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ABSTRACT

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY: THE POSITIVE IMPACT
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMING HAS ON TEACHER MORALE

By Sean B. Yisrael

Many secondary teachers, especially those with less than five years of experience, find the traditional isolation of teaching to be very problematic. Within various public spheres, the official discourse among teachers has been reduced to compliance and conformity, instead of engaging in critical debates that will translate into effective practices that could boost student achievement.

One of the most common negative outcomes resulting from teachers being isolated is the decrease in their morale. When morale decreases among the teaching staff, teachers lose passion for what they do. Many schools districts today are moving toward more collaborative structural models that give teachers more autonomy over their daily work, and involving them in the decision making process.

The purpose of this research was to determine the positive impact interdisciplinary teaming has on teacher morale. The researcher was interested in this area of research for a couple of reasons. First, there was an interest in learning more about a school structure like interdisciplinary teaming, which allows teachers to use their time within the school day to plan, collaborate, and dialogue about issues that directly affect them. Secondly, the researcher also wanted to bring out the importance of having high staff morale within a school organization. When a healthy school environment exists and teachers' morale is high, teachers feel good about themselves and what they are able to do for students.

In order to find out if interdisciplinary teaming positively impacts teacher morale, the researcher conducted a qualitative case study on a ninth grade interdisciplinary team of teachers. Throughout the twelve weeks of the study, individual interviews and observations were conducted in order to gain an understanding of how the teachers felt the interdisciplinary teaming process impacted their morale.

The five chapters of this document include the development, process, and results of the research. What was learned from the research was that interdisciplinary teaming had a positive impact on teacher morale.

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY: THE POSITIVE IMPACT
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMING HAS ON TEACHER MORALE

A DISSERTATION

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Dedicated to A'mon, Aniyah,

Amiyr, and my youngest

brother Justin Wilcox.

2008

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

When reading any recent educational publication on the topic of school structures, reforms, and/or redesigns, I always notice a recurring theme. The theme that seems to be prevalent in all of the literature that I've read is the concept of teacher collaboration. Within the framework of teacher collaboration is another concept of allowing teachers to take more ownership and control over their daily work. This means allowing teachers to become more involved in the decision making process, teachers having a voice concerning issues that matter to them (i.e. student discipline, curriculum development, and instructional practices), and allowing teachers sufficient time to plan and dialogue with each other. According to Arnold and Stevenson (1998) if teachers are successfully able to collaborate with each other, then the quality of instruction as well as student achievement will improve.

Traditional secondary teaching practices typically call for teachers to function in isolated school settings. The average secondary teacher could be compared to an island that stands all alone in the middle of a big ocean. The teacher was individually responsible for delivering, and in some cases, creating all aspects of instruction for students (Maeroff, 1988). Teachers would close their classroom doors and would not have any significant contact with another teaching professional until the end of the school day. It was not a common practice for most secondary teachers to plan, share ideas and resources, or dialogue with each other about instructional matters or pedagogy. Within various public spheres, the official discourse among teachers has been reduced to compliance and conformity, instead of engaging in critical debates that will translate into effective practices (Giroux, 1986).

Many secondary teachers, especially those with less than five years of experience find the traditional isolation of teaching to be very isolating and overwhelming (Maeroff 1988). According to Maeroff (1988) alienation, isolation, a sense of powerlessness and self-estrangement help to create a climate of great dissatisfaction and frustration with teaching. Even though many school districts are moving toward a more collaborative

model for teachers, there are still many who work in isolated settings in many school districts across Ohio, and other parts of the country.

There are many negatives that result from teachers who are isolated in their daily work. One of the most common negative outcomes resulting from teachers being isolated is the decrease in their morale (Wood and McCarthy, 2002). There are various definitions of the word *morale*. One such definition comes from Wood and McCarthy (2002) which states, "morale is the feeling a worker has about his/her job based on how the worker perceives him/herself in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations". Andrew, Parks, and Nelson, (1980) define morale as the professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays towards the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job. Even though both sources were stated twenty years apart, each definition deals with how workers feel about their job or position within an organization. When morale decreases among the teaching staff, teachers lose passion for what they do. They also lose their enthusiasm for helping students and going that extra mile to make a difference. According to Wood and McCarthy (2002) teachers who lose their morale are more likely to leave the profession within the first five years of their careers. Demographers project that there would be a teacher shortage between 2000 and 2010 (Hussar, 1999). Nationally, between the years 1999-2000, 27% of first-year teachers leave their schools, and 11 percent will leave the profession altogether (Smith and Ingersoll, 2003).

A loss in a teacher's morale is also commonly referred to as the teacher feeling "burned out" (Wood and McCarthy, 2002). Teachers can experience the feeling of being burned out at various stages in their careers. There are several negative effects that can result from teachers who lose morale and passion for teaching (Wood and McCarthy, 2002). Wood and McCarthy state the following are a few of the negative outcomes that can result from a teacher's loss of morale:

- Loss in pride of work
- Resistant to change
- Lack of organization and planning
- Decrease in support for school sponsored activities

- Increase in criticism of the school and/or administration
- Lack of participation in school initiatives and programs
- Refusal to take on increased responsibilities outside of the classroom

When teachers lose passion for teaching, the ultimate losers are the students. A decrease in teacher morale will undoubtedly affect the quality of education and programs that students receive.

The purpose of this case study is to determine if interdisciplinary teaming has a positive impact on teacher morale. When I speak of positive impact, I'm referring to the aspects of interdisciplinary teaming that boost interest, enthusiasm, creativity, and/or increase job satisfaction for teachers. Being able to discern between the positive and negative factors that impact morale could significantly change the teaching profession, as we know it today. Understanding the factors that can help improve teacher morale could significantly reduce the percentage of teachers who feel burned out and stressed, and it could also improve their overall job satisfaction.

Improved teacher morale could also have a positive impact on student achievement. According to Ames (1992) there is a positive correlation between teachers with high morale, and student achievement. Teachers with high morale perform better than those who do not.

In order to find out if interdisciplinary teaming positively impacts teacher morale, I will seek to find answers to the following questions. These questions will be used to guide my research:

- What factors contribute to teachers having high morale? Low morale?
- What are some of aspects of interdisciplinary teaming that affect teacher morale?
- What aspects of a teacher's daily job duties contribute to high morale? Low morale?

Limitations to the Study

There are a few limitations to this study. The first is that I'm only looking at teachers who teach students within the ninth grade. The case study doesn't look at teachers of students in grades ten, eleven, and twelve. Teachers who teach other grades might have greater or fewer factors that may contribute to them having high or low morale. Even though some of the issues that affect the morale of ninth grade teachers will undoubtedly affect teachers of all grades, some of the issues might be slightly different due to the varying ages of the students and the students' level of maturity.

Secondly, the sample size from which I'm drawing my data could serve as a limitation. Some might say that the sample size is too small. They might argue for me to collect data from all four of the ninth grade teams, and then determine the positive affects. Whether the sample is from four teams or from forty, I'm still trying to get at how people feel about their job, responsibilities, and zeal for doing the work. Also, when doing research of this caliber the notes and data could become very lengthy. I want to be able to do research that is manageable so that I do not become overwhelmed. I want to be able to take accurate notes and collect data that is meaningful.

Overview of Dissertation

Following this introduction, chapter two discusses a review of the literature significant to the study. Chapter three discusses the methods used for conducting the study. Chapter four presents the data analysis and results of the study. Chapter five presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

Key Terms and Definitions

The following terms and definitions are included to help acquaint the reader with concepts that help define the study.

- Interdisciplinary Teaming – a team that consists of two or more teachers from different subject areas and the group of students they commonly instruct.

- Morale - feeling a worker has about his/her job based on how the worker perceives him/herself in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations.

- Job Satisfaction – describes how content an individual is with his/her job.

- Job Enrichment - the process of giving the employee increased authority or decision making power along with greater responsibility.

- Two Factory Theory – developed by Herzberg, the theory states that there are certain factors that lead to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

- Common Planning Time – a time set aside within the school day when a team of teachers is able to plan, organize, and dialogue.

- Qualitative Research - a field of inquiry that crosscuts disciplines and subject matters. It involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behavior.

- Burned-out – an exhaustion of physical or emotional strength due to increased stress or frustration.

- Research Observer – the person who is conducting the research by collecting and analyzing data.

- Research Participant – a person who is the subject of the data collection.

- Stress - the physical or emotional tension that one feels as a result of pressure.

- Triangulation – when a qualitative researcher employs various procedures in order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation.

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory – a pyramid of five levels that explain human desires on a basic level.

- Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory – a set of factors that motivate employees to work more efficiently and productively.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will cover the areas of interdisciplinary teaming, teacher morale, Herzberg's Motivational Hygiene Theory, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. First, I will discuss interdisciplinary teaming and its structure affects teachers and students. Secondly, I will discuss what is currently written on the topic of teacher morale and its importance to a school's environment. Lastly, I will discuss aspects of human relations theory as it relates to Herzberg's Motivational-Hygiene Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, as it relates to this study and how their work has shaped my thinking and influenced my research.

