

TEACHER COLLABORATION AND SCHOOL REFORM:
DISTRIBUTING LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE USE OF
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports a study of two professional learning teams of teachers at one Midwestern secondary school implementing a hybrid school improvement process incorporating elements of several reform models. A qualitative extended case-study approach was used to study the role of organizational conditions on teacher team performance, the emergence and enactment of leadership within the teams, and the quality of team outcomes. Organizational factors such as performance alignment and school governance structures were found to interact with *time* to constrain and intensify teachers' work in teams. Patterns of discourse interacted with teachers' perceptions of team purpose and autonomy to shape collaboration. *Interactional routines* were established that are improvisational and negotiated in character, yet exert a powerful shaping force on team performance. Leadership in teams is manifest as a relational phenomenon identified as *emergent reciprocal influence*. The study concludes that collaboration potentially serves both a disciplinary and an emancipatory role regarding the professional discretion and autonomy of individual teachers. These roles are related to broader trends in business management, educational reform, and domestic politics.