Perceptions on Teacher and Collective Efficacy While Platooning over an Academic Year: A Case Study of Three Elementary Educators

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHER AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY WHILE PLATOONING
OVER AN ACADEMIC YEAR: A CASE STUDY OF THREE ELEMENTARY
EDUCATORS

Alison DuCharm, Ed.D.
Northern Illinois University, 2020
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Elizabeth Wilkins, Director

Due to increased accountability requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and, most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), educators and administrators face intensified pressure to increase students’ achievement in their schools. Changing how classrooms are organized for instruction has been one response to this pressure. Platooning at the elementary level is one example of such an organizational change; however, very little research specifically addresses platooning at the elementary-level. Therefore, many interested school districts are faced with making an uninformed decision about platooning, particularly at the elementary level.

This qualitative study studied the perception of platooning on teacher and collective efficacy through an in-depth case study of three fifth-grade teachers in a suburban Chicago school district. Data collection occurred over an eight-month period and included individual interviews with each of the three teachers, a team interview, and analysis of the reflective journal responses and scale data. Specifically, this study explored teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy when teaching one or two content areas instead of all subject areas required of a self-contained teacher.
Three findings were drawn from the research. First, teachers described the creation of a platooning definition and team norms led to mastery experiences as a source of teacher efficacy. The second conclusion suggested that when teachers perceived team norms were not being followed, collective efficacy began to disintegrate. The last finding indicated a connection between teacher and collective efficacy based on mastery experiences or classroom observations. However, in the absence of observations, data indicated teacher and collective efficacy, although informed by the same sources, worked independently.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that district administration, principals, and teachers work together to define platooning. Without a current, research-based definition of platooning, it is essential that all stakeholders have a common understanding of the organizational structure within their school district. In addition, it is also recommended that all school members working with the teachers (i.e., principal, special education teacher, social worker, etc.) should be considered part of the platooning team and participate in the creation of group norms. This ensures members contributing to the success of platooning understand the expectations and needs of both the platooning teachers and the students. Finally, it is recommended that platooning teachers participate in both district and building level professional learning to meet the challenge of academic standards and ultimately, raise the level of learning for all students.
PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHER AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY WHILE PLATOONING OVER AN ACADEMIC YEAR: A CASE STUDY OF THREE ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS

By

ALISON DUCHARM
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Doctoral Director:
Elizabeth Wilkins
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supported it ever since. It took many individuals to help me complete this degree, and to them all, I humbly express my gratitude and appreciation.
DEDICATION

To my girls

and their own pursuits of wisdom.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Over the past 15 years, legislation and new education standards have put more pressure on elementary teachers to become specialists in all content areas to meet higher academic expectations (Gewertz, 2014; Hood, 2010). However, within the traditional elementary school setting, teachers are generalists who teach all subjects and meet the social-emotional needs of children within a given grade-level. With increased pressure for students to meet or exceed new standards, elementary teachers are becoming both overwhelmed and stressed as they try to become content specialists in all subject areas (Reid, 2012). In response, both administrators and teachers are now challenging the past assumption that “an elementary school teacher is a Jack (or Jill)-of-all-trades who is equally strong in all areas of the elementary curriculum” (Chan & Jarman, 2004, p. 1).

Given the challenges of being a generalist, more and more elementary school districts have begun to ask teachers “to drop their roles as generalists and serve instead as experts in one or two content areas” (Gewertz, 2014, p. 1). Many elementary administrators and teachers view this shift toward content specialization as “a sensible way to simplify the teacher’s work and deepen their expertise” (Levine, 2002, p. 61). As teachers deepen their content knowledge, they are also sharing the academic and social-emotional learning responsibility of two or more classes of children (Reid, 2012). This structure, known as “platooning,” has begun to appear predominantly in grades three through five (Gewertz, 2014) in schools across the nation. While
this organizational system has the potential to support elementary teachers as specialists, platooning still lacks an agreed upon definition.

Historically, platooning first appeared in the 1900s as a result of the progressive education movement (Mohl, 1977). Its recent resurfacing (Hood, 2010) has resulted in neither a consistent definition nor peer-reviewed research. Therefore, current research defines platooning as everything from departmentalization (Barkley, 2009) to teacher specialization (Hood, 2010). However, the lack of consistent terminology has not deterred one west suburban Chicago school district from creating its own definition of platooning and implementing the system in its upper elementary school. Community Unit School District 123 (CUSD 123) defines platooning through seven components: 1) teacher as content specialist (i.e., one to two content areas); 2) teachers sharing a group of students; 3) utilization of student data to inform instruction, interventions and groupings; 4) flexible student grouping; 5) block scheduling, 6) consistent team systems for study skills, organization, management, and parent communication; and 7) team communication and collaboration to plan and provide feedback. This definition determines not only the role of the individual teacher (expert in one or two content areas) within a platoon but also how the teachers work together as an interdisciplinary team to share and meet the needs of the students.

In defining and implementing platooning, Community Unit School District 123 inadvertently defined interdisciplinary teams that, while common at the middle school level, are not common practice in elementary schools (Clark & Clark, 1994). Interdisciplinary teaming, like platooning, also includes the seven aforementioned components (Pounder, 1999; see Table 1.1).
Table 1.1

Similarities and Differences between Platooning at the Elementary Level and Interdisciplinary Teaming at the Middle School Level

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<td>1. teacher as a content specialist (core academic teachers)</td>
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<td>2. team of teachers share a group of students (two or more classrooms)</td>
<td>2. team of teachers share a group or grade level team of students</td>
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<td>3. Utilization of student data to plan instruction and interventions.</td>
<td>3. Utilization of student data to plan instruction and interventions.</td>
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<td>4. Flexible student grouping</td>
<td>4. Flexible student grouping</td>
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<td>5. Block scheduling</td>
<td>5. Block or class period scheduling</td>
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<td>6. Consistent team systems for</td>
<td>6. Team decision-making responsibilities and coordination in</td>
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<td>a. classroom management</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. study skills</td>
<td>b. scheduling</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. organization</td>
<td>c. study skills</td>
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<td>d. parent communication</td>
<td>d. organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Team members:</td>
<td>7. Team members are involved in cooperative decision making:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. communicate</td>
<td>a. communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. collaborate</td>
<td>b. collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. plan</td>
<td>c. planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. provide feedback</td>
<td>d. providing feedback</td>
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</table>

Platooning has the potential to allow elementary teachers to work as interdisciplinary teams to capitalize on “their collective knowledge, expertise, and effort” (Pounder, 1999, p. 319)
to promote higher levels of student achievement and teacher efficacy. In addition, through alignment of definitions, understanding platooning and interdisciplinary teaming as one and the same will allow peer reviewed research on interdisciplinary teaming to be used within this research to define, explain, and support the use of platooning at the elementary level. This study used the merged definition, referred to as platooning or platooning at the elementary level, to describe how a team of fifth-grade teachers’ responded to this organizational system change on individual and collective efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

A team of teachers implementing platooning involves individual classes as well as the grade level team as a whole (Reid, 2012). Within this particular study, it was important that the framework enabled the researcher to explore how teachers experienced platooning both individually and as a team. Therefore, an essential framework for determining whether platooning is “a sensible way to simplify the teacher’s work and deepen their expertise” (Levine, 2002, p. 61) is Bandura’s social cognitive theory (SCT), which encompasses self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, and collective efficacy. This study uncovered how the teachers perceived experiences with platooning provided sources for both teacher and collective efficacy.

Social Cognitive Theory

The study about teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning was analyzed through the lens of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). SCT exerts that all humans are capable of human agency, which Bandura (1997) defines as “the human capability to exert influence over one’s functioning and the course of events by one’s actions” (p. 8). Human
agency operates within a process called triadic reciprocal causation. In simpler terms, reciprocal causation is a “multi-directional model suggesting that human agency results in future behavior as a function of three interrelated forces: environmental influences, internal personal factors such as cognitive, affective, and biological processes behavior” (Henson, 2001, p. 4). In the case of platooning, there is a reciprocal relationship among a team’s platooning environment (E), an individual teacher’s personal experiences in the classroom (P), and the resulting behavior (B) (Bandura, 1997). More specifically, a teacher may take into account personal experiences as a content specialist (P) along with other information such as observing the performances of colleagues (B) and the team’s ability to work collaboratively (E) when platooning. Therefore, observations, feedback, support, and feelings about each of the three interrelated forces of triadic reciprocal causation work together to inform teachers’ beliefs when platooning. This three-part model impacts the beliefs people have about themselves and the actions they take, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Bandura’s model of causation. (Bandura, 1997, p. 6)](image-url)
Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy also plays an integral role in SCT in that it influences the outcome of thoughts and reactions to events that shape human behavior (Bandura, 1997). In his seminal work, *Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*, Bandura defined self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). Since the 1970s, Bandura (1982, 1986, 1993, 1996, 1997) has continued to research self-efficacy and defend the idea that belief in one’s abilities impacts one’s behavior, motivation, and ultimately success or failure.

When focusing on self-efficacy, one finds that it is situational, which means expectancy cannot be generalized (Ross & Bruce, 2007). In other words, the context of the situation must be understood to comprehend how it might influence a person’s self-efficacy. Therefore, someone considering a new or similar task (e.g., platooning) may take into account personal experiences along with other information such as observing the performances of colleagues and feedback and support received from others as well as acknowledging how they feel about the situation itself (Bandura, 1997). The four sources of self-efficacy include the following: 1) mastery experiences, 2) vicarious experiences, 3) social and verbal persuasion and 4) physiological and emotional cues. Collectively, these sources enable observers who have a high level of self-efficacy to be more likely to adopt observational learning behaviors (Bandura, 1997).

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy, like self-efficacy, is also grounded in SCT and is defined as teachers’ confidence in their ability to promote students’ learning (Hoy, 2000). Hoy defines teacher
efficacy by explaining that two types of beliefs make up teacher efficacy. The first type of teacher efficacy, related to a teacher’s confidence in teaching ability, is called personal teacher efficacy. The second, having confidence in the ability to impact the learning of children, is termed general teaching efficacy. Research shows that teachers with higher teacher-efficacy are “more likely to try new teaching ideas, particularly techniques that are difficult, involve risks, and require that control is shared” (Ross, 1998, p. 52). Research has also shown that teachers with high efficacy have a higher level of success with student learning (Ashton, Webb, & Doda, 1983), student engagement (Ashton et. al., 1983), and classroom management (Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990). Since teachers’ perceptions of their work with difficult children were not assessed, only personal or individual teacher efficacy rather than general teaching efficacy was considered for this study. Herein, for the purpose of this research, personal teacher efficacy is referred to as teacher efficacy.

Collective Efficacy

When SCT is applied to an organization as a whole, it is referred to as collective efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines collective efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (p. 477). Therefore, the four sources of self and teacher efficacy – mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion and affective states – are also the four sources of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). Both teacher and collective efficacy are based on the premise that an individual or a group can set a course of action to achieve an outcome (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1997) further clarifies collective efficacy as the belief the team has in its ability to perform as a whole under different dynamics. Since an organization is the product of the
interactions of individuals within the organization, performance is determined by the group of individuals as the collective (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, when considering an elementary school, this collective can be any combination of individuals from a school’s faculty to a grade level team collaborating as a PLC. This research, then, focused on perceptions of collective efficacy of one team of teachers implementing platooning at the elementary school level.

As shown in Figure 2, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) explain that while the four sources of efficacy are essential to the creation of collective efficacy, “the perceptions of group capability to successfully educate students result when teachers consider the level of difficulty of the teaching task [in relation to] their perceptions of group competence” (p. 485). Therefore, collective efficacy requires teachers to take both the teaching task and the competence of their team into consideration simultaneously because it is difficult to separate the two components of collective efficacy (Goddard et al.). The teachers’ reflections regarding these two components form their perception of collective efficacy (Goddard et al.).

![Simplified Model of Collective Efficacy](image)

Figure 2. Simplified model of collective efficacy. (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 486)
In summary, social cognitive theory was essential for understanding the participants’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning. This theoretical framework is expanded in Chapter 2.

Problem Statement

Educational reform comes from many places and can be initiated and implemented within economic, social and political contexts (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Williams, 2007). These reforms present what needs to be done, often leaving the how to the teachers and administrators at the building level. Starting in 2010, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards were approved by states to reform expectations when preparing students, starting at kindergarten, to be college and career ready. Years later, elementary level teachers are still struggling to unpack and understand the comprehensive standards put in place to raise the level of learning across all content areas at the elementary level. However, to ensure this deeper level of learning takes place, teachers find themselves overwhelmed with the professional learning and time needed for students to meet these many standards within self-contained classrooms (Hood, 2010).

Under this increased pressure to meet these standards, educators and administrators may find themselves reacting to rather than planning solutions to address educational change (Baker, 2011). However, successful change is most likely when school districts focus on improving instruction and establishing clear strategies for improvement (Wagner, Kegan, Lemons, Garnier & Helsing, 2006). Through his research, Duke (2006) found 11 areas associated with successful school improvement efforts:
1. providing timely student assistance;  
2. expecting teacher collaboration;  
3. making data-based decisions;  
4. leading the school improvement process effectively;  
5. adjusting the organizational structures to increase student achievement;  
6. providing continual staff development;  
7. aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment;  
8. assessing student progress regularly;  
9. maintaining high expectations for student achievement;  
10. communicating with parents and enlisting parental support; and  
11. adjusting schedule to increase time on task, particularly in math and reading. (p. 26)

When specifically looking at the organization of elementary schools, Duke (2006) argued that

the cherished image of the traditional elementary school with its self-contained classrooms and solitary teachers is disappearing. In its place is a much more complex and complicated organization involving more team teaching and team planning, greater reliance on specialists, and variable schedules dictated by student needs. (p. 27)

The idea of reorganizing elementary schools and classrooms is not new. While departmentalization has been in and out of favor for years (Anderson, 1966; Franklin, 1967), self-contained classrooms remain the predominant way to organize elementary schools (Anderson, 1966; Goodlad, 1966; Otto & Sanders, 1964). However, reforms such as Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have required restructuring for schools failing to make AYP for consecutive years (Harold & Lathrop, 2004). In other words, by believing restructuring will change teaching and learning for the better, platooning advocates hope to meet the demands of these reforms and increase school performance (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthy, 1996).

Therefore, aligning curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices (Marzano, 2007) with organizational structures, processes, and skills (Fullen, 2001, 2010; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) can positively impact student achievement and move educational systems closer to meeting the expectations of reform. At the elementary level, the system of platooning may be
a viable solution for how schools and teachers might achieve the expectations of the new standards and reforms (i.e., CCSS, NGSS, C3). Nonetheless, most administrators do not view platooning as a viable option without supporting evidence (Delviscio & Muffs, 2007). The scarcity of peer-reviewed research at the elementary level leaves a gap in understanding the organizational system, especially from a teacher’s viewpoint. Therefore, a qualitative study that captures teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy when platooning (Schwanenberger & Ahearn, 2013) was both timely and necessary to advance the understanding of platooning.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe three fifth-grade teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning. To support this purpose, this study was guided by the following questions:

1. How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe her own teacher efficacy while implementing platooning?
2. How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe the collective efficacy of the team while implementing platooning?
3. How does the fifth-grade team describe concurrency between efficacy and platooning?

Significance of Study

Elementary administrators and teachers are constantly searching for ways to help their
students best acquire skills and knowledge. Platooning at the elementary level may be a legitimate option for supporting the learning of children. However, the best way to structure elementary schools and classrooms has been debated without resolution for the last century (Franklin, 1967; Gibb & Matala, 1962; Lamme, 1976; McGrath & Rust, 2002; Otto & Sanders, 1964; Slavin, 1986). Hence, this study strove to fill a gap in the current research regarding platooning, while it also added to the research currently available. Therefore, this study enhances understanding and would provide guidance for administrators and teachers searching for possible solutions to meet the increased expectations of current standards such as the CCSS, NGSS, and the C3 Framework.

This study on platooning is valuable in that it explored teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy regarding the organizational system’s ability to “produce desired effects by their [the teachers’] actions” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Exploring perceived teacher efficacy when platooning helps address teacher stress and workloads and provides support for administrators and classroom teachers searching for alternatives to the problem of elementary teachers becoming specialists in all content areas. As such, platooning has the potential to positively inform teacher efficacy by allowing teachers to become more proficient in their specialized content knowledge (i.e., reading, writing, mathematics, social studies and science) and, therefore, experience less stress and lighter workloads (Strohl, Schmertzing, & Schmertzing, 2014). In other words, an in-depth knowledge of facts, concepts, and principles in one or two specific academic areas may make it possible for teachers to focus their time and professional learning on confidently making informed instructional decisions.

Platooning, by definition, is a team of teachers who share a group of students (Reid, 2012; Crow & Pounder, 2000); therefore, this research on elementary teachers specializing in
one or two content areas (instead of five or more) and collectively sharing responsibility for
platoons or groups of students provided significant data on collective efficacy. These data can be
used by administrators and teachers when determining how to support and strengthen a
platooning team of teachers as they develop a “nurturing environment that emphasizes both
student and teacher success” (Johnson, 2012, p. 49). Hence, a study such as this helps both
administrators and teachers develop a deeper understanding of how experiences with platooning
can shape perceptions of teacher and collective efficacies when deciding whether to platoon in
the elementary grades.

Finally, this research opens other opportunities for future qualitative and quantitative
research on platooning. These future studies can provide more research-based evidence for
administrators and teachers to consider when deciding to implement platooning or fine-tune
existing team structures in elementary schools.

**Definition of Terms**

To clarify terms within the context of this study, the following definitions are provided.

**Departmentalization**: Departmentalization is an organizational school setting in which students
typically change classes to receive instruction in each subject from a specialized teacher.
Departmentalization is primarily found at the middle and high school levels (Chan & Jarman,
2004).

**Flexible Student Grouping**: Flexible groups are temporary heterogeneous or homogenous groups
of students placed together in a classroom. Students can be placed in these groups for a lesson or
until mastery of a skill is achieved. Flexible groups are not intended to be permanent (Jack,
2014).
**Interdisciplinary Teaming:** A way of organizing the faculty so a group of teachers share 1) the same group of students; 2) the responsibility for planning, teaching, and evaluating the curriculum and instruction in more than one academic area; 3) the same schedule; and 4) the same area of the building (George & Alexander, 1993).

**Professional Learning:** Activities that are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education to meet the challenging state academic standards and be sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops) in intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused learning (Learning Forward, 2017).

**Self-contained:** In an elementary setting, a self-contained classroom means students receive instruction in core content areas from one teacher. Art, music, and physical education are supplemental courses provided by a specialized teacher. Self-contained settings are the primary organizational structure in elementary schools (Rogers & Palardy, 1987).

**Semi-departmentalized:** In the semi-departmentalized setting, students are assigned to a homeroom but move to specialized teachers for blocks of instruction. For example, students may receive language arts and reading in one block, mathematics and science in another block, and social studies and health in another block (Rogers & Palardy, 1987).

**Teacher or Content Specialization:** Teacher or content specialization enables elementary teachers to reach more students by focusing on their best subjects and teaching those subjects to two or more classes of students rather than just one (Reid, 2012).

**Team Teaching:** The approach to teaching wherein one group of students is shared by a group, or
team, of teachers. This term also refers to the practice of two teachers working together within
the same classroom setting to teach one group of students (Johnson, 2013).

Traditional Setting: A traditional setting is often used interchangeably with a self-contained
setting. A traditional setting is defined as an elementary setting in which students are taught by
one teacher in all content areas all day (Jack, 2014).

Methodology

A qualitative case study was used to explore a newly formed fifth-grade team’s teacher
and collective efficacy as they implemented platooning. Due to the complexity of platooning and
teachers’ perspectives of its implementation, a case study allowed in-depth exploration of how
teacher and collective efficacy were perceived by the teachers as they put a plan for platooning
into use. The case included three fifth-grade teachers who worked in an elementary school in a
suburb outside of Chicago, Illinois. The data were collected through scales (a graduated range of
values to inform the qualitative narrative), individual and team interviews, and reflective journal
entries. The data collection period was eight months, August 2018 to March 2019. This 27-
week timespan for data collection, which took place after the team’s implementation of
platooning, enabled the researcher to collect teachers’ experiences and feelings about platooning
while they were still current. After data collection was complete, the process of identifying
grounded theory (initial, axial and theoretical coding leading to a grounded theory), along with
analytic memos and triangulation, was used to analyze the data (Saldana, 2016).

Organization of Study

This study is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study by presenting an
overview of platooning at the elementary level. Chapter 2 includes a review of the relevant literature on current platooning practices as well as the history of platooning. This chapter also provides a more detailed understanding of the framework, which included both teacher efficacy and collective efficacy. Chapter 3 describes the methodology for completing the research. The results are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Finally, Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the findings, implications for current practice, and future research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter examines platooning, a term that originated in the early twentieth century and then disappeared until its recent resurfacing in the field of education (Hood, 2010). The review of literature is organized into seven sections: 1) school structures; 2) connections among platooning, departmentalization, and interdisciplinary teaming; 3) educational reforms impacting school districts’ decisions to platoon; 4) the history of platooning; 5) positive and negative aspects of platooning; 6) teacher efficacy and collective efficacy and how they relate to platooning in the elementary classroom; and 7) the relationship between teacher and collective efficacy.

School Structural Organization

A school’s structural organization is its framework for achieving its goals (Otto & Sanders, 1964). Schools must have a structure for moving students vertically through the school system as well as a way to organize students horizontally among teachers at a given grade level (Baker, 2011). Vertical organization provides a school district with a structure for moving students from early education through to the end of their educational career in the district. While at first schools were not vertically organized, by 1870, classes, curriculum, and teaching assignments became graded to organize students, and the vertical structure continues to be the
predominant way standard schools organize students (Goodlad, 1966). Graded, non-graded, and multi-graded classrooms are all considered vertical organizational structures (Goodlad, 1966). In addition, schools also need to organize students using a horizontal approach. A horizontal structure enables schools to divide students among classrooms and teachers (Anderson, 1966; Goodlad, 1966). “Educational values are brought into play in deciding the basis on which learners are to be allocated into groups” (Goodlad, 1966, p. 46). When deciding how to organize students horizontally, the learner, the curricula, and the teachers are often considered (Goodlad, 1966). When the learner is the primary consideration, classrooms are either homogeneous or heterogeneous. When organizing classrooms by curricula, decisions are made to either combine or separate various content areas for grouping students (Baker, 2011). Finally, the horizontal structure can also be based on the number of qualified teachers (Goodlad, 1966). Of course, schools may also use a combination of these factors when horizontally organizing students within a grade level. The main configurations include homogeneous, heterogeneous, self-contained, departmentalization, and team teaching (Franklin, 1967; Goodlad).

Homogeneous grouping places students together based on their similarities as learners (Goodlad, 1966). Goodlad explains that when grouping homogeneously, children may be organized into groups based on achievement, gender, age, and interests. On the other hand, heterogeneous grouping is the practice of dividing students based on differences, although often while classes within a school are grouped heterogeneously in regard to ability, most classes are formed homogeneously by age (Goodlad).

Classes at the high school level are generally organized horizontally through the departmentalization of subjects (Goodlad, 1966). However, at the elementary level, discourse about horizontal organization differs from its secondary counterpart.
At the elementary school level, grouping practices as related to horizontal curriculum organization frequently have been reduced to debate over the virtues of departmentalization as contrasted with the self-contained classroom. This is an oversimplification. The curriculum may be departmentalized, the classroom self-contained. The practice of moving students from room to room in a system of departmentalization or semi-departmentalization is known as *platooning*. Consequently, the grouping issue is whether to platoon or not to platoon. (Goodlad, 1966, p. 50)

The possibilities for horizontal organization at the elementary level can be considered a continuum. Lobdell and Ness (1967) explain that the self-contained classroom with the teacher acting as a generalist and teaching all subjects including specialized subjects such as art, music, physical education and special education is found at one end of the continuum. Departmentalization, with students moving to different classrooms with different teachers acting as content area specialists, is at the other end of the continuum. Between each point, there are many organizational possibilities (Lobdell & Ness).

Team teaching, or interdisciplinary team teaching, is another lens for examining horizontal organizational structures. Team teaching, a horizontal structure that has the benefits of both self-contained and departmentalized classrooms considers teachers, children and curriculum in grouping students for instruction (Anderson, 1966; Goodlad, 1966; Otto & Sanders, 1964). Goodlad suggests that team teaching is distinguished by 1) a hierarchy of personnel, 2) delineation of roles based on qualifications and instructional agendas, and 3) flexible grouping of all learners within the team. Crow and Ponder (2000) have also offered a definition of team teaching: “an interdisciplinary team of teachers composed of core academic teachers (e.g., language arts, social studies, math science, and reading) who are responsible for the required academic instruction of a contained group of students” (p. 220). Crow and Pounder clarify the meaning of interdisciplinary teaming in this way: Interdisciplinary teams also have a responsibility to develop and implement curriculum “and teaching strategies based on a child’s
developmental needs, develop coordinated interventions and management strategies to address student learning and/or behavioral problems, and provide coordinated communication with parents” (p. 220). In other words, each individual teacher on a team specializes in a content area, but the team, as a whole, is responsible for the learning and needs of its assigned group of students.

Connections between Platooning, Departmentalization and Interdisciplinary Teaming

Literature on departmentalization and interdisciplinary teaming and the connections that can be made to platooning refocus thinking about the purpose and use of platooning in elementary classrooms during the 21st century. Therefore, departmentalization and interdisciplinary teaming, both examples of horizontal structures, were investigated to better understand contemporary platooning.

Departmentalization and How It Relates to Platooning

The differences between platooning and departmentalization need to be clarified to demonstrate how platooning is distinct and separate from the traditional departmentalization models used at the secondary level. Although common since the 1900s (Heathers, 1972), departmentalization, like platooning, can differ in both definition and focus. Heathers described departmentalization as a classroom structure in which “the attendant teacher (has) specialization” (p. 48). Baker (2011) expanded Heathers’ definition by explaining that departmentalization is any school structure that does not have the student receiving all instruction from a single teacher. While both Heathers (1972) and Baker (2011) included teacher specialization in their definition, the assumed need for either teacher or student movement to and from classrooms is omitted.
Chan and Jarmon (2004) explicitly included grouping as well as teacher specialization when they described departmentalization as a structure in which “teachers teach in their area of specialization and students move from one classroom to another for instruction” (p. 70). Like Chan and Jarmon, Hanks (2013) also interpreted departmentalization in terms of student grouping and teacher specialization when he explained departmentalization as a teacher specialist who teaches a specific subject to students who change classes “4-8 times a day with a different teacher” (p. 10).

Since research shows there is “absence of a clear definition” (Baker, 2011, p. 25) in terms of both departmentalization and platooning, it is important to compare the similarities and differences between the two organizational structures (see Table 2.1). In considering the resemblance between platooning and departmentalization, the components of teacher specialization and student grouping overlap. Goodlad (1966) connected platooning to departmentalization when explaining that platooning requires students to either move from classroom to classroom with a different teacher for each subject or to remain within one classroom while different teachers travel from classroom to classroom to provide instruction in all the content areas. More recent articles on platooning written by Hood (2010), Gewertz (2014), and Baker (2011) have also noted the overlay of grouping and teacher specialization in describing both platooning and departmentalization. Hood, like Goodlad, also identified the same commonalities between platooning and departmentalization by explaining that “departmentalizing is called platooning - elementary students as young as six change classrooms, sharing teachers who specialize in only one, two or three subjects” (p. 13 emphasis in original).
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<th>Platooning</th>
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<td>Team utilization of student data to plan instruction and interventions.</td>
<td>Teachers share students</td>
<td>Teacher accepts responsibility for students in only his or her class.</td>
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<td>Flexible student grouping</td>
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A difference between commonly held explanations of platooning and departmentalization is the concept of teacher groups or teams. The interpretation of platooning that includes the concept of teams of teachers working collaboratively to meet the needs of the groups or platoons of students is not considered part of true departmentalization. True departmentalization occurs when each individual teacher takes a responsibility for one subject (Anderson, 1966; Goodlad, 1966) but does not take joint responsibility for the students. For example, a teacher teaching within a departmentalized structure is not responsible for the student beyond the short time period the student spends in the teacher’s classroom each day. Barkley (2009) also strayed from the idea of platooning as true departmentalization by including the idea that a team of teachers who participate in joint planning “uncovers how students’ approaches to learning are similar and different as they move from reading to science,” supports each other with both students and parents, and accepts responsibility for student success in all content areas (p. 1). Therefore, for this research and to honor the evolution of the organizational system since Goodlad’s 1966 definition, platooning is defined to include the components of student grouping, teacher specialization, and interdisciplinary teacher teams as identified in Barkley’s (2009) definition of platooning. These three components that, in part, define the contemporary meaning of platooning also describe interdisciplinary teaming.

**Interdisciplinary Teaming and How It Relates to Platooning**

While platooning is not quite departmentalization and teaming itself is not platooning, interdisciplinary teams are an integral part of platooning (Barkley, 2009). To continue to meet the socio-emotional needs of elementary students, teachers involved in platooning must “organize work around students rather than around departmental disciplines” (Pounder, 1999, p.
The clearest example of this type of teaming may be interdisciplinary teams at the middle school level, where teams of teachers work together with a subset of students to make decisions about everything from curriculum, planning, behavioral interventions, flexible grouping strategies, parent communication, and student assessment (Pounder, 1999). Team teaching and the interdisciplinary philosophy are closely related and are probably the most basic and unique aspects of the middle school attempt to broaden and integrate subject matter at the intermediate level (Coppock & Hale, 1977). Indeed, according to Lounsbury (1981), many people believe interdisciplinary teaming and middle schools are one and the same. According to Armstrong (1977), the five major strengths claimed for interdisciplinary teaming include:

- Capitalizing on the individual strengths and weaknesses of teachers
- Engendering creativity because of close working relationships among teachers
- Facilitating individualized instruction
- Providing better sequencing and pacing because teachers can check their perceptions with others
- Building program continuity, as the team remains even when individual teachers come and go.

Armstrong’s (1977) five major strengths of interdisciplinary teams at the middle school level could just have as easily described the potential strengths of platooning at the elementary level. However, while interdisciplinary teams are common at the middle school level, they are scarce at the elementary level due to the popularity of the self-contained classroom model (Lobnell & Van Ness, 1967). Platooning has the potential to allow elementary teachers to work as interdisciplinary teams to capitalize on “their collective knowledge, expertise, and effort” (Pounder, 1999, p. 319) to promote higher levels of student achievement, teacher and collective efficacies.
Educational Reforms Impacting the Decision to Platoon

Recently, more and more elementary school districts have begun to ask their teachers to focus on one or two content areas instead of having a wide array of knowledge on a variety of subjects (Gerwertz, 2014). This practice, known as platooning, began to appear in elementary schools across the nation after legislation put more pressure on schools to increase test scores (Gerwertz, 2014). The legislation, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act by President Obama in 2015) and content standards – such as Common Core State Standards (CCSS); Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards – led to higher expectations and stakes. The legislation and the new standards demanded that administrators and elementary teachers question the assumption that “an elementary school teacher is a Jack (or Jill)-of-all-trades who is equally strong in all areas of the elementary curriculum” (Chan & Jarman, 2004, p. 1). They also forced school districts to identify that “raising standards require[d] teachers to receive more specialized professional development in one or two content areas versus trying to develop the expertise to teach all the content areas” (Barkley, 2009, p. 1).

Therefore, school districts across the nation in locations such as Florida, Tennessee, Colorado, Washington, Washington D.C., Massachusetts, and Illinois have implemented the organizational structure of platooning to address the need for elementary teachers to focus on one or two subject areas to achieve higher levels of content knowledge (Gerwertz, 2014; Hood, 2010). Irving Hamer, Deputy Superintendent of Academic Operations, Technology and Innovation for School District 351 in Memphis, Tennessee, explained that none of his fifth-grade
teachers had majored in math and, therefore, were not equipped to meet the CCSS (Hood, 2010). Therefore, District 351 moved to platooning to help ensure that “math is being taught by the most able math teachers in a 5th grade configuration” (p. 13). As Yearwood (2011) argued, “By altering the organizational structure and turning the self-contained classroom on its head, elementary schools are hoping to use this different paradigm to meet the standards, curriculum benchmarks and various student learning needs” (p. 41). This would then give a team of teachers the time to meaningfully teach all content areas while sharing the pressures created from the increased demand to be skilled practitioners and content area experts.

History of Platooning

In 1907, William Wirt, Superintendent of Gary, Indiana, schools, began implementing his vision of education, called the Gary Plan through the implementation of platoon schools (Mohl, 1977). Wirt believed that social efficiency and social productivity could be combined successfully to instill traditional values in each student and “prepare kids for life in corporate, technological and consumer society” (Mohl, 1977, p. 353). Wirt’s philosophy of education derived from both his childhood as a part of a self-sustaining farm family and his belief in Dewey’s (1916) progressive educational philosophy in that schools were viewed as miniature democratic societies in which students learned and practiced the skills needed for democratic living. Therefore, Wirt believed that in addition to schools being efficient, they could also be “a self-sustaining child community” in which children made school chairs in carpentry class, took care of plants on school grounds during botany, and prepared lunches in cooking classes (Mohl, 1977).
To make this vision of efficiency and productivity a reality, Wirt took advantage of a population explosion that took place between 1906 and 1930 (Lutz, 1935). During this time, Gary grew by 229 percent and new schools were needed to accommodate the increased number of students. Wirt immediately built new schools to meet the needs of the additional students but also designed them to support his plan for platoon schools (Lutz, 1935).

Under the Gary Plan, platoon schools introduced a different organizational structure within the elementary school and required a new way of thinking about the school building itself (Lutz, 1935). Wirt needed buildings that would sustain the 50-50 program that divided children into two platoons. One platoon, or fifty percent of the students, attended classes on the content areas (reading, writing, and math), while the other platoon, or half of the students, attended special subjects (physical education, art, music, etc.) (Diemer, 1924). Consequently, platoon schools in the 1920s were built with facilities that had never existed before in a school building: a library, an art room, a gymnasium, a print shop, a theatre, science lab, etc. (Mohl, 1977). These rooms were necessary to teach the special subjects to each platoon during half of their school day. Schools, at this time were built with classrooms or academic rooms as Wirt called them, along with, for the first time, gymnasiums, auditoriums, woodworking shops, and music rooms (Lutz, 1935). Wirt’s platoon schools were the precursors to the elementary school buildings of today.

In addition, platooning also led to a need for homerooms to be included in elementary school buildings. “This ‘school home’ is presided over by a teacher who is advisor, counselor, and friend; in short, the child’s school ‘mother’” (Diemer, 1924, p. 9). The homeroom teacher was responsible for providing socio-emotional support for the children as well as teaching the core academic subjects. In addition, the homeroom teacher was also responsible for “vitalizing
Platoon schools had another big selling point – they were cost effective. Under Wirt’s platoon school plan, every classroom and special facility was “in use 100 percent of the time which spelled 100 percent efficiency in the use of the school building” (Diemer, 1924, p. 7). This cost-savings, along with its efficiency and productivity, made platoon schools very attractive to schools across the nation. In 1914, the City of New York hired Wirt to introduce platoon schools and win approval for their implementation in New York City schools. While the innovation failed and Wirt returned to Indiana, Alice Barrows, a young woman hired as Wirt’s secretary while he was in New York, “moved to the forefront as the most aggressive national publicist for the platoon school during the 1920s and 1930s” (Mohl, 1977, p. 353). After forming the National Platoon School Association in Washington D.C. and setting up regional offices across the nation, Wirt and Barrows worked together over the next two decades to champion their cause (Case, 1931).

After two decades of popularity, platooning began to lose favor in 1932 as the Great Depression set in. Barrows resigned from her role as the editor of The Platoon School magazine and the “platoon-school organization became further mired in debt” (Cohen, 1990, p. 124). Despite the financial setback in the early 1930s, platooning, as Wirt knew it, survived until 1941. During the early years of World War II, platoon schools were replaced by changing leadership in schools across the nation along with changing times that called for strict discipline “necessary for the protection of our children in the face of possible emergencies” (Cohen, 1990, p. 166). This strict discipline did not fit within the platoon school’s “spirit of experimentation, discovery, inventions, and developments” (Case, 1931, p. 14).
Definitions & Characteristics of Platooning

Research on current platooning differs in both meaning and focus. While Diemer (1924) defined it in 1924 as two platoons of children spending half their time on academics and the other half on special subjects, the term has transformed over the last century. Today, Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018) defines platooning as “1) a group of soldiers that includes two or more squads usually led by one lieutenant and 2) a group of people who are doing something together.” In addition, other researchers have connected the term platooning to the alternating groups used by baseball teams (Bailey, 2014). While neither the dictionary nor the baseball definitions directly address the use of platooning in elementary schools, they do provide an understanding that platooning involves grouping.