<u>Interdisciplinary teaming</u>

An interdisciplinary team consists of two or more teachers from different subject areas and the group of students they commonly instruct (Erb and Stevenson, 1999). Team teachers plan, coordinate, and evaluate curriculum and instruction across academic areas. Teams cultivate meaningful and regular communication with families. Teams often share the same schedule and the same area of the school building. For teachers, teams provide a collaborative and supportive work group. For students, teams offer stable relationships with teachers and peers (George and Alexander, 2003). Principles for organizing effective teams include:

- Keep teams small in terms of number of teachers and students.
- Provide sufficient individual and team planning time for teachers.
- Allow teams to design their students' daily schedule.
- Assign teams to their own area of the building.
- Allow teams to work together for multiple years (Erb and Stevenson, 1999).

Characteristics of highly effective teams include:

- Student-centered focus.
- Strong commitment to academic achievement.
- Collaborative policies and accountability systems.
- Strong sense of team community.
- Regular communication with parents.
- A proactive approach.
- Teachers who work professionally and collaboratively (George and Alexander, 2003).

Several large-scale studies have been conducted that successfully demonstrate the positive effects of teaming on student outcomes. In one study, schools with highly implemented teaming were found to have higher levels of student achievement and student self-esteem, than schools without teaming (George and Alexander, 2003). According to Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall (2003) schools that are fully engaged in teaming with high levels of common planning time show improvement in student self-reported outcomes (e.g., depression, behavior problems, and academic efficacy). Furthermore, student achievement scores improved particularly for schools with high percentages of free/reduced lunch students where the teaming approach was implemented (Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall, 2003).

Common planning time is deemed critical to the success of an interdisciplinary team because it provides teachers with an opportunity to plan collaboratively (Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall, 2003). Team teachers should have common planning meetings at least four times per week for at least 30 minutes per meeting (Eaker, DuFour, and Dufour, 2002). At a basic level, teams utilize their common planning time to plan, distribute state test, integrate curriculum, meet with parents and/or students, and coordinate team activities (e.g., homework, tests, schedules, special projects). At an advanced level, teams coordinate and integrate curriculum, instruction, and assessment during common planning times. Teachers' shared time should not come at the expense of their individual planning times. When common planning interrupts individual time, collaborative work suffers because teachers are concerned with their own workloads (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Schools structure and organize teams in different ways. There is not one acceptable model. Teams can include small partners with only two to three members, or larger teams that encompass all teachers of a grade. Several key factors to consider when designing teams include the needs of the students, the number of students per grade, the division of teaching responsibilities, and the design of the school building (Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour, 2002). To ensure a sense of smallness and to foster long-term student-teacher relationships, students can be assigned to teams in a variety of ways. The most prevalent strategies include multiage grouping, looping, and schools-within-a school (George & Lounsbury, 2000). According to Jackson and Davis (2000) teams should be no larger than five teachers with no more than 125 students. The advantages of smaller teams include closer teacher-student relationships, better student-student relationships, and less complex coordination issues (Jackson and Davis, 2000). On teams of 90 or fewer students, the use of desirable instructional practices and the quality of team interactions is higher than on larger teams (Mertens, Flowers, and Mulhall, 2000). Another study found that teams of 120 or fewer students with a ratio of no more than 25 students to one teacher engage instructional practices that are linked to positive student outcomes more often than larger teams (Erb & Stevenson, 1999).

For interdisciplinary teaming to work effectively, total commitment is required from central office staff, the school's administration, and its teaching staff. According to Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour (2002) the teaming process is useless when the team members are not committed to the work and each other. Many schools that would like to use interdisciplinary teaming do not because they are unable to make that commitment for various reasons. According to Rottier (2002) the top two reasons why some schools find it difficult to use interdisciplinary teaming are (1) scheduling conflicts and (2) cost to train teachers.

Scheduling conflicts occur with the students when trying to ensure that all students on a given team have the same core teachers and lunch period without crossing teams. Problems occur when trying to schedule all teachers on a given team to have the same common planning period without overloading some teachers' classes with students, while other teachers have very few students in their classes (Rottier, 2002). When making the decision to use interdisciplinary teaming, school officials will have to look at

overhauling the enter structure of the school (staring time, lunch periods, teachers' planning times, and school dismissal).

Despite the few drawbacks of interdisciplinary teaming, I see it as a useful school organizational structure because it is centered on teachers collaborating, planning, and organizing on behalf of students. Interdisciplinary teaming is also a valuable tool for teachers because it fosters teacher accountability, empowerment, and it gives teachers a voice in regards to decisions that matter to them the most.

Teacher Morale

The job of being a teacher is becoming more difficult with each passing year. Expanding expectations that are placed on teachers are stretching them to the limit. Their role encompasses not only teaching specific content and monitoring students' learning, but also functioning as social workers in some cases. The increased pressures and demands that teachers are forced to deal with, which in most cases have nothing to do with actual teaching, are leaving them feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and burned out (Wood and McCarthy, 2002). In a recent poll, one-third of the teachers contacted said they would not go back to teaching if they had the chance to do it again (Wood and McCarthy, 2002). Another indicator of teacher burnout is the number of teachers with over twenty years of experience has dropped by half in the last fifteen years (Wood and McCarthy, 2002). It seems that younger teachers are leaving within the first five years of experience and that older teachers are retiring early. This exodus from the education profession is partly due to teachers having low morale (Wood and McCarthy, 2002).

Morale can be defined as the feeling a worker has about his/her job based on how the worker perceives him/herself in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations (Wood and McCarthy, 2002). When a healthy school environment exists and teachers' morale is high, teachers feel good about each other and, at the same time, feel a sense of accomplishment from their jobs (Lumsden, 1998). When morale is low, teachers generally do not like what they are doing. When morale is low for an extended period of time, teachers will leave the profession and find other employment, or they will begin to

drop in performance and not care about the quality of instruction delivered to students (Lumsden, 1998).

There are many factors that can result in the reduction of teacher morale. According to Lumsden (1998) a report on teacher job satisfaction was conducted by the National Center for Education, stating that American teachers identified more administrative support, good student behavior, increased parental support, a positive school environment, and more teacher collaboration with colleagues as the top indicators for higher job satisfaction. The absence of these can drastically affect the morale of the teaching staff. Stress can also affect morale. Stress is physical or emotional tension that one feels as a result of pressure (Benjamin, 1987). It can result in emotional and physical fatigue and a reduction in work motivation, involvement, and satisfaction (Benjamin, 1987). Feeling overly stressed can result in erosion of one's idealism, sense of purpose, and enthusiasm (Benjamin, 1987).

Wood and McCarthy (2002) noted that teacher morale could have a positive affect on pupils' attitudes and learning. Raising teachers' morale levels is not only making teaching more pleasant for teachers, but also learning more pleasant for the students. This creates an environment that is more conducive to learning. According to Arhar, (1997) there is a direct connection between morale and achievement. Where morale was high, schools showed an increase in student achievement (Arhar, 1997).

Low levels of satisfaction and morale can lead to decreased teacher productivity and burnout, which is associated with a loss of concern for and detachment from the people with whom one works, decreased quality of teaching, depression, greater use of sick leave, efforts to leave the profession, and a cynical and dehumanized perception of students (Arhar, 1997). In short, the morale of teachers can have far-reaching implications for student learning, the health of the organization, and the health of the teacher.

<u>Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory</u>

Frederick Irving Herzberg was an influential psychologist whose work became prominent in the field of business management. He became most famous for introducing his Motivator-Hygiene Theory of job satisfaction. According to Herzberg's theory,

employees are influenced by two factors called satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, 1959). Satisfaction is primarily the result of the motivator factors. These factors help increase satisfaction but have little effect on dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is primarily the result of hygiene factors. These factors when absent or inadequate can cause dissatisfaction but their presence has little effect on long-term satisfaction.

The following are key factors for both motivator and hygiene:

Motivation Factors

- Achievement
- Recognition
- Work Itself
- Responsibility
- Promotion
- Growth

Hygiene Factors

- Pay and Benefits
- Company Policy and Administration
- Relationships with co-workers
- Physical Environment
- Supervision
- Status
- Job Security

In many traditional school settings, teachers suffer from a lack of the various hygiene factors mentioned above. When the hygiene factors deteriorate to unacceptable levels, low teacher morale can occur. According to Feder (2000) hygiene factors directly affect job attitudes and enthusiasm. There are some motivation factors that also contribute to teachers having high or low morale such as recognition, achievement, and the types of duties that they are assigned to do outside of teaching. When certain

motivation factors are absent, employees will lose their zeal and passion for performing the work they are paid to do (Feder, 2000).

Job enrichment is the process of giving the employee increased authority or decision making power along with greater responsibility (Mione, 2006). The current practice of job enrichment also stemmed from the early work of Herzberg (Feder and Mione, 2006). According to (Moine, 2006) job enrichment includes three steps:

1. Turn an employee's effort into performance:
   - Ensuring that objectives are well defined and understood by all.
   - Providing adequate resources for each employee to perform well.
   - Creating a supportive corporate culture.
   - Eliminate secrecy and create a free flow of information.
   - Encourage employee initiatives.
   - Provide adequate recognition, appreciation, and other motivators.
   - Provide skill improvement opportunities.
   - Provide job variety.

2. Link employee performance directly to reward:
   - Create clear definitions of rewards.
   - Explain the link between performance and rewards.
   - If reward is not given, explanation is needed.

