Interpreting Identity—‘Seeing’ Ourselves as Leaders:
The Transformation of Professional Identity through Visual Culture

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MASTER of EDUCATION

in Leadership Studies

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Dedication

To my grandmother and mother, who exemplified joy and perseverance. I thank-you for always seeing the beauty in my identity, even when I could not.

To my family, without whose support, this journey would have been unbearably lonely. I thank-you for learning right along with me, whether or not it was your passion.

To the members of my cohort, especially my critical partner, Amber, for all of the conversations that led to the learning we created together. Distance and time will not fade the vibrancy of that experience.

To my fellow colleagues, who risked vulnerability in the pursuit of professional growth. You have stretched and enriched my professional identity in order to see yourselves and others so that we may nurture the identities of those that matter most – our students.
Chapter 1 Introduction: The Transformation of Professional Identity through Visual Culture

“Visual culture is that vision “deeply involved with human societies, with the ethics and politics, aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen.””

(W.J.T. Mitchell, 2002, p.166)

What happens to educators’ perceptions of teaching and learning when we connect change theory to leadership through visual culture as a means of interpretation?

My hypothesis was that, as educators, we will gain greater insight into our own professional identity through the exploration of images that contextualize our personal experience in education, moving us towards transformation by building leadership capacity and driving change. This exploration could be done through many possible lenses: political, social, intellectual, historical, and cultural in the search for themes. One of the key goals of this study was to explore teacher identity through visual representation.

A second key goal was to explore, record, and reflect on the process that inquiry participants went through in order to clarify this overarching question. This data was written in the form of a narrative, and as such, has a distinctly personal tone. The reader will get a sense of the transformation from participants’ point of view and begin to see leadership plans taking shape.

Context

Social and cultural identity is part of the British Columbian Ministry of Education’s focus for the creation of learning competencies and new direction in curriculum design (draft 2013). Teaching and learning around the idea of identity is difficult to conceptualize and define, and even more difficult to consider in the terms of
assessment. School District 67, Okanagan-Skaha, has been selected as one of the districts to flesh out some of the potential understandings around identity and the role it plays in the delivery of curriculum. It is my contention that teachers are grappling with the idea of personal and professional identity and how it connects to their ideas of teaching and learning. If educators have the opportunity to consider how their personal identity connects to their professional tenets, and how those in turn create a culture of teaching and learning, will there be a transformation in their vision of education? If we closely examine elements in teaching such as the politics, intentions, messages, actions, images, roles, expectations, physical settings and methods, can we identify and interpret how we, as teachers, are seen and how we would like to be seen? I wondered if, given the opportunity to explore this idea of visual culture and metaphor as a means of interpreting teaching and learning, educators could solidify their professional identity, with eyes focused inward on changing understanding of what it means to teach and learn in the 21st century. How deeply would examining our perception of what we do and how we do it connect to who we are as people and our motivations for choosing this complex profession? By using visuals as a lens of data interpretation, my hope was to provide participants the opportunity to examine the cultural possibilities involved in “the ethics and politics, aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 166) as it applied to our profession. Ideally, our transformation would come in the form of being able to see ourselves in our physical role through our own internal landscapes in order to consider personally relevant changes that impact our leadership action. Investigating what has been done on both the macro and micro levels of educational change theory would allow us to see where we fit into this process of reform, to identify
how we can ourselves implement personal transformation and to create and contribute to professional culture.

The trail of research that has been gathered, analyzed, and synthesized over the last four decades around the idea of “change knowledge” (Fullan, et al. 2005) is long and well-travelled. Reform seems like a militaristic word for the movement to revolutionize education, by enlisting and recruiting teachers as change agents. In this new role, teachers have begun to see themselves as champions for transformation.

Inherent in the thinking that surrounds the idea of revolutionizing education are my own fundamental beliefs; concepts that frame my personal experiences and professional identity. Every climate that is created has its own culture based on the social interactions of the people and circumstances involved. Educational facilities become the cultural climates where our society vets its ills to create new, hopefully greater, understandings. Change is necessary, not just inevitable.

Considering my own identity during change is part of the process of my personal and professional development. I embrace change and the chaotic nature of the universe at work, unleashing energy that has a force of its own. As teachers we live in this multi-layered process of learning that is woven into teaching: connect, process, transform and reflect. In this appreciative inquiry mindset, change management focuses on the identification and analysis of strengths by identifying and analyzing what has positive impact, why it has impact and how to create greater impact. Teaching involves an organic fluidity of adaptive changes in thinking that allow deeper connections and transformative interpretations of various contexts that we need to share with others. Collaboration provides a social context for educators, whereby they can be supported, honoured and
nurtured so that they can in turn support, honour, and nurture each other and their students. Being part of inquiry teams, or professional learning communities, encourages us, as educators, to be self-regulatory and accountable. It provides a venue where practical and theoretical understandings are both necessary parts of learning and educating.

I am part of a demonstration teaching team in our district which allows me to: regularly work in classrooms as a side-by-side coach, develop intermediate sequences, scaffold curriculum and content over the year and facilitate inquiry groups. This year I was given a 0.2 FTE district position to work more intentionally with intermediate educators. My experience is that elementary schools, and primary grades in particular, are configured in ways that foster a stronger sense of the new changes in curriculum and learning design through inquiry processes and professional learning communities. Collaborative planning seems like a more natural and expected behaviour in this context. The structure in the middle and high school seems to compartmentalize by grade teams or department heads and be less flexible with the provision of common planning time. In my teaching experience at both middle and high school levels, collaboration is not always part of the culture especially in the context of strategic learning design and self-assessment of practice.

With the efforts of Smart Learning teachers and support from our district, educators are invited into Smart Learning demonstration classrooms to see tools and strategies modelled within a particular framework. Part of these experiences involve the collaborative development of instructional sequences that address competencies, learning tenets and formative assessment techniques and work with teachers to directly apply them
to personal practice. At these learning rounds, I have noticed that there have been many intermediate and high school teachers who are excited about the results and come to the task-building sessions hungry for a way to have a more engaged impact on the collective creation of the learning environment. I have noticed that once we are no longer in the same physical space, the focus, momentum and accountability seem to dissipate and then disappear altogether. I wanted to respect the quality contributions that teachers have the daily opportunity to provide, which would inevitably change learning conditions for all of us.

This project was motivated by my desire to be part of the work that changed the concept of teaching as a profession, that looked at the culture of what learning can be and who ‘should’ be doing it. I wanted to consider the self-concept of teachers as learners and how that co-exists with task design which then crosses curriculum, content, culture, gender, space and time. I value learning and wanted to be involved in the process of fostering relationships with intermediate and middle school teachers in order to build awareness about what it means to be professional.

There are a number of nebulous, but connected, concepts and ideas that make up my rationale for this project: the construct of motivation, context of participants, grounds for action, fundamental beliefs of teachers, basis for understandings, underlying principles, justification of behaviour, reasoning behind thought and emotion, logic to be followed, validation of a process, culture for change. Perhaps with the permission to examine our whole selves— that being which includes the self that is inflated by dead certainty and the self that is deflated by uncertainty— we can come to a lucid conception of what we mean when we say, “I am a teacher”.

Interpreting Identity—‘Seeing’ Ourselves as Leaders
Chapter 2 Literature Review: Weaving Together the Research

There is an expansive body of research based on change knowledge and reform. When reviewing the research, it became important to the writer to choose data highlighting Canadian perspectives and to analyze the implementation of tried reforms. Sources were also chosen from a global to an insular perspective to better place the participants in the context of the many levels available to express professional moral purpose and identity through the action of leadership. The literature featured in this review serves to make connections between teacher identity and the notion of visual expression and visual metaphor as a means to lead teachers in the direction of personal action toward educational reform. The idea of change agency, as leadership between classroom and colleagues, is at the heart of my research. If there are ways that we can build our professional practice and see ourselves in it as both teacher and learner, I want to contribute to that momentum.

Change Knowledge and Reform – What a Capital Idea!

Within the vast body of research that exists on educational reform, Levin (2008) one of the powerful Canadian voices, states that innovative practices might be implemented but for a system to truly experience reform, only those researched innovations with the aim of producing positive, sustainable results are worth investing in. Levin’s message is that Canadian schools have been implementing innovations in practice for many years but only best practice yields findings that are worth assessing and interpreting. Education (and the students it serves) cannot afford a hit and miss
approach to teaching by implementing strategies that do not generate results. Without exploring best practice, based on research, teachers are unable to be informed and intentional about our roles as educators. I believe that who teachers are and who they see themselves to be, will determine their comfort with the research and their willingness to play with ideas, share challenges and successes with colleagues, and reflect on personal changes in thinking; teachers as learners.

In *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) embark on a mission for collective educational transformation. Their contention is that systematic reform is dependent on the professional nature and quality of teaching. Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan collaborate to demonstrate that professionalism in teaching has value or capital. Their book is comprised of a description of two models of education (one business, one professional), the changes in fundamental thinking around teaching and the three important elements that can help to frame discussions about quality teaching: Human Capital (individual quality), Social Capital (group quality), and Decision-Making Capital (critical/interpretive analyses and synthesis). Inherent in the thinking, is that leadership and group quality are the driving factors behind sustained implementation. Building professional capital through shared experience and the exploration of our professional identity seem connected and it is through this lens that this book informs my leadership and teaching practice. The idea of examining, challenging, and creating an idea of professionalism with my colleagues is a way to reflect on practice, to consider who we are as professionals.

Fullan’s (1994) book, *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*, further fleshes out the notion that reform is not the responsibility of one
organizational body and encourages educators to initiate learning networks that create partnerships for greater social community. In this book, Fullan refers to the need to link moral purpose with change agentry, where deciding professional action needs to come out of personal, fundamental beliefs based on research, experience and collaboration. Activating collegial integrity and appealing to moral purpose are invitations into the process of change for participants. Fullan speaks to the idea of equity, when he further outlines the importance of looking at individualism and honouring what professional qualities powerful teachers bring to their practice. Through this research around teaching as a profession, participants can identify the qualities that will provide a personal sense of what is at the core of individual educators’ fundamental beliefs that support and drive the thinking behind innovative practice. Once participants can capitalize on the knowledge that our individual efforts are an important part of systematic restructuring, perhaps we can begin to look a little more deeply into the culture behind our moral purpose which is inherently part of our identity.

