

TEACHER LEADERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION: CHANGE AGENTS
IN A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Education reform initiatives continue to push schools to improve methods of measuring accountability intended to improve student achievement in the United States. Federal programs like the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) provide school districts with funds to develop and implement school accountability and leadership programs. Teacher leadership is one of the concepts being formally developed amongst these initiatives. My applied thesis project focused on work I conducted with a team of researchers at American Institutes for Research, where we evaluated a teacher leadership program in its third year of implementation in a large urban school district. Teacher leadership is facilitated through distributive leadership. School leaders distribute responsibilities that provide teachers with opportunities to extend their expertise outside of their own classrooms. My thesis explores teacher leadership roles and investigates implementation across the client school district. It also discusses how particular anthropological theories about communities of practice, learning, and identity can provide a foundation for conceptualizing teacher leadership implementation and the social interactions between program actors.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Education reform initiatives continue to push schools to improve methods of measuring accountability intended to improve student achievement in the United States. Federal programs like the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) provide school districts with funds to develop and implement school accountability and leadership programs. Teacher leadership is one of the concepts being formally developed amongst these initiatives. My applied thesis project focused on work I conducted with a team of researchers at American Institutes for Research, where we conducted an evaluation of a teacher leadership program in its third year of implementation in a large urban school district in the United States.

Teacher leadership is facilitated through distributive leadership. School leaders distribute responsibilities that provide teachers with opportunities to extend their expertise outside of their own classrooms. Responsibilities include: coaching peers individually and on teams, conducting observations and evaluations, providing frequent feedback, and facilitating professional development. Increasingly, districts are encouraging schools to implement teacher leadership programs. As a result, several cohorts complete formal pilot and initial year program phases. These efforts provide opportunities to study the effectiveness of teacher leadership programs and to learn about successes and challenges of implementation.

This thesis explores teacher leadership roles and investigates implementation across the client school district. The overall goal of the evaluation is to inform other schools and districts about the process and what rolling out a similar initiative could

mean for their own shared leadership and accountability efforts. This thesis discusses how applied anthropology has been a relevant and an insightful lens for collecting and analyzing data, leading to findings about teacher leadership implementation. This thesis also explores how particular theories about communities of practice, learning, and identity have provided a foundation for conceptualizing teacher leadership implementation and the social interactions between program actors.

CHAPTER 2

APPLIED THESIS PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following chapter sections provide information about my client, the school district, and the Teacher Leadership Program investigated, providing a context for the study's research questions addressed in Chapter Four. District documents are not specifically identified here as to maintain district confidentiality. Information presented in this chapter concerning district background, program objectives, and roles was drawn primarily from extant data and interview responses collected during the study concerning understanding of the program.¹

2.1 Description of Client and Research Team

American Institutes for Research (AIR) is a non-profit, non-partisan social science research and evaluation organization. AIR employs over 1,800 people throughout the world. The organization's mission is to "conduct and apply the best behavioral and social science research and evaluation towards improving people's lives, with a special emphasis on the disadvantaged" (AIR 2016). AIR conducts research in many areas such as health, education, and workforce. I worked with researchers who are in their second year of evaluating the effectiveness of the client school district's teacher effectiveness evaluation and teacher leadership programs.

I began working for AIR as an intern assisting with data analysis of the year one evaluation. I also wrote a literature review to contextualize and situate the project's

¹ Particular data has been presented in this chapter instead of in findings chapter to provide background information needed to contextualize the study design.

research and findings. The team consisted of four other researchers and was divided into qualitative and quantitative expertise. However, everyone dabbled in both when working to inform analysis and develop findings for client recommendations. I was fascinated by the work, especially the aspects of teacher leadership and implementation challenges. Implementation was a topic the second year evaluation protocols addressed more specifically via deep dive interview probes. Given my interests, I asked my team if I could extend the internship and complete my applied thesis project at AIR. Beginning August 2015, I have assisted with site visit preparation, data collection, analysis, and the development of deliverables for the client school district. I also conducted separate analysis through various anthropological perspectives to complete my applied thesis project. While these processes often overlapped, the work I conducted for this project is separate and its perspectives do not reflect the views of American Institutes for Research.

2.2 Description of School District and Client Relationship

After winning a Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant, the client school district piloted a teacher leadership program of their own design across more than ten schools. The district increased the number of participating schools each year. Currently, the Teacher Leadership Program is implemented in over 70 schools and is impacting over 20,000 students.

TIF, first funded in 2006, is a federal initiative through the U.S. Department of Education and currently housed under the Office of Innovation and Improvement. The program provides grants to encourage states, districts, and partner organizations to

develop performance-based compensation programs for educators in high-need schools. TIF's objectives focus on incentivizing teacher quality as measured by innovative performance-based compensation programs that work to define what an effective teacher looks like through best practices applied in the classroom instead of focusing solely on teacher qualifications (e.g. degrees earned, years of experience) (U.S. Department of Education 2015). The multi-million dollar award won by the school district spans five years and will serve over 90 schools. Similar to previous TIF awards, objectives are focused on the number of effective educators in classrooms and improving student performance. The award also included requirements to incorporate objectives for teacher leadership through human capital management systems. Under U.S. Department of Education leadership initiatives, eligible educators take on additional responsibilities outside their usual instructional time through collaborative leadership roles to work on both school and instructional needs in participating schools (U.S. Department of Education 2015).

AIR contracted with the client school district after winning the bid to take on the proposed longitudinal evaluation study in 2014 after the district had completed its first year of implementation. AIR agreed to act as an external evaluator of both district teacher effectiveness and leadership programs to measure understanding, fidelity, and provide suggestions for program improvement. AIR was a good fit for the district's project need because the staff has been involved in the development of national model teacher leader standards and is highly knowledgeable about teacher leadership implementation issues. AIR has also conducted numerous other projects in the district and has fostered a strong client relationship over several years.

2.3 School District Background

Between 2001 and 2009, the client school district's school-age population grew due to the integration of charter school expansion and preschool program opportunities. In response to growing community diversity and an influx of non-English-speaking families, several reforms have been adopted and implemented in efforts to provide more equitable education opportunities. These reforms were adopted to increase the ability of schools to address disparity issues and meet demands for focused instruction and heightened standards for teaching practice in the district. Despite these programs being implemented, the school district recognizes the challenges it continues to face, including gaps in student achievement and lack of teacher support and opportunities to grow in their practice. District actors are working to resolve these issues that are common among the national education scape. They hope to serve as a model for other schools by documenting lessons learned through internal and external evaluation of the district's education reform efforts. Evidence proving their determination for greater standards and higher achievement is expressed via the district's implementation of two programs that work to develop teacher effectiveness and encourage teacher leadership. Their hope is to resolve issues concerning teacher preparedness, retention, and student engagement through implementation of these initiatives. While the district's teacher evaluation program is important to and integrated with the Teacher Leadership Program, this thesis focuses on the development and implementation of the specific teacher leadership program. Some insight into what the evaluation process and program looks like will be touched on to clarify how pieces of the Teacher Leadership Program work in context of

teacher effectiveness evaluation. However, specifics will not be given as to protect the identity of the school district.

The client school district identified herein will remain anonymous. Specific names and details of initiatives, role titles, school names, etc. have been changed to accommodate this agreement. School and participant information will frequently be reported in an aggregated form.

2.4 Teacher Leadership and Distributive Leadership

For this project, the term “teacher leadership” is used broadly. The concept, as it is contextualized by the client school district, has developed from four main reasons.

First, principals and school leaders have many responsibilities that could be shared by other school actors; second, effective and accomplished teachers have the potential and the desire to share their practice and grow in leadership roles within their schools; third, informal peer-to-peer learning organically happens in schools where continual learning and growth models for staff are supported; and fourth, the need for districts and schools to improve instruction and student achievement drives the emergence of innovative collaborative strategies for sharing best practices (Danielson 2006; Lieberman and Miller 2004; Neumerski 2013; Wilmore 2007).

Teacher leadership provides opportunities for these areas to be fulfilled by taking key responsibilities driving school engagement and accountability (i.e. teacher evaluations and professional development) and sharing them with individuals who apply and are selected to take on additional leadership responsibilities. This concept is referred to as “distributive” or “shared leadership” (Andrews and Lewis 2004; Nappi

2014). By supporting teachers within these roles, schools can leverage the intellectual capital currently developed and practiced by effective teachers within their own community. A deeper exploration into the development and purposed need for national teacher leadership and distributive leadership is provided in Chapter Three.

2.5 Program Objectives

The Teacher Leadership Program has several objectives and aims to result in several outcomes. The following objectives illustrated in Figure 1 are the goals the Teacher Leadership Program attempts to fulfill and the outcomes expected from implementation. Figure 1 and sections that follow in this section summarize district goals documented via teacher leadership implementation process documents such as job descriptions, implementation guides, and media coverage.

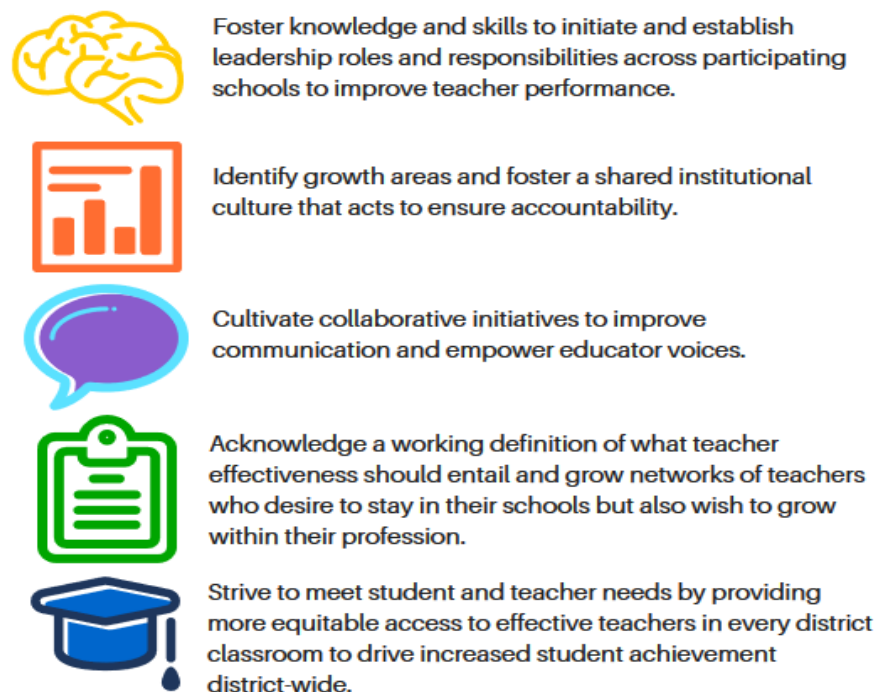


Figure 1: Teacher Leadership Program objectives summary

2.6 Becoming a Teacher Leadership School

The client school district designed their teacher leadership program to support teacher development and identify effective teaching methods that promote best practices. Teacher leadership expands and builds on what their teacher effectiveness evaluation program had already started. They utilized research concerning informal teacher leadership, teacher effectiveness, and logical models to develop their own district program. The TIF award gave the district the monetary means to implement a program based on school needs across the district and facilitate changes through classroom teachers who excel in their current positions.

Currently, schools, who want to implement the Teacher Leadership Program, proceed through an application process to identify school readiness and goal alignment with teacher leadership programming team at the district level. Teacher Leadership Program staff in the district's central office work with schools to assist in determining school readiness status. Once schools are deemed ready, they help develop teacher leadership approaches and structures. They also provide implementation support throughout the school year. It should be noted that some schools pilot similar teacher leadership initiatives in the district to assess if it is a good fit for their school and put their own spin on the program that differs somewhat from the district's vision and particular program planning.

2.7 Program Roles

The client school district offers two distinct teacher leadership roles: Senior Teacher Leader and Teacher Leader. Educators in these roles have teaching and

leading responsibilities. A major eligibility condition for teacher leader positions is the achievement of an individual evaluation rating of “effective” or “distinguished” on the district’s teacher evaluation system during the previous year. Excellent candidates hired for these teacher leader positions identify common areas of instruction that need improvement across classrooms at their school. They receive monetary incentives through an additional stipend on top of their annual salary and are provided training on a variety of topics such as evaluation and feedback, using data, leadership theory, and coaching. These trainings are offered throughout the summer and school year.

Teacher leaders typically receive 20 to 50 percent release time from their classroom duties to perform leadership responsibilities as distributed by the school leader. Teacher leaders work with other teachers to help improve instruction and student learning. They also advocate for teacher voice by serving on Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs). Senior teacher leaders fulfill evaluation responsibilities similar to those of principals and assistant principals. After being assigned a team of teachers, senior teacher leaders collect a body of evidence that consists of observation data as it has been calibrated with the teacher evaluation rubric throughout the year. They conduct full observations and collaborate with school leaders on final ratings for particular areas of focus as defined by the district’s teacher effectiveness evaluation program. Teacher leaders also provide ongoing feedback to teachers and facilitate mid-year and end-of-year conversations. Although teacher leaders conduct partial rather than full observations, both senior teacher leaders and teacher leaders take active roles in supporting teacher growth by facilitating professional development, ongoing

coaching, and regularly scheduled feedback conversations with their assigned caseload of teachers.

School leaders take on the responsibility of furthering teacher leader growth in the context of teacher leadership. While teacher leaders are meant to take responsibilities off the school leader's plate via distributive leadership, the school leader is responsible for supporting and continually developing all teacher leaders. These responsibilities might include modeling lessons or difficult conversations, scheduling regular check-in meetings, calibrating evaluations, and making sure to provide opportunities for targeted training or professional development. School leaders are also responsible for setting up the Teacher Leadership Program in compliance to district standards and designing the program with their school needs in mind. They encourage staff buy-in, hold teacher leaders accountable, and continually communicate district or central office requirements. Further discussion about how teacher leadership roles are developed and who fulfills these roles is discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION REFORM LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Literature Review Breakdown

This literature review serves two purposes. The first is to provide a foundation for understanding what factors have influenced education reform in the United States from the 1980s to 2016, leading to the current definitions and assessments of teacher effectiveness and leadership in schools. The second purpose is to illustrate how and why formal teacher leadership efforts are becoming instrumental in increasing achievement in schools and better preparing students as knowledgeable and capable citizens. The review discusses teacher evaluation and effectiveness to provide context in which formal teacher leadership initiatives have grown out of. Finally, it focuses on teacher leadership as an important component addressing teacher effectiveness issues and as a concept cultivating collaborative school cultures.

