff collectively attend a meeting where they will receive information & guidance on their important role
 - The intrastate education card must be presented at the time of enrollment
 - Within ten school days a team meeting will be convened

- Conference calls can be used in place of face to face meetings to accommodate child welfare staff and other participants

Cross-system Collaboration. The ECP-COP emphasized the roles that child welfare and education professionals and systems play in providing services to students in foster care. Despite the expectation of shared responsibility, the ECP-COP participants pointed out that youth in foster care are often confused and overwhelmed by the number of professionals with whom they interact. The lack of shared awareness and practice between professionals in the child welfare and education systems has historically further compromised school success for students in foster care. It was the position of the ECP-COP that, due to the unique needs of students in foster care, students need professionals in both systems to work together on their behalf. Offering a positive example of cross-system collaboration that aided a young girl removed from home due to sexual abuse, Trisha's *Digital Story* provided powerful evidence of what is possible when professionals and systems work together. Trisha's story of her efforts as a child welfare professional demonstrated the power of child welfare as the initiator for disclosure, taking an important step for communication, team building, and collaboration. The recommendations related to this idea included:


- RIDE, DCYF & LEAs have policies & practices within the various service systems to promote school success for all youth in care.
 - All schools have a uniform procedure for incoming students in foster care that ensures the continuity of their educational experience
 - School Level -
 - Provide/establish a team approach to ensure all incoming students in foster care are provided with an initial team meeting
 - Team Meetings allow all service providers/content folks to learn the needs of the student, including eligibility for special education

- LEAs of origin will provide transportation to any foster youth who becomes a student in another community due to necessary foster placements

From the presentation of recommendations, the ECP-COP produced a handout that was given to the audience and also posted on the Child Welfare Institute's webpage. This handout is the second artifact to affirm the existence and purpose of the ECP-COP.

CONNECTING PUBLIC SCHOOL & CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS TO STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

EDUCATION COLLABORATION PROJECT



The *Education Collaboration Project (ECP)* is a research and training process within the RI Child Welfare Institute.

The *ECP* utilizes open communication and relationship building among key constituents: (1) youth with foster care history, (2) education professionals and (3) child welfare professionals, to understand and improve school success for students in foster care.

Through this approach, the *ECP* is working collaboratively to promote school success for students in foster care.

CHALLENGES TO SCHOOL SUCCESS

Child welfare, education & student participants shared an uncertainty regarding professional roles & organizational positions related to balancing educational needs with the emotional-social-behavioral needs of students in foster care.

Several core challenges were identified as central to understanding obstacles to achieving school success for students in foster care:

- **Impaired or non-existent Communication**
 - Within & across organizations & with students in foster care
 - Impacts by delaying support for the school success of students in foster care
- **Lack of power/voice**
 - When communication is not productive & when organizations/people feel overwhelmed, individuals feel disempowered
 - Feeling disempowered prevents us from knowing & understanding each other & from working together
- **Lack of communication & empowerment**
 - We do not understand or know how/why other organizations/people work, which results in negative images of DCYF and other professionals' roles related to school success
- **Lack of consistency in organizational practices & procedures**
 - Relevant practices & procedures within their own organizations
 - Each other's roles & organizations
 - The needs of students in foster care
- **Lack of voice for Students in foster care**
 - Voiceless regarding their education, living situation & future
 - Unsure about their relationships with & obligations to professionals from child welfare & education

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL SUCCESS

Students in foster care are not treated equally...

- ✓ **All students in foster care will have equal access to all educational resources & opportunities**
 - Child welfare & education staff need to meet to discuss/document the academic/social progress of the students in foster care each grading period
 - Supports need to be put in place to provide students in foster care the opportunity to engage in extra curricula activities

Students in foster care experience too many school and placement moves...

- ✓ **Identify foster care placements by region & develop policies within child welfare that will regionalize placements to allow students in foster care to remain close to their community of origin**
 - Identify available foster placements by region
 - Recruit foster placements from regions with lower numbers of available placements
 - Provide incentives to foster families/mandates to residential providers to provide transportation to/from school when necessary

Students in foster care are negatively impacted by the absence of information sharing across systems

- ✓ **Intrastate education cards need to be presented at the time of enrollment & maintained in the student's school file (not the district file)**
- ✓ **Schools need to identify a specific SCHOOL CONTACT PERSON whose role is to**
 - Monitor receipt of intrastate education card
 - Notify the student's teacher in preparation for the planning of a team meeting
 - Remove student's intrastate education card from the school file when the student exits care

Students in foster care suffer when professionals and systems fail to communicate & collaborate

- ✓ **Once school identify a SCHOOL CONTACT PERSON that person will be tasked with**
 - Fostering communication between child welfare and education staff
 - Making sure a student's foster care status is noted
 - Making sure a team meeting is convened within 10 days of enrollment
- ✓ **Create & use School-Student-Child Welfare Teams**
 - Provide/establish a team approach to ensure all incoming students in foster care are provided with an initial team meeting
 - Team meetings allow all service providers/content folks to learn the needs of the student, including eligibility for special education
 - Local Education Agency (LEA) of origin will provide transportation to any youth who becomes a student in another community due to placement in foster care

GROUPS WORKING TO PROMOTE SCHOOL SUCCESS

Child Welfare Advisory Committee,
Catherine Walsh & Jojo Garcia, Co-Chairs

Child Welfare Educational Committee,
Mike Burk & Lisa Gulletto, Co-Chairs

Joint Legislative Commission on Educational Success for Children & Youth in Foster Care,
Senator Rhode Perry & Representative Eileen Naughton

The Education Collaboration Project at the Child Welfare Institute,
Tonya Glantz, Project Director