In the *Journal for Staff Development*, Cuttress et al., (2005) further clarify the idea of professional capital by citing eight core concepts to be considered on the road to educational reform as a collaborative effort. This journal article speaks directly to educators in classrooms because it highlights the importance of the coherence of learning and assessment cultures that build the capacity behind the drive for change. Teachers need to understand the process of change, if we are to change the process. Coherence is fostered when the creation of professional cultures focuses on intentional assessment design for accurate interpretation. Learning intentions and criterion become explicitly linked to the tools and methods of assessment and the collaborative discussions about
where to go next. Creating coherence is a never-ending proposition that involves alignment, connecting the dots, being clear about how the big picture fits together as well as where and how each of us fits in to the big picture. When we can make a marked difference and it can be sustained, we know we have impact. When we know we have made an impact, we know we have capital.

**May the Forces be with You – “Know Thy Impact” (Hattie, 2012)**

“*Know thy impact…*”, that is Hattie’s (2012) message in *Visible Learning: Maximizing Impact on Learning*. Here, Hattie provides a synthesis of the meta-analyses that serves as a useful resource for anyone interested in educational research on successfully implemented interventions and strategies for students and teachers. Hattie (2012) examines the notion that teaching is, by name and nature, a practice where theories are “tools for synthesizing notions” (2012, p.4) rather than dictators of action with special consideration for those innovations whose impact is not supported with evidence. Hattie invites readers to focus very intently on personal beliefs and practices and then presents guiding frames and questions that are supported by the many analyses of a vast collection of relevant research studies. Checklists and surveys are provided to collect data and engage the reader in personal or staff level assessment. This resource places the readers in an appreciative inquiry lens and challenges them to probe into personal questions about what it means to reform both practice and profession.

Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) seem to agree that a “fundamental repositioning” of our profession as social change agents, is necessary. Teacher practice is often viewed in scientific and economic frames that do not support the idea of improving the quality of teaching. Where Fullan and Hargreaves explore the political views, how they impact the
stereotyping of education, implementation of innovation, and sharing professional capacity to make change, Hattie (2012) focuses on strategy, evidence-based practical research.

From his vast research data, Hattie has condensed high level principles into verbal cues that teachers can use to guide their thinking about professional practice and consider what it means to be a teacher and a learner (Hattie, 2012). Through these ways of interpreting practice, teachers have the opportunity to think about learning using four specific lenses and how learning about students’ learning connects to the flow of teacher practice. This in turn, affects positive student outcomes as represented in the chart below (figure 1). Our professional identity has to be wrapped up in our understanding of how we co-create learning conditions that enable student success.
I see learning through the eyes of my students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mind frames:</th>
<th>A cooperative and critical planner:</th>
<th>An adaptive learning expert:</th>
<th>A receiver of feedback:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*I am an educator/activator *I am a change agent *I am a seeker of feedback *I use dialogue more than monologue *I enjoy challenge *I have high expectations for all *I welcome error *I am passionate about and promote the language of learning</td>
<td>*I use learning intentions and success criteria</td>
<td>*I create trusting environments</td>
<td>*I know how to use the three feedback questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*I aim for surface and deep outcomes</td>
<td>*I know the power of peers</td>
<td>*I know how to use the three feedback levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*I consider prior achievement and attitudes</td>
<td>*I use multiple strategies</td>
<td>*I give and receive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*I set high expectation targets</td>
<td>*I know when and how to differentiate</td>
<td>*I monitor and interpret my learning/teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*I feed the gap in student learning</td>
<td>*I foster deliberate practice and concentration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I help students become their own teachers

Figure 1 (Hattie, 2012)

Understanding our professional identity connects us as people to our practice. Knowing how our moral purpose is influenced by our identity as a professional will cause us to reflect on the use of our strategies for learning and with learners. By giving educators in my district a chance to foster that collegial relationship in a collaborative settling, and by using researched frames, strategies and tools, we had a chance to dialogue and co-create understanding. Some of what we discovered gave us our own force to hone our practice and invite others to do the same. Having an intentional, collaborative community where exploration and discovery of professional identity was part of the dialogue that took place was integral to the process. When we know we have impact, we know we have capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). When we know we have capital, we make ourselves visible (Hattie, 2012) through our practice.
Being visible becomes crucial when we are interpreting data for evidence that has led us to the conclusions that learning intentions have been understood and demonstrated. In her journal article, ‘Using Assessment Data for Improving Teaching Practice’, (2009), Timperley outlines various conditions that need to be met in order for the interpretation of student data to inform responsive and impactful direction. The first two conditions involve curriculum relevance and the reflection on whether the data provides evidence of a connection between student ability and the teaching/learning process. The next five conditions identify the steps for teachers and school leaders to use conversations within an inquiry process to inform what the assessment data means, how to use it to adjust practice and how to identify what pedagogical knowledge around assessment needs to be pursued next. Ideally, the recommendation is for this practice to be school wide, with the responsibility for the required provisions in the collection of assessment evidence falling on school leaders.

“When teachers are provided with opportunities to use and interpret assessment data in order to become more responsive to their students’ learning needs, the impact is substantive. Teachers, however, cannot do this alone, but require system conditions that provide and support these learning opportunities in ways that are just as responsive to how teachers learn as they are to how students learn.”

(Timperley, 2009, p.24)

For the purpose of this research, the most significant principle stressed the necessity for teachers to have multiple opportunities to practice and reflect on various forms of assessment with colleagues in order to delve into the impact and context of the learning.
That means not only knowing the impact, but being able to justify it with evidence that guides future learning conditions.

That leads us back to the idea of vision and the creation of an assessment culture where we learn from each other through the joy and tears of the inquiry cycle. In, ‘The Courage to Teach’, Parker Palmer (1998) magnifies the importance of the formation of teacher identity and the ways that having a vision of what we are manifest themselves within our profession. In chapter one, ‘The Heart of a Teacher – Identity and Integrity in Teaching’, Palmer offers “a more generous and human image” (1998, p. 30) of teaching in a “culture that sometimes equates work with suffering” (1998, p. 30). He suggests that identity is defined as “an evolving nexus; a complex moving intersection of inner and outer forces …converging in the irreducible mystery of the human being” (1998, p. 13). This idea, coupled with Palmer’s definition of integrity (the wholeness of life experiences as they form and reform patterns) gives us the opportunity to interpret our experiences by aligning academic culture and making those investigations open to students so they can do the same (p. 30). It follows then, that if our identity directs us to subject matter and determines the way we deliver content, this idea must also extend to our students.

This reading continues to outline what happens when teachers lose heart. Palmer uses narratives to describe some of the side effects of letting external forces create behaviours, such as professional isolation, and self-protection, that are counter to our personal, fundamental beliefs about teaching. This drains integrity and leaves teachers feeling disheartened. In this culture, learning cannot take place.

Palmer’s final point is perhaps the most simple and complex. He urges teachers to “teach from within”; that power comes by gaining personal authority, that is,
recognizing and becoming the author of your own story (1998, p.33). Imagine a culture
where we authored our professional stories and shared them within the larger educational
story. If we did that, we could look at the most significant problems within our school
settings, honestly identifying factors that are not working, and make a plan together,
without blame, to impact change. Those are the very moments that Palmer refers to as
“difficult days [that] will ultimately gladden me” (1998, p.30). These are the conditions
that he believes necessary to create quality teaching.

**Learning Vision: Creating Culture**

As a result of the findings of the International Summit on the Teaching Profession
that took place in 2011, the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
compiled a background report entitled, *Building a High Quality Teaching Profession:
Lessons from Around the World*. It presents various perspectives of educational leaders
from systems that currently implement high quality systematic changes for the
improvement of the professional and practical quality of teaching and learning. Four
evidenced themes emerged that address issues relating to effective teacher-oriented
reforms, including examples of reforms that have produced specific results and
demonstrate creative ways of implementing change. The initial three themes focus on
“system features that shape particular aspects of teachers’ professional careers” (p. 5,
OECD, 2011), while the fourth theme examines the process of engaging teachers in
reform.

The first theme, teacher recruitment and professional training, considers the ways in
which the status of the profession could be elevated by increasing monetary levels,
creating greater career prospects and inclusion into processes of reform through
leadership. Through teacher education, professionals would have the opportunity to “become innovators and researchers in education, not just deliverers of the curriculum” (p. 5, OECD, 2011). The second theme focuses on the benefits of long term professional development opportunities that help align and build support networks around practice. Teacher evaluation/performance reward is a theme closely linked to the first two. Many countries are restructuring the evaluation and appraisal process for the purpose of developing professionalism and, in some cases, combining that process with performance rewards. A complicating feature of the performance rewards system is its strong dependency on the infrastructure that secures funding.

The OECD (2011) document is interesting in its entirety, but of particular interest to me, is the data on teacher reform, moving beyond consultation to involvement in the reform process. This fourth theme outlines the importance of the role of the teacher in the process of developing and implementing educational reforms. Teachers become leadership partners involved in the creation of pragmatic policies and practical expectations that support all involved in the learning environment. In this capacity, educators are seen as the co-creators of sustainable self-adjusting systems that honour their professional aptitude (OECD, 2011). Seeing ourselves within the process as professionals with the opportunity to create a new identity for education not only speaks to our professional identity but to the moral purpose that initially drove us to become teachers as part of our personal identity.

In the *Journal of Transformative Education*, Edith Rusch and C. Cypress Brunner (2013) unpack the idea of teacher reform by designing an *Experimental Simulation* specifically concerned with immersing educational leadership doctoral students in
that “disrupts a carefully crafted learner identity” (p.45) while supported by “enhanced knowledge of the learning self” (p.45) that can lead to reflection, marking a significant shift in “both learner and learner identity” (p.45). By embracing personal ways of knowing that create identity leadership, students explored the limitations in singular thinking and perceptions of others to create very personal pathways into the deep processing of theories. Rusch and Cypress-Brunner (2013) discovered when participants entered into the muddy waters of inquiry through simulation, their new perceptions of identity as learners prompted them to not only reflect on action but to intentionally modify it in an effort to bring more congruence between it and personal values and beliefs. Seeing ourselves as learners changes our decisions about reforms and brings clarity to “the importance of the human dynamics in the development of more democratic communities” (Rusch & Cypress-Brunner, 2013, p. 65). Seeing ourselves in the process changes our identity. Identity, vision, and culture reunited.