3.2 Education Reform

A Nation at Risk, the report of President Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) proposed that the United States had "educationally disarmed itself" (453). In the 30 years following publication, of education reform has been pushed into action by various federal and state reform initiatives (Cuban 1998). Concern for the next generation's educational prospects has been driven by a number of factors, including high-need schools and low student achievement across the nation (Fishman 2015; Lehman 2015; Leithwood et al. 2004; National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE] 1983; Rivkin et al. 2005; Tirozzi and Uro 1997).

Initiatives implemented in the 1990s in response to these concerns address issues in the Educate America Act (Goals 2000 Plan) and standards-based reform. The Educate America Act stressed the need to track and measure student achievement, set standards, and provide the resources and support needed to improve student performance (Educate America Act 2016). Initiatives in the 2000s focused on the concept that all students, if given quality instruction by their educators within a safe and supportive school environment, could reach high standards successfully regardless of any family and economic challenges students may face (Curtis 2013; Knowles et al. 2013; Lehman 2015; Little et al. 2009). One such reform initiative was called No Child Left Behind.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated that all teachers be “highly qualified,” (a) possess a bachelor's degree, (b) hold full state teaching certification or licensure, and (c) provide documentation that they know each subject they teach (Klein 2015a). NCLB also mandated that states develop assessments to test students on basic skills to measure results against overall standards. Overall standards define what students should attain or exceed as defined by the state. The NCLB law required annual public reporting, including reporting student performance by subgroups, to establish whether adequate yearly progress on such assessments had been reached (U.S. Department of Education 2002). The obligation to disaggregate by subgroups such as race/ethnicity, English language learners, and special education students attempted to target areas where schools need help improving equity.

Although NCLB attempted to ensure accountability for educators and districts, concerns remained about how NCLB impacts the way teachers do their jobs (i.e.

teaching to the test) and how the act's requirements define an "effective" teacher (i.e., qualifications by degree or years of experience) (Little et al. 2009). These concerns have sparked efforts to develop innovative programs to measure what it means to be an effective teacher in a variety of school contexts and to provide resources that will help teachers to develop professionally, thereby promoting best teaching practices and improving student performance. In 2011, NCLB waivers started granting eligible states more flexibility in meeting NCLB requirements to promote development and implementation of innovative teacher evaluation programs. These evaluation systems were required to contain measures of student growth such as student achievement on standardized tests.

New federal reform educational initiatives and policies have emerged since the Obama administration took office in 2009. In November 2009, President Obama stated, "It's time to stop just talking about education reform and start actually doing it. It's time to make education America's national mission" (U.S. Department of Education 2009). In the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) worldwide education evaluation survey, the United States placed 36th in mathematics, 28th in science, and 24th in reading out of 65 participating countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2012). PISA results revealed that the United States is nowhere near the top in major subject areas, including mathematics, reading, and science. These findings stir up ever-growing frustrations embodying the American public's demand for equitable education opportunities. These findings, too, can be perceived as an influence and driver for bold steps in education reform that has pushed the United States to reevaluate its methods of measuring effectiveness and determining

what schools need to improve student outcomes. Questions relating to these issues and discussion about actionable steps to improve these results continue to be directed at federal and state governing bodies (Horchschild and Scott 1998; Knowles et al. 2013; National Education Reform 1994; Rivkin et al. 2005).

The national Common Core Standards was developed in 2009 as a result of the Obama administration's push to improve national student achievement. Since 2007 these standards had been discussed formally by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Common Core was the result of those efforts taking shape and being developed officially. Notions about developing national standards are not new. Standards have existed since the early 1990s. By 2000, most states had their own version of formal standards. However, the lack of national standardization that define what *proficiency* means for schools and educators was a significant factor in drafting the Common Core Standards (King 2011; Porter et al. 2011). The Common Core defines proficiency and effectiveness for schools by providing a national framework that promotes student preparedness for continuing education in college, encouraging readiness and acquisition of the knowledge base required for a career. Common Core is controversial and has received much criticism. However, as of November 2013, the standards have been adopted by 45 states who are integrating them into their own systems of state education expectations and evaluation assessments.

In alignment with the Common Core State Standards mission, teacher quality evaluations and assessments have been areas of interest and action in federal and

state initiatives. The Obama administration's Race to the Top initiative has influenced the increase in evaluation program innovation and development. The competitive grant fund worth \$4.35 billion is facilitated by the U.S. Department of Education and has been authorized under sections 14005 and 14006 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act since 2009 (U.S. Department of Education 2009). States were awarded funding based on a point system that rated district efforts to assess teacher effectiveness grounded on multiple-measure, performance-based evaluations. Student achievement measures were a major requirement to include in the evaluations. The first awards were announced in 2010. This funding expanded the states' ability to support district reforms as well as develop and implement educator evaluation initiatives.

In December 2015, President Obama passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replacing the NCLB Act. The bipartisan measure "reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students" (U.S. Department of Education 2016). ESSA continues to push for higher standards set by schools and strives for increased student achievement like many other initiatives. ESSA will provide more flexibility for state driven assessment and accountability measures. While previous initiatives required evaluation systems based in part on student achievement measures, ESSA has eliminated the mandate to include student achievement measures based on large-scale standardized tests. Some initiatives and programs not included in NCLB have been integrated into ESSA such as College-and-Career Readiness Standards (CRC), innovative local and state assessments, and teacher and leader evaluation systems (Klein 2015b).

With these new changes to reform, design of the client school district's evaluation program and teacher leadership initiatives will likely be altered as well in efforts to better measure teacher effectiveness and provide support to teachers. For example, under ESSA student testing and assessments are no longer required to be a part of the measure of student growth. The district has multiple components that make up the student growth measure, including student assessments. However, greater weight may be applied to components centered on student goal setting and meeting objectives that are not tied to testing (U.S. Department of Education 2016). When reform changes, districts are forced to revisit their current initiatives and make revisions to meet national standards but also contextualize measures within their own states based on stakeholder demands.

3.3 Teacher Effectiveness and Evaluation

How are teachers evaluated and why does it remain important to consider evaluation reform? What measures should be taken into account to assess effectiveness, and how should the weight of chosen components be determined? These difficult questions are at the core of current education reform and debate. Discussion concerning these topics remains heated because of the nature of the stakes, which are determinedly high, and the prospective unintended damaging consequences if changes do not occur—the continuation of widespread disparity of access to quality education.

Hull (2013) writes, "For decades, teacher evaluations were little more than a bureaucratic exercise that failed to recognize either excellence or mediocrity in teaching. Increasingly, this is no longer the case" (1). Similarly, Weisberg et al. (2009)

explain the problems in effectiveness evaluations by identifying what they call “The Widget Effect.” They write, “The Widget Effect describes the tendency of school districts to assume classroom effectiveness is the same from teacher to teacher” (Weisberg et al. 2009, 2). The effect notes how these systems lack respect and acknowledgment for teachers as “individual professionals” and instead characterize them as “interchangeable parts” (3). The notion that teacher effectiveness is complex, and more complicated than just school administrator opinions and student test scores, has pushed states to think critically about alternative and more representative systems to develop, implement, and reevaluate.

Local principals typically conduct traditional teacher evaluations, assessing individual teachers with surface-level and routine methods of observation. Qualifications and certifications are also viewed as inaccurate measures of effectiveness. Hahnel and Jackson (2012) explain the issue clearly when they write, “‘highly qualified’ may not mean highly effective” (8). Teacher evaluations, although similar across states, do vary from state to state by component selection and distribution of weight of chosen components. More recent and popular measures, commonly known as “value-added measures,” have heavily weighted and factored in student test scores and student achievement to determine teacher ratings. Most stakeholders, especially teachers, have recognized the limitations of these types of calculation methods and believe them to be inaccurate, subjective, and unfair representations of their teaching practices and of the dynamics taking place in their classrooms (Dee and Wyckoff 2013; Gordon et al. 2006; Master 2014; McCaffrey et al. 2004; Rockoff 2003; Whitehurst et al. 2014).

Although fervent debate continues about what effectiveness means and which components should be used, one common understanding among stakeholders remains especially significant—educator effectiveness should be calculated using multiple measures. The use of multiple measures as conveying more holistic representations and accurate ratings of teachers in their classrooms is documented extensively in the literature (Dee and Wyckoff 2013; Gordon et al. 2006; Goe and Croft 2009; Hull 2013; Little et al. 2009; MET Project 2013a; Whitehurst et al. 2014).

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project is the first and well-known research study to evaluate new teacher evaluation systems. Released in 2013, the MET study was designed to conduct in-depth research about how teacher evaluation programs were currently being implemented and how those programs were informing teachers about the skills they needed to be successful practitioners in the classroom. The MET project was a multiyear, multidistrict study that culminated with findings aimed at answering questions concerning the worthiness of evaluative components, the weighting of evaluation components in teacher overall ratings, and the identification of effective teaching in effective learning outcomes. The MET study highlighted several important findings, two of which also show up in the literature are (a) using multiple measures in evaluations is important in representing “a more balanced approach” and a holistic 360-degree representation of a teacher’s effectiveness, and (b) having multiple observers evaluate a teacher contributes to a more representative rating of a teacher overall. Multiple observers provide helpful feedback from more than a sole source, which provides perspectives that influence teacher steps for practice improvement (MET Project 2013a).

Evaluation systems ultimately strive to improve the quality of teaching by identifying instructional strengths and weaknesses. Evaluation systems also influence personnel decisions, whereby effective teachers are assigned to areas they are best suited for, and ineffective teachers, after failed steps to improve, are dismissed. This type of model supports high retention of effective teachers in school systems, providing more equitable education opportunities for prospective students (Abliedinger and Kowal 2010; Griffeth and Horn 2001; Kane et al. 2011; Master 2015; Steel et al. 2002). Research on education evaluation strives to provide empirical and data-driven findings concerning the validity and reliability of these programs, especially on the relevancy of components such as observations and student perceptions (Herlihy et al. 2014; MET Project 2013b).

Although existing literature, research, and ongoing discussion have influenced and helped in the design, development, and implementation of new programs, which measures to use and how those measures should be weighted are topics of great debate with little empirical evidence. In addition, multiyear analysis of implemented programs has been limited, and evidence of these programs' success in the field is unreliable or incomplete. As education reform continues to gain more attention, and as programs developed in recent years have time to get under way and be assessed comprehensively, literature concerning these topics with illustrative examples can start answering the difficult lingering questions about teacher evaluation. Answer to these questions can help better inform the definition of what it means to be a highly effective teacher in the United States.

Teacher quality and educator effectiveness directly influence the output of skilled students, critical thinkers, and prepared citizens (Goe 2007; Goe, Bell, and Little 2008; Little et al. 2009; MET Project 2013a). It is not difficult to grasp the importance of these desired outcomes or to understand how students' failure to succeed in classrooms can impact our nation's future. What is challenging is figuring out solutions to improve these conditions.

While the client school district discussed in this thesis has implemented a new teacher effectiveness evaluation program that is being assessed as well, this thesis focuses solely on the district's Teacher Leadership Program that was developed in response to reform efforts. However, having the context of teacher effectiveness evaluation sets the stage for the formalization of teacher leadership initiatives and sets the stage for why particular duties are now being written into teacher leader role descriptions.

3.4 The Concept of Teacher Leadership

In the 1980s and 1990s a movement to professionalize teaching was established by education scholars who were concerned that teachers' expertise was being underutilized. They believed that by leveraging existing expert teachers, school improvements could occur via change agents from the inside (Stoelinga and Mangin 2010). The concept of teacher leadership, though not new to the education, recently has been developed and implemented alongside teacher evaluation to address accountability issues. Holland et al. (2014) developed a framework that traces the concept from the "managerial role" (grade-level/content chair), popular during the era of

A Nation at Risk (NCEE 1983), to the “teacherpreneur” role, brought about with the development and implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Given the need for districts and schools to improve instruction, implement reforms, expand the impact of excellent teachers, and provide sufficient instructional leadership, the role of the teacher leader is increasingly important (Curtis 2013; Gordon et al. 2014; Nappi 2014; Stein 2014).

Early teacher leadership efforts arose to professionalize teaching created “shared decision-making structures that incorporated teachers” (Stoelinga and Mangin 2010, 3). The scope of teacher leadership literature has slowly evolved over time from Miles, Saxl, and Lieberman’s (1988) early studies on teacher leader skills in the 1980s to Wasley’s (1991) and Smylie and Denny’s (1990) targeted studies concerning teacher leader difficulties in assuming their new roles in bureaucratic systems in the 1990s. Lambert (2003) and Shulman’s (2000) conducted studies in the 2000s on new teacher leader roles and how the roles act to reculture schools. However, despite discussion, development and implementation of these leadership initiatives, the vast majority of the literature on school-level education leadership focuses on the role of the principal (Neumerski 2013). This focus is possibly indicative of the fact that early teacher leadership efforts promoted teachers into “managerial” roles and “away from matters of instruction” (Stoelinga and Mangin 2010, 3). However, schools do report implementing different types of roles that are targeted more towards improvement in instruction. It is evident that teacher leadership is forging ahead in school improvement efforts, especially considering the number of federal initiatives and reforms that have supported implementation of teacher leadership and distributive leadership models such as

Reading First, Teacher Incentive Fund, America's Choice and Success for All, and, the newly passed, Every Student Succeeds Act. However, literature to support and explain these particular types of roles and programs is still arriving on the scene (Stoelinga and Mangin 2010; York-Barr and Duke 2004).

