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The Principal's Role; Distributed Leadership

Kathryn R. Hermann
Old Dominion University

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KATHRYN R. HERMANN
B.A. May 1994, Randolph-Macon Woman's College
M.A. August 2001, The George Washington University

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APPROVED BY:

DR. KAREN L. SANZO, DISSERTATION CHAIR

DR. JAY SCRIBNER, COMMITTEE MEMBER

DR. JOY HOWARD, COMMITTEE MEMBER

ABSTRACT

The role of the principal role has become very complex with the increased focus on accountability and student achievement. Principals can no longer do their jobs alone. Distributed leadership has been the subject of considerable educational research and discourse in recent years. This study explores how principals employ or do not employ distributed leadership with their staffs. The study found that the school principal plays a key role in supporting the school by communicating a common purpose, that distributed leadership is developed within a school climate built upon collaboration, the principal models leadership using tools and routines, and situational decision making requires principals to make the decisions on their own. The results of this study provide additional information for future research to continue to define the behaviors and practices of principals that support a distributed leadership model.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Academic accountability is a non-negotiable in education today. No longer can school divisions afford to have schools that are not demonstrating student growth. In an era of high stakes, test- driven accountability in public education, student academic success and student achievement are paramount. Schools are held to high levels of accountability and must be able to reach state pass rate expectations on state driven tests, and make sure that the school is continuing to show growth after reaching such goals. Federal demands (i.e No Child Left Behind), require states to be able to show that they are making AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). NCLB (2001) require states, school districts, and schools to ensure all students are proficient in grade-level math and reading by 2014. As the result of such high stakes, principals are under pressure to show improving student achievement. The role the principal plays in creating a learning environment where student academic success is achieved is paramount and has been directly tied to strong school leadership.

The school principal's role has evolved rather significantly over the past few decades. Principal's job responsibilities have changed dramatically. One of the biggest changes that principals must accept is that measurable academic student growth is required yearly. In addition to holding the largely managerial responsibilities of the past, today's principals are expected to lead their schools, increase student learning, and help staff to grow professionally. Research over the last thirty years indicates that principals are the catalyst for shaping school improvements, creating lasting foundations for student learning, and accelerating teacher effectiveness. They were often referred to as heroic in nature and that is no longer the case. According to the Wallace Foundation (2004) "Leadership is second only to teaching among

school influences on students' success." In other words, the position of principal has evolved to reflect the necessity of both management and leadership roles. Though the responsibilities are many, effective principals can and do balance them, knowing how to "use" their power most effectively.

Most elementary schools have only one principal; therefore, the impact on teaching and learning led by one person may not result in organizational reform even if that individual is an instructional leader. Principals carry out a multitude of responsibilities; hence, to impact growth they must be able to influence other leaders (formal and informal) within the organization (Lambert, 2002; Shivers-Blackwell, 2006; Spillane 2005, 2006, and 2010). The manner in which districts address this challenge can vary significantly, ranging from efforts to improve the content knowledge of their leaders, to setting up formal structures to distribute instructional leadership in the form of teacher leaders (Timperley, 2005; Sherer, 2008). Historically, it has been assumed that the title of 'principal' is applied to the person who has more skill and knowledge than others in the school (Hoerr, 2007; Sheppard, 1996). It is suggested that the building principal must distribute leadership and decision making to a group of leaders within the building in order to build capacity for reform (Elmore, 2004; Gronn, 2000; Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Smylie, 2007). In other words, the principal cannot do the job alone.

Statement of the Problem

Principals can no longer single-handedly lead schools to greatness given the intensive demands placed on them (Spillane, 2005). The principals' leadership role is changing as the result of increased expectations for student learning and how principals' manage the work load. There is an evolving theory that leadership from a distributed perspective has the potential to improve teaching and increase learning (Harris, 2005). There have been few quantitative studies

conducted to examine to what extent effective principals employ distributed leadership in their schools. Since distributed leadership is a relatively new concept, which has been researched more in the last five years, most of the literature on this topic focused on theory development and knowledge about distributed leadership is small (Harris, 2007; Spillane, 2006). The findings that are available on distributed leadership do show advantages of this technique in improving teaching and learning (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2005). However, there are limited studies that have investigated the relationship between distributed leadership and how effective principals' build capacity with their staff.

Statement of Significance

This quantitative study extends current research on distributed leadership and brings attention to how effective principals employ or do not employ distributed leadership in their schools. This study has the potential to be useful to school divisions as they look at hiring and placing principals, and even offering professional development to current principals. It could also be helpful to colleges and universities as they develop principal preparation programs. The results of this study could lead to course development about distributed leadership. This study could also be helpful to teacher preparation courses. Preparation programs may want to address the role of the teacher in decision making and the practice of distributed leadership. The intent of this study is to add to the empirical research studies on distributed leadership. This research study was designed to provide a principals' perspective through the quantitative approach.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

1. *Distributed leadership*- Distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures. Though they are important considerations, leadership practice is still the starting point. A distributed perspective frames leadership practice in a particular way; leadership *practice* is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation (Spillane, 2005).
2. *School based leadership team*- A school-based leadership team is a group of individuals at a school that help make decisions and are an integral part of leading instructional improvement initiatives. This team is usually comprised of the principal, the assistant principal, a grade level lead teacher for each grade level, and the reading specialist. The purpose of the school-based leadership team is to build capacity to develop and grow initiatives at the school level.
3. *Grade level lead teacher*- A grade level lead teacher is a teacher selected by the principal to serve as a leader for a specific grade level. This individual may receive a stipend (depending on the school system) to serve as a liaison between the school and central office in order to build capacity with instructional initiatives at the school.
4. *School culture*: The intangible principles that define the school's climate. Teachers are encouraged by the administration to take leadership roles in the school, collaborate to solve problems, and feel respected by their peers and the principal.

5. *Instructional program:* Instructional decisions are based on data and are made in the best interest of students. School personnel have ownership in the improvement of instruction.
6. *Effective principals:* Principals who have been in the position for at least three years and have shown instructional growth on state report cards.

This research chapter provides an overview of the practice of distributed leadership. Additionally, a description of the purpose of the study, statement of the problem, and statement of significance are also outlined. The next chapter reviews the literature on distributed leadership school.

Conceptual Framework

This research sought to capture the experiences of school principals and members of their leadership team while examining how principals employ or do not employ distributed leadership. This study utilized a qualitative research design in order for the researcher to gain the perceptions of both the school administrators and the members of their leadership team concerning their experiences. In addition, the qualitative design allows the researcher to understand the experiences through a phenomenological focus.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will explore and critique the concept of distributed leadership as presented in the literature. The premise for this review is to inform an examination on the functions school leaders perform through the lens of Distributed Leadership Theory. This exploration is important because the role and responsibilities of principals in schools has shifted. School leaders are responsible for managing the school building, leading and supervising instruction, and interacting with internal and external stakeholders. The list of responsibilities has dramatically increased over the past twenty years (Ross, 2005). Leadership is no longer on the shoulders of a single person and has transitioned to more a collective leadership phenomenon (Ross, 2005). In this literature review, I will explore evolution of distributed leadership, the contemporary role of the principal, distributed leadership practice, how leadership can be spread across many people, and leadership interactions.

The Evolution of Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is a concept that emerged in the early 2000s from a combination of existing sociological, cognitive, psychological, and anthropological theories. Most notably, distributed leadership emerged in part from the Distributed Cognition and Activity Theory and was influenced by Wegner's Communities of Practice (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). It was conceived as a theoretical and analytical framework for studying school leadership, one that would explicitly focus attention on *how* leadership was enacted in schools, as an activity stretched across the "social and situational contexts" (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership is a conceptual and analytical approach to understanding how the work of leadership takes place

among the people and within the context of a complex organization. It was developed and used primarily in education research; however, it has since been applied to other domains, including business and even tourism (Benson & Blackmon, 2011). Rather than focus on characteristics of the individual leader or features of the situation, distributed leadership foregrounds how actors engage in tasks that are "stretched" or distributed across the organization (Spillane, 2006). Leadership from a distributed perspective means seeing leadership activities as a situated and social process at the intersection of leaders, followers, and the situation.

"Distributed leadership" entered the leadership and organizational theory discourse and clearly appealed to various scholars, policy makers, administrators, and practitioners as they have used it to frame, describe, and promote their work (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). According to Harris, (2009), some use it as a recipe for effective leadership or improving schools; others use it to prescribe optimal leadership or organizational structure. As the result of increased demands on leaders in schools and changes in the demands on educational organizations, the term "distributed leadership" is getting used more often (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

Understanding leadership from a distributed perspective means looking for leadership activity as situated and social processes, which draws Activity Theory. Activity Theory is a broad social sciences approach to understanding human behavior as contextualized in a situation. This perspective expands the unit of analysis to the collective rather than individual and studies the relation between actions. Although this approach is aimed at understanding the individual, the unit of analysis is the broader system in which that individual participates. Engestrom (1987) identifies three generations of Activity Theory and associated researchers: first generation, a model focused on the individual (subject-object-mediating artifact) by Lev Vygotsky (1978); second generation, expansion of the model to include collective action, by Alexei Leont'ev

(1981); and third generation, moving toward a networked understanding of interactive activity systems. Another Activity Theory scholar, Barbara Rogoff (1995) adds to this work in two ways: first, foregrounding of the individual must be done without losing sight of the interdependence of the system; and second, there are three different levels of resolution (interpersonal, cultural/community, and institutional/cultural planes) needed to understand the different levels activity. A distributed perspective on leadership takes this networked and multi-level approach to give "context of action" and "maintain... the tension between agency and distribution," (Spillane, Halverson, Diamond, 2001, p. 23). Spillane (2006) and Gronn (2003) both draw on an application of Activity Theory in the field of leadership research that grew out of Mintzberg's studies of work-activity, observing managers through structured observations to document what they actually do.

The Contemporary Role of the Principal

Leadership research up through the late 1990s focused on specific traits, functions, or effects of individual leaders. Much of the work done in educational research focused exclusively on the principal and centered around defining the heroics of individuals (Spillane, 2006). As new demands and accountability has increased, it is no longer about one person. The role of a school leader is complex; therefore, a school principal can no longer do the job alone to meet the increasing demands for continuous school improvement (Spillane, 2005). Strong leaders still need exceptional vision, but vision alone cannot transform a school. Leaders do not come "ready-made" to meet the demands involved in being a school leader in today's world (Copland 2003). In the current era of high stakes accountability, the number of administrative tasks a principal undertakes typically leaves insufficient hours in the day to complete the necessary heroic activities and to cope with these more mundane responsibilities (Elmore, 2002; Gronn &

Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003). If such a heroic leader happens to be in a school, when the heroic leader moves on, progress often comes to a standstill and previous practices re-emerge (Copland, 2003).

Different models of leadership, which explore how to address the complex role of principals and alleviate some of the burdens of the role, have increasingly been explored. These models and approaches are viewed as achievable and sustainable conceptualizations of leadership, as well as more realistic to replace the model of a single “heroic” leader standing atop a hierarchy (Camburn, 2003). Distributed leadership specifically examines how activities and interactions are *distributed* across multiple people and situations (Camburn, 2003; Copland, 2003; Spillane et al. 2004). A network of leaders cultivated within a school is seen through this lens as more realistic to create successful change (Watson & Scribner, 2007). Leaders perform a variety of functions that are spread across the organization. These functions are both formal and informal. With such a network, all members offer a unique perspective and serve as experts in their own rights. Distributed Leadership Theory extends power and responsibilities beyond the principal as the singular school leader and shares the daily work in schools with assistant principals, teachers, and other staff members (Spillane, 2006). This concept will be examined more fully later on in this chapter.

The Impact of No Child Left Behind on Leadership

The concept of sharing power and responsibilities is not necessarily new, but formalization of this concept through the development of the distributed leadership theoretical model occurred in parallel to increasing accountability demands on leaders. Administrative practices in schools have changed over time as federal laws have strengthened. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB: 2001) introduced greater levels of accountability for students and an

increase in the qualification requirements for teachers. As the result of NCLB, educational leadership practices shifted, focusing on leadership roles and practices of the leaders in relationship to the effectiveness of the use of collaborative leadership practices (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). NCLB (2001) was developed as the result of the federal government's overwhelming dissatisfaction with our country's lack of improvement in educational achievement despite increased funding over the last twenty years. Prior to the passage of NCLB was the evolution of an already lengthy accountability trend that started with Sputnik, revitalized with *A Nation at Risk*, and solidified by NCLB. The NCLB reform initiative adopted accountability as its mandate. Student achievement became the focus, and standardized tests became the measure used to gauge student performance. NCLB holds school districts accountable for all students' learning through student participation in statewide assessments. Since districts are now held to such accountability standards, Superintendents of school districts want to ensure that the leaders in their district are highly effective. As the result of past failures, districts have learned that positive change is dependent on effective leadership which emphasizes collaborative approaches to school improvement. There has been additional pressure placed on educational leaders to attain higher levels of student achievement as the result of the increase in accountability. Consequently, the district and school based leadership are viewed either as the catalyst or the anchor for improving student learning.

Educational leadership is complex, and a school leader must be willing to tackle the daily challenges that come with the role. One particular approach to this role is through sharing leadership or distributed leadership. The role of the principal is crucial in distributing leadership opportunities for staff members. The principal is responsible for creating leadership opportunities, identifying teacher leaders, and clearly communicating the purpose of their

leadership functions. One thing that Spillane (2001) points out is the principal does not have to be the expert on everything, but is the instructional leader. The expertise can come from others in the building but such expertise should be distributed through the school. In the following sections I will share a theoretical framework of distributed leadership, share how distributed leadership is spread throughout the school, explore the leaders' interactions, and discover how the use of data is linked to distributed leadership.

Theoretical Framework – Distributed Leadership

Educational leadership is complex. The leadership function of the school principal has shifted. There is no one specific reason for this change; however, research shares that schools often get “distributed” by the principals (Leithwood, 2006). Setting the mission, professional development, managing the organization, and redesigning the instructional program are just a few examples of how this distribution may occur (Leithwood, 2006). Distributed Leadership Theory promotes the decentralization of one leader (Harris, 2003). This decentralization is a shift in how the leadership is distributed under this theory. The following section will explain the rationale for why such change has taken place.

Today's accountability movement has propelled many states to hold principals directly responsible for changes in both teaching and learning that ultimately improve student achievement (Elmore, 2000; Spillane, 2011). In turn, principals are now soliciting and empowering staff to be an intricate part of increased student achievement (Spillane, 2011). Distributed leadership develops the bounds of traditional leadership beyond the formal leader to include multiple individuals in the work of leading change initiatives within schools (Firestone & Martinez; Halverson, 2006; Leithwood, Mascal, & Strauss, 2009; Mayrowitz, Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2009; Spillane, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond,

2001). The thinking and learning that occur in an organization is greatly influenced by the interactions of the people in the organization.

According to Gronn (2003), Distributed Leadership Theory suggests the principal should build leadership throughout the organization to include individuals and teams. Principals set the tone that foster practices within the school that collaboration is paramount. With distributed leadership, the leader is no longer central and supports the notion that everyone can demonstrate leadership with the organization (Gronn, 2003). Not everyone in a group is a leader, and collective leadership in a group where roles are defined is acceptable (Harris, 2003). After looking at the most recent studies of effective leadership in schools, one of the most consistent findings is that the authority needs not to be dispersed within the school but in between and among people (Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, & Steinbach, 1997; Day et al., 2000). What this implies is the principals' leadership behaviors are changing within the school. As the result of networking and building partnerships organizational boundaries are changing and redefining current leadership practices (Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004). Collaboration opens the possibility for all teachers to become leaders and to be able to create changes for school improvement. Leithwood (2006) determined that a principal who actually uses the distributed leadership approach engage staff in activities such as: setting the school mission, establishing professional development initiatives, redesigning the organization, and managing instruction. Such leadership functions can have a correlation to the success of the school community.

Principals play a key role in distributed leadership and defining leadership within their schools. Distributed leadership is not something 'done' by an individual 'to' others, or a set of individual actions through which people contribute to a group or organization. Distributed leadership is a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual

action. (Bennett et al. 2003). Harris and Spillane (2008) share that it is the interactions that the leaders foster rather than their actions. A principal's job is no longer simply managerial, moreover, principals should focus on building teams that include teachers, support staff and even student leaders.