Learning in Beauty (2000) further supports the idea of creating visual metaphors as a way of consolidating personal ideas about identity into a visual representation that supports and defines basic fundamental beliefs of ourselves as professionals. Visual metaphor is the manifestation of a vision statement and is a valued attribute of all cultures to deepen reasoning and creative thought through relational connections, especially those of the oral tradition. Visual metaphors provide a way to process and transmit important knowledge in a multi-channel way, including non-verbal communication, that is often over-looked in verbal, text oriented systems, such as education. Reyhner et al. (2000) point out that the cognitive action of visual thinking is experientially “processing patterns that are not analyzed sequentially as in verbal expression, but are seen as simultaneous
structures, as visual patterns” (p. 85). In addition, these patterns are perceived in more emotional terms (Reyhner, Jon, et al., 2000, p. 85). This has a tremendous impact on how we deliver information as educators and how we construct our own meanings of what learner identity looks like. If “visual meaning, in this context, comes not from verbal dichotomies, but from Gestalt configurations” (Reyhner et al., 2000, p. 85), then examining how we view ourselves within our profession might allow us to visually construct a professional identity with a direction toward action.

**Connecting Visual Culture with Teacher Identity**

“*Visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision*”

*(Mitchell, 2002, p. 170)*

Until we know who we are, we cannot know what we want. If we do not know what we want, it is hard to know what to ask for. Who we are and what we want as educators, determines how our vision is influenced and formulated. As our senses interpret data they create values and beliefs that will shape our identity. Our identity impacts our practice and our ability to reflect and adapt with the evolution of thinking necessary to meet the needs of our students. Mitchell’s definition of visual culture in the article, * Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture*, (2002), nicely frames how we, as educators, maneuver through the lenses that influence teacher identity and the deep connections between them in order to provide our children with opportunities that help them function successfully within our human society. Five of Mitchell’s (2002) eight counter-theses on visual culture provide a way that we may, as educators, “show seeing” of our practice and be seen as professionals (p. 170). He notes that visual culture “encourages reflection on the differences between art and non-art, visual and verbal
signs, and the ratios between different sensory and semiotic modes” (p. 170). That reflection piece is the beginning of really examining ourselves and our professional environment. Mitchell invites us to then investigate and consider possible motives for that which may have seemed insignificant, invisible, impossible to see at the time, or those that were simply overlooked. By using Mitchell’s definition, language can be made visible by drawing attention to gestures, “the tactile, the auditory, the haptic, and the phenomenon of synesthesia” (2002, p. 170).

Mitchell’s (2002) third thesis points out that the study of visual culture is “not limited to the study of images or media,” (p. 170) but reaches out to include daily practices of “seeing and showing” especially those that are unscripted, random happenings of human existence. In fact, this notion is supported by his fourth contention that there are only various saturations of mixed media, none strictly visual. That idea contextualizes interpretation so that we look beyond the image to how it is situated in time, space and meaning. If we think about that in terms of education, it opens up a whole new way to interpret what we do, how we do it, and for whom it is done.

Imagine the use of visual culture as a means of interpretation helps us to understand Mitchell’s next assertions. He affirms that all the artifacts of visual culture, for example, images, gestures, language, are part of the discussions that help us assess relationships. We do this to help us construct meaning of the social that informs the academic. Therefore visual culture has a social, academic and political purpose that the educator cannot deny.

Hooper-Greenhill (2000) and Bal (2003) support Mitchell’s definition of visual culture. Hooper-Greenhill further connect Mitchell’s ideas about the act of seeing and
showing by drawing our awareness to the tension held between the visual inventory and the process of thinking to reflect response or reaction. Hooper-Greenhill contends that the process of examining visual culture is intended to notice the interrelatedness between ways of knowing and power in order to construct a social theory of visuality. Bal (2003) goes a step further by including the act of dislodging those interrelations through critical analysis of values and beliefs held as universal truisms to expose alternative narratives and the motivations behind them. Where better to begin to observe and participate in the formation of professional identity than with ourselves as people, as teachers, and as learners?

Two case studies provide excellent examples of how visual culture infiltrates our personal and professional image of ourselves as educators and gives us a place to begin the process of reflection. Beijaard et al, (1999) define and examine teacher identity in terms of pedagogical knowledge, subject matter expertise, and the didactical nature through which curriculum is chosen and delivered. In their study, teachers were asked to complete a four part questionnaire beginning with the identification of potentially influential variables, such as gender, level of education, and years of experience. The second part of the questionnaire asked teachers to identify professional identity by awarding a total of 100 points to three descriptor statements presented as follows:

- “a subject matter expert is a teacher who bases his/her profession on subject matter knowledge and skills”;
- “a didactical expert is a teacher who bases his/her profession on knowledge and skills regarding the planning, execution, and evaluation of teaching and learning processes”;

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• “a pedagogical expert is a teacher who bases his/her profession on knowledge and skills to support students’ social, emotional, and moral development” (D. Beijaard et al. 2000, p. 754)

Part two also included a written justification of points awarded based on current and prior perceptions and the identification of the most significant learning experiences in terms of shaping their professional identity.

Part three of the questionnaire was designed to lend objectivity to the participants’ perceptions of identity in part two, by rating 18 control items such as, “The subject I studied determined my decision to become a teacher”, “In my lessons, I pay a lot of attention to varied learning activities”, “As a teacher, I serve as a model for the way students mix with each other” (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 755). Teachers evaluated the extent to which each statement was applicable on a scale of 1-4, 1 being not applicable and 4 being totally applicable.

Lastly, the questionnaire (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 755) attempted to address theoretical factors that may have influenced data, for example, experience, context, and biographical information using a similar four point scale, 1 for disagree and 4 for completely agree. Educators rated statements such as, “Cooperation with colleagues is important for my work as a teacher”, “The importance of experience is that I have developed a personal teaching style”, “My way of teaching is influenced by one or more good teachers from my own period as a student” to demonstrate perceived significance.

By comparing secondary teachers’ current and prior perceptions of their professional identity, their identification of the most significant learning experiences in terms of identity, and the factors that carried the most influence on their perception of
professional identity, the authors’ intended to provide insight into the possibility that identity and the factors that influence it may encourage the promotion of professional innovations. The examination of the combination of the above professional aspects of teaching in the form of a four part questionnaire revealed five distinct groups of teachers.

Table 2
The five groups of teachers' current and prior perceptions of their professional identity (N=80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups of teachers</th>
<th>Current Perception</th>
<th>Prior Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject matter experts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didactical experts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical experts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High on two aspects</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After qualitative analysis, the authors found that teacher identity changed drastically over time, showing the most significant shift from teacher as a subject matter expert to teacher as a didactical expert in terms of the way that curriculum was organized, executed and interpreted considering the ethical and moral features of social emotional engagement involved in interactions with students. Most interesting, were the ways in which each educator justified his/her expertise. The reasons behind their self-assessments gave great insight into their own personal beliefs and the ways that change theory data may change current perceptions. For example, one of the responses in the study spoke to the perception of the importance of the teacher as subject matter expert if there was to be any authority and credibility. Hattie’s work would suggest otherwise in terms of impact.

Although results were inconclusive in terms of how much these experiences contributed to the formation of professional identity, Beijaard et al, (1999) suggest that
this might be an important issue to research further to “contribute considerably to our understanding of teachers' professional images of themselves” (p.762).

This study is of great interest to me because it draws together the elements of innovation, identity and change theory by providing an example of how perceptions, interpretations, and predispositions strongly influenced the judgment and behaviour of the educators involved and their willingness to understand and reflect on self-image. This study found that the combination of subject matter and didactics were highly relevant to the experienced teachers. In the words of the authors, the study’s insights concerning innovations must sufficiently “do justice to both subject matter and didactics” that are “congruent with the teachers' perceptions” (Beijaard et al., 1999, p. 762) including those that involve pedagogical aspects only. It was equally important that contextual, experiential, and biographical factors were not influential to the participants’ current perception of their professional identity. Parker Palmer would agree.

Clover’s (2006) case study powerfully represents the connection between visual culture and identity by having participants use photography to combine “a practical, informative image and a poetic, subjective image” (p.289). She demonstrates the use of visual culture to facilitate the creation of a visual narrative representing a deep learning that is both transformative and imaginative. Through this simulation of seeing identity, participants were able to “nurture individuality and respect anonymity while creating powerful, collective public artwork” (Clover, 2006, p. 289). Clover interviewed educators who created opportunities for participants to use photography simulation as a means to visually express personal power over societal forces that have impacted their identity. As well as examining these two projects, she participates in the process as a
way to “engage in learning at symbolic and metaphoric levels as [an] activist artist” (Clover, p. 289). Participants took a variety of photos and chose two for an exhibition that best exemplified their identity within the framework of the impact of social on personal identity. Clover highlighted the power of the dichotomies that shine through the imagery in the photo montages. Like Mitchell’s vision on seeing social theory in everyday arbitrary experiences, Clover (2006) embraced the process that she described as growing “out of the soil of daily life, exemplify[ing] the profound human power central to personal and social development and be[coming] powerful critical and aesthetic forms of a public transformative education in action” (p. 289). Clover’s study is of particular interest to me because it is local and is representative of the ways that visual culture creates equity, showing how the power of identity can be taught and learned from anyone in order to provide grounds, motivations, and inspirations for action that demands change.

Both case studies provide guidance into the types of experiences that educators may engage in to develop a taste for risk that examines the unseen of personal and professional identity and a reflective comfort that might nudge change forward in the ever-changing culture of teaching.
Chapter 3 Methodology

Chapter three is a description of what the study involved. The methodology had to be structured in a way that gently challenged the ideas of personal and teacher identity based on evidenced learning strategies and change implementation frameworks in order to examine our professional culture and create ‘seeing’. I have written this as a narrative account of the process we went through. This narrative format provides the reader a sense of what we did as participants in this project and an explanation of why the researcher chose particular actions. Because the process was so central to how the research unfolded, it is important to include such details.

The chapter is divided up into three sections. The first section is a brief overview of the project. The second section provides a bridge between the brief research overview and the sessions themselves. It supplies the reader with the author’s research definition and summarizes the set-up and process without describing sessions or giving specific data. The third section is a detailed account of each inquiry session including topics, research and progression. Samples of the data that emerged and decisions for next steps are also included in section three.

Section One - Brief Outline

Using an ethnographic lens, the participant researcher designed a recruitment script around the question, “What happens to educators’ perceptions of teaching and learning when we connect change theory to leadership through visual culture as a means of interpretation?” Ten participants who worked with students from grades 4-8 and/or teacher leaders attended six sessions related to examining personal and professional identity. Participants considered perceptions of the way we see ourselves and are seen as
teachers and how that connects to leadership action. Sessions were held at the School Board office because it was a neutral location that disassociated participants from particular school settings. Each session was formatted using an inquiry style model including quiet, written check-ins; review of group norms and protocols; dialogues to connect; reflections on research using processing tools; transformation activities for action planning; closures with gratitude; and setting of the agendas for future work. Any participant samples such as actions, behaviours, gestures, artifacts, conversations, projects, tools, and written evaluations, were recorded in a journal and used to code for themes. Implications of this research were represented by the writer in the form of visual pieces framed with descriptions of surfacing themes that will be displayed in an art gallery style for participants and district staff.