This idea of grouping students for instruction in not new. Goodlad (1966) initially explained the practice of moving students from room to room as platooning. While the word platooning disappeared from educational terminology for decades, the resurfaced term is still consistent with the understanding that platooning involves groups of students moving from teacher to teacher. However, this interpretation has become more intricate over the years, and there is an apparent discrepancy in how people and groups have defined platooning.

Hood (2010), a freelance education writer for the Harvard Education Letter, explained that platooning is “divvying up instruction according to subject area, with students rotating to different rooms headed up by different teachers for different subjects” (p. 14). Bailey (2014), a former elementary teacher, public education advocate, and blogger, described platooning as students moving around from subject to subject. Onosko, Salvio, and Stearns (2014), writers for
The Washington Post, pointed out that “each group of students or ‘platoon’ moves every 45 minutes or so to a different classroom to receive instruction from a teacher specialist” (p. 2).

Others (e.g., Barkley, 2009; Gerwertz, 2014) have further fine-tuned their definitions of platooning by including not only how students are grouped but the teachers as well. The shared responsibility for groups of students can be done by teams of teachers with each teaching one subject area or by a pair of teachers with each teaching two or more subject areas (Gewertz, 2014). In addition to teachers specializing in a subject area or two, Barkley (2009), an educational consultant and blogger, also included the need for the group or team of teachers to plan, collaborate, know their students, build trust within the team, and share responsibility for their common groups of children. When considering the many definitions of platooning, it is apparent that while the idea of grouping is still unchanged from Goodlad’s definition in 1966, current researchers have attached the inherent ideas of teacher specialization, teaming, differentiation, time, professional learning and communication to their definitions.

Self-Efficacy and Collective Efficacy as They Relate to Platooning

An essential framework to examine whether platooning is “a sensible way to simplify the teachers’ work and deepen their expertise” (Levine, 2002, p. 61) is Bandura’s (1997) social cognitive theory (SCT), which encompasses self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, and collective efficacy. By capturing teachers’ voices as they use the organizational system with their team, we can begin to better understand the teachers’ perceptions of their teacher and collective efficacy while platooning.
This study about teachers’ experiences with platooning focusing on teacher and collective efficacy was analyzed through the lens of SCT (Bandura, 1997). SCT exerts that all humans are capable of human agency, which Bandura (1997) defined as “the human capability to exert influence over one’s functioning and the course of events by one’s actions” (p. 8). Human agency operates within a process called triadic reciprocal causation. In simpler terms, reciprocal causation is a “multi-directional model suggesting that human agency results in future behavior as a function of three interrelated forces: environmental influences, behavior and internal personal factors such as cognitive, affective, and biological processes” (Henson, 2001, p. 4). This three-part model is shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Bandura’s model of causation. (Bandura, 1997, p. 6)](image)

The concept of self-efficacy also plays an integral role in SCT in that it influences the outcome of thoughts and reactions to events that shape human behavior (Bandura, 1997). In his seminal work, *Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*, Bandura defined self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action
required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). Continued research (Bandura, 1982, 1986, 1993, 1996, 1997) justifies the impact of beliefs about ability on an individual’s ultimate success or failure.

Since Bandura (1997) directly connected self-efficacy beliefs with a person’s perceived abilities, he proposed that self-efficacy is a powerful predictor of behavior, and research in areas such as addiction (Marlatt, Baer, & Quigley, 1995), depression (Davis & Yates, 1982), and smoking behavior (Garcia, Schmitz, & Doerfler, 1990) all show links to Bandura’s work on self-efficacy. In addition, direct links among self-efficacy, academic performance and self-regulated learning have also been found (Hackett, 1995; Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1991; Zimmerman, 1995).

When focusing on self-efficacy, one finds that it is situational, which means expectancy cannot be generalized (Ross & Bruce, 2007). In other words, the context of the situation must be understood to comprehend how it might influence a person’s self-efficacy. Therefore, someone considering a new or similar task may take into account personal experiences along with other information such as observing the performances of colleagues, feedback, and support received from others as well as acknowledging how they feel about the situation itself (Bandura, 1997).

The four sources of self-efficacy – 1) mastery experiences, 2) vicarious experiences, 3) social and verbal persuasion and 4) physiological and emotional cues – enable observers who have a high level of self-efficacy to be more likely to adopt observational learning behaviors (Bandura, 1997).

Teacher Efficacy Construct

Teacher efficacy, like self-efficacy, is also grounded in SCT and is defined as teachers’ confidence in their ability to promote students’ learning (Hoy, 2000). Hoy defines teacher
efficacy by explaining that two types of beliefs make up teacher efficacy. The first type of teacher efficacy, relating to a teacher’s confidence in teaching ability, is called personal teacher efficacy. The second, having confidence in the ability to impact the learning of difficult children, is termed general teaching efficacy. Research has shown that teachers with higher teacher-efficacy “judge themselves as more capable” (Bandura, 1997, p. 248). Research has also shown that teachers with high efficacy have a higher level of success with student learning (Ashton, Webb, & Doda, 1983), student engagement (Ashton et. al., 1983) and classroom management (Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990). Since teachers’ perceptions of their work with difficult children are not being assessed, only personal or individual teacher efficacy rather than general teaching efficacy was considered for this study.

**Relationship of Self and Teacher Efficacy**

As previously mentioned, Bandura’s (1996) definition of self-efficacy encompasses all possible “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). Hoy’s (2000) definition of teacher efficacy simply narrowed the lens of Bandura’s definition to focus on teachers’ beliefs in their ability to promote students’ learning. Therefore, with the understanding that self-efficacy and teacher efficacy are both grounded in SCT and developed through reflection on identical sources, the current study will concentrate specifically on the sources of teacher efficacy. These four sources of teacher efficacy, along with the reflection and the professional learning opportunities they provide for teachers, result in either strong or weak self-efficacy (Bandura, 1996).
The sources of teacher efficacy – mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social and verbal persuasion and physiological and emotional cues – all provide learning opportunities for teachers to become more efficacious as individuals. Figure 4 illustrates how professional learning fits within the framework of teacher efficacy.

The first source of teacher efficacy, mastery experience or change agents, are first-hand teaching experiences. “Teacher perceptions of changes in student performance gleaned from student utterances, work on classroom assignments, homework, and formal assessments all provide information to teachers that informs their self-judgements” (Bruce & Ross, 2008, p. 349). However, information from these mastery experiences, while useful, cannot be
professional learning opportunities or sources of teacher efficacy unless the teacher takes the

time to process and reflect on the student feedback and connect the outcomes to teachers’ actions
(Ross & Bruce, 2007). Therefore, mastery experiences provide professional learning when they
“are enhanced through feedback” (p. 51) from a principal, from an instructional coach, or from a
colleague who has been able to observe the instructional episode.

Second, the long-standing tradition of teachers working in isolation has negatively
impacted teachers’ professional growth and school-wide improvement efforts (Elmore, 2000;
Little, 2002; Schmoker, 2006). Therefore, shared practice or vicarious experiences through
collaborative teaming are other ways for teachers to fine tune their understanding of platooning
while also informing their teacher efficacy. Through observations of others and group reflection,
teachers can study their profession with others in their community (Hord, 2007). This kind of
professional learning results in improved and sustained changes in teacher practice because it is
embedded in the teachers’ classrooms and is ongoing (DuFour, Eaker & DuFour, 2005; Hindin,
Morocco, Mott, & Aguilar, 2007; Little, 2002).

Third, social and verbal persuasion, which can be a part of both mastery and vicarious
experiences, can entail everything from encouragement to specific performance feedback
(Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). While social persuasion can boost efficacy, it can be considered weak if
the persuasion is provided by someone who is not knowledgeable in the instructional area (Ross
& Bruce, 2007). Therefore, to be a source of professional learning, social and verbal persuasion
depend on the credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise of the persuader (Bandura, 1986).

Finally, the fourth source of teacher efficacy alters efficacy beliefs by reducing stress
levels and learning how one reacts to taxing situations (Bandura, 1997). Any time new
strategies, resources or instructional structures are implemented, a teacher with knowledge of
how to manage physiological cues is better equipped to deal with the stress a new initiative may cause. In other words, a teacher’s understanding of how his or her body reacts to stress allows better performance and open-mindedness when processing and reflecting on instructional performance. While this source of efficacy does not provide an opportunity for professional learning, it does make it possible for the teacher to be open to acquisition of knowledge or skills through experience.

**Teacher Efficacy – Relation to Platooning Structure and Organization**

The most important source of teacher efficacy is mastery experiences (Ross & Bruce, 2007). These first-hand teaching experiences take place within the teacher’s classroom and provide teachers with the information to make self-judgements (Bruce & Ross, 2008). However, a teacher’s experiences with the structure and organization of platooning do not lead to efficacy without the teacher taking the time to process and reflect on the experience. For example, a teacher may watch the students as they use platooning binders to organize their materials. Through reflection with an instructional coach, team member or administrator, the teacher may see that the large amount of time devoted to training the students to use the binders paid off as it is now saving instructional time. This reflection then becomes a source of positive teacher efficacy that may motivate the teacher to take risks with other organizational methods in the future.

In addition, vicarious experiences, such as one teacher observing another teacher on the same platooning team, could enable a team to “uncover how students’ approaches to learning are similar and different as they move from reading to science and accept responsibility for student success in all content areas” (Barkley, 2009, p. 1). While platooning teams have consistent team
systems and routines across classrooms (Reid, 2012), observation of students in other classrooms could enable a teacher to identify different instructional approaches that may benefit students in each of the different platooning classrooms. In addition, during observations, teachers may also uncover aspects of platooning they commonly defined as a team but unknowingly implemented in different ways. For example, when observing students in another classroom complete their daily planner, a teacher may realize that each teacher is asking the students to complete the planners in different ways, thus causing confusion. Observations of both students and routines can be brought back to the team’s PLC for discussion, reflection and problem solving. Figure 5 illustrates how these observations, coupled with reflection, can lead to teacher efficacy.

Figure 5. Model of platooning and its resultant teacher efficacy. (adapted from Bandura, 1997; Ross & Bruce, 2007)
In addition to vicarious experiences, professional learning opportunities for teachers who are platooning can also be found within the social and verbal persuasion source of teacher efficacy. For example, feedback from trusted team members can provide ideas, strategies, and solutions not considered by a fellow teammate. Once reflected on, social and verbal persuasion have the potential, within a platooning framework, to inform teacher efficacy, which then has the potential to influence student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Finally, while physiological and emotional cues, the last source of teacher efficacy, do not provide professional learning opportunities, they are indicators of how a teacher is feeling during the implementation of platooning. Instructional coaches, administrators and teammates can look for emotional cues (e.g., confusion or frustration) that can indicate support or a reflective conversation is needed. For example, a teacher questioning the implementation of an instructional process could be lacking clarity and be deemed confused. In addition, a teacher focusing on the negatives and placing blame instead of taking a problem-solving stance could be considered frustrated. The teacher’s reaction to and processing of his or her feelings then has the potential to become either a positive or negative source of teacher efficacy.

Collective Efficacy

When Bandura’s social cognitive theory is applied to an organization as a whole, it is referred to as collective efficacy. As previously stated, Bandura (1997) defines collective efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (p. 477). Therefore, as indicated earlier, the four sources of teacher efficacy (mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion and physiological cues) are also the four sources of collective efficacy (Goddard et
al., 2000). Similarly, both teacher and collective efficacy take into account the belief in the capacity to achieve a determined goal (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) further clarified collective efficacy by explaining it as a “group that operates collectively to set a course of action to achieve an outcome. In other words, Bandura explains that the sources of collective efficacy must originate within social and organizational structures of a system (Bandura, 1997). Since an organization is the product of the interactions of individuals within the organization, performance is determined by the group of individuals as the collective (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, when considering an elementary school, this collective can be any combination of individuals from the school faculty as a whole to a grade level team collaborating as a PLC. Therefore, the current study focused on the collective efficacy of one team of three teachers who implemented platooning at the elementary school level.

Goddard et al. (2000) explained that while the four sources of efficacy are essential to the creation of collective efficacy, “the perceptions of group capability to successfully educate students result when teachers consider the level of difficulty of the teaching task [in relation to] their perceptions of group competence” (p. 485). Therefore, collective efficacy requires teachers to simultaneously take both the teaching task and the competence of their team into consideration because it is difficult to separate the two components of collective efficacy (Goddard et al.). The teachers’ reflections of these two components form their perception of collective efficacy (see Figure 2).

**Collective Efficacy – Professional Learning Associated with its Sources**

Figure 6 illustrates how, as teachers work together, the sources of collective efficacy provide opportunities for embedded professional learning that allows a team to “share mastery
experiences, model effective strategies and approaches, encourage each other and alleviate stressors” (Johnson, 2012, p. 52).

![Sources of Collective Efficacy and Professional Learning](image)

Figure 6. Sources of collective efficacy and professional learning.

When considering the first source of collective efficacy, mastery experiences represent the first-hand successes and failures a staff or team experiences. Often successes build collective efficacy, while failures produce disappointment (Goddard et al., 2000). For example, a team of teachers who collectively judge themselves through mastery experiences as capable of academic success are likely to positively inform collective efficacy. On the other hand, mastery experiences that do not result in learning can cause a team to doubt its collective capabilities. These doubts can negatively affect collective efficacy. However, teachers or teams who have the ability to reflect on professional learning opportunities embedded within mastery experiences,
such as working with an instructional coach or videotaping a classroom experience, are able to celebrate growth and plan the next steps. This self-reflection, when not focused on whether the experience was a success or a failure but instead on what the teacher learned from the process, has the potential to inform both teacher and collective efficacy (Gerstein, 2014).

Next, teachers learn by listening to and observing other teachers (Huber, 1996). Therefore, as shown in Figure 6, the second source, vicarious experiences, serves to promote collective efficacy (Goddard et al., 2000). As teachers listen to their colleagues and teammates tell stories of both accomplishments and challenges, they collect this information as a source of their team’s collective efficacy. Therefore, since these stories are often told from an individual perspective, it is important that embedded professional learning opportunities, such as team members observing each other in classrooms, be provided to build vicarious experiences that collectively represent the group or team. After teachers complete planned observations (with collaboratively developed protocols) focused on an instructional purpose, they often debrief and reflect with instructional coaches to “build an enhanced student perspective, enhanced collegiality, enhanced understanding of the subject, increased support, real empowerment, and enhanced efficacy” (Spies, 2003, p. 58).

Third, as also illustrated in Figure 6, social persuasion is another means of strengthening the collective efficacy of teachers. Goddard et al. (2000) explain that the “more cohesive the faculty, the more likely the group as a whole can be persuaded by sound argument” (p. 484). This means that verbal persuasion needs to be more than just compliments and kind words. Therefore, professional talks, workshops, professional development, PLC time, and feedback, “coupled with models of success and positive direct experience” all have the potential to inform teachers’ collective efficacy through social persuasion (p. 484).
Finally, like self and teacher efficacy, organizations and teams can learn how to both block and deal with stresses that have the potential to disrupt work and have negative consequences (Goddard et al., 2000). This affective state, as illustrated in Figure 6, supports research by Johnson (2013) that there are always two sides to the implementation of any new program in schools. An efficacious school or team will choose the positive or bright side and use this perspective to persevere and overcome challenges. Bandura (1993) explains that when a school or team works together toward a common goal, such as platooning, the teachers are able, with the help of a strong leader and professional development, to establish the belief that a difference can be made. This again supports the need for professional learning that provides teachers with time to receive feedback and reflect on teaching experiences both independently and in PLCs (Heggart, 2015).

**Collective Efficacy – Related to Platooning Structure and Organization**

Platooning, by definition, is a team of teachers who share a group of students (Crow & Pounder, 2000; Reid, 2012). In addition, while the individual teacher serves as a content specialist, the platooning team of grade-level teachers communicates, utilizes data, plans, and provides feedback to help the team as a whole meet the academic and emotional needs of the group or platoon of students (Crow & Pounder, 2000; Little & Hoel, 2011). In other words, the team collaborates by discussing how to meet the academic and developmental needs of their shared students (Crow & Pounder). This collaboration, an essential part of platooning, has the potential to ensure that students learn while teams of teachers develop a “nurturing environment that emphasizes both student and teacher success” (Johnson, 2012, p. 49).

The collective efficacy of a platooning team of teachers begins to develop through the
analysis and interpretation of the four sources of collective efficacy. In addition, each teacher on
the team will analyze the task(s) and assess the teaching competency of the team members (see
Figure 7). Utilizing embedded professional learning time within a PLC or working with an
instructional coach to process feedback and reflect can provide the compelling evidence needed
for teachers to change beliefs about teaching tasks and competence. For example, a teacher
implementing platooning with her team may have a vicarious experience when watching students
transition from room to room. She may observe, on a consistent basis, students from her
teammates’ rooms misbehave in the hallway during classroom transitions. The observing
teacher takes this information into account and begins to analyze it. From there, the analysis and
assessment leads this teacher to estimate the team’s collective efficacy before determining
whether the members of the team have the capacity to succeed in teaching students (Goddard,
Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). In this case, the observing teacher may begin to have doubts
about her teammates’ capacity for management, which may lead to a decline in collective
efficacy.

Bandura (1997) pointed out that the team’s beliefs in both the teaching task and teaching
competence are likely to remain unchanged unless convincing proof causes them to be
reevaluated. This convincing proof, such as one teacher interpreting her teammate’s actions as
either competence or incompetence, can cause teachers to change their perception of collective
efficacy. For example, a teacher in a platooning team listens to her other teammates share their
perseverance in engaging a difficult child within their platoon. This social/verbal persuasion has
the potential to also impact her own perseverance with the student, especially if the teacher
initiates a deeper conversation with her teammates to reflect on how she might use the
information in her own classroom (analysis of the teaching task) and whether she feels her
teammates are effective (assessment of teaching competence) in meeting the needs of the
student. It is through this reflection the teacher determines collective efficacy and then decides
whether her belief in the team’s capability will change her behaviors and, ultimately, the
effectiveness of the team.

The effects of teacher and collective efficacy can be attributed to several factors
(Bandura, 1997). Teachers and teams with high efficacy are more likely to try new teaching
ideas, promote student autonomy, meet the needs of lower ability students, promote student
efficacy, and positively influence student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2007). In other words, a
teacher’s or a team’s reflection on the four sources of professional learning attributed to
platooning (embedded in each source of self-efficacy) determines efficacy for both the teacher
and the platooning team as whole.

Platooning provides sources of teacher efficacy, which shape teacher’s beliefs when
deciding whether platooning can meet the academic and social needs of students. At the same
time, collective efficacy can determine whether a team of teachers is able to achieve a shared
vision and a sense of collegial respect crucial to the deepening of content knowledge and sharing
of two or more classrooms of children (Reid, 2012). As illustrated in Figure 7, the overlap of the
sources of teacher efficacy, and collective efficacy along with the professional learning
opportunities they potentially create have the potential to provide teachers with both the learning
and support needed to platoon or “simplify their work and deepen their expertise” (Levine, 2002,
p. 61).
Figure 7. How each type of efficacy possibly aligns with platooning.

**Relationship between Teacher and Collective Efficacy**

Much research has attempted to identify a relationship between teacher and collective efficacy. Coleman (1985, 1987, 1990) contends a possible link may be through the use of school or group norms. Coleman explains that in a school setting, collective efficacy “is a way of conceptualizing the normative environment of a school and its influence on both personal and organizational behavior” (p. 496). In order to conceptualize their environment, teachers’ beliefs promote unwritten norms or rules about what is, or is not, accepted by the group as a whole. Goddard and Goddard (2001) further explain that these norms allow the group as a whole to control an individual’s actions, “when they have consequences for the group” (p. 810). Thus, when a teacher does not meet expectations, the effect is a collective sanction (Coleman). This
collective sanction, can then lead the norm-breaking teacher to reflect on social and verbal persuasion, a source of individual teacher’s efficacy. In simpler terms, this may illustrate a relationship between collective and teacher efficacy.

Other research looked at the possible connection between teacher and collective efficacy differently. Goddard and Goddard (2001) write that while teacher and collective efficacy have the same sources, an interrelationship has yet to be determined. They explain that the same sources (mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion and emotional cues) can simultaneously, yet separately, inform both teacher efficacy and collective efficacy. For example, a classroom observation is a vicarious experience that can lead to collective efficacy while at the same time informing teacher efficacy as a mastery experience. While the sources inform both teacher and collective efficacy, one type of efficacy does not necessarily affect the other.

In addition, Kurz and Knight (2004) determined that the connection between teacher and collective efficacy is potentially weak due to the lack of or inaccurate perception of mastery experiences. Thus, neither having the ability to observe in other teachers’ classrooms nor purposely reflect after an observation can inaccurately influence teachers’ collective efficacy (i.e., their belief in the staff as a whole) to educate students. Kurz and Knight further contend that by not observing each other, a “lack of knowledge could cause teachers to underestimate or overestimate their school’s or team’s collective efficacy” (p. 123). This misconceived collective efficacy can potentially affect teacher efficacy (Kurz & Knight). Simply put, ignorance of colleagues’ practices leads to a perceived but unreliable connection between collective and teacher efficacy. This means a teacher with high teacher efficacy may not feel confident in her teammate’s abilities and a team that feels confident as a whole, may not be sure about an
individual member. In other words, without mastery experiences or knowledge of other teachers’
practices, teacher efficacy and collective efficacy are more likely to work independently (Ashton

Conclusion

The focus of platoon schools in the 1920s and 1930s seemed to be directly on the
children when striving to realize Dewey’s quest to “train children to make the most intelligent
use of their own capabilities and of their environment” (Mohl, 1977, p. 352). However, to meet
the educational needs of the child today, the case can be made that platooning should start with
the teacher. The focus of this research offered insight into teacher and collective efficacy while
platooning. Through subject specialization, interdisciplinary teaming, and student grouping,
platooning has the potential to provide positive sources of teacher and collective efficacy by
allowing teachers to become content area experts and teach more purposefully and with greater
confidence.

However, since the term platooning has only recently reappeared, there are few peer-
reviewed articles or books examining the current definition of the classroom organization
method or its purpose and implementation despite the fact that the practice of platoon schools
dates back to the early 1900s (Diemer, 1924). This reality poses challenges to presenting a
rigorous literature review. However, this literature review is not the first to deal with this
problem and there are some considerations. Stanovich and Stanovich (2003) advise educators to
be aware of the difference between professional education magazines and research published in
peer-reviewed journals. While educational opinion pieces may include thought-provoking
discussions of educational issues, they often do not critique or “evaluate the plausibility of
educational claims” (p. 1) that peer-reviewed research can provide. However, due to the current paucity of peer-reviewed literature on the topic of platooning, articles on platooning were referenced to bring awareness to the different interpretations of this organizational structure. This study, *Perceptions on Teacher and Collective Efficacy While Platooning over an Academic Year: A Case Study of Three Elementary Educators*, strove to capture a deeper understanding of the organizational structure along with teachers’ perceptions of their teacher and collective efficacy while platooning.
The purpose of this study was to describe three fifth-grade teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning. Data were collected from elementary teachers implementing platooning as a way to be content specialists while also meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of students as a team (Gerwertz, 2014). This chapter details the research design, school site, selection of participants, data collection and data analysis.

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe her own teacher efficacy while implementing platooning?

2. How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe the collective efficacy of the team while implementing platooning?

3. How does the fifth-grade team describe concurrency between efficacy and platooning?

Research Design

There is little research examining platooning or interdisciplinary teaming at the intermediate (grades three through five) level in elementary schools (Hood, 2010) due to the popular and historical belief that elementary age children need a go-to person at the center of
a self-contained classroom (Gewertz, 2014). In other words, as stated by Molly McCloskey, director of the Whole Child Programs at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, “the conventional wisdom has been that younger students benefit from the stability and continuity provided by having the same teacher every day for the whole year. In the hierarchy of priorities, keeping the kids with one teacher is way up there” (Hood, 2010, p. 2).

However, political ramifications, such as No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act, have increased the demand for skilled content-area-experts at the elementary level (Gewertz, 2014). Despite the popular belief in self-contained classrooms at the elementary level, many school districts, after seeing the success of platooning in other districts (Hood, 2010), have begun to wonder if such an approach could be beneficial for the teachers and students in their district (e.g., Community Unit School District ABC, 2017).

Therefore, to explore teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning, a single-case study design was utilized. This eight-month (August 2018 -March 2019) qualitative study explored perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy during the implementation of platooning within three fifth-grade classrooms. The type of case study utilized for this research was a multiple-baseline-across-people design, which is defined as “try[ing] to establish a change using the same independent variable (treatment) with more than one person” (Mertens, 2015, p. 226). In this study, the phenomenon of platooning served as the treatment with a focus on seeking viewpoints of the fifth-grade team of teachers. As the researcher, I was hoping to identify the three fifth-grade teachers’ specific behaviors and beliefs regarding the use of platooning in the elementary classroom through the frameworks of teacher and collective efficacy.
Bracketing the Researcher’s Experience

As a long-time employee in the targeted school district, it is critical that I acknowledge my assumptions and perspectives about platooning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I have worked in CUSD ABC for 22 years as an elementary teacher and as an Instructional Coach. Currently, I work at Fox Creek Elementary School [pseudonym] as a fourth grade teacher. I have relationships with all of the participants in the study, as I am a colleague at the same school. However, since I teach fourth grade, I am neither part of the participants’ grade level team nor their Professional Learning Community (PLC). While I supported them in completing the district’s platooning proposal, ongoing support with the organizational system was neither requested nor offered during this research.

My beliefs about platooning continue to develop with continued research and experience. When I first learned about platooning, I believed in its ability to lessen a teacher’s workload and allow deeper content knowledge. With more experience, self-directed professional learning, and reflection, I began to better understand the complexities of the organizational structure and its requirements of relationships, communication, time, professional learning and putting students at its center. As a current classroom teacher, I am aware, from firsthand experience, that elementary teachers cannot be content specialists of ALL elementary curriculum. I believe platooning can work by allowing teachers to specialize in fewer subjects. However, elementary students need teachers who are equally aware of a child’s academic and social-emotional needs. Finally, I also understand the importance of the relationship between platooning team members. Last year, two new teachers joined my three-section fourth grade team. Without time to build trust and communication with new teammates, I have currently chosen to teach in a self-
contained classroom.

As a former instructional coach, I have learned many skills that have helped throughout this study. First, my questioning and paraphrasing skills helped during interviews to have participants elaborate on and clarify answers. In addition, over the years, I have also learned to deeply reflect, which often causes me to consider alternatives to my beliefs and learn from mistakes.

I acknowledge that these experiences were significant for my research. First, my relationships with the participants may have impacted how the three teachers in the study interacted with me. The platooning teachers and I had established trust as we taught at the same school, and because of this, there was a familiarity in interviews and observations that occurred between us. Second, my experience as a current classroom teacher allowed me to be realistic about the demands of teaching at the elementary level. It also gave me insight when understanding the benefits and challenges of both self-contained classrooms and platooning. Finally, my coaching skills enabled me to delve deeply into the data in order to draw evidence-based conclusions.

Case

Fox Creek Elementary School (pseudonym) is one of 12 elementary schools in Community Unit School District ABC (CUSD ABC). The school is a high performing school (Illinois School Report Card, 2017) located in a western suburb about 40 miles outside of Chicago. In 2017, 529 students were enrolled at Fox Creek, while a total of 12,570 students in PreK-12th grades, were enrolled in the unit district as a whole. The school’s student population comes from middle to upper-middle class homes, and the student body is 82% Caucasian, 1%
African-American, 5% Hispanic, 9% Asian, and 4% other races (Illinois School Report Card, 2017). Students at Fox Creek perform above the state average on all state tests, with 56% of the students meeting or exceeding standards (compared to the state average of 35%).

Through conversations with elementary principals, instructional coaches and teachers, the CUSD ABC Assistant Superintendent for Leadership and School Improvement (Pre-K-5 Education), identified that elementary teachers were struggling to meet the expectations of national reforms and the Common Core State Standards. Therefore, the CUSD ABC district administrators considered the possibility of platooning after visits to other Chicago suburban elementary schools that had implemented the organizational system.

Process that Led to Platooning in CUSD ABC

Platooning was introduced to CUSD ABC elementary principals through a slide show documenting platooning information from a nearby district that had implemented platooning for grades three through five across the entire district. This overview provided principals with a basic understanding of platooning but did not determine specific criteria or a professional learning plan for how platooning would be rolled out across CUSD ABC. In 2017, CUSD ABC elementary teachers were given permission to platoon. Thirteen teams platooned in 12 elementary schools across the district.

Since platooning was an option rather than a district requirement for the 2017-2018 school year, some teachers chose to platoon, while others did not. Therefore, some elementary buildings in the district had grade level teams who platooned and some do not. CUSD ABC provided neither training nor guidelines at the district level, and therefore, teams who chose to platoon were asked to work with their building principals to implement the structure at various
grade levels across the district. Due to the autonomy allowed principals as to how it would be interpreted at their schools, platooning was implemented many different ways across district elementary schools. Some teams implemented a structure much like interdisciplinary teaming, while teams at other schools utilized departmentalization. It was during this inaugural year CUSD ABC administrators realized that without understanding at the district level, teams across the district had implemented platooning using different standards. Therefore, the following year, at the request of the district’s new Chief Academic Officer (CAO), a committee of administrators and teachers was formed to create common district-wide criteria for platooning. Since the momentum to platoon had already started before the CAO was hired, she led the committee work while also sharing she was not a proponent of platooning. The teachers in the room, however, took the task of determining a consistent districtwide understanding of platooning very seriously. As they worked, the committee found that the need for a team of teachers to trust, collaborate, and communicate with each other had to be inherent within these criteria.

However, before the committee had a chance to accomplish this work, it was disbanded without explanation. Shortly thereafter, on March 24, 2018, without asking for committee or teacher review, the district administration released platooning criteria: 1) the number of instructional minutes for literacy and math, 2) the need for a consistent management system, 3) a plan for consistent communication with families, 4) a process for communicating with parents about individual students, and 5) a means for knowing students as learners.

District platooning criteria neither defined platooning nor considered the teachers’ experience with platooning. One such example included the platooning models the district administration suggested for dividing time and content among team members. Only models for grade level teams of two or four teachers made it possible for teams to equitably share time to
plan and prepare content. For a team of two, the sample model recommended students be divided into two platoons (or groups of students) with one teacher teaching ELA/social studies and the other teaching math/science. For a team of four, the students would be broken into four platoons with two teachers teaching ELA/social studies and two teachers teaching math/science. For a team of three, however, one teacher was required to teach all of literacy (i.e., reading, writing and word study), while the second teacher taught math and the third teacher taught social studies and science. This inequitable division of work and responsibility led many teams of three not to platoon.

Teams interested in platooning had to submit proposals describing how they would meet the criteria as individuals and as a team. Some teams of three submitted proposals requesting the ability to share the responsibility of literacy. These proposals were turned down because they did not meet district criteria. Teachers on grade level teams of three, feeling they could meet the literacy needs of their students by planning and sharing instruction, felt that their voices and expertise as teachers were being ignored by district administration.

In addition, no district professional learning was offered on platooning. Therefore, while there were consistent criteria, many teachers, never having researched or experienced platooning, interpreted the criteria through the lens of either a self-contained or departmentalized classrooms without realizing the time and collaboration needed to plan for platooning using common data, consistent team systems, and PLC time. So despite criteria, district administration and teachers continued to lack a common understanding and implementation of platooning. Seven teams, however, requested and were approved to either platoon again or to platoon for the first time during the 2018-2019 school year. Out of these seven teams, four of the teams platooned for the first time.
Participant School Site

The participant school site was selected because it met the criteria for this case: first, through a district presentation to elementary principals about platooning, the district administration offered intermediate grade (three to five) teachers the opportunity to platoon. Second, the principal of Fox Creek determined that platooning would be a possible solution to her intermediate staff’s expressed feelings of stress, exhaustion, and being overburdened. Third, through continued conversations with her staff, the principal determined that the tension and pressure teachers were experiencing originated from district and school-level expectations to learn and implement new curriculum to meet the expectations of the standards (such as the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards). Therefore, after careful consideration of the district’s criteria, the fifth-grade team’s proposal, and students’ needs, the principal offered three teachers at the fifth-grade level the opportunity to platoon. Finally, the principal of the elementary building was willing to allow access to and resources for the study, including permission, facilities, and opportunities to follow the staff’s implementation of platooning from the beginning of the process.

Participants

The participants of this study were the fifth-grade teachers of three classes at Fox Creek School. At this time, the fifth-grade team was the only team platooning at the Pre-K-5 elementary building. Throughout their careers, two of the three teachers had experience with both self-contained classrooms and semi-departmentalized classrooms. During the 2017-2018 school year, the two teachers, along with another teacher, piloted platooning. When the teacher
left the team, a former middle school teacher in the district, joined the fifth grade team for the 2018-2019 school year. The new teacher had formerly taught social studies in a departmentalized setting. While she had an understanding of social studies, she had never taught in a self-contained classroom. While all three team members had experience with different organizational structures in the past, they had never platooned together.

Each teacher had a class or homeroom of fifth-graders, ages 9-12. In addition, each teacher’s class size ranged from 24 to 29 children. While gender was not an influence in the selection process, all teachers were female, and they ranged in age from 31 through 56 years. In addition, experience for these teachers ranged from 5 to 11 years. This age range and experience level were used in tandem with interviews to understand the roles age and experience might play in the participants’ teacher and collective efficacy.

Furthermore, the team that consisted of the two original teachers and me, the researcher, originally built a collegial relationship after I joined the staff as a fourth-grade teacher in August 2017. The teachers, learning of my doctoral research on platooning, requested that I share information that would assist them in understanding platooning. The personal and professional connections continued to foster a camaraderie after the new team decided to platoon for the 2018-2019 school year. At the teachers’ request, I supported the three fifth-grade teachers when they came together as a new team at the end of the 2017-2018 school year to write a proposal reflecting both a common understanding of the new CUSD ABC criteria for platooning and the components of platooning. Therefore, within this research, the resulting trust and respect from these relationships allowed me to ask probing questions through various data collection tools to capture the teachers’ thoughts about platooning and how it may have informed their teacher and collective efficacy.
This study was purposefully kept to one fifth-grade team at one district elementary building for several reasons. First, while there were other teams in the district that were platooning, the trust the Fox Creek teachers built as a new team lent itself to being open to fresh ideas and ways of doing things. Second, these teachers made an interesting case. While they had many similarities, including an openness to being transparent about their thoughts and feelings, there were differences as well. One teacher was a former teacher in the academically talented program for grades three through five before returning to the self-contained classroom. The other teacher had taught various grades at both the primary and secondary levels. Two teachers had piloted platooning, while the third teacher, beyond writing the proposal, had no experience with platooning. The newest member of the team, as mentioned earlier, only had middle school social studies experience. The new team as a whole brought a rich variety of perspectives that enhanced the research. Third, the team platooned for the first time during the 2018-2019 school year using an organizational system that matched CUSD ABC criteria and the components of platooning defined in this research. This agreement of the definition, criteria and components of platooning allowed the researcher to share a common understanding of platooning with the participants. Next, the three teachers agreed to be in the research study and were at a point in their teaching careers at which they felt comfortable and confident enough to participate in this type of research. Finally, no other teachers in the school or district met these criteria.

Since the three teachers accepted the opportunity to implement platooning during the 2018-2019 school year, they were formally invited through convenience sampling to participate in the study. At the beginning of the academic school year, each teacher was given a consent letter detailing her participation in the research (see Appendix A). In addition, each teacher was informed about the procedures the researcher implemented to ensure their confidentiality,
including the use of participant-chosen pseudonyms, restriction of collected data to password-protected computer files, and omission of identifying names and information on documents appearing in publications.

Data Collection

A qualitative case study, taking place over eight months, August 2018 to March 2019, was used to study the fifth-grade teachers’ teacher and collective efficacy as they implemented platooning. The data were collected through scales, reflective journals, and individual and team interviews. The decision to use these particular data sources was influenced by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), who advocate for utilizing a combination of interviews and documents to collect data for qualitative research. The procedures for each data collection type are described in the following subsections. A crosswalk of the data collection tools as they relate to the research questions appears in Appendix B.

Scales

The purpose of this study was to collect perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy from a team of teachers as they implemented platooning across their fifth-grade classrooms. Therefore, it was important to gather data about these perceptions through researched, valid, and reliable tools. A scale, which is a graduated range of values, was used to collect data on both teacher and collective efficacy. A scale, with clearly opposite words representing the ends of the scale, was used to gather and interpret data based on the connotative meaning of each participant’s answer (Sincero, 2012).
While Patton (2011) believes that a scale, or survey, is an efficient and cost-effective way to collect data, he also finds disadvantages. Patton explains that two disadvantages are “socially desirable responses and that it is ‘only a snapshot’” (p. 3). It was possible the fifth-grade teachers may have responded to the scale statements in a way that could be their perceived practice instead of a reflection of their actual practice. However, the efficiency of the data the scales provided outweighed this disadvantage. In addition, although the scale was only a snapshot of the teachers’ perspectives of teacher and collective efficacy, the scale statements paralleled the interview questions and journal prompts. This made it possible for the scale data to be compared to the data from the interviews and journal responses (see Appendix B).