In most districts, formal teacher leadership roles are in early stages of development, and though the role is theoretically promising and being adopted with increasing frequency, there is little research that exists examining the impact of teacher leadership on student achievement or outcomes specifically (Curtis 2013; Neumerski 2013). The literature also lacks practical information about how teacher leaders understand and execute their roles, instead focusing on describing the characteristics of teacher leadership (Avidov-Ungar et al. 2014; Firestone and Martinez 2007; Gronn 2002; Helterbran 2010; Margolis and Deuel 2009; Neumerski 2013) or how perceptions of teacher leadership impact school efficacy (Angelle and Teague 2014; Marzano and McNulty 2005; Nappi 2014).

School principals and administrators are accountable for many responsibilities as well as the overall school performance outcomes. Put simply, if there are problems, principals and administrators are expected to figure out how to fix them. These individuals might have the experience and expertise to handle the job, but discussions about whether this sort of system is most effective and whether shared responsibilities among other school actors might be a more productive model has sparked changes in designing education evaluation reform (Anderson 2004; Curtis 2013; Gordon et al. 2014; Helterbran 2010; Nappi 2014).

3.5 Elements of Teacher Leadership

Andrews and Lewis (2004) describe a form of leadership in which teacher leaders work closely with principals. Responsibilities are shared and distributed to achieve pressing school goals. This model is being incorporated increasingly into schools to address teacher effectiveness and evaluation through leadership initiatives. Margolis and Huggins (2012) describe the role as a hybrid position, in which teacher leader time is distributed between instruction with students in the classroom and responsibilities undertaken outside the classroom to lead and mentor colleagues in best practices. Some states are more concerned about improving student success by increasing effectiveness of teachers through coaching and peer mentoring strategies that aid in developing teacher practice. Other states are more concerned about recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers. Some school districts use leadership programs to provide opportunities for advancement inside the classroom by distributing additional responsibilities to teachers. These teachers receive increased compensation and recognition (Curtis 2013). Stoelinga and Mangin (2010) report the strategy of leveraging “expert teachers” has spread rapidly in the past few years and “today most schools offer formal roles for teacher leaders as instructional coaches” (ix).

Research indicates that collaboration and sharing expertise provides greater overall achievement rather than focus on goals worked on by individuals separately and on different components (Gronn 2002). Instilling a coaching culture corroborates a more collaborative model and allows effective teachers to pursue leadership positions (Berkowicz and Myers 2014; Jackson and Bruegmann 2009).

Quartz et al. (2008) examined teacher career paths, investigating retention and role changing among 838 teachers. They found that teachers were looking for positions in which they could grow professionally to make good teaching possible across their school campuses. Environments supporting this growth facilitated supportive colleagues, engaged principals, and sufficient resources. Teacher leadership positions not only encourage highly effective teachers to engage in coaching and mentoring their peers, but also act to elevate the profession as a discipline of continual and collective learning (Curtis 2013; Hunzicker 2013).

With the teaching profession facing serious challenges in the areas of recruitment, morale, and retention, teacher leadership is becoming increasingly integrated into evaluation systems as a strategy to (a) provide opportunities for highly effective teachers to further develop their careers and (b) share their skills and experience to foster team-oriented school cultures. These cultures support educator opportunities to learn from their peers in a formalized capacity through structured time and access to resources. Expansion of literature bodies in education is anticipated as these programs become a more formalized part of the landscape.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

This chapter details how the Teacher Leadership Program evaluation was conducted with the AIR team. It also provides detailed discussion about the research questions, approach, methods, and analysis I conducted for this project.

The research team investigated Teacher Leadership Program implementation for the client school district through a mixed-methods approach utilizing qualitative and quantitative methods. Research questions informed the design of the study that included two main phases for each of the following qualitative elements: protocol development, school and participant recruitment, data collection via site visits, and analysis. Two district-administered surveys were analyzed for questions relevant to my research questions. The research process and phases are detailed below within their respective sections.

4.1 Research Questions

While the AIR team had many research questions negotiated with the client school district, I chose to develop my own central research questions. My questions were answered by many of the questions within the site visit protocols and amongst extant data from the year one evaluation analysis I helped conduct in the summer before site visits began in October for the year two evaluation.² Figure 2 includes the list

² While my work on the year one evaluation informed how I understood, approached, and conducted my thesis project, I have only drawn on the year two evaluation data for the analysis of this thesis due to project time constraints.

of research questions I developed to foster a more informed preliminary understanding concerning the program and context.

My Initial Central Research Questions

How was the Teacher Leadership Program developed and why?

How many district schools are participating in the Teacher Leadership Program? Which schools are participating and how do they differ from each other?

How do teachers become teacher leaders? What is the process for recruitment and selection?

What are teacher leader roles and responsibilities, as implemented by teacher leaders?

What traditional school leadership responsibilities are being distributed to teacher leaders and how?

What is the impact of teacher leaders on other school leaders and their roles/responsibilities, including principals and assistant principals?

Figure 2: Initial central research questions

With these initial questions from the year one exploration and my review of all available implementation documents from the district, I was able to identify directions I wanted to pursue for my thesis project. I was interested in knowing more about what implementation looked like across schools, what factors participants felt were important for successful implementation, and what qualities and skills participants felt were critical for teacher leaders to have in order to succeed in their roles. I kept these interests in mind when aiding in protocol development (discussed below) and developed a second set of research questions I utilized for my thesis. Figure 3 lists the questions I developed.

Central Research Questions

What are best practices and areas of improvement around teacher leader recruitment and selection?

What are predictive indicators that teachers will be successful teacher leaders?

What are the structures in place at schools successfully implementing the Teacher Leadership Program before and after implementation?

What interactions are products of teacher leadership implementation? How do these interactions form and how are they maintained?

How is the Teacher Leadership Program impacting schools?

Figure 3: Central research questions

4.2 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods primarily defined this study. The purpose of interviewing school actors was to gain perceptions about and insights concerning Teacher Leadership Program implementation. By documenting their responses, a more accurate and emic understanding of what is happening within schools and how teacher leadership is influencing school structure, support, and culture. These methods, described below, adhered well to my educational training in cultural anthropology and my experience in conducting ethnographic research, collecting data, and analyzing data to identify patterns and themes. Ethnographic research is described by LeCompte (2010) as

a systematic approach [that] uses the researcher as the primary tool of data collection [and] emphasizes and builds on the perspectives of people in the research setting. [It also] uses both inductive and deductive approaches, so as to

build more effective and socially and culturally valid local theories for testing and adapting them for both locally and elsewhere (1).³

While ethnographic research can be conducted utilizing many different methods, I mainly conducted interviews during site visits and reviewed internal and external program documents (i.e. job descriptions, implementation guides) and media coverage (i.e. news articles, district statements).

I also define this study as utilizing Rapid Qualitative Inquiry (RQI) defined by Beebe (2013) as

an intensive, team-building qualitative inquiry with (a) focus on the insider's or emic perspective, (b) using multiple sources and triangulation, and (c) using iterative data analysis and additional data collection to quickly develop a preliminary understanding of a situation (3).

My participation and the duration of this individual thesis project has spanned six months and AIR is contracted for a longitudinal evaluation spanning three years with the district. However, the research process has been broken up into chunks with scheduled steps including: site visit preparation, site visits, coding and analysis, and preparation and presentation of deliverables. The time between data collection and findings delivery is frequently marked by only weeks. It should be noted that ethnographic research calls for immersive and extended time in the field with relatively long stints of analysis and continuous visits to the field to collect more data. However, practitioners in applied anthropology and RQI have worked to develop approaches to more quickly conduct fieldwork and speed up the analysis process (i.e. via dynamic teams, targeted sampling, and advanced systems of analysis) (Beebe 2013; Bernard 2011; Jordan 2013;

³ I recognize that the methods described here cannot necessarily be categorized as ethnography due to the lack of immersion and participant observation. The study should be understood in terms of ethnographically informed approaches.

LeCompte and Schensul 2013). These methods are extremely valuable and effective to clients needing timely information for continued development and decision-making. AIR, in an agreement with the client school district, determined deliverable turnaround including emerging findings reports and presentations to the district for only weeks after data was collected. The quick turnaround was determined to facilitate delivery of applicable feedback and evaluation on the recent state of the Teacher Leadership Program throughout the school year. Qualitative methods were well-suited for this project in terms of in-depth analysis and timeliness. It was the work of a dynamic team that made these methods most effective and feasible.

4.3 Sampling Design

To gain deeper knowledge of educator understanding and implementation of teacher leadership, we conducted site visits with a sample of schools in the district. We worked with the district's central office staff to recruit and select a purposeful sample of schools for site visits. The representative sample of participants included: teacher leaders, teachers who work with teacher leaders, teachers who do not work with teacher leaders, and school administrators. Selection of teachers to participate in interviews made up a stratified random sample. However, the selection was also purposeful. We wanted to make sure to get a more representative sample with teachers who teach varying subjects and grades.

The research team considered several factors when creating the school selection and interview sampling plan. Key among the factors was ensuring representation of schools of various types and in various different grade-level configurations, cohorts, and

networks. The senior researcher on the team received a list of district schools and school rosters from the client school district that identified schools that had formally implemented the Teacher Leadership Program. We used these documents as our sampling frame. The sample was stratified by the following variables: network, school type, and cohort. The number of schools was determined based on an agreed upon sample size between AIR and the client school district, which was informed by the timeframe we had to conduct visits, analyze data, and report findings, the limited number of researchers on our team, and budget concerns.

Participants from rosters were disaggregated into four main categories: school leaders, teacher leaders, teachers who work with teacher leaders, and teachers who do not work with teacher leaders. We recruited all school leaders and teacher leaders at each school. Recruitment of teachers was random once identified initially. We attempted to recruit at least six to eight teachers per school. After the first round of site visits, the research team decided not to interview teachers not working with teacher leaders in round two in order to prioritize the client school district's need for information about the interactions between teacher leaders and their caseload teachers. We prioritized scheduling interviews with teachers working with teacher leaders and looked more closely at the subjects taught by teachers in the second round of site visit participants in order to get a diverse group of interviewees. Figures 4 and Figure 5 display approximate sample data that describe both interview and survey participants.⁴

Figure 4 displays only the subject(s) teachers interviewed teach. It does not include the subject(s) teacher leaders teach part-time during their instructional periods.

⁴ October and January site visit participants are combined. Numbers represent a majority of participants. Demographic data was not collected from 100 percent of interviewees.

The “Other” category includes the following subjects: Music, Computer Design, Ceramics, Photography, Art, Technology, Business, Multimedia and Video, Physical Education. Most elementary school teachers taught all subjects and have been included in their own category instead of being counted in each subject area.

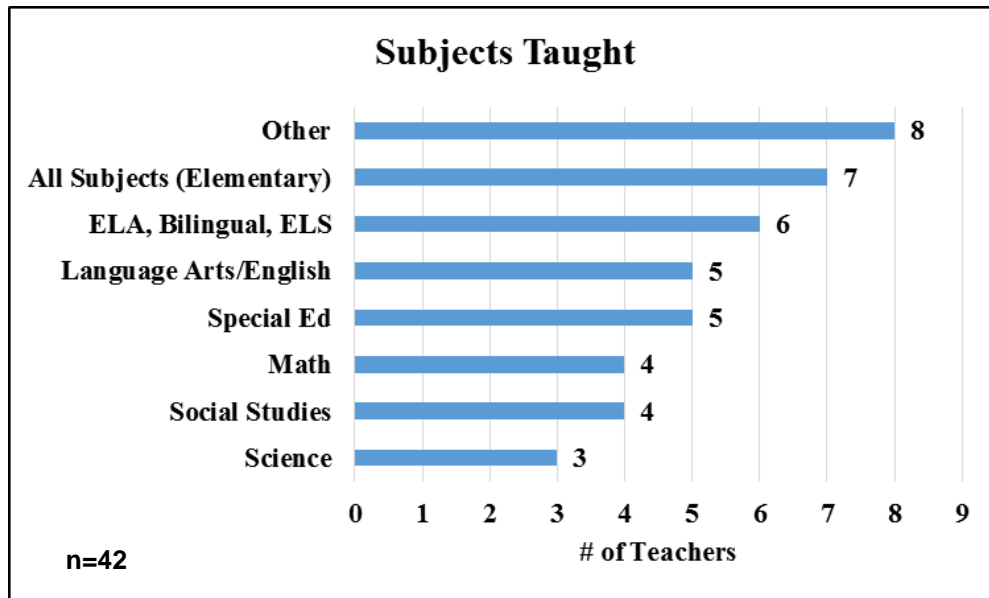


Figure 4: Subjects taught in sample

Figure 5 displays the spread of teachers among school type including secondary and elementary. Secondary includes middle and high schools.