Figure 6. ECP-COP -Suggestions for Improving School Success -Artifact 5

On May 11, 2011, the ECP-COP presented its assessment of what was impeding school success for students in foster care. Emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of students in foster care. The presentation also spoke of the disempowerment of professionals and the mutual burden shared by youth and professionals. The intervention required ECP participants to trust in a process, become vulnerable in order to become strong, and it created an authentic representation of the multiple dimensions of school success. Participants did not let the difficulties associated with school success

stop them from identifying solutions. They rose to the challenge enthusiastically, collaboratively, and creatively. It was when they came together as an ECP-COP they were able to negotiate the impact of problems and deconstruct these problems to uncover solutions that would benefit the youth and professionals. On May 11, 2011, the ECP-COP shared a message and modeled a process lacking in the dialogue and action surrounding school success for students in foster care. This final act of the ECP-COP flows from the entire intervention process to demonstrate the coming together of previous disparate group to form a whole. As a consequence, affirmation was given to the roles and participation of the members from all the pre-existing groups, while at the same time using those pre-existing roles to inform their collective identity and responsibility as the ECP-COP. Participants in the ECP-COP were able to construct new meaning for school success and opportunities to engage in empowering problem solving activities that have potential to create change for students in foster care and the professionals who work with them.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, the Education Collaboration Project (ECP) became an opportunity to closely monitor and document the transformation of small groups of youth with foster care histories and professionals from school and child welfare systems as they confronted the issues surrounding school success for students in foster care. The work of these participants was complemented by the feedback of an equally small group of foster parents whose *Collaboration Survey* responses added an important dimension from which to consider school success and individuals' related roles. The study was delivered over the course of a thirteen-week graduate course that took the form of an empowering intervention. The empowering intervention was informed by an innovative theoretical framework that allowed for validation of each individual group and support as they explored their own and then others' connections to school success for students in foster care. Though somewhat unorthodox, my framework wove together, in an intentionally progressive fashion, critical pedagogy (Freire, 1994), adaptive change theory (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001), and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) theories. This selection of theories formed the foundation of an intervention that honored, modeled, and embraced cross-system relationships as an essential tool for creating change.

From my theoretical framework, I constructed a qualitative methodology that allowed me to collect and share the perceptions and experiences of each separate group of participants as a tool for their engagement, education, transformation, and ultimately collective action. Data collection consisted of pre- and post-*Collaboration Surveys*,

narrative essays, and a modified Q-sort, as well as the collection of audio-taped and photographed weekly group work. These collective tools afforded opportunities to better understand the needs and identities of each group, which was essential to building authentic and meaningful relationships within and across groups. Data were analyzed using critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2004; Patton, 1990) and techniques that quantified data to allow for pre- and post-comparisons, as well as within- and across-group comparisons (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2005). I utilized a twenty-eight question response q-sort to gain insight into participant pre- and post-dispositions to technical or adaptive practice changes. While difficulties with the Q-sort software prevented me from doing a more quantitative and statistical analysis, I believe my adaption of the Q-sort data into scale data with frequency analysis allowed me to learn much from these data. Furthermore, the level of inquiry and consideration resulting from my adaptation of the Q-sort afforded opportunities to more fully explore and challenge my previous convictions about the unequivocal value of adaptive change approaches, which I will explore later in this chapter. My chosen theoretical framework paired with its qualitative method made it possible to engage participants in an empowering intervention that led to individual and collective transformation and to consider the larger implications for improving school success for students in foster care.

FIVE STAGES OF TRANSFORMATION

During the Education Collaboration Project, it was my hope to fully engage the diverse participant groups in a meaningful and honest exploration and problem-solving process. I was eager to gain insight into training as a tool for education in the conventional sense and for empowerment and change at the personal and systems level.

My suspicion that each participant group, as a result of lack of understanding and oppression, was uniformed and unaware of how to become an agent of change was supported. As a result, I carefully attended to issues of identity, agency, and power as I, my research assistants, and the study's participants made our way through the thirteen week intervention. Throughout this process and based on my evaluation of participants' survey and narrative data, there was a distinct five-part evolution that created the opportunity for collective action. Figure 5 depicts this progressive evolution or, more appropriately termed, transformation.

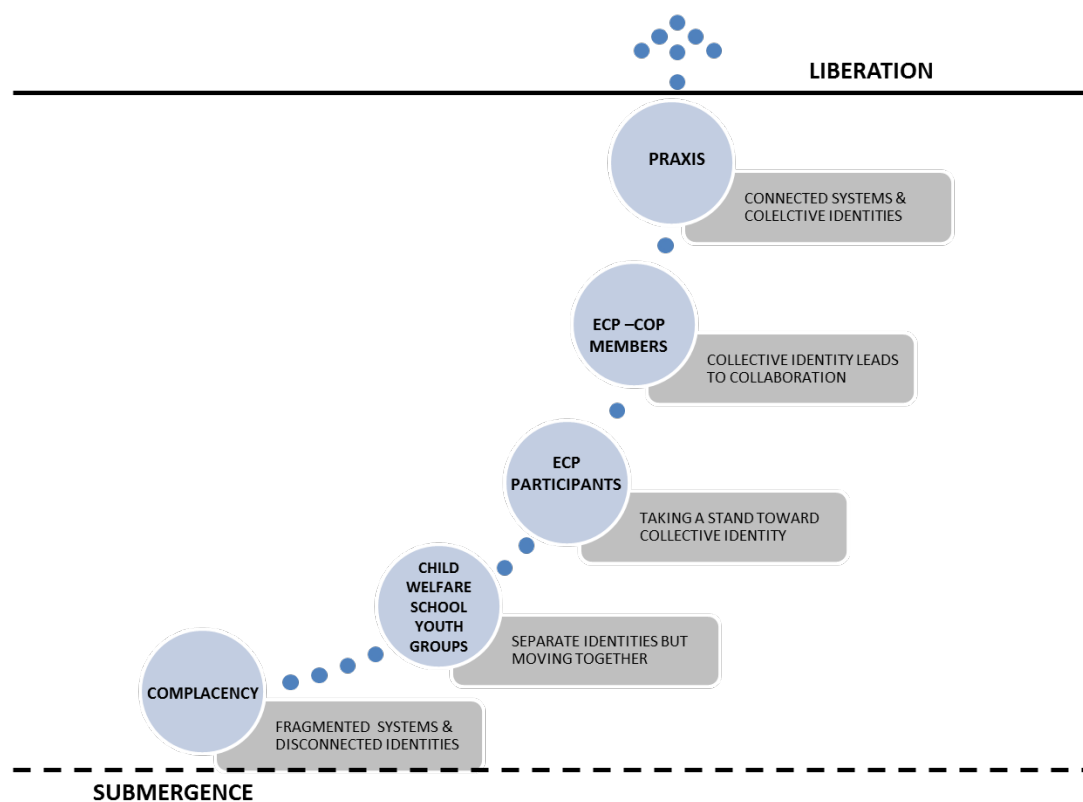


Figure 5. Transformation to an ECP-COP

Figure 5 shows a series of transformations, beginning with isolation and lack of involvement and ending with unity and action. This figure demonstrates the evolution of identity, agency, and power that occurred throughout the empowering intervention.