After considering the efficacy measures that grew out of Bandura’s (1997) concept of self-efficacy, examining Bandura’s Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale and considering the context of the current study, an adapted version of the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES), also known as Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), was used for data collection (Roberts & Henson, 2001). While three General Teaching Efficacy items referring to outside influences were removed, the other statements included on the OSTES honor the components of teacher efficacy: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practice, and efficacy in classroom management within their teacher efficacy scale (Roberts & Henson, 2001). Therefore, the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (see Appendix C) tool was used as the initial teacher efficacy data collection tool since it is based on Bandura’s social cognitive theory and the understanding that teacher efficacy is best described within context (Pajares, 1996). The reliability and validity of the scale were examined in three different studies that indicated “the OSTES could be considered reasonably valid and reliable and proves a useful tool for researchers interested in exploring the construct of teacher efficacy” (Tschanzen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 801).
While the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale was used to collect information about the perceptions of teacher efficacy while platooning, the Collective Efficacy Scale (CE-SCALE) was adapted to collect perceptions of collective efficacy from the fifth-grade team of teachers implementing platooning for the first time (Appendix D). This tool was written to reflect the experiences of a panel of experts in the field of teacher efficacy research (Goddard, 2002; Hoy, 2003). Hoy was purposeful in explaining the difference between the CE-SCALE and teacher efficacy scales. He explained that “the collective teacher efficacy tool directly assesses perceptions of both perceived competence and task” (p. 1). The reliability and validity of the collective efficacy scale were examined through both field and pilot tests. The results of the tests suggested that the CE-Scale was found to provide “validity evidence for the collective efficacy scale as well as strong reliability evidence” (Hoy, 2003, p. 2).

The two scales, OSTES and CE-SCALE, were administered at the beginning and end of the research study’s 27-week, timeframe. As the first step in the data collection timeline, the data collected from the Teacher Efficacy Scale and the CE-SCALE were used to inform open-ended and probing questions for the reflective journal entries and interviews (Ramey-Gassert, 1993). In addition, as the last step in the data collection timeline, the data collected from the Teacher Efficacy Scale and the CE-SCALE provided additional data to prove or disprove the themes that emerged from the other forms of data collection (Merriam, 2009). The scales were sent electronically with responses returned through Google Forms. The OSTES, with 24 items, took the fifth-grade teachers approximately 15 minutes to complete, while the CE-SCALE, with 16 items, took less than 10 minutes to complete. The data from both scales were downloaded to Google Sheets for storage and future analysis.
Reflective Journals

Another impactful way to collect qualitative data is through reflective journaling, which provided the participants with a method for detailing their experiences through writing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). Therefore, reflective journal entries were included as a data collection tool for this study. Two prompts, one reflective of teacher efficacy and the other reflective of collective efficacy, were provided repetitively for thirteen bi-weekly journal entries throughout the research study’s 27-week timeframe. Prompts were sent electronically with responses returned through Google Forms. Each reflective prompt directed the fifth-grade teachers to respond in writing for approximately 10 minutes (See Appendix E). All journal entries were downloaded to Google Sheets for storage and future coding.

These prompts, or elicited texts (Charmaz, 2003), encouraged participants to reflect on and keep “ongoing records of practices and reflections on those practices” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 34). These journals also provided more expedient and in-depth data over time than the interview data gathered three times during the 27-week time frame. In addition, response bias was lessened compared to interviews when the researcher was present (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Finally, the journals provided additional data to prove or disprove the themes that emerged from the other forms of data collection (Merriam, 2009).

Interviews

The purpose of this study was to examine three fifth-grade teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning. Interviews allow for direct, yet flexible, inquiry of the participants (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, multiple in-depth individual and group
interviews were conducted throughout the eight-month period (Mertens, 2015; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994). Specifically, seven semi-structured interviews, six individual and one team, were used to qualitatively gather data about the participants’ teacher and collective efficacy (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994). While the teacher and collective efficacy scales were used to collect data at the beginning and end of the study, the six interviews, two with each teacher, were used to make the participants’ lived experiences understandable and meaningful to the researcher (Seidman, 2006). Therefore, the first 45-minute individual interview that honored the teacher’s time while still capturing perceptions of platooning, teacher efficacy and collective efficacy took place at the elementary school 13-14 weeks into the proposed 27-week data collection timeline. This allowed the researcher to collect data on perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy after platooning was fully implemented in the classrooms. In addition, the second 45-minute individual interview took place during weeks 21-22 of the 27-week study to again capture the teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy after platooning had been in place for 22 weeks.

Furthermore, the three fifth-grade teachers also worked as a team within agreed upon team structures and systems for the purpose of owning or educating the combined platoon of students. Therefore, one group interview, defined as “one researcher interviewing two or more people together” (Houssert & Evans, 2011, p. 67), was conducted. The team interview took place at the elementary school during the second data collection period, January to March 2018, to give the teachers time to familiarize themselves with platooning and acclimate themselves as a new grade level team. The team interview, lasting approximately 90 minutes, honored the time it took to identify how a group of people perceived the same phenomenon (Arksey, 1996).
Since in-depth interviewing is “designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experiences and explore their meaning” (Seidman, 2013, p. 94), an interview protocol was used (see Appendix F) to provide prompts and a structure for the interview and to ensure all issues or topics connected to the research questions had been covered. The interview protocol in this study utilized a structure based on the four phenomenological themes, which allowed the researcher to take the participants through a continuum of questions that built on one another to fully reconstruct the participant’s experience (Seidman, 2013). The first phenomenological theme stresses that during an interview, it is understood that researchers are asking participants to relay the essence of their lived experience, which in the case of this research was platooning (Seidman, 2013). The second theme stresses that the interviewer must understand that the point of view of the participant is subjective and that the researcher should “strive to understand a person’s experience from their point of view” (Schulz, 1967, p. 20). Keeping the participants’ subjective points of view in mind leads to the third theme of phenomenological interviewing. This theme explains that to fully understand an experience, one must stop and reflect on it (Seidman, 2013). Therefore, when listening to a participant recount his/her subjective understanding, the interviewer needs to ask probing questions to have the participant consider, reconsider, and reflect on their lived experience (Seidman, 2013). Through questioning, the interviewer worked “to guide their participants to reconstitute their lived experience” (p. 18). Finally, the last theme of phenomenological interviewing takes the context of the participants’ experiences into consideration (Seidman, 2013). Schutz (1967) explains that to understand those experiences, the context of the experience must be taken into account.
Phenomenological Interviewing Process

Seidman (2013) states that after becoming acquainted with the interview structure, such as during a field test, time allotted to the each of the three interviews can be shortened to 30 minutes. Phenomenological interviews are often done in a series of three; however, for this study, each individual interview combined the purposes of the set of three phenomenological interviews into one longer interview rather than three shorter interviews. The first part of the interview asked each teacher to “put the participant’s experience in context by asking them to tell as much about himself in light of the topic up to the present time” (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). For example, by asking why they decided to platoon, the researcher encouraged the participants to place platooning in the context of their recent lives. Next, the teachers were asked to share facts rather than opinions of their experience. This opportunity allowed each teacher to reconstruct her experience and then form opinions (Seidman, 2013). Answering a question such as “What do you do when you platoon?” required the teacher to first recount facts before adding her own opinions. Finally, through questioning based on information gathered earlier in the interview as well as from the scale and the journal entries, the interviewer prompted the teachers to reflect on and make meaning from their experience (Seidman, 2013). Asking “How does platooning make you feel and why?” prompted the teacher to describe how platooning made her feel while eliciting physiological and emotional cues that may have informed teacher efficacy. Likewise, asking teachers to consider whether they trusted team decisions enabled the researcher to better understand each teacher’s and the team’s perceptions of collective efficacy. This practice of using a combination of data collection strategies, in this case scales and journals, to inform other data collection strategies, in this case interviews, enriched the depth of
understanding of teachers’ perceptions of teacher efficacy and the role context played in its development (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1987; Webb & Ashton, 1987). These interview questions allowed open-ended answers that further elaborated on existing data while also allowing the teachers to have some investment in where the interview headed. In addition, the questions sought to specifically gain understanding of the teachers’ teacher and collective efficacy when implementing platooning in their classrooms for a time span of eight months.

Interview Data Collection

All notes were recorded on an interview protocol (Seidman, 2013) that took into account the three stages of the interviews along with themes and data that emerged from the teacher and collective efficacy scales. In addition, two high-quality audio recorders (Seidman, 2006) were used to record all interviews in case one failed during the interview. Both recorders were checked ahead of time. At the end of all interviews and for the purpose of an immediate member check, the researcher devoted time to paraphrasing the interview notes for the fifth-grade teachers. Stake (1995) noted the benefit of member checking immediately after the interview when the conversation and its meaning are still fresh. Instead of providing the interviewee with a full description, Stake (1995) argued that paraphrasing allows the researcher to understand what the interviewees truly meant instead of the literal meaning. This type of member checking ensured the teachers’ ideas were accurately represented while also demonstrating to the teachers the care taken to value their thoughts, opinions, and beliefs. Therefore, having the participants read over my notes right after the interviews ensured that I had captured what the participant(s) truly intended to convey rather than what I thought I heard.
Much of the literature on qualitative research indicated the use of field testing research instruments prior to the actual collection of data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2011). In qualitative research, criteria for determining the quality of research ensured the integrity of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Yin, 2014). The field tests provided information to “head off any potential ethical issues that might arise and strengthen the research” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 92). For this study, field testing was conducted for non-vetted data collection tools, namely the interview and reflective journal prompts.

Prior to using the interview protocols with the teachers in this study, field testing for the two data collection tools was conducted. To improve validity and clarify questions, a CUSD ABC principal first reviewed the interview protocol and journal prompts. This administrator had expertise in the field of qualitative research after doing a qualitative study for her dissertation process. During her coursework, she took several qualitative courses dealing with the skills of interviewing. In addition, she also attended a district presentation on platooning given to principals at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. At the time, the principal also had two platooning teams at her school. To help the teams prepare to platoon, she provided time for the teams to learn about the organizational system and plan for its implementation. Therefore, she was able to provide insight and feedback about both the interview protocol and the prompts for reflective journal entries.

Also, using what Patton (2011, p. 55) terms a “think aloud,” the administrator was given the interview protocol and reflective journal prompts and asked to verbally share her thoughts as she responded to each question. Notes were recorded throughout this first phase of the field test.
After the review was completed, the second phase of the field test provided an opportunity for the administrator to write short reflective memos on her experience with the protocols and prompts (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The feedback collected after each of the field tests was used to make revisions to the data collection tools. Suggestions about phrasing, number of items, and the use and clarity of the tools were taken into consideration when revising the protocols and journal prompts. In addition, the field testing process allowed the researcher to better understand the phenomenological interview process to shorten the interviews while still gathering the teachers’ perceptions of their teacher and collective efficacy while platooning.

Table 3.1

Alignment of Data Collection Strategies to Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Strategies</th>
<th>Alignment to Teacher and Collective Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) Collective Efficacy Scale (CE-SCALE)</td>
<td>Questions required teachers to analyze the platooning structure, their perception of platooning (mastery experience) and both their individual competence (teacher efficacy) and that of their team (collective efficacy - vicarious and social and verbal persuasion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Journal Entries</td>
<td>Prompts required teachers to describe their teacher and collective efficacy when reflecting upon their experience with platooning. Additional prompts asked teachers to reflect on earlier beliefs indicated by scale and interview responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and Group Interview Protocol</td>
<td>Part 1-2: General questions that required teachers to consider their experiences with platooning through the lens of both the individual and the team. Questions required teachers to analyze the platooning structure, along with individual and team competencies. Part 3: Focused questions that connected to the sources of teacher and collective efficacy. To answer these questions, the teachers reflected upon and interpreted platooning as they connected these experiences to teacher efficacy. To connect their experience to collective efficacy, teachers also reflected upon and interpreted platooning as a team endeavor in addition to their assessment of the team’s competence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Alignment to Teacher and Collective Efficacy

All three data collection tools – the scale, the reflective journal entries, and interview questions – required teachers to simultaneously consider the teaching task and their individual and/or team competence because it was difficult to separate the components (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). Additionally, these data collection tools allowed the researcher to collect data on both teacher and collective efficacy (Table 3.1).

Data Collection Alignment to Research Questions

Table 3.2 presents a visual representation of the alignment of the research questions and data collection strategies. A visual of the data collection timeline is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2
Alignment of Research Questions with Data Collection Strategies and Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Teacher Efficacy Scale</th>
<th>Collective Efficacy Scale</th>
<th>Reflective Journal Entries</th>
<th>Individual Interviews</th>
<th>Group Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe her own teacher efficacy while implementing platooning?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe the collective efficacy of the team while implementing platooning?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the fifth-grade team describe concurrency between efficacy and platooning?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.3

#### Data Collection Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks in Study</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1-2</td>
<td>Administered teacher and collective</td>
<td>● Established baseline of teacher and collective efficacy before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>efficacy scales.</td>
<td>implementing platooning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 1</td>
<td>● Informed reflective prompts and interview questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 3-4</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 2</td>
<td>● Gathered data about individual teacher perceptions of teacher and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>collective efficacy while platooning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 5-6</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 7-8</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 9-10</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 11-12</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 6</td>
<td>● Gathered data about individual teacher perceptions of teacher and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>collective efficacy while platooning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 13-14</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 7</td>
<td>● Gathered data about individual teacher’s understanding of platooning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Interview 1</td>
<td>● Gathered data about the teacher’s understanding of platooning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Gathered data to make connections between the teacher’s platooning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>experience and teacher efficacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Gathered data to make connections between the teacher’s platooning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>experience and collective efficacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 15-16</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 8</td>
<td>• Gathered data about individual teacher perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 17-18</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 19-20</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 21-22</td>
<td>Reflection Journal Entry 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|          | Individual Interview 2 | • Gathered data about individual teacher perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning.  
|          |                           | • Gathered data about the teacher’s understanding of platooning.  
|          |                           | • Gathered data to make connections between the teacher’s platooning experience and teacher efficacy.  
|          |                           | • Gathered data to make connections between the teacher’s platooning experience and collective efficacy.  
| Weeks 23-24 | Reflection Journal Entry 12 | • Gathered data about individual teacher perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning. |
| Weeks 25-26 | Reflection Journal Entry 13 |
|          | Team Interview | • Gathered data about individual teacher perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning.  
|          |                           | • Gathered data about the team’s understanding of platooning.  
|          |                           | • Gathered data to make connections between the team’s platooning experience and teacher efficacy.  
|          |                           | • Gathered data to make connections between the team’s platooning experience and collective efficacy.  
| Week 27   | Administered teacher and collective efficacy scales. | • Established post measure of teacher and collective efficacy after implementing platooning. |
Data Analysis

Data analysis happens alongside data collection within a qualitative study. “The process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data is messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating. It does not proceed in a linear fashion: it is not neat” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 154). Further examination of data is driven by the understanding that surfaces as the data are continuously collected and analyzed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Therefore, throughout the data analysis process, the research questions and literature review guided the formation of categories for initial coding and thematic analysis of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Scales

Upon completion of the scales, the fifth-grade teachers submitted the Google Form, and their responses were automatically entered into a Google spreadsheet. The statements on the OSTES honored the components of teacher efficacy by taking into account efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practice, and efficacy in classroom management. Therefore, the first step in analyzing the scales was to organize the data into those three categories (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The second step was to add the scores for all 24 items. The greater the sum, the higher the teacher efficacy (Hoy, 2003). The baseline sum of the OSTES allowed the researcher to establish pre-data for teacher efficacy and its components before the implementation of platooning in addition to measuring change in teacher efficacy due to platooning after the 27-week data collection period. In addition, the snapshots of teacher and collective efficacy from the scale (Patton, 2011) paralleled the interview questions
and reflective journal entry prompts, which allowed the scale responses to be compared. Table 3.4 indicates into which grouping the teacher efficacy scale item falls.

Table 3.4
OSTES Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Scale Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSTES</td>
<td>Overall Teacher Efficacy</td>
<td>All Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficacy in Student Engagement</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficacy in Instructional Practices</td>
<td>7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficacy in Classroom Management</td>
<td>3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likewise, the statements on the CE-SCALE honored the components of collective efficacy by taking into account faculty’s trust in colleagues (Goddard, 2002: Hoy, 2003). The CE-SCALE differed from the OSTES in that 10 of the items in this scale were reversed scored, that is 1 was scored 6, 2 was scored 5, etc. Table 3.5 indicates which items needed to be reversed before scoring. I first reversed the indicated scores and then added the scores for all 16 items. The greater the sum, the higher the collective efficacy (Hoy, 2003). The baseline sum of the CE-SCALE allowed the researcher to establish baseline data for collective efficacy before the implementation of platooning in addition to measuring change in collective efficacy due to platooning after the 27-week data collection period.
Table 3.5
CE-Scale Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Scale Items to be Reversed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CE-Scale</td>
<td>Faculty Trust in Colleagues</td>
<td>3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, scale data were analyzed for emerging themes that guided further data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This practice of using a combination of data collection strategies, such as scales, to inform other data collection strategies, such as interviews, enriched the researcher’s understanding of the teacher’s perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1987; Webb & Ashton, 1987). Therefore, once administered, the resulting data collected from both the OSTES and CE-Scale were used to generate relevant open-ended questions for the interview protocol (Ramey-Gassert, 1993).

**Reflective Journals**

To prepare for coding, all reflective journal entries were gathered through Google Forms and downloaded as a Google Sheets file. Google Sheets allowed me to organize the data in different ways to carry out coding. For example, the journal entries were organized by the type of prompt used to understand the similarities and differences in teachers’ responses. The journal entries were also grouped by date to compare the phase of platooning implementation with perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy over the 27-week time period.
Transcription

After both the individual and team interviews were completed, I sent the recording to a professional transcription service that transcribed verbatim. Following transcription of the individual and team interviews, the typed version of the interviews was compared with the audio recordings to ensure the interviews had been transcribed as precisely as possible. The transcribed interviews and researcher’s notes taken during the interviews were combined into a Google document. The transcription included complete thoughts and useful information in addition to verbatim documentation (Stake, 1995) to eliminate erroneous comments that can occur during a semi-structured interview. Finally, I did not edit the interviews other than to add pseudonyms.

Coding

Interview transcripts and reflective journal entries were coded. For this research, a grounded theory process was utilized to provide “meticulous analytic attention by applying specific types of codes to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles that ultimately led to the development of a theory – a theory ‘grounded’ or rooted in the original data themselves” (Saldana, 2016, p. 55). As illustrated in Figure 8, the grounded theory process started with intensive seeing. The strategy of intensive seeing was used when I read the interview transcripts and journal entries for the first time (Gibbs, 2007). This strategy required me to keep basic questions in mind when immersing myself in the data for the first time:

1) What is going on? 2) What are people doing? 3) What is the person saying? 4) What do these actions and statements take for granted? [and] 5) How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements? (Charmaz, 2003, pp. 94–95)
Once familiarity with the reflective journal responses and the interview transcripts was established through intensive seeing, the first coding cycle of the data, called initial or open coding of the data, took place (Saldana, 2016). During my second read, initial coding was used to “fracture or split data into individually coded segments” (Saldana, 2016, p. 55). After breaking the data into categories, the category was titled to indicate a more general idea (Gibbs, 2007). Therefore, I categorized the data from the interview transcripts and the reflective journal entries by similarities and differences. However, no attempt was made to group the concepts or connect themes into overarching categories (Maxwell, 2012). Initial coding concluded when all the data were analyzed and the themes began to repeat.

The second cycle of coding, referred to as both focused and axial coding, was devoted to “classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing and theory building” (Saldana, 2016, p. 69). It was during this step that I looked for common trends within the categories established during
initial coding. The coding methods utilized within this cycle were determined through alignment with the research questions. This influenced which theories and trends were generated from the data (Trede & Higgs, 2009). During this second step of coding, I used both priori (pre-set) and emergent codes (Gibbs, 2007). These codes, reflective of both the conceptual framework and the research questions, were determined by the data collected from the interview transcripts, reflective journal entries, and my knowledge of platooning (Gibbs, 2007). These pre-determined codes or themes are found in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6
Sources of Priori Codes and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Priori Codes/Possible Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teacher Efficacy Scale         | ● Efficacy in Student Engagement  
                                 |   ● Efficacy in Instructional Strategies  
                                 |   ● Efficacy in Classroom Management |
| Collective Efficacy Scale      | ● Faculty trust in Colleagues  
                                 |   ○ Perceived competence  
                                 |   ○ Perceived task        |
| Researcher’s Expertise of Platooning | ● Platooning - utilization of student data  
                                   |   ● Platooning system  
                                   |   ● Platooning - student grouping  
                                   |   ● Platooning - collaboration     |

In addition to priori codes, other codes emerged as I read and analyzed the data. These codes, called emergent codes, “are those ideas, concepts, actions, relationships, meanings, etc. that come up in the data and are different than the priori codes” (Gibbs, 2007 p. 39). Emergent
Finally, after initial coding and axial coding, theoretical coding took place (Saldana, 2016). Saldana explains that “a theoretical code functions like an umbrella that covers and
accounts for all other codes and categories formulated thus far in grounded theory analysis” (p. 250). As illustrated in Figure 8, the first step of theoretical coding was to identify the central or core category, which required me to synthesize the results to explain what the data indicated in a few words (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To place my data into theoretical codes, I began by using coding families or The Six C’s (Glaser, 1978). These coding families helped determine the theoretical codes: “causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and condition” (Glaser, 2005, p. 74). Glaser (1978) further noted that if all the data did not fit with the emerging theory, then the theory would need to be modified. These central categories triggered reflection and discussion to determine the grounded theory (Saldana, 2016).

**Analytic Memos**

During both the open and axial coding, I recorded analytic memos to capture my thoughts, ideas, and choices (Saldana, 2016). These analytic notes also had the potential to become part of the thick rich description included in the more formal qualitative report of the study (Saldana, 2016). Hence, memos allowed me to analyze and reflect on the data to determine whether it supported or contradicted previous codes and themes (Gibson & Hartman, 2014).
Figure 9. Triangulation or convergence of data for proposed single-case study. (Adapted from Yin, 2014).

Data Integrity Procedures

Figure 9 illustrates how the convergence of evidence sources for this study supported the findings and conclusions about the impact of platooning on teacher and collective efficacy (Yin, 2014). Initial collection and verification of data from multiple sources, or triangulation of data, started with the teacher and collective efficacy scales (Ramey-Gassert, Shroyer & Staver, 1996). From there, I took into consideration the interviews, reflective journal entries, and analytic memos. Since this study examined three participants’ perceived teacher and collective efficacy after implementing platooning, I needed to be flexible with all possible theories that emerged as the data were examined (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the convergence or triangulation of data ensured this single-case study accurately represented each of the participants’ perspectives as well as
their collective perspective as a fifth-grade team (Yin, 2014).

In addition, to assure validity, the three elementary teachers participating in the research were asked to member check the qualitative data from interviews and reflective journals for perceived accuracy (Merriam, 2009) and to ensure validity. Lastly, peer examination was utilized after data were collected, transcribed and analyzed. The peer examiner (who is a CUSD ABC instructional coach, is knowledgeable about my study, familiar with platooning, and a doctoral student) reviewed all phases of data coding and provided feedback on the analysis of the data (Mertens, 2015). The peer examiner was also encouraged to use her skills as an instructional coach to provide probing and critical questions about the research.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this research was to collect data from three fifth-grade teachers at an elementary school in suburban Chicago to determine perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning. Data were collected at five points during the research through scales, two sets of individual interviews, one team interview, and reflective journals. Following data collection, the researcher analyzed the data using grounded theory. In addition, data triangulation, member checking and peer-examination ensured the validity of the data. The findings are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Data were gathered from two scales, reflection journal entries, and a three-part interview series with two individual teachers and one team interview. I then coded the data and identified the emerging themes across the participants. The chapter begins with a description of the three teachers, including details about their personalities, teaching backgrounds, and what led them to platooning. Then, the six major themes from triangulating the data follow.

Teacher Participants

Three female participants, ranging in age from 31-56, were selected to participate in this study due to their decision to platoon for the first time during the 2018-2019 school year. As a team, they completed a Platooning Proposal required by the district, followed by the building principal reviewing their proposal before formal approval at the district level. Proposals had to include the following categories:

- Suggested weekly and daily schedule by subject, teacher and time.
- Plan for ongoing, consistent communication with families
- Plan for communicating with parents about individual students
- Plan for parent-teacher conferences
- Plan for knowing students as learners and individuals
Crystal

Crystal was in her mid-fifties and the most veteran participant, with 12 years of teaching experience. When she began working in the district, Crystal taught a pull-out math program to students identified as academically talented. She noted the benefit of teaching students when grouped by ability when she explained that

the value of being able to take this group that’s struggling with numeracy and build the concept I need to teach on their level, and be able to take this high group that can learn that in 8 seconds and throw a problem and have them fly with it. (Interview 1)

Crystal also shared thoughts about her teaching experiences:

Since I started teaching fifth-grade, and we’re talking...Gosh, I bet nine years ago now...We’ve [my teammates] always leveled our kids for math. So, I’ve always taught one level of math. Then a content area. social studies or science. And then reading and writing. (Interview 1)

Crystal felt that platooning would allow her to do what she loves most – teach math. She explained, “I naturally gravitated towards math because I had taught the gifted math program for several years. So, I automatically said if I could teach math all day. That would be awesome” (Interview 1).

Crystal also expressed the need for things to make sense, such as being able to focus through platooning more deeply on a new district-approved math resource:
With the resource being [used] a second year, it’s a lot easier to focus on one content area and get better at it. Like a natural evolution. Now I can play with it, and you know where the pitfalls are, and you know where you can put some new finesse to it, which is fun. So, that was really attractive to me to just have to worry about math. (Interview 1)

Crystal’s responses throughout the study consistently carried her practical and optimistic outlook on her individual and team experiences with platooning.

Grace

Grace, the oldest participant in the study, found her way to education after being a real estate broker for 20 years. While earning her teaching degree, she was a teaching assistant at the kindergarten level in the district for seven years. Now on her sixth year as a licensed educator, Grace taught her first two years as a fifth-grade teacher at another school within the district. While there, Grace noted that

when I started at that school, they didn’t call it platooning, but we did switch from the get go. I never managed to teach social studies, because when I first started I taught science, and then the other teacher taught social studies. (Interview 1)

Once arriving at Fox Creek, Grace taught third grade for one year. She recalled, “At third grade I looked back and we did switch for math. We did differentiate with our math instruction” (Interview 1. In addition, Grace recalled that “the planning [when she taught third grade] took forever when you had to sit down and plan every single subject” (Interview 1).

She recalled starting her current teaching assignment in fifth-grade at Fox Creek. During her first year, although her team did not platoon, their students did switch classes for social studies and science, and then Grace taught all other subjects (Interview 1, March 2019). The smile slid from Grace’s face as she remembered implementing reading and writing workshops that first year: “I did take on the reading workshop as, what do you call it? As a pilot. I would go
home and probably spend, I’m not exaggerating, two hours on every lesson, prepare it, and getting the slides ready” (Interview 1).

Finally, two years ago, Grace’s inclination to teach literacy, her favorite subject, more in-depth led her and her grade level team of three (which included Crystal) to decide to explore the possibility of platooning and “how [they] block times, and what teacher teaches which subject area” (Interview 1, January 2019). Grace’s final reflections (Interview 1) on the journey that led her to platooning and being able to teach reading and writing full time spread a look of contentment across her face as she expressed both challenges and fulfillment. Grace’s responses reflected an awareness of both consistency and flexibility when platooning.

Michaela

Michaela, the youngest member of the team, was the newcomer to the Fox Creek fifth-grade team. She joined this particular elementary school after her eighth grade social studies position was cut at one of the district’s middle schools. She described her middle school experience in this way:

[I taught] eighth grade. And then I student taught at sixth grade, and it was the same thing. You had your core classes that you taught, which at the time was math and social studies. And then you had one special, whether it was an intervention class like I had math intervention, or when I taught social studies it was their engineering explore wheel class. (Interview 1)

Since this was the first time Michaela would teach at the elementary level, she was relieved to know she would not be responsible for a self-contained classroom:

I had a lot of new changes this year. I came from the middle school down to elementary. Platooning is a new thing for me. I didn’t even know what it was. However, I felt like I was lucky because I went from teaching three subjects at the middle school to teaching two versus the whole class all day long. So, that helped. (Interview 1)
Although she was unfamiliar with what platooning looked like at the elementary level, Michaela put faith in her new teammates to help her understand both fifth-grade and platooning. The first step was completing the Platooning Proposal required by the district. After meeting her teammates, Michaela felt assured that platooning was the way to proceed because it seemed similar to the interdisciplinary teaming she had experienced at the middle school:

    So, that was very brief, like, we’re gonna forward you the paperwork for our applying to team specialization. We had a quick conversation with the team. Just kind of walking me through what I was looking at the paperwork and basic, like, here’s what team specialization is because I had no idea. And I looked at it and I said, “Okay. Looks good,” ‘cause I didn’t know if it was good or not or if anything needed to be changed or not and it was all new. So I said, “Okay.” (Interview 1)

In addition to Michaela’s desire to teach two content areas (social studies and science) versus five, she was also “happy because I didn’t have to teach one [group of] kids ... I was worried about having the kids that were bad that I had to teach all day long” (Interview 1). Throughout her initiation into fifth-grade and platooning, Michaela’s responses reflected change, fresh perspective, collaboration, and at times, isolation.

    Beginning of a Team

    In May 2018, I walked into Crystal’s classroom to find Grace and her huddled over a cell phone describing their Platooning Proposal to their new team member, Michaela. The proposal, due to the district at the end of the month, was Michaela’s first exposure to platooning. She later reflected,

        I never experienced [teaching elementary] before, and then teaching things like reading and writing and learning the math curriculum and doing science and social studies, learning all those new pieces was a bit of a stressor for me. So we’re going to platoon and you’re just gonna focus on social studies and science.’ (Michaela, Interview 1)
While Michaela was new to platooning, her teammates, Crystal and Grace had worked on the same team for the past three years and had previous experience with a platooning pilot and departmentalization (i.e., having students switch classes for one or two subjects). At the time, Grace verbalized her understanding of platooning by explaining,

Well, I would just explain how many teachers are on my team. I would start there and just basically say how we have blocked times, and what teacher teaches which subject area. I would compare it to a middle school situation. The benefits of it is that you have your team still together for planning and talking about the kids, and the benefits of knowing that every single one of those kids in your grade level. (Interview 1)

Crystal concurred when she explained, “when your team platoons, you have one content area that you are focused on, and your responsibility is to the grade level, not to your own 20 some kids” (Interview 1). Two weeks after the proposal was submitted, Michaela remembered,

And then when we got approved for team specialization we had kind of met as a team. They told me we were approved, you know, let’s plan a time to meet in August where we can really talk more about each one of these specific things our expectations in the classroom, talking over content. Getting me kind of rolled into that. (Interview 1)

At that point, Michaela, coming from teaching social studies at the middle school, felt confident about the decision to platoon: “[Her two teammates said], we’re just gonna give you all social studies and make it easy on you. So that was kind of nice” (Interview 1). Crystal and Grace also felt positive about the future platooning experience. Crystal noted that “to teach math in 90 minutes is quite glorious, right? (Interview 1), while Grace explained, “I got the long end of the stick for that, in terms of your content, because I am passionate about my content” (Interview 1).

Participant Summary

There were three teachers in this study; each was part of the same fifth-grade team at the same elementary school who agreed to platoon for the first time during the 2018-2019 school
year. Data from the teacher and collective scale data, their reflective journal entries, and transcripts from both individual and team interviews were gathered. Six major themes emerged to answer the three research questions that guided this study. Those themes are described next.

**Major Themes**

Six major themes emerged from the data: 1) administration, 2) professional learning, 3) team, 4) content area expert, 5) needs of students and 6) time for planning and preparation. To chronicle the team’s platooning experience over the academic year, a chronological presentation of the themes follows with August through December 2018 data grouped first and then January through March 2019 described second. Table 4.1 lists the data sources for the two time periods.

**Table 4.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>August – December 2018 (15 weeks)</strong></td>
<td><strong>January – March 2019 (12 weeks)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Efficacy Scale, August 2018</td>
<td>Teacher Efficacy Scale, March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Efficacy Scale, August 2018</td>
<td>Collective Efficacy Scale, March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal - Interview 1</td>
<td>Crystal - Interview 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace - Interview 1</td>
<td>Grace - Interview 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michaela - Interview 1</td>
<td>Michaela - Interview 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the references and comments are shared by time period, the data are considered as a whole to determine thresholds for themes and subthemes. That is, the total number of qualitative comments for each theme and subtheme represents the full time period of this study (i.e., August 2018 - March 2019).

Administration, August – December 2018

The first major theme was administration, defined as the people responsible for running a school district or a school building. Within this theme, the data were categorized into two subthemes, each requiring a threshold of at least five qualitative data points: district level administration (i.e., assistant superintendent) and building level administration (i.e., principal). In addition, each subtheme was further categorized by teacher efficacy or collective efficacy comments or references (Table 4.2)

Table 4.2
Subthemes for Theme 1: Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Number of Collective Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Total Number of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subtheme of district administration (first half of the academic year) is discussed first, followed by building administration.
During the district’s inaugural year for platooning, 2017-2018, district administrators realized that without common criteria, teams across the district had implemented platooning using different definitions and standards. Therefore, a committee of administrators and teachers was formed and met several times to explore different structures and approaches to team specialization. On March 24, 2018, the committee released the agreed upon criteria: 1) the number of instructional minutes for literacy and math, 2) the need for a consistent management system, 3) a plan for consistent communication with families, 4) a process for communicating with parents about individual students, and 5) a means for knowing students as learners. Teams interested in platooning had to submit proposals describing how they would meet the criteria as individuals and as a team. Seven teams, including the fifth-grade team at Fox Creek, submitted a proposal and were approved to platoon during the 2018-2019 school year.

In addition to the criteria, district administration sent teachers a draft agenda for a platooning committee meeting on May 8, 2018. The agenda included:

- Review criteria & suggested models
- Future work (2018-2019)
- Identifying indicators of success
- Problem-solving challenges during 2018-2019 implementation
- Bringing forward team specialization recommendations for 2019-2020
- Determining feedback process for students, staff and parents
- Consider how curricular changes impact team specialization model
- Consider future professional learning needs
• Brainstorm additional future work
• Establish 2018-2019 meeting calendar

This meeting was later canceled by email without explanation. In addition, the platooning committee was disbanded, again without explanation, by district administration.

Of the 39 qualitative comments in this subtheme, 13 of the coded responses (33%) referenced collective efficacy. Likewise, the teachers verbalized that decisions made about platooning by district administration also affected them as individual teachers. More specifically, 26 of the 39 qualitative comments that represented this subtheme (67%) described sources of teacher efficacy. Table 4.3 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.

Table 4.3
District Administration: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme District Administration</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
<th>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</th>
<th>Teacher Efficacy (RQ1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total District Admin. Comments</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Administration</td>
<td>Administrators responsible for the supervision of schools, school improvement process and planning, and facility operations.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All three teachers described district-level administration as both supporting and undermining them in their collective and teacher efficacy (i.e., August 2018-March 2019). As such, the teacher efficacy comments are discussed first, followed by comments specific to collective efficacy.

**District administration: Teacher efficacy comments, August – December 2018.** When considering the district level platooning criteria, all three teachers described the district-level platooning criteria as not supporting their self-efficacy. The comments from all three teachers indicated that district platooning criteria neither considered the teachers’ overall expertise nor experience with platooning. One such example included the platooning models the district administration suggested for dividing time and content among team members. Only models for grade level teams of two or four teachers were shared. For a team of two, the sample model recommended students be divided into two platoons (or groups of students) with one teacher teaching ELA/social studies and the other teaching math/science. For a team of four, the students would be broken into four platoons with two teachers teaching ELA/social studies and two teachers teaching math/science. Crystal expressed her personal frustration with not knowing how and why the models were determined,

> Administration is being so rigid. I think that’s the hardest part is then it makes me question. Because what was that based on? If you can show me the data, if you can show me the reports that say this is the best structure for ten and eleven year olds to have [90 minutes for ELA and 60 minutes for math] during the day, then I think I’d buy-in ... and my buy-in just isn’t there because I haven’t seen why the choice was made for what it was. (Interview 1)

Grace, who was responsible for the time intensive ELA assessments, also found the district guidelines negatively shaped her buy-in and confidence in the classroom: “I’m the one that got
the short end of the stick [in terms of planning and prep]” (Interview 1). Since content areas could not be split, Grace tried to solve the unequal workload in a different way,

I went in with a deal with them [my team] before we even started. I go, “I’ll take it on you guys, but I need your help. I am not doing F&Ps [reading assessments] for 80 kids. I am not grading the On-Demands [writing assessments] for 80 kids. You guys got to help me with that.” (Interview 1)

While Grace’s teammates agreed to help, Grace found her inability to assess the students herself affected her knowledge about them as readers and writers: “It’s hard for me to make those connections [between the assessments and instruction]” (Interview 1). Michaela also struggled with a disconnect when grading assessments for Grace’s content area: “It is not right for a teacher to grade work that they did not specifically teach. This has created a few problems as to inter-rater reliability and scores not matching up or making sense” (Journal Reflective Journal Entry, August – December 2018).