Section Two - The Theory of Evolution

What is important to Ethnographers as social scientists, is their ability to adapt and create locally appropriate aids to data collection or instruments that are effective in building a picture, narrative, story, or theory of local culture that is predictive and produces hunches, guesses, and hypotheses that can be applied to the same research methods and data collection techniques. (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999, p. 3)

According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999) ethnography is an inductive process that constructs theories in order to interpret, assess and adapt them to suit local contexts with the intent to apply results elsewhere. This socially interactive methodology stands apart from other scientific forms of research because even if the researcher begins with a theoretical lens, the results will evolve. In fact, there is an organic growth to this type of
investigation that denies control of the field situation, making this process, in my opinion, more valid and certainly more exciting.

Ethnography involves writing about the culture of a group of people and is concerned with the role of perceived identity. The result is a narrative that examines and theoretically interprets a community’s culture in terms of beliefs, thoughts and behaviours. The main goals of ethnography centre around socio-cultural problems and the construction of meaning and action towards positive change in institutions and communities (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). This type of interaction is at the heart of my passion for inquiry work and, therefore, made ethnography a natural choice.

Ethnography pairs well with action research while also using many of the stages of appreciative inquiry (outlined above on page 7), interpreted through the process of codification. This methodology supported my pre-existing belief that working in a small group setting would create relationships and make the time spent together professionally purposeful and personally fulfilling for those who participate. Ethnography embraces the belief that visual thinking is an important part of how we process the social theory of culture, a skill that I believe is undervalued, seldom explored, and rarely explicitly taught.

As an ethnographic participant-researcher, I used inductive processes for hand coding reflections in order to identify themes and build logical theories. Those theories became the foundation for exploring the meanings prescribed to our beliefs, actions, and thoughts about professional learning. We could then re-evaluate our definitions and adapt them as they applied to practice. This process of exploration and adaption are specifically outlined in Chapter 4. I had a role as a facilitator and as a participant in a series of professional learning sessions that explored the roles and strategies teachers
engage in, within an inquiry framework. Agendas were developed based on discussions, interpretations, personal reflections, and individual and group analysis of research. Participant reflections, both collaboratively and individually, provided evaluative feedback in order to determine the direction, process tools, and relevant research best suited to group need. It was critical to examine the collaborative creations as well as individual reflections in order to develop an understanding of personal perceptions of our educational culture and possible ways to support sustainable change based on change theory.

**Goals for Action: Procedural, Performance, Achievement.** There is some risk in this type of ethnographic action research for me as a participant researcher. The invitation to participate had to be gentle and provide some commitment to engaging purpose. The process had an evolution that I would not be able to pre-script and a fluid form that would only began to take shape as we moved through each session and further solidified our ideas. My initial invitation attempted to outline possible procedural goals and how they might translate into performance goals for participants, as well as how that may help us achieve a possible course of action for building capacity within the culture of teaching.

**Setting the Image–Venue and Initial Meeting for the creation of culture and identity.** Once participants indicated that they wished to be part of our collaborative planning time, a meeting was held to choose a suitable venue and create protocols around the intentions for our time together. It was important to the participants that the location of the sessions would be a neutral, private facility, not associated with any one particular school, and that the space could facilitate our group of ten participants;
therefore, the School Board Office was chosen as a location that provided us space and resources. Initially, there were going to be four, half day sessions, but after our first half day, participants wanted to increase session time to full days and meet for six sessions. During the inquiry process, the members of our PLC were invited to mine for themes that helped us express who we are as teachers and learners in the context of building an identity through the culture of teaching and learning. An outline (Appendix A) was provided with the understanding that there was flexibility within the framework.

In late November, all who had expressed an interest in being part of the inquiry group met to review the logistics of our time together. A mixed group of participants joined, including beginning and seasoned teachers, men and women, those that would need convincing and others that could more easily flow with the possibilities. I presented the tentative outline, beginning agenda and how each session could possibly proceed. No participant had gone through the inquiry process before and expressed interest in the outline and curiosity about our first session topic - vision building. The researcher fielded questions about time frames and a feeling of uncertainty about how the process would unfold. Would we have enough to discuss? What would we do for a full day once we were together? How does the framework of inquiry operate? Will we have to be responsible for planning any part of the sessions if we have no knowledge of the topic/process? Even here, it seemed that identity was part of our process.

**Ethnographic study - Who am I?** This is the “Who am I?” context, whereby each member’s individual identity within the teaching profession was personally investigated. Explorative directions or actions were decided on by consensus and levels of comfort by the cohort. Each member of the group was provided with a journal and
asked to reflect with a response frame that was later, by invitation, used as part of a larger case study. During our collaborative planning time, I had the role of being a reciprocal participant facilitator. My intention was to learn as much as possible through the lens of participator-facilitator in order to maintain the credibility and validity of the process and ensure that the agenda design reflected the flow of participant need. My own field notes became part of my research when identifying themes and helped to guide the construction of each learning session. Reflecting and writing in my role gave me a chance to be vulnerable and provided credible evidence as a participant. Being part of a culture allowed me to help create a culture.

**Individual case studies – Who are we?** Once we had an idea of our voice, the group began reflecting on our own thinking. Participants were repeatedly invited to share ideas in order to identify common threads that connect our personal identity within a professional culture. As anticipated, using this format allowed conversations to unfold like unstructured interviews where participants situated themselves in the moment and discussed common questions, surfacing deep underlying emotions and topics. In the role of both participant and researcher, I tried to hear and connect the dialogue, extending the thinking with my colleagues, to create a visual/verbal outline of themes for building our story.

**Woven into a narrative – Who are we together?** Together our cohort illustrated the story of our journey through the process of seeing ourselves in our practice. As a group we decided that it was important to represent and share our story with others not directly involved in our process. This manifested itself in many formats including the development of personal leadership goals, the creation of professional learning
communities in school sites, the designing of new agendas, and the presentation of visual pieces for colleagues, administrators, and members of the school board to celebrate and share results. As part of my thesis work I knew that the research data and results would be used to share with colleagues in my program, but I did not anticipate how important it would be to share this work with trustees and district staff in order to preserve the helping-teacher time that provided my colleagues and I with this collaborative opportunity and helped us to redefine ourselves in a time of shaken identity and irresolute purpose.

**Section Three- Procedural Narrative**

The following section outlines, in detail the process of our story as it formed. It describes each of the sessions and how they took shape as our thinking solidified. This section provides insight into the voices of the participants as they worked through each session and demonstrates the progression of the topics and how they are related to leadership change. Samples of participant work are included with each section, including a participant gallery, showcasing some of the completed final projects created during the last session. This section is a hybrid of methodology and results to bridge the reader into the process.
The Story Begins. It was agreed that we would meet in January for a half day initially and make decisions about how we wanted to proceed from there. Participants were reminded that they could opt out if it did not suit them. This seemed to give reassurance to those who were brave enough to push past the uncertainty and believe that there was a place for them in this process.

In mid-December and again in early January, a tentative agenda was sent around to all the participants to give them time to think about the work that we would begin and provide any feedback that they would like considered before the actual meeting. This would be the process for each session so participants could provide feedback prior to meeting and feel prepared for the activities involved in each session. In order to honour the vulnerability of participants, arrangements were made to meet at the school board office in a private conference room instead of at any one specific school site. To further create the spirit of community, all food was to be provided by local restaurants that supported micro-farming, the environment, and where possible, local charities. All supplies were provided in order to limit the amount of stress and preparation on the part of the participants, including a journal that they would be encouraged to use to record thinking both within and outside of our meeting times. I was acutely aware that the climate of the first session would determine the tone and direction of all the meetings that followed and the pressure to be mindfully gentle was palpable.

Teacher Identity—‘Building a Vision of Teaching’. In January, participants met for the first session entitled, ‘Teacher Identity—Building a Vision of Teaching’ (See Appendix B for a sample session agenda and power point presentation). The agenda was visually displayed in power point format on the projector and hard copies were available
for each participant. Following an inquiry format, the session began with a check in whereby each participant was invited to choose from a selection of images (see below) and quietly write to explain how this image best represented them at that moment. While writing, participants were invited to consider the question, ‘What are you hoping to get out of our work today?’ with the understanding that sharing was optional.

What happened next both surprised and pleased me. Each participant wanted to speak aloud the thoughts and feelings they had written and that instance of shared vulnerability bonded all of us in the room. There was a letting go of the need to pretend that teaching was always full of joy and contentment.

To further build on the connection to each other and encourage open dialogue, participants engaged in an activity that allowed movement and the discovery of the stories that bring us together. With the reminder that good stories are not necessarily all about successes, participants processed, discussed and shared personal reasons for becoming a teacher with partners and then the greater group if that was comfortable for them.

From this experience, the beginnings of trust began to be established, making the creation of protocols seem like the next natural dialogue. Using a professional learning inquiry model, the group co-created criteria and group norms for the six collaborative planning sessions that explored personal perceptions of teaching and learning, scaffolded tools for personal relevance in task and sequence design, and identified possible direction for support through resources, mentoring, and collaborative time. (See below)
Our Time Together

- Good food
- Active listening
- Authentic Dialogue
- Confidential
- Balance of collaboration and reflection
- Rigour (something new every time)
- Work time
- Opportunities for equal air time
- Framework/agenda used
- Focus on celebration and JOY

Next we set the image and context. Before we could think about what someone else considers teaching, we needed to have a really clear picture of what it was to us, as professionals. We considered the following questions and let them guide our thinking as we read chapter one from Parker Palmer’s, “The Courage to Teach - The Heart of a Teacher: Identity and Integrity in Teaching” (Palmer, 1998, p. 9-33). We recorded and shared our ideas about: “What is the culture and action of teaching?”, “What powerful words and actions come to mind?”, “What should be involved?”, “How does it happen?”, “What makes it a profession?”, “What motivates me in teaching?”, “Why do I do it?”, “What motivates me to continue educating despite the challenges?”, “What strengths do I contribute to the culture of teaching?”