3. Make sure the employee wants the reward. How to find out?
   - Ask them.
   - Use surveys (checklist, listings, questions).

According to Howe and Bell (1998) teaming schools have higher teacher job satisfaction. Teaming leads to new roles for teachers in governance, management, and the delivery of instruction that is not typical with teaching in a traditional sense. Herzberg's two-factor and job enrichment theories provide the necessary philosophical framework to show how interdisciplinary teaming connects with higher teacher morale.

Both motivation and hygiene factors are incorporated in the structure of interdisciplinary teaming. As part of an interdisciplinary team, teachers are able to set and establish goals, create a supportive culture, use all available resources and share information, and also recognize what each member contributes to the group; all are tenets of Herzberg's two-factor theory.

<u>Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory</u>

In 1954, Abraham Maslow first published Motivation and Personality, which introduced his theory about how people satisfy various personal needs in the context of their work. Based on his observations as a humanistic psychologist, he believed that there is not a general pattern of needs recognition and satisfaction that people follow in generally the same sequence. According to Maslow (1954) human beings are pushed and pulled by mechanical forces, either of stimuli and reinforcements (behaviorism) or of unconscious instinctual impulses (psychoanalysis).

Maslow believed that humans strive for an upper level of capabilities. Humans seek the frontiers of creativity, the highest reaches of consciousness and wisdom. This has been labeled "fully functioning person", "healthy personality", or the "self-actualizing person" (Franken, 2001). Maslow has set up a hierarchic theory of needs. Humans start with a very weak disposition that is then fashioned fully as the person grows. If the environment is right, people will grow straight and beautiful, actualizing the potentials they have inherited. If the environment is not right, they will not grow tall and straight and beautiful (Daniels, 2001).

Maslow's hierarchy contains five levels of basic needs. Beyond these needs, higher levels of needs exist. These include needs for understanding, esthetic appreciation and purely spiritual needs. His hierarchy is often illustrated as a pyramid with the survival need at the broad-base bottom, and the self-actualizing need at the narrow top. According to Maslow (1954), his basic hierarchy of needs is as follows:

- Physiological Needs – biological needs such as oxygen, food, water, and constant body temperature. They are the strongest needs because if a person were deprived

- Safety Needs – occurs after all physiological needs are satisfied. Adults have little awareness of their security needs except in times of emergency or periods of disorganization in the social structure. Children often display the signs of insecurity and the need to be safe.
- Love and Belongingness – Occurs after all the safety and physiological needs are met. People seek to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation. This involves both giving and receiving love, affection and the sense of belonging.
- Esteem Needs – Occurs after all the safety, belongingness, and physiological needs have been satisfied. Esteem needs involve how people feel about themselves. This is associated with the amount and types respect that a person receives, and the respect that they give to others.
- Self-actualization – this is the highest level and sits on top of the hierarchy. It is defined as the instinctual need of humans to make the most of their abilities and strive to be the best that they can.

Maslow's need hierarchy is set forth as a general proposition and does not imply that everyone's needs follow the same rigid pattern (p. 101). For some people, self-esteem seems to be a stronger motivation than love. For others, the need to create is often a stronger motivation than the need for food.

For example, lets take the case of a starving artist who is living in poverty. The artist might be willing to suffer hunger and some other deprivation for protracted periods, and my live happily doing so, if he/she is able to get enough of what he/she lacks. The artist might be willing to endure hardship and lack certain basic needs to achieve a desired goal.

Herzberg's and Maslow's Implications on The Case Study

Herzberg and Maslow's theories have great implications on the teaching profession, but they must first be put within the proper contexts. Herzberg and Maslow's

research was initially done to understand what motivates people to work more productive in the professions of business and management, not the educational sphere. Business owners used their research to understand how to get more productivity out of their workers in order to increase production and profit (Franken, 2001). The theories were mainly utilized with factory or assembly line workers. The use of these theories in education occurred many years later.

When using these theories in education, one must be cognizant of the differences between educators and factory/assembly line workers. I will admit they both have some similarities (contracts, work schedules, duties, responsibilities, pay, benefits/insurance, unions, work environment, etc.), but the major difference is in the final product being produced. Factory/assembly line workers usually deal with the production of gadgets and widgets that can be pieced together in a calculated manner. They deal with objects that can be manipulated and transformed at any given time in order to increase profit and meet specific goals. If a product doesn't turn out right, they can get rid of it or change it altogether.

When dealing with their students, educators face a different set of obstacles than factory workers because they deal with human beings. Humans are not like objects that can be pushed down an assembly line. Humans have attitudes, opinions, desires, wants, motives, baggage, needs, feelings, and many other characteristics that make up who they are. Educators have to take all of those characteristics into consideration when dealing with their students collectively. Educators do not have the luxury of discarding the bad students and keeping only the good ones. Educators can't change the students they don't like to fit a certain model or mold. So when looking at Herzberg and Maslow's theories as a framework for this case study, I will be looking at specifically how specific components of each theory coincide with the data.

When looking at Herzberg's motivation factors, the components of recognition, responsibility, and work duties are the ones that are most associated with the educational arena. I'm not saying that the components of growth and promotion are not a factor for teaching professionals, but I see the others as being the most prevalent. Promotion and growth are not as prevalent because most teachers work under a teaching contact that determine their pay, as well as pay increases. When teachers are looking for growth, they

usually take on roles such as lead teacher, department chair, or take an active role in an extra curricular activity (coaching or advisor). Teachers can also ascend to the ranks of school administration when seeking to grow professionally.

There are only certain components of the hygiene factors that apply to the educational arena. Those components are company policy and administration, status, job security, and relationship with co-workers.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs have five levels, but only levels three, four, and five are most pertinent to this case study. Based on the literature I've been able to read on the subject of teacher morale, I've concluded that a teacher's need for belonging, esteem/respect, and self-actualizing needs could greatly influence his/her morale the most. According to Maslow (1954) love and belongingness occurs after all the safety and physiological needs are met (p.189). Once the physiological needs are met, people will seek to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation (p.189). Esteem needs involve how people feel about themselves. This is associated with the amount and types respect that a person receives, and the respect that they give to others (p.101). Self-actualization is the highest level and sits on top of the hierarchy. Maslow (1954) defines it as the instinctual need of humans to make the most of their abilities and strive to be the best that they can.

Many managers, and school administrators alike, make the mistake of assuming that money and other tangible incentives are the only cures for morale problems with their staff. It may be that the need to participate, to be recognized, to be creative, and to experience a sense of worth are better motivators in an affluent society where many have already achieved an acceptable measure of freedom from hunger, threats of security, and personal safety. I will use the components mentioned of these theories to develop further questions and when analyzing and interpreting the data collected.

The next chapter will cover the research method and design of the study. In this section I will give information about how the study will be conducted as well as give more information about the school and the interdisciplinary team involved.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

The purpose of this case study is to determine the positive impact interdisciplinary teaming has on teacher morale.

Background

This is an instrumental qualitative case study to show the positive affects interdisciplinary teaming has on teacher morale. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) an instrumental case is done mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. I designed this case study to speak to the experiences that teachers have while being engaged in an interdisciplinary team, that result in them having high moral.

I am using the case study methodology because it is one of the best ways to examine the process of how interdisciplinary teaming affects morale. It provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and collecting results (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). According to Bolman and Deal (2003) a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The general consensus is that qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to actions, decisions, beliefs, values and the like within their social world, and understanding the mental mapping process that respondents use to make sense of and interpret the world around them (Ziman, 2000). Qualitative research can describe or provide further understanding of a subject and its contextual setting, provide explanation of reasons and associations, evaluate effectiveness and aid the development of theories or strategies (Wolcott, 1999).

The case study was conducted at a high school located in a Southwest Ohio. This school was chosen as the focal point of my research because it currently used interdisciplinary teaming as part of its organizational structure. It has nearly 1300

students. Its current student population breakdown is currently 95% African American, 3% Caucasian, and 2% other. It is located within a lower-middle class community where the average home value is $74,000 (Ohio census, 2000). Most of the homes are inhabited by senior citizens who do not have school aged children.

The majority of the student population does not live in the community where the school is located. Most of the students are bused in from surrounding neighborhoods. Many of the neighborhoods where the students live are ones that are plagued with high crime, domestic violence, unemployment, and public housing. Eighty percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. This school also has a very active parent organization, but the members of the organization are not made up of parents of the students who attend the school. The parent organization is predominately of community members who live and work in the community where the school is located, or they are alumni.

In 2001, interdisciplinary teaming was implemented as part of the school's reform effort. The school was in danger of being taken over by the state due to multiple years of low student achievement.   The school was criticized for its low scores on state standardized tests and high dropout rates. School officials were given three years to develop a plan of action and show enough adequate yearly progress to avoid state take over.

The high school is divided into an upper and lower house (the school's staff also refers to their school's structure using this terminology). The lower house is made up of grades nine and ten, and the upper house consists of grades eleven and twelve. Students in the lower house take all of their core classes on the first and second floors while students in the upper house take classes on floors three and four. The only time that students of different grades intermingle with each other is during lunch or in elective classes.