In addition to the unequal workload, Crystal found district criteria deflated her confidence by making it difficult for her to make decisions based on student-need:

I feel devalued as an educator because there’s no, “What’s best for your students? What works?” [District administration did not value that] I found this in research or that I spent 25 years in the classroom and I found this. I would say it has frustrated me with admin. And it is a hard one to have a positive attitude towards. And once I get negative, it’s ugly. (Interview 1)

In summary, the data revealed the perception that the administration devalued their mastery experiences, leading the teachers to negatively perceive their teacher efficacy.

**District administration: Collective efficacy comments.** Because the platooning committee was disbanded and the criteria for platooning determined before teachers felt fully heard, Crystal, Michaela and Grace felt the district administration made decisions without valuing the team’s input and experience. The data revealed that 85% of the teachers’ comments about district
administration negatively informed the team’s collective efficacy, while the remaining 15% of comments illustrated a positive perception. For example, Grace reported, “They [district administration] didn’t even approach us [to share our experiences]” (Interview 1). Additionally, the Fox Creek team found the criteria did not make it possible to evenly divide time and responsibilities among the three teachers. For example, the teachers found it frustrating the criteria forbade them to share ELA content, which required the most intensive planning and instructional time (i.e., 90 minutes for ELA versus 60 minutes for other content areas). Crystal commented,

So this year, when we started our specialization, the model was highly dictated to us. Which has been a struggle because that flexibility we’ve had in the past isn’t allowed. So, you have to be the reading/writing teacher. You have to be the math teacher. And, you have to be the science and social studies teacher. (Interview 1)

The inability to determine who would teach what and the time required to do so made the teachers doubt they were doing what was right for students. Grace commented, “What the district wants us to do, it’s not really best practice (Interview 1). Michaela shared a lived experience:

The district didn’t give us that flexibility, and we really struggled at the beginning of the year. By October, kids have kind of, normally, gotten into the swing of things. They’ve figured it out. [Following district criteria] we didn’t get our kids going until Thanksgiving break. (Interview 1)

Michaela, however, was hopeful about things changing in the future: “I hope that if the district continues to move towards team specialization, they’re gonna be moving towards us being able to communicate with people who teach the same things that we do” (Interview 1). While Michaela found a reason to be optimistic, the teachers’ comments as a whole indicated a primary source of collective efficacy, past performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1997), was devalued by the district administration and therefore led teachers to negatively to perceive their
collective efficacy. Again the administration’s disregard for successful mastery experiences left teachers as a team feeling trivialized.

**Building Administration, August – December 2018**

The second subtheme referred to the building administration or the principal. Of the 42 qualitative comments in this subtheme, 22 of the coded responses (52%) referenced collective efficacy. Likewise, the teachers described that decisions made about platooning by the building principal also affected them as individual teachers. More specifically, 20 of the 42 qualitative comments that represented this subtheme (48%) indicated teacher efficacy. Table 4.4 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Administration</td>
<td>The building administrator or principal keeps the school’s overall process flowing smoothly, making decisions that facilitate successful student learning.</td>
<td><a href="#">Table 4.4</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Building Admin. Comments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Negative Total CE Comments Positive Negative Total TE Comments</td>
<td>Positive Negative Total TE Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42 13 9 22 5 15 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.4**

Building Administration: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy
Since teacher and collective efficacy are influenced by the same sources (mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion and emotional cues), many times it is perceived that the sources inform collective efficacy before informing teacher efficacy. In the case of this subtheme, building administration, the opposite proved true. Therefore, teacher efficacy sources are examined first since, for this subtheme, the teachers described them initially informing teacher efficacy before collective efficacy.

Building administration: Teacher efficacy comments. From August – December 2018, Michaela and Crystal immediately expressed their dissatisfaction with the building principal. Michaela shared, “Our principal is not 100% on board with platooning” (Interview 1). When prompted, Michaela further explained,

And the last couple of conversations that any of us have had with administration, it has seemed like she’s trying to find the holes in what we’re doing. And she’ll [the building principal] ask very pointed questions at you that have to do about a different team member. So like she’s asked Grace, “How does Michaela integrate reading and writing into her social studies’ curriculum?” And that has been very hard for us to handle because Grace doesn’t want to say, “I don’t know,” but at the same time she’s not in my classroom teaching social studies to know how I’m integrating those things. And, she wants to give the right answer but doesn’t...we don’t necessarily know what the right answer is. So those conversations then come back to the team and it’s us trying to figure out what administration meant by comments like that or questions like that. (Interview 1)

During the team interview, Grace agreed that the principal’s questioning of individual team members was “an effort to pull us apart” (Team Interview 1). In addition, Michaela’s perception of being put-on-the-spot by the principal to answer questions about her teammates’ classrooms led her to further wonder

is it that she [the principal] is trying to find a hole or trying to find a problem, or is she trying to trip me up because I don’t know necessarily what’s going on? The frustrating part to me is: “Well, I’m the one who teaches social studies, why didn’t she just come ask me that question?” (Interview 1)
While Michaela perceived the principal’s questions as undermining, Crystal viewed them as controlling:

Admin [the principal] is more interested in solving the problem [herself] than in allowing the person to solve the problem or trusting that the problem will be solved by that person [the teacher] instead of taking control. (Interview 1)

Crystal further explained, “I believe it does because at some point the principal supports autonomy, right, and it’s a positive flow, or doesn’t and there’s a negative backlash, whatever it might be” (Interview 1).

During the team interview, Michaela explained how she perceived the principal’s behavior informing her teacher efficacy.

As an individual teacher, I felt a little bit lower in myself. Here I am sitting with the principal talking about another teacher, another teacher’s classroom, and that’s not the kind of person I want to be. That’s not the kind of teacher I want to be. (Team Interview)

When considering the sources of teacher efficacy, the teachers perceived the principal’s questioning as devaluing two sources of teacher efficacy: social and verbal persuasion and emotional cues. While the principal did not provide direct feedback about platooning, the teachers, as revealed in their comments, explained the principal’s questions as “pitting” the teachers against each other. Michaela commented: “each one of us got pulled by the administration [principal] to talk about individually why team specialization wasn’t working and what the other ones were doing in their classroom” (Team Interview). The principal’s feedback through individual questioning led the teachers’ to examine themselves as teachers. Michaela explained,

It [feedback or questioning from administration] derails our thinking and then it kind of turns into this spiral effect of: “Are we doing something wrong? Did we miss something? Is something going on?” You know, I didn’t know how to answer this question. I should
know how to answer this question. Maybe I’m not in tune enough with what you’re [my teammates] doing in your class. (Interview 1)

Therefore, the four sources of teacher efficacy – mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social and verbal persuasion and emotional cues (Bandura, 1997) – caused all three teachers to reflect on their experiences with the building administration and subsequently teacher efficacy. Each teacher, at one point during the study, had mastery experiences or conversations with the building principal about other teammates that led the team, after sharing vicarious experiences, to question whether the principal had the team’s best interest in mind. In addition, the conversations with building administration also caused the teachers to wonder if they were deliberately being undermined as a team. In turn, the teachers described this suspicion to be a physiological and emotional source that led them to negatively perceive their teacher efficacy.

Building administration: Collective efficacy comments. Due to the team having and then sharing individual interactions with the building principal, the data indicated that the same four sources of teacher efficacy also informed collective efficacy. To illuminate this point, Michaela shared,

As we got talking about it as a team I was realizing, it’s not just me and then we realized as a team something is going on, we need to make sure we’re all on the same page, we need to handle this situation now. (Team Interview)

After the teachers realized the principal was individually questioning each teacher, Michaela also described,

We [the team] needed to make sure that we were all on the same page so as those questions were coming up, we knew how to answer them. I feel like that was a turning point for us as a team to strengthen us and say, “We need to make sure that we’re on the same page. We need to make sure we’re giving the same message” not only to administration but to parents, to students and I think for us that was a good point in our relationships with each other and in team specialization to say, “Okay, we need to make some changes in how we relay information and now’s the time to do it.” (Team Interview)
While Crystal struggled with the principal’s methods, she agreed that, in the end, the discomfort and distrust brought about by the principal’s questions caused her to reflect:

It impacted my confidence in my team, right then and there. Because we’re supposed to all be on the same page, and I thought we were on the same page, but then I was asked a question that I didn’t necessarily know how to answer. (Team Interview)

Once the teachers were able to see how adversity could strengthen the team, they began to make sure they were in agreement about all aspects of platooning. Michaela remarked,

We need to make sure that we’re on the same page. We need to make sure we’re giving the same message not only to administration but to parents, to students and I think for us that was a good point in our relationships with each other and in team specialization to say, “Okay, we need to make some changes in how we relay information and now’s the time to do it.” (Team Interview)

Crystal agreed, “Because we know it’s [being on the same page as a team] gonna make our students better. So, we’re going to work on it” (Team Interview).

Beliefs in collective efficacy are a primary determinant of group behavior and thought patterns that occur within groups (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, when the teachers relied on a shared belief in their ability, they were able to boost their collective efficacy by problem solving and banding together as a team.

Summary of Theme 1

The qualitative comments indicated that the teachers were in a precarious place when administrative support and opportunities for teacher input were neither provided at the district nor building level. Lack of teacher involvement when determining district criteria for platooning left the teachers feeling undervalued as individuals and led to negative perceptions of teacher efficacy. In addition, confusion about whether building administration stood for or against platooning also evoked doubts. These doubts prompted teachers to feel as if they needed to unite
to protect each other and their right to platoon. In other words, the team’s mastery and vicarious experiences led the team to unify as a result of their estimation of collective efficacy.

**Professional Learning**

The second major theme was professional learning, defined as specialized training intended to help teachers improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. To qualify as a subtheme, I set a threshold of at least five qualitative comments. The data within this theme resulted in two subthemes: district professional learning and building professional learning. In addition, each subtheme was further categorized by teacher efficacy and collective efficacy comments (Table 4.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Number of Collective Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Total Number of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data revealed that professional learning at the district level often led to an estimation of teacher efficacy, whereas professional learning at the building level informed perceptions of
teachers’ collective efficacy. The subtheme of district professional learning is discussed first, followed by building professional learning.

**District Professional Learning: August – December 2018**

Of the 24 qualitative comments in this subtheme, the four coded responses referencing collective efficacy did not meet the threshold of five comments. On the other hand, 20 of the 24 qualitative comments that represented this subtheme (83%) indicated teachers described district level professional learning as leading to teacher efficacy. Table 4.6 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.

**Table 4.6**

District Professional Learning: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme District Professional Learning</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Teacher Efficacy (RQ1)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Professional Learning</td>
<td>Professional learning on content areas and platooning offered to all teachers in the district</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Across the academic year (i.e., August 2018-March 2019), the teachers’ comments indicated that their analysis of district-level professional learning informed teacher efficacy more than collective efficacy. The data also showed that collective efficacy did not meet the threshold of five or more comments.

**District level professional learning: Collective efficacy comments.** After the district approved Fox Creek’s proposal for platooning, all three teachers reported that the district neither offered classes nor online training on platooning. Since all three teachers taught different content areas, the one and only area of professional learning all three teachers had in common was platooning. Therefore, of the 24 coded qualitative comments in this subtheme, only four comments referenced collective efficacy. Therefore, since the data did not meet the required threshold of at least five qualitative data comments, they will not be discussed.

**District level professional learning: Teacher efficacy.** The district offered face-to-face classes and online learning opportunities regarding instructional strategies and content areas three times during the year. However, no professional learning was offered about platooning. In addition, all three teachers commented on feeling frustrated during district school improvement days. Crystal, for instance, explained that a new math resource was made available the previous year: “With math being rolled out as a blanket resource for the district, I was able to get a lot of professional development in my content area. And that was tremendously helpful” (Interview 1). While this benefited Crystal, she explained:

> I think it’s really difficult to sit through student improvement days on literacy. Like I said, because math was a new resource, I’ve had great training and haven’t had many of those days, but I’ve sat through a lot with teammates on math when they were teaching reading or science or social studies. And, I’ve seen how painful it is for them. And, wanting them to be positive and energetic towards my math content is hard. (Interview 1)
Grace, the team’s ELA teacher, also shared that district professional learning on content areas other than reading and writing felt like wasted time: “It [district professional learning] was a big joke, where I had to go and sit through professional learning on math. Like really? Can’t I find a better use of my time?” (Interview 1). Michaela expressed the same frustration,

I feel like our focus as a district is reading and writing and math. As a social studies and science teacher, it is very hard to find things in our learning for math and reading and writing that directly affects the work in my classroom. (Interview 1)

Even though all three teachers noted that no district learning was provided in their platooning content area(s), they expressed that the tide was turning. For example, Crystal reported,

During our last [district] school improvement day, it was on math, but then they [the district] pulled the literacy teachers, and they could go and do something different, and the science and social studies teachers could do something different. So they have accommodated for that. (Interview 1)

Grace agreed with Crystal:

Well, I think this was the last SIP [School Improvement Planning] day that they [the District] finally had something for teachers who were platooning. SIP days are gonna be more directed for content areas and [choosing] where you are able to go. (Interview 1)

Although Michaela agreed that the district should offer professional learning that reflected the needs of platooning teachers, she also saw the benefit of trying to make connections between “off-content district professional learning and her content areas” (social studies and science):

You know, I sit there in our professional learning and we talk about conferring [during reading and writing workshops] for example, right? Grace’s done conferring a million times. She’s already done it 20 times in her classroom. For her this is like nothing. But I’m like, “I have no idea what they’re talking about Grace, like, can you help me out here? What am I supposed to be doing? What am I supposed to be looking at? What kind of conversation am I supposed to be having with the kids? What’s going on?” And she can... it’s almost like I have a personal tutor right there, one-on-one helping me and supporting me. (Interview 1)
Like Michaela, Grace shared that while district professional learning did not always meet content area needs, the teacher needed to be responsible for making connections and continuing to learn as a professional. She first mentioned the benefit of district-approved curriculum and resources,

If I know that I have at least something to start with, and work with...just having some kind of a guide. That’s just how I work. Give me an outline, give me some bare bones of what I need to cover, and where I need to go, and I’ll get there. (Interview 1)

In addition to learning from available resources, Grace also commented on seeking out other platooning teachers in the district: “When you go there [SIP Days] you find who is platooning, and then what they do. Then, you gravitate to them because that is more of what you are doing” (Interview 1). Michaela also hoped the district would help her make connections with platooning teachers at other schools in the district.

I know that the district has other fifth-grade teams that are platooning. I know that there are other teachers who teach science and social studies, but right now they... It’s too new for them [the district] to be pulling us together. They’re still trying to figure out how platooning is gonna work. So I know that it is coming, but it’s gonna be down the road a little bit. (Interview 1)

In these examples, the teachers described district professional learning to lead to a positive perception of teacher efficacy. In turn, use of district resources and connecting with other teachers platooning in the district were also interpreted as positive sources of teacher efficacy. This evidence appears to indicate that when professional learning was applicable and meaningful, it promoted teachers’ confidence in their ability to promote students’ learning within the classroom (Hoy, 2000).
The second subtheme was building professional learning, or professional learning on content areas and/or platooning offered at the building level through staff members, instructional coaches and building level SIP days. The qualitative data coded for this subtheme described professional learning at the building level to be a greater source of collective efficacy than teacher efficacy. Of the 27 coded qualitative comments in this subtheme, 63% of the responses indicated that professional learning at the building level was perceived to inform collective efficacy. On the other hand, 37% of the responses indicated the teachers felt district professional learning led to an estimation of teacher efficacy. Table 4.7 illustrates the breakdown of positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy.

Table 4.7
Building Professional Learning: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Professional Learning</td>
<td>Professional learning on content areas and platooning offered at the building level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Comments</td>
<td>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data in Table 4.7 represent comments referencing collective efficacy as a result of building professional learning. While data indicated building professional learning had an adverse consequence on collective efficacy; it is also interesting to note that data within the same subtheme revealed an equal positive/negative perception of teacher efficacy. Collective efficacy comments within this subtheme are addressed first, followed by a discussion of the teacher efficacy data.

Building level professional learning: Collective efficacy. Once approved to platoon by the district, the team of teachers began to work together to build a common grade-level understanding and implementation of platooning at the building level. Of the 27 coded qualitative comments in this subtheme, 17 comments referenced collective efficacy. Of the 17, 24% of the responses indicated a positive perception of collective efficacy, while the other 76% indicated a negative perception of collective efficacy.

All three teachers again agreed, similar to the district level, professional learning at the building level was not offered. Grace reflected,

We’ve had none [professional learning specifically on platooning]. I think we got dictated to us what we had to do without anybody talking to us on what we were doing and how well it worked. (Interview 1)

When asked if professional learning about platooning came from the building level, Michaela responded with a similar answer: “Nope. Directly from my team” (Interview 1).

After the team members determined they were on their own, they began meeting in August to learn about platooning and plan for its implementation. Using their proposal as a checklist, Grace shared her memories of the new team’s summer planning:

We just sat down and we thought, “What would this look like? How we would get this done? What would our schedule look like? How do the specials fall into this?” We had to think through all that stuff. What’s our LRC gonna look like, what’s our Too Good for
Drugs gonna look like? Just sitting and figuring out how they would all work. (Interview 1)

While the district approved the fifth-grade team’s platooning proposal, the teachers realized that the existing building schedule (for special subjects such as music, art and PE) made it difficult for them to meet district criteria. Michaela recalled this struggle while working with the building schedule,

I would say we spent maybe a week over the summer trying to get the schedule to map out. Following exactly the district guidelines which were reading and writing have to be a 90-minute block taught by the same teacher. So, that really limited how we could rotate and move kids. (Interview 1)

Grace also shared her frustration with trying to schedule the required 90-minute platooning blocks into the existing building schedule: “We don’t have time to breathe with three 90 minute blocks. It’s hard for the kids for 90 minutes. Many of the days we go up until 2:50. It’s like craziness” (Interview 1).

Once the school year started and platooning was up and running in fifth-grade, the teachers reflected on other building professional learning opportunities they would have appreciated. Crystal remembered past opportunities to observe her teammates while teaching:

And then so once every three weeks, I would have time when [during Too Good for Drugs or Second Steps] when another person was in my room to go visiting and sit in those [other fifth-grade] classrooms. I could go see Grace’s classroom. I could go in and watch her reading lesson and go, “Wow. That’s powerful. I can see how that’s correlating with what we’re doing.” (Interview 1)

Thinking about the building level professional learning opportunity, Crystal saw its current value:

[This year] I had no idea what they [my teammates] were doing. So that’s I wish we had more flexibility of going in and seeing each other’s content. Because I do think it overlaps, and they [the students] don’t come to me just for math. They come to me as a whole student. (Interview 1)
After discovering that professional learning about platooning would not be offered at the building level, the teachers pulled together as a team to learn about and implement platooning. In these examples from the 27 identified in the coded data, the teachers indicated that a lack of social and verbal persuasion and vicarious experiences negatively affected their estimation of collective efficacy. However, the lack of professional learning provided at the building level caused them to rely on each other for learning about platooning and how to best implement it across the grade level. In turn, after analysis of this joint effort, the resultant collective efficacy allowed the team to feel confident they could work together “to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce positive levels of attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 476).

Building level professional learning: Teacher efficacy. While having previously taught both fifth-grade and their content areas, this subtheme’s data did not indicate consequences for either Crystal’s or Grace’s teacher efficacy. However, in support of teacher efficacy within this subtheme, Michaela, new to platooning, commented on the lack of professional learning at the building level. Considering the 10 responses reflecting teacher efficacy, 50% indicated a negative perception of teacher efficacy and the other 50% indicated a positive perception. As shared previously, Michaela also indicated that no professional learning about platooning came at the building level (Interview 1). This deficit caused Michaela to feel anxious. She shared, “I knew that it [platooning] was gonna be a new experience, and I was nervous about things, right?” (Interview 1). However, when professional learning opportunities on platooning were not offered at the building level, Michaela found she could rely on her teammates to provide the needed information. Therefore, an awareness of the sources that provided a boost in collective efficacy during the August team meetings also were deemed by Michaela to inform her teacher efficacy
after her teammates helped her understand platooning and her individual role within the structure,

They’re [Grace and Crystal] like, “Okay, here is what you teach for social studies, kind of what you cover for science. And here’s what Grace does in reading and writing. Here’s what Crystal does in math. Here’s kind of how our rotations are going to work, and our schedule lines out.” (Interview 1)

It was also during these meetings Michaela realized that while her team had explained her role in platooning and provided an overview of her content, she did not have the guidance and support of self-contained teachers teaching the same content. This made her aware of the need for and benefit of building support when learning about her two content areas of social studies and science:

‘cause I’m new at elementary school, right now it’s hard for me to bounce ideas for social studies and science off of Crystal and Grace, because they’re not teaching social studies and science. You know, so that’s where it feels sometimes like I’m on a lone island trying to figure it out. (Interview 1)

In sum, the 10 responses revealed that the even split between perceived positive and negative teacher efficacy was due to Michaela’s need for professional learning at the building level as a teacher new to platooning and fifth-grade content. The professional learning provided by her teammates allowed Michaela’s confidence to grow as she better understood her contribution to the platooning structure. On the other hand, when it came to understanding fifth-grade curriculum and content areas, the lack of building level professional learning negatively informed Michaela’s estimation of her teacher efficacy and her confidence in her ability to promote students’ learning (Hoy, 2000).
Summary of Theme 2

In examining the subthemes of District Professional Learning and Building Professional Learning, the findings indicated the teachers faced a predicament when it came to professional learning on both platooning and content area needs. The participants’ described their assessment of district curriculum resources resulted in a high estimation of teacher efficacy, while the lack of professional learning choices caused frustration. In addition, insufficient professional learning opportunities on platooning at the building level compelled teachers to seek support from each other, thus positively informing collective efficacy. Finally, sharing common students enabled the teachers to collaborate when it came to meeting students’ academic and behavior needs. However, with each teacher on a platooning team teaching a different subject, the teachers noted a deficit of collaborative learning when it came to content areas. This, in turn, led teachers to describe negative perceptions of teacher efficacy.

Team

The third major theme was team, defined as coming together to achieve a common goal. Within this theme, the data were categorized into four subthemes, each requiring a threshold of at least five qualitative data points: communication focused on students, collaborative check-ins, trust, and new-to-team. In addition, each subtheme was further categorized by teacher efficacy or collective efficacy comments (Table 4.8).
Table 4.8

Subthemes for Theme 3: Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Number of Collective Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Total Number of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Communication Focused on Students</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative Check-Ins</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New-to-Team</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data revealed overall that working as a team informed collective efficacy. However, within the theme of team, the comments reflecting new-to-team similarly informed both teachers’ collective and teacher efficacy. The subtheme of communication focused on students will be discussed first followed by the other subthemes.

Communication Focused on Students: Collective Efficacy Comments

Of the 96 qualitative comments in this subtheme, 68 (71%) referenced collective efficacy. Likewise, the teachers described communication focused on students as impacting them as individual teachers. More specifically, 28 of the 96 qualitative comments that represented this subtheme (29%) indicated teacher efficacy. Table 4.9 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.
Table 4.9

Communication Focused on Students: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Focused on Students</td>
<td>Informal and formal conversations focused on the needs of students.</td>
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<td>Teacher Efficacy (RQ1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Comments</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
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Data in Table 4.9 reveal that comments referencing communication focused on students were perceived by the teachers to positively inform collective efficacy. In addition, it is also interesting to note that within this subtheme, talking about students led to positive perceptions of teacher efficacy. Collective efficacy comments within this subtheme are addressed first, followed by a discussion of the teacher efficacy data.

When considering their team meeting time, Michaela reported, “We have a lot more conversation about the needs of the kids than we do about content” (Interview 1). It was during these conversations about students that each teacher shared her personal classroom experiences and perspectives about students. Crystal stated, “It’s like they [the students] are getting three sets of eyes every day, and these conversations can be really powerful” (Interview 1). Often the teachers found that “three sets of eyes” positively impacted the team’s perspective of a student.
And although teachers acknowledged they connected with some students more than others, team time spent having conversations about students allowed each teacher to positively affect the perspectives of the other teammates. Crystal described this perception when she shared, “Because as we talk about kids, [a teammate may say], ‘Oh, so-and-so drives me crazy.’ I reply, ‘Really? I love him.’ Then I can influence the other teachers on what I love about him” (Interview 1). As a result of these conversations, all three teachers indicated that sharing students’ strengths positively resulted in how they collectively viewed students.

In the end, the teachers all expressed that, due to the focused conversations about students, they knew the 80 students well enough to feel responsible for and connected to three classrooms instead of just one self-contained classroom of 20+ students. Crystal communicated the value of these interchanges:

[It’s important] knowing that we’re a team. And as a teammate, yeah, I think I would say I look at us as a whole. I do look at us as a team. It’s not me, and it goes back to thinking of those kids. It’s not like my classroom. I do look at it as like we, the three of us, have our 80 kids. (Interview 1)

Michaela further supported Crystal’s viewpoint that the team shared a group of 80, versus 20+ students, through her use of the pronouns “we” and “our” in her comments:

We spend so much time together, the three of us, worrying about the kids, creating problem-solving on the problems for the kids. Making sure that we’re going down the right path. We’re giving the kids what they need, that it’s not sharing the kids, but is it more ... owning [the kids] is the word. Because we ... Johnny’s not my problem. He’s our problem. You know this kid is having a hard time in my class but it’s our kid. (Interview 1)

Finally, the teachers found that consistent communication about students allowed them to know and understand what was happening in each other’s classrooms. Crystal elaborated on this point:

Because the kids are kids. The behaviors are the behaviors. It’s not consistent to the
classrooms. So you can say, “Did you notice so-and-so was struggling today? They were all over the classroom.” So we’re seeing the behaviors, which is an awesome part of platooning because you can say, “Oh my gosh, did so and so even look your way today?” No, they are out in left field. “Yeah, I noticed that too. That’s unusual.” (Interview 1)

Similar to Crystal, Grace explained, “We could talk about every kid and what that kid looks like. In your switch [classroom], my switch [classroom], and by lunchtime it’s usually two switches [classrooms]. I saw that too, or no, I wasn’t seeing that” (Interview 1). Michaela extended this thinking by elaborating on the benefit of the team taking time to share classroom observations about students: “It gives us that ability to have conversations about “well what are you doing to help her in your class? What are you doing to help her in her class? How can I do that?” (Interview 1). By sharing perspectives about students, each teacher was able to consider different viewpoints and strategies to best meet the needs of students. As a result, all three teachers verbalized that communicating about students resulted in the team feeling responsible for all students’ needs in and out of their own classrooms.

**Communication Focused on Students: Teacher Efficacy Comments**

During August through December 2018, all teachers expressed that a perceived boost in collective efficacy, brought about by communication focused on students, also seemed to boost their teacher efficacy. Grace explained why she felt this affirmation: “I was able to go to Crystal or Michaela and say, ‘What do you think about putting so and so with so and so? What do you think about this?’ I even did it the other day, what do you think about this group?” (Interview 1). In addition, Grace noted another personal benefit of sharing students on a platooning team:

Even though you have 27 kids in a [self-contained] class you might not catch something, or you couldn’t check in with that one student every single time, even when you try your best. By having another set of eyes on that kid, I didn’t notice that. I got to pay attention to that. (Interview 1)
In simple terms, Grace’s analysis of sharing experiences as a team led her to positively estimate her own teacher efficacy.

In addition to the benefit of sharing student observations, Michaela shared how team problem solving and collaboration provided her with ideas when meeting students’ academic and behavioral needs in her classroom:

Just listening to what they [my teammates] do, and how they do things could maybe open your mind or trying something different. Just being a little more open minded, to see how they are doing something or getting their feedback. How would you do this? What do you think about this? We’re talking about not only what the kids need but, okay, this kid is really good at X, Y, and Z. And then the thought process is, “Okay, how can I bring that into what I’m doing to get them onboard to what I’m doing?” (Interview 1)

Crystal and Grace also elaborated on the influence of the team on their personal practices:

Today I struggled with a student who as we pulled his desk apart, and he struggles with organization, had several weeks of work that was left undone in his desk. So I brought it to my team and said, “Look at this pile. Is it okay if I let this go?” I felt like from the team I need validation that I was being the best teacher for this kid as I could be ‘cause I was questioning myself. Through the discussion it helped me set a plan for that student going forward. (Crystal, Team Interview)

Grace expounded:

By one of us bringing a student or a group of students to the table for the team, it makes you self-reflect on those kids because we’re looking for solutions for them. Whether it’s individual solutions or whole team solutions. (Interview 1)

In addition, Michaela discussed how her estimation of collective and teacher efficacy intertwined when supporting students within a platooning structure:

I think that it’s a combination of having confidence in yourself and your team. It’s not just you, it’s three people who have possibilities and understanding and that supports [students]. While it might look different in each one of our classes, we know that we’ve had the conversation of how we’re going to support him. (Interview 1)

While the data denote that communication about students led to more significant estimations and consequences of collective efficacy than teacher efficacy, the teachers deemed their team
conversations about students provided them with ideas and feedback that positively informed their teacher efficacy.

Collaborative Check-Ins: August – December 2018

The second subtheme was collaborative check-ins, or meeting to examine something other than student needs. Meeting as a team to have formal and informal conversations about educational topics other than their students emerged from the data as an integral part of platooning. The qualitative data coded for this subtheme indicated that meeting to check in with each other – whether it was about report cards, content or scheduling – had more strongly informed collective efficacy than teacher efficacy. For this subtheme, 40 of the 45 coded qualitative comments (89%) indicated that touching base to discuss topics other than student needs nurtured collective efficacy. On the other hand, while still meeting the required threshold of five or more comments, when analyzing the sources of efficacy from collaborative check-ins, only 11% of the responses indicated the teachers felt collaborative check-ins resulted in teacher efficacy. To demonstrate this point, Table 4.10 illustrates the breakdown of positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy within this subtheme.
Table 4.10

Collaborative Check-Ins: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting as a team to have formal and informal conversations about educational topics other than their students</td>
<td>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</td>
<td>Teacher Efficacy (RQ1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Comments</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 4.10 revealed that collaborative check-ins positively informed the teachers’ estimations of their collective efficacy. On the other hand, the data referencing teacher efficacy just met the threshold of five comments. Collective efficacy comments within this subtheme are addressed first and followed by a discussion of the teacher efficacy data.

Collaborative check-ins: Collective efficacy comments. In support of collective efficacy within the second subtheme, the team frequently noted the benefits of check-ins on topics other than student needs. For instance, Grace explained, “Every day, in the morning, at lunch, on our breaks, if we have a special, we are popping in, how can we change this?” (Interview 1). Michaela further explained how quick check-ins became more in-depth conversations later on:

The big decisions that we’ve had to make or the big conversations that we’ve had to have are not a one-time conversation. It’s something that we start out with: “Okay, everybody is having this issue. Why do we think we’re having this issue? Okay, next time we come together, let’s brainstorm some ideas on how we might fix that issue.” (Interview 1)
While some meetings started as quick check-ins, the team also scheduled longer check-in times to have in-depth discussions. Grace described how extended periods of formal meeting time were required by the team to mark report cards,

We did the same thing [collaborate] with report card competencies because, I didn’t do any of the speaking and listening, because she [my teammate] did some group presentations. We sat and we were like, “Can you use this for this competency? I’m gonna use this for writing. I didn’t do informational; can you take that competency out of writing and grade that?” We were able to work through the reading and the writing, and the social, speaking and listening competencies [on the report card]. (Interview 1)

In addition, the teachers all discussed that no matter what the topic (e.g., completing report cards, adapting schedules or writing a parent letter), all check-ins involved a give-and-take among team members before a final decision was made:

Grace would say, “I really need to have a switch [schedule change for extra time] this day,” and, I’m like, “Oh my gosh, do we really want to drive ’em into the ground?” But if Grace needs it, I’m okay, fine. We’ll do it. (Interview 1)

Furthermore, after meeting with her team to write a parent letter, Crystal found that both check-in meetings and their required give-and-take benefited the perceived collective efficacy of her team:

I think as a team we’re stronger in our vision of what we want for our group as a whole. I noticed that as we were writing that letter today that we’re like, “No, we really want this to be said. We want this as an outcome. Now we want this as a goal.” So I thought, another aspect of it [check-in meetings] was that we are more clear as a team on what we want our goals- our vision- to be. (Interview 1)

Therefore, a combination of both quick and in-depth check-ins, either in the hallway or during formal after-school meetings, were described as positive sources of collective efficacy. Michaela summed it up,

Do I think it’s an easy process? No. Not at all. It’s a long process. It takes time. It’s hard, but we ... I feel like, as a team, we’ve put in place a system where the things that are really important that we need to hit, we’re gonna take the time out to figure it out. (Interview 1)
However, while collaborative check-in time to figure out “the really important things” (Michaela, Interview 1) was interpreted to positively inform collective efficacy, it did not strongly inform teachers’ perceived teacher efficacy.

Collaborative check-ins: Teacher efficacy comments. In the case of collaborative check-ins, a perceived boost in collective efficacy seemed to lead to a boost in perceived teacher efficacy. While only 11% of the total collaborative check-in responses reflected teacher efficacy, all teacher efficacy comments, except one, indicated the teachers positively perceived their teacher efficacy. For instance, Grace noted a boost in her teacher efficacy when a collaborative check-in led to her to considering other ways to doing things in her classroom,

Well, it helps just listening to what they do, and how they [teammates] do things could maybe open your mind to trying something different. Just being a little more open minded, to see how they are doing something or getting their feedback. How would you do this? What do you think about this? (Interview 1)

In other words, these teachers indicated that conversations with their teammates made them reflect on how different ideas, strategies, and information shared during collaborative check-ins could be used in their individual classrooms. For example, Michaela, being new to the elementary level, struggled with CHAMPS, a classroom management system used at elementary schools throughout the district. A collaborative check-in with her team about CHAMPS not only boosted Michaela’s confidence in her teammates’ knowledge and support but also strengthened the group’s shared belief in its capability to use the classroom management system across the grade level. In turn, the boost in the team’s estimation of their collective efficacy led to a boost in Michaela’s teacher efficacy through verbal persuasion/feedback from her teammates (Bandura, 1997). The collaborative check-in on CHAMPS encouraged Michaela to more
successfully implement the system in her classroom. This perceived connection between collective and teacher efficacy is supported by Michaela’s reflection:

I feel like this has made me a better teacher. There’s a connection between the teachers where I can have a conversation with my teammates and say, ‘Listen, I’ve never done CHAMPS before. I’m trying really hard, it’s not working for me’ and my teammates can say, “Have you tried this one little strategy?” [I say] “No, I didn’t even think about that. And now I’m using it and it works, and I’m like, Great!” (Team Interview)

Crystal explained how collaborative check-ins encouraged her teacher efficacy with this brief statement: “It always helps me when we come together and have conversations” (Team Interview 1).

Like the subtheme of communication focused on students, the data for collaborative check-ins indicated that meeting about educational topics other than students had a more significantly informed collective efficacy than teacher efficacy. However, when teachers reflected on their time sharing and learning from each other, they described the check-in time to result in a positive estimation of their individual teacher efficacy.

Trust: August – December 2018

Trust, the third subtheme, was defined as a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something as well as strong interpersonal relationships (i.e., the strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people). Of the 93 qualitative comments in this subtheme, 65 of the coded responses (70%) referenced collective efficacy. Likewise, 28 of the 93 qualitative comments that represented this subtheme (30%) indicated teacher efficacy. Table 4.11 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.
Collectively, evidence in Table 4.11 indicates trust, when assessed by teachers, led the participants to have a greater positive perception of collective efficacy than teacher efficacy. At the same time, the data also indicated that trust positively informed teacher efficacy more than collective efficacy. Collective efficacy comments within the subtheme of trust are discussed first, followed by comments referencing teacher efficacy.