Harris and Spillane (2008) and Spillane (2005) point out that leadership is no longer viewed solely on the principal's skill and knowledge, but it is viewed as the interactions between people and their situations. As the result of the interactions leadership Spillane (2008) contends that leadership happens in a variety of ways throughout the school. Distributed leadership is centered in the interactions between people. "Depending on the particular leadership task, school leaders' knowledge and expertise may be best explored at the group or collective level rather than at the individual leaders' level" (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001, p.25). Hopes that the transformation of schools lie with exceptional leaders have proved both unrealistic and unsustainable. The idea of leadership as distributed across multiple people and situations has proven to be a more useful framework for understanding the realities of schools and how they might be improved. However, empirical work on how leadership is distributed within more or less successful schools is rare.

There are contrasting views about distributed leadership which touch upon the surface challenges and tensions. "Distributed leadership is a perspective; a conceptual or diagnostic tool for thinking about school leadership" (Spillane, 2005, p. 149). It is not a program that can be bought nor is there a book to follow. It is a framework by which principals build capacity within a building to ultimately enhance student success. Distributed leadership is challenging work and principals who do not begin here will have difficulty building capacity (Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009). Distributed leadership spreads decision making across the school

where all parties are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the decision making process (Fullen, 2002). Distributed leadership is an organizational structure that has taken shape in the form of leadership teams and team structures (Dufour, 1997; Spillane, 2005).

Distributed leadership is a framework with which to study leadership practice. It is not a prescription for how to lead well, rather a way of looking at leadership practice. The conceptual foundation for this study into the analysis of distributed leadership, grounded in the belief of the contributions, knowledge, and expertise of a network of individuals, should be created to ultimately create process of instructional improvement. The purpose of my work is to explore principal perceptions of distributed leadership. Through the empirical work that uses the distributed leadership framework, my findings will help to better understand the impact that distributed leadership has on school leadership. With these findings, *support* and training can be created to support school leaders and aspiring school leaders. The responsibility of leader should not fall on one person; moreover, it is the interactions of leaders, followers, and elements of the situation.

Distributed Leadership Practice

The diagram below (Figure 1: *Distributed Leadership Practice*) depicts the three basic factors that shape leadership practices within the distributed leadership framework. The research illustrates interrelating actions/ situations that took place in schools; among two or more individuals is where leadership was distributed (Leithwood et al., 2007; Presthus, 2006; Spillane, 2006). Leaders are constantly being influenced by internal and external factors. While the principal of a school is clearly a leader, there are many other individuals who take on leadership roles. Situations and external factors are also a main concept within the distributed leadership framework. The term “situation” refers to the day-to-day experiences and tasks completed by

the actors as they used and incorporated the various artifacts. Such experiences could include such tasks as; monitoring the instruction of a specific grade level or subject matter, helping create the school vision, or presenting professional development. The term artifact refers to the intangible cultural principles. Examples of such artifacts include establishing the school's vision, goals, and expectations (Spillane, 2007). Tangible artifacts also are a part of cycle. The artifacts could include a variety of instructional tools. The manner in which educators utilize various or instructional tools such as curriculum guides, state standards, grade level meeting agendas, student assessment data, or observation feedback forms vary.

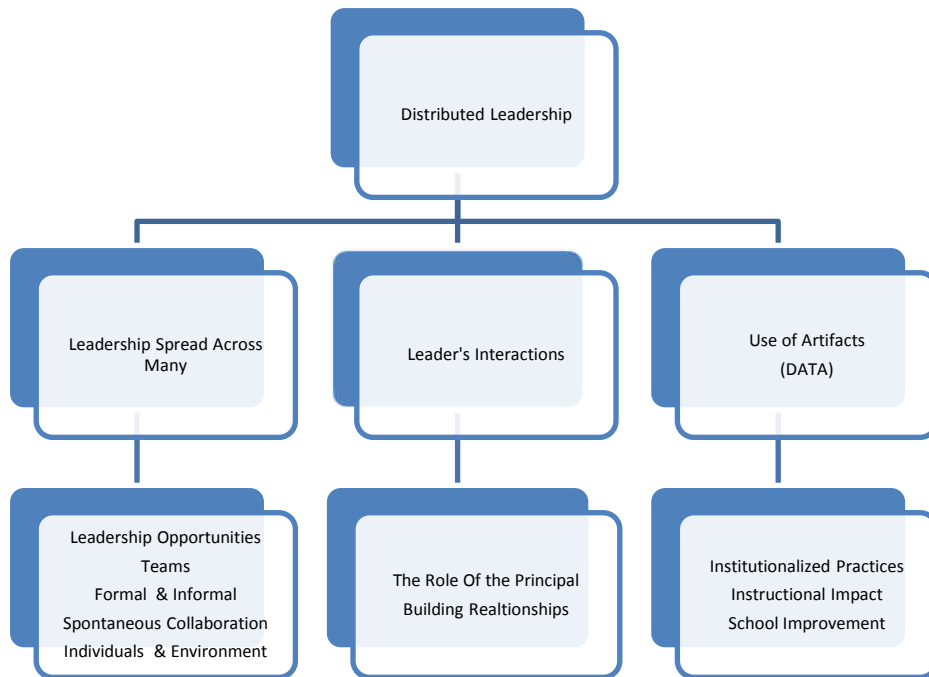
To study leadership practice, one has to study the interplay between leaders, followers, and elements of the situation. The process of change required to move to the next levels of reform will be incredibly demanding. Distributed leadership focuses on how the leader and their followers work together to solve a problem or achieve a goal. Ultimately, when distributed leadership becomes a part of the school's operating practice, the principal has a clear understanding of which tasks should be distributed, who should participate in the distribution, and the use of artifacts will guide the schools' instructional program. What are needed are not a few good leaders, but large numbers to make the extraordinary efforts are required (Fullan, 2003).

Figure 1: *Distributed Leadership Practice*



Figure 2: *Tenants of Distributed Leadership*

The following figure the three main areas that this literature review will explore; leadership spread across many, leader’s interactions, and the use of artifacts. Each of the three areas is then followed by sub topics that will each be addressed in the literature review.



Leadership Spread across Many People

The diagram below depicts three main areas from which leadership is spread. The three main areas include; leadership opportunities, teams, and the individuals and environment.



Leadership Opportunities

The principal is the initiator behind the distribution of leadership in Gronn's (2002) framework, and builds on seasoned staff with the knowledge about the school and/or instructional practices. Gronn refers to this as a multiple leadership approach, or an additive approach, which spreads the leadership among or across many members of the school. Gronn's (2002) philosophy of "concertive action" fosters an environment where people work together for the good of the organization, rather than work in isolation. Expertise becomes greater as the result of working in concert with each other. Three forms of concertive action can take place when distributed leadership occurs; spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations, and institutionalized practice. Spontaneous collaboration is when more than one staff member works with another staff member or team to complete a task or solve a problem. This is when someone other than the principal can bring expertise to the table and often occurs unplanned. Intuitive working relations happen when staff members collaborate to solve a problem or complete a task without being asked by the principal. The third concertive action is institutionalized practice which in a school setting often refers to grade levels, schedules, and staff meetings. These are formal of the "formal structures" of the school.

Teams

“Leadership practice takes shape in the interactions of people and their situations, rather than from the actions of an individual leader” (Spillane, 2005, p.3). A network of leaders should be created in order to create successful change (Watson & Scribner’s, 2007). They contend the leaders are both formal and informal in their roles, and they perform a variety of functions that are spread across the organization. With such a network, all members offer a unique perspective and serve as experts in their own rights. No longer is it about just the principal. According to Gronn (2000), Distributed Leadership Theory suggests the principal should build leadership throughout the organization to include individuals and teams. Principals set the tone to foster practices within the school that collaboration is paramount. With distributed leadership, the leadership is no longer central and supports the notion that everyone can demonstrate leadership with the organization (Gronn, 2003). Not everyone in a group is a leader, and collective leadership in a group where roles are defined is acceptable (Harris, 2003). After looking at the most recent studies of effective leadership in schools, one of the most consistent findings is that authority needs not to be dispersed within the school but between and among people (Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, & Steinbach, 1997; Day, et al., 2000). What this implies is the principals’ leadership behaviors are changing within the school since the growth of collaboration, networking and partnerships means that organizational boundaries are changing and redefining leadership is taking place (Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004). It opens the possibility for all teachers to become leaders and to be able to create changes for school improvement. Leithwood (2006) determined that principal who actually uses the distributed leadership approach engage staff in behaviors such things as: setting the school mission, establishing professional development initiatives, redesigning the organization, and managing instruction. Such leadership functions are an important part of the success of the school community.

Spillane (2007) postulates the way in which schools manage to create highly effective collaborative environments differ from school to school. He shares the influence teachers have over their colleagues on their work can be very powerful. "The days of the principal as the lone instructional leaders are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other educators" (Elmore, 2002, p. 27.) In what Spillane calls the "leader plus" aspect, he recognizes that leadership roles are played by multiple individuals, whether in formal or informal positions. "People in formally designated positions and those without any such designations can and do take responsibility for leading and managing in the schoolhouse" (Spillane and Diamond 2007 p.7). Spillane's distributed leadership perspective is neither a top-down nor a bottom-up approach, but recognizes that different people play leadership roles at different times. Spillane's theory of distributed leadership moves beyond individual agency and the study of what leaders know and do to explore how leaders think and act in situations which leads to the "evolution of a leadership practice that is potentially more than the sum of each individual's practice" (Spillane et. al 2001 p.25). In using distributed cognition and Activity Theory as the basis for his study of leadership practices, he identifies the social context as an integral component. He identifies "the tasks, actors, actions and interactions of school leadership as they unfold together in the daily life of the school" as contributing factors to distributed leadership in schools (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond 2001. p.23.) He highlights not only the interaction between people, but the interdependence between the people and their context. "The interdependence of the individual and the environment shows how human activity as distributed in the interactive web of actors, artifacts and the situation is the appropriate unit of analysis for studying practice" (Spillane et al 2001 p.23). In the school context this interdependence exists

between the teacher, the students they teach, their subject department and the overall school culture and context.

There have been studies on the positive implications that distributed leadership can have on teacher teams, and the effectiveness that such teams can have on overall team performance. Leithwood et al. (1997) studied distributed leadership as it related to the nature of teacher teams' collective learning and the conditions which influenced such learning. In their large sample size qualitative study they used semi-structured group interviews to collect data on six teacher teams in five secondary schools in a Canadian province. The researchers also used an eleven item questionnaire to survey forty-eight people. Once the interviews were conducted, the researchers placed the participants in two categories- high potential and low potential. Participants who shared culture, beliefs and a purpose were classified as high potential teams. Such participants shared that they learned from each other and thus built their team capacity. Leithwood et al. (1997) found that distributed leadership can make a significant difference to a team's learning, and they described that conditions did not have to be positive for team learning or problem solving to occur. One thing that this study made evident was leaders can emerge from discourse and conflict; new ideas and new perspectives can also be gained. The researchers pointed out how there needs to be a balance between generating diversity and building consensus in order to promote collective learning. As Leithwood et al. (1997) concluded their findings, it was noted that the internal validity was questionable since they reported that two of the low potential teams began to work through constraints during the interview process that the team members were unable to solve during the observed team meeting.

A second group of researchers, Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers (2007) also looked closely at how distributed leadership can affect teacher teams within the context of a school. The

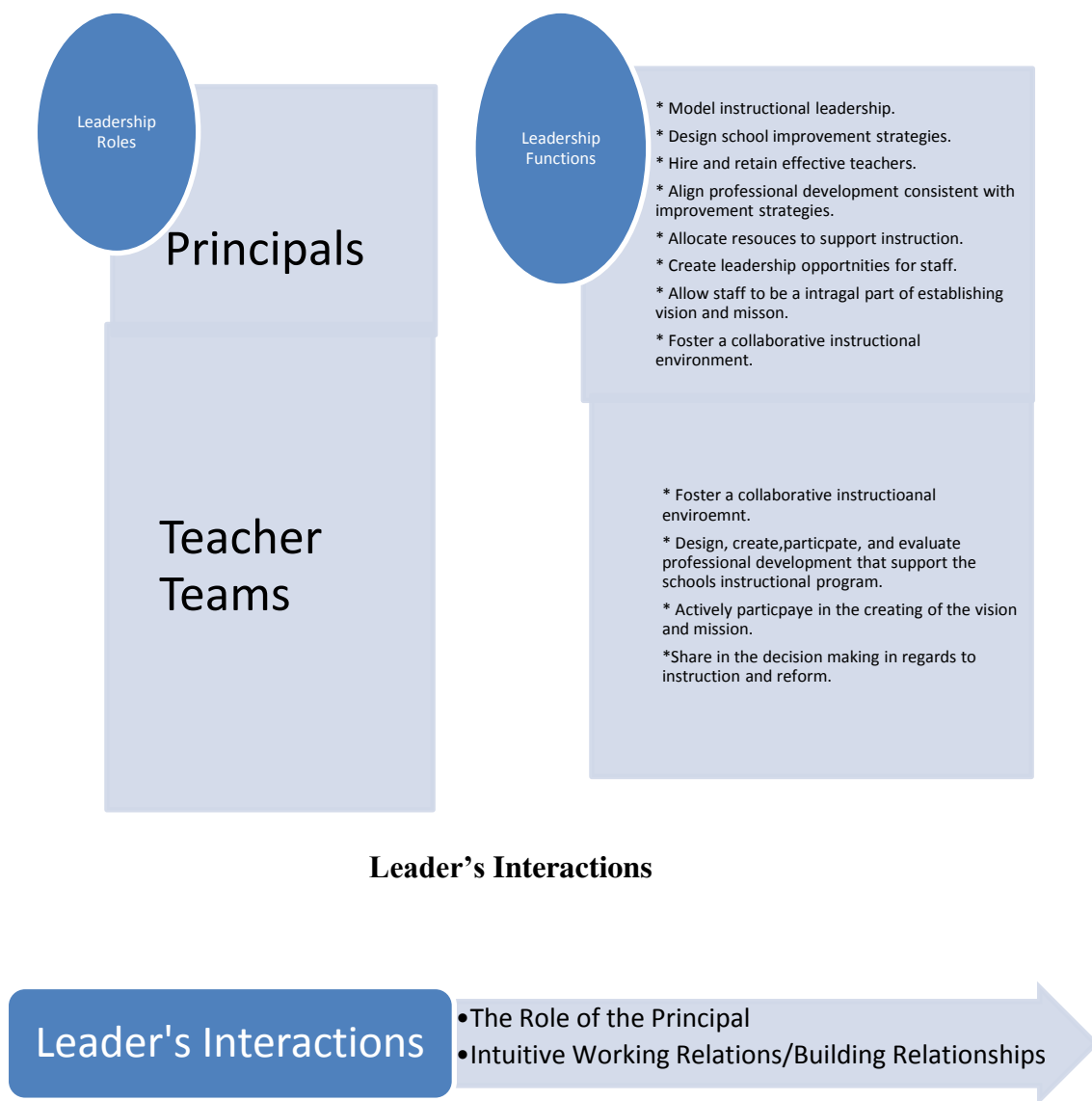
researchers conducted an ethnographic case study in which they observed two teacher teams in a high school located in a mid-sized Missouri community. The researchers gathered data as they collected using field notes, tape recordings and video recordings during 18 team meetings over a 16-week semester. One thing that the researchers clearly established was that the perceived purpose and autonomy within teacher teams can create differing contexts for the social distribution of leadership. They also discovered that the data from meetings showed how purpose and autonomy shape the pattern of active or passive discourse that characterized the interaction of the team members. One area that Scribner et al. (2007) focused on was the interactions between individuals on teams that they called *socially distributed leadership*. They noted that such interactions had not been explored prior to their study. Even though their study was small in size, it yielded a better understanding about distributed leadership as it relates to team dynamics. It should be noted that generalizing their finding was difficult, again due much in part to the small sample size. In conclusion, it should be noted that the two teams that were selected for this study had different purposes which contributed to their effectiveness. The team that was given the more challenging problem was perceived to be less successful than the other. Thus causing the reader to interpret the comparison of the two teams that Scribner et al. (2007) studied.

The exploration of teacher teams provided a lens through which to understand how one aspect of leadership is distributed among multiple individuals. The extent to which the teams were viewed as successful was determined by a clearly communicated vision or purpose, shared norms, and how they embraced divergent thinking. Since the qualitative studies presented were mainly descriptive and contained various limitations, looking at the research together there were

clearly established patterns that suggest distributed leadership can positively influence the effectiveness of teacher teams.

Figure 3: Leadership Roles and Leadership Functions

The chart below illustrates the leadership roles and the leadership functions of the school principal and member of the teacher teams. The intention of the visual is to show the importance of functions the principal and teacher teams. These functions listed will be in the subsequent pages.