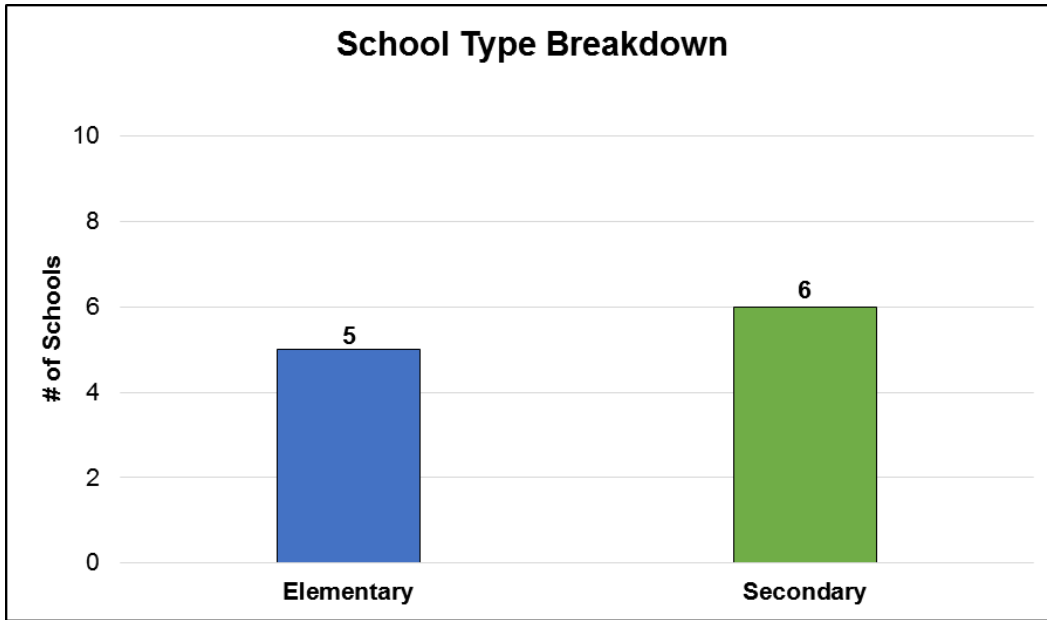


Figure 5: School type breakdown

Figure 6 displays number of years of experience in education across all participant types together. Teacher leaders tended to have a minimum of three years of experience in education with an average of 10.8 years across teacher leaders. Teachers from the sample had years of experience ranging from one to 44 years with an average of 13 years of experience in education. School leaders had an average of 13 years of experience in education.

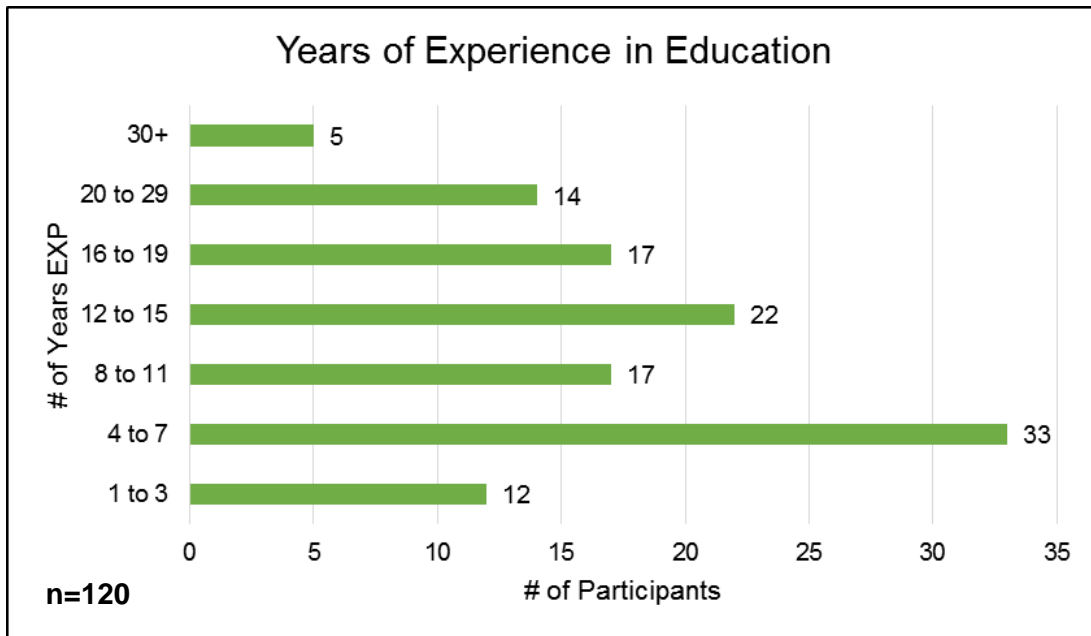


Figure 6: Years of experience in education across all participant types

4.4 Study Timeline

Table 1 shows a timeline in which the processes and particular tasks of my thesis project took place.

Table 1: Project timeline

Activity	Timeframes
Institutional Review Board Approval	October 23, 2015
Recruitment	Early October-Late October
Development/Finalization of Protocols	Late September – Late October
Site Visits	October 26 th —30 th
Transcription	Early November
Cleaning and Coding Transcripts	Early-Late November
Analysis	Late November – Early January
Findings Summary Presentation	January 14, 2016
Findings Summary Report	Late January
Recruitment	Early – Mid January
Development/Finalization of Protocols	Early – Mid January
Site Visits	January 25 th -29 th
Transcription	Early February
Cleaning and Coding Transcripts	Early-Late February
Analysis	Early-Late March
Survey Thesis Analysis	Mid-February-Mid March
Thesis Research Complete	Mid-March
Findings Summary Presentation	April 5 th , 2016
Findings Summary Report	Late April

4.5 IRB Review and Confidentially

The process of gaining approval from the university's Institutional Review Board worked out the nature of my applied thesis project and confidentiality agreements with both AIR and the client school district. A letter granting me permission from the district to conduct my thesis work alongside AIR's evaluation was provided. A major part of the IRB's protocol was to gain permission from individual interviewees to use their responses in my study. I drafted consent forms describing the study and a confidentiality agreement. The confidentiality agreement defined how I would use pseudonyms for participant and school names. Participation in AIR's study was not contingent on whether or not participants agreed to participate in my study. Responses from interviewees not wanting to participate in my study would not have been included in datasets utilized for my thesis. Fortunately, no interviewee declined to participate.

4.6 Protocol Development

Interview protocols were developed based on agreed upon central research questions between the client school district and AIR researchers. Several meetings were held between the research team and the client to understand client needs and to review logic models and previous data collected to help inform the year two evaluation questions for teacher leadership protocols. Four separate protocols were drafted to accommodate our four types of participants: school leaders, teacher leaders, teachers who work with teacher leaders, and teachers who do not work with teacher leaders (refer to Appendix A). The qualitative lead on our team drafted the questions and then the whole team reviewed, revised, and discussed changes. Because we only had 20 to

30 minutes with each participant due to the hectic and full school day, we prioritized our protocol questions based on what the client school district identified as being most important for their own program development purposes. Protocols were semi-structured, meaning the interviewers would follow a general script and be sure to cover key topics using the protocol guide.

Semi-structured interviews were particularly suited for this study, because we had four researchers interviewing with varying levels of interviewing experience and varying levels of content matter expertise and contact with the client school district. Bernard (2011) writes “Formal, written guides are an absolute must if you are sending out several interviewers to collect data” (158). Protocol structure ensures the consistency of how interviewers phrase questions. Protocols included main questions, suggested probes, and “look fors,” which acted to prompt the interviewer as to what sort of data each question should be eliciting. “Look fors” also added clarity across interviewers in terms of what kind of information the client school district was looking for. Once a draft satisfied both the research team and the client school district, we sent the draft to an internal quality assurance associate to ensure appropriateness from an organizational front and to provide an outside perspective to objectively investigate question clarity.

After the October site visits, the team repeated the process for the January site visit protocols. However, January questions became informed by October responses and also shifted in some ways due to the client’s shifting priorities. Those priorities mainly shifted due to support and budget changes occurring in the district. With restructuring occurring in the district, we drafted questions that hit more specifically on

information the district felt would be useful for timely decision-making. These changes included questions asking participants to identify specific district supports needed and district-run professional development and training that were particularly useful.

4.7 Site Visit Scheduling

Scheduling was organized within a master scheduling spreadsheet with a tab for each school. These spreadsheets included information about the school, individuals identified as being part of the sample, individuals identified to contact as back-ups, specific information about potential participants such as their subjects, grades, and roles in the school. The recruiter took notes in the spreadsheets to record confirmations, follow-ups, cancellations, and next steps. Interviews were scheduled for between 20 to 30 minutes. As an intern and new team member, I was not a major part of the first round of recruitment. I revised the recruitment emails to include information about my thesis study in addition to AIR's evaluation and provided informed consent forms. However, I received the opportunity to take charge of the recruitment process for the site visits conducted in January. I worked closely with the scheduler to amend scheduling conflicts, reached out to potential participants via email to increase our sample size, and sent interview reminder emails.

4.8 Site Visit Overview

Over 70 schools have implemented the Teacher Leadership Program in the district. The first round of site visits took place in October 2015. Twelve schools were recruited. Eleven schools were visited. During site visits, myself and three other

researchers visited three cohort 1 schools, four cohort 2 schools, and four cohort 3 schools. Five schools were elementary and six schools were secondary. Seventy-seven participants total were interviewed during the first round.

We conducted a second round of site visits in January 2016. Nine schools were recruited. Seven total schools were visited. One school was conducted only via phone interviews due to scheduling issues, bringing the total number of schools included in the study in January to eight. We collected interview data from two different cohort 1 schools, four different cohort 2 schools, and two different cohort 3 schools. Four schools were primary and four were secondary. Forty-four participants total were interviewed during the second round.

Phone interviews were conducted after each site visit to accommodate a few participants who were unavailable to meet the week researchers were onsite. All together we visited 19 schools and conducted interviews with 121 participants. Table 2 provides a breakdown of schools and participants by type.

Table 2: Participant count and breakdown

Participant and School Summary Overview	
School Type	
Primary ⁵	9
Secondary	10
Total	19
Number of Schools by Cohort⁶	
Cohort 1	5
Cohort 2	7
Cohort 3	7
Number of Interviews by Participant Type	
School Leaders ⁷	18
Teacher Leaders (TLs)	54
Teachers who work with a TL	41
Teacher who do not work with a TL	8
Total Participants	121

4.9 Site Visit Preparation

The research team met before both site visits to review protocols and clarify any unfamiliar terms or context. However, after the first site visits, the research team decided to hold an extended meeting led by the qualitative lead to roleplay protocol questions. Researchers took turns being the interviewer and interviewee. This practice helped create greater understanding across the research team about how to ask questions and dig in with appropriate probes. We found the exercise to be helpful to the project and a beneficial team-building exercise.

⁵ Primary school type includes: ECE-5 and ECE-8; Secondary school type includes: 6-12 and 9-12

⁶ Cohorts represent groups of schools who formally received funding for the Teacher Leadership Program.

⁷ 18 out of 19 school leaders were interviewed. One was unavailable and out of the building at the time of the site visit and could not be reached for a phone interview.

Before traveling to the school district, we prepared site visit packets for interviewers. Packets were made for each school. Contents of each packet included: school information (address, phone number, etc.), interview schedules, and copies of each type of protocol, sign-in sheets, and confidentiality forms. Two recorders were given to each interviewer to ensure we had backup recordings.

4.10 Semi-Structured Interviews

The plan to conduct semi-structured interviews, instead of structured interviewing such as focus groups for example, was to maximize resources while minimizing threats to validity. Bernard (2011) mentions the benefit of conducting semi-structured interviews in terms of time and control. Semi-structured interviews demonstrate “that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your respondent to follow new leads” (158). We found this to be true during the flow of interviews. The structure helped keep discussions on topic, but also allowed some flexibility to dive deeper into interviewee responses.

Interviews conducted during the school day seemed to encourage staff participation since they would not require school staff to travel from their respective school sites. Conducting individual semi-structured interviews allowed participants to speak freely and increase the likelihood of protecting their confidentiality since we were able to meet in a location of their choice within their school.

4.11 Site Visits

Two pairs of researchers visited schools each day during site visit week. Interviewers paired off and interviews were conducted individually by one interviewer unless both interviewers were available. If a joint interview was conducted, one team member was responsible for explaining the study, providing an introduction, and recording the interview. The second interviewer primarily led the interview by following the protocol.

When interviewers arrived at each school, they checked in with the main office and then proceeded to interview locations. Interviews occurred at the following times: after school, before school, during lunch, or during common planning time. Each interview lasted an average of 25 minutes and covered between six to twelve protocol questions.

Prior to the start of the interview, participants were asked to fill out a sign-in sheet with demographic information such as their areas of teaching including subject and grade, their current role, number of years teaching at their school, and the number of years of experience in their role. Sign-in sheets proved helpful in analysis phases when sorting the data and participants by the different variables.

4.12 Summary of Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis is a process by which particular tasks are carried out to manage, organize, and validate the data. LeComte and Shensul (2013) summarize these tasks as the following in the process of capturing “emerging” themes: “noticing or perceiving, describing, defining, listing, classifying, comparing, contrasting, aggregating,

ordering, establishing linkages and relationships, and speculating” (92). We conducted and revisited these tasks throughout the four phases of analysis.

4.12.1 Phase I: NVivo and Creating a Coding Structure

Interview recordings were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents and saved under specific file conventions (i.e. school name, role, and participant’s initials) to help organize the data. Once interviews were transcribed and “cleaned” for accuracy, interviews were then uploaded as “sources” into an analysis software program called, NVivo. NVivo is a qualitative analysis program that is designed to manage large datasets and is particularly useful for coding and analyzing interview data.

Once the sources were uploaded, we needed to establish a coding structure. A coding structure is the arrangement researchers use to organize and disaggregate the data. This structure was built off of the protocols and an initial review of the data and supporting documents such as district and school implementation plans and process documents. We read through those supporting documents and transcripts to gain a basic feel for the type of data we had collected and what initial topics could be used to create a coding structure. These initial codes are called “thematic codes” or “parent nodes.” “Child nodes” fall underneath the parent nodes and provide more specific labels describing responses and topics relating to the parent node. We developed both theory-based codes derived from the research questions and stated goals provided by the client school district’s program staff. Data-based codes that emerged as themes were discovered during data analysis. Figure 7 displays a portion of the coding structure as situated in NVivo that I created for purposes of my thesis project.

Primary Nodes			
	Name	Sources	References
+	ExplainingTeacher Leadership	77	301
+	General Challenges	34	96
-	Implementation	76	859
+	07. Teacher Leader_Teacher match	27	75
+	14. TL Recruitment and Selection	55	281
+	15. Conditions needed to successfully implement Teacher	50	155
+	16. Principal Needs	9	72
+	17. Indicators of successful Teacher Leadership implemen	5	15
+	Do School Characteristics Matter	21	28
+	Successful teams	31	96
+	Teacher Leader framing	52	137

Figure 7: Example node structure in NVivo⁸

Data from sign-in sheets were pulled together into one Excel spreadsheet. That spreadsheet was then converted into a classification sheet. Items in the classification sheet are tied or linked to our sources (the interviews) in NVivo. These classifications are useful when conducting analysis on particular nodes, because we were able to disaggregate queries by attributes like years of experience or role. Figure 8 shows the structure of the classification sheet as it is built and visible in NVivo. The actual classification sheet is not shown here to protect participant identities.