Each student in the lower house is placed on a team upon entering the ninth grade and remains on one until the end of the tenth grade. Each team is made up from a teacher from the core courses of English, science, math, and social studies. There is also a teacher from one of the elective classes (art, music, physical education, or typing), and a representative from either the special education or counseling departments.

There are approximately 495 students in the ninth grade, which are divided among four teams. The tenth grade has 405 students divided among four teams as well. All of the lower house team teachers have a common planning period in addition to their individual teacher planning period. The common planning time is referred to as "team time".

Team time is the group's common planning time. It's the time when the team teachers get together to discuss issues that affect the students that they commonly share. The time is used in a variety of ways such as discussing issues of student attendance, behavior and discipline, curriculum development and implementation, lesson plan development, etc. This time can also be used to make parent contacts, hold conferences with students, plan agendas and schedules, reviewing forthcoming changes in the daily schedule, and to handle issues concerning students with special needs.

The upper house doesn't have interdisciplinary teaming. The decision not to use teaming with the upper grades was made because of two main reasons. First, trying to keep an entire grade on a team is nearly impossible due to the specialized schedules of students upon entering the eleventh grade. Students in the upper house have the option of tailoring their schedules to fit their specialized areas of interest. Upper house students have the option of taking concentrated courses in business education, humanities, information technology, or continue taking academic course to prepare for college.

Second, school officials who first came up with the idea to use interdisciplinary teaming believed that students mature the most between grades eleven and twelve, so to put them on a team wouldn't be really necessary. Upon entering the eleventh grade, students are able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. They are able to see graduation within their grasp. Students at this stage are more focused and determined, therefore they typically do not have the same kinds of issues with discipline and behavior that underclassmen have.

This case study involved a total of five teachers, all of which made up one interdisciplinary team for the ninth grade. I collected data to determine the positive effects that interdisciplinary teaming had on their morale. This team was chosen because collectively they have the most experience of all the teams (tenth grade teams included). This team has been together longer than any other team in the school. This team was also

noted by the assistant principal as one with high morale, members who were always willing to go the extra mile for students, and ready to assist in other capacities.

Also, ninth graders historically lead the school in disciplinary referrals and suspensions. According to the school's principal, staff members who experience burnout the quickest are the ones who work directly with ninth graders throughout the school year. The principal also told me that despite the stress associated with teaching the ninth grade students, the ninth grade teams do an outstanding job at giving the students the attention they need. The principal also stated that the ninth grade teams are very good at supporting each other through the teaming process. I explored the factors that kept them going and learned what contributed to their morale being high or low, and what role the interdisciplinary team played in the equation.

Methodology

I collected data over a time span of five months (October-February), using a variety of methods. I did this in order to be as accurate as possible with my research, and to stay within a reasonable time of correspondence.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) researchers of qualitative casework employ various procedures in order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation. This is known as triangulation. The idea is that the researcher can be more confident with his/her findings if multiple methods are used, which leads to the same results. I view triangulation as a form of cross-examination used to double-check my results. Using multiple methods of collecting data will help me to clarify meaning and verify the accuracy of my interpretations. Triangulation helps because it will identify different ways the phenomenon is being seen (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

I visited the school weekly, with a minimum of two visits per week. I collected data primarily by using interviews and observations. According to Walcott (1999), qualitative interviewing is a way to find out what others feel and think about their world.

I interviewed each participant individually and asked him/her questions concerning their morale and their feelings toward the interdisciplinary teaming process (see appendix 1 for possible interview questions). I recorded each interview as well as took notes on the

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participants' responses. After each interview, I reviewed my notes with the recordings to make sure I had documented the participants' responses accurately. After listening to the recordings, I transcribed my notes from each interview and gave a copy to the participants to read (each participant only read the summaries from their own interviews). Once the participants reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy, I stored the data for later use.

The other method used to collect data was observations. According to Ziman (2000), observations are conducted in research to study cultural behavior. The observations occurred during team time. I studied the connections between the participants' interactions with fellow teachers during the interdisciplinary teaming process and their morale. I was able to observe how the team members worked together in the process, and see the connections between their interactions as it relates to their morale.

I transcribed my notes after each observation and give a copy to each respective participant to read for accuracy. Only participants were able to read my observation summaries, non-participants were not privileged to that information. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) it is important that targeted persons receive drafts revealing how they are presented, quoted, and interpreted and to aid the researcher in listening for signs of concern.

My role as an observer was to document accurate information and to represent the participants in the most appropriate manner. Over the course of my research activities, my goal was to learn as much about the environment and working conditions of the participants so I could view their circumstances through their eyes, and not from someone from the outside looking in. I wanted to become familiar enough with the participants so that they would trust me. By trust, I mean that I want the participants to feel comfortable enough to speak freely with me, without having to worry whether something will be taken out of context or used against them at a later time. The participants shared their intimate interest, opinions, and circumstances of their job duties and responsibilities. They risked exposure and possible embarrassment. It was important for me to always exercise caution to minimize their risk. Qualitative researchers are guests in the private

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spaces of the world, so their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

All of my notes, transcripts, tapes, and other documentation were kept in a binder. The binder was housed in my personal safe. The safe has only one key and I have sole possession of it. The safe is waterproof and fireproof. Once the case study was complete, I gave a final copy to each of the participants. After each participant received a copy of the study, all materials, notes, and documentations were destroyed.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This qualitative case study was done to determine the positive impact interdisciplinary teaming has on teacher morale. The study was done over a span of five months, beginning October 2007 and ending February 2008. During this time, I had the opportunity to visit with a ninth grade interdisciplinary team made up of five teachers from a high school located in Southwest Ohio. The team members were from the academic disciplines of English, math, science, social studies, and physical education. This team was responsible for 120 ninth grade students.

The results will outline the impact interdisciplinary teaming had on the morale of the teachers who participated.

TEAM OVERVIEW

I'll begin by giving my overall impression of the team participating in this study. My purpose for doing so is to try to create a clear picture of the team's make-up, and to show how the team functions as a unit. Doing so will give greater understanding of the issues that impact their morale.

As I stated previously, the team consisted of all ninth grade teachers from various academic disciplines. They were responsible for 120 students. There were two males and three females, three were African-American and two were Caucasians. This group had a mixture of veteran and novice teachers. Their range of teaching experience spans from five to twenty years. The team participating in this study was one of four ninth grade teams within the high school. This was an urban high school with roughly 1300 students, 95% of which are African-American. There were a total of 490 freshmen students.

Going into this study as the observer, I wanted to document accurate information and to represent the participants in the most appropriate manner. I wanted to learn as much about the environment and working conditions of the participants so that I could view their circumstances through their eyes, and not from someone from the outside looking in. I also wanted this study to be as non-intrusive as possible. The participants

in this study had very demanding workloads. I didn't want to compound their duties, nor have them view their roles in the study as burdensome.

In an attempt at being non-intrusive, I did observations for the first week of the study. I observed the team every day during the first week while the participants were in their daily team meetings. I started in this manner not only to be less intrusive, but also to try to create familiarity with the participants. I wanted them to view my presence as an additional team member, or simply "one of the gang" in a sense. I wanted the participants to feel comfortable with sharing their feelings about their morale within the framework of the interdisciplinary teaming process without feeling uneasy. By the time the study ended, I had conducted fifteen team observations and ten individual teacher interviews (each individual teacher was interviewed twice).

The team welcomed me from day one, and was very eager to share their thoughts and feelings about interdisciplinary teaming and the impact it had on their morale. They were pleased to have someone show an interest in their feelings and concerns, so they were more than happy to contribute.

The thing that stood out about this team the most was how organized and efficient they were. Every team member was on time for the start of every team meeting, and they concluded just a minute or two shy of the allotted fifty minutes so each member could be on time for their next scheduled class. They also had an agenda which dictated how the meeting time would be used, as well as how much time they would spend discussing each item on the agenda. They rarely strayed from the agenda items, but on the few occasions when they did, someone would bring the focus back to the topic at hand.

Their organization and efficiency were also evident in their parent/student conferences. There was always one person who conducted the meeting and served as the point person or facilitator (usually the teacher who was having the most issues with the student). This person usually deferred to the other team members, which allowed them to make contributions to the meetings when necessary. There was also an agenda present at every parent/student conference. They used the agenda as a guide to keep the meeting focused on the issues that the team thought necessary to discuss.

I was also able to notice how well the team worked with each other. They were very polite and courteous toward one another. For example, I seldom saw someone cut

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another person off while they were speaking, but on the rare occasion when it did happen, the person who made the intrusion would always say excuse me.

I also got a sense that the members on this team really liked one another. For example, before the winter break they took the time to buy each other Secret Santa gifts. I know that Secret Santa gifts are typical around the winter holiday season, and people are typically in a giving mood during that time of year, but people usually don't take the time to do such a thing when there is not a mutual liking among the group members. It seemed they genuinely enjoyed one another's company, and they also enjoyed the work that they were doing together.

There were several occasions when one of the team members needed some kind of assistance, and one of the other members volunteered to help. During the course of this study, I didn't notice any dominant personalities or rabble-rousers. What I did notice was a group of teachers who were sincere in their efforts and were about the business of educating students.

For the next section, I will discuss my findings by highlighting the positive impact that interdisciplinary teaming had on the morale of the teachers participating in this case study.