**Trust: Collective efficacy comments.** Collective efficacy depends on the interdependence within the team and often determines group behavior and thinking (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, from scheduling to grading papers and from classroom management to instruction, teammates’ trust in each other appeared to result in sources of the team’s efficacy. When analyzing the teachers’ qualitative responses about trust, each teacher reflected on how the team came together. Crystal verbalized how the first three months they spent as a team gave them time to learn and understand each other,
Starting in August we didn’t even know each other’s teaching style. The difference between then and now is I think we know each other personally, and I think we are learning better each other’s styles and our strengths and our weaknesses. (Team Interview)

While also thinking about her team as it existed at the beginning of the school year, Michaela shared what she had learned about the personalities of each of her teammates,

Grace wants everybody to be happy and she wants the kids to be happy. And so her focus is always on what’s best for the kids and what’s gonna make them happy. So Crystal’s got these bright, great ideas, right? And she’s gonna run with it and she’s gonna be halfway done before we even have the conversation, and Grace is gonna pull us back to ground and be like, “Okay, that’s all great and good but how is this gonna help and support the kids? What does it do with the kids?” (Interview 1)

Michaela then reflected on the perceived benefit of the team’s individual personalities as a whole:

And so it is more of that respect for each other, knowing that we all come from different backgrounds, we all support the team in a different way. We’re all looking at the problem in a different way, and knowing that we need to hear everybody’s ideas. (Interview 1)

While Michaela shared the benefits of each other’s strengths, Crystal described the importance of trusting her teammates enough to share weaknesses: “We’ve grounded each other with our issues [struggles]. So we kind of balance. So I see it as a balance” (Interview 1). On the other hand, Grace described how her teammates’ weaknesses could be detrimental at times:

There was a time when I could see that she [my teammate] was having a meltdown, and I offered to take something off of her plate, and after I did I’m like, “Why did I just do that?” Because I got the short end of the stick. (Interview 1)

However, in the end, all teammates found that knowing each other’s strengths and weaknesses allowed them to trust each other,

I think we kind of all just jelled. We all knew what our strengths and weaknesses are. Like mine is not typing on the computer, because I can’t see half the time even with my glasses. Michaela, she’s the one typing, I’m the one, I’ll make the copies, I’ll do this. Crystal is the one ... We all just kind of have our place. It just worked that way. It’s developed over time. (Grace, Interview 1)
Through mastery experiences such as listening, watching, and spending time together at the beginning allowed the teachers to learn about each other’s past accomplishments and struggles. This initial understanding of each other as teachers allowed the team to begin to build trust with regard to platooning.

About a month later, the teachers expressed continued growth in their trust as a team. Michaela expressed the significance of trusting her team:

I would rely on my team more than I’d rely on anybody else. We have an administrator, and we have an ISC [Instructional Support Coach], we have a math specialist, we have a reading specialist. They’re not my first route that I would go when I’m struggling or I have a question or I’m not understanding. My team is the first place I go. (Interview 1)

Crystal also noted the increase of trust when sharing,

I’ll say I think it shows I trust my team because I come to them with problems. If you trust them you can have a good communication. It’s not gonna work if they don’t communicate. It really is about the team. (Team Interview)

Grace simply agreed, “Like your teammates. Trust your teammates” (Team Interview).

In these examples from the 65 identified in the coded data, the teachers expressed trusting their teammates before trusting the administration or other support personnel. This demonstrates that trust built over time through communication, interpersonal relationships, and commitment was judged by the platooning teachers to provide affirmation, feedback, transparency, and willingness to share mistakes and faults. In turn, these experiences or sources were analyzed by the teachers in order to estimate their collective efficacy. The resultant collective efficacy allowed the team to trust they could work together to organize and do what was necessary to meet teacher and student needs through platooning. (Bandura, 1997).

Trust: Teacher efficacy comments. Early in this study, Michaela, new to the team, commented most often about how trust in her teammates’ social and verbal persuasion led her to
positively perceive her teacher efficacy: “Just them [my teammates] saying, ‘You’re doing great. Everything’s okay.’ Just that alone is like, okay, I’m on the right path. I’m going the right direction” (Interview 1). Michaela then went on to explain how the trust fostered by the interpersonal relationships with her platooning teammates informed her teacher efficacy:

I feel like I’m more confident. I know that if I have a question or if I get stumped, or I’m stuck, or a kid does something that I have absolutely no idea how to handle, I have two people right there who in 30 seconds can give me an answer. In 30 seconds they can calm me down and say, “Take a deep breath. Keep going.” Have that ability to say, “You’re on the right track. You’re doing great things.” So I feel like it’s more like having cheerleaders behind me, telling me I’ve got this. (Interview 1)

Although already having an established relationship with Grace, Crystal commented on the importance of continuing to strengthen trust with both her new and old teammate when she shared, “We met to check in with our planning. It helps us rely on one another, if we have a struggle or we need something” (Reflection Journal). Michaela added,

Our meetings are not spent on personal relationships, but it [personal relationships with her teammates] has brought that connection with each other outside of school to know that they care about me, I care about them and what’s going on and how they’re doing and how their life is. And that helps build our confidence. (Interview 2)

With this level of trust, the teachers noticed they felt confident challenging and questioning each other without fear of hurt feelings or retribution. The feedback was then utilized by the individual teacher. Crystal shared this example:

When I came in Monday and I was like, “We’re punting. Our boards aren’t here for our project. I’m throwing out another project. We’re doing it today.” And they’re [my teammates] all like, “Whoa, whoa, whoa. Back up. You know what, let’s wait and see.” So they slowed me down. (Interview 1).

Grace also recalled how trusting her teammates allowed her to be transparent when she needed help:

I’m like, “I told you it’s gonna be hard for me. You guys got to help me with that. And they are like, Okay.” I went in with a couple of things that I knew that were just gonna
overwhelm me. It’s just being honest. I think we were able to do that with another, which is nice. (Interview 1)

These comments revealed the teachers found getting to know and trust each other on a personal level through platooning allowed them to be self-assured as teachers.

As noted, personal teacher efficacy is the belief related to a teacher’s confidence in her ability to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of her students. A teacher’s reflection on the four sources of self-efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social and verbal persuasion and psychological and emotional cues) can inform or develop personal teacher efficacy (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Therefore, the data revealed that each teacher in this study perceived that a foundation of trust and positive interpersonal relationships led to positive estimation of teacher efficacy.

New-To-Team: August-December 2018

New-to-team, the fourth and final subtheme, reflects a teacher joining a previously established grade level team. In the case of this research, Michaela was also new to platooning. Of the 37 coded qualitative comments in this subtheme, 17 of the comments (46%) indicated perceptions of collective efficacy. On the other hand, 20 of the responses (54%) referenced teacher efficacy. Table 4.12 illustrates the breakdown of positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy.
Table 4.12

New-To-Team: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
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<th>Subtheme New-To-Team</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collective Efficacy (RQ2) Teacher Efficacy (RQ1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Comments Positive Negative Total CE Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37 7 10 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data for the subtheme, new-to-team, shows similar perceptions of both collective and teacher efficacy while platooning with a new team member. The teacher efficacy data, however, reflect only comments from Michaela, the new member of the platooning team. The collective efficacy references are discussed first, followed by comments referencing teacher efficacy.

New-to-team: Collective efficacy comments. In support of collective efficacy within the fourth subtheme of new-to-team, the team frequently noted both the benefit and the challenge of welcoming a new teacher to a platooning team. Out of 17 responses reflecting collective efficacy, 41% indicated that being new to the team was positively perceived, while 59% showed being a new person on the team led to negative perceptions of collective efficacy.

When first realizing their new team member would be coming from a district middle school, both Crystal and Grace had mixed feelings. They were reassured that Michaela’s experience at the middle school teaching social studies would make her a good fit for teaching social studies and science within the platooning structure; however, they were worried about
their new teammate’s transition from eighth to fifth-grade. Grace remembered, “Who we ended up with [Michaela] – that could have been a whole different situation [if she didn’t teach social studies]. However, I do see her struggling just with the whole elementary thing, it’s just a lot of freaking work” (Interview 1). Crystal agreed, “You know, I think it’s hard with Michaela learning what a 5th grade expectation is. It’s evolving. So I think our expectations ... and our expectations across the board are different” (Interview 1).

Michaela also saw her transition to fifth-grade as a challenge and was worried about the expectations and content knowledge needed by self-contained elementary teachers. However, the idea of platooning appealed to her. Michaela shared,

I came into the year scared that I would need to learn all new curriculums, students, grade levels, parents, and as a result [of platooning], I was able to focus on a few areas to grow and learn versus them all. I feel confident that my team and I can work together in a positive way of keeping students first. I know that they support me and my decisions. (Reflective Journal)

Grace agreed,

Could you even imagine if she had to do all the subjects? It wouldn’t be good. She [Michaela] just can’t believe how much there is in elementary, even with report cards, and all the competencies, all the paperwork. She just can’t believe how much there is to do. (Interview 1)

As indicated in the narrative for the trust subtheme, the team got to know each other better and settled into the work after the initial impressions. Crystal identified the benefit of having a new teammate as a part of a platooning team:

Specialization has impacted our team’s ability because one of our teammates is new to the elementary level of teaching and this allows a lot of communication to happen all day long. I think if we were all teaching every subject with our “doors closed” the level of communication that is occurring would not be occurring. This communication creates cohesiveness and improves student learning. (Reflection Journal)

Later Michaela shared,
At the beginning I feel like I relied more on Grace and Crystal to get me through every day, and I feel like now I’m able to bring more to the table whereas before they were giving me the information that I needed. Now I feel like I can be a part of that team and give suggestions and talk about how things are going versus at the beginning I was just kind of trying to survive. (Team Interview)

While the data initially indicated Grace and Crystal were apprehensive about a new team member, both teachers commented on giving (and Michaela on receiving) positive verbal persuasion and physiological or emotional support, both sources of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

**New-to-team: Teacher efficacy comments.** As existing members of an established team, this subtheme’s data did not indicate a perceived influence on either Crystal’s or Grace’s teacher efficacy. However, in support of teacher efficacy within the fourth subtheme of new-to-team, Michaela commented on being new to both the fifth-grade team and to platooning. Considering 20 responses reflecting teacher efficacy, only 15% indicated being new to a platooning team positively informed teacher efficacy. On the other hand, 85% of the comments reflected a negative estimation of teacher efficacy. See Table 4.12.

Despite having the support of her teammates, Michaela expressed that platooning made her feel “stressed out and like she was alone on an island” (Interview 1). While Grace and Crystal were able to support Michaela in understanding fifth-grade, Michaela felt at a loss when it came to her need to collaborate to better understand the fifth-grade science and social studies curriculum. She reflected, “Their [Crystal and Grace] focus is math and reading and writing. So science and social studies is kind of that afterthought for them” (Interview 1). Since the team did not share content, meeting times were devoted to student needs (subtheme: communication focused on students) and other educational topics (subtheme: collaborative check-ins) rather than
subject areas. Michaela expressed missing the collaboration she had experienced when she taught middle school,

They [my teammates] both give me some ideas but it’s different. You know, coming from the middle school level, I had an hour every single day to talk with other social studies teachers about, “What’s going on in your classroom? What’s not working? What is working? What are we going to talk about in this unit?” There is not a connection about content here [Fox Creek]. (Interview 1)

While Michaela knew there were other fifth-grade teachers in the district teaching social studies and science in a platooning framework, being new made it difficult for her to reach out. She expressed, “Oh, so and so from this school is doing the same thing I am. So right now I don’t have that ability to reach out to other people because I don’t know who I’m reaching out to yet” (Interview 1). Michaela was hopeful the district would help her make these connections in the future. She shared, “so I’m hoping that as we [my team] move forward with platooning, they’ll [administration at the district level] start helping us make those connections and giving us time to meet and be together in the content areas (Interview 1).

The data revealed that although Michaela had the support of her team, which she perceived as boosting her collective efficacy, she negatively described her perceived teacher efficacy. In other words, she felt both individually isolated and collectively encouraged at the same time,

Sometimes I feel like I’m a lone island, but at the same time I feel like I’m so supported and I’m backed. So it’s ... I mean those are two opposite ends of the spectrum to be feeling two separate ways. (Interview 1)

Michaela’s comments indicate that at this time, a lack of mastery experiences or experiences with platooning due to being new to the team initially led to a negative estimation of her teacher efficacy. Therefore, at that early point in the school year, Michaela indicated she depended on
her teammates and her hopes for future content support from the district level as sources of her teacher efficacy.

Summary of Theme 3

In reviewing the theme of team through its subthemes of communication focused on students, collaborative check-ins, trust, and new-to-team, the findings indicated that taking the time to establish and continually strengthen interpersonal relationships while collaboratively working to meet students’ needs provided positive sources for both teacher and collective efficacies. On the other hand, the teachers faced a challenge when figuring out how a new member would fit into the platooning team at the beginning of the school year. Since platooning, a team-based organizational structure, required the teachers to work as a team, the new teacher felt supported by her teammates and perceived collective efficacy was boosted. At the same time, while the team met regularly to share expertise and student updates, teaching different content areas made it seem pointless to work collaboratively to improve content area knowledge and teaching skills. Therefore, not having a content area partner negatively informed a new teacher’s teacher efficacy.

Content Area Expert: August 2018 - March 2019

The fourth major theme was content area expert, defined as the domain of knowledge and skill chosen by a teacher participating in platooning. To qualify as a theme, I set a threshold of at least five qualitative comments. The theme was further categorized by teacher efficacy and collective efficacy comments (Table 4.13).
Table 4.13

Theme 3: Content Area Expert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Number of Collective Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Total Number of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Area Expert</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data coded for this theme revealed that teachers perceived being a content area expert led to a strong estimation of teacher efficacy. The data also showed that collective efficacy did not meet the threshold of five or more comments.

Content Expert, August – December 2018

The theme of content level expert was defined as an expertise of a body of knowledge and information in a given content area that teachers are expected to know to teach students. The qualitative data coded for this theme indicated that content level expertise was a much stronger source of teacher efficacy than collective efficacy. Of the 51 qualitative comments in this subtheme, only two of the coded responses reflected collective efficacy and, therefore, will not be discussed. On the other hand, the teachers described that being a content expert influenced them as individual teachers. More specifically, 39 of the 51 qualitative comments that represented this subtheme (96%) reflected teacher efficacy. Table 4.14 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.

Data in Table 4.14 indicate that comments reflecting being a content area expert indicated a positive perception of teacher efficacy. On the other hand, comments reflecting collective efficacy did not meet the threshold of five or more comments.
Content Area Expert: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Comments</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Content area expert: Collective efficacy.** Each teacher on the team taught a different content area. Crystal taught math, Grace taught literacy, and Michaela social studies and science. Of the 51 coded qualitative comments in this theme, only two comments referenced collective efficacy. Therefore, since the qualitative data for this theme did not meet the required threshold of at least five comments, it is not discussed.

**Content area expert: Teacher efficacy.** While the data did not reveal content area expertise as a source of collective efficacy, the responses did reflect teacher efficacy. Of the 51 coded comments in this subtheme, 49 comments (96%) referenced teacher efficacy. Of the 49 teacher efficacy comments, 92% indicated a positive perception of teacher efficacy and 8% indicated a negative perception of teacher efficacy.
Each teacher on the Fox Creek platooning team commented on feeling more assured when they were passionate about the subject matter they were teaching. Grace stated matter-of-factly: “The purpose [of deciding to platoon] was to teach a content area that you are passionate about” (Interview 1). Crystal shared that her passion stemmed from being able to teach math:

We decided that each teacher would have a content area, and I naturally gravitated towards math because I had taught the gifted math program for several years. So, I automatically said if I could teach math all day – that would be awesome. (Interview 1)

Crystal continued to expound on the importance of teaching a subject she loved:

I dislike [teaching] writing to begin with so therefore I feel like I’m not as good a teacher, and it’s such a struggle for me. I’m more passionate about what I teach [math] therefore I feel like I’m a better teacher. I feel a lot better as a math teacher. I feel more confident in my subject [math]. (Team Interview)

Grace, on the other hand, shared her passion for literacy:

I have always had a passion, ever since I chose to pilot reading workshop. I’ve always had a passion for teaching reading. That was almost like a given for me. I have my endorsement in middle school for language arts. It’s just been something that I’ve always favored. (Interview 1)

While Michaela was new to fifth-grade and platooning, she had always taught social studies at the middle school level. Her confidence was boosted hearing she would again be teaching social studies and the only new content area would be science. Michaela shared:

Like I said, I’ve done the same content the whole time, I’ve never done all content, and I will tell you, my fear when they told me I was moving to elementary school was I was going to teach all the content levels. My teammates gave me social studies to make it easy on me. So looking at it [the opportunity to platoon], saying like, “Okay, you’re just gonna focus on social studies and science,” was kind of like, “I can do elementary school. I can figure this out.” (Interview 1).

Once all three platooning teachers claimed their content areas of choice, they commented on the benefit of focusing on fewer subject areas. All three teachers expressed having only one
or two subjects allowed them to go deeper with their learning, planning, and teaching. Crystal commented on being able to focus on planning for math:

> It was really attractive to me to just have to worry about math. Now I can play with it, and you know where the pitfalls are, and you know where you can put some new finesse to it which is fun. (Interview 1)

In addition to learning from past experiences, Grace shared the benefit of being able to focus in depth on one or two content areas:

> I think it’s huge when you only have one or two content areas versus five or six. Being able to try to be the best in all of the content area is insane versus diving into one content area. I’m understanding it better and tweaking it and changing it with students in front of me. (Team Interview).

Grace further explained:

> I can spend more time planning right now, knowing that’s the only thing that I’m teaching. I can really look at it [planning for literacy] with a fine tooth comb versus if I didn’t specialize I can only put in so much time to this [only literacy]. I would have to move on, because I got to look at my math lesson now. Whereas now I could still look at that [literacy], and go, “What can I do here? What can I pull as another resource or whatever?” I can go above and beyond. (Interview 1)

Michaela also commented on feeling optimistic about the ability to intensely know and teach her subject matter: “My confidence was affected in a positive way because I truly felt I was the expert in my content area. I was also elated I didn’t have to plan for three other content areas!” (Michaela, Reflective Journal). In the end, Grace summarized the benefit of teaching within a platooning structure: “I think it makes you feel really good as something you do really well, versus kind of like jack of all trades, master of none. Where you can say, ‘Yeah, I’m really good in that area.’” (Interview 1)

In addition to the benefit of making one or two subject areas the focal point of a teacher’s learning, planning and teaching, the teachers also found it advantageous to teach a lesson
multiple times throughout the day. Crystal shared: “Teaching the same lesson three times allows me to question things that went well and didn’t, allowing me to immediately change it for the next group” (Reflective Journal). Grace agreed:

I just feel that there is so much value in teaching it three times a day, and how you can tweak it better and better every single time. And you could do it immediately, versus waiting a whole another year to come back to that lesson again, or whatever. (Interview 1)

In other words, reflecting on repeated mastery experiences with the opportunity to learn from mistakes boosted the teachers’ perceptions of teacher efficacy.

Summary of Theme 4

In sum, the participants’ teacher efficacy benefited from teaching fewer content areas than a self-contained teacher. Each teacher reported positive physiological and emotional cues when teaching the one or two content areas she was passionate about. This passion, along with the ability to focus on fewer subjects, enabled the teachers to plan and teach with more depth and, therefore, feel more confident in their ability to promote students’ learning. In addition, teaching a lesson multiple times also made it possible for teachers to reflect on and learn from mastery experiences, another source of teacher efficacy. In short, these sources fostered teacher efficacy and allowed each platooning teacher to express strong beliefs of confidence, positivity and success.

Needs of Students, August – December 2018

The fifth major theme was needs of students, defined as operating procedures and routines put in place to foster specific academic and behavioral skills needed for daily living or
social achievement. Within this theme, the data were categorized into two subthemes, each requiring a threshold of at least five qualitative data points: academic needs and behavioral needs. In addition, each subtheme was further categorized by teacher efficacy or collective efficacy comments or references (Table 4.15)

Table 4.15
Subthemes for Theme 5: Needs of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Number of Collective Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Total Number of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs of Students</td>
<td>Academic Needs</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behavioral Needs</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data revealed that academic needs more often led to the teachers’ estimation of teacher efficacy, while behavioral needs led more often to their perception of collective efficacy. The subtheme of academic needs is discussed first, followed by behavioral needs.

Academic Needs, August – December 2018

Academic needs of students were defined as operating procedures or routines utilized to meet or surpass student deficits in specific skills that impede academic learning. These deficits ranged from mild to severe, depending on the student. Of the 53 qualitative comments in this subtheme, 24 of the coded responses (45%) referenced collective efficacy. Likewise, the
teachers described that students’ academic needs also impacted them as individual teachers. More specifically, 29 of the 53 qualitative comments (55%) informed teacher efficacy. Table 4.16 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.

Table 4.16

Academic Needs: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme Academic Needs</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Needs</td>
<td>Deficits in specific skills that impede academic learning.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 4.16 indicate that teachers perceived academic needs as sources of both collective and teacher efficacy. The collective efficacy comments within this subtheme are discussed first, followed by comments referencing teacher efficacy.

Academic needs, collective efficacy comments, August – December 2018. When considering academic needs, 83% of the comments reflected a positive perception of the team’s collective efficacy. Conversely, 17% of the comments indicated a negative estimation of the team’s collective efficacy. During the team interview, Crystal discussed the benefit of being able to analyze student data and discuss academic deficits as a team.
The last time they [students] did Performance Series [district assessment] and we did all of our tests all in one day, and then the district came back and said, “Whoa, whoa, whoa. We didn’t like the scores. What did you do?” I think as we evaluated our scores and evaluated the needs of our kids, that strengthens us as a team and probably because we look at our group as a whole and not classes. I think that’s team building when we say, “Yeah, when I look at my lowest math kids or I look at my struggling readers,” those we look at as a whole, we don’t look at them as Michaela or Crystal or what have you. So, I think that strengthens us as a team. (Team Interview)

Crystal’s comment describes the team’s interdependence when it came to meeting students’ academic needs. Instead of placing blame, the teachers described students’ academic deficits as an opportunity to problem solve. Michaela expounded on Crystal’s comment by explaining how the team identified possible causes for the weak performance series data within the platooning structure:

When we pulled that data, and we looked at it, my group had the most amount of kids that scored significantly lower, and we had looked at, as a team, what could be the cause of that. We realized that my kids get reading and writing as their last switch every single day, well maybe by the time they get to reading and writing they’re already burnt out, they’re not learning that content. We noticed that Grace’s class has math at the end of every day, and her class was the lowest scores in math. (Team Interview)

After the problem and potential causes were identified, the team reflected on instruction within the platooning structure and how it might be tweaked to better support students’ academic needs. Through conversation, the team came up with a system to have students learn a skill from one teacher and then intentionally practice it with another teacher in a different content area. The team members found that teaching skills in one class and then reinforcing those skills in another class was an advantage of the platooning structure. Crystal discussed the benefit of overlapping academic skills between classes:

I think it’s powerful because another voice [teacher] is saying the same thing that sometimes comes across a little tweaked, a little bit differently, so I think sometimes maybe a student hears it differently or better or whatever, just a different way, to reiterate it. So, I like that process of it [the overlap between classes]. (Team Interview)
Michaela added a more specific example,

In terms of reading and writing, looking at those reading strategies, bringing them into science and social studies. They’re working on argument. Well, we’re working on argument too, so being able to make those connections from those kids versus, okay you’re learning about argument in reading and writing, here’s how you do it. Here’s how you do it in social studies and science. We talk about how you write a claim in reading and writing. How it’s the same here [in social studies]. We’re bridging those gaps and making those connections between each of the classes. (Interview 1)

Bandura (1997) defined collective efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (p. 477). In this case, the teachers believed they could persist together when their students were faced with academic deficits. More specifically, when working within a platooning environment, the teachers utilized their perceived positive collective efficacy to inform next steps (goal setting, effort, and persistence) in meeting the academic needs of their students.

Academic needs, teacher efficacy comments, August – December 2018. When considering the operating procedures or routines utilized to meet or surpass deficits in specific skills that impede academic learning, 76% of the comments referenced positive teacher efficacy. On the other hand, 24% of the comments described teacher reflection on academic needs leading to a negative perception of teacher efficacy. Once the academic needs were identified as a team and a solution was proposed, each teacher applied the proposed solution in her classroom. Often the solution involved the differentiation of content specific instruction. While the principal forbade them to form platoons by ability, the teachers shared they felt platooning was the perfect opportunity to group and teach students with similar academic needs. Grace noted the challenge of not being able to group by academic needs: “They [the students] don’t leave their homeroom
group. When they come to me they come to me as a homeroom. They stay together. It’s more
planning ahead of time knowing we’re gonna have more needs [in one platoon]” (Interview 1).

While also considering differentiation, Crystal shared her frustration with not being able
to ability group:

Teaching a class at multi-levels [instead of grouping by ability] makes me question how
good of a math teacher I am because I see the value of being able to take this group that’s
struggling with numeracy and build on the concept. I need to teach on their level, and
then be able to take this high group that can learn that in 8 seconds, and throw a problem
and have them fly with it. I’m struggling with that. (Interview 1)

Feeling that she was not able to meet the varied academic needs in her classroom, Crystal
problem solved with her team. Although they could not ability group for content areas, the team
decided to differentiate through the routine use of exit slips. Crystal stated,

The other thing we’ve implemented is having kids complete exit slips so we know what
they do and don’t know. So once a week I have a list of kids based on my exit slips who
come to visit me for an extra half hour. (Interview 1)

This solution made Crystal feel more successful in the classroom. She explained, “I am able to
pull a small group [of students with similar needs], and we’ve worked with ways to meet their
needs” (Interview 1).

In addition to differentiating instruction to meet students’ academic needs, the team also
commented on how the platooning structure supported more continuous and in-depth instruction.
Michaela commented about how platooning “has opened up for students to be able to have
science and social studies every single day. I know I have the consistent time every day”
(Interview 1). She expounded,

And so as far as science and social studies go, I think it [platooning] has given them that
option to dive deeper and to have those experiences every single day and to ask questions
and….Okay, we’ve had these questions at the end of the class period today. You know,
we’re not gonna wait three days to come back to it. You know, having the students to be
able to guide their learning and their interests and their questions to be able to answer
right away. Like I said, even if it’s the next day, they know that they’re gonna come back to it. (Interview 1)

Knowing a platooning structure provided protected time each day for chosen content area instruction encouraged a positive estimation of teacher efficacy, as the teachers were able to be both purposeful and responsive with their instruction.

While the teachers felt frustrated being unable to ability group to meet academic needs, their use of exit slips to differentiate for small groups of students along with guaranteed daily instruction in all content areas boosted confidence in their teaching ability. This boost can be attributed to the relationship between a teacher’s sense of efficacy and teacher behavior in the classroom (Guskey, 1988; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Milner, 2002). In other words, the teachers’ mastery experiences within the platooning environment (exit slips, differentiation and consistent time to teach) led to positive perceptions of teacher efficacy.

**Behavioral Needs, August – December 2018**

The subtheme, behavioral needs, was defined as the operating procedures or routines utilized to meet or surpass deficits in specific skills that impede behavioral and social achievement. As with academic needs, behavioral deficits can range from mild to severe depending on the student. Of the 106 qualitative comments in this subtheme, 58 of the coded responses (55%) referenced collective efficacy. In addition, 48 of the 106 qualitative comments that represented this subtheme (45%) indicated teacher efficacy. Table 4.17 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.
Table 4.17
Behavioral Needs: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme Behavioral Needs</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># of Qualitative Comments August 2018 - March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficits in specific skills that impede behavioral and self-help activities in daily life or social achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4.17 indicates, the number of comments on behavioral needs were greater for collective efficacy than teacher efficacy. The data also show that feeling they were meeting the behavioral needs of students led to the teachers to describe positive sources of both collective and teacher efficacy. As before, collective efficacy comments within this subtheme are discussed first, followed by comments referencing teacher efficacy.

Behavioral needs: Collective efficacy comments. Before the previous school year ended, word that behavior was an issue for this group of students traveled to the fifth-grade team through former teachers, placement cards, and transition meetings. Therefore, the teachers immediately pulled together to set up structures within the platooning framework to ensure behavioral success. All three teachers readily agreed that consistency was the key. Grace shared,
“Systems have to be in place and each teacher has to follow so students have clear expectations” (Reflective Journal Entry). Crystal concurred, “All teachers have to give them [students] the same message on expectations” (Reflective Journal Entry). Michaela was also on board with similar beliefs, “I think when we are all consistent it is easier. I think when we are not consistent it is harder. They [students] need the same message across the board to really be able to follow through” (Reflective Journal Entry). However, when considering both the self-contained and platooning classrooms, Crystal readily admitted that the platooning structure required routines that would not be necessary in a self-contained classroom,

The kids have got to be organized and bring all their stuff with them [when they go class to class]. That wouldn’t happen if they weren’t platooning because they wouldn’t have to bring it from their homeroom. And the homework might not get lost on the way down the hallway as sometimes it does. Or the time wasted going back to the classroom to dig it out of their backpack. So, that sometimes keeps them from being engaged or being able to start learning. It alters the classroom. (Interview 1)

Therefore, in August, the teachers discussed platooning routines that would provide a foundation for consistent and expected behaviors. Michaela explained,

The routine was a big one. So making sure you have your pencil ready to go, how we use a binder system that they travel with. So, they travel with all their materials. So knowing exactly how each kid’s binder was gonna be set up. In all three classes the binders were set up exactly the same. Looking at class supplies. So what supplies we were gonna have to keep [in the classroom] versus what supplies the kids were going to keep [in their binders. (Interview 1)

After determining the binder set-up, the team moved on to planning for quiet and efficient hallway transitions. Crystal remembered,

The transitions from down the hall and our classrooms aren’t right in a row anymore. So that’s challenging. That they have to pass by another classroom that is in session and the reading specialist’s room. So, I think we had to be a little more rigid and stringent and have taped lines, so they know where to stand and how to stand and what the expectation is. (Interview 1)
In addition to planning routines for materials, supplies, and transitions, the teachers also put a color-coded system in place for each classroom. Crystal explained,

> So I’m blue. I’ll know if I pick up something and it’s blue, it belongs to me. Even though I have green late slips. My late slips are green. Grace’s are yellow, and Michaela’s are pink. So they’re color-coded. (Interview 1)

Being a grade level in which each student has his or her own Chromebook, Grace talked about also planning routines for the use of one-on-one technology in the classrooms:

> We are just gonna keep them [Chromebooks] in our homerooms [not have students carry them from class to class]. We put three numbers on each Chromebook. We number the kids one through 80. Crystal’s got 1-30, I got 30-61 and Michaela has 62-80. When they go to the Chromebook cart there are three numbers associated with each Chromebook, so that we know we can go to one of those three kids if there is an issue. (Interview 1)

In August, after routines and expectations were determined, the team presented them to all 80 students at the same time so the students heard the same message simultaneously. Grace remembered,

> We all made sure in the beginning of the year we came together as a grade level several times. And talked to the kids on expectations, and what that would look like from classroom to classroom, and from teacher to teacher. It’s just spending that time upfront knowing what expectations are. Try to keep it as consistent as possible. (Interview 1)

After the foundation of behavioral expectations for routines was in place, the teachers watched to identify behavioral successes and areas of need. During their interviews, Crystal and Michaela shared behavioral deficits observed during the first three months of school. Crystal started,

> Students showed us through their behavior that it just wasn’t working for them. Transitions were rough, when they were done with that 90 minutes, and we are asking them to do a two-minute switch and get right back into 90 minutes, the switch was horrendous. (Team Interview 1)

Michaela offered similar observations,

> So it’s been an extra month of trying to do basic things like how to walk in the hallway,
how to stand in the hallway, how to transition into the classroom. What materials you’re supposed to need. Right? Which are basic things that the kids should get in the first couple of weeks. (Interview 1)

Due to the problems with behavior, the teachers often met to brainstorm possible solutions. They decided, as a team, to be even more vigilant when observing behaviors and providing feedback. Michaela explained,

So things that we thought we could be a little more lenient on like bathroom passes, switching to different classes. With this specific group of kids, we’ve learned that they need more structure. Like, there are very specific expectations, very specific rules, very specific consequences. And they’re gonna be the same no matter what class they’re in. (Interview 1)

All three teachers also indicated the importance of consistent language when delivering feedback. Michaela elaborated,

Even our language has to be the same. So, things like ... we say things like, “be at a level zero.” So our noise level should be at a zero. We have to use that across all three classes. Our transitions to get them back focused need to be the same through all three classes. You know, things that normally you’d be a little more lenient on each class might look a little bit different. With this group of kids, they need very, very strict consistency on everything in all three of our classes. (Interview 1)

When behaviors did not change, the team began to look more closely at possible causes. The first possibility identified was the 90 minutes of instructional time for each content area. Grace shared, “There were misbehaviors in terms of ability to focus. [They couldn’t] stay in their seat for that long [90 minutes], stay on a certain topic like math or writing or reading or social or science for that long, they lacked stamina” (Team Interview 1). The team determined that a 90-minute time frame for content was too long for students and led to disengagement and misbehavior. Grace explained, “The time right now with 90 minutes was too long, and we lost them. They were not engaged. It’s too long. We made changes to the timeframe within our school day in order to keep them engaged” (Interview 1).
One of those changes made it possible for students to earn 30 minutes of break time a week. Grace noted,

We gave them a goal, a weekly goal, if they make their weekly goal, then each individual class can choose what they wanna do for their 30 minutes. They brainstormed a list of things, so we voted last week on computer time, and what that would look like, with math games and stuff like that. (Interview 1)

In addition to 30 minutes of choice time, the teachers also implemented a grade-wide behavior system. When a teacher observed students following established expectations, such as quiet hallway transitions, work completion and listening, a construction paper turkey feather would be awarded and stapled around a paper turkey on the hallway bulletin board. Grace further verbalized,

We did it per class. We have a lot of kids that are just disrespectful and don’t want to listen, they just don’t feel they have to listen. Whichever class got the most feathers in the couple of weeks, and then they got Dairy Queen. Then we decided to bring it [the ice cream] into the lunch room, so that the other two classes would see it. I feel very strongly, and I think my teammates do too, that every kid doesn’t get a trophy. We taught them about sportsmanship, and things like that. They are at an age now where they should know that you are not gonna get everything that you want, and sportsmanship. (Interview 1)

The teachers perceived the incentive system as motivating the students to improve their behavior, so they planned to repeat the system before winter break – this time having the students collect paper Christmas lights. Grace noted,

They took it really well, most of them. I mean, there is always gonna be those kids. Then we decided, “Now, we have four weeks, between now and Christmas when we get back, winter break.” Now we did it differently, where they are gonna work collectively as a grade level. (Interview 1)

In addition to the behavioral system, the building principal also asked the teachers to work with the district behavioral specialist. Crystal recalled,

We’ve had the district, I don’t know what her title is, but some girl [behavior specialist]
came out to help us with that. And, we’re starting a new timer system for the kids to transition more efficiently. I think it’s more of the group than it was platooning, though. I think this group in general struggles with their own proximity and being responsible for themselves. (Interview 1)

Even with a grade-wide behavior system and collaboration with the behavior specialist in place, the team still noticed the students struggled with behavior. Crystal commented,

The kids’ behavior…that was a huge challenge this year, and it still is. The behavior has improved as long as it’s the three of us. Outside of our three classrooms, our kids can’t behave. They can’t behave in specials, they can’t behave in lunchroom, they can’t behave on recess- or if we have a sub. They can’t behave when it’s not the three implementing a very rigid structure upon them. The structure has become so rigid, so tight, and they can’t function outside of that. That structure is very rigid because of the behaviors. (Team Interview)

Although Crystal’s comment inferred that behavior in the classroom was improved due to a constant and rigid system, Grace began to suspect, due to continuing behavior issues, a lack of consistency among the classrooms:

I think some of us take it more serious than others, and some of us just our style is more loosey-goosey. We all made sure we came together as a grade level several times to keep it as consistent as possible. We had good intentions where we were going to CHAMP everything out but the reality of it was that wasn’t happening. I told them [teammates], “You guys got to be consistent.” But I don’t know if that’s truly getting done. (Interview 1)

Crystal also noted possible inconsistencies:

You know, I think it’s hard with Michaela learning what a 5th grade expectation is. It’s evolving. So, I think our expectations ... and our expectations across the board are different between Grace, Crystal, and Michaela. We all have different expectations of our kids. (Interview 1)

In sum, when discussing behaviors, the teachers indicated a common belief that behavior expectations needed to be consistently communicated to students and implemented across classrooms. However, each teacher’s differing interpretation of behavioral expectations may have led to mixed messages and inconsistent results when it came to student behavior. As student
misbehaviors continued, team members began to express doubt when reflecting on student behavior and estimating the team’s collective efficacy.

**Behavioral needs: Teacher efficacy.** When reflecting on the connection between grade-level and classroom behavioral expectations, all three teachers acknowledged that consistency of routines and expectations was crucial:

I believe that team specialization makes limits easier as the kids see them [behavioral expectations] displayed across their day [in each teacher’s classroom]. As long as the team is consistent with expectations and consequences, the student can better understand and stick with the limits (Crystal, Reflective Journal).

Michaela agreed,

I think when we are all consistent it is easier. I think when we are not consistent it is harder. They [the students] need the same message across the board to really be able to follow through. (Reflective Journal)

While Grace agreed with the importance of consistent behavioral expectations, she also acknowledged that “students are different and each reacts to their surroundings differently, therefore, team specialization impacts each student differently” (Interview 1).