After consolidating our vision of ourselves we individually and collaboratively reflected on research by processing an excerpt from “Professional Capital – Chapter Three Stereotypes of Teaching” (Fullan, Hargreaves, 2012, p. 24-45), on the meaning of teaching. We reflected on any connections we could make, the things that surprised us, the questions we were left with, and the feelings or affirmations that came to mind as we
read. We discussed our connections with a partner in order to notice similarities and differences. We made decisions about what would be important to include in a vision statement that we could see our voices in.

Before we could fully transform our thinking by examining the implications for ourselves as teachers, the learning communities that we were involved in and the people they impacted, we made the decision not to try to hurry the sharing with the whole group. We had needed the time to build community and as a facilitator, I knew the importance of not rushing through the connection piece. The climate and culture that we were creating would be the key to our future success.

During the last minutes of our session we examined our options and decided that we needed a full day to have the chance to deeply reflect and transform our thinking into a vision statement and personal visual metaphor. We wanted to be able to frame our questions in our practice and have direction as to how to embark on the ‘what next’.

Ending the session with gratitude was perhaps the most important part of the day. Thanking participants for their willingness to explore and discuss the idea of a personal vision of teaching ended the session on a positive note and validated all of the emotional work that we had experienced throughout the day. I encouraged them to use their journal to record any images, questions, thoughts, connections or feelings that they might have about what teaching is to them over the course of the next four weeks before we could meet again. An invitation was extended to each participant to collect and bring in any artifacts, images, research pieces, and/or relevant data that connected to their vision of what teaching is and what they would like others to know about our profession.
The Teaching-Learning Connection. February’s session was a continuation of vision creation and how that vision connected to our ideas of learning. We began by reflecting back on our feelings at the beginning and end of our first gathering. Each participant shared aloud, drawing attention to what changes we had each noticed and what we felt that we would need from the group during that day’s session. Each participant shared a teaching activity that focused on joy to create a positive intention. The session was going to be hard and the need for support before beginning seemed critical.

We began the processing piece with the big reveal of our final synthesis (collaborative summary) of the Fullan & Hargreaves research. As a group we decided on the three most relevant components that would be necessary to the creation of a group vision as a way to ground our own personal vision in the larger conversation. This conversation was deep and intense. It took a long time and we drafted many versions, using many frames and we struggled with words such as ‘crisis’ because of the need to have strong justification for the use of an intense and contentious word.

Collaborative group vision statement:

:\textit{IF we build capacity and shift from a culture of blame to one of collaboration, while recognizing that we are in the midst of unsustainable demands created by varied perspectives causing system-wide crisis THEN we can create trust and power through professional relationships and take responsibility to make changes toward improvement.}

An example of a personal vision statement (mine):

- Do justice
- Seek equity
- Act with purpose
- Choose integrity
- Love kindness
- Walk humbly with each other
Once we had established a working definition we needed to consider how teaching and learning were connected. We undertook a month of images and quotes that framed the following questions:

“What is learning?”, “What does the evidence of the tenets support that definition?”, “What do you know that it is happening?” The answers were shared with participants:

Learning in Haiti

While we individually considered the learning principles, there was not time to really unpack our thinking about how we interpret them or how they aligned with our identity. Because we needed so much time to fully establish a working vision statement, we decided to leave the synthesis of the learning principles and our personal visual metaphor until we had more time to fully amalgamate the ideas. We agreed to use this as our connection piece for next time and move on to the evaluation piece of the agenda; a looking in and looking out.
Participants were asked to identify connections, notice surprises, and consider questions, feelings and affirmations in relation to vision building and learning. The evaluations revealed similarities in responses. Each participant recorded connections outlining the complexity of teaching and learning and how this cycle directly tied to teacher wellness and collaboration. We all noticed that within the framework of teaching, we could be who we are but each participant recognized the same need to be connected back to the larger group of professionals.

The emotional climate surprised participants, and there was a sense of unity in the vulnerability, challenges, disheartened purpose, and the pretense of “holding it all together”. Participants also found it surprising that conversations were intensely powerful because while there was agreement, there were also elements of contention.

The questions that most were left with focused on the direction for action, plans for implementation, and methods of assessment that could support personal visions and learning principles. The management of time and ways to intentionally collaborate were common in all evaluations. There was also evidence of an intense faith in the group’s ability to provide the necessary emotional and physical support each participant would require.

The feelings and affirmations section of the evaluation provided the most feedback in terms of raw data. This is where participants wrote candidly about what they were feeling after working intensely to isolate what defined their professional identity. Words such as collaborate, integrity, assessment, adequacy/inadequacy, value, identity, complexity, inclusion, discovery, engagement, validity, resolve, and optimism came up in each evaluation as products of our time together.
The implications for participants centered on a commitment for personal momentum to create collaborative learning opportunities that fostered an appreciative inquiry approach. There was realization that the connections between wellness and positive relationships affect our personal wellness and have professional impact.

Participants left with an extension of gratitude and an invitation to record any learning as it evolved. There was a plan to expand our collaborative experiences, use an appreciative lens, and listen to the intention in our words and in the words of others.

**The Elements and Principles of Teaching and Learning.** In March the climate in the schools was tense with two weeks before break time, and it seemed like a good idea to rearrange my thinking and take this inquiry group on a visually reflective journey. To connect, participants used the elements and principles of design (art) to explain which of the two impressionist images (*The Red Studio* by Matisse or, Picasso’s, *The Girl in the Mirror*, see below) best represented them at this moment. Interestingly, every participant framed themselves from both perspectives; one external and one internal.
What’s Your Impression?

Our group then revisited our vision statement and asked ourselves if it still represented our learning. We shared our individual thinking about the learning principles and established a personal meaning of learning. As a group we processed the OECD’s (2011) seven principles of learning, capturing their essence and synthesizing them with our own ideas of what defines learning. Finally we worked to put it all together by using a tool that builds a visual for our thinking and holds all of the important ideas thus far. We transformed our version of professional vision into a personal visual metaphor (symbol or image) that represented our identity as a teacher and a learner with a clarifying word or caption. Some examples included a pyramid, a lighthouse, a tree, with a sapling and a spider web.

After establishing our own metaphor as a visual thinking piece, it was time to offer a new perspective on the power of imagery by analyzing visual pieces that were created to represent the merging of cultures and identities. The local art gallery had an exhibit on Immigration where a local artist met with another community member that had come to our area from a different country. The exhibit allowed artists to interpret stories of immigrants in different mediums, applications, and forms to demonstrate the challenges of their journey and the joy in the melding of self between two cultures.

This field trip was also the perfect merging of the use of visual perspectives and the use of the principles of learning as an assessment tool. We toured the gallery, spending time at each piece to make the connections to the stories of the people as represented by the local artists. No two pieces were alike, nor were our analyses. Each piece spoke differently to the participants and the personal connections that we made illustrated our own feelings about who we are as people, as teachers, and as learners.
One story proved to be extremely powerful to each participant in our inquiry group. Two artists had been paired with the same immigrant, and so the one story had yielded two pieces of art. Participants noticed the startling contrast between the images even though they had both been a representation of the same personal story. Imagine the conversation between the two artists if they were able to explain their interpretations; rich, powerful, and illuminating.

Evaluations were provided for participants to consider and record their thinking on the tenets of the research that spoke most vividly to them and why that was. They were asked to add any tenets that may have been missing or more clearly define any that needed context. Participants were asked to identify those tenets that they wanted to explore further. They were asked to notice the similarities and/or differences between the practice of teaching and the OECD’s seven principles of learning which are as follows: Learning 1) places learners at the center; 2) recognizes the social nature within the process; 3) understands emotions are integral; 4) recognizes individual learners differences; 5) stretches all students; 6) is reflected by assessment for learning and 7) builds horizontal connections (OECD 2011).

It was determined that there was a need to interpret and determine what innovations would create impact and help participants see themselves and be seen in a way that validated professionalism. The best way to do that was to consider the seven learning tenets and unpack the meaning of assessment.

As always, participants were thanked for their willingness to explore and discuss the idea of learning and how it connects to teaching. Each was encouraged to use their
journal to record any images, questions, thoughts, or feelings about what learning is and how it unfolds for them, their colleagues, and their students.

**Learning Assessment-Assessment of Learning.** After a long break it was important to get situated into the work that we had done. Participants began the April inquiry session by reviewing our vision statement and our evaluation of the 7 Learning Principles as presented the last time we gathered together. We then waded through a stack of assessment for learning quotes from many sources. Each participant choose a statement that best connected to their thinking around interpretation and assessment, and justified their choice. We considered how the statement(s) on assessment connected to our evaluation of the learning tenets taking note of any changes in thinking.

Participants were then provided with visual cues in order to develop a picture of a time when they had experienced being assessed. Participants were given no qualifying direction in terms of the type or tone of the assessment. They were prompted only with statements such as, “Where were you?”, “What were you doing?”, “How did you feel?”, “What words were being spoken (to you or others, by you or others)?”, “What gestures did you see or make?”, “What posture did you take?”, “How did you feel emotionally and/or physiologically?” Each participant was encouraged to listen for common elements as people shared out. Samples included positive and negative tones and were coded for attributes in order to establish a meaning of assessment.

Once participants had a personal definition of assessment and how it looked for them, we processed Timperley’s article on ‘Using Assessment Data for Improving Teaching Practice’ (2009) through four lenses: images, sensory details, powerful words (words thought, spoken and wondered), and feelings. Participants then used a six-step
process to collaboratively generate and present a statement to summarize their thinking. After hearing others’ ideas of the reading on evidence, participants classified the important ideas and how they applied to one’s own thinking on assessment in a Plus, Minus, Interesting (PMI) (E.de Bono, 1995). I added a column for pending questions.

![Application for the Assessment of Action to Assessment in Action](image)

Using the evaluation provided, participants reflected their thinking about their new understandings of assessment and the connections between assessment and teacher identity. They pondered the idea of collaboration and how it corresponds with assessment and considered what they were willing to explore further in relation to assessment in their own practice.

As we ended our session, participants agreed that exploring assessment using personal exemplars was our next direction, considering their desire to have a visual anchor that would help them implement leadership action and collaboration in order to
feel a sense of wellness about their professional decisions around learning design and assessment.

We shared our gratitude with one another and prepared to explore systems framed by the question, “How can we gather meaningful evidence, collaborate, and change the system?”

**The Systems Assessment.**

“Teachers teach more by what they are than by what they say.” (Unknown)

May was our final chance to meet, process research, and consider our basic fundamental beliefs about assessment and systems before putting together some ideas of how we would implement change. Participants reviewed and revised definitions of assessment through the four lenses. Participants randomly picked from the quotes on evidence (provided) and connected them to their data and the idea of assessment.