THE POSITIVE IMPACT

The data collected for this study were generated from observations of the group's team meetings, and from individual interviews of each team member. To make sense of the data, I reread all of my transcribed notes several times in search of common themes and patterns. According to Walcott (1999), the researcher uses smaller focused samples rather than large random samples, and categorizes data into patterns as the primary basis for organizing and reporting results.

Whenever I thought I discovered an important piece of information, I would highlight it with a colored marker, giving all recurring themes the same color. Next, after highlighting themes I gave each color a number. After giving each color a number, I then placed the themes in two categories, one positive and the other negative.

When finished, I had a total of nine themes, five of which were positive. The five positive themes represented elements of the interdisciplinary teaming process that had a positive impact on the team's morale.

The five aspects of interdisciplinary teaming that positively impacted the team's morale were 1) Supportive Atmosphere, 2) Participation, 3) Collegiality, 4) Autonomy, and 5) Collaborative Work. I will discuss each aspect in detail by giving examples from the member's individual interview responses, and from my observations during the team's common planning time.

SUPPORTIVE ATMOSPHERE

In traditional high school settings where teachers are isolated, teachers will generally have to seek the support of an administrator when needing assistance with an issue, or if in need of a professional opinion. Depending on the administrators' daily schedule and individual demands, trying to muster their support for an issue could take days or even weeks.

In the case with the team participating in this study, the members relied more on themselves for support. The team operated in a manner that fostered a "do-it-yourself" attitude. Regardless of the issue(s) they looked toward each other for assistance and support before turning the problem(s) over to the school's administration. The following are excerpts from statements made during the individual interviews:

"If a student has repeated disciplinary issues, I'll seek the team's support before writing a referral unless the violation is severe." -Teacher #1

"Being on a team when dealing with issues helps with my morale because I'm not faced with the burden of handling all of the issues by myself." -Teacher #1

"We share best practices, and information about students. The team is really supportive in many ways." –Teacher #2

"As a team, we handle most of our own disciplinary issues. Some of our issues don't even make it to the office because we are able to deal with them as a team."
–Teacher #3

"The team members really do support each other. I'm really satisfied with how we're progressing at this point in the school year. We share and combine resources, brainstorm ideas, and collaborate on issues concerning our students."
–Teacher #4

The final example that I will use to illustrate the teams support for one another, comes from a situation that involved Teacher #5. While in an interview, this teacher candidly described a difficult situation involving one of the team's ninth grade students and parent. Below is an excerpt of the interview with this teacher. It includes the actual interview questions and the exact response from the teacher.

Q: How is your morale currently?

R: It's good overall, but I'm currently dealing with a situation that's really starting to drain me, but I'm hanging in there.

Q: Do you mind telling me about it?

R: See, I've got this kid in my class named T.K. He's a really smart kid. I mean he's bright, articulate, but he's lazy as hell. During first quarter he blew off two major reports, turned in only half the homework, and turned in an incomplete test at the end of the quarter. His final grade for the quarter was 59%. Two weeks into the second quarter, I get a message from T.K.'s mother on my answering machine. She was requesting for me to call her back. I called her back and she literally started cursing me out. She's calling me all kinds of derogatory names, and blaming me for her child's failure. I hung up on her because I'm not going to tolerate being called out of my name by anyone. The next day, I get an email from the assistant principal informing me of a mandatory meeting with T.K.'s

mother after school. During the meeting, she once again blamed me for his failure by saying that I didn't contact her when I first noticed his grades slipping. She demanded that T.K. be given make-up assignments so his first quarter grades can be changed. Her statement about me not contacting her was far from the truth. I made four different attempts at calling home, but the answering machine was full each time. His name was also part of a list of student names called during one of our team meetings. The list was generated from students who were having problems completing assignments. The answering machine was full then also, so when sent out one of our generic letters requesting for a parent conference. We never received any response from the letter. In addition to that, the school mails all the mid-term reports home. I would think that if the parent was so concerned with the grades, then she should have made contact with us then.

Q: So what happened next?

R: The meeting ended with me having to show documentation of the parent contacts attempted. I went back and got a copy of my call log, a copy of the minutes of our team meetings, and a copy of the letter that we sent to T.K. residence. I gave all that to the administrator to support my stance on having the grades remain as they are.

Q: Did the grade stand?

R: Yes, but get this, she's now claiming that he has some kind of medical condition that causes him to lose concentration and experience fatigue.

Q: So, how has the team supported you with this?

R: The team has been very supportive. They've helped me with gathering the proper documentation, and each team member wrote a statement regarding T.K.'s grades, attendance, and behavior in their classes. To tell you the truth, I am glad

to have them just to talk to. The ironic thing about this whole situation is that in his college prep math class, he earned an 84%. Now I'd like to know how his condition caused him to get an "F" in my class, but doesn't affect him at all in math.

The situation shared with Teacher #5 was an excellent example of how the team members band together in an effort to provide each other support with the daily issues they encountered.

The next part of this chapter, will discuss how the supportive atmosphere was evident throughout the researcher's observations.

Team Meetings and Supportive Environment

The greatest factor that contributed to this team's supportive atmosphere was their common planning time. The common planning time, or team meetings, was the time during the school day when the team members came together for the benefit of their students. They were allotted fifty minutes out of the school day to plan, organize, and collaborate. The time team members were together during these meetings served as the foundation to all that they were able to do as a team.

They generally used this time to coordinate lesson plans, schedule conferences, share and discuss student progress, problems and issues, and to integrate subjects around a central theme. It was during the team meetings when I observed the cultivation of the support for each other. The common meeting time was the one opportunity when they would share their feelings, desires, doubts, strengths, weaknesses, concerns, and triumphs, failures, and successes about teaching.

Since the team was able to share issues that matter to them with each other, they were more in touch with each other's needs. Knowing the other members' needs makes it easier to provide the support when the opportunity presented itself. The team's supportive atmosphere not only had a positive impact on the teachers' morale, but it also allowed them to do their jobs more effectively.

A significant example of the team's supportive atmosphere came from a situation I observed during one of the team's meetings. It was the time of the meeting when they dealt with student issues. One of the team members said she was having behavioral issues with a student, but was unable to contact the student's parents because the phone number was disconnected. She also stated that the work number listed for the mother wasn't helpful because she didn't work there any more. Another member of the team went into her folder and pulled out the phone number of the student's grandmother.

"Here, try this. It's the grandmother's number. Any time when I couldn't get hold of the mother, I would always call the grandmother. She'll deliver the message. She's a very nice woman."

Another example of the support they provide for each other is during the parent conferences. The parent conferences usually took place during the team meetings. The team would support each other by attending all of the parent conferences and making contributions to the meeting whether they had an issue with the student or not. Having the support of the other teachers at the parent conferences gave the members the strength to tackle difficult situations, as well as providing multiple perspectives of the issue for the parents. This supportive atmosphere was not only prevalent among the team members, but it is also extended to the students, parents, and other staff members as well.

During one team meeting observation, one team member brought up the name of one male student on their team. The teacher discussed how the student came to school with bad hygiene, matted hair, and in need of a winter coat. After a few minutes of discussion, the team decided to do something for this student. They pitched in and bought the student a goodie-bag filled with deodorant, soap, toothpaste, mouthwash, toothbrush, comb and brush. Also, one of the teachers stated they had a relative that was similar in size to the student in question and he would see if his relative had a gently used coat that he could donate. The team collected the items and the teacher with the best relationship with the student delivered the items to him.

An example of how the supportive atmosphere positively impacted a parent was when I observed a conference during the fifth week of the study. A parent came to one of the team meetings to get a report on how her son was doing. She had been in for a conference with her son previously, so she wanted to follow up since their initial

conference three weeks prior. The parent was visiting the school unbeknown to her child. Each team member pulled out their grade books and gave the parent the current status of her child's grades, behavior, and attendance. The lead teacher even gave the parent a copy of an upcoming test and homework assignments complete with dates and calculations of how much each assignment was worth.

The final example to demonstrate the team's supportive atmosphere came from a meeting that I observed during the first week of the study. This meeting was significant because it involved an elective teacher who was not on an interdisciplinary team. The teacher was having issues with a female student and was informed by a colleague to contact the student's team. She made contact with the team and was invited to attend a team conference with the student present.

At the conference, the teacher complained of problems associated with the female student's tardiness to class, excessive talking, and incomplete work. After the teacher finished expressing all of her concerns, one of the team members added to the discussion by stating that she has had some of the same issues. The meeting concluded with the team contacting the student's mother via speakerphone.

The mother was not available so the lead teacher left a message outlining the problems and concerns. The student was also given an opportunity to acknowledge the problems, and given a plan of action by the team to follow.

The elective teacher who called the meeting was so impressed at how the team supported her with the matter that before leaving she stated, "Thanks for your support guys. I really appreciate your help. So, this is what it feels like to be on a team? I like it."

The next section discusses how the team's participation in the interdisciplinary process positively impacts their morale.

PARTICIPATION

Each team member's participation was very critical to the interdisciplinary teaming process and the overall health of the group. The work that they did as a group on behalf of their students allowed them to work efficiently and cohesively. All of the members gave their full cooperation when engaged in the interdisciplinary teaming

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process. Without full cooperation from each member, the teaming process would have been less effective.