Through reflective journal entries, the teachers identified the top three recurrent misbehavior observed in individual classrooms: 1) blurting out, 2) attention seeking behavior (making noises, faces, etc.), and 3) disrespectful actions and comments (Crystal, Michaela & Grace, Reflective Journal Entries). Therefore, after working as a team to identify behavioral needs and implement consistent routines and expectations within the overall platooning structure, each teacher spoke about how she brought overall grade-level expectations into the classroom to meet behavioral needs. To start, all three teachers commented on the benefit of posting the common grade-level behavior expectations in their classrooms. Michaela shared,

The ideal classroom that they [students] developed at the beginning of the year is posted
on the board (what it looks, sounds, and feels like). We also have non-negotiables that the team has put in place for each class. This consists of what materials they need to move from room to room, as well as, what should be completed before instruction begins. CHAMPS is used throughout their day to understand how they should be behaving and what to do if they have a question. (Reflective Journal Entry 1)

Grace expounded on the benefits of taking time to reiterate grade-level behavior expectations in the classroom,

Well, I think that’s where class management comes in, because when they come into the room, they have to know what expectations are because you could waste a lot of time getting them settled down, and getting them to start the lesson and stuff like that. (Interview 1)

While the grade-level platooning routines and structures provided the what of behavioral expectations, the how of these expectations looked a bit different in each classroom. Therefore, even though all teachers acknowledged the importance of a tight and consistent grade level behavior system, Crystal explained the discipline in each classroom reflected the individual’s teacher’s personality, style, and content:

My students have assigned seats; they have a set schedule that we follow each day along with CHAMPS to allow them to understand the expected behaviors during different parts of their lesson. Consequences are sometimes a simple stern look, a late slip to be signed by a parent, a comment from me about helping EVERYONE learn, a removal from their seat to a private part of the room or to the hallway to allow learning to continue. Yes, usually consequences are effective because the lesson is quick paced and they need to use their learning in the next part. Busy kids are usually well behaved kids. (Interview 1)

While Crystal utilized “a simple stern look and a quick pace” (Interview 1), Grace, on the other hand, focused on using the 30 minutes earned through the turkey feather/Christmas light incentive program to strengthen behavioral deficits: “Today we all played kickball together as a class to build that community within our homeroom. Because I was out there playing with them, they loved it. The kids needed to bond and decompress” (Interview 1). Michaela, on the other hand, “worked on changing mindset to focus on positive versus negative behavior which has
helped connect more with students” (Reflective Journal). All three examples illustrated how the teachers utilized autonomy when upholding platooning routines and expectations within their own classrooms. However, while each teacher individualized her classroom approach to behavior, all three addressed the need for continued consistency, “if one teacher is a little more lenient on expectations regarding expected behavior it can be challenging” (Grace, Interview 1).

When asked to describe how the students’ behavioral needs informed teacher efficacy, all teachers commented on the benefit of not having students all day. Crystal explained, “There are some kids that just drive me up a wall. The blessing is, I have ‘em 90 minutes. Sometimes you don’t connect to a kid, but you’re so glad somebody else does, you know?” (Interview 1) Grace agreed,

Well, I look at it this way. When you get you’re a [self-contained] elementary school teacher, you are stuck with that teacher all year. Whereas now, as a team with specialization, if we get a student that’s having a bad day, we only get them for 90 minutes. (Interview 1)

Michaela viewed the short periods of time spent with each teacher from the students’ perspectives:

Those kids can look at it that way, “I got this homeroom teacher, but at least I only have them for this amount of time and this amount of time, and then I’m gonna go see a different teacher.” I think that that’s a big plus. (Interview 1)

Grace further explained,

We [teachers] have bad days, they [students] have bad days. If they are not getting something in one switch they might go to the next switch and say, I’m just having a bad day, or it’s just a long time. A long day or whatever. Maybe a kid was doing something really well, or whatever, and then I might have just, didn’t say anything or I overlooked it, and then they go in Crystal’s room, and then Crystal is like, “Good job.” (Interview 1)

In other words, each teacher expressed the benefit of not being the only source of behavioral and emotional feedback for the students. The support of the platooning team, in turn,
provided each individual teacher with a sense of relief when realizing she did not have to meet the behavioral needs of each and every student. This analysis of platooning by the teachers led them to positively perceive their teacher efficacy.

When the teachers were asked if platooning made it easier or harder for misbehaving kids to have their needs met, Crystal reflected, “Both...because I don’t see them from the morning on, I do not always grasp what their day has been like” (Reflective Journal). Grace shared, “Could be both depending on the team. Systems have to be in place and each teacher has to follow, so students have clear expectations” (Reflective Journal). Finally, Michaela answered the question thinking more about things outside of her control:

Harder. The district mandates make our schedule completely inflexible for student needs. It pushes students to work without transitions longer than they are capable of. With more flexibility needs, would be able to be met more [behavioral needs] regularly. (Reflective Journal)

In sum, while the teachers verbally indicated the importance of consistency when platooning, continuing misbehaviors caused the teachers to pay closer attention to vicarious experiences to possibly identify the root of behavioral problems.

Summary of Theme 5

The teachers described working hard before and during the school year to implement structures and routines to support positive student behaviors within the platooning structure. However, inconsistent results and continued struggles made the teachers wonder what role the lack of consistency among the classrooms might play in the students’ misbehavior. This demonstrates that team members, while positive about the behavior systems put in place, began to doubt other members’ abilities to establish and maintain behavioral expectations within
individual classrooms. Therefore, the participants’ reflection on these experiences negatively informed collective efficacy and planted the first seeds of doubt as to whether the team could successfully platoon.

In addition, the teachers also identified that while a grade-level behavioral management system was essential, each teacher needed the autonomy to add her own spin to classroom behavioral expectations. These positive mastery experiences within individual classrooms, with informal feedback provided by students, resulted in a perception of positive teacher efficacy. In addition, the teachers also identified that while dealing with misbehavior was at times daunting, realizing expectations for behavior and emotional supports were shared with teammates fostered positive physiological and emotional cues, another source of teacher efficacy.

**Time for Planning and Preparation**

The sixth and final major theme was time for planning and preparation, defined as time allotted, available, or used. To qualify as a theme, I set a threshold of at least five qualitative comments. The theme was further categorized by teacher efficacy and collective efficacy comments (Table 4.18).
Table 4.18

Subthemes for Theme 5: Time for Planning and Preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Number of Collective Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Efficacy Comments</th>
<th>Total Number of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time for Planning and Preparation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4.18 indicates, the qualitative data coded for this theme revealed that time for planning and preparation, when reflected upon, informed both collective and teacher efficacy. However, the number of comments were greater for teacher efficacy than collective efficacy. As before, collective efficacy comments within this subtheme are discussed first, followed by comments referencing teacher efficacy.

Time for Planning and Preparation: August – December 2018

The theme of time for planning and preparation was defined as planning, scheduling or arranging when something should happen or be done. Of the 39 qualitative comments in this subtheme, nine of the coded responses (23%) referenced collective efficacy. Likewise, 30 of the 39 qualitative comments (77%) indicated teacher efficacy. Table 4.19 breaks down the positive and negative comments for both teacher and collective efficacy for this subtheme.

Data in Table 4.19 specific to time to plan and prepare indicated a negative perception of collective efficacy. Evidence also shows that data referencing teacher efficacy are divided comparably between positive and negative comments. Collective efficacy comments within this theme are addressed first, followed by a discussion of the teacher efficacy data.
Table 4.19
Time for Planning and Preparation: Positive and Negative Comments on Teacher and Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Collective Efficacy (RQ2)</th>
<th>Teacher Efficacy (RQ1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning, scheduling, or arranging when something should happen or be done.</td>
<td># of Qualitative Comments</td>
<td># of Qualitative Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>August 2018 - March 2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time for planning and preparation: Collective efficacy.** When considering the time needed to plan and prepare for content within a platooning structure, 22% of the comments referenced a positive perception of collective efficacy. Conversely, 78% of the comments indicated a negative perception. As a team of three, the teachers realized from the start that the time needed to plan and prepare for content areas would not be equal. Grace shared:

> I’m the one that I feel got the short end of the stick, but I’d still rather be doing what I’m doing than teaching math and teaching science and social studies, even though I know I got the short end of the stick as far as time. (Interview 1)

When considering planning and preparation in the platooning structure, Crystal explained the struggle of equalizing the time needed by each teacher to learn content and develop lessons:

> Well, we know we have to do social/emotional learning. Someone we have to fit in our LRC time. We have to fit in Too Good for Drugs time. We have to fit in a new handwriting curriculum. All those then had to get dumped into somebody’s content area [90 minutes]. Well, reading and writing is barely fitting in that 90 minutes. Math, it doesn’t make logical sense. It doesn’t marry well with it. So all of that got dumped onto
our science/social studies teacher [Michaela]. It is a lot to manage. And I think that we’ve [Grace and myself] kind of asked a lot of Michaela. (Interview 1)

Michaela agreed with Crystal’s assessment that some content had more “parts” (i.e., literacy instruction included reading, writing, conventions, and word study) and, therefore, required more time. The thought of adding more to her block overwhelmed Michaela:

They [Crystal and Grace] had asked me to look at the Patterns of Power book [lessons on conventions] and to add mentor sentences into my block [90 minutes], and I got to a point where I just can’t do the learning needed to teach conventions appropriately when I’m already doing the learning for two separate subjects [social studies and science]. It’s just not something that I mentally right now have the power for. (Interview 1)

When Michaela declined additional subject matter, Grace, who was already teaching reading and writing, two time intensive subjects, agreed to also teach conventions. Grace reflected, “I offered to take something off of her [Michaela’s] plate, and after I did I’m like, ‘Why did I just do that?’ Because I got the short end of the stick [planning and preparing for] reading and writing” (Interview 1). To make up the time now reserved for conventions during Grace’s 90-minute literacy block, Michaela agreed to provide practice time during her social studies/science time for students to write:

Our reading and writing teacher [Grace] took it on [conventions] to be able to do it. So that kind of messed her block up a little bit ‘cause that takes away from writing time. So, we’re gonna push a couple days a week, their writing, into science and social studies. So I’m not teaching the lesson. I’m just giving them the time to actually write. (Interview 1)

Michaela further explained:

Right now, the idea is that it’s just extra time in here to write. It’s going to take more work and time in order for them [students] to apply what they write to the social studies content. It’s going to take more work and time as far as my understanding the writing content and learning and how to implement in social studies, and right now we’re not at that level. By the end of the year, we could probably push that way but we’re gonna start with just them coming in here for extra time to write. And me learning kind of the lesson, the basic lesson, so I know how to support them. And see how that works and runs and how they respond to it, and then see if we can expand it. (Interview 1)
In this case, teamwork or Grace’s willingness to take on additional work so Michaela had the
time to adjust to and learn a new grade level positively boosted Michaela’s perceived collective
efficacy, while leaving Grace doubting Michaela’s ability to fully contribute to the team.

**Time for planning and preparation: Teacher efficacy.** When considering the time needed
to plan and prepare for content within a platooning structure, 47% of the comments referenced a
positive perception of teacher efficacy. On the other hand, 53% of the comments indicated a
negative perception. Grace first spoke about her planning and preparation time before
platooning:

> The planning took forever when you had to sit down and plan every single subject. Then
> the one year that I did take on the reading workshop as, what do you call it? Pilot. I
> would go home and probably spend, I’m not exaggerating, two hours on every lesson,
> prepare it, and getting the slides ready. (Interview 1)

Grace acknowledged that while platooning required her to plan for fewer subjects, having
previously taught the content helped reduce planning and preparation time:

> It’s knowing who is in front of you when looking at the content. And it’s been a year
> since I’ve put my eyes on it, too. I still have to go back, open up the Lucy Calkins’ book
> [literacy resource], and see what I underlined, and what I still want to highlight, and see if
> that’s still where I wanna go. It takes a lot less time than initial from a few years ago
> when I had to put everything together. (Interview 1)

In fact, Grace explained that time is less flexible when teaching literacy within a platooning
team. Therefore, she occasionally found herself not having enough time to teach what she had
planned:

> Sometimes it’s knowing where to cut back because there is too much, and what do I cut
> back, what don’t I cut back because I just don’t have time to do it all. I think it’s knowing
> what I have to let go. (Interview 1)

Like Grace, Crystal also reflected on the combination of previous experience with a content
resource and platooning:
One, I think there’s no way, especially with this being a new resource list year, that I would one, understand the resource as well as I do. Two, this year I am able to extend or give alternate ideas which I wouldn’t be able to fit in if I was busy doing all the other planning [for other subjects]. With platooning, I don’t mind pulling something like a problem of the week. I think if I was teaching like my regular [self-contained] class I’d be like ... I don’t have time. But now I do. So I have more time. (Interview 1)

While Crystal reported that teaching one content area allowed her time to more thoroughly plan and prepare, she clearly explained that she still had a similar amount of work:

It’s lessened my hours of preparation. [Planning and] prepping I feel like is less, but when I give a test like I did this week, I have 80 tests to grade or whatever. When I’m doing homework, I have 80 to do where you can get through 25 or 26 or 27 a lot faster. So I feel like I work the same amount even though when I really think about what I plan, I do plan less. But sometimes I feel like I work more. (Interview 1)

In addition, Crystal, like Grace, also noted less flexibility with time in a platooning classroom:

In a self-contained classroom, I could dictate when I teach and what. So [when platooning] that third switch [group of students] comes to me, I can’t say, “You know what? Tomorrow, let’s do math first.” So there’s more flexibility [with self-contained]. (Interview 1)

Crystal furthered described the lack of flexibility when planning for “extras” or non-content requirements within the platooning framework:

So you have no class team meeting time. There’s no time for an extra recess. If we have something special to pop in, there’s no time, or when we have an assembly. There’s no flex time to be like, “That’s okay, we can get ‘em all in.” There has to be new schedules developed for those times. (Interview 1)

Michaela also acknowledged the struggle with having more than one subject area and not having the time to teach what she planned. She reflected on the beginning of the school year:

This week we added in science to my block. It makes the time go fast and I am still learning how to manage the short amount of time we have for each thing [content area]. It makes the day go fast and I notice the thing that keeps getting cut during my switch is the Read Aloud. (Reflective Journal)
Being new to both the content and the grade level, Michaela also noted that platooning “has definitely made me schedule and plan more” (Reflective Journal).

When considering planning and preparation within a platooning structure, the teachers found the workload the same as a self-contained teacher. Teaching fewer subjects, there was less to plan and prepare; however, grading needed to be done for three classrooms of students instead of one. In addition, while teachers had protected time each day to teach their subject areas, they did not have the flexibility of a self-contained teacher to modify time frames of lessons. Therefore, when reflecting on workload, the teachers described platooning as both positively and negatively informing teacher efficacy.

**Summary of Theme 6**

The teachers discovered that within the platooning parameters set by the district (90 minutes for literacy, 90 minutes for math, and 90 minutes for social studies/science), the time needed to plan for the different content areas was not equal. When comparing perceived planning and preparation time, not all team members expressed the belief that time needed to plan and prepare should be shared comparably between the teachers. Therefore, the teachers’ realization of unequal preparation and planning time was expressed quietly during individual interviews and described a negative perception of the team’s collective efficacy.

In addition, the data indicated platooning required less planning and preparation time due to fewer content areas. However, since the teachers were responsible for more students (a whole grade level versus one self-contained classroom), the participants indicated more time was necessary for grading tests and preparing student materials. In addition, the teachers explained that the platooning schedule caused them to have less flexibility when implementing planned
content or scheduling non-content activities (such as recess or assemblies). After each teacher was able to witness the effect of a platooning schedule on planning and preparation firsthand, she was able to consider feedback from students, which in turn informed efficacy. Therefore, when considering their experiences with planning and preparation as a mastery experience, teachers perceived the time as both positive and negative influences on teacher efficacy.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings from the first data collection period (August – December 2018) regarding teachers’ perception of their teacher and collective efficacy when implementing platooning for the first time. The three participants were all fifth-grade teachers. Each completed a teacher efficacy scale, a collective efficacy scale, reflective response entries, and participated in an individual interview during this first data collection time frame. Findings for the second data collection period, January – March 2019, are presented in Chapter 5, along with the answers to three research questions.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS: JANUARY – MARCH 2019

This chapter includes the continuing description of the six major themes and findings to answer each of the three research questions. When coding the data, I found the emerging themes revealed a change in the platooning team over time. Findings for each theme from January to March 2019 are shared in the same order as in Chapter 4. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 are answered at the end of this chapter.

Administration: January – March 2019

As before, the first major theme was administration, defined as the people responsible for running a school district or a school building. The data were categorized into two subthemes: district level administration (i.e., assistant superintendent) and building level administration (i.e., principal). In addition, the data represented in each subtheme were further categorized by either teacher efficacy references or by collective efficacy comments or references. The subtheme of district administration from January to March 2019 is discussed first, followed by building administration for January to March 2019.

District Administration: January – March 2019

Since platooning proposals had been approved and the school year was in full swing, Crystal’s and Michaela’s attention was on the day-to-day work at the building level. Four months
into the school year, Grace, however, still struggled with the effect of district criteria on both instruction and students. Therefore, for the time period of January to March, Grace is the only one who commented on the district administration and these comments only reflected teacher efficacy.

District Administration: Teacher Efficacy

As indicated in Chapter 4 (Table 4.3), when viewing the effect of the decisions made by district administration about platooning through the lens of teacher efficacy, 100% of Grace’s comments described district administration as not supporting her in her teacher efficacy. As Grace reflected on the criteria requiring one teacher to teach all areas of literacy, she contended:

This year the district mandated I [the same teacher] had to do the reading and the writing, because that’s a lot of work. I was a little overwhelmed in the beginning. But then the more I thought of it I’m like, “Okay, I taught writing and reading [before]. So I will [now] have two more classes of writing instruction that I’m gonna have to take on. It was overwhelming knowing that I now had to do that. So my confidence at the beginning of the year was a little ... I don’t know if I was skeptical, but I’m like, ‘How is this gonna look? What is this gonna look like to cram all that content in a 90-minute block? (Interview 2)

Four months later, when asked about the district requirement not to split up literacy content, Grace answered,

It’s not fair! It’s frustrating. It’s frustrating, because no one ever came and talked ... No one from the district office] ever came and talked to us about specialization. Like they [the district] didn’t value us as teachers and that we knew how to make the right choices and decisions for our kids - the kids in front of us. That was very, very frustrating (Interview 2).

Grace, aware that reading and writing workshops at the fifth-grade level each required an hour of classroom time and did not typically run back-to-back, expounded on her feelings of frustration as she shared specific examples from her classroom:

This year we were dictated to put reading and writing all in a 90-minute block. That was
impossible. First of all, to do, to do it well. It made teaching more difficult. I had to cram that content [reading and writing] into that 90-minute block. The kids couldn’t sit that long. It’s way too much for them. They didn’t have the stamina. Even now they still don’t have the stamina. (Interview 2)

Grace then commented on how lack of autonomy concerning literacy time and content affected how she perceived her teacher efficacy:

I started to question myself. I started to question, ‘How am I gonna make this work? What is this gonna look like? Because it can’t continue this way. They couldn’t handle, they just couldn’t handle that long of a block with reading and writing. (Interview 2)

In the end, however, Grace determined that she did not have the authority to solve problems she continually experienced due to the district platooning criteria: “I had to stick with the district’s telling us that [the literacy block had to be 90 minutes. After I tried this for a little while, I realized the 90 minutes is the problem” (Interview 2).

While neither Crystal nor Michaela commented on the role district administration played in platooning during the second round of individual interviews, Grace’s remarks again reflected frustration. Grace’s discussions about mastery experiences in the classroom and accompanying feedback from students indicated she was able to identify both the problem and the solution. However, Grace also expressed feelings of helplessness when realizing she did not have the authority to solve the self-identified problems due to district platooning criteria. Therefore, Grace’s interpretation of her mastery experiences led to a negative estimation of her confidence when trying to meet the needs of students in her platooning classes.

Building Administration: January – March 2019

Building administration, the second subtheme, reflects building leadership, in this case the principal. During the January-March 2019 period, the comments indicate a change in teacher
perception. In other words, the data for the later period showed that experiences with building administration, as a source of teacher efficacy, were perceived more positively than as a source of collective efficacy.

Building Administration: Collective Efficacy

The data illustrated there were still doubts about the intentions of building leadership when it came to the platooning team of teachers. When asked if there was anything that did not support collective efficacy when it came to building administration, Crystal shared:

I think the doubt that came down from administration, that was consistent throughout the year that there would be some nitpicking and almost like really an effort to divide the teachers and pit them against each other. I just don’t think that’s our goal as teachers. I think our goal as teachers is to build one another up. I think the administration was a struggle. (Interview 2)

However, as the team (especially Grace) struggled with the district criteria for scheduling and continuing behavior issues, the team turned to the principal for help. Grace, who did not initiate comments about building administration during the team interview, remembered appealing to her teammates:

I was trying to get it [literacy content] all in. I’m like, “Guys, I don’t know about you, but 90 minutes with these kids.” It’s hard. It’s hard. Their stamina is just not there. So then that’s when we went to our principal. And then she was telling us, “Well, it [district criteria] says 90 minutes.” And I said, “Okay, what about this? What if we take 60 minute blocks?” And I said, ‘I’ll do the direct instruction for the writing, but then they’re gonna practice in their homerooms.” And she’s [the principal’s] like, “Okay.” (Interview 1)

Grace confirmed that after going to the principal, “the solution became more of a team solution and not so much something I had to figure out on my own. We convinced her, and then we came up with a new schedule” (Interview 2). After implementing the new 60-minute schedule, Grace
reported: ‘She told us we could try one or two days at 60 minutes. And now we’re all at 60 minutes, and the kids love it. It just was much better. I feel much better” (Interview 2).

While it was noted that the team still felt undermined by the building administration, data indicated that once the principal was included as a part of the team’s problem solving process, the resulting physiological and emotional support led the teachers to describe positive perceptions of collective efficacy.

**Building Administration: Teacher Efficacy**

Data representing building administration indicated that responses referring to teacher efficacy met the overall threshold of 20 comments for the full August 2018 to March 2019-time frame. However, there were only two comments from January to March related to building administration and teacher efficacy. These comments are quickly discussed as they lay the groundwork for other themes emerging from the January to March 2019 data.

The principal met with Michaela to share observations about her classroom management. Michaela recalled:

It started with administration and like I said, it kind of rocked my world. Like, ‘What do you mean? You’re not seeing respect in my classroom and I’m seeing these things. What do you mean there’s no classroom management?’ So when I brought it to team like this is what administration is saying, this is what I know and I’m hearing going on in my classroom, why is there such a disconnect?” (Interview 2)

As in Chapter 4 (see Table 4.4), Michaela’s comments continued to describe a possible relationship between teacher efficacy and collective efficacy. Here, Michaela reached out to her team for positive collective social and verbal persuasion after negative social and verbal persuasion (the principal’s feedback) led her to adversely perceive her teacher efficacy.
In addition, during her second individual interview, Crystal identified that while one of her teammates needed help, she (unlike Grace) was not willing to approach the principal, worried that it might negatively affect the teacher’s evaluation:

I don’t feel strongly that I should go to the principal who evaluates that person. That’s not what I’m looking to do, because I’m not looking to hurt somebody. I’m looking to help my students. (Interview 2)

This data indicated that even though the team’s collective efficacy was boosted when it came to the building principal, individual teacher efficacy was still negatively perceived.

Summary of Theme 1

Over a period of three months, only Grace was still feeling the effects of platooning decisions made by the district administration. When working in a platoon of three teachers, district guidelines made it impossible to divide content and teaching responsibilities equally among team members. Having neither the ability to make changes nor be heard by district administration led to a continued decline in Grace’s assessment of her teacher efficacy. However, when it came to the building administration, Grace felt she found positive results when she turned to the principal for help solving scheduling issues. While the other members of the team still indicated distrusting the principal’s motives, Grace saw the benefit of including the principal in team problem-solving meetings. This led Grace to reassess her estimation of teacher efficacy when it came to building administration. Finally, sharing the principal’s feedback concerning Michaela’s classroom management with her team set the stage for marked change in the team’s collective efficacy during the second half of the school year.
The second major theme is professional development, defined as specialized training intended to help teachers improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. The data were categorized into two subthemes: district level professional learning and building level professional learning.

**District Level Professional Learning: January – March 2019**

During this second data collection time frame, all qualitative data within this subtheme originated from two scales, five reflective journal entries, one set of individual interviews, and one team interview. District level professional learning was offered three times a year: summer, fall, and spring. At the time of the second data collection for this research, summer and fall sessions were completed and the spring session had not yet begun. Therefore, while the data in this subtheme met the overall threshold of five comments, August 2018 – March 2019 (see Chapter 4, Table 4.6), the teachers did not comment on district level professional learning during January to March 2019.

**Building Level Professional Learning: January – March 2019**

The second subtheme was building professional learning, or professional learning on content areas and/or platooning offered at the building level through the principal, staff members, instructional coaches, and building level school improvement planning (SIP) days. For the time period of January to March, Crystal and Grace were the only teachers who
Building Level Professional Learning: Collective Efficacy

When reflecting on building-level professional learning later in the school year, both Crystal and Grace commented, during their individual interviews, on the benefit of an outside party when platooning. Grace viewed an outside party as advantageous when she was not sure how to handle conflict within her platooning team:

[I’ve] had situations before. And I have to talk it through sometimes [with someone] before I just go and open my mouth. Because sometimes I say the wrong thing, because I’m pretty black and white. I got advice from my principal. And she said, “Well, why don’t you try this tomorrow?” (Interview 2)

Grace continued, “When something does not sit right with me, well, then that’s usually when I will seek out advice on how I should handle something that really bothered me” (Interview 2).

On the other hand, Crystal felt differently about the benefit of seeking assistance from a person outside the platooning team. While a third party helped Grace learn how to more successfully work with her team in times of conflict, Crystal described the need to help the team understand the reality of what was happening inside each teacher’s classroom. Ongoing misbehavior convinced the team members they needed continued professional learning in the areas of classroom and behavior management. Crystal commented:

It’s one thing to say, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, we’ve got to do this.” Great. Moving forward, realizing, gosh, we’re not there. So maybe it’s a lack of reflection as a team or the assumption [that we are doing what we said we were]. So it would help to have another party, third or fourth party to come in [to help reflect on team specialization]. (Interview 2)
For the second time that year, the building principal requested support for the fifth-grade team from the district behavioral specialist. Crystal recalled the experience:

That’s really what ended up happening. We had another person come to just reflect with everybody about what makes this work and not work, and then visit each person [in her classroom] and say, “Okay, this is where we can work. This is how we can help implement.” So that did happen. (Interview 2)

It was through the process of working with the district behavioral specialist, an outside party, the team became aware that the behavior system was not consistently being implemented in all fifth-grade classrooms. Crystal commented on the effect of this realization on her collective efficacy:

“If my teammate wasn’t doing what I thought, I’m not confident [in my team]” (Interview 2).

At this point in her second individual interview, Crystal stood up and closed her classroom door (Interview 2). Confident of a private conversation, Crystal explained that reflecting as a team with the behavioral specialist made her aware of Michaela’s struggles in her classroom. However, Crystal realized, since Michaela had not asked for help, it was not easy to get Michaela support:

I think as her teammate I can help if she comes to me, but I don’t think it’s my job to evaluate what and how she teaches. So if she comes to me and struggles with something, I certainly feel that’s my obligation to be a good teammate. But it’s not my job to say, “Hey, my students say this. What are you doing?” (Interview 2)

It was after this realization that Crystal identified the need for a third party’s involvement with a platooning team. Crystal expounded,

So, I went to an instructional coach voicing some concern over how my kids are learning [in my Michaela’s classroom], and they’re stressed because of the way they’re learning [with Michaela]. I do feel that our instructional coach should be responsible for that, but that once again goes to that piece of how do we know for sure what’s happening in that classroom [other than informal student feedback]? How do we know what learning needs to take place? (Interview 2)
Crystal explained the difficult situation that is created when a platooning teammate neither
acknowledges nor asks for the help perceived necessary by other teammates:

I think the hardest part is when there is learning to be done, such as learning about what’s age appropriate. If she [my teammate] doesn’t come to me, someone has to do that teaching. It’s affecting our students, so although I can approach it in a very subtle, kind way, it’s not my job. I think that’s a real big struggle, so I sought help in that. I went to our instructional coach. I still don’t think it’s perfect, but it’s improving. (Interview 2)

When seeking help from the building’s instructional coach, Crystal said:

I went to our instructional coach and said, “Hey, there has to be some learning done here. I can’t say it. I feel like it’s not my place to say, but I feel like it’s your job [the coach’s]. I can go the principal, but I feel like she’s going to come to you [the coach] so I’m circumventing that step.” (Interview 2)

In the end, Crystal expressed her frustration when she could not personally solve a problem she perceived as negatively affecting a whole grade-level of fifth-grade students: “I felt like my hands were tied, and that I felt responsible for those kids, but yet I was not the one to help her makes those instructional changes” (Interview 2).

Bandura (1997) pointed out that a team’s beliefs in both the teaching task and teaching competence are likely to remain unchanged unless convincing proof causes them to be reevaluated. Crystal explained her ongoing struggle with wanting help for Michaela but not knowing how to acquire it for her, had left Crystal feeling powerless to meet the needs of the team’s students. This in turn led to the “convincing proof” needed to reevaluate her perception of the team’s collective efficacy. In other words, Crystal’s reevaluation of Michaela’s teaching competence led her to doubt the team’s capability, as a whole, to positively influence student achievement.
Summary of Theme 2

The spotlight on Michaela’s classroom management, which started with the principal’s feedback, continued to shine after a behavioral specialist was brought in to help the team problem solve continued student misbehavior. The specialist, who provided both feedback and professional learning, caused Michaela’s teammates to reexamine prior vicarious experiences and consider seeking professional learning opportunities for Michaela. In addition, lack of mastery experiences, or being able to see firsthand whether Michaela’s classroom management was improving, led team members to doubt the interdependence within the group with regard to platooning.

Team

The third major theme was team, defined as coming together to achieve a common goal. Four subthemes emerged: 1) communication focused on students, 2) collaborative check-ins, 3) trust, and 4) new-to team.

Communication Focused on Students: January – March 2019

The first subtheme was communication focused on students or informal and formal conversations focused on the needs of students. For the time period of January to March 2019, Grace and Michaela were the only teachers who briefly commented on communication focused on students, but only Michaela’s responses were reflective of teacher efficacy.
Communication Focused on Students: Collective Efficacy

When thinking about communicating with teammates about their shared students later in the school year, both Grace and Michaela assessed the team’s growth. Once the principal agreed to let the team modify time frames to allow students to practice literacy skills in Michaela’s and Crystal’s classrooms, Grace viewed the time communicating about students as more productive:

Much better. Much better, because now I have certain days, we call them balanced lit blocks, those extra 30 minutes of day. And then now I tell my team, “Okay, I want writing done on this day, writing done on this day, independent reading done on this day.” I give them status of the class - This is what you’re [my teammates] gonna do during that. So I have to let them know. (Interview 2)

In addition to Grace communicating which literacy skills she would like the students to practice during their time in Crystal’s and Michaela’s classrooms, Grace also reiterated the belief that students benefited from having three teachers instead of one: “I feel that we all know our students. And if I miss something, maybe their [my teammates] eyes caught it, or this or that. So I feel that we know those kids pretty good (Interview 2). Michaela echoed Grace’s sentiments:

It helped to know that when I meet with my fifth-grade team, our focus is on students and what they need and what we need to do to make sure they get where they need to go. And the goal is always the same. What do the students need from us? What do we need to do? (Interview 2)

Michaela further explained the need not only to focus on the students but also to be consistent as a team:

Our conversations are always centered around our students and what they need and how we can get it to them. Our meetings and chats have to have a focus. That focus is normally problem-solving. It has really opened up some good conversations on how to help each other and be on the same page. It does have its challenges. We have to get on the same page a lot quicker and we have to agree to try something and stick through with it a lot quicker. (Michaela, Reflective Journal)
In addition, as a former middle school teacher, Michaela felt, at this time of the year, she could contribute knowledge about what the students needed to be prepared for sixth grade:

We had talked about placement going into middle school and what that was going to look like. It’ll [platooning] help them moving forward next year in middle school, which will be nice. And I could bring that to the table [team meetings] because I’ve sat in on those things [middle school transitions]. But we need more time to ease them into it, make sure that they’re [students] successful. (Interview 2)

Both Grace and Michaela indicated that while communicating about students was still an agreed upon priority, the purpose of some of the meetings changed from openly sharing classroom experiences and perspectives of students to sharing perceived personal needs (Grace sharing literacy lesson plans with teammates) and previous experiences (Michaela’s sharing middle school expectations). In other words, interview comments indicated teacher needs were now discussed as well as student needs. While the team originally met to “look at the team as a whole and the students as one class” (Crystal, Interview 1), the teachers were now using some of the time to share what one team member needed another team member to do. As the reason for meeting shifted, so did perceived collective efficacy.

**Communication Focused on Students: Teacher Efficacy**

During the second trimester of school, Michaela reflected that her confidence during team meetings grew because she had time to adjust to both a new grade level and platooning. She reflected:

Before I felt like I was kind of sitting and getting a lot of information. And that was, again, because everything had changed and I’m trying to feel out what my team is going to be like and I feel like we’ve gotten to that place team-wise where it’s a relationship, it’s beyond school. Now I know when I go into that meeting, I’m an active part of that meeting. (Interview 2)
In addition to building relationships with her teammates, it was also important to Michaela that she was able to meaningfully contribute when communicating about their shared students:

Relationships built my confidence in the team. I could have walked into this team, and they could have said, “Michelle, this is how we’re going to do it. You’re going to follow along with it.” And at first that’s how it was, and I was okay with letting it happen that way because that’s what I needed. Now, when I walk in, there’s been a couple of times when I’ve brought a student to the table, like, “I’m having concerns about this. What are you guys seeing? These are things I’ve tried. What have you tried?” (Interview 2)

Furthermore, Michaela indicated that team meetings to communicate about students became more planned as they discussed meeting standards for academics:

I think right now I feel the most confident because I can walk into our team meetings knowing exactly what we’re going to talk about, but also being able to bring something to the table, to be able to support and help. (Interview 2)

Although knowing how and what she could contribute before the meeting boosted her perceived teacher efficacy, Michaela again stressed the importance of balancing students’ needs with grade level expectations:

It helped to know that when I meet with my fifth-grade team, our focus is on students and what they need and what we need to do to make sure they get where they need to go. And the goal is always the same. What do the students need from us? What do we need to do? (Interview 2)

Being new and without the knowledge or experience to initially contribute, Michaela reported that knowing “exactly what we [the team] are going to talk about” nurtured her confidence. Feedback from experiences with her teammates (mastery experiences), along with a self-awareness of her emotional state (physiological and emotional cues), worked together to contribute to Michaela’s perceived teacher efficacy during meetings with her team to communicate about students.
Collaborative Check-Ins: January – March 2019

The second subtheme of the team theme was collaborative check-ins, or meeting to examine something other than student needs. For the second data collection time period, January – March 2019, qualitative data within this subtheme originated from two scales, five reflective journal entries, one set of individual interviews, and one team interview. While the data in this subtheme met the overall threshold of five comments, August 2018 – March 2019 (see Table 4.10), the teachers did not comment on collaborative check-ins during the January to March 2019 period.