Submergence. At the start of the process, the youth, school, and child welfare participants were comfortable in the isolation of their separate groups. Preliminary data collection did little to convey any sense of shared awareness or responsibility. Instead there was a strong evidence that each group felt misunderstood and disrespected by the other groups or the broader society. These perceptions intensified the feelings of isolation and the projection of blame onto others, which actually increased the feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness among the groups. At this initial part of the intervention, participants had done very little, if any, work to reach out to other groups to better understand or to join forces in support of school success for students in foster care. The two professional groups were entirely victims of their isolation and ignorance. The youth group, while much more globally aware than the professional groups, still remained stymied by their lack of voice and access. As a result, Weeks One through Four required engagement methods where these otherwise submerged (Freire, 1994) participants could share their realities and receive affirmation of their experiences. During this time participants in the study could be characterized by a sense of personal complacency, *this is how it has always been*, with significant fragmentation across the groups and their respective systems. This combined complacency, fragmentation, and isolation contributed to the construction of identities that were closed and lacking in the benefits of a wider perspective. It was not until the participants began to be exposed to each other's perceived realities that movement away from their submergence was possible.

Youth, school, and child Welfare ECP participants. During Weeks Two through Four, participants were able to view and listen to parallel responses of the other

groups to the same exercises in which they themselves had participated. Because, to a certain extent, submergence provides a sense of safety, albeit a false one, I wanted the separate groups to have the comfort of their same-group peers as they confronted the perceptions and words of the other groups' thematics and codifications (Freire, 1994). Maintaining homogeneous groupings was important at this stage to afford protection and an impetus to move beyond submergence. The information being shared was especially difficult for the child welfare participants to hear due to the often negative views held by the other groups. Even though the sharing of the other two groups' codifications made the child welfare participants feel badly or angry, the codifications were shared in a manner that promoted empathy and critical thinking. The most powerful codifications were the separate and combined *Power Scales* (discussed in chapter 6), with their corresponding self-generated role and impact descriptions. This resource made it possible for individual groups to move beyond themselves and to see their group as a part of a much larger picture. One message that carried through the collective groups' pieces of feedback was the undeniable vulnerability of youth in foster care and an equally indisputable link to the efforts of school and child welfare professionals. This information became a focus that began connecting participants to the issue and role within it. Wenger (1998) would label this development as the start of a *domain* and *practice* focus that would give impetus to the emerging ECP community of practice. During the end of Week Four the separate groups began to consider themselves as a part of a process and not just as separate (youth, school, or child welfare) participants. At the point when the discrete participant groups became a single group of ECP participants, the whole group's identity started to emerge, as it moved

toward the establishment of a *community* (Wenger, 1998).

ECP participants. During Weeks Five through Nine, ECP participants began moving in and out of allegiance to the group with which they originally identified. A factor that promoted the merging of participants occurred during Week Five, the first time that all three groups met together and participated in an introduction exercise. I would not qualify this first full meeting of the ECP participants as easy or an instant community; however, there was a different sense of knowing and chosen vulnerability that all the participants willingly embraced as they met one another. There was an effort to share space and talking time and a sense of intended equal treatment that I do not think could have existed early in the process when groups were defensive, hurt, and more disempowered. In addition to the introduction exercise, the ECP participants began taking stands on issues that were not always consistent with positions taken in their original group affiliation. For example one child welfare professional decided to express a very strong stance on the need to disclose a child's foster care status and provide a justification. Her statement was in contrast to the views of several child welfare professionals and at least one of the youth. In the audio recording there are changes in the speaker's tone and breathing, which signify her nervousness at taking this risk. When the woman did take this risk, she was supported by the school professional, who stood with her. This act of bravery brought the issue to a level of discussion that was not possible before. This one example captures the crossing of territory and the attempt to reach beyond one's self and one's professional group in order to reach out to a broader group to negotiate meaning (Wenger, 1998; Freire, 1994). Subsequent group discussions and exercises afforded additional opportunities for

the ECP participants to explore their collective voice, which helped to transform them into more of a community and less random group of participants in a shared process.

Education Collaboration Project-Community of Practice (ECP-COP). With the formation of a community connected to the issue of school success for students in foster care and a growing consensus of the need to make improvements, the ECP participants began to move into a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). I have dedicated chapter 7 to the events that shaped and came to define this ECP-COP. The evolution to a COP became apparent when members began raising questions about the *status quo* and asking why things couldn't change. The ECP-COP's movement toward collaboration and action intensified quickly following its community formation. I saw this development as evidence of the power of finally being able to openly and honestly consider the realities and what it meant for the members and for the world that they were trying to improve. The members welcomed the opportunity to meet with a legislator who was co-chairing a task force related to foster care and education. There was a wonderful energy on the day of the meeting, but the energy became even more intense when those members who represented the ECP-COP reported back to the full community. This exchange really buoyed the spirit of the group and served as a call to action for them. During Weeks Ten through Twelve, the members worked collectively to identify primary areas to target for change and to define the intricate steps and resources necessary to support their ideas. The conversation during these strategy meetings was really powerful because the members, regardless of their youth, school, or child welfare status, equally agreed, disagreed, explored other options, and advocated amongst each other to negotiate and construct meaning for their ECP-COP. From this

intense process evidence of the ECP-COP's work became clear in the reifications and artifacts they produced, especially in their policy recommendations and the *Digital Stories* (Wenger, 1998). It was from their work on creating strategies to support change that the members of the ECP-COP truly began to free themselves from the constraints and limitations that burdened them at the start of the intervention.