Participation began with the team meetings and extended into other areas that impacted their job duties, which made them not only responsible for their students, but also responsible for each other. Their participation in the interdisciplinary teaming process positively impacted their morale because it gave the members of the team the feeling that they were able to get more accomplished as a group, than they would have on an individual basis.

Below are excerpts from individual team member interviews. They give insight into how the team members felt about their participation in the group and how it impacts their morale.

"The teaming process is more helpful than harmful. I'm glad to be part of a team. I think that if I had to deal with some of the things around here on my own, then I might have lost it a long time ago." – Teacher #1.

"Our team has taken a strong stance on student discipline. If I had to deal with all of my discipline issues alone, I would have burned out first quarter." – Teacher #1

"The other team members' participation helps me deal with discipline so I can get back to what I do best, teaching." – Teacher #1

"Teaming is good for my morale. When I'm working with the team members, I feel a sense of empowerment. I feel my participation is valuable." – Teacher #2

"I don't feel isolated all the time. Being on a team makes me feel like I'm getting more accomplished. I've worked in a school that didn't have teaming and boy, I can tell the difference." – Teacher #2

"I'd rather be on a team than not be on one. People seem to work better together when on a team. Trying to get other teachers around here who are not on a team

to do something is like trying to pull teeth. They won't participate in anything." –
Teacher #2

"I enjoy participating on this team and the work that we do." – Teacher #3

"Being on a team helps take some of the load off. It helps make dealing with
tough issues a little easier." – Teacher #4

"We're all professionals. We're committed to doing what's best for the students
we serve." – Teacher #5.

The final example of how the team's participation in the interdisciplinary teaming
process positively impacted their morale came from an excerpt of an individual interview
I had with Teacher #3. It contains the exact questions as and the participant's exact
response.

Q: What aspects of Interdisciplinary Teaming help to boost your morale?

R: Well, whenever one of us have a problem, or issue, regardless of what it is; we
get behind each other in a supportive way.

Q: Could you please elaborate on how Interdisciplinary Teaming helped make
you a better teacher?

R: For starters, I get to know the students better. The more knowledge you have
on a kid helps to serve his needs better. Secondly, I benefit from having the
expertise of my colleagues whenever I have an issue. But I benefit the most when
we critique each other's lesson plans.

Q: What exactly does that consist off (lesson critiquing)?

R: Well, every Friday two members bring a sample lesson plan that they've either
done, or want to do, in their classrooms. First, we look at how the lesson is

written, and then the teachers take turns performing the lesson in front of the rest of the team as if they were in their actual classes. After the teachers finish, each team member takes turns at giving the teachers feedback on their lesson. I personally enjoy participating in these sessions because they help me to look at my practices in a different way. My team members help me to see things that I might have overlooked or didn't consider.

<center>Team Meetings and Participation</center>

The team meetings/common planning time is where the team members do the majority of their participating outside of their individual classrooms. The group's activities included, but were not limited to scheduling and facilitating conferences, monitoring students' attendance and progress, integrating curriculum, planning and organizing student activities and events, contacting parents, critiquing lessons plans, providing support to parents, students, and other staff outside of the team, and providing recognition and support for each member of the team. The team's participation revolves around items that not only affect their students, but also issues that affect them as a group.

During the fourth week of the study, I had the opportunity to observe the team during one of their team meetings. The assistant principal was invited to attend this meeting because the team wanted to discuss the manner in which students were sent to the in-school-suspension center (ISS) with the administrator. The team discussed the types and frequency of offenses committed by students, as well as the efficiency of how assignments are being sent to and returned from the student in ISS. The team worked together as a cohesive unit. By the end of the team meeting, there was a consensus among the group as to what was needed in order to solve their issues with the ISS center.

The team was very efficient and organized. I say this because the team had an outline of what they wanted to discuss with the assistant principal. They began by describing the problem and then moved to possible solutions. What impressed me the most about the meeting was the manner in which they conversed with the assistant principal. The team didn't invite the administrator to give them the solution to their problem, but merely to update him on the issues affecting them, and to inform him of

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their proposed solution. The team was able to collaboratively work together in order to identify their problems and to come up with possible outcomes that would be beneficial to them.

The group's participation in the interdisciplinary teaming process contributed to them having high morale because they felt they were getting more accomplished, shared a sense of responsibility, a feeling of value and empowerment, and they had a voice in the issues that affected them and their students. The team members' participation made their job duties less stressful and manageable; therefore positively impacting their morale.

The next section will discuss how the team's collegiality played a part in positively impacting the morale of the teachers participating in this study.

COLLEGIALITY

According to Flowers, Mertens, and Mulhall (1999) traditional high school teaching is typically characterized as being an isolated and lonely job where collegial interactions are few and far between. Most high school teachers spend most of their time void of seeing and hearing others in the act of teaching. They typically go without interaction from adults all day, models to emulate good teaching, and are forced to deal with tough issues and learn best practices by trial-and-error.

The participants in this case study meet with each other an average of four days per week for three hours and thirty minutes. In one calendar school year, that would equate to an average of 144 days, and 119 hours per year. That's a lot of time for one group of people to spend together.

According to Egan (2004), collegiality can be defined as respect for ones colleagues and the work that they do. It involves more than having employees work together, because a group of people could actually work together without having collegiality. Collegiality not only involves employees working together, but there is a bond or level of respect formed due to their common interest, mission, or purpose (Egan, 2004).

Having collegiality among an interdisciplinary team is critical to the team's overall success. If an interdisciplinary team doesn't communicate well with each other, frequently dialogue, voluntarily share knowledge and resources, unity for a common

mission, or treat each other with respect and professionalism, then the team formed will not function properly.

One prevalent aspect of the team's collegiality is their ability to work with each other. They have a sense of camaraderie that I haven't seen before. It seems to be very genuine and sincere. After spending time with this team, I sensed that the members truly like each other as professionals and as people. The type of relationships that the team has formed was forged through their desire to not only help their students, but also to help each other. Their common mission to serve their students to the best of their ability severed as the glue that bonded them as a team. Their support of one another, and common purpose, helped the group form a tight bond, which positively impacts their morale.

Below are excerpts from individual teacher interviews. These excerpts illustrate, in the participants' own words, how they felt about the group's collegial interactions, and overall attitude toward each other.

"In all of our conferences, we stand together as a united front." – Teacher #1

"We usually recognize each other for the work that we do for our students, especially when someone goes beyond the call of duty. Sometimes we even share stories with each other during our team meetings of something significant that has happened during the week. I get inspired by some of the testimonies." - Teacher #2

"I enjoy the camaraderie among the team members. Everyone respects each other as a professional. I think each teacher brings a certain level of expertise to the table." – Teacher #2

"We collectively decide how we're going to integrate our curriculum." – Teacher #2

"We take time to recognize each other during team meetings." – Teacher #3

"I feel a shared sense of passion and mission from our team members. We want our students to be successful, and I believe that each of us is willing to do whatever it takes to do so." – Teacher #4

"The camaraderie among us is great. Work becomes easier when you're working around people that you like. It's no fun when you're working with people you don't get along with." – Teacher #5

"We work together in order to handle our own discipline issues. At the beginning of the year, we (the team) sat down and form our classroom rules and consequences so that students will see some consistency when they move from classroom to classroom." – Teacher #5

Their camaraderie leads to a greater association with each other, which fosters more sharing and collaborative work among the team.

Another example of the team's collegiality comes from a direct excerpt from one of the individual interviews. The questions asked pertained to things that boost morale.

Q: So what are some things that boost your morale while at work?

R: Seeing my students make strides, working with the team, and of course, getting a pay raise is a big morale booster?

Q: Yes, increased pay is a good morale booster. Could you talk more about how working with the team helps your morale?

R: We share things with each other that could help our teaching in the classroom. Someone is always bringing in information about a good conference to go to, or information on some new technology that could be helpful in the classroom. We even critique each other's lesson plans and give feedback teaching methods and classroom management.

Q: So, how does this boost your morale?

R: I can't speak for the rest of the team, but I know that when I get feedback on my lesson plans, or something that I was dealing with in class, it motivates me to go back and try out the suggestion that was given to me. I want to see if it works. I'm willing to do almost anything to improve because I know when I improve, so does my students.

The above excerpt illustrates how the team's collegial interaction not only helps to build camaraderie and improve morale, but it also helps them to improve on their instructional skills and expertise as well. It also brought the participant a certain level of job satisfaction and enthusiasm.

Team Meetings and Collegiality

As stated previously, the team meetings are the focal point of the participants' interactions. It is during these meetings when they are able to express feelings of success and failure, triumph and frustration; and express emotions toward their role and responsibilities (whether positive or negative). They have developed a mutual support and care for each other with respect to the circumstances and duties of their jobs as teachers. The team's collegial interaction positively impacted their morale due to the benefits they received from their social interactions.

When I speak of benefits, I'm referring to both tangible and intangible assets each member receives from being on the team. The tangibles are such things as physical aid, advice, or knowledge on how to complete a task or solve a problem. Intangibles benefits are things such as the display of caring behavior, listening, and/or empathy. The team members seem to gain a lot from talking and listening to colleagues whom they respect.