Trust: January – March 2019

The third subtheme, trust, was defined as the firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something as well as strong interpersonal relationships (i.e., the strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people). For the second data collection time period, January – March 2019, qualitative data within this subtheme originated from two scales, five reflective journal entries, one set of individual interviews, and one team interview. During this second time frame, all three teachers discussed trust during their second individual interviews. Also, during this period, qualitative data for this subtheme indicated only collective efficacy.
Trust: Collective Efficacy

Now that the team had been together for six months, each teacher reflected on the reliability of her teammates. Crystal revisited her belief that trust grows as relationships evolve through open and honest communication:

I think in specialization it is all about the relationship of the team. I am more steeped in that understanding that it is truly about communication with your team and being on the same page. It’s not about teaching, it’s about an understanding that you’ll have an organizational method for the students to run their content, their organization piece, the behavior piece, sometimes the motivation piece that will be consistent across the grade. (Interview 2)

As the interview continued, Crystal commented on the importance of communication in more specific terms:

Communication, and I think it’s getting there because I think we all have to be willing to be vulnerable to another person. If something fails in my class, such as the kids struggling with behavior, I didn’t think of it as my problem, I thought of it as our problem. So the students, if they’re struggling within my classroom, I have to be vulnerable enough to be able to say, “Help me. What am I missing? How can I do this better?” And I think I expect it of all my teammates too. (Interview 2)

Crystal finished her thoughts by acknowledging transparency among her teammates can be hard, especially when a struggle needs to be shared:

I know I’m overbearing. I know sometimes it could be perceived as rude, as blunt, but I think we have a really honest relationship, so I think we’re open enough that although I can be really blunt, I hope they see as I’m going to call a spade a spade, and I think they do too. (Interview 2)

Although sharing a difficult subject, Crystal found a silver lining in having difficult conversations with her teammates:

It’s not personal. It’s always through the eyes of the student. What are we doing for the student? It’s not a personal attack. It’s, “Wow, look what happened with this student. We have to be better at this.” (Interview 2)
Michaela’s responses about trust, when interwoven with Crystal’s responses, told a more in-depth story. Michaela began by referring to the principal’s feedback about a lack of a management system in her classroom. Michaela reflected on sharing the principal’s evaluation with her teammates:

They [my teammates] wouldn’t have brought it up to me if they didn’t feel like they could trust me or they wouldn’t have brought it up if we couldn’t handle it together. The reason they brought it up and we had the conversation was, number one, ‘cause I brought it to them because I was concerned and to know that they were willing to take minute stop and say, “Michaela, you’re right. But at the same time, this is where you need to be, so we need to get you from here to here. Let’s talk about how to do that.” (Interview 2)

Like Crystal, Michaela came to the conclusion that trust enabled her to have difficult but beneficial conversations with her teammates:

A relationship, I would say it builds trust. Trust allows us to work together, to listen to each other. We have lots of conversations where teammates don’t want to hear what you have to say, and we have to have those tough conversations because we all have to be on the same page. And to know that we can have those tough conversations, but it’s not ... we’re not attacking you. We’re not coming at you. We’re not judging you. There’s obviously a problem. We need to fix it. How are we going to go about it? (Interview 2)

Grace felt, on the other hand, that her trust in the team, as a whole, was slowly deteriorating. She started the interview by recognizing that at one point all team members had verbally agreed to 90 minutes for content area instruction. However, Grace had doubts about whether her teammates were following the literacy lesson plan she provided for the students’ practice time in their classrooms:

I’m glad that we were all on the same page. I mean, we truly were all on the same page with the 90-minute switches. So now, I mean, I still question, “Is that really getting done?” I don’t know if it’s a lack of trust or just accountability ... I mean, I guess accountability is trust, right?” I mean, I trust them, I just want to make sure that they’re doing it. I don’t always have confidence that the team as a whole is doing the best they can for those, what, 80 kids? (Interview 2)

Grace explained further:
Oh, I have all the confidence in my teammate with math. And, again, it goes back to, I think, because we have a new teammate that I kind of questioned, and we [she and Crystal] both have questioned how she [Michaela] flew through social studies so fast. (Interview 2)

When she needed evidence to confirm or deny vicarious experiences, Grace questioned their new teammate:

Some of the activities that she’s choosing to do, I believe are a little higher level than these kids can handle. Because she came from eighth grade social studies, so we questioned, we kind of brought it to her attention. We asked, “Why are you having them do these worksheets?” or “Do you think this is best practice?” (Interview 2)

While Grace perceived Michaela as being open to her teammates’ questioning her practice, Grace was not convinced Michaela was committed to change: “I think she [Michaela] takes our conversations to heart a lot, but sometimes there’s no follow through. And it’s a little frustrating” (Interview 2). Therefore, to ensure that Michaela was fulfilling the team’s commitments, Grace began to provide written expectations of the literacy work that needed to be done in her teammates’ classrooms:

When I saw the lack of consistency it made me concerned about whether she’s [Michaela’s] following through on other things.” So I try to give stuff that helps accountability. I gave them [teammates] a red folder and a status of the class. I go, “So if you could check back with me, I need you to go around and I need you confer real quick, [and find out] do they [students] have a thesis?” So that I have at least some accountability from them [my teammates] to make sure it gets down the way I want it.” (Interview 2)

Grace finished by explaining why she went to the extra effort to make sure her teammates were following through:

Because I feel that even though that’s [literacy practice] sitting in their classrooms, I’m still responsible for it, because I’m the reading and writing teacher. I just want to make sure that that’s not a reflection on me not doing the best job. (Interview 2)

Although Crystal saw the benefit of having trusting conversations with her teammates, she also began to wonder about the results of those conversations. Like Grace, Crystal’s
vicarious experiences made her question the implementation of agreed upon routines and expectations within the platooning structure:

Getting these kids to where we they are, and I’ll say we’re finally at a point where we should have been in November, was long. I don’t know ... it probably did not have to do with platooning, but that we shared kids. We [the team] built a common understanding, and we set those parameters but they weren’t being followed in each classroom, and you [an individual teammate] don’t know that. You don’t know what goes on in another classroom. But then as things don’t improve or have a normal flow of a school year, you start to question it. So I think even though we said we were tight at the beginning and we had set parameters, it just wasn’t happening. (Interview 2)

As Crystal began to ponder the reason her students still grappled with behaviors and routines, she questioned her, and her teammates’ role in platooning:

So I question how things are done [by teammates], and I always struggle with that because I always want to do it [platooning] a certain way. Letting that go was fine, because I have one subject and that’s a beautiful thing. But when it’s [platooning] not done well, it is hard. It’s hard to know that your kids aren’t getting the experience they could get with a subject. (Interview 2)

While Crystal tried to view her current mistrust matter-of-factly, the thought of not being able to depend on her team the following year caused her to express the following:

So there was a subject I didn’t teach. So I do have lack of confidence? I do have a lack of confidence [about whether the kids were taught that subject well], but it’s also not the end of the world, and they’re going to be fine without it. Does it make me question for next year ... there we go ... does it make me question for next year whether or not I want another set of kids not getting what I feel would be valuable? That will be different with another year because I’m really speaking about a new teacher. (Interview 2)

Crystal continued:

Going into next year, I would not want my kids to have that experience again, meaning I would not continue with team specialization if I knew it would be a repeat of this year because I felt like my kids [students] really did miss out on some experiences. My kids were asked to learn in a way that I think was not age appropriate. (Interview 2)

Crystal summarized:

That is the rock and the hard place, because when you’re team specializing, my homeroom class is my responsibility but I’ve given that up by specializing and putting
my trust that she [Michaela] will do the best job. I think the hardest part is when there is learning to be done, the teammate [Michaela] needs to learn. It’s affecting our students, so although I can approach it in a very subtle, kind way, it’s not my job [to ensure she is doing her part]. I think that’s a real big struggle. (Interview 2)

These examples from January to March 2019 show Grace and Crystal began to negatively perceive collective efficacy due to vicarious experiences with Michaela and ineffective social and verbal persuasion. This demonstrates that although the team of teachers cultivated trust through communication and interpersonal relationships, Crystal and Grace no longer (due to feedback from both Michaela and the students) firmly believed in the reliability and ability of a teammate. This distrust negatively informed the team’s collective efficacy or their confidence in their ability as a team “to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce positive levels of attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477).

New-To-Team: January – March 2019

The fourth subtheme, new-to-team, was defined as a teacher being new to both the grade level team and platooning. The qualitative data for this subtheme, January – March 2019, originated from two scales, five reflective journal entries, one set of individual interviews, and one team interview. During this time period, all three teachers discussed having a new team during their second individual interviews.

New-to-Team: Collective Efficacy

In support of collective efficacy with the fourth subtheme of new-to-team, the two veteran teachers on the team, Crystal and Grace, shared their thoughts about bringing a new team
member into the world of platooning. Grace spoke specifically about her experiences with Michaela:

The struggle I had, and I think Crystal can speak to this, was our new teammate not teaching elementary school. That was huge. And she had different expectations. She had different philosophies. (Interview 2)

As Grace reflected on the school year, she determined that part of the challenge was the professional learning she perceived Michaela needed as a new member on the fifth-grade team:

“I think because she [Michaela] had that year of learning, that learning curve, it affected our team specialization” (Interview 2). Grace further explained the difference between having a new team member on a self-contained team versus a team that had platooned:

If we did not platoon and there was a new team member, I would want to help her in any given opportunity, but then it kind of goes back to, “That’s your [self-contained] classroom, this is my [self-contained] classroom.” Whereas now [with platooning] this is all of our kids. We’re responsible for all of our kids. I don’t look at it as, “Well, this is my classroom. That is your classroom.” (Interview 2)

Crystal, on the other hand, took a more global view as she considered the effect of a new teacher on a platooning team. Crystal explained what could be learned:

It is something else we had to learn. I think I questioned how do we acclimate teachers into a school? And how do we acclimate a teacher into a team? And how do we do that learning? There’s a million things to know. Well how could we improve on that? How can we improve on integrating our teachers into the culture and climate of the school, and our beliefs of how things should run, and then follow through with that, follow up with them? (Interview 2)

While the data from August to December 2018 initially indicated Grace and Crystal were apprehensive about a new team member, both teachers commented in their first individual interviews about providing Michaela with verbal persuasion and physiological or emotional support, both sources of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997). However, during the second round of individual interviews from January to March 2019, both Crystal and Grace shared they were
now grappling with having a new team member. As reflected in the data, the challenge came from sharing students with a new team member with different expectations and philosophies (Grace, Interview 2). Therefore, the veteran team members’ analysis of mastery experiences and vicarious experiences led the two team members to negatively perceive their collective efficacy during this time frame.

**New-to-Team: Teacher Efficacy**

As existing members of an established team, this data coded for this subtheme did not reflect comments from Crystal or Grace. However, in support of teacher efficacy within the fourth subtheme of new-to-team, Michaela’s comments, during both data time periods, reflected being new to both the fifth-grade team and to platooning. After six months, Michaela ruminated on her transition to the Fox Creek fifth-grade team and platooning:

> [Being new] is a combination of not being prepped and ready to go and understand the content enough to be able to switch it to what it needs to be. It’s a combination of, “Here’s what we’ve done in the past,” and realistically learning two contents, I kind of need to go with what’s been done in the past so I can stay afloat. And then not knowing fifth-grade - what expectations are and what they’re [students] capable of. (Interview 2)

Despite the original feeling of being unprepared, Michaela perceived that platooning, which required working closely with her teammates, had minimized her stress:

> I think that this [platooning] was a good steppingstone [for a new person]. I had so many changes between moving from eighth grade to fifth-grade, moving schools, new team, new curriculum, but it was a smaller change than it could have been and there was more support for what I didn’t know. (Interview 2)

While platooning allowed Michaela to take a “smaller bite” out of fifth-grade and teach fewer content areas than a self-contained teacher, she still felt apprehension about not knowing how things would work:
Coming in, until I could feel out my new team, I wasn’t sure what was going to happen. With team specialization, you work so closely with the team, and coming into a team that’s kind of already established and what is that going to look like as I walk into it was a little nerve wracking at the beginning. (Interview 2)

However, after time passed, Michaela expressed feeling more acclimated and in control:

At the beginning of the year, I didn’t feel like I was at an equal level because of all the changes I was going through being new to the school and the grade level. They’re already established, and I’m trying to figure it out. Whereas now I feel like we’re all on the same playing field. (Interview 2)

In the end, Michaela summarized her thoughts: “Not having that knowledge, whether it’s knowledge about the content, about the kids, about the grade level, it really affected my confidence the most” (Interview 2).

The realization that lack of knowledge (mastery experiences) is what discouraged Michaela’s teacher efficacy as a new-to-team teacher connected Michaela’s comments to Crystal’s and Grace’s. All three teachers (including Michaela herself) indicated that Michaela needed support and learning, not just to know fifth-grade curriculum but also to understand how best to mesh beliefs and philosophies for the benefit of both the team and the students. This brings to mind the questions Crystal asked in the previous section (How do we acclimate teachers into a school? And how do we acclimate a teacher into a team? And how do we do that learning? How can we improve on integrating our teachers into the culture and climate of the school, and our beliefs of how things should run, and then follow through with that, follow up with them?) and how the answers to those questions may have positively informed both the team’s collective and teacher efficacy.
Summary of Theme 3

By January, Michaela felt more confident with the expectations of fifth-grade curriculum when she expressed she was now on the same playing field as her teammates (Interview 2). However, Michaela was unaware her teammates were struggling with perceptions that she was not meeting agreed-upon-expectations as a fifth-grade teacher or as a platooning teammate. Despite Michaela comments about feeling more efficacious during the second part of the academic year, her teammate’s vicarious experiences led them to doubt the team’s collective ability to platoon.

Content Area Expert: January – March 2019

As in Chapter 4, the fourth major theme was content area expert, defined as the domain of knowledge and skill chosen by a teacher participating in platooning. For the second data collection time period, January – March 2019, qualitative data within this subtheme originated from two scales, five reflective journal entries, one set of individual interviews, and one team interview. As a reminder, while the data in this theme, August 2018 – March 2019, met the overall threshold of five comments, the teachers’ responses, January – March 2019, did not reflect collective efficacy, only teacher efficacy.

Content Area Expert: Teacher Efficacy

As indicated in Chapter 4 (Table 4.14), when considering the opportunity to be a content area expert at the elementary level, 92% of the comments referenced teacher efficacy. As
Crystal reflected on only being responsible for teaching math to all fifth-graders, she realized the need to stay current in her content area:

[Her content area of math] should be rich, and it should be varied, and it should be meaningful. So even when I’m looking at math, this being the second year of implementing this resource, I’m still feeling like it’s a little dry and I’m working now with our math specialist and saying, “Hey, we need more investigation. We need more open-endedness. How can we implement this?” And I’m hoping in the next couple of weeks that we can grow that. (Interview 2)

Crystal explained how platooning encouraged her continued growth as a math teacher:

“So I feel really lucky because in platooning I can take the time to delve in and critique what works and what doesn’t work, and say, “Hey, I have time to change this” (Interview 2).

Instead of being ready to do more professional learning, Grace, after teaching all the literacy subjects: reading workshop, writing workshop, and word study, felt differently:

[I’m] Exhausted. Exhausted. It’s just exhausting. I’ll walk into my teammate’s room [and] she’s sitting down at a desk, and she is able to go to LRC [because her teammates have less content to teach]. I don’t have those luxuries. So that kind of gets a little bit under your skin, but you gotta stay focused. Because I still wouldn’t trade it. I still wouldn’t trade it for teaching all content areas. (Interview 2)

Despite being tired, Grace explained the benefit of platooning when it came to being a content area expert:

Well, I mean, every day when I did teach all the subjects, sometimes you’d have put a little bit more time into finding a resource or whatever for reading or writing, but then you kind of slacked with math and you didn’t take it to that next level and you’re like, “Ah, that’s good enough,” because you ran out of time. (Interview 2)

Additionally, as a new teacher, Michaela was feeling more confident. After immersing herself in fifth-grade social studies, she was able to make connections to the eighth grade content she used to teach:

We [Michaela and her fifth-graders] just got to the point in social studies where we’re talking about government systems and that’s the first quarter of eighth grade. I have background knowledge in it. I know what the expectations are going to be when they get
to middle school for government. And it was the ability for me to already know the content to come in and focus on some other things with them, like academic vocabulary, to be able to focus on how to create a main idea, how to read complicated texts when we’re looking at primary sources. And so it wasn’t just, “Here’s the content.” It was really a switch to, “I can actually teach you how to learn now.” (Interview 2)

Like her teammates, Michaela noted that the opportunity to have and reflect on mastery experiences with content allowed her to positively perceive her teacher efficacy:

I think that it [knowing the content] set me free. Having a background in the content allowed me to allow them [the kids] to control their learning, and we can focus on things that they were interested in, the questions that they had, and move forward with that, along with looking at performance series data, to identify their struggles. Having the time [to focus on fewer subjects] to pull all that in, gave me the ability to do more than just give them information and hope they got it. (Interview 2)

In other words, while platooning was not viewed as less work, the teachers noted their work was more focused, and the teachers found themselves able to meaningfully consider instructional strategies and students’ learning needs.

**Summary of Theme 4**

In summary, all three teachers described a boost in teacher efficacy given the ability to be content area experts within the platooning structure. Through the opportunity to be content area experts, the teachers shared their teacher efficacy was informed by two different sources. First, the teachers indicated they were able to deeply undergo and reflect on mastery experiences with one content area versus multiple ones. In addition, while Grace expressed that teaching, whether as a self-contained or platooning teaching, was exhausting, all three teachers noted that teaching fewer content areas positively affected their stress levels. Therefore, the teachers’ description of physiological and emotional cues when being responsible for fewer subject areas, indicated a positive estimation of teacher efficacy.
The fifth major theme was needs of students, defined as operating procedures and routines put in place to foster specific academic and behavioral skills needed for daily living or social achievement. After establishing themselves as a platooning team and noting the benefit of sharing information, the teachers realized conversations about students in different groups or platoons could be categorized by their academic or behavioral needs. As a reminder, each subtheme included comments about the structures, systems, routines, and schedules the team put in place to meet students’ academic and behavioral needs. In addition, the data were further categorized by either collective efficacy comments or teacher efficacy comments.

**Academic Needs, January – March 2019**

The first subtheme was academic needs, or the operating procedures or routines utilized to meet or surpass student deficits in specific skills that impeded academic learning. Within this subtheme, all qualitative data originated from two scales, five reflective journal entries, one set of individual interviews, and one team interview, collected January – March 2019. While the data in this subtheme met the overall threshold of five comments for August 2018 – March 2019 (see Table 4.16), the teachers did not comment on academic needs during the January to March 2019 period.

**Behavioral Needs, January – March 2019**

The behavioral needs of students were defined as the operating procedures or routines utilized to meet or surpass deficits in specific skills that impede behavioral and social
achievement. As with academic needs, behavioral deficits ranged from mild to severe depending on the student. Within this subtheme, the teachers explained how students’ behavioral deficits within a platooning environment affected both collective and teacher efficacy. During January to March 2019, all three teachers commented on behavioral needs. Their responses reflected both teacher and collective efficacy.

Behavioral Needs: Collective Efficacy

At this point in the school year, the fifth-grade team noted the grade level students as a whole were still grappling with behavioral deficits. While problem solving behavior deficits were considered a team responsibility earlier in the year, the teachers now indicated the possibility of inconsistent viewpoints. In fact, all three teachers noted the importance of consistent expectations in their reflective journal entries. Grace explained:

I feel that the structure of team specialization has to have clear expectations. All teachers have to give them the same message on expectations! Each student needs to know what they are in EACH classroom. We are struggling a little this year because I feel this is not looking the same in each class. (Reflective Journal)

Crystal agreed:

I believe that team specialization makes limits easier as the kids see them displayed across their day. As long as the team is consistent with expectations and consequences, the student can better understand and stick with the limits. (Reflective Journal)

Michaela reiterated:

I think when we [the team] are all consistent it is easier. I think when we are not consistent it is harder. They [the students] need the same message across the board to really be able to follow through” (Reflective Journal).

While all members of the team commented on the importance of consistent routines, expectations and structures, they began to doubt their teammates were following through with
their verbal commitments. Crystal, acknowledging the continued student misbehavior, reflected on the possible origin of inconsistencies among classrooms:

Students misbehavior patterns seem to become more evident as the school year progresses, but I’m also now aware of each teacher’s perception. Some behaviors that I find easily nipped or ignored can really bother some of my teammates. The need for intervention of behaviors isn’t as strong to me, sometimes, as it is to teammates. Maybe it is the content we teach as mine is intensive and demands concentration with little group projects. Other teachers with subjects requiring such activities may see behaviors I don’t. (Reflective Journal)

Michaela, also aware of inconsistencies, explained why one teacher might be doing one thing while her teammate was doing another:

We face a lot of challenges. We have a really rough group this year, at this point. And I think one of the hardest challenges as a team has been, for a while, we were looking at individually, “Well, in my classroom things are going like this.” “In my classroom, things are going with this. Well, I do this and it seems to be working well.” “I do this and it seemed ...” We [the team] were so separated even though we were together and supporting each other. And I think what the challenge was when something was working well in my class, well, why isn’t everybody else doing that? (Interview 2)

Michaela further expounded:

We were able to problem solve, and then that was kind of the tipping point of knowing we need to all do this. It’s not just, yes, it was brought up for me and I have to make this change and I have to go down this route. But it almost opened the eyes to each of us doing our own thing isn’t working. It started in my classroom, but it’s different in each classroom, and maybe what we need to do now is share all the strategies that we use. Let’s make sure we all use consistent strategies. Let’s start changing it so we’re all consistent. (Interview 2)

Despite her struggles, Michaela decided to learn from past mistakes:

When you get kind of thrown into all the changes I was thrown into and then you have kind of a rough group, you don’t realize that you start down that slope of just looking at the negative. As a team, when we made the decision to stop looking at the negative and start looking at the positive, as a team, we became stronger. Our conversations had changed. Things we were looking at was even with that kid that we struggle every single time, like, “You’re never gonna believe what he did for me today. You’re never gonna believe what happened ...” (Interview 2)

For Michaela, the ending was a happy one:
It built our confidence as a team. Like, “Okay we’re on the right track. Here’s what we need to do.” So then we started making plans like, “Okay, let’s do class competitions to see following expectations, ‘cause that seems to be a hard part.” So we came up with a plan for that and the kids jumped on it. Then we came up with, “Okay, now that they could do it individually as classes, let’s see if we can do it together as a whole fifth-grade.” And they were able to do that and they were able to show us that they could do that. And then we focused on, “Okay, so they understand the expectations. Now we need to move towards kindness.” (Interview 2)

Grace did not share Michaela’s positive outlook when she succinctly noted: “There are inconsistencies in terms of the classrooms and the messages that are being sent to kids” (Interview 2). Grace expressed that her doubt, continually fed by reflections of vicarious experiences (student behaviors and comments), led to frustration and negative perceptions of her collective efficacy.

Behavioral Needs: Teacher Efficacy

Grace’s reflection on the behavioral needs of the students during January to March 2019 was very brief and to the point. When asked about the current behavioral needs of the students, she expressed:

I feel that I have a huge responsibility. Huge. Not that you don’t with your homeroom, but it’s like you have to be accountable to every single one of those 80 kids. I know those kids inside and out. (Interview 2)

While Michaela agreed with Grace’s sentiment, she also acknowledged her struggle with classroom management:

I’ve never had a problem with classroom management. That has been one of my strong areas, and student respect and rapport has always been one of my strongest areas, and this group has pushed that limit and it’s not just the group, it’s coming down to fifth-grade, learning what fifth-grade expectations are versus my eighth grade expectations, and that kind of stuff. To be told that my classroom management isn’t up to par was a little personal. (Interview 2)
After sharing her classroom management challenges with her teammates, Michaela was at first taken aback by their response:

Then they [my teammates] had to have that hard conversation with me. Like, “Michaela, what you’re doing, it’s not appropriate for these kids.” And that was like the second hit. The first one was, you have none [classroom management]. You’re failing at this is. It’s how it felt, and the second one was like, “You’re not where you need to be for fifth-grade.” (Interview 2)

However, after time to process the feedback, Michaela used it to persevere: “It built it [my confidence up]” (Interview 2). In other words, Michaela viewed the feedback, while uncomfortable to hear, as beneficial to growth in her new position as a platooning fifth-grade teacher.

Summary of Theme 5

The data revealed that continued behavioral needs led the teachers to negatively perceive their collective efficacy (see Table 4.15). While all teachers expressed the same beliefs when it came to consistent grade-wide behavioral routines, expectations and structures, the teachers began to doubt the team’s commitment when student misbehavior did not improve over time. While one teacher viewed the problem as a learning experience, another teacher on the team expressed that a teammate had yet to put agreed upon structures, routines, and expectations into place for the second half of the school year. Therefore, reflection on vicarious experiences and physiological and emotional cues prompted teachers to identify inconsistent implementation of behavioral expectations in individual classrooms. This led the teachers to negatively perceive collective efficacy.

In addition, when considering teacher efficacy, Michaela expressed trying to view her mastery experiences through her teammates’ lenses. In doing so, she described learning that her
classroom management system neither met the expectations of the team’s agreed upon behavioral expectations nor were grade level appropriate. This learning curve, resulting from vicarious experiences and physiological cues, prompted Michaela to reflect, and, in turn, reassess her teacher efficacy.

Time for Planning and Preparation: January – March 2019

The sixth and final major theme was time, defined as time allotted, available, or used. All qualitative data within this subtheme again originated collected from two scales, five reflective journal entries, one set of individual interviews and one team interview, collected January – March 2019. While the data in this subtheme met the overall threshold of five comments, August 2018 – March 2019 (see Table 4.18), Grace’s responses for January to March 2019 were the only ones that reflected time for planning and preparation. In addition, her responses reflected teacher efficacy, not collective efficacy.

Time for Planning and Preparation: Teacher Efficacy

In support of teacher efficacy within the sixth subtheme of time for planning and preparation, Grace recalled the cause of disproportionate time to plan and prepare among the three teachers on a platooning team:

The district mandating that I had to do the reading and the writing, because that’s a lot of work. The way the subjects are divided [among a team of three teachers per the district mandate], it’s not fair. (Interview 2)

Grace more specifically shared the difference between being planning and preparing for literacy versus math (Crystal) or social studies/science (Michaela):
There’s more to it [than planning for math or social studies/science]. There is the planning. There is the feedback. There’s part of literacy that’s not part of math or social studies - conferring. (Interview 2)

Grace continued: “That being said, I have talked to other people in the district who are platooning, and they’re really struggling with that inequality of work. So the same thing” (Interview 2). Grace reiterated the support she received after the principal allowed her teammates to share some of the literacy responsibilities (practice time for reading and writing skills) in their classrooms:

So I had to step in and go, “The benefit for you guys anyways is that you’re gonna see the kids as readers and writers.” So they agree to take that on. I go, “I’m gonna tell you right now, I won’t be able to handle that [not having her teammates’ help].” (Interview 2)

Grace expounded:

The person that has the science and social studies gig [Michaela], I mean, come on. I’ll take that in a heartbeat. I’ll take that in a heartbeat [because it is less to plan and prep for]. But I don’t let it eat at me. I mean, I could really let that get to me and say, “Forget it. I’m out.” But, yeah, it’s definitely not fair. (Interview 2)

While the unequal amount of planning and preparation frustrated Grace, she kept her end goal in mind:

So that kind of gets a little bit under your skin [having to teach multiple content area because the district mandated that ALL literacy be taught together]. It wears you down, the amount of work, the amount of responsibility but you gotta stay focused. Because I still wouldn’t trade it. I still wouldn’t trade it for teaching all content areas. (Interview 2)

However, when considering the extra responsibility of teaching literacy, Grace did not feel it led to a negative perception of her teacher efficacy. She explained: “It didn’t affect my confidence having to take all of that on. It affected my mental health” (Interview 2). In other words, Grace expressed the inability to share content responsibilities caused her to feel overwhelmed and stressed when trying to keep up with the work required of her content areas. Thus, Grace’s
comments revealed that her reaction to these physiological and emotional cues resulted in a negative perception of teacher efficacy.

**Summary of Theme 6**

In sum, Grace’s comments during January to March 2019 indicated vicarious experiences led to her perception of an unequal workload. In addition, Grace’s feelings of being “exhausted and worn down” (Interview 2) indicated an awareness of physiological and emotional cues. In turn, it is evident these two sources discouraged Grace’s perceived teacher efficacy when planning and preparing for literacy within the platooning structure.

**Scale Data**

As the first step in the data collection timeline, the data collected from the Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) and the Collective Efficacy Scale (CE-SCALE) were used to inform open-ended and probing questions for the interviews (Ramey-Gassert, 1993). In addition, the scales were also used to collect data on teacher efficacy and collective efficacy during both data source periods. Since it is possible that the fifth-grade teachers may have responded to the scale statements in a way that could be their perceived practice instead of a reflection of their actual practice, the scale statements paralleled the interview questions and journal prompts. This made it possible for the scale data to be compared over time to the data from the interviews and reflective journal responses (see Table 5.2).
Table 5.2
Scale Data by Time Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Overall Teacher Efficacy August – December 2018</th>
<th>Overall Teacher Efficacy January – March 2019</th>
<th>Overall Collective Efficacy August – December 2018</th>
<th>Overall Collective Efficacy January – March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michaela</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) honored the components of teacher efficacy: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practice, and efficacy in classroom management within their teacher efficacy scale (Roberts & Henson, 2001). Taking these components into consideration, the resulting data from the OSTES showed Grace and Michaela’s teacher efficacy aligned with data from the interviews and reflective journal responses and increased from one data period to the next. Crystal’s teacher efficacy, however, saw a decline, which was not represented in the interview and reflective journal data.

In addition, the Collective Efficacy Scale (CE-SCALE), written to directly assess the perceptions of both team competence and task, demonstrated a decline in collective efficacy for Crystal and Grace. On the other hand, platooning from August 2018 to March 2019 resulted in a perceived increase of collective efficacy for Michaela. The scale data aligned with data from the interviews and reflective journal responses.

Synthesis of Findings for Research Question 1

The first research question in the study was “How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe her own teacher efficacy while implementing platooning?” During the first data
collection period, August – December 2018, all three teachers, while platooning, described sources during individual interviews and reflective journal entries that caused them to positively and negatively perceive their own teacher efficacy. During the first 15 weeks of the study, all three teachers described reflecting on the same experiences in order to estimate and react to their teacher efficacy. First, qualitative data illustrated that mastery and vicarious experiences with district administration led all three teachers to negatively describe their teacher efficacy. In addition, all three teachers shared their mistrust of the building principal. This also provided mastery and vicarious experiences that led all three teachers to perceive a decrease in teacher efficacy. Thus, from August to December 2018, the participants reported feeling teacher efficacy to be devalued outside of the immediate platooning team.

On the other hand, during the first data collection period, all three teachers also reported having experiences that led to positive perceptions of teacher efficacy. Working together for the first time as a team, the teachers described relying on each other to succeed as a platooning team. All three teachers mentioned mastery and vicarious experiences with their team that led them to perceive positive teacher efficacy. When reflecting on sources of efficacy, each teacher described believing in her ability to contribute to platooning. In fact, interview comments coded for teacher efficacy indicated that building trust and meeting to discuss the needs of shared-students led to an assessment of positive teacher efficacy for each teacher. For example, the information and ideas shared during team conversations empowered the teachers to try new things in their individual classrooms. During the first part of this research study, all teachers’ comments were similar in terms of teacher efficacy sources, interpretation of the sources and perceived teacher efficacy.
During the second data collection period, January – March 2019, Grace’s interview responses suggested mastery experiences with the building principal led her to feel empowered and perceive a positive teacher efficacy due to her experiences with the building principal. For example, after speaking to Grace, the principal advocated for a requested change in the platooning schedule, even though it did not follow district criteria. In turn, Grace felt more confident in her ability to promote students’ learning (Hoy, 2000). While Grace shared her experience vicariously with her teammates, it neither led to a softening toward their principal nor positive perceptions of their teacher efficacy.

It is interesting to note, however, that also during the second data collection period, the teachers continued to describe positive teacher efficacy, even though team had begun to fall apart. When asked during their second individual interviews when the teachers felt their confidence to be the highest, all three teachers answered, “right now.” Crystal and Grace indicated mastery experiences, such as classroom experiences with their students, favorably influenced teacher efficacy. However, Michaela, being new to the team, also indicated that she felt confident in her new role. Yet, interestingly, when asked to describe what fostered her teacher efficacy, only her teammates were mentioned, indicating her teacher efficacy was dependent on vicarious experiences and social persuasion from her team instead of individual mastery experiences. In other words, the data revealed Michaela’s perceived teacher efficacy was based on her team’s support, opinions, and feedback.

Next, during both data collection periods, all three teachers described positive teacher efficacy when only needing to plan and prepare for one or two content areas instead of five or more. For example, focusing on fewer content areas allowed the teachers to seek new ideas to engage students, meet individual student needs and deepen understanding of content. In turn, the
teachers described that focused attention on less content enabled them to feel more confident in both their instruction and ability to promote student achievement. However, it is also important to note that both Michaela and Grace indicated they perceived their teacher efficacy negatively at times while platooning. Grace explained that while platooning meant less content, it also meant more students to teach. Therefore, platooning was not less work than a self-contained classroom. And as a new teacher, Michaela described feeling isolated when it came to content collaboration. As a team of three, none of the teachers had a content-partner or teammate to discuss their subject areas.

Through the synthesis of the findings related to Research Question 1, a clearer picture of the three participants’ perceptions of teacher efficacy while platooning emerged as they described their reflections, judgement, and reactions to the four sources of teacher efficacy.

Synthesis of Findings for Research Question 2

The second research question in the study was “How does each member of the fifth-grade team describe the collective efficacy of the team while implementing platooning?” During the first data collection period, August – December 2018, interview sessions and journal entries again indicated sources of collective efficacy provided during the platooning experience to result in both positive and negative collective efficacy. Like teacher efficacy, all three teachers reported that sources of efficacy derived from district administration and the principal also decreased collective efficacy. District platooning criteria and the principal, tasked with enforcing the criteria at the building level, led the teachers to describe feeling undermined as a team. In turn, as the teachers shared and reflected on what they perceived as detrimental mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional cues, their resultant
collective efficacy caused them to become defensive and protective of both the team and their right to platoon. Thus, the participants perceived collective efficacy to be devalued outside of the immediate platooning team and positively influenced within.

Building level professional learning was another area all three teachers described as a negative influence on their collective efficacy. While the team indicated they did their best to learn about platooning before the school year started, they described yearning for building professional learning opportunities, such as classroom observations, to learn from each other and grow as a team during the school year. As Crystal stated, “I had no idea what they [my teammates] were doing.” Having neither mastery nor vicarious experiences to draw from, the team united based on social persuasion and emotional cues. Michaela explained, “When I’m struggling or I have a question or I’m not understanding, my team is the first place I go.” The absence of building professional learning again led them to “circle the wagons” and depend on each other to try to deepen their knowledge of both content areas and platooning.

In both the interview transcripts and reflective journal entries from the first data period, all three teachers described the importance of having a clear team vision. All three articulated that meeting as a team to discuss students and problem solve challenges positively contributed to collective efficacy. They also shared the belief that part of this vision included teacher ownership of fewer content areas. However, in this study, district criteria required an unequal split of content between three teachers. Crystal taught math, Michaela taught social studies and science, and Grace taught math. While all teachers expressed they were teaching subjects they were passionate about, they also acknowledged Grace was responsible for the heaviest workload. Thus, when Michaela, being new, started asking for help and refused to add anything to her workload, Grace quietly took on the additional responsibility. Grace explained during her first
interview that helping Michaela fulfill her obligations to the team made her feel like she “got the short end of the stick.” Crystal also expressed she felt Michaela’s “expectations across the board are different.” This vision or team norm, while unwritten, was a vicarious source of collective efficacy that Grace and Crystal identified as essential to both the success of the team and platooning. Once Grace and Crystal perceived Michaela was not holding her own, they indicated collective efficacy began to suffer and began to doubt Michaela’s ability to contribute to the platooning team.

During the second data collection period, January – March 2019, data indicated collective efficacy stemming from district administration, the principal and professional learning were similar to those experienced by the teachers during the first data collection period. In addition, while the team started with a consistent whole-grade-level platooning management system, its effectiveness seemed to dissolve during the second part of the year. During individual and team interviews, the teachers shared that collaborative problem solving and work with a behavior specialist initially fostered perceived collective efficacy. However, since they were not able to observe each other, teachers explained continued misbehavior by contemplating vicarious experiences and emotional cues. During interviews, each teacher described that these sources of collective efficacy led them to doubt their teammate’s ability to consistently implement agreed upon routines and behavioral expectations.

Surprisingly, in the reflective journal responses for the second time frame, Michaela expressed that she was still feeling supported by team collaboration: “The focus [of our conversations] is normally problem-solving. It has really opened up some good conversations on how to help each other and be on the same page.” Grace and Crystal felt differently. During
each of their second individual interviews, both stated outright their doubts about Michaela’s ability to platoon. Crystal succinctly described her and Grace’s struggle:

I have one subject and that’s a beautiful thing. But when it’s [platooning] not done well, it is hard. It’s hard to know that your kids aren’t getting the experience they could get with a subject. (Interview 2)

Perceiving Michaela was not honoring the team’s decisions or the developmental academic and social-emotional needs of their students damaged collective efficacy beyond repair. Ultimately, Grace and Crystal described that the disintegration of collective efficacy prompted them to ask for and receive permission to platoon without Michaela the following year.

Through synthesis of the findings related to Research Question 2, a clearer picture of the three participants’ perceptions of collective efficacy while platooning emerged as they described their reflections, judgements and reactions to the four sources of collective efficacy.

Synthesis of Findings for Research Question 3

The data collected for this case study did not reflect the word “concurrency” in the third research question: “How does the fifth-grade team describe concurrency between efficacy and platooning?” The definition of concurrency is “to exist at the same time” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2019). As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, teacher and collective efficacy stem from reflection on the same four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social and verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional cues. After reflecting on the source(s), the resultant efficacy is either positive or negative. Therefore, since both teacher and collective efficacy are the outcome of the process of platooning, they are unable to be concurrent or exist at the same time. As a result, the data cannot answer Research Question 3.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 described the second set of research findings for this study regarding how the three teachers perceived their teacher and collective efficacy when platooning. During this second time frame, the participants in this study completed a second teacher efficacy scale, a second collective efficacy scale, additional reflective journal entries, participated in a second individual interview and a team interview. A discussion of the findings identified in Chapters 4 and 5 as well as implications for the field are presented in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Using qualitative tools, this study examined three elementary teachers’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy while platooning as a team for the first time. Their 27-week journey was captured in the previous two chapters. This final chapter includes the implications, recommendations for administrators and teachers, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Major Implications

Platooning is more than just moving students from classroom to classroom during the school day. Properly conducted, platooning entails administrators and teachers working collaboratively to deepen the learning of students by aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment within an organizational structure (Fullen, 2001, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005). Based on the 27-week findings that emerged from this study, four implications surfaced to add to the research literature on this topic:

1. A districtwide definition of platooning must be determined.
2. Team norms are essential.
3. Platooning teachers must be able to observe each other.
4. The opportunity to platoon does not mean less work for teachers.
Each of the four major implications is discussed, including how each implication relates to past research on this topic as well as the theoretical frameworks.