Liberation. On May 11, 2010, the ECP-COP members hosted a policy forum in support of promoting school success for students in foster care – what I consider their praxis event (Freire, 1994). They took their message to a very broad audience: child welfare professionals, community providers, family court representatives, higher educators, legislators, school personnel, and other youth in care. As the ECP-COP, they came together and coalesced around the issue of school success for students in foster care. They created a shared awareness of and meanings for this issue and their collective relationship to it and each other, which reinforced a collective identity for their COP. It is as a result of their joining together that their voices and message are strengthened and made more powerful, not only to benefit the ECP-COP but to advance the broader discourse beyond the ECP-COP. It was in this culmination of the thirteen weeks of work and the ultimate praxis moment on May 11, 2010 that I saw true evidence of liberation for the members of the ECP-COP (Freire).

UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY

While this was a moment of great celebration, it was filled equally with the awareness and consequences that naturally follow the removal of a protective layer or, in this situation, a *limiting barrier of oppression*. At this point there was no denying the enormity of the challenges to school success or the many working parts. This mixture of

elation and challenged reality was evident as I analyzed the data, and it taught me some interesting and unexpected lessons. The most pressing lessons had to do with (1) participants' continued disillusionment following the intervention and (2) challenges to my original assumption about the superior value of adaptive over technical change. I will briefly highlight these two discoveries in the paragraphs that follow.

Disillusionment. At the start of the study, I expected the intervention to positively impact participants' satisfaction and knowledge of professionals, systems, and roles. I hypothesized that exposure to information and, more importantly, the opportunity to join with others from different systems and roles would contribute to enhanced knowledge, collaboration, and feelings of empowerment. Based on the findings from my pre- and post-*Collaboration Survey* scale data, however, I was only partially correct. Yes, at the end of the process the participants had learned to collaborate with each other, and they began to explore collaboration beyond the work we completed together. However, their post-scale scores did not indicate high levels of satisfaction with collaboration, nor did their collaboration seem to enhance knowledge of professional or system roles. Instead, the data indicate a relative loss of hope in the face of intransigent realities. Initially, I was concerned by these data; however, using a critical pedagogical perspective, these data offer evidence of emergence and the awareness of what might be a challenging road ahead (Freire, 1994). From this reframed perspective, I am encouraged that the ECP-COP members wanted and could handle the truth. Furthermore, their true liberation depends on their ability to achieve and maintain a grasp on reality, without which they could fall prey to the *limiting barrier of oppression*. This finding is important to consider for future research. The

potential for liberation in the face of ongoing frustration over what is lacking or needed is something to celebrate and also to discuss with participants. I did not have this opportunity at the close of my study but highly recommend the inclusion of this theme in future empowering research efforts.

Adaptive change and technical change. The findings provided a wonderful opportunity to better understand the relationship between adaptive and technical change. In my own practice I have come to see the absence of adaptive work (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001) as a significant impediment to organizational progress and change. Based on my personal experiences, I fully expected the intervention to positively impact the development of adaptive perspectives in the ECP-COP participants. The Q-sort tool and its twenty-eight options were intended to document pre- and post-practice perspectives related to adaptive and technical change. Despite my predictions, there was a less than overwhelming movement in practice perspectives from technical to adaptive change strategies. Instead, there was a tendency to combine adaptive and technical perspectives. While some movement away from full technical perspectives, the data did not depict any drastic movement to full adaptive perspectives was evident. As I reviewed the data and triangulated it with the survey and discourse data, I discovered a potentially interesting and necessary relationship between adaptive and technical change. First, adaptive change is a powerful tool for inviting all stakeholders' voices to inform a change or outcome. Adaptive processes ensure inclusivity, which facilitates a more comprehensive and well thought-out decision making strategy. However, that being said, technical change can play an equally important role in carrying out adaptive-inspired change, because technical practices can concretize and make doable what

emerges from the adaptive process. My bias came from my past experiences with technical changes that lacked an adaptive foundation, which were often experienced as punitive or culturally irrelevant to the system or people targeted. However, the findings from the pre- and post- practice perspective profiles really called attention to what was naïve thinking on my part. Fortunately for me, the ECP-COP members realized that good change is built from a combination of adaptive and technical components. This finding is important to consider as I work to implement or support my research through policy, training, or other program developments. This study reflects a model for engaging participants from overlapping systems in a critical discussion and problem solving process. Sharing this model has the potential to benefit youth in foster care and the professionals from school and child welfare systems. It would also be important to replicate this study in other settings for the purposes of testing the findings against my own.

CLOSING STATEMENT

This study and the corresponding three years that went into planning, implementing, and analyzing it was time well spent. While small in scale and limited by sample selection and my role as a participant-observer, the findings from this study have merit to offer child welfare and school systems as they struggle to overcome the inequality of school success for students in foster care. As the director of the Child Welfare Institute, where I oversee training for numerous public and private agencies in Rhode Island, this study affirmed my belief that empowering interventions can be a tool for change. Furthermore, the training component of my intervention was enriched by the synergy and necessity of my decision to thoughtfully begin with critical pedagogy

and to slowly integrate adaptive change and communities of practice theories. My intervention truly was empowering because the participants became my teachers, as they taught themselves and each other. My study does advance the field of research on the topic of school success for students in foster care, because it marks the first time, to the best of my knowledge, that these otherwise disconnected groups were engaged beyond the problem and for the sake of a solution.

In Judaism there is an expectation that Jews and, I would argue, all people are called to engage in *Tikkun Olam*, or “repairing the world.” When I decided to return to school for my doctorate with the plan of trying to do something to improve school success for students in foster care, I, in my own small way, was trying to repair a piece of the world. I do not think I realized that it was not I who would be *repairing the world*, but that the ECP-COP members would make me a partner in their quest to repair not only theirs but a much bigger world.