Each person then took turns setting the image and context by walking us through a personally relevant assessment exemplar, highlighting evidence, learning principles, and the implications for learning design. The questions that framed our conversations were as follows: “How was this exemplar an example of assessment”, “What evidence did it provide?”, “What tools allowed you to measure results?”, “How did you communicate the learning intentions on which you would assess student achievement?”, “What kinds of data did you provide and to whom?”, “What were the implications in terms of the ‘what next’ for your lesson design?”. While the exemplar was only one example of assessment, it did provide a concrete visual to work through.

Participants then processed Hattie’s checklist for “Rankings and effect size of program influences”, (Hattie, 2012, p.20) to reflect on what information in the checklist
could assist in the learning design and development of criteria to answer assessment questions around what actions have the most impact. Visual symbols, called talking points, helped us to notice what ideas stopped us and caused us to take notice, what information we felt we had squared away, what direction we were willing to try, and what we were still mulling around or thinking about. Participants were very surprised at the influence of factors directly related to identity, such as teacher credibility, teacher expectations, response to intervention, reciprocal teaching, and feedback.

Using the same tool, participants looked at the bigger picture of impact presented in Chapter 7 of ‘Professional Capital – Transforming Teaching in Every School’ (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012, p.148-162). What was most helpful to participants was the way Fullan and Hargreaves outlined the change process in the form of leveled guidelines from teachers and teacher leaders all the way up to large scale reform at the provincial and national level using comprehensible language and doable objectives.

The talking points tool used to process the Fullan & Hargreaves chapter was used as an evaluation of the day’s session and an action plan for ourselves. We reflected on which suggestions really spoke to us in a way that we could leave the day’s session and begin the following day, honouring our identity as a teacher/learner/ valuable person.

It was unclear whether or not our last session would take place with the escalation of job action. We decided to plan on a celebration of our learning and a chance to visually represent our journey even if it meant meeting outside of the timetable.

We came up with a plan to transform our vision by showing others what we wanted them to know. Participants considered the ways we wanted to demonstrate our learning, how we would share our learning with others, who those others would be and
why they needed to know. We brainstormed how we wanted that to look and what materials/space we anticipated needing. Some of our ideas for representation included: photo vignette, painting, collage, poem, sound track, life map, and symbols map.

Because there was a very real chance that this would be our last formal time together I wanted to be sure that participants understood that this was not the end of our journey. Even if the helping teacher time was cut from our budget, I communicated my commitment to continuing to work alongside participants and provide support. With the shift in professional development, there were options for continuing on as a group, or beginning their own inquiry groups (facilitation assistance available). Participants were encouraged to continue to use their journals to record images, ideas, questions, thoughts, or feelings about the process and how it unfolded or would unfold for them, their colleagues, and their students. I expressed my deep gratitude for their willingness to explore, discuss, and participate and for everything that they had done and would do for each other, colleagues, and students.

The End of the Beginning. By June, we were in the throes of rotating strikes and lock outs. Written communication between the district and union offices gave some assurance that the last session for participants would continue as planned. Alternate plans were made in case that decision had changed. There were some tense moments of confusion and disagreement between staff and management, but the June 12th session went ahead even though some participants were unable to complete their visuals due to the limited time and access they had to their resources and the stress of all that was going on in our profession. It should be noted that the political climate, which many of us
found toxic, had an impact on the morale, the action plans, the final projects of the participants, and inevitably the results of this research.

The venue for the last session changed to a location that would provide ample space for participants to spread out materials in order to work and present. Materials were provided in the event that participants did not have the opportunity to collect them from their individual locations. Participants began by checking in with a gratitude activity using the writing frames, “It is important to remember…” and “I am thankful for…” Participants commented on the value of the inquiry sessions, the power of joy that collaboration brought, and their intention to shelf external factors in order to create the kind of climate that supported celebration. Some example responses included: “It is important to remember that when we work together, authentically communicate, and support each other, we are all stronger.”; “It is important to remember to honour our efforts because what we do matters, who we do it with matters and who we do it for matters! We matter!”; “Thank-you to everyone for the fun even in the tough conversations. You see everywhere how important laughter is to health.”; “To laugh with colleagues helps us to pull the weeds from our garden.”

Participants reviewed our protocols and work to date before completing a four quadrant activity. Each participant completed four statements, orally reflecting after each one. Responses were anonymous as we handed in the quadrants page and then randomly picked one out of the bin to read aloud. The following is a sample of the questions with one response from four different participants:
1) *When I think back to the time we have had together, I am thankful for...*

“the opportunity to gather with a group of caring and committed professionals – with the leadership of a wise and dedicated master teacher. Our facilitator created safe space and clear expectations each time we met. And we were always invited into big picture thinking, discussing, imagining with an eye on ourselves within our teaching culture.”

2) *Something that really surprised me during our inquiry sessions was...*

“The design of the work we were undertaking together validated the dis-ease that was infusing so much of the daily experience of teachers but it didn’t allow it to be bigger than the vision and the intention of our profession and of our time together.”

3) *If I was to consider the research, the strategies and the dialogue I would identify the following as reoccurring themes:*

“That authentic meaningful work requires clear intentions and appropriate feedback, regardless of subject matter. Everything that a teacher does or does not do has an impact on how students learn (relationship building, learning experiences, assessment). Teachers have an impact on their student identity. We can improve our own identity through the power of collaboration.”

4) *Implications that I see this work having on my own role as a leader are...*

“Interesting. My reason for wanting to be connected with this Inquiry Process is because of my work as a wellness facilitator. Our teachers must be well for our learning environments to be healthy. The growing culture of polarization, isolation and mistrust that is spreading in so many schools needs committed intervention. There is a vast barren space where conversations need to be invited and encouraged. We, as teacher leaders,
have the capacity to heal the malaise – one school environment at a time – it is that simple and that difficult.”

Participants spent a good part of the day working on their final projects. We ended with a presentation for our group and an intention to present our work to the greater conversation when there was opportunity, ideally August.

Gratitude Extended. After our last inquiry session on June 12th, participants expressed an interest in continuing our work and having a chance to meet without parameters. I received daily e-mails that spoke to the power of our collaborative time: “I already have our plans all mapped out!” “It has been amazing learning from you. I am grateful to have joined this group. In many ways, the group and our gatherings saved me this year. Thank you again!” “Thank you again, Tammy for inviting me to join the group. It was a wonderful experience and the highlight of my year!”

So, participants were invited to gather at my home for a meal and an informal sharing of our thoughts about the upcoming year and the support we envisioned. With tentative professional development plans and no settlement regarding job action on the horizon, there seemed a need to solidify some kind of plan within our group. Our identity had been formed and we had a vision of the culture that we wanted to nurture and hope for the opportunity to be agents of change.
Chapter 4 Implications Gallery– The Results

“Visual culture is that vision “deeply involved with human societies, with the ethics and politics, aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen.”

(W.J.T. Mitchell, 2002, p.166)

Brief Outline

Chapter four is my representation of the themes which we, as a group (including myself), generated. The data that each participant provided during session activities, including a written evaluation and reflection, and a final visual metaphor with a written description including personal implications and plans for expanding personal leadership action, was used to code for themes. All participants began a final visual piece but two were not complete due to the political interruptions of the educational situation in the province.

All the pieces in this chapter were created by me to reflect the themes of this inquiry experience. I made natural and contemporary pieces to demonstrate the ‘nature’ of teaching and how that fits into the contemporary ideas of leadership within the system. Each piece speaks about teaching and leadership. The implications of the data in the form of each visual work represented me as a teacher, but also me as a facilitator of inquiry in order to create leadership capacity. These are themes that I faced as a participant and needed to address as a leadership facilitator all at the same time. They are implications for both teacher and leader because the teacher is also the leader.

My goal as a participant researcher was to look at the various dynamics of what it means to be a teacher by examining the elements of visual culture within our profession and try to determine how to support the development of professional identity through the
research on change theory. I was challenged and nurtured as part of a process that I could not have predicted would be so timely and meaningful at such a precarious juncture in education.

Conversations identified strong messages from participants that leadership capacity was always an underlying piece of the perception of their own personal teacher identity. However, the action of making teaching a cyclical process of learning, assessing, transforming, reflecting, and teaching was challenged by the perceptions of how others saw individual educators and the teaching profession, and how that, in turn, made them see themselves. Participants reported heightened vulnerabilities around prior attempts to be innovative learners and practitioners which created hurt, limiting the willingness of participants to take risks. Without the perception of personal safety, participants felt that expanding their own leadership capacity and that of others was an impossibility. In fact, the lack of perceived personal safety that they felt in their current situations fostered feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and disconnectedness that lead to the display of pretense; the idea that putting on a brave face was preferable to acknowledging that sometimes, we do not feel brave. Participants shared stories within the inquiry group meetings of visible displays of favour, verbal phrasing, judgmental gestures, and school actions which all tended to be perceived as creating a climate of competitiveness within a culture of blame. All felt this was not a suitable environment for transformational change.

Participants reflected that their attendance in the inquiry sessions came out of a need to foster their personal wellness and professional growth by finding a place to belong with colleagues and be part of the kinds of dialogue that would renew their joy,
compassion, and impact. Never once did they shy away from the hard conversations that this work required. Six reoccurring themes emerged from our work and provided me with important insight for future facilitation: the vision of self, the power of collaboration, the interpretation of assessment, the need for balance, the impression of perspective, and the direction of change. The following images are my representations of those themes, drawn from our six inquiry sessions and many collaborative works, as an illustration of how they tie the research to our inquiry experience, and perhaps provide insight into leadership action.
Seeing the Tree for the Forest – the Vision of Self. The title of this piece is DEFINE. Understanding ourselves in the context of our beliefs as we are situated in the profession of teaching became imperative to defining our identity and the types of contributions that we could make to change the educational culture. It involved the ethics of being true to thine ownself, as it applies to the modeling of behaviour, learning environment, and the activation of capacity building. This piece represents the freedom to expose personal attributes, explore what matters to us and consider our own defining moments as tools to enlighten our understanding of how we matter and how that fuses with our professional identity.

Teaching is not simply a job; it is a way of viewing the world. When we are able to share our strengths and identify challenges with colleagues, we open ourselves to opportunities that increase the human capital Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) identify.