The Role of the Principal

Leadership exists at all levels and must be cultivated in order to develop schools as learning organizations (Senge, 2007). Leaders cannot effectively lead alone (Angelle, 2010; Drago-Severson, 2009; Elmore, 2000; Mangin, 2005; Spillane et al., 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007a; Taylor, 2008). Effective leaders embrace a collaborative culture and delegate both responsibility and authority (Bennett et al., 2003; Copland, 2003). They realize that they must develop the leadership of others in the building by giving them opportunities to learn and grow through the process of leading. Allowing others to be empowered requires the leader to have a willingness to relinquish their own power. The job of administrative leaders is primarily enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization (Elmore, 2002).

“Successful administrators develop teacher’s innate leadership talents as they —move beyond a hierarchical and authoritarian structure of leadership” (Ellison & Hayes, 2009, p. 79).

Employing a distributed leadership perspective, administrators identify the natural leaders within their schools, organizing people according to their skills, roles, and knowledge to work towards a common goal to improve teaching and learning (Elmore, 2000).

Formal leaders can affect real change. New York City’s District 2 Superintendent Anthony Alvarado’s district made tremendous student achievement advances in the 1990’s because he developed a shared purpose among leaders and teachers, and he communicated clearly defined expectations, then dispersed power through the distribution of leadership (Elmore & Burney, 1999). Effective leaders develop a network of distributed leadership, and then put in accountability systems and regularly monitor the change being instituted (Camburn, Kimball, & Lowenhaupt, 2008; Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009).

It is important to note that even though distributed leadership consists of a network of leadership collaborators, it still requires at least one person at the helm, “steering the organization in a forward motion to prevent teachers from going in circles” (Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, Sacks, et al., 2009, p. 240). Keep in mind that leaders influence the actions of followers, and followers also influence the leaders’ actions as they choose whether or not to follow the leader (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). As effective leaders distribute leadership, they also monitor leadership activities in order to support teachers’ efforts to improve classroom instruction and student learning. This creates the fine line that leaders must walk in trying to create balance between improved student achievement and the need to facilitate the leadership of others.

Intuitive Working Relations/ Building Relationships

Spillane’s theory (2006) of distributed leadership is an exploration of leadership as practice, encompassing a number of key features. The first feature is that leadership is enacted by multiple players that does not start at the top and only include the principals. It becomes a practice that occurs through people interacting with each other and co-leading in different ways. There is no one person in charge, but there is interdependence between leaders, followers, and situations. The leaders influence followers and help shape their practice, especially in relation to teaching and learning. The distributed leadership perspective is a framework that can be used to focus on teaching and learning and plan for improvement. “Distributed leadership is first and foremost about practice rather than leaders, leadership roles, or leadership functions” (Spillane, 2005, p.3). Spillane’s ongoing research in schools suggest that the work of leading instruction is distributed among multiple leaders including the principal, assistant principal, teacher leaders and regular classroom teachers, and other specialists in the school.

The relationship between transformational and distributed leadership is commonly confused or mis-used. Keeping in mind that both types of leadership involve mobilizing personnel to take on the tasks of improving instruction (Leithwood et al. 1999, Spillane et al. 2004). What comes into question is whether one is a sub-set of the other, and if so which is a sub-set of which. Spillane et al. (2004) considers leadership in schools to be mostly distributed (which may or may not be transformational), whereas, Leithwood and Jantzi's (1999) analysis of transformational leadership lists distributed leadership as one of many components.

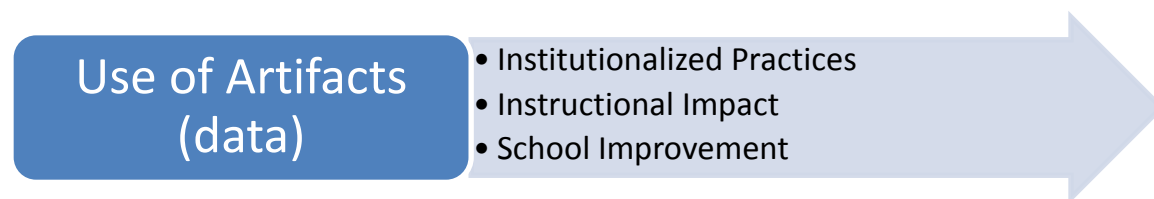
A distributed leadership perspective is not a recipe or a blueprint for practice, it is a framework/theory for focusing diagnostic work and a guide to help us design for improving practice. It is about practice and improvement. This changes the manner in which principals interact with their staff from a dictatorship to that of engagement through the practice of leading and managing teaching and learning. School staffs become key agents in diagnosing and designing work for improvement (Spillane 2008).

Spillane also presents that the distributed leadership framework is predicated on a ready and willing group of followers waiting to assume leadership responsibilities. This is not always the case in schools. Some buildings do not have staff members who are capable or competent to take on added leadership responsibilities, thus leading to inappropriate distribution of leadership. Spillane (2005), also theorizes that a contextual misunderstanding may exist which could lead a principal to believe he or she is distributing leadership when he or she may indeed be simply delegating, which will not build capacity. There is a lack of evidence that distributed leadership alone provides direct causal influence on school attainment levels, suggesting that distributed leadership is a fad and nothing more than good leadership (Hartley, 2007). Principals must distribute or share leadership in order to build capacity.

The principal is in a critical position to influence the success of distributed leadership and its impact on teaching and learning at the building level (Murphy et al., 2009). It is not an easy task or something a principal can do overnight. “For principals trained in top-down approaches to leading schools, for example, the distribution of leadership is likely to necessitate a relinquishing of some control to enable others to assume new power” (Copland, 2003, p.378). It is possible that distributed leadership could support the abuse of power (Maxcy and Nguyen 2006 in Mayrowetz 2008 p.429). One way can occur when a teacher or teachers take it upon themselves to make decisions on their own without soliciting feedback from their team.

Instructional Impact = School Improvement

The use of data has become a part of the school improvement process. The next section will look at the research on how the use of artifacts (data) has an impact on institutionalized practices, instruction, and school improvement as depicted in the graphic below.



“Powerful leadership is distributed because the work of instructional improvement is distributed” (Elmore, 2003). Effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000). “The days of the principal as the lone instructional leaders are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other educators (Elmore, 2000; Lambert, 1998; Lambert et al.,1995; Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent & Richert, 1997; Olson, 2000; Poplin, 1994;Spillane, Halverson & Diamond,

2001).” Spillane states that the distributed perspective can be used as an analytical tool to frame research on school leadership and management, and as a diagnostic tool for practitioners to examine and improve their practice (Spillane 2007). “Concertive action” fosters an environment where people are working together for the good of the organization, rather than work in isolation (Gronn, 2002.)

Elmore’s work advanced the work of both Spillane and Gronn. His work is based off of the standards- movement and connects the work of distributed leadership to school improvement and instructional improvement. As the result of new standards, Elmore’s work (2000) layers principles of Spillane and Gronn’s work focusing on the principal to provide guidance and direction to the experts in the building. The “experts” then focus on what is needed to move the school forward.

Elmore (2000) explains that a distributed leadership model extends the responsibility for leadership beyond the individual and weaves it into the relationships and interactions of multiple stakeholders. Elmore (2000) argues the problem of scaling up school improvement, whether it is in a school or a school system, is one of capacity building and specialization. Building a broad base of capacity is not possible if control is limited to a few individuals. Elmore contends in order for failure not to occur there must be the broader distribution of leadership. Educational leadership moves beyond the mere management of a school to the larger charge of providing guidance and direction for instructional improvement (Elmore, 2000, p. 13). In other words, the thinking and learning that occurs within an organization is greatly influenced by the interactions of its people within the organization’s social framework and cultural environment.

School Improvement

Within the past fifteen years, research has increasingly linked leadership to student achievement. Empirical linkage between leadership and achievement has thrust instruction to the forefront of the job of principal. This is in direct opposition to the past view of the principals' role as the lead manager of the building. Principal leadership is clearly of critical importance in schools, as highlighted by the conceptual shift in the role of the principal. Marzano et al. (2005) performed a meta-analysis examining 69 studies over 35 years of research involving 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers and the results indicate that "school leadership has a substantial effect on student achievement and provides guidance for experienced and aspiring administrators alike"(p.12). Leadership is second only to teaching on its direct impact on student learning (Marzano et al.; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). New accountability standards have also shifted the focus from principals as managers to that of instructional leaders. Spillane (2004) contends that principals who effectively communicates the school objectives with clear outcomes while maintaining high expectations for staff performance are far more effective than managers of schools.

Copland (2003: 376) defines leadership as a set of functions or qualities shared across a much broader segment of the school community that encompasses administrators, teachers and other professionals and community members both internal and external to the school. Such an approach imposes the need for school communities to create and sustain broadly *distributed* leadership systems, processes and capacities. "Decisions about who leads and who follows are dictated by the task or problem situation, not necessarily by where one sits in the hierarchy" (Copland 2003: 378).

A potential drawback of distributed leadership is how it can actually work against the organizational structure that the principal may be trying to create. Spillane is particularly

mindful of how organizational structures can isolate teachers in their classrooms. Teachers can become overstressed by shared decision-making, and the benefits of participation do not necessarily equate to better teaching practice or to the benefit of the school as a whole, especially if teachers' and organizational goals are not well aligned (Mayrowetz 2008 p.429). This argument ties directly to a major component of Spillane's work that indicates that leadership is embedded in the vision of improving teaching and learning. Distributed leadership is a framework for focusing work to guide and to help design practices for improvement and it is NOT a recipe or a blueprint for just practice. Principals must engage in the practice of leading and managing teaching and learning. School staffs have to become agents in this work (Spillane 2008).

Burns, 1978; and Hatcher, 2005, criticize Spillane's assumption that principals understand how position and relationships may be used positively or negatively is not realistic. Principals, by virtue of authority and position, are "managers of organizational meaning" (Anderson, 1990, p. 43). Ignoring how principals participate "as unequal subjects" fails to make "explicit the political nature of education and how power operates to privilege, silence, and marginalize individuals" (Anderson, 1990; McIntosh, 1988; Ng, 2003, p. 214). For some leaders this shift in release of power does not come naturally. Principals can actually be barriers to distributing leadership (Barth, 2001; Hatcher, 2005) by: (a) holding tightly to power and control, (b) refraining from nurturing alternate leaders, and (c) choosing to involve only those who support their agenda. Expanding leadership across members of a school-based leadership team can complicate the development of a clear mission and sense of purpose (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). When leadership is intentionally distributed and limited, principals create conditions for "unchosen" teachers to surreptitiously lead, or for followers to influence leadership through

subtle insubordination (Burns, 1978; Hatcher, 2005). This may result directly in opposition to creating and fostering a climate of trust and collaboration. Distributed leadership has also resulted in tension and conflict between leaders who do not share common beliefs and values (Storey, 2004; Wallace, 2001). Such leadership discourse may cause a lack of clarity and uncertainty about what needs to be done to improve the school or organization (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Spillane's (2006) distributed framework gives minimal attention to the roles, responsibilities or circumstances under which the principal must exercise leadership. In the age of accountability coming from all levels (federal, state and local) to simply ignore the legislation and policies that define the role of the principal, and hold principals accountable for their actions and school-based results, would in all actuality pose significant ethical, professional and organizational concerns.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Principals should distribute leadership in a school building to improve teaching and learning (Copeland, 2003; Elmore, 2004; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009; Spillane, 2005, 2006, and 2010). Currently there is a gap in the research that explores how leaders share leadership with faculty to improve student achievement and overall school effectiveness. This study sought to address that gap in the literature. Within this chapter I discuss a research design used in this study to examine how school leaders employ or do not employ distributed leadership in their schools. The problem, purpose, research questions, population and sample, instrumentation, research design, data collection, researcher's role, and analysis procedures will be discussed.

Problem

Leaders significantly impact overall organizational performance (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). Distributed leadership is a development in organizational leadership that promotes utilizing a fluid approach to leadership, and draws on the strengths and interests of individuals within the organization to share leadership. Researchers recognize that distributing leadership throughout an organization will support building the necessary capacity to advance initiatives to improve student achievement (Copeland, 2003; Elmore, 2004; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz & Louis, 2009; Spillane, 2005, 2006, and 2010). There have been numerous qualitative case studies and reviews that focus on leadership styles and structures for a distributed

leadership approach (Lambert, 2002; Shivers-Blackwell, 2006; Spillane, 2005, 2006, and 2010); however, there is a gap in the research that focuses on successful principal's use of distributed leadership to build leadership capacity in their school. There is limited empirical research that explores the relationship between effective principal characteristics and the use of distributed leadership. Exploring if there is a connection between effective principal attributes and the use distributed leadership will add to the body of knowledge linking these aspects together. There is little research about how the components of distributed leadership are related to the effective principals components, and if the two are related to leadership effectiveness. Evaluating to see if there is a relationship between effective principal's leadership and distributed leadership will help researchers and practitioners understand strength of relationship between the two and to determine if the two are related.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand how effective principals employ or do not employ distributed leadership in their schools. This qualitative study will explore what leadership practices current principals' use, if they exercise distributed leadership practices, and if they do, how they use those practices. The study draws from a purposeful sample of principals in public elementary schools in a southeastern state. I sought to understand if and how distributed leadership is used by effective principals in their daily school practices. The results of this study can inform future research endeavors around distributed leaders, aid leadership development and preparation efforts, and provide practical insight about which aspects of distributed leadership are most used by effective leaders.

Leadership practices were also explored. Research has been conducted on principal leadership models and frameworks (Elmore, 2002; Leithwood, Mascal, Strauss, Sacks, Memon & Yaskins, 2006), yet researchers should continue to gain an understanding of how the leadership of current successful principals impacts school culture and student success. There is current research which defines the function of the leader (Harris, 2003, Lambert, 2002), yet there is not much research surrounding documented barriers to distributed leadership. There is a clear framework for distributed leadership, but a gap in translating that model into descriptive, measureable actions. It is the intention of this research to begin to fill such gaps in the research.

Research Questions

This study is designed to address questions related to principals' perceptions around distributed leadership. The following question will be used to guide this study:

Question Do principals employ distributed leadership practices in their daily leadership activities within a school?

- a. What aspects of distributed leadership do principals employ?
- b. How are these aspects employed?
- c. Why are these aspects employed?
- d. Why are other aspects of distributed leadership not employed?
- e. If distributed leadership is not evident in a principal's approach, what strategies do a principal use?

Research Design

A qualitative research method was selected for this study as the researcher sought to understand how principals employ or do not employ distributed leadership within their

schools. Through the process of phenomenology, the researcher wanted to gain an understanding of personal experiences from the perspective of principals and members of their leadership team. In this study, as participants shared their experiences and perceptions common themes were identified.

Three purposefully selected elementary principals in a southeastern state participated in semi-structured interview sessions. A member from the two school divisions' office of accountability selected the principals for the researcher based on the research proposal that was submitted prior to the research being conducted. Interviews were offered to all members of the leadership teams at the three respective schools. Data collection methods include a semi-structured interview protocol and reflective notes. Principals and members of their school leadership team were invited to participate in an interview regarding their perceptions of distributed leadership practices and the principal's influence on distributed leadership. Each participant's name and school information is altered to protect their confidentiality.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews

The primary data method procedure was interviews in this qualitative study. Interviews are a critical way to uncover multiple facets within a case study (Stake, 1995). Over the course of my study, I formally interviewed three elementary school principals, and ten members of their leadership teams. The interviews were conducted to gather principals' perceptions of their leadership style. I conducted interviews that are semi-structured, open ended, and exploratory to gather real world experiences (Appendix A).

It was my hope to represent both male and female principals, primarily focusing on principals who serve in the elementary setting; however all three principals were females.

The formal interviews were audio recorded and all participant identifiers were removed. The interviews took place in the principal's school. Before each interview, I explained the purpose of the interview, how the results will be shared, and reassured the participants of their confidentiality. The interviews lasted anywhere from forty minutes to one hour and a half. Each interview was recorded. The interviews were transcribed from audio recordings using Dragon Software, a hired transcriptionist, and were reviewed by me and the interviewee for accuracy. As interviews were conducted two participants shared documents (Appendix B) that they utilized in leadership team meetings, grade level meetings, and mentor teacher meetings. Such documents are included as sample artifacts. The research took place over a two to three month period.

Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of my work was to seek to understand how effective principals employ or do not employ distributed leadership in their schools. Prior to the interview process, each participant signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the research. In order to be consistent with data collection, each participant was given a copy of the interview protocol before the interviews started. Demographic information was gathered from each participant before the interview took place. The demographic information consisted of the participant's current position, total number of years at their current school, total number of years in education, and gender. One way to get at a leader's perspective is to delve into the actions undertaken by that individual. Open ended

interview questions would provide a platform to gather perceptions, experiences, and an understanding of the participants.