APPENDIX A

Connecting Public School and Child Welfare Systems to Students in Foster Care

Week	In-Class Plan	Online Plan
Defining Constituent Identities		
Fri – 11/5/10 3-5 - youth Wed 11/10/10 4-6 - DCYF Wed 11/17/10 4-6 - CFSD	Orientation & Preliminary Data Collection <i>Introduce texts and materials (assign chapter for wk 2– which do we want to focus on?)</i> After data collection share survey data <i>Explore Google Groups & Growing in the care of strangers:</i>	Post personal profile and on Google Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor and respond as needed
Fri – 11/19/10 3-5 - youth Wed 12/1/10 4-6 - DCYF 12/8/10 4-6 - CFSD	What Can We Learn About Ourselves (data collection)? Review data collected from previous mtg Large group fdbk re: resulting data – doc any changes Review chapter from <i>Growing in the care of strangers</i> <i>Small group work re: chapter –Info Gathering – who we are; how we function in relation?</i> Assign chapter for next week – <i>which do we want to focus on</i>	Post Discussion Question/statement for comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group
Sharing and Comparing Group Identities		
Friday 12/17/10 3-5 – Youth Wed 12/15/10 4-6 - DCYF Wed 12/22/10 4-6 - CFSD	What Can We Learn About Others (data collection)? Introduce final data the group and add to it the data from the collective groups <i>Small group work re: chapter –Shared Info Gathering – who we are; how we function in relation to each other</i> <i>Strengths (qualify, challenges (qualify), things the need to stay the same and things that need to change?</i> Process as a large group – doc/photograph process for analysis week 4 Review chapter from <i>Growing in the care of strangers</i> Should we assign chapter for next week – <i>which do we want to focus on</i>)	Post Discussion Question/statement for comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group

<p>Friday 1/7/11 3-5 - Youth Wed 1/15/11 4-6 - DCYF Wed 1/12/10 4-6 - CFSD</p>	<p>What Have We Learned About Others (data collection)?</p> <p>Review week 3 data as a large group – weigh in, make changes and prepare to post. Share results of small work group ideas & come to agreement on final status of brainstorming re: <i>Small group work re: chapter –Shared Info Gathering – who we are; how we function in relation to each other</i> <i>Strengths (qualify, challenges (qualify), things the need to stay the same and things that need to change?</i></p> <p>Capture final work for posting on Google Group as the intro to team bldg 5 – doc/photograph process for analysis week 4</p> <p>No reading but plan to connect posting to class process. Invite all participants to bring in any forms or policies they feel help or hinder this work. We can review and obtain permission to upload on Google group for comment</p>	<p>Post synthesized data from wk 3 & 4 as the lead in for integrated group work – this is likely to form the foundation for what teams target for change.</p> <p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group
Creating Student, School, Child Welfare Teams (youth, DCYF & CFSD meet together)		
<p>Wed 1/26/11 4-6</p>	<p>Team Building for the Whole Child We need a good icebreaker – something to help folks get to know each other – food??</p> <p>Do we keep this first week focused on youth via Tracy’s video, The Whole Child Exercise?</p> <p>Small group work – integrate groups into permanent teams (let them name them). Process posted wk 3 & 4 material and relate to tonight’s class</p> <p>Prepare for next week – guest speakers & pick a chapter from the text</p>	<p>Post final outcome of small group work, names of teams & members</p> <p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group
<p>Wed 2/2/11 4-6</p>	<p>Guest Presentation: Youth Voices Process chapter and postings Listen to speakers & offer large group process</p> <p>Small group - process relevance of presentation to wk 3& 4 materials.</p>	<p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and

	Prepare for next week – guest speakers & remind of article (we'll summarize on the google group for comment) from the text	connection to others in the group
Wed 2/16/11 4-6	<p>Guest Presentation: Child Welfare-Education Training Team</p> <p>Check-in, quick review of Gilligan, Robbie (1998). The importance of schools and teachers in child welfare. <i>Child & Family Social Work</i>, 3, pp. 13-25.</p> <p>Plan 1 hour for presenters</p> <p>Small group - process relevance of presentation to wk 3& 4 materials.</p> <p>Pick clips from Broken Child & NCLB flick to help orient to experience of these professional groups</p> <p>Prep for wk 8 presenters and materials</p>	<p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, films</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group
Wed 3/2/11 4-6	<p>Guest Presentation: Restorative Justice - Central Falls-DCYF Collaboration</p> <p>Check-in, quick review of http://www.iirp.org/whatisrp.php</p> <p>Plan 1 hour for presenters</p> <p>Small group - process relevance of presentation to wk 3& 4 materials.</p> <p>Pick clips wraparound work of restorative justice is available</p> <p>Prep for wk 9 presenters and materials:</p> <p>Jensen, C. (2009). <i>Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it</i> (pp. 1-12). Alexandria, VA: ASCD Publications,</p> <p>Ravitch, D. (2010). <i>The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education</i>. USA: Basic books, pp. 223-242; Review of Foster Care-Education Legislation from http://www.abanet.org/child/education/publications/fosteringconnections.html</p>	<p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, films</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group

<p>Wed 3/16/11 4-6</p>	<p>Guest Presentation: Foster care Education Legislative Committee Check-in, quick review of materials: Jensen, C. (2009). <i>Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it</i> (pp. 1-12). Alexandria, VA: ASCD Publications, Ravitch, D. (2010). <i>The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education</i>. USA: Basic books, pp. 223-242; Review of Foster Care-Education Legislation from http://www.abanet.org/child/education/publications/fosteringconnections.html Plan 1 hour for presenters Small group - process relevance of presentation to wk 3& 4 materials. Prep for wk 10 presenters and materials: Gilligan, Robbie (1998). The importance of schools and teachers in child welfare. <i>Child & Family Social Work</i>, 3, pp. 13-25; Staub, D. and Meighan, M. (2007). Improving educational success for children and youth in foster care: Ensuring school stability. <i>Communique</i>, 36(4), 9-11; Wulczyn, F., Smithgall, C, and Chen, L (2009). Child well-being: The intersection of schools and child welfare. <i>Review of research in education</i>, 33, 35-62.</p>	<p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, films</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group
<p>Wed 3/30/11 4-6</p>	<p>Guest Presentation: Collaboration Panel Check in, review of materials: Gilligan, Robbie (1998). The importance of schools and teachers in child welfare. <i>Child & Family Social Work</i>, 3, pp. 13-25; Staub, D. and Meighan, M. (2007). Improving educational success for children and youth in foster care: Ensuring school stability. <i>Communique</i>, 36(4), 9-11; Wulczyn, F., Smithgall, C, and Chen, L (2009). Child well-being: The intersection of schools and child welfare. <i>Review of research in education</i>, 33, 35-62. 1 hour presentations Small group - process relevance of presentation to wk 3& 4 materials. Prep for wk 11 – beginning of strategic planning process We could do a preliminary online vote re: priorities for work ahead and use this as the stepping off point.</p>	<p>Post material from accumulated presentations how it relates to wk 3 & 4 materials and template for team strategy work.</p> <p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group <p>We could do a preliminary online vote re: priorities for work</p>