⁸ Parent nodes are expanded to show an example of existing child nodes

Source Classifications		
Name	Created On	
Name	12/16/2015 5:36 PM	
Name		Type
School		Text
Role		Text
Working w/ TL		Text
How many teachers do you work with		Text
Grade(s)/Subject(s)		Text
Exp In School		Text
Exp Total		Text

Figure 8: Example of source classifications

4.12.2 Phase II: Coding Sources in NVivo

Before coding in NVivo, we met to review nodes in the coding structure to clear up any possible confusion about what a given node meant or if there needed to be any changes to the structure. I coded the data with two other researchers. To ensure accuracy and understanding across researchers, we conducted an inter-reliability query after interviewers had transcribed at least three varying sources (i.e. one teacher working with a teacher leader interview, one school leader interview, and one teacher leader interview). The purpose of inter-reliability is “to see whether the constructs being investigated are shared” (Bernard 2011, 447). We were able to run a query in NVivo to see the percentages of agreement amongst coders. Low percentages tell where coders are inconsistent. Fortunately, we had very few low percentage agreements and were able to quickly revisit and re-code the few discrepancies.

After establishing agreement and conducting the inter-reliability test, we coded the rest of the transcripts. Coding took several weeks and the coding team met regularly

to discuss any changes to the structure, assessing progress made, and to discuss next steps.

When I conducted my thesis analysis, I created a new project within NVivo with the team's coded data and recoded sources as needed to fit within my new coding structure.

4.12.3 Phase III: Running Queries and Conducting In-Depth Analysis

After all of the sources had been coded, the team met to discuss areas and topics where rich analysis could be yielded. We also looked back on notes detailing what the client school district wanted us to prioritize and cover in our analysis. After assessing topics to cover, the qualitative lead assigned topics to each researcher.

NVivo eases the process of analysis by providing automatic query options. Query examples include: word frequency, text search, and matrix coding. I used the matrix coding query most frequently. Matrix coding cross-tabulates the project content that has been coded at different nodes. An example of this type of query was when I investigated the "Cohort" node disaggregated by 1, 2, and 3 to represent schools implementing at different stages across the district and hiring processes via nodes "Hired from Outside" and "Hired from Within." This query provided information about how many participants from cohort 1, 2, and 3 mentioned their school hiring internally versus externally. Figure 9 shows an example of how this query can be ran. More elaborate queries can also be run by adding attributes (from the classification sheet for instance) to the selected nodes to disaggregate the data further.

Matrix Coding Query - Results		
	A : Hired from outside	B : Hired from within
1 : Cohort 1	0	5
2 : Cohort 2	2	5
3 : Cohort 3	5	8

Figure 9: Example matrix query from October 2015 site visits

While queries are useful in gaining ideas about how the data is distributed and provides a high level analysis of what is going on in the data, deeper dives looking into the actual text yield the richest insights. By selecting nodes within NVivo, the researcher is able to pull up all of the text that has been coded under that node. The researcher can then read through exactly what participants had to say about the given topic. While the queries may report the number of participants who mentioned internal hiring for instance, the text within the node provides the story. What are participants saying about how people were hired internally? What did that process look like? Were there any challenges? What was beneficial about hiring internally versus externally? These questions have the possibility of being answered by reading and re-reading the text coded under the respective nodes. Between queries and deep text dives, we reported findings that provided insight into research questions to the client school district.

4.12.4 Content Analysis and Grounded Theory

Analysis in this project was a process of abstraction that has moved between inductive and deductive analysis and reasoning. The recursive process allowed for both exploration of the data from the “top down,” where we deductively used predefined coding nodes for analysis and from the “bottom up,” where we inductively developed nodes from newly identified themes (LeCompte and Shensul 2013, 83). These levels of

abstraction provided a comprehensive approach to organization of the data via content analysis. Content analysis splits and chunks data. Coding text under nodes within our coding structure acted to facilitate this process.

This project analysis can also be situated in Glaser's and Strauss' "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss 2012). Bernard (2011) describes grounded theory as incorporating three steps, "coding the texts for themes; linking themes into theoretical models; and displaying and validating the models" (435). Grounded theory also incorporates both inductive examination and deductive reasoning. On the one hand, we knew a lot about what themes were likely to come up due to the previous year's analysis and the process of conducting interviews with semi-structured protocols; however, we proceeded in an exploratory mode, where themes emerged from the texts as we read and re-read the transcripts. When new themes emerged, we added them to the coding structure to create a more comprehensive representation of the data collected. Our methods cannot completely be considered grounded theory, because we did not incorporate theoretical sampling in terms of conducting one interview and then using those cases to inform selection of following participants. Our whole selection process of participants was conducted prior to conducting any interviews or site visits. However, I believe the work we did drew upon grounded theory like approaches and our interviews from the October site visits did inform the January recruitment and selection process. We became, as Bernard (2011) emphasizes, "grounded in the data to allow understanding to emerge from close study of the texts" (430).

4.12.5 Phase IV: Reporting Analysis

Interview responses were summarized based on common themes to inform the client school district about stakeholder perceptions and behaviors as a formative feedback data source. The analysis used an inductive and deductive approach to incorporate a systematic method of managing data through reduction, organization, and connection (Dey 1993; LeComte and Shensul 2013). Findings were summarized in site visit presentations and preliminary summary reports for the client school district covering topics each researcher investigated. The client school district received presentations and reports for each round of site visits. Feedback provided by the district during the first presentation informed protocol questions and data to be gathered in the second round of site visits.

Site visit presentations were given to the client school district before drafting data summary reports so that feedback from the client could be incorporated more extensively in the report. With the feedback from the client school district, we drafted the data summary reports. Data visualization has become a significant priority in communicating results at AIR and we utilized different techniques to display our data. Data was presented through narratives, tables, graphs, and illustrative quotations. Presentations and data summary reports were sent to our quality assurance associate at AIR, where they were checked for clarity and then submitted to the client.

At the end of summer 2016, a final report merging the two rounds of analysis together will be completed after my thesis project has concluded. The report will detail each topic mentioned in the research questions and will include recommendations for the client school district to consider in both the short and long-term.

4.13 Qualitative Challenges

Our team faced some recruitment challenges. Working with schools can be difficult not because participants are unwilling to talk about their experiences, but because of how tight their schedules often are due to the demands of being a teacher and school community member. We tried to be as flexible as possible, meeting some participants before and after school. A major factor that we had to contend with was school testing. If schools had either district or state testing going on in the building during the days we intended to visit, schools often declined the site visit. We did not run into too many issues in this case, because we looked at the district schedule before deciding on our site visit dates and coordinated with our district partners at central office. However, we had some issues scheduling January site visits. We ended up interviewing one school via phone interviews instead of conducting a full site visit.

While a majority of interviews went well, we did face some interviewing challenges. In the field you learn that no matter how many times you revise your protocols and prepare to deliver the questions, it is difficult to know how those interviews will go once in the field. Our team learned about how some questions did not quite get at the information we were looking for and needed to be revised more purposefully to this end. After the first day, we met as a team to debrief about how the interviews went and made slight adjustments to a couple of the questions. These adjustments included adding probe questions that described to the interviewee what the main question was asking.

Another challenge we ran into was limited time during site visits. While we attempted to be as flexible as possible, teachers and school leaders have exceptionally

busy schedules. Sometimes interviews were cut short due to a fire alarm, school activities, student misconduct, or other obligations. We scheduled follow-up phone interviews to make up those interviews. While we eventually obtained the data for phone interviews, we did find that scheduling phone interviews were more difficult than the face-to-face site visits and “phone tag” occurred frequently.

4.14 Quantitative Methods

While a survey was not specifically designed to align with our protocol questions by our team, the client school district administers their own surveys every year via email. Questions on two of their mid-year surveys related to several of our research questions and particularly some of mine. I utilized extant survey data from two main surveys that were conducted in 2015-2016 in my thesis analysis.

One of the surveys was administered specifically to teachers to assess their understanding and opinions concerning the purpose and support the Teacher Leadership Program provides. I call this survey the Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teachers POV).⁹

The other survey was specifically administered to teacher leaders to gauge their understanding of the teacher leadership role, areas they see themselves growing, and what impacts the program has made. I call this survey the Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teacher Leaders POV). Specific details about these surveys are not included here to protect the identity of the client school district. However, example topics the surveys asked are provided in Appendix B.

⁹ POV= point of view

4.14.1 Survey Analysis

Both surveys were cleaned and all responses from teachers and teacher leaders who were not interviewed during site visits were deleted from my dataset. Responses in the Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teachers POV) used in analysis come from only the 32 participants who both answered the survey and participated in a site visit interview.¹⁰ Responses in the Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teacher Leaders POV) used in analysis come from only the 39 teacher leaders who answered the survey and participated in a site visit interview.¹¹ I analyzed responses from 20 specific questions in those surveys that were related or aligned with interview questions I chose to explore in this study. Findings from those variables will be incorporated in Chapter Five. Data was analyzed within Excel. I generated frequencies of responses to each question of interest and created graphs to illustrate differences. Survey questions I chose to include in the findings for this thesis provided additional insight into topics explored in interviews that yielded rich and telling descriptions about the programs successes and challenges.

4.14.2 Quantitative Challenges

The only challenge I faced when analyzing the survey data was not having responses from all teachers and teacher leaders that were also interviewed. However, I was able to capture 75 percent of my interviewee population in the survey data. While conducting my own survey could have had the potential to capture more of the sample population, I felt the district administered surveys captured relevant data that was well-

¹⁰ Interview sample size of teachers=41.

¹¹ Interview sample size of teacher leaders=54.

aligned with my research questions. I also wanted to reduce the burden placed on my participants' time.

4.15 Study Limitations

This section highlights four main limitations of my study concerning methods and approaches. The following limitations are discussed: self-reporting biases, differing questions across site visit protocols, selective sample, and lack of participant observation.

4.15.1 Self-Reporting Biases

Self-reporting biases should be taken into account when it comes to interpreting participant interviews. Participants may tend to share only responses that would put themselves or their school in a positive light when self-reporting. In addition, participants may not remember all their interactions and Teacher Leadership Program activities accurately or they may have been more inclined to speak about only recent events. However, participants in interviews were candid and provided areas of vulnerability when asked about challenges or ways in which they felt their program could be improved. Having one-on-one and face-to-face interviews helped facilitate those more candid interactions with participants. We were able to reiterate how their responses would remain confidential and that the purpose of the study was not to evaluate their particular school. We were also able to emphasize the point of the study being to learn about best practices and challenges occurring in order to recommend areas of support to the district.

4.15.2 Differing Questions across Site Visit Protocols

Selected participants from the sample did not always complete an interview because they either opted out or did not have time during site visits. In one school, the principal asked that teachers not be interviewed because of the burden on their time. School staff who were selected but did not participate in an interview may have been systematically different from staff who did choose to participate. These are sampling limitations to consider. We attempted in the second round of interviews to accommodate sampling limitations we saw in the first round of site visits. For instance, we took a more purposeful approach to sample teachers from varying grades and subjects.

While some questions overlapped from the October site visits to the January site visits, not all questions remained the same. Sample sizes for each question and topic differed. The need to balance study exploration and client requests prevented every question to be asked across all 19 schools. Asking participants the same questions at each school could have yielded different results, expanded understanding on the topics, and increased validity of findings due to a larger sample size. In the same vein, survey responses utilized for my analysis were also limited by the number of participants who answered both survey questions and participated in an interview.

4.15.3 Lack of Participant Observation

Participant observation, often used in ethnographic methods to better understand the context and the work of participants by actively participating and engaging in community activities, was not used in this study. Participating or sitting in on professional development meetings or weekly collaborative team time for instance could

have provided a unique perspective as to how these activities develop and are facilitated by experiencing them. While such a method could add value to the research process in this project's context and provide a more thorough understanding of the lives of study participants, time, logistics, and overall applicability was not in favor of this practice. If I were to conduct a similar study in the future, I would make the case to incorporate participant observation as a valuable and informative method to the client.

4.15.4 A Note on Limitations

Despite these limitations, I do feel the goals described by Bernard (2011) that remain important to applied ethnographic research were still met (9). Those goals are as follows: “understanding socio/cultural problems in communities or institutions; [and] using the research to develop and assess approaches to solving problems or helping to bring about positive change in institutions or communities” (9). Those goals were met through the involvement of a wide variety of participants, the thoroughness of our protocol questions, and the semi-structured interviews that allowed enough flexibility for participants to take directions they felt were important to express.

4.16 Relevancy of an Anthropological Lens

While particular methods remain important to understanding how I conducted research addressed in this thesis and the overall project design, an anthropological lens and approach were very valuable and just as significant in my participation in the research process. Particular anthropological theories and concepts will be discussed in

Chapter Six, but the nature of an anthropological approach in general is important to ground the foundation in which the project's methods were carried out.

An anthropological approach allowed me to treat a sample of schools from the client school district as "case studies" in which to better understand teacher leadership reform initiatives, investigate implementation of distributive leadership, and conceptualize shared learning practices demonstrated across district landscapes. Beebe (2013) writes, "The intent of case study research is to develop an in-depth understanding of a single case or issues across multiple studies" (29). Responses analyzed via this approach can provide "rich narrative descriptions" to provide "the story behind the numbers" (Reeves 2008, 34). My goal for having conducted this research was to utilize the school district's teacher leadership experiences to provide an informative study about how teacher leadership can be interpreted and applied formally and widely to interested parties. My training in anthropology acted as my lens into how to effectively conduct interviews, build rapport, and gather participant responses in attempts to provide the most emic perspective as possible. It also acted to acknowledge potential biases expressed by researchers and participants alike. Anthropological concepts such as cultural relativism have been guiding principles in the processes of conducting my research analysis.