Another second way to gain an understanding is to look at what the participants say they do. These perspectives can be classified as phenomenology. "Phenomenology is the interpretive examination of lived experience which has this methodical feature of relating the particular to the universal, part to whole, episode to totality" (van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Anything one can perceive is a phenomenon; hence, my study is informed by the phenomenological research tradition. Phenomenology revolves around experience.

In order to have a solid phenomenological study, the researcher was cognizant of interpreting perceptions (in particular the perceptions of the researcher as it is the intention to gather perceptions from the interviewees) in analyzing data, especially since interviews are the basis for this research. Often there can be a significant variance between what people say they do and what they actually do (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1996). Some people embellish their work when they talk about it. One such reason can be that there is a disconnect between what principals think they do and what they actually spend time doing. When a task becomes so ingrained in people's practice, they tend to forget to identify it in their list of day-to-day activities. Consider, for example, a principal who has acted as principal for ten years. He or she may be so accustomed to carrying out the duties of principal that, when asked in an interview to explain his or her daily leadership style, he or she will forget to mention half of what they meant to say because it is such a natural part of the way they operate. My

approach is to capture leadership practice by looking at *what they say they do* (based on interview data) by asking probing questions and getting them to expound on answers.

The role of the researcher is complex in a phenomenological study.

Hermeneutics, which is a theory of interpretation developed by early 19th century German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, can factor into the researchers interpretation of their findings. As a researcher, interpreting the findings in a fair and non-bias manner is imperative. In order to make sure that the data was analyzed and interpreted accurately a coding system was used. There is no one precise way to conduct a phenomenological study. One roadmap suggests starting with an issue or problem, examine the literature in some way related to the problem, pose questions, gather data and then analyze them, and write up the findings (Cresswell, 2007, p.41). This was the manner in which this study was conducted.

Once all of the interviews were completed and transcribed, the researcher began organize the data by common themes. This began with a number coding system of like statements. Based upon the number coding system, like categories were identified. This process was repeated three times to narrow themes. The final coding was linked to four major themes. The data was thematically coded and analyzed in order to identify principal practices that positively or negatively influence distributed leadership in a school, along with the benefits and drawbacks of such efforts. Patterns and themes in the data were identified. Such patterns and themes may include (but not be limited to); similarities, differences, and the relationships between events, activities, or people. I used a methods triangulation to check the validity and reliability from the data collected. In order to ensure the researcher's findings were accurate, each participant was given a

copy of their findings along with a transcribed copy of their interview. This process made certain that all findings were represented accurately. After, each participant completed a member-checking process to determine the accuracy of the findings. A copy of all consent forms, recorded interviews, interview transcriptions, and data from coding and analyzing themes has been maintained by the researcher. Discrepancies that were found among the interviews were also noted and are addressed in the findings.

Results of the study could assist the principal and school leaders to better understand how the principal does or does not influence distributed leadership in a school, while considering the benefits and drawbacks of these efforts as the principal tries to bring about effective change. The overall goal of the study was to see if principals employ or do not employ tenants of distributed leadership in their schools. Other participants provided insight into the ways in which distributed leadership positively and/or negatively influenced their school.

Limitations

This study sought to determine if there is a relationship between principal effectiveness and the use of distributed leadership. A limitation of this study is that some factors that influence a principal's ability to be effective are not controlled for in this study. For example, the socioeconomic status of the student population, the size (enrollment), and school resources are school factors that are not considered in this research. A second limitation could have been the levels of professional support for principals which may include; support from state, district, and school based school performance. Other support could include the number and quality of assistant principals, classroom teachers, and support staff. A third limitation could be the sample size of the

study and that the participants reflect one state. It should also be noted that while conducting the interviews at two of the schools the principal was present for some of the leads teacher interviews. The principal made sure to ask if the leads would mind if they stayed in the room or if they finished work at their desk. Even though the lead teachers said that they were fine with the principal's being present, one cannot help but wonder if the information shared was candid and completely honest. I am aware that capturing the interactions and activities of leaders was absent in my research. It should be noted that I focused on principals and members of the leadership teams'. I realize that distributed leadership is the focus of my research and understand the limitations of recording the key interactions among a variety of leaders and followers will not be evident in my findings.

Given that the sample size in this study is small (eleven people) and only focuses on three leadership teams in three elementary schools, across two school divisions, findings will be generalized to this specific population, rather than a larger population. Other limitations should include my current role as a principal in one of the divisions during this research project. Since my position is a principal, members of the leadership team that agreed to be interviewed may have been hesitant to disclose their true feelings about collaboration, especially the role that the principal played, since they knew I was a colleague of their school principal. However, being clear about the goals of the study and explaining from the outset that their individual interview responses would be confidential, helped to mitigate this issue. Participation in the study was voluntary, and the members who showed up to be interviewed were aware that participating in the interview was not required. These limitations, when taken together, have the potential to lead to further research.

Research Bias

As I conducted this research, I was a 43 year old female Caucasian doctoral candidate at Old Dominion University, Education and Foundations Department. I am currently a doctoral student and employed by Newport News Public Schools as an elementary school principal. I have 15 years of elementary administration experience in three school divisions. I understood that I have to refrain from allowing my own perceptions to influence any of the interviewees and my findings.

Conclusion

“Instead of looking to the principal alone for instructional leadership, we need to develop leadership capacity among all members of the school community. The old model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped” (Lambert, 2002, p.37). Through this qualitative study, founded in phenomenology, the researcher sought to understand if principals employ or do not employ tenants of distributed leadership. Through the sharing of experiences by the principals and members of their leadership team, their perspectives were captured. To ensure the research was conducted in a credible manner the data was collected, coded, and categorized to determine themes, patterns, and even outliers. The findings were then reviewed by participants for accuracy. Starting with the principal, the distributed leadership model emphasizes collective action, empowerment, and shared agency, which value the notion that all members of an organization can lead and that leadership should be distributed or shared (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2003; Shivers-Blackwell, 2006; Spillane, 2001;). Leadership practice involves the interactions of multiple leaders, both informal and formal (Spillane, 2005).

CHAPTER FOUR

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter 4 presents the findings for the research study. The goal of the study was to gain a better understanding of leadership styles as related to the distributed leadership framework with principals and members of their leadership team. The study documents the perceptions, experiences, and changing roles of teacher leaders and their principal in their work as a team. In this chapter I will share the context of the study, findings, and discussion.

Findings and Discussion

The qualitative findings revealed that forms of distributed leadership have been established in the three schools in this study. The findings will be interpreted and presented under the following four headings: the school principal plays a key role in supporting the school by communicating a common purpose, that distributed leadership is developed within a school climate of collaboration, the principal models leadership using tools and routines, and situational decision making results in principals making a decision.

Context

The participants for this study included three elementary principal in two school systems in a southeastern state, and a total of ten members of their school based leadership teams who volunteered to participate in the study. Principal experience ranged from less than one year to fourteen years experience as a principal. Members experiences on their school based leadership team range from one year to more than ten years. In two of the schools members of the leadership teams receive a \$2000.00 stipend to serve as leads in their school, whereas, in the

third school membership on the leadership team is not monetarily compensated. The chart below represents information about each of the participants in the study.

Name	Position	Years At Current School	Total Years in Education	Gender	# of years on the Leadership Team at Current School
Mrs. Stallion (Mustang School)	Principal	1	11	Female	1
Mustang 1	1 st grade teacher	10	23	Female	1
Mustang 2	2 nd grade teacher	2	9	Female	2
Mustang 3	4 th grade teacher	1	11	Female	1
Mrs. Nice (Dolphin School)	Principal	2	17	Female	2
Dolphin 4	Kindergarten	3	3	Male	2
Dolphin 5	Resource - PE	16	23	Female	5
Dolphin 6	2 nd grade	10	10	Female	7
Dolphin 7	4 th grade	10	10	Female	1
Mrs. Caring (Panda School)	Principal	2	24	Female	18
Panda 8	3 rd grade	2	2	Female	2
Panda 9	5 th grade	23	23	Female	9
Panda 10	4 th grade	2	12	Female	7

Site Selection

The Mustang Case. Mustang Elementary is in year four of provisional accreditation with the state. It is a Title I school in an urban school system. Mustang Elementary serves about 450 students. As the result of declining student achievement, high staff turnover, and poor building moral, a new principal and assistant principal were placed in the school for this academic year.

Mrs. Stallion brings a variety of educational experiences to Mustang Elementary. Mrs. Stallion has served as a classroom teacher, teacher mentor, classroom coach, lead teacher and assistant principal prior to becoming a principal. Most recently, Mrs. Stallion served as an assistant principal in a school that was not meeting state standards. She shared that she is excited to be in her first year as principal and attributes her previous success to the vast experiences that her former administrator provided. Mrs. Stallion shared a bit about her philosophy;

I guess being in the classroom and having different experiences with different types of students. I guess that even before I became a teacher I kind of had my penciled philosophy written down. But actually being in the classroom and working with kids I would say that my philosophy has changed and evolved throughout the years, so throughout the experience and seeing kids engaged in things and engaged in my lessons. I guess trying to tailor their love for learning based on what I can provide to them, so I guess it was always ongoing. My biggest philosophy is that all kids can learn no matter what and it is my job to be able to provide them those experiences so that they can learn. So I guess that has kind of been the backbone of what my philosophy of education is, but throughout the years I have kind of changed it to meet the needs of my kids. I too had wonderful mentors that I would always look up to and say, "I want to do that when I grow up." I am again back to that whole global piece. I like to make an impact in my own classroom and I thought as a classroom teacher I was making a huge impact. I wanted to broaden my impact in other areas. I wanted to make larger impact in my instructional knowledge and just wanted to broaden my experiences to affect a larger population. That has led me to my current position.

Mrs. Stallion selected her leadership team over the summer and it consists of one grade level lead K-5, a reading specialist, two interventionist, a family engagement specialist, a Positive Behavioral Intervention Support specialist, a resource lead, a lead that represents special education, and both the assistant principal and principal. Mrs. Stallion sought input from central office staff in the staff selection of her first leadership team. Mrs. Stallion shared that she spent much of her summer months combing through data and meeting with members of the staff. She used the information gathered as the basis for the first leadership team meeting (Appendix B).

The three members of the Mustang leadership team who participated in the interviews all echoed the benefits of having a leader who provides a platform built upon shared decision making. Mustang 1 has been a teacher at Mustang Elementary for ten years, and she currently serves as team lead for the first grade team. She has been an educator in this division for a total of twenty three years, working at two other schools in the division. This is her first year on the leadership team and she expressed she was excited to be on the team with new leadership. Mustang 1 was asked to be on the leadership team when she met with the new principal over the summer. She viewed this as a great opportunity.

Mustang 2, the second great team lead, is serving in her second year at Mustang Elementary and is in her ninth year teaching. She has taught second to fourth grade during her teaching tenure. This is also her second year on the leadership team. Mustang 2 shared that she has a degree in Administration and Supervision and she has always been interested in leadership. According to Mustang 2 she loves to be a part of the decision making process and she views herself as a “student of the principal, always eager to learn.”

The third member of the lead team who was interviewed was Mustang 3. Mustang 3 has just returned to education after having taken the past five years off to be a stay at home mom.

She had previously taught in the division for eleven years and had worked with Mrs. Stallion when they were teachers. Mustang 3 is a fourth grade teacher and team lead. She shared that she was excited to be a part of the leadership team because she wants proactive and share strategies that will help other teachers be successful.

The Dolphin Case. Dolphin Elementary is a Magnet Elementary School in an urban school district in the Tidewater area of Virginia. The student population ranges from 425-450 students and about thirty percent of the school is classified as economically disadvantaged. The principal at Dolphin Elementary School is in her second year as principal at this school. She served in the central office prior to coming to Dolphin Elementary. It was shared that the principal at Dolphin Elementary had been hand-picked to go to Dolphin last year in the effort to boost what was a “dying” magnet program. Before Mrs. Nice arrived at Dolphin Elementary, the student population had dwindled and students were not applying to attend the magnet program. Mrs. Nice, building principal, shared she knew right off the bat that she had to revitalize the magnet program in order to attract students. This was a task she did not want to go about alone. She indicated she needed staff, who had been vetted in the school, to share input as to why they thought the school was not making academic progress, and student achievement and enrollment has shown a steady decline. Mrs. Nice shared that after her first year serving as principal fifteen staff members left Dolphin Elementary for various reasons; however, this has allowed her to hire new staff that are in line with her vision, mission, and philosophy. (The staff is made up of 36 total staff.) This year, staff had to apply and be interviewed to be a part of the leadership team. There are a total of twelve members of the team. Both the principal and assistant principal serve on the team, as well as a lead from K-5, a resource lead, a special education lead, a reading specialist, and the bus coordinator.

Four lead teachers from Dolphin Elementary agreed to participate in the interview. They ranged in experience from three years to over twenty five years. Three of the four members interviewed had served on the leadership team for many years. One member was in her first year on the leadership team. The members represented PE, kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 4. The members of the Dolphin leadership team all shared that the principal was open, collaborative, yet she set a tone of high academic and professional expectations.

Dolphin 4, the kindergarten lead has been for three years all at Dolphin, where he has been team lead for the last two years. He shared that he approaches both his role as a teacher and a member of the lead team from the social emotional learning arena. Dolphin 4 is drawn to being able to build kids up daily, providing the structure, and honoring them as individuals, but has to balance that with his love for teaching reading. He is drawn to the leadership team because he really likes to be collaborative. He likes talking to teachers and sharing ideas, all of which help their students grow.

Dolphin 5 has been an educator for over twenty five years and represents the resource team on the school leadership team. Dolphin 5 has taught kindergarten and first grade the majority of her teaching career, and had only recently become a PE teacher. She shared that she is getting toward the end of her career and wants to pay it forward and see the leadership team as a great way to do so. Clear and open communication is the biggest factor that Dolphin 5 wants to contribute and take away from being on the leadership team.

Dolphin 6 represents the second grade team and has taught at Dolphin for ten years. She is very goal orientated and pointed out that she keeps the lead team on task with the agendas and following the time lines. She has learned that she must pick her battles as she views herself as a real perfectionist.

Dolphin 7 a is fourth grade teacher who has also taught for ten years. This is her first year on the leadership team, and she shared that she brings a broad perspective to the team as she has taught kindergarten, third, fourth and fifth grade. Dolphin 7 stated that she believes communication is the pinnacle for all that occurs in the school. Even though this is so important the communication on her grade level team is a challenge.

The Panda Case. Panda Elementary school is a Title I school in the Tidewater Region of Virginia. It serves approximately 500 students, but should be noted that it has a very transient population. About fifteen percent of the students are English Language Learners. The school is accredited with warning by the state because they did not show adequate yearly progress in reading. The principal, Mrs. Caring, is in her second year at Panda Elementary. She was placed at the school by the Executive Directors because she has a proven track record as a principal in the division for increasing student achievement. Mrs. Caring, shared that it is her philosophy that shapes the manner from which she leads:

My personal leadership philosophy is you are only as strong as your weakest link and I work really hard to build everyone up. I start always start each year with teambuilding. We build professional learning communities and I don't actually ever say the words professional learning communities. We simply talk about doing what is best for students and carefully look at data. It's funny because I actually had some teachers attend a professional conference and they came back and said to me did you realize that what we are doing. I reiterated to them it's not just about the name it's about the lifestyle of the way we do our work. That is the beauty, when you know what you are doing is successful when your team is on board with your vision and you did not have to use the lasts lingo to get them there.

Panda 8 is in her second year teaching and has taught third grade both years. She shared that doing what is best for kids is what drives her work every day. She feels it is her job to figure whatever it takes to meet the needs of her students. Panda 8 describes herself as a good middle man and has loved taking on leadership roles all her life.

Panda 9 has taught at Panda Elementary for twenty years and has been a team lead for the past nine years. She has taught every grade except first and is currently teaching fifth grade. One thing Panda 9 shared that makes her an interesting addition to the leadership team is that she does not like to “tell people what to do.” She view herself as a very much a team player and a control freak.

Panda 10 is a fourth grade teacher who has taught for twelve years. She has taught fourth and fifth grade and has been a lead teacher for seven years. Panda 10 shared how she “followed” Mrs. Caring from her previous school. The words she used to describe why she followed her principal were; supportive, all about relationship, not a micro- manager but facilitator, and the fact that she recognizes the need for autonomy and she gives that to her teachers. Panda 10 is all about hands on learning and she revealed that she is confident in her leadership, strong at her craft, and loves to get and share opinions.

FINDINGS

Evidence of distributed leadership was found within each of the three study sites. However, findings also revealed distributed leadership was not employed in certain situations and, at times, faculty recognized the need for more autonomy. The following four themes emerged after an analysis of the data: the school principal plays a key role in supporting the school by communicating a common purpose, that distributed leadership is developed within a

school climate of collaboration, the principal models leadership using tools and routines, and situational decision making: principals making the call.