		ahead and use this as the stepping off point.
Wed 4/6/11 4-6	<p>Strategic Team Work: Building Solution to Promote School Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student, School, Child Welfare Teams will be formed and teams will begin synthesizing course data/materials to inform areas to target for improvements and the identification of strategies for informing practice and system changes that support school success for students in foster care <p>Strategic Team Work - Small group work of mixed professional groups using course - share and develop strategies for collaborating to support students in foster care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post feedback regarding group work on Google Group 	<p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group <p>Post results of priorities vote and focus of each team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪
Wed 4/13/11 4-6	<p>Strategic Team Work: Building Solution to Promote School Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student, School, Child Welfare Teams continue synthesizing course data/materials to inform areas to target for improvements and the identification of strategies for informing practice and system changes that support school success for students in foster care <p>Strategic Team Work - Small group work of mixed professional groups using course - share and develop strategies for collaborating to support students in foster care</p>	<p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group <p>Post ongoing work of teams for comment and support</p>
Wed 4/27/11 4-6	<p>Strategic Team Work: Building Solution to Promote School Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student, School, Child Welfare Teams continue synthesizing course data/materials to inform areas to target for improvements and the identification of strategies for informing practice and system changes that support school success for students in foster care <p>Strategic Team Work - Small group work of mixed professional groups using course - share and develop strategies for collaborating to support students in foster care</p>	<p>Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group <p>Post ongoing work of teams for comment and support</p>

<p>Wed 5/4/11 4-6</p>	<p>What Have We Learned (data collection)? Strategic Team Work: Building Solution to Promote School Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student, School, Child Welfare Teams finalize report and recommendations for informing practice and system changes that support school success for students in foster care • Hand in final project and prepare for community presentation on week 15. 	<p>Final Data Collection Post Discussion Question/statement for comment re: presenters, articles, models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons monitor • We should keep any discussion threads going with at least one response and connection to others in the group <p>Post ongoing work of teams for comment and support</p>
<p>Wed 5/11/11 4-7</p>	<p>Community Presentation & Recommendation Strategic Team Work: Building Solution to Promote School Success – using the Student, School, Child Welfare Teams (SSCWT) model, group will develop recommendations for informing practice and system changes that support school success for students in foster care. Group reports will be delivered to Patricia Martinez, Director of DCYF, and Dr. Fran Gallo, Superintendent of Central Falls Schools.</p>	<p>Post final reports and discussion question re: process</p>

APPENDIX B

An Adaptation of Shor's Problem Posing Method

<i>Shor's (1992) Corresponding Problem Posing Method</i>	<i>Adaptation for the Empowering Intervention</i>
1) Questioning 2) Listening 3) Identifying & representing issues or problems	<p><i>Defining Group Identities</i></p> <p>Individual constituent groups begin sharing their identify and building researcher-constituent relationship</p>
4) Sharing the wider scope of collective information 5) Exploring different perspectives	<p><i>Sharing and comparing group identities</i></p> <p>Relationship building continues and constituents begin learning about each other.</p>
5) Exploring different perspectives 6) Turning thoughts into action	<p><i>Creating an ECP-COP</i></p> <p>Groups join together for joint discussion, team work and shared problem solving.</p>

APPENDIX C

Collaboration Survey (Child Welfare, School, Youth and Foster Parent Versions)

Child Welfare Professional Collaboration Survey

This survey is being used to begin to understand challenges and solutions to promoting school success (*attendance, school stability, academic achievement, completion of grade and transition to the next grade, high school graduation, and social and emotional comfort in the school setting*) for students in foster care. Please complete this survey and return it Tonya Glantz at the end of this session.

Focus Group Involvement

Did you participate in a focus group with Tonya Glantz during the spring of 2010? (check one)

- Yes No Unsure

Participant Demographic Information:

Gender (check one): Female Male

Race & Ethnicity (check all that apply or write in your race and ethnicity if it is not reflected)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian & Alaskan Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> White |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino | |

Which of the following categories best describes your current professional role? (check one or if it is not reflected, write in)

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Service Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Probation & Parole Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Service Supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Probation & Parole Supervisor | |

Approximately how long have you been a professional in the child welfare system?(check one)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 to 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 21 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 3 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 6 years | <input type="checkbox"/> other |

School-Child Welfare Questions

Are you aware of any laws or policies in education and/or child welfare that address the educational needs of students in foster care? Yes No

If yes, please identify the law(s) and/or policy(s) and describe its role in supporting the educational needs of students in foster care:

For the question below, Child Welfare is shortened using the initials, CW. When you see CW, it means both the family service and juvenile probation and parole parts of DCYF.

In your opinion, who is responsible for initiating collaboration between school and child welfare (CW) professionals on behalf of students who are in foster care and attend school? Child Welfare -

CW will be inclusively for child welfare family service and juvenile probation and paroles staff and divisions. (please check all that apply):

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> School Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Administrator | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Foster Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Psychologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Special/Language Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Social Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other School Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Other CW Personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

The questions below ask you to rate your response using a scale with seven categories. Please check the category that best describes your response:

To what extent do you agree that collaboration between school and child welfare systems is necessary to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

To what extent do you agree that collaboration between school and child welfare professionals is necessary to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

How satisfied are you with current collaboration between school and child welfare systems?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How satisfied are you with current collaboration between school and child welfare professionals?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How informed are you regarding the roles school systems and professionals play in serving students who are in foster care and attending school?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Uninformed | Uninformed | Slightly Uninformed | Undecided | Slightly Informed | Informed | Very Informed |

How informed are you regarding the roles child welfare systems and professionals play in serving students who are in foster care and attending school?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Uninformed | Uninformed | Slightly Uninformed | Undecided | Slightly Informed | Informed | Very Informed |

How are school and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals currently working together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

What challenges are preventing schools and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals from working together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

What specific tools (policies, practices, documents, etc...) can you identify that support students in foster care? How can these tools be shared between school and child welfare systems and professionals?