Cultural relativism, a concept established by renowned anthropologist Franz Boas, reminded me to investigate the district, the schools sampled, and the classrooms where I conducted interviews on the terms of the actors working within. The concept reminded me to take care to withdraw bias or pre-conceived notions I had about the teaching profession, what I believed teacher leadership to be, and even what to expect

from “high needs” schools. Cultural relativism means interpreting specific beliefs and practices “in the context in which they belong” and to “not make snap judgments about the value of other peoples’ customs but to consider first the role that those customs fulfill within the culture in which they are found” (Lavenda and Schultz 2010, 24).

I have experience in education and have worked in settings where my opinions concerning the public school system in the U.S. have developed through those experiences. While these notions are a part of the formation of my own identity and the shaping of my worldviews, as a researcher and as an anthropologist, I am responsible for recognizing and keeping my own assumptions and biases separate from the work. This responsibility was paramount to understanding the context of implementation— success factors, participant challenges, how teacher leadership takes shape, and why the Teacher Leadership Program shares common components across the district but is interpreted somewhat differently in particular aspects across schools. By utilizing this approach, the findings and recommendations provided to the client are more likely to represent the situation accurately and provide a foundation for actionable next steps in program development and growth.

4.17 Deliverables

In previous sections, I discussed what deliverables our team was responsible for providing to the client school district. As AIR was my primary client for this thesis project, I was responsible for other deliverables during the duration of my internship. I was responsible for writing a literature review, summarizing program descriptions, revising the qualitative plan, aiding in the development of interview protocols,

conducting one third of site visit interviews, conducting qualitative coding and analysis, and writing report sections to summarize qualitative research findings. I aided in revising questions and providing feedback to the qualitative research lead. Protocols developed will be used as models for future protocol development. Qualitative coding schemes informed summary and report structures for presentations and reports delivered to the client school district. Reports provided the district with findings from the evaluation and included recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter provides findings from my analysis conducted in NVivo on transcripts and analysis of survey data. Analysis surfaced many themes and patterns across both interviewee responses and survey data. The themes presented here have been selected to provide understanding about lessons learned through Teacher Leadership Program implementation. These findings represent important factors and context to consider for other districts interested in implementing or formalizing a teacher leadership program of their own. The following themes are discussed:

- Why teachers become teacher leaders
- Teacher leader experiences including expectations, role satisfaction, and implementation successes and challenges
- Teacher experiences including usefulness of teacher leader support and implementation successes and challenges
- What conditions and factors teachers and teacher leaders reported as needed for successful Teacher Leadership Program implementation
- Reported program impacts

Recommendations and implications are presented at the end of the chapter. Quote attributes with participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

5.1 Why Teachers Become Teacher Leaders

Findings Summary: Two main themes are found across a majority of participant responses describing why they became teacher leaders.

- The highest priority reported was positively impacting student learning and achievement.

- Teachers reported wanting to collaborate with their colleagues to improve instructional practices in their schools.

Twenty teacher leaders were asked to describe why they wanted to become teacher leaders in their schools. Participants reported a wide range of reasons for wanting to take on the position. While some teacher leaders wished to stay in the classroom in addition to growing as a leader in their school, other teacher leaders have utilized the time in the position to develop skills and experience needed for future administrative roles. This section discusses frequently mentioned reasons for wanting to become a teacher leader including: wanting to impact colleagues and students, and wanting to develop leadership skills for future positions.

5.1.1 Impacting Colleagues and Students

Most participants mentioned wanting to expand their reach and make an impact beyond their own classrooms. The quotes below from teacher leaders, Jason and Lori, describe wanting to better the effectiveness of their school's community of teachers through sharing strategies and targeting or honing in on improving instructional practices. They felt sharing their techniques and experiences could be useful in efforts to improve their colleagues' practice. By collaborating, they reported being able to work towards the ultimate goal of providing equitable access to effective educators for all students.

It's a great way to build teacher capacity and leadership amongst the teachers and being able to really target and build their instructional practice because that's what teaching is all about, students first. (Lori)

I am one of the more seasoned people at our school. Everything I use I stole from other people and tweaked it and made it mine. I just want to share some of

the structure and strategies I used with other teachers to empower them and to essentially just help kids get the best teacher they can and the best education they can. (Jason)

Teacher leaders also expressed wanting to help support novice colleagues coming into the profession. Teacher leaders described reflecting on their own experiences, recalling their past struggles and how coaching and having someone support them in their growth process significantly improved their practice. A teacher leader described her experience in the following quote.

I always think back when I was in my first couple years teaching, and even since then, the people who have been there to help coach and support me I've really valued, because I think that they've really helped me be a better teacher. I wanted to be that for other people. (Amy)

Amy described an inclination towards reciprocity—wanting to support her peers in similar ways she was helped along the way. She implied that growing in the profession is not something that can be tackled on your own, but one that takes the support and caring of others to foster the necessary skills to work through challenges the profession and managing different classrooms present.

Another participant described her ambition to support her fellow teachers in a similar fashion but for a different reason in the following quote.

It was an opportunity for me to impact the effectiveness of other teachers with some coaching and support that I didn't have starting out. This [the Teacher Leadership Program] is relatively new throughout the country and I've taught in many different states. The opportunity to still stay in the classroom, because I was not interested in administration in that I didn't want to leave the classroom, so this gave me the balance that I was basically looking for to help impact what students are learning and help teachers be more effective. (Kate)

Unlike Amy, Kate did not have the type of support she wished she could have had when she started pursuing her teaching career. She reported recognizing the struggles novice teachers come up against in their first few years of teaching and

expressed wanting to alleviate some of that stress by being a line of support in her school.

Kate also mentioned wanting to be involved in making changes in her school, but not wanting to leave her role as a classroom teacher or pursue full-time administrative roles. The teacher leader role has allowed her to continue doing what she loves, teaching in her own classroom. Similar sentiments were reiterated in the Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teacher Leader POV). Ninety-five percent of teacher leaders agreed that continuing to have classroom responsibilities is an important part of their leadership role and that teacher leaders should continue having classroom responsibilities. In interviews, teacher leaders expressed the importance of staying in the classroom at least part-time because it has kept them grounded in the context of instruction and the day-to-day life of classroom challenges.

5.1.2 Pursuit of Future Leadership Roles

Teacher leaders expressed the teacher leader role as being helpful in the development of skills necessary for future career goals. Participants said they wanted to gauge whether or not they would like to pursue leadership in the future. The following quotes share motivations concerning career development and goals.

I had thought about going into the realm of administration. So, I thought this was a good way to kind of test the waters to see if I would like it or not. (Mike)

This is my sixteenth year of teaching and early on I knew that I wanted to take on leadership roles. So, I decided that I would slowly ease into becoming department chair and joining committees that were school-wide committees and things like that. (Emily)

While Mike expressed wanting to “test the waters” in a position very different from his own as a classroom teacher, Emily had taken on previous leadership roles in the past and was putting the skills she had learned in other positions to work in a new role as teacher leader. Mike mentioned consideration of a more administrative career direction, but not wanting to jump into something he had little experience in. The teacher leader position has provided a taste of what it is like to be an administrator or school leader since responsibilities teacher leaders take on are ones shared through the distributive leadership model. Responsibilities reported include: classroom observation, one-on-one feedback sessions, conducting evaluations, and leading professional development.

The Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teacher Leader POV) asked respondents to think about where they see themselves in two and then in five years. These questions provided insight into the reasons teachers have been interested in becoming teacher leaders. Respondents selected from a list of six choices as shown in Figure 10.

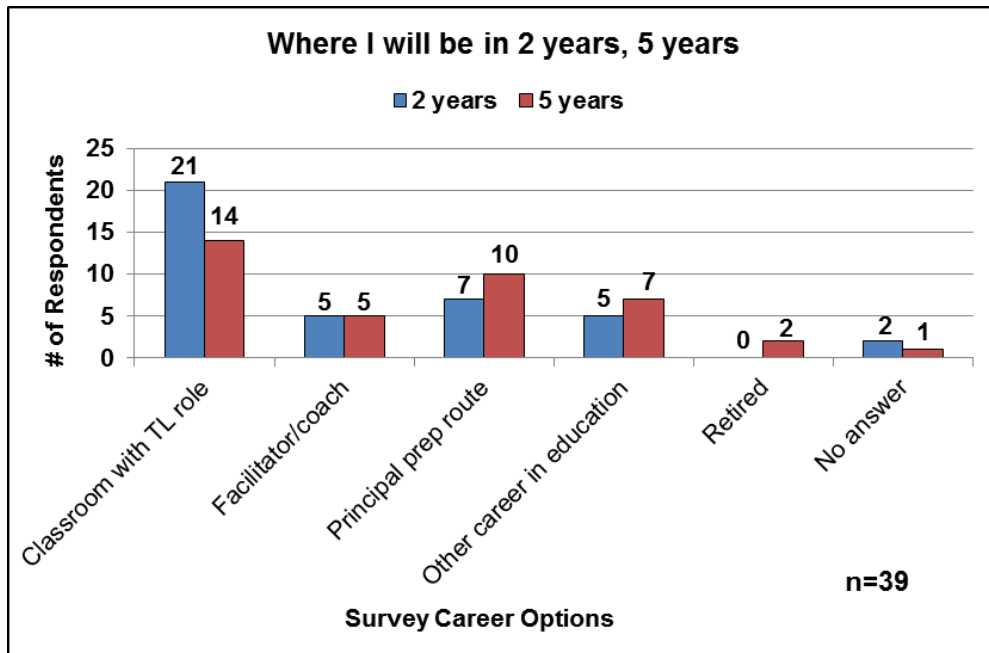


Figure 10: Where do teachers see themselves in 2-5 years

A majority of respondents reported seeing themselves still in the classroom after both two and five years. Seventeen respondents reported seeing themselves pursuing a principal prep route. There are two main points to be noted here. First, teacher leaders wanted to continue developing as leaders and contributing to school growth outside of their classroom, but, again, they also wanted to remain in their own classrooms. Second, some teacher leaders wanted to develop leadership skills within the role that can help them understand what it is like to be an administrator and what areas they need to grow in to pursue school leader positions. These points align with interviewee responses mentioned previously describing why they wanted to become a teacher leader and have implications concerning the importance of role clarity and thorough development of program purposes.

It remains important to understand why teachers continue to want to take on teacher leader roles and what career pathways they are interested in pursuing. This

knowledge can inform the development of what the teacher leader job description should entail. It can also provide understanding about what responsibilities are significant to fulfilling what teacher leaders want out of the role and provides insights as to how the role can be marketed to reach potential candidates.

5.2 Teacher Leader Experiences

Findings Summary:

- *Expectations:* Teachers taking on the teacher leader role anticipated and understood the amount of effort needed to make an impact and balance their roles as both classroom teacher and teacher leader. However, teacher leaders could use further elaboration and communication prior to becoming a teacher leader about the effort required to fulfill the duties as teacher leader.
- *Role Satisfaction:* A majority of teacher leaders who are satisfied in their role believed they were growing as both teachers and leaders because of the position's responsibilities. They also reported feeling that they were contributing to efforts to empower teacher voice in their schools.
- *Implementation Successes and Challenges:* Teacher leaders mentioned time constraints and too many responsibilities as being areas they perceived as hindering implementation success. While teacher leaders find it important to remain in the classroom at least part-time, the amount of significant responsibilities their teacher leader role demands, has made fulfilling both roles as teacher and teacher leader difficult. Teacher leaders mentioned substantial support and culture shifts as being areas they perceived as positively contributing to implementation success.

This section discusses how teacher leaders described their experiences with implementing the Teacher Leadership Program. The Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teacher Leader POV) asked several questions addressing teacher leader experiences in the role including: expectations before the role, current satisfaction in the teacher leader role, and implementation challenges and successes. Interview responses also addressed similar themes. These participant responses can shed

understanding about how the Teacher Leadership Program is being implemented and how successful teacher leaders feel particular program aspects are going.

5.2.1 Teacher Leader Expectations

This section investigates teacher leader expectations versus their experience in their teacher leader roles. Survey respondents were asked to compare their experiences in the program to the expectations they had coming into the role. A majority of respondents reported that the effort required to fulfill their duties, balance teaching and leadership responsibilities, and impact students and fellow teachers was about what they expected. Effort required to fulfill teacher leader duties was reported as requiring more effort than what respondents expected in several cases as shown in Figure 11.

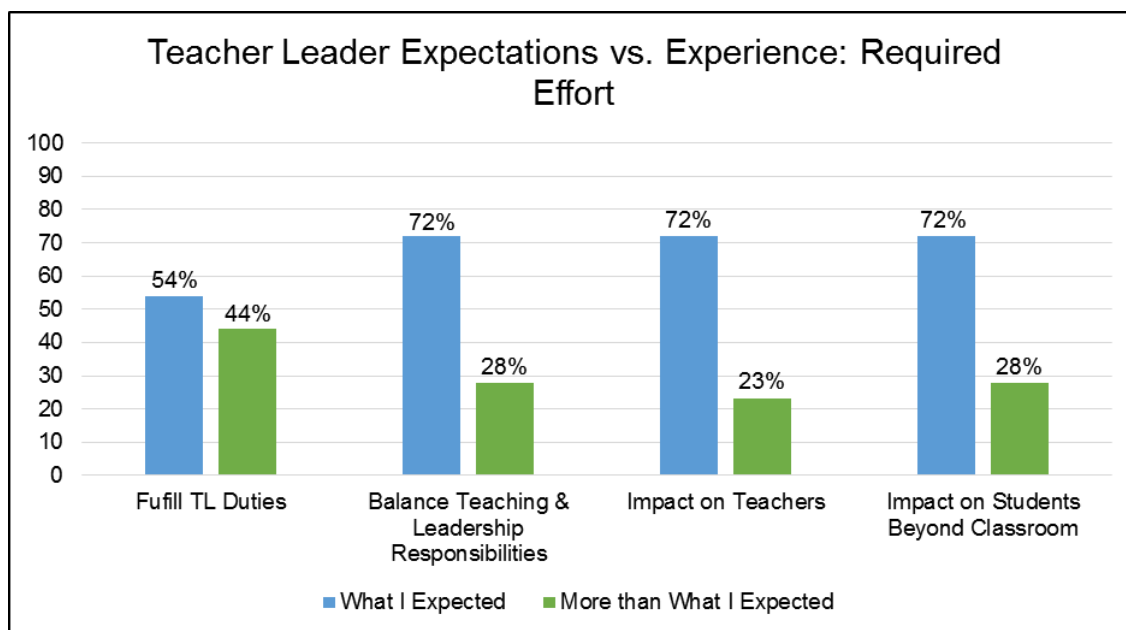


Figure 11: Teacher leader expectation vs. experience

Experiences including “balancing my teaching and leadership responsibilities” and “impact on my fellow teachers and students beyond classroom” were attributed to

ongoing successful fulfillment of teacher leader duties. Offering additional support around fulfillment of teacher leader duties can provide clarification concerning the teacher leader role. Support could take the form of professional development, training, or reevaluation of distributed leadership. This additional support would likely decrease the amount of effort required for teacher leader duties in general and would more likely meet teacher expectations.