Communicating a Common Purpose

The lead teachers across all three schools shared there was a sense of community at each of their school sites, and they each discussed a sense of shared purpose for their work.

According to the teacher interviewees, they perceived all stakeholders play an important part in the overall success of the school; increased student academic performance. Panda 10 used the analogy that as a staff they were “all on the same train that left the one station, headed in one direction.” The direction that was referenced was full accountability with the state. In order for this collective sense of community to be experienced across all three study sites, it became apparent that communication – and effective utilization of communication practices by both leaders and the leadership team – was essential and a core bind that tied those groups together.

Every participant discussed communication as central glue that connected colleagues and brought cohesiveness to their purpose and mission as educators; however, it was shared that communication can also cause uneasiness. Effective communication, as evidenced through the interviews, manifested in many different ways. Three subthemes emerged around communicating a common purpose. The three subthemes included: communication about a clear vision, communication about core purpose of increased student achievement, and communication about roles. Each subtheme will be explored in the following paragraphs.

Communication About School Vision

All three principals discussed that establishing a school wide vision was one of the first tasks that the leadership team was responsible for creating. They all shared that accountability

and school accreditation were the drivers behind the vision. They viewed this accountability as the cornerstone from which the daily operations occurred. The ultimate outcome for the schools was increased student achievement which is embedded into the schools' vision.

Several leads at Mustang Elementary discussed the sense of urgency they felt as they created their vision. Creating a solid instructional focus, which was attainable and manageable, while moving the school out of improvement certainly was the center of creating their vision. As the principal, Mrs. Stallion discussed;

The purpose of the leadership team is to get us out of improvement. One thing they did last year, we know there were so many tasks (on the school learning plan) that we could do and we could waste our efforts on fifty million tasks that the school need improvement in. I think one of the things that have made us so successful this year is we kind of have that "laser focus" on two or three things. We have our goals in front of us, our four major goals, and everything that we do goes back to those four goals. We are not going and picking something else to do. We have identified our needs as far as professional development, the discussions in CLT meetings are instructionally focused on students, our school leadership team meetings are productive and data driven; everything goes back to those four focus areas. We have to be in order to move us in the right direction. Again a lot of time is spent looking at our school improvement plan but a huge part of time is also spent looking at our professional development and really making sure that what we have upcoming focuses back on the four focus areas. A large amount of the time is spent talking to the leadership team on what I think and what they think the school needs and moving forward in those areas. I'm in classrooms; however, they know their team. They live and breathe their team; they know what their team needs. So really

allowing them to have feedback and give the feedback on what we think we need in each area. That is the majority of the time of our school improvement team meetings entail all going back to our four instructional goals/ tasks.

Mrs. Caring also expressed the importance of having a clear vision for her school. She discussed;

Even though this is my second year at Panda, I knew it was very important to start the year off going over the school vision. This was done first with my leadership team, and then we shared it with the staff on the very first day back. The vision did not change from last year; however, I knew it was important to revisit it and make new folks aware. We want to start with the end in mind. My leads know that all decisions we make together must be in support of our vision, and as a school that is still in need of instructional improvement, I don't think we should be constantly changing what is our focus. We are not performing to the degree that the division and the state want so we have to keep our focus and tie it in to our daily work, our school vision.

Mrs. Nice did not have the same type of urgency as the other two principals did as she spoke of accreditation. Dolphin Elementary has met standards and is fully accredited by the state; however, she did speak of the need to keep performing at high standards. Mrs. Nice shared quite a bit about her personal leadership perspective;

I have watched a lot of people fail miserably in their leadership role. There are a couple of pieces that I really took away that really have shaped my own leadership style and one is being smart. Smart is something that as a leader you kind of have to hide and just give little bits and pieces of it. You need them to know you are smart but it doesn't matter that you are smarter than anyone because that doesn't necessarily mean that anybody is going to listen to you. So how do you give the competent stance of "I know what I am doing"

but allow them to be smart too? Because when they are not feeling like they are smart they wait for you to tell them everything to do and you need to have them grow in the investment of their doing. The other thing is distributed leadership. One of the readings I did on that just made so much sense. Everybody needs to be invested and it's just not the act of sitting at a table together, but if you think about substitute lesson plans or one person writing what the tasks are for six. When I write my thinking in my mind makes perfect sense but the way that piece is going to be implemented or understood is going to be very different by every person that looks at it. So the only way to get past that is that everybody has some input in the development of it and that is really my view of the leadership team and running the school in general. I try very hard not to come to the table with a decision unless I am forced to do so. But putting the problem on the table and allowing everyone to pitch in. I read a quote one time that stuck with me that said, "If you allow them to determine what needs to be done, they won't rest until it is." So I can tell you there is a problem or I can help you find the problem and then ask you to help me solve it.

As state accountability demands increase each year, all three principals understand in order to continue to show growth they must establish a clear vision. Whether it was to get their school out of improvement with the state or make sure that they were meeting the needs of their school magnet program, Mrs. Nice, Mrs. Caring and Mrs. Stallion shared how it was to have a clear school vision. Interestingly enough, none of the three specifically shared what their school vision states.

Communication about a Core Purpose of Increased Student Achievement

Just as all three principals shared the importance of a school vision, their leads referenced repeatedly that their core purpose was to increase student achievement. One school shared that they monitor their data closely to make sure their students are performing. Panda 10 discussed how they approach this task;

I like the way we look at our data just kind of as an overall school. It has never felt that it is each individual grade level in isolation. We look to see how it impacts everybody. Standards and data drive our outcomes. So how we look at one schools unit verses each individual grade levels is how we start conversations. So if kindergarten did not do well, well I'm going to get them eventually so it's not really looking at individual kids but looking at this is what the areas are, these are the concerns, this is how it has impacted our kids. If we don't attack this, this is how it is going to affect us when they come up to us in fourth grade. I think that is pretty important – looking at it as a whole verses individuals.

A second lead shared how they use their agenda and hold themselves to high standards in order to see an increase in student performance. Dolphin 6 shared;

We are very goal oriented. We always have an established agenda. (*SEE APENDIX B*) That is what drives all decisions around student accountability. We know if we have a weak link or grade level we have to decide what we will do to fill in the gaps because we will not allow our team to fall behind because of one team. There are two questions Mrs. Nice asks us all of the time is “how are we going to get there and what are you going to do about that.” We all keep our eyes on the data whether it's a common assessment, a weekly task, or a quarterly. We know ultimately what we want so we do whatever it takes to get us all there. There are definitely others who contribute more and are more,

but what are you going to do. I know I won't let my team fail because of the ones on my team that don't contribute. It's just not fair to our kids.

Several other leads discussed that they knew that their role as leads was a very important role not only to the school, but also to the principal. They were there to be the leaders of improvement and help their schools show growth. They all shared the impact that they wanted to have on overall academic improvement; however, two leads brought up the additional pressures that teachers felt because of the continuous communication about the need for increased student achievement. Mustang 3 shared how the demands placed on the school by "outside people" (division leaders and Virginia Department of Education) is what makes doing their job not so fun. She shared that the added pressures from external forces adds a sense of tension to their daily job. According to Mustang 3, teachers are very aware what needs to be done and they do not want it "constantly pushed down their throat."

Communication about Roles

It was evident that all members of the staff played an important role in the overall success of the school. Lead teams that represent the entire staff provide diversity in roles and perspectives. All three schools have a diverse leadership team and no matter what role you serve, you are an integral part of the team. One principal shared;

I think I would consider myself overall more of a facilitator position. One – making sure that, again, everybody has the tools that they need. Giving them an observation and feedback so they can make decisions, allowing them to make decisions, helping them come to the decisions that they are going to make. But there is also the managerial piece that can't be ignored, but actually I try to keep that a little more down low and just not let the public see what I do with them. So they know that there is a management thing going

on- like having to manage the office. All these pieces have to run smoothly but they are handled very carefully making sure that each are organized and filed. Everyone has to know that no stone is left unturned but is done so in a way that is not for all to see and know. I can't let this be a burden or even if it is I try to make things as easy for them as possible. I try to filter things so that they don't have to deal with it. I try to protect the staff and always find something good in every single one of them, even if it is really hard and build on that.

One lead shared how in her resource position she plays an important role on the Dolphin team.

Dolphin 5 shared;

Even though I am a PE teacher and the lead for the resource team, I know I must keep my team in the loop. We do play an important role in the success of our students but in a very different way. Mrs. Nice has never been known to diminish our roles as resource; in fact, we carry a lot of different responsibilities. As team lead I must sure I hear and share all concerns and feedback from the resource team. I have always felt that I do have a say in decision making and am very interested in our instructional success. This may come from the fact that I was a classroom teacher for years and see the total connection and picture. This is what I try to bring and add to the lead team and my resource team. Even though our roles in the school are a bit different, we do have an integral part of the school success. I do think Mrs. Nice has supported the importance of all parties being represented and heard.

One of her team mates went on to add Dolphin 7;

I think principals really control the climate of the building and how the staff interacts in terms of with each other. The principal is the head facilitator and sets the tone in making

the building successful. She certainly can set the tone and certainly take away from it. They are similar to teachers in that regards. A principal sets the tone just like a good teacher can and just like a bad teacher can. My role as lead is to communicate what my team says. I also find myself kind of with the other leads making sure my team is being heard and making sure things aren't talked over because the primary grades don't understand what the fourth grade is doing. So it is kind of just motherly, in a way. I am a leader and a mediator and I guess a facilitator too.

These three findings were affirmed by Mrs. Nice's interpretation of the roles with in her school. She shared;

I do not have to be the one making all of the decisions. I always ask my staff what are you going to do about that. This causes the teams to have discussions and even push themselves outside their comfort zone. I would never allow it to get out of control, but I do think it is important and part of the learning experience for staff to make decisions and even have difficult conversations. All members of the team are there for a reason and they all bring different perspectives and it is important to hear from all parties. I have found that this is more difficult for some staff than it is for me as they just want an answer or solution. I have a few members who are type A and get impatient but I have to explain to them it is all a part of the process- making solid instructional decisions.

Communication has a significant impact on the overall functionality of the school. Each component, whether it was communicating a common purpose, communication about a school vision, communication about increased student achievement, or communication about roles taken all together, when working together have a positive impact on the operation within the three schools. The findings listed above portray the importance of each component.

Climate of Collaboration

In a distributed leadership model, the principal shares authority and power; teachers take leading roles and assume responsibility (Spillane, 2005). Distributed leadership promotes the staff's full participation in key decision-making and implementation processes and also makes them accountable. All participants clearly communicated that the principal supported and promoted a collaborative working environment. In all three cases the collaboration started on the leadership team. The need for collaboration was the result of several factors; principals not being able to be everywhere at once, the importance for teams to work together to accomplish goals, being able to conduct professional development with another staff members, being on the same page as far as calendars, agendas, and resources, and the willingness of staff to share professional knowledge.

Ms. Caring starts each year by doing team building activities with her lead team, then the entire staff, to build a sense a community. She shared that these activities have helped the staff to work together with like groups (grade levels) and even unlike groups (various staff members together). Such activities have ranged staff participating in Ropes Course activities to just meeting up at a local restaurant for down time together.

Collaboration can be as a leadership team, grade level team or even with another member of the staff. The different principals in this study all use and rely heavily on their leadership team, but the manner in which the leads follow up with the their teams can differ from school to school. Panda 10 pointed out how their principal really relies on them to make decisions as she shared;

We do get to make a lot of the decisions as far as what the school needs. So leads are the ones that get to talk and share with Mrs. Caring and the AP. For example, like we have

these issues, we can put this into the next professional development or I am seeing that people don't know how to use our interactive achievement well enough. The leads get some more help and guidance on how to use/ train that better so we play a bigger role in those types of decisions. We get to say that these are our needs and what we are struggling with, and so this is what we see that we need to focus our next attention on. So that is what I see as our biggest role in making the decisions, but in general Mrs. Caring and the AP like to come back to us and ask us what we think, what do you think are the options, what do you think will be best. So they also are the same way that I feel like I am in the fact that I am not the one making all the decisions, we are making them together, and we are all thinking about what is best for the kids in the end. I love working for Mrs. Caring and the AP. I feel very blessed that I have been placed here and am very blessed that she came to the school when she did, because I think that my first year would have been even harder had it not been for them being my administration, so I just feel lucky.

One principal went on to share how her tenure in the principalship impacts the manner in which she leads. Mrs. Stallion explained;

I am a collaborative leader, especially being a first-year principal. I know I don't have all the answers. I feel like sometimes I probably seek too much of everybody's feedback in making decisions. I know that that could happen, there could be a too much seeking of information but I don't want to be the one that makes the final decision, I mean of course I am the one who makes the final decision, but as far as being that collaborative leader I tap into as many stakeholders as I can in order to make the decisions that are in the best

interest of the kids. I try to be happy and boisterous and just be that person that everybody looks at that is smiling every day and loves what they are doing.

One lead shared how his collaboration was not only for his own personal benefit, but also benefitted the leadership team and his grade level team. Dolphin 4 expressed;

I really like collaborating. I like talking with teachers and taking ideas from them, I like stealing ideas. That is the common teacher thing, "I stole that from you!" And so I really like that and I like facilitating that. So I think I like to be at the table and bring other people in. I can often ask them what they are doing so that we can talk about it, tweak it, and then I like to have a leadership role. At this time to then say, "Let's go and do this, let's try this out." That is what draws me to leadership, as I can say those are great ideas, they are not all mine in fact a lot of times they are mostly not mine, but then I can shift the meeting to, okay let's go and do these things and lets come back and talk about whether they are working or not. We did that with math, especially it was a big initiative of making them purposeful station work rather than only doing whole group model. I think collaborating in the school, lead team and grade level is very very important to the success of the school.

Leads and principals alike realize that working together benefits all. Having principals that promote and condone sharing of ideas, not in a one size fits all approach affords leads and their teams the opportunity to do what works best for their team. Collaboration also taps into a larger pool of ideas while tapping into expertise and building capacity.

Collaboration can also lead to friction. It is normal when working with large numbers of adults to have varying ideas and opinions. Panda 10 talked about how on her team there are very different personalities and they do not always agree. In fact she shared how she believes one of

her team mates intentionally disagrees with colleagues just to be difficult. As the lead, Panda 10 shared that this has been a huge challenge for her because she tries to get along with everyone and having to work with team mates who intentionally challenge discussions and planning ideas has been a growing experience for her as a leader. She even mentioned she was not sure how her principal was able to deal with such different personalities of the staff everyday in such a professional manner. A lead from Dolphin school talked about how collaboration is a good thing when everyone does their part. Dolphin 8 discussed how even some leads don't pull their weight which in turn causes others to pick up "the slack." She did mention that her principal does not call people out publically but she knows that she does have conversations behind closed doors when it becomes obvious that someone is not doing their part. Collaboration is not all "peaches and cream" according to Dolphin 8. She added, "It is maintaining a balance of differing opinions and doing our jobs."

Principals Can Not Be Everywhere

All three principals pointed out that the responsibilities of being an instructional leader and being responsible for all actions in the school is either impossible or nearly impossible. They simply cannot be everywhere all of the time, therefore; the need for collaboration across staff is crucial. Mrs. Stallion shared she currently is working without an assistant principal and other staff members have stepped up to help out. Her guidance counselor is now stepping into various administrative roles, like sitting in on child study meetings, student intervention meetings and she even handles minor discipline. Mrs. Stallion explained how she simply cannot be in two places at once, that is not physically possible. A lead from a different school shared the same type of feelings regarding her principal. Dolphin 4 expressed;

Mrs. Nice is a wonderful facilitator but we all realize she cannot be everywhere all of the time. That is where we step up and step in. As leads all staff looks to us in the absence of our principal. We can make or break the school tone. We have to model high expectations and total professionalism at all times. I can say I want to do that regardless of my principal being there or not. I think this make Mrs. Nice pleased to know that we have her back, but we also know she has ours.