YOUR VOICE COUNTS
Thank you for completing the survey.

School Professional Collaboration Survey

This survey is being used to begin to understand challenges and solutions to promoting school success (*attendance, school stability, academic achievement, completion of grade and transition to the next grade, high school graduation, and social and emotional comfort in the school setting*) for students in foster care. Please complete this survey and return it Tonya Glantz at the end of this session.

Focus Group Involvement

Did you participate in a focus group with Tonya Glantz during the spring of 2010? (check one)

- Yes No Unsure

Participant Demographic Information:

Gender (check one): Female Male

Race & Ethnicity (check all that apply or write in your race and ethnicity if it is not reflected)

- American Indian & Alaskan Native Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander
 Asian White
 Black or African American Other _____
 Hispanic or Latino

What category best defines your role within the school system? (check all that apply)

- Elementary School Middle School High School

Approximately how long have you been a professional in the public schools?(check appropriate category)

- Less than 1 year 7 to 10 years 11 to 21 years
 1 to 3 years 4 to 6 years other _____

Which of the following categories best describes your current professional role? (check one or if it is not reflected, write in)

- School Guidance School Teacher Other School Staff
 School Psychologist Special Education Staff
 School Social Worker Special/Language Staff

School-Child Welfare Questions

Are you aware of any laws or policies in educational and/or child welfare that address the educational needs of students in foster care? Yes No

If yes, please identify the law(s) and/or policy(s) and describe their role in supporting the educational needs of students in foster care:)

For the question below, Child Welfare is shortened using the initials, CW. When you see CW, it means both the family service and juvenile probation and parole parts of DCYF. (check one)

In your opinion, who is responsible for initiating collaboration between school and child welfare (CW) professionals on behalf of students who are in foster care and attend school? Child Welfare - CW will be inclusively for child welfare family service and juvenile probation and paroles staff and divisions. (please check all that apply):

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> School Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Administrator | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Foster Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Psychologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Special/Language Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Social Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other School Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Other CW Personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

The questions below ask you to rate your response using a scale with seven categories. Please check the category that best describes your response:

To what extent do you agree that collaboration between school and child welfare systems is necessary to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

To what extent do you agree that collaboration between school and child welfare professionals is necessary to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

How satisfied are you with current collaboration between school and child welfare systems?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How satisfied are you with current collaboration between school and child welfare professionals?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How informed are you regarding the role school systems and professionals play in meeting the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Uninformed | Uninformed | Slightly Uninformed | Undecided | Slightly Informed | Informed | Very Informed |

How informed are you regarding the role child welfare systems and professionals play in meeting the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Uninformed | Uninformed | Slightly Uninformed | Undecided | Slightly Informed | Informed | Very Informed |

How are school and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals currently working together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

What challenges are preventing schools and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals from working together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

What specific tools (policies, practices, documents, etc...) can you identify that support students in foster care? How can these tools be shared between school and child welfare systems and professionals?

YOUR VOICE COUNTS
Thank you for completing the survey.

Student Collaboration Survey

This survey is being used to begin to understand challenges and solutions to promoting school success (*attendance, not moving from school to school, passing grades, finishing each grade and moving to the next grade, graduating high school, and feeling good about being in school*) for students in foster care. Please complete this survey and return it Tonya Glantz at the end of this session.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Did you take part in a focus group with Tonya Glantz during the spring of 2010? (check one)

Yes No Unsure

Participant Demographic Information:

Gender (check appropriate category): Female Male

Race & Ethnicity (check all that apply or write in your race and ethnicity if it is not reflected)

American Indian & Alaskan Native Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander
 Asian White
 Black or African American Other _____
 Hispanic or Latino

What education category best shows your current or most recent role as a student while you were involved with foster care? (check the appropriate category)

Middle School Student High School Student College student
 GED Student Not enrolled in School Other _____

About how long did you or have you lived in foster care?(check one)

Less than 1 year 7 to 10 years 11 to 21 years
 1 to 3 years 4 to 6 years other _____

In which child welfare (DCYF) division were/are you open? (please check all that apply)

Child Protective Services Family Services
 Intake/Monitoring Juvenile Probation/Parole

Are you currently living in foster care or in another child welfare placement? (check one)

Yes No

School-Child Welfare Questions

Do you know about laws or policies for schools and/or child welfare (DCYF) that help make sure your school/educational needs are met? Yes No

If yes, please identify the law(s) and/or policy(s) and write a little about how the law(s) and/or policy(s) help make sure your and other students in foster school/educational needs are met:

For the question below, Child Welfare (DCYF) is shortened using the initials, CW. When you see CW, it means both the family service and juvenile probation and parole parts of DCYF.

Which people do you think need to get professionals in school and child welfare (DCYF) to work together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (please check all that apply):

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> School Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Administrator | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Foster Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Psychologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Special/Language Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Social Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other School Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Other CW Personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

The questions below ask you to answer by using a scale with seven choices. Pick one choice to answer the question:

To what extent do you agree that having school and child welfare systems work together is important to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

To what extent do you agree that having school and child welfare (DCYF) professionals work together is important to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

How satisfied are you with how school and child welfare systems (DCYF) currently work together?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How satisfied are you with how school and child welfare (DCYF) professionals currently work together?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How informed are you about the roles school systems and professionals play in meeting the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)?

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Uninformed | Uninformed | Slightly Uninformed | Undecided | Slightly Informed | Informed | Very Informed |

How informed are you about the roles child welfare systems (DCYF) and professionals play in meeting the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Uninformed | Uninformed | Slightly Uninformed | Undecided | Slightly Informed | Informed | Very Informed |

What are the school and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals doing to work together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

What are the schools and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals that is not helping to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

Share your ideas about what schools and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals can do to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school: :

YOUR VOICE COUNTS
Thank you for completing the survey.