5.2.2 Teacher Leader Role Satisfaction

This section investigates how teacher leaders described their satisfaction with Teacher Leadership Program implementation. Ninety-five percent of teacher leaders reported being satisfied with their experience with the Teacher Leadership Program. Figure 12 reports how many survey respondents were satisfied and dissatisfied with their roles.

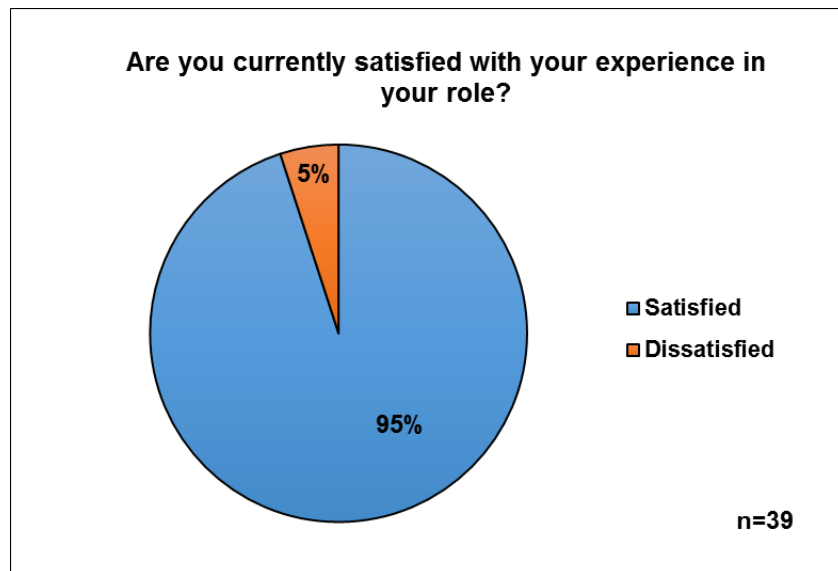


Figure 12: Teacher leader satisfaction with experience¹²

¹² Satisfied has been operationalized by including both satisfied and very satisfied responses. Dissatisfied has been operationalized by including both dissatisfied and very dissatisfied.

While only one survey question asked about how satisfied teacher leaders have been with their experience in the role, other responses to survey and interview questions provided insight as to what factors could be contributing to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Interview participants described their satisfaction in terms of personal growth and empowering and representing school actor voices.

Personal Growth

In survey responses, 100 percent of teacher leaders reported they felt they were growing in their profession as a leader. Ninety-two percent of teacher leaders reported they felt they were growing in their profession as a teacher due to the responsibilities they take on to fulfill their role. The role is a combination between teaching and leading. Teacher leaders are provided opportunities to develop skills in both areas.

Empowering and Representing Voices

In interviews, teacher leaders expressed feeling empowered by their school leaders because of the autonomy in the work they do with other teachers. They also reported having a voice in school objectives and challenge strategies.

I think teacher leaders at our school definitely feel empowered, definitely feel validated. They [other teachers/colleagues] really look to us as the experts in our field and our profession and will ask us what we feel like is the biggest leverage for our kids right now. (Natalie)

Teacher leaders mentioned feeling empowered by fostering positive relationships with their teachers and creating collaborative teams. They also reported being held accountable as leaders and received feedback on leadership effectiveness.

I would say I'm learning a lot about the relationships and how to build that ethos of the team, and how to empower different personalities, and honor those in different experience levels. That's been a huge learning experience for me, and how to receive feedback on my leadership in terms of my facilitation of that. (Kevin)

Empowering teacher leaders to grow, in both roles as teacher and leader, has encouraged them to be accountable for fostering a growth mindset. Through this mindset they also learn from their fellow colleagues and perpetuate their own learning through development of instructional and coaching strategies. They reported feeling grounded in instruction by staying in the classroom at least part-time and having a better understanding about how school-level decisions are made through their experiences interacting with school leaders and contributing their own voice.

One hundred percent of teacher leaders reported feeling like they fill a critical role in their school. Representing the voice of their colleagues was considered part of that role. Sixty-two percent of respondents mentioned feeling like they were providing a channel of communication between teachers and school leaders. Eighty-seven percent of teacher leaders reported feeling like they were increasing the voice that teachers have in decisions made at their school in survey questions. In interviews, teacher leaders expressed feeling trusted and sought out for advice by their colleagues and being a middleman between administration and teachers.

I think that we have become a piece for teachers where they are coming to us before going up that ladder. So, I think that there are levels of trust. (Lisa)

It's given teachers another person to go to with maybe concerns or things that they want to clarify without having to go straight to administration... They need somebody that they feel like knows exactly where they're coming from in the classroom and the [teacher leader] can potentially be that person. (Jake)

Teacher leaders have remained grounded in teaching practice due to their continued involvement working with students in their own classrooms at least part-time. Teachers have gained a “think-partner” they can approach with questions. A strong relationship between teachers and their teacher leader was reported as one built on trust, meaning teachers feel comfortable expressing what challenges they face and value the time spent with teacher leaders strategizing and developing best practices.

5.2.3 Teacher Leadership Program Implementation (Teacher Leader POV)

This section discusses the perceived challenges and successes of implementation. Interview participants were asked to identify areas of implementation they felt were successful and unsuccessful. Areas that were identified as challenging included: time constraints and the number of responsibilities demanded by the role. Areas identified as feeling successful included: strong support and culture shift.

Implementation Challenge: Time Constraints

Participants who mentioned time constraints expressed that there is never enough time to complete all of their teacher leader and classroom teacher responsibilities.

The release time can be kind of touchy sometimes. I never feel like I'm swamped with my [teacher leader] stuff. I really feel like I'm kind of swamped with my teaching stuff, you know, making sure. I'm finding, I'm taking a lot of extra time outside of my duties to make sure my teaching is still there. (Shelly)

I think the only thing that's impacted it negatively is the structure and the way it's hard to follow up and fit it in. Right now, I'm supposed to go down and work with another class with a young teacher and see what she's doing and help her. Then I have another class, and then I have an evaluation meeting. I'm just kind of pulled. (Lauren)

Interviewees expressed that with a structured schedule, any disruption can derail an entire day. Missing or having to reschedule an observation or feedback session was reported as limiting the impact the Teacher Leadership Program has on teacher growth. Participants also mentioned that time missed is time lost towards making improvements in teaching practice. Respecting teacher leader release time by not asking them to do non-teacher leadership duties during that time was reported as helping keep that time sacred and productive.

Implementation Challenge: Too Many Responsibilities

Too many responsibilities was also reported by teacher leaders and even by teachers as a challenge. Teachers said they have seen how stressed out the teacher leaders have been and have often wondered how they manage to get it all done. A few teacher leaders reported feeling like their own classrooms have suffered because they have so many things they need to do for their leadership role.

I feel like my class has suffered the most in this role. I don't think I'm as good a teacher as I used to be. (Kate)

I would say it's kind of the other way around; making sure I'm having enough time to do the responsibilities I have as a teacher. I think that's more of a struggle then making sure I get all my teacher leader stuff completed. (David)

Shelly, Lauren, Kate, and David expressed having issues with balancing and managing all of the responsibilities they take on under the constraints of a busy school day. Being crunched for time is certainly not a new issue in education. There is seemingly always too much to do and too little time, especially when unexpected or school-wide events occur—a fire drill, picture day, a student misbehaves, lunch duty,

etc. However, these participant concerns question whether or not distributive leadership is being effectively executed. Assignment of responsibilities to teacher leaders was reported as needing to focus on leadership and less on managerial tasks.

Implementation Success: Strong Support for Teachers

When participants mentioned strong support as an aspect of the program that felt successful, they reported feeling that teachers were receiving the attention in areas they needed to grow in their instructional practices.

“I think people, especially first year teachers, are getting the support that they need, and I think that has been very, very positive.” –Erin

While increased support for teachers school-wide was reported as being successful.

Teachers receive one-on-one attention and have peer-to-peer learning opportunities to help improve instructional practices.

Teacher leaders did not mention getting strong support in terms of fulfilling their leadership role. Consideration of what types of supports teacher leaders need from both the school leaders and district to successfully complete their teacher leader responsibilities is needed.

Implementation Success: Positive Culture Shift

When participants mentioned culture shift, they mentioned a culture of transparency and open-door policy being fostered. Transparency around teacher leader roles and the Teacher Leadership Program processes in general was said to increase the chances that a positive culture would take root. An open-door policy, where teachers are comfortable going into their colleagues' classrooms and sharing

vulnerabilities such as areas of growth in their teaching practice, was reported to also contribute to a positive culture shift. Interviewees reported an increase in positive attitudes about receiving feedback and fostering collaboration.

They come to me now, I'm considered. "I need something on this" or "Can you show me something on this?" I think teachers really have increased their capacity to change. (Lisa)

I think it hugely prioritizes growth, whereas I don't feel like that's been as much of a priority for me as a teacher, when I only met with a peer observer once this year and he came for one lesson. It's the regular feedback that leads to growth. (Lynn)

Collaboration and openness to feedback was often reported as a necessity to facilitate teacher leader responsibilities and fulfill the objectives of the Teacher Leadership Program. More frequent feedback sessions were welcomed once positive professional relationships between teachers and their teacher leaders became established. The culture shifted from a more isolated traditional model to a model of shared leadership, partnership, and cooperation.

5.3 Teacher Experiences

Findings Summary:

- Most teachers find feedback provided by their teacher leader to be useful when it is frequent, specific, and "bite-sized." Similar subject expertise and grade-level experience were reported as important contributors to good teacher leader and teacher matches.
- Teachers reported 'providing feedback to teachers' as being a teacher leader's primary responsibility more frequently than any other type of responsibility.
- A majority of teachers reported teacher leaders as either fostering better communication between administration and teachers or having no effect.

- Teacher leaders mentioned unclear or infrequent communication and teacher leader and teacher match as being areas they perceived as hindering implementation success.
- Teacher leaders mentioned substantial support and informed feedback as being areas they perceived as positively contributing to implementation success.

This section discusses how teachers described their experiences with Teacher Leadership Program implementation. The Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teacher POV) and interview protocols asked several questions addressing teacher experiences with their teacher leader including: usefulness and quality of teacher leader feedback, understanding of the teacher leader role, and challenges and successes of Teacher Leadership Program implementation from the teacher perspective. These responses clarify how the Teacher Leadership Program is being implemented and what challenges Teacher Leadership Program participants have experienced thus far.

5.3.1 Usefulness and Quality of Teacher Leader Feedback

Seventy-eight percent of teacher survey respondents reported the observation feedback provided by their teacher leader as being useful. Figure 13 reports how many survey respondents felt the feedback they receive from the teacher leader is useful.

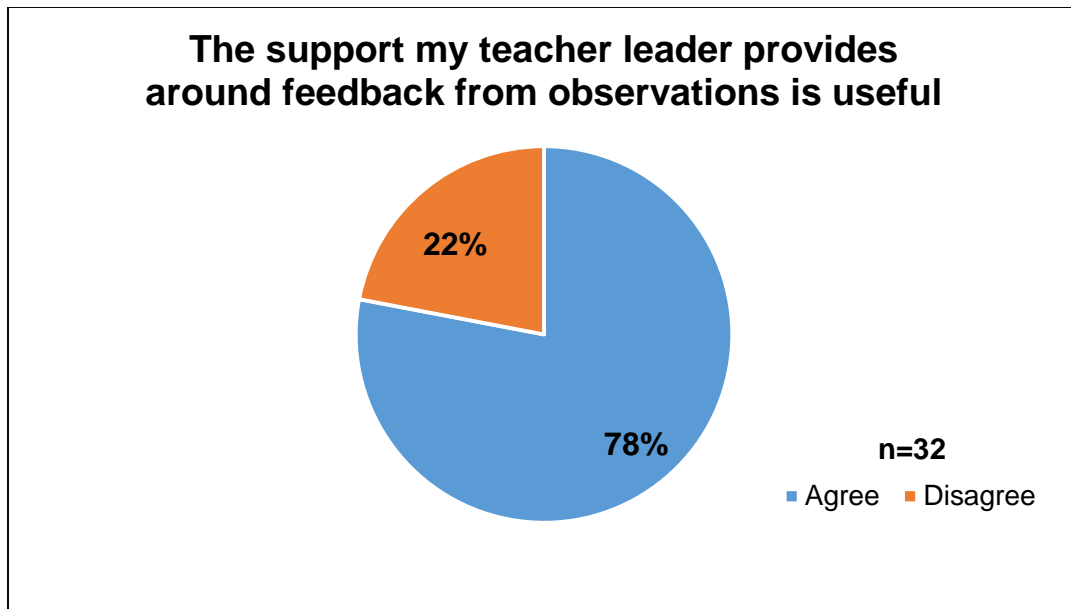


Figure 13: The support my teacher leader provides around feedback from observations is useful

Responses from interviews were able to shed further understanding as to why teacher leaders felt feedback from observations was useful. Interview participants were asked to describe the feedback they received from their teacher leader and rate the quality of that feedback on a scale from 1 to 4.¹³ Teachers who rated the quality of feedback as a 3 “good” or 4 “excellent” described teacher leader feedback as collaborative. Collaborative was described by teachers as teacher leaders and teachers working together to arrive at strategies for improvement and the teacher leader taking time to listen to how and why their teachers approach classroom environment, instruction, and management. Teachers described their teacher leader’s feedback as specific and “bite-sized,” meaning the feedback was given in small focused and manageable chunks. Feedback provided was said to focus only on one or two growth

¹³ The scale provided consisted of four answers for respondents to choose from including: 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (excellent).

areas at a time. Rather than receiving an overwhelming list of strategies the teacher needed to try to work into their teaching practice, the teacher would be provided with small steps towards improving a particular growth point. Feedback was also reported as being more frequent than previous experiences with observations from different types of observers. Teachers reported receiving feedback several times a month rather than a couple times during the school year.