One principal, Mrs. Nice, explained how she realized in her role as principal it is not possible to be everywhere, all of the time. She shared;

I'm not everywhere at once at all and that used to be a problem. I think the role as administrator has changed. We definitely live in a place of putting out fires and working on the negative side of all the problems all the time but that is not going to move ahead the rest of the school. So it is kind of teaching them to figure some things on their own, such as I can't come every time you call because of a problem. We have PBIS in place for a reason. Have you written a behavior alert form? Have you contacted the parent, have you utilized your safe place? If you have done that and it is an emergency situation we will come and help you with that child but we had to retrain the staff that "you are going to have to do these things on your own." If someone continues to do that we have to have a conversation because ultimately the adult in charge of the student should be responsible. If I don't give them that power they expect me to do everything and I can't do everything. So one is empowering the staff and letting them know clearly I can't be everywhere at once. The office staff has gotten pretty clear on that, they do a lot of triage. Unless it is an emergency parent you take a message and we'll call back. And they always ask the parent if they talked to the teacher. That is who you need to talk to

first. They know we are not going to immediately send parents to the office, we are going to put them through protocol; teacher, whatever, whatever before it gets to us so that we can be out there. We also put observations on our calendar and encourage people to look. Our door is always open.

A second lead from Mrs. Nice's school supported the findings of her principal as Dolphin 6 shared;

The great thing that Mrs. Nice does is she trusts that we are doing what is best for our students. We all realize that she cannot be everywhere all of the time yet she does not micro-manage us. She has established that trust especially with the leads, and has no problem clarifying things if needed, but she allows us to make decisions for our team and we do not have to give her blow by blow details. Don't get me wrong, she likes to be in the know, but not in a bad way. She doesn't breath down our necks. She encourages us to meet with our teams whether it be grade level, PBIS, social committee and report back to her. It is nice to be trusted and afforded opportunities.

With increased demands from the state and districts, principals cannot be everywhere all of the time. Building the capacity of their leadership team provides them and the school additional support. Principals who are willing to collaborate with their staff and encourage collaboration among their staff, affords the principals the opportunity to prioritize on the most important tasks.

Team Collaboration

Various lead teachers shared that not only were they productive as a lead team but also grade level teams when they shared goals, accepted the challenge to be problem solvers, set high

expectations for themselves and their teams; which ultimately resulted in teachers willing to share knowledge. Mrs. Caring added;

I really rely heavily on the leadership team and those representatives for the grade levels so they can take things back to their team. I often say things like. "Okay, why don't you talk to your team about this? Next time we meet, let's come back and talk about what your team suggested." So I feel like having that, the staff has benefited whenever everybody feels like they have a choice. There are some decisions of course that the building administrator has to make on her own. It can't be something that staff has the impact every single time; but as many decisions as I can, I involve staff in, I do.

Her staff went on to support the statements she shared by Panda 8 adding;

We spend a great deal of time together. Our grade level teams spend time together almost daily planning and we meet as a leadership very regularly. Mrs. Caring is always a part of this but not as a dictator but as a supporter. She laughs with us and makes us feel good, but we also know that she has established clear expectations and trusts us to get to the end result together.

One lead teacher from a different school also echoed that the decisions made for her school were also done as a team. Mustang 1 added;

I am not a huge talker, I would say, but I am a team player. Definitely the decisions that are made are for the best interest of our school and for our students and are made as a team. I believe that even though we may not agree, it is okay to share our differences but overall it's not about us, it is about what is best for the children. It is definitely a team effort from the administrators, the staff overall, not just the teacher's, the instructional assistants, the custodians, secretarial and clerical staff, and the community. It takes all of us to work

together and we are one team lead by our principal.

As second lead at Mustang Elementary also supported the same findings. Mustang 2 shared;

We collaborate; we work very well together as a leadership team. I don't feel threatened by anyone on our team. The new leadership has helped a lot. Ms. Stallion is easy to approach, she shares information. You don't feel intimidated in any way, and I think that is really what makes our team what it is, it starts from the top. Also in regards to this, it is a variety of different people working on the team, it is not just a few select. Every grade level is represented, we have specialists involved, we have our family facilitator involved, yea we have a core group here. Everything we do we do as a team.

As evidenced by the comments shared, team communication certainly plays an important part in the overall communication at the school. All three schools referenced the positive impact communication has in their operations as lead teams. These positive effects of the team communication filters into a healthy culture for the schools.

Leads conducting Professional Development

It has been restated throughout the paper that the principal cannot do it all. One thing that was heard in multiple interviews is that the principal is not the only one sharing information or professional development with the staff. The principal recognizes the talents of all staff and has various staff members lead and facilitate staff professional development. Mrs. Stallion communicated;

I also have several staff members that are presenting at the upcoming faculty meetings that are not on the leadership team. Throughout walk-throughs and observation that myself and my assistant principal have seen, you know great things happening in the building that we wanted to showcase for everybody. So it may not always be somebody

on the leadership team that is presenting. Or it may not always be somebody on our PBIS committee that is presenting, so allowing others to have that opportunity and giving that opportunity. If they decide to take it, great; if not, that is their choice also.

A second participant shared how her principal empowers the leads and encourages them to share their expertise with the staff through presenting at professional development. Mustang 2 shared;

Mrs. Stallion recognizes and affirms good practices when she sees them. Whether it is in observation feedback or asking us to present at a staff meeting something she saw. Actually today at our staff meeting I am presenting on something she saw during a walkthrough. She gives us the opportunity to learn from her and to learn from each other. I have not had a principal in the past that pushes us in a good way to share. I think it is great to have the opportunity to learn from each other. We get this chance at least once a month. The professional development doesn't have to be long or fancy either.

A lead from a different school shared, how during the summer, their principal sits down with the leads and talks about a professional development plan at least for the first nine weeks. Panda 10 discussed;

Mrs. Caring wants all professional development to be meaningful and purposeful. We start in the summer talking about grade level and school needs. She does not require everyone to attend all professional development. We do plan some whole school professional development session in the summer that supports our goals for the year. Then pretty much our data and grade level needs drive what other professional development we have. One thing Mrs. Caring encourages is us to lead the professional development. She is not afraid to get outside experts, but she believes the leads can do

most of them. This has been a big change for all of school. We use to have to sit and get professional development that didn't mean anything to us. We think the former principal liked to hear herself talk.

It was evident from the interviews that principals supported meaningful professional development for their staff. The leads are encouraged and supported in spearheading professional development sessions. The leads enjoyed having the opportunity and felt that most professional development sessions were far more meaningful presented this way.

Various Communications

Lead teachers shared their principals valued and sought their input in creating such things as the master schedule and daily operational tasks. They also talked about how they did not meet all of the time. They relied on various forms of communication besides face to face interactions. Leads discussed how decisions were even made outside of formal face to face meetings. They relied on various forms of communication. Mrs. Stallion shared;

I think I do a lot of Goggle surveys, a lot of surveys. I feel like I may do more than need be and maybe next year I will do a little bit less, but especially being new as an administrator I don't make decisions without getting the feedback of the staff, so I use Google forms a lot, keep a Google site with resources for our school, put all events on our school Google calendar, and I conduct surveys all of the time. I seek input from the staff before any big decision is made. I actually may seek too much input but because I am new I want to gather input from the staff.

One lead from Mustang Elementary shared how Mrs. Stallion gives them specific tasks from which they are responsible and she provides the tools for them to use. Mustang 1 added;

I serve as the first grade representative. One of my responsibilities is to share with my team what we discuss at our meetings in regards to when certain things are due, for example the RTI data base, to keep them up-to-date on that information. I train and support my team on how to input and use data that we keep on our students in the RTI database. Also I serve as one of the go to persons for word study, since I know that is a huge part of ABC City School's curriculum. I also have a specific task to keep track on our Google dock for our school learning plan. The task is in reference to word study.

A second lead from Mustang Elementary talked about how each member has a part in the function of the leadership team. Mustang 4 shared;

I think our leadership team is very productive because we collaborate on everything. We collaborate, we work very well together. I don't feel threatened by anyone on our team. The new leadership has helped a lot. Ms. Stallion is easy to approach, she always shares information, you don't feel intimidated in anyway, and I think that is really what makes our team what it is, it starts from the top. Also in regards to our collaboration, there are a variety of different people working on the team, it is not just a few select. Every grade level is represented, we have specialists involved, we have our family facilitator involved; yet we have a core group here and operate as a collaborative group. We all play a part. Some of us have very specific tasks on the school learning plan that we update, others take notes during our meetings, we all have a part.

Team collaboration, leads conducting professional development, and various communications are all facets in building a climate of collaboration. Both principals and lead teachers shared the positive impact that these three factors play in building a climate of collaboration; however, three different leads did mention how a positive impact is not

the case all of the time. In particular, Panda 8 talked about how one of her team mates who are always a part of everything and if you are not a part of that group than you do not have a say in decisions or get to present at professional development. Panda 8 went on to share that in her school where there are so many adults there is always going to be a group that feels left out or not valued. She stated, "It's just human nature that there are going to be people who do not feel valued and complain about everything."

Principals Model Leadership, Using Tools and Routines

"Distributed leadership has the potential to build capacity within a school through the intellectual and professional capacity of teacher" (Timperly, 2009, p.198). As shared in the review of the literature in Chapter Two, the principal being the sole leader in the school is no longer the case. Unanimously all parties interviewed expressed that the success of the school is not up to the principal alone. The researcher found the principals model leadership using a variety of tools and daily routines. The sub themes that emerged from the interviews; it is all about the relationships the principal has with the staff, the principal cultivates a culture that believes in and builds teacher leadership, and empowers and validates, the voices of the staff are important, allowing teachers to be an intricate part of professional development leads to better investment in the vision, and allowing and validating teacher expertise is a catalyst for change. School leaders also engaged in agenda setting, and shaping the flow of discussion.

It's All about Relationships

Relationships are a very important part of the success of any leader. Creating, building, and fostering relationships are a vital role of the principal. The investment in this will become beneficial to the outcome. The principal has a significant impact on building leadership with the

lead teachers, the lead teachers in turn share information with teachers who have the direct impact on student achievement. Mrs. Caring said;

I aim to create a healthy work environment to help teachers be successful. I do that by building relationships with my staff because I want them to build relationships with their students. Every year we start off with a theme and carry it throughout the year. This is how I start to establish relationships with my staff. I hope that my model serves to help teachers see and value the importance of their relationships with their students. I let them see that I am real. We will go out to dinner as a staff and I even meet them at happy hour. I ask about what is going on in their families but they also know that I do not waver in my expectations. That is exactly what I hope they learn from me and share with their students.

A second principal also discussed the importance of cultivating strong relationships. Mrs. Stallion shared;

I too had wonderful mentors that I would always look up to and say, "I want to do that when I grow up." I am again back to that whole global piece. I like to make an impact in my own classroom and I thought as a classroom teacher I was making a huge impact. I wanted to broaden my impact in other areas. I wanted to make a larger impact in my instructional knowledge and just wanted to broaden my experiences to affect a larger population. Being a building instructional leader, I get to do that; impact the instructional staff which in turn impact students. If I had not had such great mentors who shared such opportunities with me I am not sure I would be as successful at impacting my staff.

Mustang 1 added how it goes beyond just the relationship with the principal. She shared;

Mustang Elementary is like a family...The school well we are really a very close school

staff. Here they go beyond just your colleagues. The work relationships are more like friendships. For example, when people are going through with sickness we rally around them like family. We believe in each other and have each other's backs. We are a family both in teaching and out of teaching.

Cultivates a Culture that Believes in and Builds Teacher Leadership.

Repeatedly it was shared that having diversity of people with a wealth of information can be helpful in coming to a better decision or resolution. The thoughts were added that this is because it actually adds perspectives that would otherwise be absent if the decision is made by one person. Various perspectives can add to group thinking and sharing. Mrs. Nice shared how she really believes in empowering her staff to be responsible for using their voice;

I try to make it a group decision even if sometimes I disagree. Definitely, definitely, definitely I allow some things to fail in order for the teachers to see that it wasn't the right decision. For example, I am not a fan of departmentalization unless it is done perfectly. I told them things that bothered me. They told me what they liked. One of my things was that it is way easier for the teachers, but it has to be in the best interest to the kids. You proved to me this year that you can address my concerns and you can do it next year. Fifth grade did outstanding, fourth grade did not. So this year fourth grade did not departmentalize and fifth grade did. But the good thing was that when we came to the table at the end of the year they said, "We can't departmentalize next year can we?" And I said, "Did you hit all the marks we talked about?" They said no, and I said so what do you think?, and they said no. But they were okay with it because they knew the criteria. So we make decisions together. So, again, it would have been easy to say, just do this, or

just do that, but even something like that, let's talk about it so then nobody has hurt feeling or it's not her side or his side but what's the best decision for the child.

Panda 9 shared how her principal empowers them to be a "vehicle for children" and she added;

If you don't have the support from the leader, if the leader doesn't trust you that impacts you because it creates self-doubt. But if the leader approves of what you are doing, and the adjustments that you made, you are going to do those things, and I think that is going to reflect. I think that the biggest thing I noticed is that without support from administration people get frustrated and really didn't want to do anything extra. Plans can look great on paper but if you go out into the classroom and you actually see it and it doesn't match up it really doesn't matter. So I feel like, yea, you have to have a paper there as your evidence but what you are really doing is more important. I always feel that with certain leaders that was what was emphasized, and so when I was on a team I am more concerned about that piece. I know people are busy and stuff and understand that people also have an outside life and different elements. I just think a leader that believes in and your practice that makes a huge difference. When leaders and team mates are able to look at you as a person too, verses just a robot in the classroom giving instruction, and they allow your voice to be heard, and you are moving children in the right direction instructionally.

Mustang 1 supported the findings from various leads as she felt validated as a member of the leadership team at her school. She added;

We collaborate, we work very well together. I don't feel threatened by anyone on our team. The leadership has helped a lot. Ms. Stallion and the AP are easy to approach, they share information, you don't feel intimidated in any way, and I think that is really what

makes our team what it is, it starts from the top. Also in regards to this, it is a variety of different people working on the team, it is not just a few select. Every grade level is represented, we have specialists involved, we have our family facilitator involved, yea we have a core group here.

Panda 8 shared how her principal gives them the professional latitude which has led to full investment and buy in. She added;

Our supportive administration has a huge part in our team and school success. I have only worked under Mrs. Caring, as you know, this is my second year, and this is her second year at Panda Elementary and from what I hear about previous stories it is really helpful to have fabulous leadership, even leading leaders, so I am grateful to have her and her support. The fact that, especially with a school with low income, we have a lot of behavioral issues, and I know that that has lessened greatly and I do attribute a lot of it to Mrs. Caring, but I think that it is also them putting in place ways to help us to make us better instructors, so we are the day-to-day. We are the ones in the classroom every day dealing with the students so if they give us skills and strategies that we can take and implement, that is the best type of system. – She is a great leader but they also give us skills and strategies, so every time that we have a professional development they always say, “did you learn something that you could actually use in your classroom today?” She always wants to give us something that we can use in the classroom and I think that helps us get great attributes and great lessons and little tricks and trades. Often time we are asked to share the strategies at PD, so we all are learning from each other. How great is that?

Allowing and validating teacher expertise can certainly be the catalyst for change. One principal, Mrs. Stallion shared;

I know that I have to rely on the experts in my building. Let me just start with the school leadership team. With that, even being a new principal and coming into the building and not really being aware of who the members were on the leadership team prior to coming in here; I was just trying to find the people in the building that I know from previous people. You quickly learn who you can tap into by first allowing them to see the value in their voice so that I am not always that person who is making the decisions. Letting them be a part of not just monitoring the school improvement plan but also being a part of planning professional developments after school. It is a win-win situation for me. I don't have to be the one that plans everything, I don't have to be the one that monitors everything. I tap into the integrated resources that I have here with the staff. I just feel like if they see value in my abilities to use their collaboration, then that will then in turn just benefit the entire school.

Dolphin 7 shared,

The principal in the building is the facilitator. I look at the school as a workshop. Everything in this school is a workshop, all the classrooms are a workshop, and the gym is a workshop. She facilitates what needs to happen in your workshop. She guides that and leads that, so I think we are all together at the success of this, because if you are not running your workshop properly you are the weak link in the chain. We are all a big chain and no I don't think it is just one person, I think we are all part of that. As she facilitates us, we in turn facilitate the vision. Our principal believes in us to facilitate change and growth.”

Both cultivating relationships and building teacher leadership have a positive impact on the principals' model leadership; however, it was shared that not all staff members see these two things as valuable. Mustang 3 discussed how she has "overheard" staff members talking about how their principal only "goes to" a select few for input and does not take time to build relationships with the entire staff. She went on to share how when the principal ran a race, a few teachers talked about how the leads teachers were there to support the principal. They even made her signs but no one else was asked to be a part of creating signs. So within the school the leads are viewed differently by staff. Dolphin 7 also talked about how teacher leadership is really within the leadership team. She shared how the lead teachers are tapped to do just about everything and in a smaller school where there are almost half of the staff on the leadership team it can cause a bit of a divide among staff. She said that a member of her grade level team calls the leads "part of the principal's click." She said that they work very hard to make sure that all staff have a say but that is not what all staff would report. As evidenced by the interviews there are positive attributes in relying on the leadership team; however, creating a balance among staff also became equally as important in order not to alienate or cause a divide in staff.