In a leadership or facilitation role this has implications for the design of professional learning communities. The structure and pace of the learning has to honour what the individual teacher brings to the learning community in order to nurture professional identity, much like the learning environments that we attempt to create for our students. In some cases, leadership will involve inviting teachers to consider their contributions and reminding them that how they feel and what they need are important to the learning community. There is a saying, Can’t see the trees for the forest, alluding to the need to look around you before you look beyond yourself. ‘Define’ is about looking
within you before looking around or beyond you: seeing the tree within the trees within
the forest.

“Roots before branches, to know who I am; who I want to be
And faith to take chances, to live like I see; a place in this world for me.”
(Anders & Hashma, 2008)

Collaboration: Part of the job, not just a
suggestion! LANDSCAPE AND CLIMATE
CHANGE illustrates the importance of having others
to support growth by providing an environment safe
enough to contain vulnerability but challenging
enough to push thinking and risk-taking. The support
of the group as a microcosm that lives and breathes,
sustains the momentum of the group’s ability to
develop cognitive flexibility in order to adapt and
change in response to the changing needs of our
professional environment. It represents the roots, strength, and perseverance of the group
to sustain the changes in climate that are beyond our control.

This has many leadership implications. Creating a culture of trust relies on the
creation of a sense of professional belonging. It requires the acceptance by each
participant that their personal professional identity is part of the culture of the larger
collegial professional identity, and therefore, impacts the climate and landscape of
change. Leadership within collaborative communities will represent all for all, a
distributed workload that creates capacity and generates many ‘experts’ who share their strengths with each other. It means that leaders will have to shift the ideas of sameness and fairness to that of equity, ensuring teachers that the group will help support their needs whether or not those needs or supports are the same. Trust in the leadership will require the offer of many entry points for the scaffolding of skills and knowledge. The leader will need to participate and expose vulnerability, often first, to gain credibility and build relationships with colleagues based on shared experience. There will have to be faith that taking risks will not be met with judgment or evaluation of professional ability. Leaders will need to communicate the successes and challenges of the group and expand invitations to those who are not directly involved, always with an eye on creating greater capacity.

**The Imbalance of Balance.** RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE is a sculpture that requires just the right weight and arrangement of pieces in order to balance. Each piece within the sculpture has its function and supports the other pieces in order for the machine to operate smoothly and efficiently: a system of parts and movements that may appear to be operating in isolation however, does not because it must consider the purpose, force, and direction of the entire contraption. Misalignment of parts causes a slow wearing that impacts the machine’s ability to optimally function. This piece asks us to consider the value and weight of even the smallest
part and how that part serves the form and function of the greater machine.

As teachers, we are an entire being. We juxtapose our personal and professional needs and the needs of our students with external demands that often go against what we know is best for those that we serve. As part of our daily experience, questions of balance and identity will routinely surface. Questions like, “How do I hold onto the big picture of what I am doing as teacher in and out of my classroom when I am buried in minutiae that threatens to smother my profession?”; “How do I reconcile the intimate pricelessness of a child’s engagement and learning with the bottom lines of budgets and measured success?”; “How do I voice my deep and heartfelt belief in public education – the importance of holding all of our children, not just a privileged few, in a rigorous, vibrant and dynamic system?”; “How can I convince others that a public education system that truly acknowledges and supports all its citizens, wherever they are in their learning, is cost effective on innumerable levels?”; “How do I protect and share my heart at the same time?” These kinds of questions feel heavy and overwhelming. It often seems like we teach in isolation, and that our direction is dragged along by the powers that be, creating a wearing on our morale and confidence. We consider ourselves as subject, delivery or research experts but rarely all, and sometimes none. This part of our identity is wrapped up in how we perceive ourselves functioning professionally within the system.

In education, it is all about balancing… content versus process, joy versus grit, academic versus social learning. Because it all hangs in the balance, educational leaders need to provide opportunities to anchor stability within the professional environment. The weight and arrangement of contributions are less important than the opportunity to
balance the process of automaticity and creativity, theory and practice, assessment and adaptation, and reflection and transformation in a combined effort for one outcome. The pendulum has swung heavily in both the qualitative and the quantitative directions, and leaders need to consider which direction the pendulum will need to travel to balance the process for participants. Leaders will need an implementation blueprint, understanding that constant updates will be necessary as challenges arise. There is a self regulatory component that leaders will have to foster if participants’ movements will increase the collaborative momentum without creating implementation imbalance.

**The Impression of Perspective.** We all have a story. No two stories are the same. FROM THE BOTTOM UP is a piece that reminds us of the need to see things from other perspectives. Our thoughts, words, and deeds are translated through the lens of our own perspective and give an impression to those around us. Through that same lens, we get an impression of someone else. Our image changes when we understand the vantage points of others. We are better able to create a full image if we can merge all the views to really see what someone is saying.

As educators, we each need to be seen and heard as professional people. There is a great necessity for us to feel connected to the larger vision in a way that values and maximizes our contributions. This speaks to Timperley’s work on the creation of a professional learning community that uses rigour and research to place professional identity into teacher practice (2009). As leaders, we need to create opportunities for teachers to see themselves in the greater profession, much like students need to see
themselves in curriculum. The most exciting part of perspective is that it changes with new information and makes us rethink what we once saw: a transformation of vision, much like lying on your back and watching the clouds roll and change formation in the sky. The more perspectives that are included, the more complex and detailed the image. We cannot interpret if we do not understand and we cannot understand if we do not have access to or feel a part of the greater story; the bigger picture.

**Interpretive Assessment.** This piece, entitled GETTIN’ SCHOOLED ≠ BEING EDUCATED, causes us to react and evokes feelings around assessment that we have experienced both personally and professionally. The vignette projected by these objects asks us to create a new definition of, and purpose for, assessment that does not malign personal identity. It shows us where we came from and gives us an opportunity to consider the complexity of all of the elements involved in interpreting situations. This piece invites the participant to move out of a seated position and rotate around for a full view. It questions the certainty of assessment in isolation, using only numeric values and figures. There are more perspectives than one to be considered and it is no longer appropriate to take sides. Words need to be carefully crafted and gesture signals anticipated. Besides interpreting what has been included, we must ask ourselves, “What have we excluded and is it reasonable to have done so?” There is a question of power, who possesses it in the learning environment and what purpose it serves.
As educators, we are tasked with assessing various types of data to triangulate theories that address horizontal and vertical connections to the learning intentions for each student. This is a tremendous responsibility and understanding the impact of our innovations cannot be a solitary undertaking. Levin and Hattie both speak to the importance of innovations with proven impact. Creating leadership environments where educators research, examine and reflect on professional practice gives validity and reliability to authentic, measurable results that foster professional identity. This leadership culture promotes shared responsibility for all students and their progression through the learning journey, as well as shared collegial responsibility. In a time where assessment practices are changing but reporting techniques are not, this kind of assessment empowers teachers by providing them with credible evidence that they can support, building confidence in their professional strategic plans and their formal and informal sharing of information with colleagues and parents. Shared assessment strategies provide a common language that informs whole communities in ways that authentically support and sustain change as it applies to individual context. This paradigm shift invites everyone into the assessment process, more evenly distributing the responsibility for action and power to create change.
Change of Direction – Direction of Change.

WHAT’S YOUR SIGN is a piece that acts very much like a game board. At each moment in our journey, we could apply a sign that represented what stage of the process we were at. There was a clear notion that sign posts at all levels (personal, school, district or system) give us direction, no matter how we decide to begin building leadership capacity. The need for prompts and limits has been developed based on practical knowledge and changes over time. Sometimes there are accidents that result in rebuilding. But sometimes there is a need for the complete demolition of a structure before any movement is possible. As teachers we need to test drive research to drive change. We need to observe the signs along the way and adjust our speed.

Leadership means much the same. As leaders, we need to read the signs and allow colleagues to begin their journey where they are at. Leaders need to be part of the process, not strictly observers, providing direction without determining the destination. Examining personal and professional identity requires trust. Collaborating with colleagues means there will be times of vulnerability. Maintaining balance and perspective are not always possible. Redefining assessment and its purpose is no easy
task. Supporting a change in direction is all about the roadside assistance and requires the leader to be part of the journey.

“Our is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is in our reach.”

(Clarrissa Pinkola Estes, 2010)

Our story into our action

“There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly. Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above water. And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate.”

(Margaret Wheatley, 2010)

Out of our narrative, these themes suggested personal courses of action for each participant. Since our plans to demonstrate our professional growth and present our ideas to the school, administrative, and board office staff were postponed, we shared with each other.

As it stands, we have a plan for how we see ourselves as leadership capacity builders in our own setting. Each participant feels empowered to make changes that support district initiatives with the understanding that they will require the support of colleagues and administrative officers. Even without this support, we have decided that we will continue our work, and hope that the climate and tenuous relationships felt at the end of the school year, will quickly improve. We will revisit our vision statements and consider the perspectives of all those we will be working with, and adapt as necessity
demands. We will make decisions about our leadership action that will honour our personal needs and give us a sense of balance. We will create collaborative opportunities and surround ourselves with theoretical and practical knowledge in order to enable us to accurately interpret data. Together, we will bring more certainty to the practice of assessment and use it to guide our direction. We will anticipate that mistakes will happen as part of the process, forming yet another piece of our identity. We will see ourselves in our practice and work to make our vision of teaching more visible.

So educators’ perceptions of what it means to be a teacher and a learner were re-examined through the elements of visual culture within our profession and participants created a personal and collective vision. As participants, we have interpreted how we see ourselves at this moment and how that connects us to our professional colleagues. Each one of us has identified where we will need support and how we will develop our professional identity through the research on change theory. What has happened is that we have brought clarity to our position within the profession and shown seeing in ways that honour our work and each other. We are ready to embark on our chosen leadership paths knowing that they will split and merge as the situation necessitates.
References


LeCompte, M.D., & Schensul, J.J. (1999). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research*. Walnut Creek.: AltaMira Press.


Appendix A

Session Outline
Intermediate Plan: Building a SMART vision of professional SELF using
1. Common Language - Defining of our task
2. The 7 Principles of Learning
3. Formative Assessment
4. Resources and Delivery (Content knowledge/Didactical knowledge)
5. Reflection in Light of the Research (Pedagogical knowledge)
6. Celebrating Change

While viewing the images/text consider your basic fundamental beliefs about the following:

VISIONING - What is the culture and action of teaching? What makes it a profession?
How does it happen? What should be involved? What powerful words and actions come to mind?

The construct of motivation – What motivates me in teaching? Why do I do it? What motivates me to continue educating despite the challenges? What strengths do I contribute to the culture of teaching?