**Implication #1: A Districtwide Definition of Platooning Must Be Determined**

The importance of having a districtwide platooning definition emerged as the first implication. Without an agreed upon districtwide definition of platooning, teachers across the district adopted different definitions and implemented divergent structural organization models. For example, one CUSD ABC team defined platooning as departmentalization, while another team considered platooning to be semi-departmentalization. Thus, with no districtwide platooning definition in place, arbitrary implementation across the district occurred and many teachers primarily focused on content (i.e., departmentalization) instead of the students’ needs (i.e., platooning). Historically, the two most well-known organizational structures are self-contained classrooms and departmentalization (Franklin, 1967; Anderson; 1966, Goodlad; 1966, Otto & Sanders, 1964). Lobdell and Ness (1967) explained that when considering schools’ structural organization, there is a continuum with self-contained classroom on one end and departmentalization on the other. Elementary teachers, not understanding the different organizational possibilities between self-contained and departmentalization, often implement departmentalization and call it platooning.

By not having a districtwide definition of platooning, not all CUSD ABC teachers were aware that platooning involved intertwining teacher-ownership of content with team-ownership of students. Crow and Pounder (2000) described a team as having the responsibility “to implement curriculum and teaching strategies based on a child’s developmental needs, develop coordinated interventions and management strategies to address student learning and/or
behavioral problems, and provide coordinated communication with parents” (p. 220). Due to my work at Fox Creek, the fifth grade teachers adopted a similar platooning definition: “an interdisciplinary team of teachers composed of core academic teachers (e.g., language arts, social studies, math, science, and reading) who are responsible for the required academic and behavioral Through reflective journal entries and individual interview responses, the teachers, by agreeing on a common definition for platooning, expressed they knew how to individually contribute to the success of platooning. instruction of a contained group of students” (p. 220). They also agreed to prioritize students’ needs rather than content (Pounder, 1999). Thus, agreeing on a common definition provided each teacher with the mastery and vicarious experiences needed to feel capable when contributing to platooning both individually and as part of a team.

Bandura (1997) explained that the four sources of teacher efficacy, along with reflection and professional learning opportunities, informed teacher efficacy. When the teachers reflected on mastery and vicarious experiences concerning platooning decisions at the district level, they described feeling a lack of control or involvement in creating a district-wide platooning definition and criteria. This assessment of the administration’s failure to honor the teachers’ knowledge, experiences, ideas and suggestions led teachers to describe a negative estimation of their teacher efficacy.

**Implication #2: Team Norms are Essential**

The second implication from this study dealt with the importance of team norms. When looking at this implication, it is important to understand that both individual and team actions are recognized by the group as either a success or a failure (Goddard & Goddard, 2001). Thus, after
examining both interview transcripts and reflective journal entries from the first data period, it became evident that all three teachers described the importance of having a clear team vision. The team clearly articulated this vision as meeting as a team to discuss students, to problem solve challenges, and to teach fewer subject areas. These three aspects of their vision were seen as a success by the team and, once reflected upon, led the teachers to positively perceive both their teacher and collective efficacy. Other areas, however, were not perceived as successful.

In this study, district criteria required an unequal split of content. Crystal taught math, Michaela taught social studies and science, and Grace taught reading and writing. While all teachers expressed they were teaching subjects they were passionate about, they also acknowledged Grace was responsible for the heaviest workload. Thus, when Michaela, being new, started asking for help and refused to add anything to her workload, Grace quietly took on the additional responsibility. Grace explained during her first interview that helping Michaela fulfill her obligations to the team made her feel like she “got the short end of the stick.” Crystal also expressed she felt Michaela’s “expectations across the board were different.” This vision or team norm, while unwritten, was a vicarious source of collective efficacy that Grace and Crystal described as essential to both the success of the team and platooning. Since the three teachers did not create norms as a team, Michaela was unaware of this expectation. Once Grace and Crystal perceived Michaela was not holding her own, they indicated they began to doubt Michaela’s ability to contribute to platooning and expressed their collective efficacy began to suffer.

Goddard and Goddard (2001) explain that teams create norms “to permit group members some control over the actions of others when those actions have consequences for the group” (p.810). Team norms would have ensured that all three Fox Creek teachers were unified in their understanding of both platooning and team expectations. Without norms, one teacher’s
expectations (i.e., Grace) might be different than another’s (i.e., Michaela) and can result in negative sources of collective efficacy. Goddard and Goddard further explain that “when a teacher’s actions are incongruent with the shared beliefs of the group, the teacher’s actions will be sanctioned by the group members” (p.810). When Michaela failed to fulfill unwritten norms over time, her teammates described the negative effect of the norm-breaking on their collective efficacy. Perceiving Michaela was not honoring the team’s decisions or the developmental academic and social-emotional needs of their students damaged their collective efficacy beyond repair. Ultimately, Grace and Crystal explained that the disintegration of collective efficacy prompted them to decide not to platoon with Michaela the following year. This suggests that platooning requires more from teachers than just focusing on fewer content areas and organizing students at a given grade level. It also necessitates teachers prioritizing communication, collaboration, transparency, and the success of the team over autonomy.

Implication #3: Platooning Teachers Must be able to Observe Each Other

The third implication from the study indicates platooning teachers must be able to observe each other in their classrooms. This implication came from the realization that the teachers misperceived the actual individual practice of their teammates as they implemented platooning. While they all believed they were following agreed upon expectations (i.e., unwritten norms), each teacher interpreted those expectations very differently. As Crystal stated, “I had no idea what they [my teammates] were doing.”

During the first round of individual interviews when commenting on the importance of consistent student expectations and consequences, all three Fox Creek teachers believed they were upholding the team’s behavioral expectations. During her second interview, however,
Crystal commented on repeated inconsistencies in student behavior. She explained they were possibly due to differences in each teacher’s personalities and perceptions. Even though the teachers felt they were being consistent with the agreed upon management system, without being able to observe each other, they had no idea whether they had similarly interpreted the system and were working in unison. These particular data on continuing student misbehaviors suggest that a lack of mastery experiences, such as observations, caused the teachers to be unaware of differences in their teammates’ management and teaching styles. Bandura (1997) explains that the absence of observations and other types of mastery experiences can lead to an inaccurate self-appraisal of teacher efficacy. Without being able to observe each other and reflect on those observations, teachers may have an inaccurate perception of how their individual contribution may sabotage instead of support the platooning system.

When considering collective efficacy, Parker (1994) adds that a lack of knowledge about other classrooms can influence judgements about the team’s ability, as a whole, to educate students. Therefore, without observations, the team may wrongfully assess its ability as a whole to consistently implement agreed upon routines and behavioral expectations. Kurz and Knight (2004) found the connection between teacher and collective efficacy may not be viable due to a lack of knowledge of what other teachers are doing in their classrooms. Thus, by not having the benefit of observations as a form of building-level professional learning, the data indicated the three Fox Creek teachers had a true understanding of neither individual nor team influences on platooning.
Implication #4: The Opportunity to Platoon Does Not Mean Less Work for Teachers

While Strohl et al. (2014) expressed that platooning could lead to less stress and lighter workloads, the fourth implication is that while platooning enables a teacher to be a content expert instead of a generalist, it is not less work. All three teachers indicated they positively perceived their teacher efficacy when teaching only one or two content areas. In fact, during the first data collection period, all teachers reflected that knowing the team shared responsibility for meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all fifth grade students positively informed collective efficacy. Michaela described this increase in both collective and teacher efficacy: “I think it’s a combination of having confidence in yourself and your team. It’s not just you, it’s you and your team who have possibilities and understanding that support [students].” Crystal also expressed that team collaboration led her to try new things and to self-reflect on challenging students more positively. Grace noted that vicariously listening to her teammates’ classroom experiences boosted not only her confidence in herself as a teacher but also strengthened the groups’ shared belief in its ability to meet student needs through platooning.

However, on the flip side, the platooning team became aware very quickly that when “organizing work around students rather than around departmental disciplines” (Pounder, 1999, p.318), there can be two or three times more students than in a self-contained classroom. They have more students to prepare for, more papers to grade, more parents to meet, and more report cards to complete. Crystal explained, “I’ve lessened my hours of preparation but I have 80 math tests to grade. So I feel like I work the same amount even though I work less.” Therefore, all three teachers in this study found the workload to be the same as that of a self-contained teacher.
There are benefits, however. Crystal found that since she only taught math, she had time to work with the math coach, find additional resources, and plan games to complement her lessons. In addition, Grace found it advantageous, through platooning, to teach a lesson more than once. She expressed that teaching a lesson multiple times gave her the ability to reflect on and improve it before teaching it again, “I think the benefit is teaching the lesson three times each day. I can spend more time planning and looking at it with a fine tooth comb, and go, ‘What can I do [better] here?’” All in all, while platooning is not less work, it did provide teachers with the opportunity “to drop their roles of generalists and serve instead as experts in one or two content areas” (Gerwertz, 2014, p.1). This in turn had the potential to boost both teacher and collective efficacy by enabling the elementary teachers to deepen content knowledge and share responsibility for students.

Recommendations

Recommendations are made for three educational groups: district administrators, building administrators, and platooning teachers. Each group’s contributions to platooning are essential to its success as an organizational structure at the elementary level.

Recommendations for District Administrators

As demonstrated by the findings of this research, the success of platooning is dependent on a common definition and districtwide understanding of platooning. Once a common definition is determined, it is important that district administration form an ongoing committee of district administrators, building administrators, and teachers to determine districtwide platooning criteria, identify success indicators, problem solve challenges, determine feedback processes, and
consider curricular challenges and professional learning needs. While CUSD ABC initially started this committee, it was disbanded before the work could be completed. Therefore, it is recommended that district administrators interested in platooning support and facilitate the continued work of a district platooning committee.

Further support for this recommendation comes from Hattie’s 2017 research that determined collective efficacy to be the number one influence related to learning and student achievement. Therefore, the support for a committee sends the message that district administrators honor the principals’ and teachers’ contributions to the success of platooning. Simply put, devoting time and space for a committee to have collaborative conversations leads to mastery and vicarious experiences that once reflected on, can positively inform both collective and teacher efficacy. In turn, as these sources of efficacy are vicariously shared by committee members in their school buildings, they have the potential to inform positive teacher and collective efficacy and result in positive consequences such as effort, persistence, collaboration, and goal-setting across the whole school district (Goddard et al., 2000).

A districtwide definition of platooning, along with the work of the platooning committee, can lead to an awareness of the professional learning needs of platooning teachers. Professional learning, as it provides sources of teacher and collective efficacy, is essential for teachers in order to estimate both teacher and collective efficacy. Therefore, it is recommended that district administrators offer professional learning opportunities on all topics pertinent to the success of platooning, such as scheduling, utilization of data, and relevant content areas. In addition to professional learning informing teacher efficacy, classes can also positively inform collective efficacy by giving teachers opportunities to share ideas and problem solve with platooning teachers at other schools. This informal time to share platooning experiences tears down the
walls of isolation by fostering a districtwide network of support for platooning teachers regardless of their level of experience or knowledge. Having colleagues for collaboration and reflection while addressing successes and challenges of platooning is key to the success of platooning as well as positive perceived teacher and collective efficacy.

Recommendations for Building Administrators

Another key group involved with platooning is building administrators or principals. When agreeing to platooning, principals must understand the needs of platooning teachers are very different than the needs of self-contained classroom teachers. First and foremost, teachers need the ability to collaborate on both shared students and content. Therefore, it is recommended that teams of four teachers platoon. A team of four can split into two teams of two, be responsible for half of the students, and also be able to evenly split the curricular requirements. For example, when considering a grade level of 100 students, Team A (made up of one literacy/social studies teacher and one math/science teacher) is responsible for the academic and social-emotional needs of 50 students. Team B (made up of the other literacy/social studies teacher and the other math/science teacher) is responsible for the other 50 students. This arrangement provides each teacher with a colleague for collaboration regarding content (i.e., Team A literacy/social studies teacher collaborates with Team B literacy/social studies teacher) and students (i.e., Team A teachers collaborate on how to meet the needs of their 50 students, while Team B teachers do the same with their 50 students). As a result, having opportunities to have collaborative conversations can lead to a positive perceptions of collective efficacy (Hattie, 2017). Demir (2008) further explains that a team of teachers with a high level of collective efficacy is more apt to overcome individual challenges, also leading to positive
perceptions of teacher efficacy. Thus, opportunities to collaborate at the building level contribute to the success of a platooning team by fostering a reciprocal relationship between collective and teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Second, after teams have been formed, it is important the principal and teachers work together to create success indicators. Success indicators are agreed upon expectations for principals, teachers and students and serve as criteria for judging the success or failure of platooning. Determining success indicators can be a collaborative process that enables the principal and teachers to reflectively consider how to determine both teacher and student success. In turn, these indicators provide coherence across the team and set a foundation for future professional learning, collaboration and team norms.

Third, it is recommended that principals place teachers on a platooning team according to their passion for a subject area. In other words, providing a teacher with the opportunity to teach the one or two subjects she is passionate about can lead to greater job satisfaction and opportunities for both autonomy and teacher leadership. In addition, if a platooning teacher loves her content area(s), she is more likely to take ownership of pedagogical knowledge, which in turn contributes to the professionalization of the teacher. Furthermore, a teacher who is passionate about teaching her subjects is more likely to become a model for both her teammates and other teachers within the school. Therefore, allowing a teacher to focus on her strengths within a platooning team can lead to mastery and vicarious experiences that positively inform both teacher and collective efficacy.

Fifth, Calik, Sezgin, Kavgaci and Kilinc (2012) found that teacher and collective efficacy can increase or decrease depending on building leadership. Since the Fox Creek platooning team did not always perceive support from the building principal, they expressed a decrease in teacher
and collective efficacy. The teachers identified this decrease in teacher and collective efficacy when they perceived individual conversations with the principal undermined the team. Therefore, it is recommended that principals foster relationships with the team, keeping in mind that an individual conversation with one teacher of a platooning team often affects the platooning team as a whole.

Sixth, platooning teachers have less flexibility with time than a self-contained teacher. For example, a self-contained teacher, who has the same students every day, all day, can postpone a science lesson to make more time for reading if needed. A platooning teacher, on the other hand, has a fixed time each day for one or two specific content areas. This means they have less flexibility to borrow time from other parts of the day. In addition, the students’ needs must be taken into account when scheduling blocks of instructional time. Grace identified this need as she struggled with 90 minute blocks of time being too long for fifth graders. Thus, it is recommended that principals take special care in evenly distributing instructional time among platooning teachers in a way that is conducive to the attention span and learning needs of the students at that particular grade level. This means the principal must be aware of how the scheduling of special subjects such as PE, art and music can affect the instructional time of platooning teachers. These scheduling decisions, on behalf of platooning, can boost teachers’ confidence that they, together with the principal, have the potential to promote higher levels of student achievement through platooning.

Finally, a recommendation for principals is to support building level professional learning opportunities in the form of observations. Observations, as mastery experiences, can inform both collective efficacy and teacher efficacy. Purposeful observations among platooning teachers can reassure teachers that teammates are fulfilling team commitments, thus promoting positive
collective efficacy. In addition, observations with an intentional focus on classroom management techniques or an instructional method can boost teacher efficacy through post-observation discussion and reflection.

**Recommendations for Teachers**

While district and building administrations build and support the foundation of platooning, teachers make it happen. While Levine (2002) explained platooning as “a sensible way to simplify the teacher’s work and deepen their expertise” (p. 61), it does not mean less work. Yes, platooning allows teachers to simplify their planning and instruction by focusing on fewer subjects. Yes, with fewer subjects, teachers are able to understand and teach those subjects more deeply. However, learning something in depth takes time. Planning, preparing and grading papers for a platoon of students (often 40 or more students) also takes time. While teachers like Grace would not trade the ability to focus on her passion for anything in the world, it is recommended that teachers truly understand the pros and cons of platooning before agreeing to implement the organizational system at the elementary level. An uninformed decision regarding platooning can dash its potential to foster both teacher and collective efficacy.

Next, for a platooning team to capitalize on its “collective knowledge, expertise, and effort” (Pounder, 1999, p. 319), teachers must spend time developing a strong and cohesive team. Even if they have previously worked side by side in self-contained same-grade level classrooms, working as a platooning team and sharing students, routines, and expectations creates a new dynamic. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers wanting to platoon should create norms to develop both platooning routines and collaboration expectations – most importantly, addressing how the team will address issues and problem solve as a team.
According to Coleman (1985, 1987, 1990), norms allow group members control over the actions of others when those actions endanger the work or goals of the group. Thus, norms that reflect the importance of teacher collaboration ensure a safe environment for the difficult conversations that naturally occur within any team. Revisiting and relying on norms throughout the year ensures difficult conversations build teacher and collective efficacy by staying focused on the team’s work instead of deflating confidence through personal attacks.

In addition, it is also recommended that other school personnel directly involved with the platooning teachers and/or students are also involved in the creation of these expectations and processes to understand and value why and how platooning works. In turn, this unified vision can lead to trust among members and inform teacher and collective efficacy through all four sources of efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social and verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional cues.

Another recommendation for teachers wanting to platoon is to utilize data to meet student needs and build team relationships. Gewertz (2014) points out that platooning enables teachers “to drop their roles as generalists and serve instead as experts in one or two content areas” (p. 1). As a result of only teaching one or two subjects, teachers are able to analyze and respond to fewer sets of data in a timely manner. For example, a platooning teacher of math and science can manage and utilize two sets of data more easily than a self-contained teacher who needs to juggle four or five. Focusing on less content allows a teacher more time to understand and use data from district and classroom assessments to plan instruction, decide on differentiation, pull resources, and utilize pre-assessments and exit slips.

In addition to using data to inform teacher efficacy, it also has the potential to inform collective efficacy. All three teachers in this study commented on the benefit of sharing student
data (assessments, observations, and student work) to consider different viewpoints and strategies to best meet student needs. Therefore, unlike self-contained classrooms, platooning teachers have the ability to bond through the shared ownership of students. These vicarious experiences and social persuasion regarding shared students in their teammates’ classrooms have the potential to foster positive collective efficacy.

Finally, it is recommended that while norms need to be in place to provide a consistent classroom management system and a level of expectations across the team, it is also important for platooning teachers to accept and celebrate individual passions, teaching styles, and personalities. This awareness can build a healthy balance of both autonomy and professionalism. Platooning also has the potential to increase teacher and collective efficacy by providing teachers the opportunity to teach to their strengths while simultaneously working together to promote students’ academic and social-emotional success.

**Synthesis of Implications and Recommendations**

When contemplating platooning, school districts may consider how the implications and recommendations of this qualitative research work together as a districtwide system of support, understanding and learning. A district platooning system starts at the district level before traveling to the school level and finally settling into elementary classrooms. Since there is an “absence of a clear definition” (Baker, 2011, p.25), the first step is for district administration to define platooning. This definition would provide a platooning committee of administrators and teachers with a starting point when collaborating to create platooning criteria and professional learning classes. Figure 10 illustrates this system.
Figure 10. District platooning system.

After a strong foundation is built at the district level, the system continues into the elementary buildings. Principals, working with both the platooning team and the teachers who support students in platooning classrooms, use the district definition and criteria to form teams of two or four, set schedules, and determine success criteria for both the team and the students. Also, during these conversations, building-level professional learning needs are identified. The principal, working in conjunction with instructional coaches, plans future opportunities for professional learning such as observations, working with data, instructional grouping, and classroom management strategies. Most importantly, involving all platooning stakeholders has the potential to build trust between the principal and the platooning teachers and open doors to future collaboration and problem-solving.
At the classroom level, teachers have the responsibility within this system to utilize all the tools, resources, and support essential for the success of platooning. Norms need to be written, revisited, and revised. Success criteria need to be continually reviewed and updated. Observations of teammates must be requested and used to reflect on success indicators. Meeting time needs to be prioritized for student and instructional needs. In addition, data must be continuously analyzed to determine student growth along with the status of both the platooning system and the health of the team. Most of all, platooning teachers have a responsibility to continually identify, reflect on, and question sources of teacher and collective efficacy. In doing so, teachers can seek a balance between autonomy and the team by determining which sources positively inform teacher and collective efficacy and which ones do not. The sources that do not can be discussed by the team. For example, when one team member is feeling overwhelmed, the others can help to determine whether the emotional cues stem from a teacher efficacy source or a collective efficacy source. It can then be decided whether the individual teacher can solve the problem or whether the team, as a whole, needs to make a change.

As seen in Figure 10, this system is reciprocal. Team members continually reflect on sources of teacher and collective efficacy and review team norms. Principals continually meet with the platooning team to assess success indicators, discuss past professional learning, and determine future needs. In addition, principals and platooning teams across the district have a responsibility to share their experiences with the platooning committee so the administration and teachers across the district can learn from each other and revisions, if any, can be made to both district platooning definition and criteria.

When all stakeholders uphold their responsibilities within this district platooning system, platooning can be successful and provide teachers with positive sources of both teacher and
collective efficacy. Positively informed teacher and collective efficacy results in teachers believing in both their own ability as well as their team’s ability to deepen content knowledge as they share the academic and social-emotional learning responsibility of two or more classes of children (Reid, 2012). Platooning, then, can enable teachers to find success when meeting the standards, curriculum benchmarks, and various student learning needs (Yearwood, 2001).

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there were limitations in the current research. Perhaps the largest limitation was that this study represented how platooning by one fifth-grade team functioned in one particular building in one school district. Additionally, this study was conducted in a district that allowed platooning but did not support its districtwide implementation. The fifth grade team at Fox Creek Elementary developed greater understanding of platooning from the researcher of this study than teachers platooning at other schools across the district. However, the study may have looked very different in a school with a districtwide structure and understanding of platooning. Therefore, this study was limited in that it was conducted in a district without clear success indicators, ways to problem solve challenges, and/or professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of platooning teachers.

Another limitation of this study was in the methodology. As with any qualitative study, restrictions were put on the data gathering due to the limitation of both the researcher’s and the teachers’ time. There were a total of seven interviews, two with each teacher and one with the team as well as scales and reflective journal responses. These data allowed the researcher to view perspectives of platooning only through the eyes and experiences of these three fifth grade
teachers. Classroom observations, although an area of future research, were not permitted in the study’s setting.

The team itself was a limitation. The team of three Fox Creek teachers platooned for the first time during the 2018-2019 school year. While platooning was offered to all CUSD ABC teachers, the lack of a clear definition and understanding meant that platooning was implemented differently across the district. Therefore, what might platooning have looked like at a school where the teams were made up of two or four teachers? What might it look like with a team that unknowingly implemented platooning as departmentalization?

Suggestions for Future Research

While the findings and recommendations from this study are a benefit to the field, there are a number of areas that need further research regarding platooning at the elementary level. The limitations of this study necessitate similar research with varied samples from the teaching population. The fifth grade team in this study represented one set of demographics. They taught at one elementary school in a suburban school district outside of Chicago. Other geographic areas could be explored to compare the perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy when platooning in differing settings with the results of this study.

Past research indicates most platooning is done at the intermediate levels (grades three through five), and similarly, this study focused on a team of three fifth-grade teachers. Thus, further research on platooning focusing on larger or smaller teams’ perceptions of teacher and collective efficacy at different grade levels would be of benefit to the field of education.

This study was also limited by the element of time in two different ways. First, this study was conducted during a 27-week timespan. Research that included an entire school year would
be interesting to examine how teacher and collective efficacy informed a team’s decision to continue or abandon platooning the following year. Furthermore, this research examined a new team during its implementation year of platooning. A multi-year longitudinal study would enable a researcher to see how teacher and collective efficacy might be affected by platooning during a team’s sophomore year.

This study was also limited in that it was conducted in a district that did not have a common definition of platooning or dedicated professional learning to foster it becoming a districtwide system through the inclusion of all stakeholders. Thus, it would be interesting to study platooning in a district in which it was purposely implemented with professional learning classes, and a multiyear implementation plan. In addition, it would also be beneficial to promote further study regarding educating all district stakeholders, including the Board of Education and parents about platooning.

Finally, utilizing classroom observations and student achievement data to understand how platooning can influence students’ academic growth, although an area of future research, was not permitted in this study’s setting. To better understand this need for future study, it is important to acknowledge that any teachers’ goal is to increase student growth through the use of platooning. In fact, researchers find that proof of academic growth strengthens and supports teachers’ confidence in themselves and in their team (Donohoo, Hattie & Eells, 2018).

Conclusion

Platooning, as an organizational structure for schools, first appeared in 1907 to promote efficiency, humanities and democracy in education (Mohl, 1977). Over one hundred years later,
platooning has reappeared with a similar look but a new purpose. As Elmore et al. (1996) explain, school districts across the nation hope to utilize platooning to help teachers meet the reforms and accompanying standards that require teachers to have a deeper understanding of both content and instructional practices.

*Perceptions on Teacher and Collective Efficacy While Platooning over an Academic Year: A Case Study of Three Elementary Educators* explored how three fifth-grade teachers described their teacher and collective efficacy during their inaugural platooning year. It examined how they defined platooning and purposely worked together to implement the organizational system within individual classrooms and as a team. These findings and recommendations contribute to the larger educational discussion regarding platooning. Ongoing discussions about platooning and its contributions as sources of teacher and collective efficacy are key to its success. Thus, given that teachers are required to be experts in all areas of the elementary curriculum, it is advised that school districts consider platooning as a way to empower teachers, both as individuals and as teams, as they search for the best ways for their students to learn.
REFERENCES


Learning Forward (2017f). Retrieved from https://learningforward.org/about/professional-learning-definition/


APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT
I agree to participate in the research study titled, Implementation of Platooning with a Team of Fifth-grade Teachers: A Case Study of Their Teacher and Collective Efficacy, being conducted by Alison DuCharm, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of this study is to examine fifth-grade teachers’ perceptions of platooning and its influence on their teacher and collective efficacy.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: complete a teacher efficacy scale at the beginning and end of the study (approximately 15 minutes each time for a total of 30 minutes), complete a collective efficacy scale at the beginning and end of the study (approximately 10 minutes each time for a total of 20 minutes), participate in two individual interviews with the researcher (approximately 40-45 minutes), participate in one team interview (approximately 90 minutes), and complete 10 reflective journal entries (approximately 10 minutes each for a total of 1 hour and 40 minutes).

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Alison DuCharm at [contact information] or Dr. Elizabeth Wilkins at [contact information]. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at [contact information].

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include the chance for me as a teacher to deepen my understanding of platooning and its impact on my teacher and collective efficacy. I will also get the chance to learn about and from my grade level team as I collaborate and reflect with them about the topic of platooning. Finally, I will get the chance to contribute to the growing body of research regarding platooning and its influence on teachers at the elementary level.

I have been informed that potential risks and/or discomforts I could experience during this study include experiencing feelings of frustration, anger, or confusion based on the results of the findings or data.
I understand that all information gathered during this study will be kept confidential. This will be done through the use of pseudonyms for all individuals involved in the study, as well as the school where the study will take place. All data related to the study will be kept in either a password-protected computer file or a locked file cabinet.

I also understand that for transcription purposes and for increased accuracy in the data gathering process, the researcher will use a recording device to record the audio of the individual teacher and team interviews. There will be NO audio or video recording in the participants’ classrooms. The audio files will also be kept on an external hard drive not affiliated with the school district and kept in a locked file cabinet. The only person who will have access to the external hard drive will be the researcher. I understand that there will be identifiable features such as the teachers’ voices on the video. Three years after the dissertation publication date, the audio files will be destroyed.

___ I consent to the individual interviews and being audio recorded for data collection purposes.
___ I do not consent to the individual interviews and being audio recorded for data collection purposes.

___ I consent to the team interview and being audio recorded for data collection purposes.
___ I do not consent to the team interview and being audio recorded for data collection purposes.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_________________________________________                                 ___________
Participant Signature:         Date:
APPENDIX B

CROSSWALK BETWEEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOLS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Scale Statements</th>
<th>Interview Protocol Questions</th>
<th>Reflective Journal Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **How is teacher efficacy perceived by the members of the fifth-grade team before and after the implementation of platooning?** | **Efficacy in Student Engagement**  
*How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?*  
*How much can you do to help your students think critically?*  
*How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?*  
*How much can you do to help your students value learning?*  
*How much can you do to foster student creativity?*  
*How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?*  
*How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?* | **Overall Teacher Efficacy**  
*How would you describe your teacher efficacy?*  
*What influences your teacher efficacy?*  
*How has it changed since you started platooning?* | This prompts the teacher to reflect upon efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practice and efficacy in classroom management  
*Thinking about your experiences with platooning this week, how do you feel platooning impacted your instruction and/or the learning of your students?* |
| | **Efficacy in Student Engagement**  
*As you reflect on your three groups of students and the three switches they make between classrooms each day, how would you describe their engagement?*  
*How do you know they are cognitively (versus passively) engaged?*  
*What influence, if any, do you believe platooning has had on their engagement?* | **Efficacy in Instruction**  
*How has platooning impacted your planning and instruction?*  
*Within each switch, how are you differentiating for students’ needs?*  
*Platooning is supposed to support a | |
| students? *How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught? *To what extent can you craft good questions for your students? *How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students? *How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies? *To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused? *How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom? *How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?  

**Efficacy in Classroom Management** *What structures did your team consistently put in place for all classrooms? *What additional structures have you put in place and why? *How have the students responded to the structures? NOTE: This question will get to the student behaviors. | greater depth of instruction. How do you know students are experiencing a greater depth of learning?  

**Efficacy in Classroom Management** *What structures did your team consistently put in place for all classrooms? *What additional structures have you put in place and why? *How have the students responded to the structures? NOTE: This question will get to the student behaviors. |
| How is collective efficacy perceived by the members of the fifth-grade team before and after the implementation of platooning? |
| Faculty Trust in Colleagues |
| *Teachers on my team can get through to the most difficult students |
| *Teachers on my team are confident they will be able to motivate their students. |
| *If a child doesn’t want to learn, teachers here give up. |
| *Teachers on my team don’t have the skills needed to |
| Faculty Trust in Colleagues |
| * How do you describe your team? |
| *How do you make decisions as a team? |
| • Do you trust these decisions? (asked only during the individual interview) |
| *When you make decisions that impact all three teachers, are all voices heard? |
| • If the answer is yes - What is in place to support |
| This prompts the teacher to reflect upon faculty trust in colleagues |
| *Thinking about your interactions with your team this week, how did feel platooning impacted your team’s ability to work cohesively this week? |
produce meaningful student learning.
*If a child doesn’t learn something the first time, teachers will try another way.
*Teachers on my team are skilled in various methods of teaching.
*Teachers on my team are well-prepared to teach the subjects they are assigned to teach.
*Teachers on my team fail to reach some students because of poor teaching methods.
*Teachers on my team have what it takes to get the children to learn.
*The lack of professional learning on platooning makes teaching very difficult.
*Teachers on my team truly believe that every child can learn.
*Teachers on my team think there are some students that no one can reach.
*The students in this school come ready to learn.
*Students here just are not motivated to learn.
*Teachers on my team do not have the
| Does platooning influence teacher and collective efficacy? If so, how and why? | *What impact does professional learning have on your overall teacher/collective efficacy?  
*How has professional learning impacted your teacher/collective efficacy?  
*How has professional learning impacted your experiences with platooning?  
Final Reflection Questions:  
*What influence do you think platooning, if any, has had on your teacher efficacy?  
*What influence do you think platooning, if any, has had on your collective efficacy? | Throughout the data collection time frame, additional relevant open-ended prompts will be generated from the scales and interviews to address this research question. |
APPENDIX C

TEACHER EFFICACY SCALE
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that can be challenging for teachers. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

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<th>1=nothing</th>
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<td>1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?</td>
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<td>2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?</td>
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<td>3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?</td>
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<td>4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?</td>
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<td>5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?</td>
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<td>6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?</td>
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<td>7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?</td>
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<td>8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?</td>
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<td>9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?</td>
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<td>10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?</td>
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<td>11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?</td>
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<td>12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?</td>
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<td>13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?</td>
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</table>
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?

15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?

16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?

17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?

18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?

19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?

20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?

21. How well can you respond to defiant students?

22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?

23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?

24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?
APPENDIX D

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY SCALE
Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your team from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers will be confidential.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Teachers on my team can get through to the most difficult students.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Teachers on my team are confident they will be able to motivate their students.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>If a child doesn’t want to learn, teachers here give up.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Teachers on my team don’t have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>If a child doesn’t learn something the first time, teachers will try another way.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Teachers on my team are skilled in various methods of teaching.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Teachers on my team are well-prepared to teach the subjects they are assigned to teach.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Teachers on my team fail to reach some students because of poor teaching methods.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Teachers on my team have what it takes to get the children to learn.</td>
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<td><strong>15. Teachers on my team do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>16. Teachers on my team need more training to know how to deal with these students.</strong></td>
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APPENDIX E

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS
### Weekly Repetitive Prompts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Efficacy</th>
<th>Collective Efficacy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking about your experiences with platooning this week, how do you feel platooning impacted your instruction and/or the learning of your students?</td>
<td>Thinking about your interactions with your team this week, how did feel platooning impacted your team’s ability to work cohesively this week?</td>
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<td>(This prompts the teacher to reflect upon efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practice and efficacy in classroom management)</td>
<td>(This prompts the teacher to reflect upon faculty trust in colleagues)</td>
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Throughout the data collection time frame, additional relevant open-ended prompts will be generated from the scales and interviews.
APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL/GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(adapted from Seidman, 2013)
Part One:
Purpose: To build rapport and place the teachers’ participation in platooning within the context of their lives.
- Prompts and questions:
  a. Please share as much as possible about yourself/your team in light of the topic up to the present time.
  b. Talk to me about your classroom and instruction before platooning.
  c. How and why did you/your team decide to platoon?

Part Two:
Purpose(s): To focus on concrete details of the participants’ present lived experience and to reconstruct the details of teacher’s experience with platooning.
- Questions:
  a. If a colleague today asks you to explain platooning, what would you say?

Part Three:
Purpose: To have the participants focus on the meaning of their experiences:

Before starting the interview, the term, teacher efficacy will be defined for the participants.
- Teacher efficacy is a teacher’s confidence in his or her teaching ability (Hoy, 2000).

**Individual Interview Questions**

**Teacher Efficacy Questions (by component):**

**Overall Teacher Efficacy**
1. How would you describe your teacher efficacy?
2. What influences your teacher efficacy?
3. How has it changed since you started platooning?

**Efficacy in Student Engagement**
1. As you reflect on your three groups of students and the three switches they make between classrooms each day, how would you describe their engagement?
2. How do you know they are cognitively (versus passively) engaged?
3. What influence, if any, do you believe platooning has had on their engagement?

**Efficacy in Instruction**
1. How has platooning impacted your planning and instruction?
2. Within each switch, how are you differentiating for students’ needs?
3. Platooning is supposed to support a greater depth of instruction. How do you know students are experiencing a greater depth of learning?

**Efficacy in Classroom Management**
1. What structures did your team consistently put in place for all classrooms?
2. What additional structures have you put in place and why?
3. How have the students responded to the structures?
   ○ NOTE: This question will get to the student behaviors.

**Individual and Team Interview Questions**
NOTE: These questions will be asked first during individual interviews and then again during the team interview.

   Before starting the interview, the term, collective efficacy will be defined for the participants.

- Collective efficacy is the shared perceptions of a team of teachers that the team as a whole will have positive effects on students (Hoy, 2000)

**Collective Efficacy Questions**
**Faculty Trust in Colleagues**
1. How do you describe your team?
2. How do you make decisions as a team?
   ○ Do you trust these decisions? (asked only during the individual interview)
3. When you make decisions that impact all three teachers, are all voices heard?
   ○ If the answer is yes - What is in place to support that all voices are heard?
   ○ If the answer is no - Why?
4. How does your teammates’ instruction impact your work with students?
5. What feedback from your teammates is most beneficial? Least beneficial?

**Questions to Connect Platooning to Teacher and Collective Efficacy**
Purpose: Questions that combine data collections enrich the depth of understanding of teachers’ perceptions of teacher efficacy and the role context plays in its development.

1. What impact does professional learning have on your overall teacher/collective efficacy?
2. How has professional learning impacted your teacher/collective efficacy?
3. How has professional learning impacted your experiences with platooning?

**Final Reflection Questions:**
1. What influence do you think platooning, if any, has had on your teacher efficacy?
2. What influence do you think platooning, if any, has had on your collective efficacy?

**Other questions that come out of interview, scale and/or journal responses:**