Situational Decision Making: Making the Hard Call

Not all of the findings from this study supported distributed leadership being used all of the time. Three leads shared that when they, or the principal, try to involve too many others in the decision making it led to frustration and personality clashes. The leads felt there were in fact times when the principal "just had to make the decision." Five participants expressed that when the principal tried to get buy in from too many stakeholders it felt very impersonal, almost as if the principal was not certain of the decision, or, if a decision was needed that it really did not

matter who made that decision. Another factor that arose was that often staffs' previous experiences could have an influence on the current decision.

Having all staff contribute to the decision making process can lead to frustration because getting total buy in from large numbers is difficult. Dolphin 5 expressed;

I think decision making is a large part of our job on the leadership team. She (referring to the principal) never quite tells us you are going to do this or that, there are certain things, but for the most part she allows us to pick and choose. Mrs. Dolphin gives us a lot of leeway to make decisions instead of telling us we're going to do this or that (of course there is a little bit of that). This can become frustrating to those who want an answer made for us. This in turn can affect buy in. Making sure everyone has bought in. There is a buy in to all of this, and if you haven't bought in then you are the weak link. We all have to be together and we all have to be on the same page; there must be a buy-in. We all come with different work ethics, I think. Some are bigger than others but motivating those people who are not willing to buy-in on whatever concept we are working on or whatever, that is a challenge – motivating them to want to be part of it. So when too many people are involved in decision making it can cause for frustration.

Making decisions without one hundred percent buy in can be perceived as impersonal. Mustang 4 shared;

I definitely know who is in charge in our building is and I am ok with that. I get it. I understand that Mrs. Stallion is going to have decisions without asking us and that doesn't bother me at all. I have heard other staff complaining about how she didn't even ask us about that and she made the final decision. There was the whole lesson plan thing. She sent out a survey with templates and asked us to vote. We did. She made the final

decision based on the votes. Not everyone is going to be happy but then again that is always the case. Just because you were at a school in the past where the principal didn't ask for buy in doesn't mean that is how Mrs. Stallion operates. Sometimes she has to make a decision so we can move forward.

A third lead also pointed out how some staff doesn't see the big picture when it comes to decision making. Panda 8 shared;

You are only as good as your weakest link. Honestly you are only as good as your weakest link. The leaders not modeling and setting high expectation makes a difference, and I think the vast morale makes the difference if you are going to work hard for a person or not and appreciation for what the staff does. She is not being impersonal just decisive. Get over it people. Can you tell I don't like complainers?

All three principals also shared that there are definite times where they simply have to make a decision and go with it. For example Mrs. Stallion talked about selecting a final lesson plan template. She shared;

The lead team picked a few sample lesson plan templates and I sent them out to the staff to vote on via a Google survey. Not all staff voted and we were not able to reach a consensus, so rather than discussing it over and over, I made the decision and offered two choices. A decision needed to be made so teachers had it in enough time. I made the final decision.

Mrs. Nice added;

As a principal there are times when I don't have time to get buy in nor is it appropriate to get buy in. One example is with discipline. When a teacher sends a student to the office with a referral, the teacher has basically said they are turning over consequences to me.

In that case, I decide what the punishment will be and they have to move on. As a principal I know I have to make some decisions on the fly, that comes with the territory.

After gaining perceptions of three principals and members of their leadership teams, I gained a better understanding of leadership styles as related to the distributed leadership framework in three elementary schools. I found several themes developed from the interviews. The themes that were shared above were the result of interview conversations with thirteen leaders within three elementary schools. Just as evidenced in this study, educational research supports that model continual improvement collaborative relationships can have a positive impact on climate in a school and an increase in commitment to the organization (Tschannen- Moran, 2009).

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECCOMNEDATIONS

Overview

Schools throughout the United States face significant challenges to respond to the demands associated with preparing students in a standard based environment in the age of accountability (Elmore, 2004) therefore; leadership responsibilities cannot be left solely up to the principal. Leadership should be distributed among members of the school staff. When leadership is distributed to a team instead of one person, there is an increased commitment to the school (Elmore, 2004; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetze, & Louis, 2009; Spillane, 2005, 2006, and 2010). The research conducted examined specific leadership (principal) practices in which the principal provides leadership and leadership opportunities for members of the leadership team and other members of the staff in two school divisions. Principals no longer can single-handedly lead schools to greatness given the intensive demands placed on principals (Spillane, 2005). This chapter reviews the implications of these findings for principals and members of their school leadership team who utilize a distributed leadership approach. Recommendations for future research on distributed leadership and the leadership practices employed by principals and shared by lead teachers are also described.

Statement of Problem

Principals no longer can single-handedly lead schools to greatness given the intensive demands placed on principals (Spillane, 2005). The principals' leadership role is changing as the result of increased expectations for student learning. There is an evolving theory that leadership from a distributed perspective has the potential to improve teaching and increase learning (Harris, 2005). There have been few quantitative studies conducted to examine the extent to which effective principals employ a distributed leadership in their schools. Since distributed leadership is a relatively new concept, explored more in the last five years than had explored previously, most of the literature on distributed leadership focuses on theory development and knowledge about distributed leadership is small (Harris, 2007; Spillane, 2006). The findings which are available on distributed leadership do show advantages of distributed leadership in improving teaching and learning (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2005). However, the researcher sought to investigate the relationship between distributed leadership and how principals build capacity with their staff.

Findings

This study was conducted to gain an understanding of how principals employ or do not employ distributed leadership in their schools. This study explored what leadership practices three elementary principals use, if they exercised distributed leadership practices and if they did, how they used the practices. Principals carry out a multitude of responsibilities; hence, to impact growth they must be able to influence other leaders (formal and informal) within the organization (Lambert, 2002; Shivers-Blackwell, 2006; Spillane 2005, 2006, and 2010). This research also explored lead teachers perceptions of the principal's leadership with in the building. Research suggests that the building principal must distribute leadership and decision making to a group of leaders within the building in order to build capacity for reform (Elmore, 2004; Gronn, 2000;

Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Smylie, 2007). The literature on distributed leadership showed that leadership is no longer on the shoulders of a single person and has transitioned to more a collective leadership phenomenon (Ross, 2005).

A total of 13 interviews were conducted at three elementary schools in the Tidewater area of Virginia. Three participants were elementary principals and ten were members of their school based leadership teams. It should be noted that all member of three schools' leadership teams were invited to participate in the interview process. Some members chose not to because of scheduling while others were not interested to be a part of the research. The study revealed three main findings that support the research question in this study; the importance of building capacity; climate of collaboration, situational decision making: principals making the call, and the principal models effective communication in a variety of ways. This qualitative study was designed to answer the following questions related to distributed leadership were used to guide this study:

Question Do principals employ distributed leadership practices in their daily leadership activities within a school?

- a. What aspects of distributed leadership do principals employ?
- b. How are these aspects employed?
- c. Why are these aspects employed?
- d. Why are other aspects of distributed leadership not employed?
- e. If distributed leadership is not evident in a principal's approach, what strategy does a principal use?

Evidence of distributed leadership was found within each of the three study sites. However, findings also revealed distributed leadership was not employed in certain situations

and, at times, faculty recognized the need for more autonomy. The following four themes emerged after an analysis of the data: the principal plays an essential role in communicating a common purpose; that distributed leadership is developed within a school where there is a climate of collaboration, the principal models leadership using tools and routines, and situational decision making requires principals to be able to make a decision without seeking input. Chapter V focuses on interpretation of the results of the study, implications for school districts, school principals and members of the leadership team; as well as recommendations for further research.

Finding I

Principals know and understand that they cannot run their schools alone. Utilizing their leadership team is paramount to the overall effectiveness. This theme is supported by the work of Peter Senge (2006), where he shared that without a shared vision, a team can work at cross purposes and not achieve any of its goals.

The Importance of Building Capacity; Climate of Collaboration

In Chapter 4, I shared how all participants acknowledged that having a common vision was the foundation of their leadership teams' work. Scribner, et al. (2007) describes the importance of a common vision. "A team that is created with a well-defined purpose is being charged with problem solving... Team conversation remains focused on the known problems: other topics almost never come up." (p.79). One of the most significant findings from all thirteen interviews revealed that leaders who shared the vision with all stakeholders foster a school community where everyone is working toward the same goals. Several participants expressed that being involved in establishing the vision was the most important task, as it became the roadmap for all of their work. It was apparent that the development of the vision began with the principal than is interspersed through the leadership team. The leadership is distributed for

practices aimed at developing people and for setting direction and structuring the workplace. Harris (2002) contends that the foundation of distributed leadership is when capacity building within the organization occurs. As evidenced in the interviews, principals and members of the leadership team all agreed that the capacity to lead is not centered on the principal, but rather embedded in various organizational interactions starting with the leadership team. Such interactions supported three main areas; establishing a clear vision, creating a school culture that promotes and supports collaboration and continuous opportunities for professional growth. It was found that principals who shared the vision with all stakeholders foster a school community where everyone is working toward the same goals. Leadership is more distributed for practices aimed at developing people and managing instruction than it is for setting direction and structuring the workplace.

Not only did all three principals reference the need for increased student achievement, but their sentiments were echoed by many lead teachers. Whether it was the result of the push from the state, or felt even closer by the added pressures from the school division, two schools continuously referenced that an increase in student achievement was a non-negotiable for them. Principals shared their expectations, and leads understood their role in supporting the constant monitoring of data to make sure that they were working in the right direction at all times. In an era of high stakes accountability, it was very evident that the pressures the principals and their staffs feel are real.

The roles that the principal play in the daily operations of the school ultimately have an impact on the school success. Many leads used terms like “facilitator, distributor, and collaborator” as they described their principals. Such terms suggest and support a willingness to allow others to be an integral part of decision making. The leads also shared how they

appreciated their principals being open to collaboration as they felt their perspectives were heard and welcomed. This open communication made the leads feel as though they were really a part of the school team, they respected and appreciated the diversity that it added to the discussions. Each participant in this study felt validated in the role in which they served.

As many lead teachers shared, their principal's words and actions demonstrated their beliefs and influenced and supported the development of a common purpose. With a common clear purpose, the leadership team was able to focus their efforts on working as a lead team and strengthen their grade level teams. Many of the respondents used the phrase "working together" in their interview responses. In most of the cases it started with working on whole school issues, and then continued as teachers of the same subject planning their classes together. The interpretation was referenced in the whole school context. The following two phrases were repeated by more than half of the leads; "Working as a *team* with the same goals" and "the principal delegates responsibility". Teamwork refers to teams such as the leadership team, grade level teams, subject committee teams, and how these teams are facilitated in working together. Delegation was described as roles and responsibilities being assigned to various members of staff. It was very apparent that both the principals and the lead teachers saw the importance of building capacity initiated by collaboration.

Not all of the evidence supported that all teachers felt there was a positive climate of collaboration within their school. Collaboration can lead to friction among staff. It is normal when working with large numbers of adults to have varying ideas and opinions. The findings show how school staffs have different personalities and they do not always agree. One lead shared how she believes one of her team mates intentionally disagrees with colleagues just to be difficult. This has been a huge challenge for her as a lead because she tries to get along with

everyone, and having to work with team mates who intentionally challenge discussions and planning ideas has been a growing experience for her as a leader. A second point that was uncovered was how collaboration is a good thing when everyone does their part but this is not the reality in schools. Therefore, collaboration is not all “peaches and cream” according to Dolphin 8.

Finding II

Principals are willingly providing opportunities for the leadership team to be active participants in decision making; however, there are times when principals have to make a decision on their own. This is supported by the research of Spillane (2005) as he explained that distributed leadership is the product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and situations. These interactions in turn have the greatest influence on those in which they lead.

Situational Decision Making: Principals Finding Balance

All of the interview participants supported the notion that distributed leadership promotes the staff's full participation in key decision-making and implementation processes, and also makes them accountable. All participants clearly communicated that the principal supported and promoted a collaborative working environment and active roles in the decision making. Distributed leadership implies the interdependency of leaders sharing responsibility with followers (Harris, 2003). The collaboration and shared decision making started with the leadership team. The interviews revealed that collaboration and shared decision making was the result of several factors; principals not being able to be everywhere at once, the importance for teams to work together to accomplish goals, being able to conduct professional development with another staff member, being on the same page as far as calendars, agendas, and resources, and the willingness to staff to share professional knowledge.

All three principals provided supportive conditions by allowing the leads and their teams the discretion to make decisions in planning and in professional development sessions. It was clear that at Mustang Elementary all professional development had to tie directly back to their tasks on the school learning plan. In all three schools, there had been a new principal within the last two years. It was evident that leads welcomed the change, and the collaborative working environment, that has been created under all three of their leaderships. Leads have become a part of facilitating professional development and the leads are very receptive to being able to share their expertise.

The leadership team members also shared how teams collaborated in their planning and presentations. During the team meetings, teachers focused their time specifically to their grade level needs, and they did this regardless of administrator participation. It was clear that leads knew and understood that the principal cannot be everywhere all of the time and expectations did not change if they are not in attendance. All three principals demonstrated honest willingness to give decision-making authority to lead teachers.

Principals do have to make some decisions on their own. Not all of the findings from this study supported the use of distributed leadership by the principal. It was found that when the principal tried to involve too many others in the decision making it led to frustration and even personality clashes. This is when several leads felt there were in fact times when the principal “just had to make the decision.” A second part of this finding was that when the principal tried to get buy in from too many stakeholders it felt very impersonal. It was almost as if the principal was not certain of the decision or if a decision was needed that it really did not matter who made that decision. A third factor that arose was that often staffs’ previous experiences could have an

influence on the current decision. Principals need to be cognizant of finding balance between getting buy-in from staff and being able to make a decision on their own.

Finding III

Communication has a significant impact on the overall functionality of the school. The research indicates that communication certainly had a significant impact on the overall functionality of the school. Verbal communication is not the only means of collaboration and building capacity. Harris (2002) contends that the foundation of distributed leadership is when capacity building within the organization occurs.

The Principal Models Effective Communication in a Variety of Ways

The researcher found that all parties interviewed expressed that the success of the school is not up to the principal alone. All participants shared how imperative effective and open communication was to their success, ability to work as a team, and buy in to the school. Every participant discussed communication as central glue that connected colleagues and brought cohesiveness to their purpose and mission as educators. Effective communication, as evidenced through the interviews, manifested in many different ways.

Communication does not have to be just verbal communication. Communication in the forms of providing opportunities for professional development, the use of Google calendars and sites, and organizational support were just as important as the verbal interactions. Participants communicated that the principal models leadership by using a variety of communication tools in daily routines. Such tools and routines that were evident included both tangible and intangible evidence. An example of tangible evidence shared was the use of agendas at leadership team meetings. Intangible evidence included verbal conversations that the principals had with various staff members. A second tool that was shared repeatedly was how the principal cultivated a

culture that believed in and built teacher leadership, empowered and validated staff members. It was evident that the voices of the staff were important. One such means referenced repeatedly was lead team members facilitated professional development. Allowing teachers to be an intricate part of professional development lead to better investment in the vision, and allowed and validated teacher expertise as a catalyst for change. School leaders also engaged in agenda setting, and shaping the flow of discussion.

The lead teachers across all three schools shared there was a sense of community at each of their school sites, and they each discussed a sense of shared purpose for their work.

According to the teacher interviewees, they perceived all stakeholders play an important part in the overall success of the school; increased student academic performance. Panda 10 used the analogy that as a staff they were “all on the same train that left the one station, headed in one direction.” The direction that was referenced was full accountability with the state. In order for this collective sense of community to be experienced across all three study sites it became apparent that communication – and effective utilization of communication practices by both leaders and the leadership team – was essential and a core bind that tied those groups together.

The research was evident that all members of the staff play an important role in the overall success of the school; however, it was brought up the additional pressures and stress are felt by teachers because of the continuous communication about the need for increased student achievement. Such demands placed on the school by “outside people” (division leaders and Virginia Department of Education) had a negative impact on their overall moral and is what made doing their job “not so fun.” One lead shared that the added pressures from external forces added a sense of tension to their daily job. According to Mustang 3, teachers are very aware what needed to be done, and they did not it “constantly pushed down their throat.” The role of

the principal and the lead teachers is to create a sense of realistic balance between accountability pressures and establishing expectations. Therefore, it is important for lead teams to be representative of the entire staff while providing diversity in roles and perspectives. All three schools had a diverse leadership team and no matter what role they served, they were an integral part of the team.