Foster Parent Collaboration Survey

This survey is being used to begin to understand challenges and solutions to promoting school success (*attendance, school stability, academic achievement, completion of grade and transition to the next grade, high school graduation, and social and emotional comfort in the school setting*) for students in foster care. Please complete this survey and return it Tonya Glantz at the end of this session.

Participant Demographic Information:

Are you a foster parent in Central Falls? (check one) Yes No

Gender (check appropriate category): Female Male

Race & Ethnicity (check all that apply or write in your race and ethnicity if it is not reflected)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian & Alaskan Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> White |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino | |

What category best defines the school status of children and youth you care for as a foster parent to? (check all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> non-school aged (infants) | <input type="checkbox"/> elementary school | <input type="checkbox"/> High school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pre-school | <input type="checkbox"/> middle school | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> kindergarten | | |

Approximately how long have you been a foster parent?(check one)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 6 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 14 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 3 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 to 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 14 years |

School-Child Welfare Questions

Are you aware of any laws or policies in educational and/or child welfare that address the educational needs of students in foster care? Yes No

If yes, please identify the law(s) and/or policy(s) and describe their role in supporting the educational needs of students in foster care:

For the question below, Child Welfare is shortened using the initials, CW. When you see CW, it means both the family service and juvenile probation and parole parts of DCYF.

In your opinion, who is responsible for initiating collaboration between school and child welfare (CW) professionals on behalf of students who are in foster care and attend school? Child Welfare - CW will be inclusively for child welfare family service and juvenile probation and paroles staff and divisions. (please check all that apply):

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Principal | <input type="checkbox"/> School Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Administrator | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> Student's Foster Parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Psychologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Special/Language Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> CW Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Social Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Other School Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Other CW Personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

The questions below ask you to rate your response using a scale with seven categories. Please check the category that best describes your response:

To what extent do you agree that collaboration between school and child welfare systems is necessary to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

To what extent do you agree that collaboration between school and child welfare professionals is necessary to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

How satisfied are you with current collaboration between school and child welfare systems? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How satisfied are you with current collaboration between school and child welfare professionals? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Undecided | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |

How informed are you regarding the role school systems and professionals play in meeting the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

How informed are you regarding the role child welfare systems and professionals play in meeting the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school? (check one)

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Undecided | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

How are school and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals currently working together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

What challenges are preventing schools and child welfare (DCYF) systems and professionals from working together to meet the school/educational needs of students who are in foster care and attend school:

What specific tools (policies, practices, documents, etc...) can you identify that support students in foster care? How can these tools be shared between school and child welfare systems and professionals?

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

Thank you for completing the survey.

APPENDIX D

Narrative Essay

Participants will be asked to read the statement and to briefly write a response.

Professionals from School and Child Welfare

Please take just a few minutes to share your own words about what it takes to promote school success for students who are open to DCYF and living in foster care. Imagine that you are talking to a newly hired person in your organization and are trying to explain what it takes to help students in foster care be successful in school. What would you tell them?

Youth

Please take just a few minutes to share your own words about what it takes to promote school success for students who are open to DCYF and living in foster care. Imagine that you are talking to a newly hired professional who works with students in foster care and that you are trying to explain what it takes to help students in foster care be successful in school. What would you tell them.

APPENDIX E

Q-Sort Protocol (pre-post measure)

Guide to Sorting Statements						
Least Important -3	-2	-1	0	1	2	Most Important 3

School Success						
1. Students in foster care often have many issues to deal with, which makes promoting their school success difficult.	2. It is the responsibility of school teachers and staff to promote the success of a student in foster care.	3. It is the responsibility of DCYF to promote the school success of a student in foster care.	4. Because every situation is different, it is difficult to identify an organization or person that is responsible to promote the school success for students in foster care.	5. I initiate contact with other organizations to promote the school success of students in foster care.	6. School Teachers and staff routinely connect with DCYF staff to form teams that promote school success for students in foster care..	7. School teachers and staff, DCYF, caretakers, and other professionals routinely work together with students in foster care to promote the student's school success.
Communication						
8. Communicating a student's foster care status with a school code numbers is essential to promoting their school success.	9. Communicating a student's foster care status results in stigma and negatively impacts school success.	10. Communicating federal/state guidelines for education and foster care make it easy for school teachers and staff and DCYF to promote the student's school success.	11. Communicating the foster care status of a student should only be done on a case by case basis.	12. Communicating a student's foster care status is essential to promoting the student's school success.	13. Communicating a student's foster care status and their special needs is essential to promoting the student's school success.	14. Communicating a student's foster care status, strengths and their emotional, behavioral and social needs is essential to promoting the student's school success.

Perception						
15. The safety and permanency of a student in foster care is the most important priorities in their life	16. School success for students in foster care requires attention to student's academic experience.	17. Because of their losses and other experiences, students in foster cannot make their school success a priority.	18. Every student's situation is different and addressing their school success should be made on a case by case basis	19. Because of their losses and other experiences, students in foster care need professionals from schools and DCYF and caretakers to help them make school success a priority.	20. School success for students in foster care requires attention to student's academic, social, emotional and behavioral experiences.	21. Promoting a student's school success is equally as important as insuring their safety and permanence
Providing Services & Supports						
22. The federal/state laws that are in place are sufficient to insure that services and supports to meet the educational needs of students in foster care.	23. Services and resources in education and child welfare are sufficient for meeting the needs of students in foster care.	24. Professionals in schools and DCYF have sufficient awareness of each other's work to be able to meet the needs of students in foster care.	25. Because every student's situation is different, assessing and providing services and supports that promote school should be made on a case by case basis	26. Professionals in schools and DCYF need more opportunities to learn about each other's work to be able to meet student's educational needs.	27. Students in foster care require a designated person in the schools to turn to as a support.	28. Federal/state policies, schools, DCYF, caretakers, and student needs to join together to assess and develop access to appropriate services and supports to meet the educational needs of students in foster care.

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