LEARNING
The context of participants – Who participates in the learning process? What beliefs do I bring that contextualize my experience?
Grounds for action- How would I know that action needs to be taken? How would I determine what that action should be? What would I need to understand before I moved to action? What do I base my understanding on?

ASSESSMENT
Underlying principles – How do I justify the behaviours that support learning in my classroom? Am I clear about the reasoning behind my thinking and the logic to be followed? How do I honour the emotional component of learning?

Validation of a process- How do I know when learning has occurred? What types of evidence can/do I use for assessment? What types of experiences make me feel validated as a professional? How can I make these experiences more intentionally frequent?

CELEBRATING CHANGE
Culture for change – How has teaching changed? How do/have I change(d) as a result of teaching? What does my visual metaphor look like? What words might accompany it? How can I use it to validate my professional identity? How can I use it to help others ‘see’ teaching and learning?
Appendix B

Sample Power Point

Sample Agenda
Teacher Identity-Building a Vision of Teaching
Inquiry Agenda – Thursday January 16th, 2013 8:55-12:15

Checking in – “Where are you at?” Choose one of the images provided and quietly write to explain how this image best represents you at this moment. What are you hoping to get out of our work today?

Stories that bring us together – Share an activity that you have tried, watched, heard about, etc. that explains why you became a teacher. (Remember, good stories are not necessarily all about successes.)

Setting the Image & Context - Before we can think about what someone else considers teaching, we need to have a really clear picture of what it is to us, as professionals. Consider the following questions and let them guide your thinking as you record some of your ideas:
What is the culture and action of teaching?
What powerful words and actions come to mind?
What should be involved?
How does it happen?
What makes it a profession?
What motivates me in teaching?
Why do I do it?
What motivates me to continue educating despite the challenges?
What strengths do I contribute to the culture of teaching?

Reflecting on Research—Together we will process an excerpt from “Professional Capital” (Fullan, Hargreaves, 2012), on the meaning of teaching. Reflect on any connections you can make, things that surprised you, questions you may have, feelings or affirmations that come to mind as you read. Discuss with a shoulder partner and notice similarities and differences.

What are the implications for you as a teacher and the learning communities that you are involved in and who do they impact?

Our Question: Our Practice
What Next?
Thank-you for your willingness to explore and discuss the idea of a personal vision of teaching. Please feel free to choose a journal and bring it home to record any images, questions, thoughts, or feelings that you might have about what teaching is to you. You
are invited to bring in any artifacts, images, research pieces, etc., that connect to your
vision of what teaching is and what you would like others to know about our profession.

Our next topic is LEARNING – How is learning defined today? Who participates in the
learning process? What beliefs or tenets do you bring that contextualize your
experience? How do you know when learning is taking place?

Plan for our next meeting on **Thursday, Feb ___, 2013 8:55-____**

**Tools For Today**

**G•O•S•S•I•P with R•A•S•A: receive... appreciate... summarize... ask questions** This
tool is great for activating background knowledge and understanding, or for
summarizing and synthesizing information. Learners go out and selectively search for
important points using the principles behind real gossip. A concept or question is
chosen. Learners first generate their own ideas, and then start the process by going to a
first person asking, “What’s important?” They receive the information... appreciate
what they are hearing by showing appropriate body language... summarize what they
heard... and ask questions to clarify and extend meaning...They write information in one
of the boxes. They thank the person and move to another person, repeating the
process. This time they pass the gossip, ...the ideas they just heard. RASA is repeated
and person hearing the information jots it down, then shares his or her gossip.
Following the gathering of ideas, each person returns to their A/B partnership or team
to share the GOSSIP they gathered. Reporting-frame:

*My partners ___: ___, ___, and ____learned____. The next team reports only new
findings...*

**Mining for Gold; Talk About** and the **Six-Step Summary** are powerful tools that work
wonderfully with G•O•S•S•I•P.

**Insert (V+!?)**

Learners read (or view) a chunk of text inserting symbols as they read or view (adapted
from McLaughlin and Allen, 2002). Many symbols can be used. We start with five basic
ones:

- a check mark for things you already know and are comfortable with
- a plus sign for something you just learned
- an exclamation mark for something that surprised or challenged you
- a question mark for something you question, wonder about or find confusing
- a minus sign for something they worry about or something that contradicts what you
  know
Other symbols that reflect the skills being developed can be used once the learners are comfortable with the process. We stretch understanding by using:

- **eyes**, to indicate something that opened your eyes
- **a heart**, for something that touched your heart
- **a light bulb**, for something that made you think differently
- **I** for an image or sensory details
- **D** for important details

When using texts, try acetate and white board markers, post-it notes or invite the learners to write on a copy of the text.

**Collaborative Summaries into Multiple Paragraph Writing**

Learners generate the three-five most important ideas from something they have been working on. They move to a partner and negotiate until they reach agreement on the three to five most important ideas. Often the teacher stops the play at this point to develop criteria for what makes a successful negotiation, and learners set goals for further negotiation work. As a team of two, they then move into fours and repeat the process. The process ends when the teacher calls **time**. Learners will be in teams of two to as many as sixteen when that happens. Once like magic the whole class was in two teams heavily negotiating when **time** was called. At this point learners choose their three-five most important points, cluster and draft paragraphs for each one. They then generate and introduction and a conclusion and they have a draft essay to take through the writing process.
Appendix C Project Gallery

The Calling by Mandy Cole 2014 (2nd Year Teacher)

Verse 1:
I’m just a little bit lost inside my head.
These games that you want me to play
I’m just a little bit sad and tired the way
They laugh and turn their heads away.
Am I all that I am?
Is this all that I’ll be?
Turn the tables to set me free but,
I can feel you look right through me.

Chorus:
Ooh, ooh, ooh, do you hear me crying out for you?
Oh, oh.
Yes, I’m calling out for you.
Ooh, ooh, ooh, do you hear me crying out for you?
Oh, oh.
Yes, I’m calling out for you.

Verse 2:
And do you see all the holes in me,
That are locked inside my heart tonight?
At war with the demons in my mind,
It’s just a push and a shove and a tug.
I am treading on water trying to keep up,
And the walls that we build,
We keep building them up.

Bridge:
With all systems down,
When nothing but words keep flying around,
Get out of your head,
It’s just words that they said.

Chorus +
Can you hear me calling to you (draw out)
"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a child will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."

-Haim Ginott
All the research, studies and testing, the search for a foolproof formula. …

What is a teacher? Who can be a teacher? What is teaching? I look at all the research we have been reading and discussing. I type out all the words that stand out, that seem important.

When I finally hit ‘print’, there are pages and pages of words. The words are powerful, just printing them out on paper doesn’t seem enough; just more black print on white paper that can be blown away with one gust of wind.

I begin the process of cutting the words out.

Then I sort: relevant to my class; relevant to world; relevant to the researchers and powers that be. From these, I pull out the words that hold meaning for me that are part of who I am and what I believe. Whatever I pick from whichever pile I have an instant connection to the word. That is my criteria for the choices I make. I need to feel it in my heart and in my gut. The words are important, building blocks of my beliefs, my truths. I can’t just use paper as a medium for this project; it is too thin, one-dimensional; the words deserve more presence.

Outside in my garden is a pile of old bricks. Weathered, chipped and broken, different shapes and sizes although they were all originally cast from the same mold. Time and circumstance has changed them from their original form. These are perfect there are just like me, just like the children I teach, my colleagues and friends.

The Pink Floyd song plays in my head “……another brick in the wall.” But, I am not trying to build a wall. I don’t want to block thinking and feeling with a wall. I am trying to make a foundation, a scaffold to climb, something to raise one up. That is what education has done for me, I have rebuilt myself one brick at a time. That’s what I try to do with kids, rebuild, change thinking, and hopefully over time transform.

I begin to write my chosen words onto the bricks. It feels therapeutic writing these powerful words on the once ignored and discarded bricks. I look at each one carefully, the broken ones won’t be long enough to hold a big word, the bricks with chipped corners need to have their words specially chosen too, but for most of the bricks I can happily pick them up and write with my black permanent marker. It begins to dawn on me; I’m going to need more bricks.

I do have more bricks but I can’t carry all them by myself, if only my colleagues were here with me we could do this together.
Out of necessity I have to write on both sides of the bricks, this is when mistakes are made, if I don’t pick the brick up the right way the word I write on the other side is upside down. Of course I make this mistake several times before I realize. I’m not going to discard the brick just because I made a mistake, I can still work with it.

I use all the bricks and I still have a basket of words. Even with more bricks I realize I will never be ‘done’. We are never ‘done’, there is always more.

It is time for me to try and build something. Because they are not all the same size, placement is crucial to building a structure that won’t fall down. How should I choose my bricks? Do I choose by word, ignore the bricks shape and size and try to create meaning from the bricks regardless. But I can’t do that I know it won’t work I can’t have broken misshapen bricks on the bottom or the whole thing will fall down. I need to look carefully at the bricks, choose the ones that I think can hold the others up. What the words on the bricks end up saying will have to be left to happenstance. I’m okay with that because all the words I have chosen hold meaning.

Out in my garden I build my structure, carefully, and thoughtfully I stand back to look at my work. I walk around it and read the words written on the other side, ‘laugh’ is upside down I notice that’s funny!

I look at what I have made, this makes sense to me, and I feel proud and happy. I want to share it with my colleagues. I know when I rebuild it for them it will not be the exactly the same, each time I build it will be different. Naturally!

Norma-Jean Berg
Teacher
The Tree

The tree is a symbol of growth, strength and resiliency. A tree branch bends in the wind. It loses its leaves in the fall and experiences an awakening in the spring. The sapling is my symbol of hope for the future and faith in humanity.

L. Latham
To Change Public Education

To change public education, we must first change our thoughts.
To change our thoughts, we need a new vision.
To create a new vision we need to imagine.
Will you help change public education?

Imagine public education at peace.
Where government, school boards, administration, parents, and teachers
Do all they can to help students
And keep each other safe.
Public education at peace.

Imagine public education abundantly supported.
Where Mother Earth and all Her inhabitants
Have their every need fulfilled.
And there is plenty for all.
Public education abundantly supported.

Imagine public education filled with love.
Where every stakeholder
Respects the rights of all
And know they are needed and loved.
Public education filled with love.

Imagine public education fulfilled.
Where every child and every adult
Knows they have special gifts to share with each other
And all know that they each have a purpose.
Public education fulfilled.

Imagine peace…
   abundance…
   love…
   fulfilled…

Inspired by the original poem, To Change the World, by Silegnaed, 10 years old
C. Barton