Interpretation

The study described the role of the school principal as they employed or did not employ distributed leadership with members of their leadership team. After interviewing both principals and members of their leadership team, the three principals did employ many tenants of distributed leadership with members of their leadership team. The participant's shared that there were provided a variety of opportunities to be active participants in decision making. They were also a part of collaboration, communication, and creating a vision. However, all participants understood that there were times and situations where the principal must make the decision. In this study, school principals and most lead team members shared that their principals were collaborators, facilitators, and distribute leadership within their school. Setting the mission, facilitating professional development, managing the organization, redesigning the instructional program are just a few examples of how this distribution may occur (Leithwood, 2006).

Distributed Leadership Theory promotes the decentralization of one leader (Harris, 2003). It was evident through the interviews, that none of the principals viewed their role as one of power. The lead team members and the principals all shared in the decision making for the school. Distributed leadership spreads decision making across the school where all parties are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the decision making process (Fullen, 2002). "The days of the principal as the lone instructional leaders are over. We no longer believe that one

administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other educators” (Elmore, 2002, p. 27). This was evidenced by all participants in this study.

Overall, the participants in all three schools agreed that building leadership capacity was about empowering people, allowing them to take initiative and be involved in decision-making. They also agreed that the atmosphere in the school that encouraged teachers to take leadership roles in specific aspects of the school was just as important. There was strong agreement among the participants at all three schools that building leadership capacity was a concept that can be applied to all teachers, whether they hold a position or post of responsibility or not. With all of the participants in this study there was agreement that the idea of teachers working together in teams and collaborating in planning and providing learning opportunities for students was imperative. All of the tenants shared above are supportive of distributed leadership. There was definitely broad agreement with many of the features outlined in Chapter 2 around the theoretical framework of distributed leadership.

The researcher did find that while principals try to distribute leadership; frustration, isolation, and irritation can happen not only with lead teachers and other members of the staff. Staff can feel left out or not a part of decision making. One lead also shared how frustration can occur when others do not do their part. It is human nature that people will be at different levels of commitment to an organization.

Implications for Principal Preparation Programs and Principals, Teacher Preparation Programs and Professional Development

Distributed leadership provides a framework for building capacity. Improvement to principal preparation programs, teacher preparation programs, and even staff professional

development should be explored in order to better equip administrators and teachers for the current roles in education today. Leadership success depends on the skill with which leaders adapt their practices to the circumstances in which they find themselves, and how they respond to those problems (Leithwood, 2006); therefore principals need to make sure they have received the skills sets in order to be able to lead successfully.

In an era of accountability, principal preparation programs are leaving graduates unprepared for the challenges they will face. The Wallace Foundation (2016) reports that principal preparation programs have traditionally trained aspiring leaders through top-down management approaches. The course of study at preparation programs does not always reflect principals' real jobs. Principal preparation programs should include coursework that teaches and trains aspiring principals how to build capacity with staff, while recognizing the strengths of their teachers. The Wallace Foundation (2016) found that 96 percent of respondents to a survey given agreed that strong collaboration between universities and school districts was an "essential" element of an effective principal preparation program. Principals need to know and understand how to guide teachers to take on leadership roles, especially around their area of expertise. A second area that principal preparation programs should explore is making sure principals have the tools to distribute leadership, while having a clear understanding that there are going to be times where principals have to be ready to make decisions on their own. The research has pointed out that accountability has added pressures to the role of the principal; therefore, it is incumbent upon the principal preparation programs to educate principals on establishing a balance. Furthermore, principal preparation programs need to address the current reality of the role of the principal. As evidenced in this research, principals need to be aware of the lead teacher/ teacher dynamics with in the school. The last thing principals want to do is

alienate staff and create a climate filled with friction among staff. The research found that building relationships, communicating a common purpose, and creating a collaborative working environment are crucial to the success of the school; however, the principal has to be cognizant of the impact that the aforementioned has on all staff.

Teacher preparations program and district professional development could address the advantages to teachers taking on leadership positions. Leithwood (2004) stated that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school- related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p.3). Scribner, Saywyer, Watson & Myers (2007) express that positive changes in staff morale and climate occur when staff are given a voice in collective decision making. Teacher preparation programs should include a leadership component in their course of study. Not all teachers are natural leaders or understand the impact that they can have on the overall success of the school. Adding in a leadership component would provide students with the global perspective. Today’s public education reality is teachers are very often a part of the decision making process. Spillane (2006) supports this in his research as he has described that running a school is too much for one person. Providing this knowledge to teachers will enable them to perform outside of the one teach one assist roles that was most commonly seen in this study. All teachers can benefit from having a clear understanding of distributed leadership and the purpose behind why it could be used in the school setting.

Professional development should be offered to principals and their lead teams together. Keep in mind that traditional professional development approaches are designed so that principals and teachers attend professional development opportunities separately and often unrelated to one another; hence, this format would need to change. School districts should provide targeted professional development to principals and teachers who are members of the

school leadership team. The professional development should start with the principals first, because it should not be assumed that all principals know and understand the value of building the capacity within their school as the result of distributing leadership. Professional development should be offered to principals and lead teams to learn how to work in conjunction with each other, rather than in isolation. It should never be assumed that teams innately know how or understand how to do this; therefore, different types of professional development should be offered to meet the needs of the school in developing leadership capacity. Once this training has occurred, ongoing leadership coaching support with school-based leadership should be supported and followed up on regular. One important note is how many lead teachers in this study referenced their own opportunity to provide professional development; however, the potential influence it has on the learning environment of the school is such that it requires further study. The school-based professional development is also very important, and should not be underplayed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Leadership research up through the late 1990s focused on specific traits, functions, or effects of individual leaders (Spillane, 2006). There is an evolving theory that leadership from a distributed perspective has the potential to improve teaching and increase learning (Harris, 2005). Since there have been few quantitative studies conducted to examine to what extent effective principals employ a distributed leadership in their schools, this study provides a small perspective on the how it is possible to employ distributed leadership with members of the lead team. Since distributed leadership is a relatively new concept, explored more in the last five years, most of the literature on distributed leadership focuses on theory development and knowledge about distributed leadership is small (Harris, 2007; Spillane, 2006). This study

sought to understand if principals employ distributed leadership practices in their daily leadership activities within a school. The significance of this study is in the data collected from current practioners (principals and members of their leadership team) as it relates to the distributed leadership framework. The results gathered share perspectives and practices of three principals of which all three have only been in their schools less than two full years.

The principals in this study were purposely selected. One area that would be worth further investigation is comparing principals who are successful in their role with principals who have not been as successful, to see if the manner in which they utilize their leadership team varies, especially around decision making, collaboration, and establishing a clear vision. This is important because the research shared in Chapter Two indicates that the role of the principal is very complex as the result of accountability standards. Principals cannot do their job alone, however, there are principals who are not comfortable or willing to relinquish power. Research should be conducted to identify problems and issues that inhibit principals from distributing leadership with lead teachers.

A second area worth further investigation is how leaders create a balance between distribution of leadership and their own ability to make a decision. The findings in this study evidenced that the three principals interviewed were capable of making decisions on their own; however, one principal relied heavily on gathering input from her leadership team. Is this the result of her lack of experience as a first year principal, lack of confidence in her decision making, or possibly a combination of both? Are principals capable and confident of making decisions on their own? How do they create a balance between distributing leadership and being able to make a decision without getting staff involved? The concept of distributed leadership

still has many unanswered questions around which practices principals employ that have a positive influence on the leadership team and other members of the staff.

The findings in this study also showed that all three principals are aware of the power of collaboration, establishing a common purpose, and the importance of using a variety of tools to communicate with staff. The evidence supports that their leadership approaches are inclusive of tenants of distributed leadership. Is this the result of all three principals training, short tenure in their buildings, or the fact that the researcher was directed specifically to them by division personal who knew the purpose of the research? Either way this leads to the numerous possibilities for continued studies.

Conclusion

Educational accountability has changed as the result of federal, local and state standards for all students. As the result of the increased accountability, pressures are felt by all players to include; students, parents, teachers, principals, and even superintendents. In these times of heightened concern for student learning, school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn (Leithwood & Rheil 2003). In successful school communities, the capacity to lead is not centered on the principal, but rather embedded in various organizational interactions. Harris (2003) found that distributed leadership suggests interdependency of leaders sharing responsibility with followers. This study determined, through a series of interviews, that where the principal was willing to distribute leadership, especially to lead teachers, there was an increase overall school buy in. This study supports the idea that schools with a shared vision and goals affords the staff opportunities in making instructional decisions in a collaborative manner. Distributed leadership is a model of organizational leadership that promotes utilizing a fluid approach to leadership and draws upon

the strengths of the individuals within the organization. The theory of distributed leadership and literature reviewed conclude that when leadership is distributed, schools have the ability to build capacity and grow initiatives around instructional improvement.

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Appendix A

The interview questions will include:

1. Tell me about your leadership journey to your current position.
 - a. Why did you become a school leader? Why a principal?
 - b. What are some experiences that influenced your approach to leadership?
2. I'm interested in understanding your leadership style. Could you describe your leadership style and approach?
 - a. How do you believe this was formed?
 - b. Has it changed over the years? If so, how and why?
 - c. How would you describe your approach to decision making?

I would like to transition our conversation to focus on your school and your role as the principal at your school.

3. Could you describe your school when you took over as principal?
 - a. What was the climate and culture?
 - b. Discuss the organizational structure within your building.
 - c. Was there a leadership team? Can you tell me who is on it, the positions, and the use and purpose of the team?
4. If you were to identify the one major challenge approaching you as a leader, what do you view/ perceive this to be?

I would like to dive deeper in to the structure and design of your leadership team.

5. Is the team productive? In what ways are they/ aren't they?
 - a. Would you make any changes to your leadership team?

- b. Do you feel you were prepared to lead a leadership team in your career? How did you learn to develop a team and lead a leadership team?
 - c. What roles does the leadership team have in decision making at your school?
 - d. Moving beyond just your leadership team, do you share or distribute leadership opportunities with other staff?
 - e. What has been the reception to this approach?
6. Did you make any changes to the leadership structure within your building? How? Why? Are they productive changes?
 7. Was the staff receptive to your changes?
 8. Is there anything else you want to add?



2nd Grade Team Agenda

Meeting: Feb 8-12

Plans: Feb 15-19



Monday:

Word Building PD

Reading

Skill: Locate information in texts to answer questions
Skill: Organize information using graphic organizers
Skill: Write responses to what is read

Writing

Composing: Mini-lessons based on students' needs

Usage & Mechanics: Mini-lessons based on students' needs

Wednesday:

Read article and be ready to discuss.

**Be ready to discuss the next unit of
Graphing/Probability/Statistics.**



2nd Grade Team Agenda



Meeting: Feb 8-12

Plans: Feb 15-19

Please bring something pertaining to math in one of the following areas:

1. Assignments

2. Centers

3. Review

● **Thursday:** Lead Meeting Notes, I/E planning, & Housekeeping
Weather pacing/planning



Mentor/Mentee Monthly Meeting
November 18, 2015 8:00-8:35 W/W Space



1. **In a Minute**: We will share any pressing upcoming dates and deadlines.

2. **Temperature Check**: Checking in to learn questions, comments, and concerns. Burning questions or topics.
3. **Teach Like a Champion**: We will use this time to dive into 3 techniques discussed in the book:
 - a. **Technique 44**: Precise Praise
 - b. **Technique 45**: Warm/Strict
 - c. **Technique 48**: Explain Everything

*Please have read, reviewed, and be ready to discuss these 😊
4. **Action Steps**: What can you promise to try new this month?
Commit to a new technique and give it a try!



2nd Grade Team Agenda



Meeting: Oct 26-Oct 30
Plans: Nov 2nd-Nov 6th

Monday:

Word Study: Use knowledge of synonyms and antonyms when reading to enhance vocabulary

Word Study: Use knowledge of synonyms and antonyms when reading to enhance vocabulary

Skills: Explain the meaning of words within the context of how they are used

*One of the days is a Teacher Work Day.

<input type="radio"/>	Monday-I can...
<input type="radio"/>	Tuesday-I can
<input type="radio"/>	Wednesday-I can...
<input type="radio"/>	Thursday-I can...
<input type="radio"/>	Friday-I can...

Writing:

Composing: Ensure events are in sequence and have an adequate closing

Composing: Follow the organization for writing a letter to include date, greeting, body, and closing;

Brainstorm ideas for letter writing and begin shared writing

U/M: Use commas in the salutation and closing of a letter

Wednesday:

Addition and Subtraction/Inverse Relationship/Fact Fluency?



2nd Grade Team Agenda



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<input type="checkbox"/>	Monday-I can...
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday-I can
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday-I can...
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday-I can...
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday-I can...

Thursday: Content, Big picture planning, and general Housekeeping

Magnets



2:05 - 2:15

8th
Word Building
PD
10th Article
Review

Chapter - Review

February 4, 2016
Lead Meeting Agenda

- RTI Book Study
 - Share out
- Chinese New Year
 - Monday Feb 8th
 - Parade 2:30 (led by 5th grade)
 - Chinese snacks available at lunch time
 - Get your stuff
- Data Meeting (Feb 16)
 - Who is next? → *Cyber Flyers*
- Staff Meeting February 23rd 8am *Near Red Tomorrow*
 - Topic: Kandel health and stuff
 - Nichols will be at principal's meeting
- Barbara
 - Updates/reminders
- Shirley-Ruth
 - Chinese New year Monday February 8th

Kardak Snacks
Insurance requirements
Rainbow something

- 5th grade lead*
 - line halls
 - get picked up March
 - then Drop off.
- 1/2 orange after parade.
- IE cut in 1/2 that day

Full lap
 Pick up on two
 drop off on three

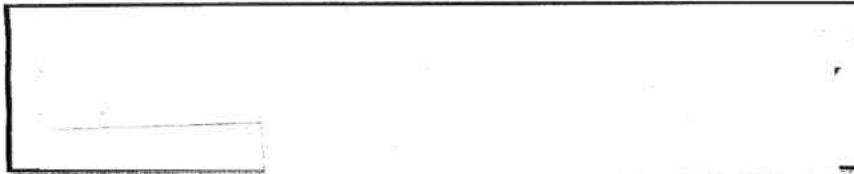
- Chinese Lunch snack
CF Rice
egg rolls

Decorations - need to be up by Monday - Can anyone stay tomorrow and help hang them.

- White*
- *Red paper ~ laminated coming - hang up*

*envelopes - compliments
String coming for necklace*

143115



Handed

IE PD
Done through leads
Article to read
Read by next MTG

December 3, 2015
Lead Meeting Agenda

* No Lead Meeting Dec 17th
* 5 days of feasting

- Cycles are continuous and fluid
- Goals in tier 2 should be met by 90% of students if the goal and instruction are appropriate (research states that 10% or less of students require tier 3) *Should be no more than 4% students*
- A general rule is students should not be in intervention groups continuously
- * Enrichment groups will be large
- Students requiring tier 3 should have this provided through small group or another ^{Tier 2} intervention cycle depending on the situation
- * Grade level teachers and specialists need to meet regularly to discuss progress and plan together *Where we need to work on as a staff*

- PTA
- Winter Festival Jan 22nd 6-8 pending final exec board approval *Replacing Winter Crafts*
 - Next exec board meeting Dec 8 6-7 *one per grade to attend, who for us?*

Success Criteria
good news 95 students did not meet quarter 1 success criteria for q1 20-3%
 * We should now be identifying those who we suspect will not meet Q2 criteria based on data and discussing a plan; *let Barbara and I know when this will take place so we can attend. We need to plan on when to do this*

- Grades
- * Grades 1 and 2 send home Interims on Dec 9th
 - Grades 3-5 should be entering grades for parentvue regularly. Should be approximately 5 grades by Dec 9

Vicki

- What should we do for a good bye gift? Dec 18 is her last day *Office getting cake \$130 GC Jefferson Cup good \$76 left by 11*

Office

- * Be mindful of times on blue slips and have students in the office on time

Next Data Meeting December 8th 8am *Alison will start MTG*
 • K grade is presenting *Connor Be on Time!*

Human Rights Day

- Updates from all Math Academy and buses

Barbara

Shirley-Ruth

- Updates/reminders

- Culture/world studies update

Gallery walk- GL doing BB

2 student openings

2nd Round of TAG Testing Next Week (Tues.)

Will be doing Chinese Year!

- Feb 8 - Monday
- Kids want to do some craft
- Windy will be ordering stuff

• See if Cafeteria will do oranges * YOU!

- Year of Fire Monkey

Human Rights Day

- Updates from all

Math Academy and buses

- Update from Debbie

Barbara

- Updates/reminders

Shirley-Ruth

- Culture/world studies update

Gallery walk - GL doing BB

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