An example comes from one of the team meetings I observed during the eleventh week of the study. This particular team meeting illustrates both the tangible and intangible benefits to the team members.

The first ten minutes of the meeting was used for a student conference. After the conference, the science teacher took out a sample lesson plan for the other members to critique. It was part of the team's protocol to set aside one day during the week when they would critique each other's lesson plans. The purpose of this was to make the lessons stronger, therefore improving instructional outcomes for the students on their team.

The science teacher began by confessing to the group that she didn't get the desired response for the students that she had hoped when doing this lesson previously. The other members of the team inquired to find out what type of response she was looking for. Next, the science teacher discussed the amount of time she spent preparing the lesson, and how disappointed she was to receive lack-luster participation and effort from students in her classes. She also demonstrated the lesson to the team, outlining exactly how the lesson was delivered to the students. The team gave her constructive criticism on her methods, delivery, and activities. The team members' interactions were cordial and complimentary. They showed a genuine interest in the young teacher, and it seemed that they sincerely wanted to offer whatever helpful hints they could.

Some of the comments given to the teacher were, *"Great opening…that's okay, those kinds of things happen sometimes…Did you list the objectives on the board?…From my experience, I've learned that it's not always about the lesson, it has a lot to do with the mindset of the students when they walk into your room."*

The feedback from the team members gave the young science teacher encouragement and motivation, but more importantly; she received positive reinforcement, which reduced feelings and stress, incompetence, and inadequacy; therefore positively impacting her morale.

AUTONOMY

According to Benson (2001) teacher autonomy can be defined as ideas of professional freedom and self-directed professional development. As a group, this team

has a strong sense of autonomy. Interdisciplinary teaming gave them cognitive control over the academic process. They have been given the freedom to plan, develop, organize, create, and implement policies and academic standards for the benefit of the students on their team. The participants exercised this freedom every time they meet on behalf of their students. The autonomy that the team shared had a positive impact on their morale because it gave them feelings of self-worth, empowerment, and personal satisfaction.

Below are quotes from the team members' individual interview.   The quotes illustrate the positive impact the team's autonomy had on their morale.

"Working with the team gives me a sense of empowerment." – Teacher #2

"As a team, we handle most of our own disciplinary issues. Some of our issues don't even make it to the office." – Teacher #3

"I like being able to make decisions about my students without one of the administrators hovering over my back." – Teacher #4

"I like having the freedom to make adjustments to the curriculum as I see fit. I want to be respected and trusted as an educator enough to be able determine what best fit the needs of my students, instead of being told what is best by someone who doesn't have as much interaction with the students as I do." – Teacher #4

"We make decisions about issues that directly affect us and our students." – Teacher #5

<p align="center">Team Meetings and Autonomy</p>

I was able to observe the team exercise their autonomy on several occasions during their team meetings. The first example of this came from an observation I did during the tenth week of the study. During this particular team meeting, the team discussed the formation of an after school-tutoring program for the students on their team

who needed additional help. The team felt a need to form such a program due to the high number of students who received low marks in math, English, and science during the mid-term reporting period.

The team discussed possible days, times, and the possible locations within the building where students could report. The team members also discussed how they would volunteer their time and room space in order to make the program a success. They discussed how they would rotate their scheduled days, and who would cover if a team member was absent on their scheduled tutoring date. After discussing all of the parameters, the only thing left to do was get their idea approved by the school's principal.

Another example came from an observation that was done during the fourth week of the study. The entire meeting was used to plan and coordinate when students on their team would take the practice Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). The assistant principal came to the meeting and spent the first 15 minutes to discuss tentative dates and times. For the remainder of the meeting, the team discussed which classrooms would be used for testing and other aspects (i.e. tardy students, use of the restroom, potential problems, and accommodations for special needs students). Even though the discussion wasn't finished before the end of the meeting time, the dialogue that took place showed the group was in the driver's seat. The administrator was present only to give the potential dates and to see what direction the team wanted to pursue.

In the above examples, the team members saw a need and collaboratively developed means to fulfill that need. They didn't wait for anyone to tell them that there was a problem, or suggest to them how to fix it. They took control by making the decision to tackle the issue among themselves. The autonomy they share not only gave them a sense of empowerment, but it also let them know their opinions and ideas were valued.

COLLABORATIVE WORK

The interdisciplinary teaming process fosters collaboration among the team members. Throughout this case study, I've watched the participants of this study handle

a variety of issues from student discipline to curriculum integration, by working collaboratively.

Below are excerpts from individual interviews. The quotes give insight as to how the participants feel about the collaborative work that they perform.

"We work together in order to educate the students we're responsible for." – Teacher #1

"Everything we do is done in a collaborative effort. We integrate the curriculum when possible, monitor student attendance, take turns sitting in on IEP meetings, determine ways to reward students, you name it. I think the collaboration and support from the team helps keep my morale up and my spirits high because I feel as if I don't have to tackle every issue alone. There always strength in numbers, so being able to work together allows us to pool our resources together so we can better serve our students." – Teacher #1

"We share and combine our resources, brainstorm ideas, and collaborate on issues concerning our students." – Teacher #4

Some researchers would have combined collaborative work and collegiality together under one heading because the precepts overlap in many ways. Collegiality is fully inclusive of collaborative work, but collaborative work is not fully inclusive of collegiality. Collegiality involves more than having employees work together, because having a group work together doesn't mean that their interactions will be collegial. It not only involves employees working together, but there is also a bond formed due to their common interest, mission, or purpose (Egan, 2004).

I chose to separate them because I viewed them differently during this case study. I understood the team members' collegial work as their collective actions (work performed together) around their common goal(s) and/or mission, and the collaborative work as a depiction of how the members felt while working together.

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Team Meetings and Collaborative Work

All of the collaborative work took place during the team's common planning time. The results of the team's collaborative work manifested into positive outcomes for students, parents, and staff members. I was able to observe the team's collaborative work throughout the time of the study. Even the above examples in the previous sections contain elements of collaboration.

The most common area where the team used collaborative work was with student discipline issues. Out of the fifteen observations conducted during the case study, the topic of student discipline was an issue in twelve of the meetings. Student discipline seemed to be the area of the team's responsibility were collaborative work, participation, and support was needed the most.

For example, during the fifth week of the study I observed the team use their entire meeting time on student disciplinary issues. The first twenty-five minutes of the meeting began with a parent conference. A parent came in to get a report on how her son was doing. She had been in for a conference with her son previously, so she wanted to follow up since it has been three weeks from the time of the last meeting. The parent was visiting the school unbeknown to her child. Each team member pulled out their grade books and gave the parent the current status of her child's grades, behavior, and attendance. The lead teacher even printed out the dates of upcoming test and homework assignments (the meeting was held in his classroom).

The last half of the meeting was with a male student who got caught selling candy in his in math class. The student's math teacher was the one who saw him and reported the incident. The teacher stated that he initially saw the student selling candy bars out of his locker, and warned him not to do so because it is against the school's policy. He wrote a referral when he saw the student sell a candy bar in his math class. The assistant principal sat in on this portion of the meeting and explained to the student how he violated the solicitation rule written in the district's code of conduct. He also explained the consequences if the student continued to violate the rule. The student was assigned a Saturday School detention and sent back to class.

Another example came during the eleventh week. Just as with the previous example, the entire meeting time was also used on disciplinary issues. The first half of the meeting was used for a student disciplinary conference. The team called in a male student because he was previously put out of his fourth period class for using profanity while speaking to another student. The incident happened in the student's English class. During the meeting, the English teacher explained what the student did wrong, and discussed consequences if the use of profanity occurred again. The team also called the student's mother and invited her in the conversation via speakerphone.

Moments later, the team called in two students on their team, both female, to discuss their recent changes in behavior in English class. The two girls were best friends and they only share English and Physical Education in common throughout the day. The first 10 minutes of the meeting consisted of the English teacher outlining the problems associated with the two girls. English teacher reported that the two girls were tardy to class several times last week without a legitimate excuse or pass. The PE teacher also added that the two left class early twice last week with permission. The PE teacher suspected that they left class to socialize during the first lunch period. The team called the girls in to speak with them individually, and then spoke to both at the same time. The English teacher took the lead for most of the meeting. She outlined the expectations and instructed them on what is considered proper behavior. She also informed them of the consequence that would follow if the behaviors continued. Both girls acknowledged their understanding of what was expected of them. Both girls were assigned detentions and sent back to class.

It appeared that the members on the team felt more confident, and equipped, when having to deal with tough disciplinary issues since they had the support and collaboration from each other. Together they were better able to support one another's strengths, and accommodate their weaknesses. The team actively used their collaborative work to try to foster coherence, consistency, and to promote high expectations in the area of discipline.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE CONCLUSION

Today's high school teachers face a barrage of challenges each day. They face a classroom full of students with varying degrees of learning styles, negotiate potentially stressful interactions with parents, administrators, counselors, and other teachers, contend with relatively low pay and shrinking school budgets, and ensure students meet increasingly strict standards of accountability.

Conducting this case study has enlightened me on the issues surrounding teacher morale, and its importants to the overall health and affectiveness of a school. Like many high school administrators, I previously thought I understood teacher morale. I was under the ironeous impression that to improve or maintain high teacher morale, the only thing necessary was to develop and implement a teacher appreciation or recognition program.

One commonly used attempt by high school administrators at improving teacher morale is by having a teacher of the month program. This kind of program highlights teachers by monthly posting their pictures in a display case with an excerpt at the bottom of the picture describing how great they are. Another feeble attempt is the often used staff appreciation meal that takes place at the end of the school year. This is when all of the staff members of the school building are mandated to attend a scheduled meal when the principal gives a prepared speech about how much he/she appreciates the work done by the staff. Such teacher appreciation programs/activities are imbedded into the culture of many high schools across the country. Although these types of programs are plentiful, they are also generic and enaffective at solving the morale problems of a high school's teaching staff. If such generic programs were affective at improving or maintaining high teacher morale, then there wouldn't be as many teachers suffering from stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and/or ready to leave the profession.

Working with the participants in this study has shown me that the first step toward improving teacher morale is to allow teachers the opportunity to dialogue about issues that are important tothem. I've learned that as a school principal, I would be better able to maintain/improve teacher morale by including teachers in the decision making process,

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creating an outlet for teachers to voice their opinions and concerns, and by allowing teachers opportunities to converse with each other.

According to Freire (1970) it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it (p. 87). Dialogue is a way by which they achieve significance as human beings (p. 87). Not allowing teachers to dialogue is, in my opinion, not recognizing them as competent educated professionals; therefore undermining the significant role that they play in the educational process.

According to Maslow (1954) esteem needs involve how people feel about themselves. This is associated with the amount and types of respect that a person receives, and the respect that they give to others (p.189). This case study has taught me that teachers feel empowered when they are include in the decision making process. Their feelings of empowerment improved their morale because it improved their self-worth and personal job satisfaction.

The five themes mentioned in the analysis section (supportive atmosphere, participation, autonomy, and collaborative work) had a positive impact on the morale of the participants. Despite the varying types and degrees of issues these teachers faced, they were able to tackle the issues with a certain level of enthusiasm and vigor.

Based on the data collected, I've concluded that, for this particular team, interdisciplinary teaming had the following overall positive impact on teacher morale:

- Less feelings of stress, fatigue, and burnout
- Increased feelings of confidence
- Perform their job more efficiently
- Shared resources and expertise
- Shared responsibility of job duties
- Reflective dialogue and positive talk
- Feelings of accomplishment and achievement
- Develop own solutions to problems
- Creating a voice in the decision making process
- Feelings of value, empowerment, and high self-efficacy

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- Duties are less stressful and manageable
- Critiquing of lessons and positive feedback
- Ability to establish coherence and high expectations
- Better relationships formed with students, colleagues, and parents
- Increased opportunities to mentor younger teachers

Previously, I discussed how feelings of burnout could affect the morale of teachers, and the implications that it could have on their job duties. I would like to refer back to those tenets because they will further establish the extent of how interdisciplinary team positively impacts teacher morale.

Wood and McCarthy (2002) referred to a teacher's loss of morale as the feeling of being burned out. Burnout is the result of a long period of stress. Stress comes from the perception of a teacher that the resources available to deal with the stress are not adequate. There are several negative effects that can result from teachers who lose morale and passion for teaching. Wood and McCarthy also state the following are a few of the negative outcomes that can result from a teacher's loss of morale:

- Loss in pride of work
- Resistant to change
- Lack of organization and planning
- Decrease in support for school sponsored activities
- Increase in criticism of the school and/or administration
- Lack of participation in school initiatives and programs
- Refusal to take on increased responsibilities outside of the classroom

Teachers who exhibit characteristics of being burned out are not effective in the classroom. They feel that they can no longer be responsible for the behavior or learning of the students in their classroom. The team participating in this study displayed characteristics that were the exact opposite of the negative outcomes mentioned above.

I found the methods used to collect data for this case study to be very helpful in determining the positive impact interdisciplinary teaming had on the morale of the participants. The methods were also helpful in determining some common themes that negatively impact their morale as well.

I initially placed the common themes found in the data in two separate categories, one positive and one negative. Even though I discovered five common themes that positively impacted teacher morale, there were four themes that had a negative affect. The themes that adversely affected their morale didn't necessarily have anything to do with the interdisciplinary teaming process, but pertained more to issues that were outside of the participants' control, but still had a direct impact on their job duties and roles as teachers. The following are the issues the participants expressed that had a negative impact on their morale.

- The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)
- Irate/misinformed parents/student misconduct
- Non-supportive administrators
- Lack of recognition

The following are excerpts from individual interviews of participants of this case study. The excerpts provide evidence in the participants' own words as to how the issues above negatively affected their morale.

Q: What are some of the things that cause a decrease in your morale?

R: Irate parents, disrespectful students, non-supportive administrators, and anything that takes me away from teaching. My morale also decreases during testing time. Everyone gets in a real hissy during test week. It's like everyone looses their mind for a week. All of the talk around here is centered on the test. It's like we forget about real education.

Q: Would you say that this is caused by NCLB?

R: Yes, of course. The district receives pressure from the state, the administrators receive pressure from central office, and the administrators put pressure on the teachers. Shit seems to always roll down hill.

Q: You mentioned non-supportive administrators as one of the things that decrease your morale. Could you talk more about that? Would you say that support is lacking at this school?

R: I wouldn't say that it's lacking, but sometimes they tend to side with the parents a little too much. I understand the importance of establishing a rapport with parents, but I don't think you should be a pushover.

The following is another excerpt from an interview with a different teacher:

Q: So, what are some things that negatively impact your morale?

R: The thing that negatively affects me the most is when we go through the teaming process with a student, the student receives discipline from the principal, and the student continues to exhibit the same negative behaviors. That really kills my morale because…it's like…what's going on. It's like no matter what we do, some students have made up their minds that their not going to make changes, and their parents can't make them change either. That's very frustrating because it's like all of our efforts are of no effect.

Here's another excerpt from a different teacher:

Q: What aspects of the teaming process are you satisfied with and what aspects are you not satisfied with?

R: I'm very satisfied with the way in which we're functioning. I think we mesh well together as a unit and we do a good job of working with some of our most difficult students. The only thing that I'm not satisfied with is the amount of time that our administrators spend in our team meetings. I know that they have their own separate set of issues, and I know that we're not the only team in the building, but it would be good if they could pop in a little more. We have a lot of positive things going on that they never get to see. They usually show up when there is a major disciplinary problem, so I guess that's a good thing.

Here's another excerpt from a different teacher:

Q: How is your morale currently?

R: It's good currently but last week was something all together different.

Q: What happened last week?

R: Well, I had this situation with a student that really got under my skin. I sent a student to the office due to his constant disruptions. The student's administrator was not in the office so instead of waiting in the office until the administrator returned, the student tried to come back to class. He lied and said the administrator sent him back to class. I asked for a note, but he couldn't furnish one. I told him that he couldn't come back in without a note, so the student slammed the door in my face before I was able to finish talking.

Q: I bet that was a real morale buster.

R: Yeah, to say the least.

Q: How was the situation handled?

R: The student received a few days in ISS. I was fine with the result. I just think that students who are disrespectful to adults should be dealt with immediately.

Q: Okay, so what are other factors that contribute to you losing morale?

R: The only other thing that I can think of is students who misbehave constantly and those that don't want to learn. It seems that some students only purpose for coming is to disrupt the learning environment. I can put up with almost anything, but when it comes to disrespect and disruptions to the learning, that when I draw the line.

Here is another excerpt from an interview with a different teacher:

Q: What are some things that hurt your morale?

R: The lack of administrative support, no recognition, unmotivated students, non-supportive parents, and not having the proper supplies or adequate resources to do my job.

Q: How does not having administrative support hurt your morale?

R: Well, when they don't support us, it's almost like saying they don't support what we do.

Q: Is that the feeling around here, that administrators don't support teacher?
R: Put it this way, if a teacher sends a referral on a student and nothing happens, or if you need the administrator's assistance but he/she's "too busy" to help or never around, then your attitude can take a plummet very quickly.

Q: How can administrators support you in the interdisciplinary teaming process?

R: First of all, they could support us by attending our team meetings. That's the best way to stay abreast of what we are doing and to stay updated on our students. They can also support us by responding quickly too our discipline issues. Sometimes we might write a referral on a kid, but the student doesn't get called to the office until 2 or 3 days later. By then it's too late and the point is lost. Sometimes I'm not sure the administrators realize how busy they would be with disciplinary issues if we didn't handle most of our own discipline.

This case study has sparked my interest in doing research in two different areas. I would like to do further study on the impact that administrators have on teacher morale, and how teacher recognition can be used to positively impact morale.

Even though interdisciplinary teaming is one structure, I think it can be used to not only produce significant outcomes for students, but also to help maintain high morale for teachers.

Appendix One: Possible Interview Questions

1. What creates high morale for you? What creates low morale?

2. What are some of the factors that positively affect your morale at work? What factors negatively affect it?

3. What creates high morale for this team? What creates low morale?

4. Does the interdisciplinary teaming process create high morale for you? Does it create low morale? Explain why or why not.

5. What aspect of the interdisciplinary teaming process satisfies you the most? What aspect of the process dissatisfies you the most?

6. Are you satisfied with your job? Why or why not?

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