Teachers who rated the quality of feedback as a 1 “poor” or 2 “fair” described feedback as vague or high level, one size fits all, and infrequent. A majority of participants reported having more informed observations and feedback since they started working with a teacher leader compared to previously when their observers were either school leaders or district observers.

Teachers mentioned the quality and usefulness of feedback from teacher leaders being impacted by subject and grade-level expertise exhibited by the teacher leader. Teachers who emphasized the importance of this expertise tended to be special education and English language acquisition teachers. Teacher leaders who have particular experience working in similar subjects or grades were said to make good teacher and teacher leader matches. They were able to provide grounded feedback and more informed strategies due to similar classroom experiences and pedagogical training.

5.3.2 Teacher Perceptions of the Teacher Leader Roles

Teachers were asked a series of questions about how they understand the teacher leader role. Survey questions asked about teacher leader responsibilities, trust,

supervisory versus supporting role, and communication with their teacher leader.

Interview questions asked teachers about viewing teacher leaders as leaders in the school, and teacher leaders as a channel of communication.

Responsibilities and Role

Teachers reported 'providing feedback to teachers' as being a teacher leader's responsibility more frequently than any other types of responsibilities when they were asked about their understanding of the teacher leader role responsibilities. A majority of survey respondents associated teacher leader responsibilities as leadership or supporting roles. Figure 14 breaks down the different roles taken on by teacher leaders and provides the number of teachers who reported each role as a part of their teacher leader's regular responsibilities.

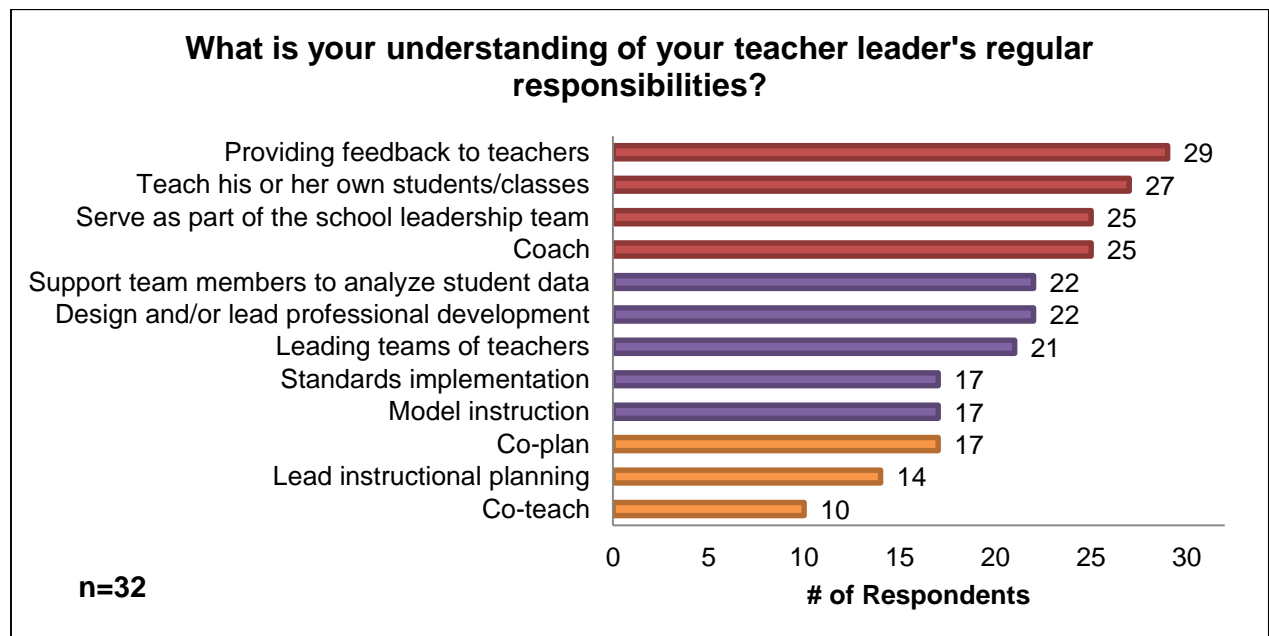


Figure 14: Teachers' understanding of their teacher leader's responsibilities

Eighty-four percent of interview participants said they viewed teacher leaders as leaders. However, 47 percent of survey respondents reported viewing teacher leaders as a supervisor. Most respondents reported their principal or assistant principal as being their supervisor despite the fact that teacher leaders also conduct evaluations and weight in on overall teacher effectiveness scores. While teachers may have viewed teacher leaders as leaders, they did not frequently report teacher leaders as filling a supervisory role.

The concept of “leader” understood by teachers varied when they were asked to describe why they viewed teacher leaders as leaders. Garrett described leadership attributes as taking on responsibilities that are often associated with what school leaders do (i.e. evaluations and observations), conveying the distributive model.

Because they're in a role of observation and critiquing. They offer help as far as lesson plan construction, evaluating student performance, offering ways to approach things in new ways or different ways of learning. (Garrett)

Ellen described leadership taking on a new form, where understanding about what is happening across the school and within classrooms is more informed and widespread.

They are leaders at our school, but I think the difference is that they are actively involved in the classrooms a lot more than you would naturally envision a leader of a regular school to be. There is a better understanding from both angles about what's actually taking place in the classroom and what direction we may need to go in, and that's really helpful for us when we're planning. (Ellen)

Mike and Tammy described the nature of the professional relationship between teachers and teacher leaders. Mike described teacher leaders as allies who “lead by example.”

I think that we all, as a staff, have leadership roles and capabilities. I would say they do a lot of leading by example. I don't necessarily view them as a leader in the general sense where they're a position that's above us. They have the ability

to be an effective leader by example, and be a coach and encourage us to do, encourage us to improve in our own teaching by being an ally. (Mike)

Tammy described the professional relationship she had with her colleague before he became her official teacher leader as a mentor.

My particular teacher leader is someone who I would go to as a mentor anyway for the past few years. I feel like that person is still someone who I can still do that with, but that's part of their job now. (Tammy)

While the quotes offer how the definition of leader can be interpreted differently, all participants did agree that the teacher leader role means stepping up to make school improvements by conducting work outside the classroom within a formalized role.

Communication and Trust

Teachers did not overwhelmingly report communication of teacher needs as being improved since they started working with their teacher leaders. In interviews, teachers reported either seeing some better communication or no change at all. However, 66 percent of survey respondents reported trusting teacher leaders to increase teacher voice in decisions made within their schools. While teacher voice representation remains an area that is still developing as Teacher Leadership Program implementation continues, teachers did report viewing teacher leaders as channels of communication. Teacher leaders communicate changes happening in the school and particularly report what is going on in the Teacher Leadership Program.

5.3.3 Teacher Leadership Program Implementation (Teacher POV)

Like teacher leaders, teachers were also asked to identify areas of implementation they perceived as successful and unsuccessful. Teacher leaders

mentioned unclear or infrequent communication and teacher leader and teacher match as being areas they perceived as hindering implementation success. Teacher leaders mentioned substantial support and informed feedback as being areas they perceived as positively contributing to implementation success.

Implementation Challenge: Communication Barriers

When teachers spoke about how communication could be improved, they frequently mentioned their lack of understanding around the responsibilities of the teacher leader role and how teacher leader release time was spent. The following quote summarizes how participants described communication as feeling unsuccessful.

Maybe at the beginning there could have been a better definition of what her role was supposed to be to me so that I would know. I didn't even know what evaluations were going to be like. (Sheryl)

Participants reported that lack of clarity among teachers can be very detrimental. They often mentioned the notion of having a colleague or peer come into their classroom for observations and conduct evaluations as a very different model than traditional models, where school leaders typically fulfill that role. Participants frequently reported that increasing understanding about how the role functions and why teacher leaders need release time from the classroom to fulfill their leadership duties could be helpful in increasing teacher buy-in to the program and helpful in decreasing any teacher animosity about program elements they feel are punitive.

Implementation Challenge: Teacher and Teacher Leader Mismatch

Teacher leader and teacher match is a significant factor in the formation of professional relationships between teacher leaders and teachers. Teacher and teacher leader match was one of the most frequently reported areas by teachers as feeling unsuccessful. However, despite teacher and teacher leader match being an area that was frequently deemed as unsuccessful, a majority of participants still claimed they had a good match and rated their professional relationship with their teacher leader as “good” or “excellent.”

Kary described how having many years of experience in education and specifically field experience in the classroom as being important to her if someone is evaluating and giving her advice about how to improve her practice.

For me personally though, I would love to have someone who has been in the classroom like 20, 25 years giving me feedback. (Kary)

While scores of “effective” or “distinguished” are prerequisites for teacher leadership role eligibility, no specific number of years of experience is required or specified in the job description. While Kary mentioned years of experience as being important, other teachers reported the number of year experience not being as important as having content knowledge. John and Brenda mentioned grade and subject content expertise as important to having beneficial interactions with teacher leaders.

I feel that the differences that I've described before might be due to because she teaches high school and I teach middle school. I feel like our middle school kids, I mean we both teach high needs populations, but I feel like our middle school kiddos, there's a lot of emotional issues and they really don't, at this stage in their lives, know how to cope with those and know how to appropriately react to certain situations. (John)

My classroom is mostly ELA-S [English Language Acquisition-Spanish]. So if she's not able to understand what's going on, how can she rate me? You know,

on something like the accountable talk or are students really participating or are they just chatting about anything else? To me it wasn't fair for her to actually come in and evaluate me. (Brenda)

Content and grade-level areas are also not specified in the district job description. However, just because the job description does not list those areas as specific eligibility criteria, does not mean those factors are not taken into consideration. The job descriptions for these positions created by the district's central office focus on foundational qualifications such as in-depth knowledge concerning the district's evaluation system and district policies, experience in conflict management and leading adults, expertise in instructional practices, and being flexible to learn on the job through training and professional development. Schools conduct their own interviews and make efforts to hire candidates that meet their school needs. Further in-depth study about the recruitment and selection process could yield a more informed understanding about the process across schools in comparison to district expectations.

Implementation Success: Strong Support

Despite some teacher interviewees reporting their teacher and teacher leader match could be better, teachers did mention feeling like they were being supported. Strong support was mentioned as being an area of implementation that feels successful. Lacy's quote illustrates how most teachers expressed the type of support they are currently receiving.

You know that extra support of having the coach going to classrooms and observe and support of creating new ideas and teacher leaders also, having their collaboration is all very helpful. (Lacy)

Increased collaboration, where you see teachers in other teachers' classrooms (conducting observations, modeling a lesson, sharing best practices via a feedback session), creates ongoing support for teachers. In survey responses, most teachers reported meeting with their teacher leader at least once or twice a week for observations or feedback sessions. This frequency of observations and feedback was reported as being very different than before when they would be observed only a few times a year by their school leader or a district observer. Previous feedback provided was not timely or "actionable." Participants reported more frequent visits to the classroom giving rise to small changes they could make during the school year. These changes overtime were reported as making lasting impacts on teaching practices.

Implementation Success: Quality Feedback

Teachers reported more informed feedback as an area of implementation that felt successful. The following quotes provide further insight as to why this area has felt successful.

I think because admin is stretched so thin in the schools in this community, I think people get observed more and get more feedback and bite-sized feedback than they do when it's just on admin to do the coaching and the PD and stuff like that. (Ginger)

Just to have a coach or a teacher leader that is so well-versed in the expectations and the cultures of the school. It's nice to, "Hey. This is happening. What would you do?" (Alan)

Teachers reported that more informed feedback was coming from someone consistently visiting their classroom. Feedback takes on both verbal and written formats during feedback sessions. Evaluations were reported as becoming more accurate as the teacher leader, acting as their primary observer, worked closely with teachers. Teacher

leaders also calibrate with the school leaders for formal observations. Through more frequent observations, teacher leaders work on areas teachers need improvement on. Teachers then are more prepared for effectiveness evaluations and better understand school expectations.

5.4 Conditions Needed for Successful Teacher Leadership Implementation

Findings Summary:

- Participants mentioned a wide range of factors and conditions needed to be considered and incorporated into the Teacher Leadership Program's design, development, and implementation.
- Over 50 percent of participants mentioned factors contributing to building a strong community foundation accepting of feedback and continual growth before implementing the Teacher Leadership Program.

Sixty-three participants total were asked an open-ended question in interviews about what systems, processes, mindsets, or plans they think need to be in place before Teacher Leadership Program implementation. Participants answered this question with a number of factors that fell into four main categories. This section discusses those conditions and factors identified by participants. Figure 15 summarizes the conditions and needs mentioned.

Community Characteristics (52 participants)	Logistical (32 participants)	Support (23 participants)	Human Capital Management (19 participants)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative, trusting, and accountable culture • Growth mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher and team lead matches • Scheduling • Staffing capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing communication (clarity of roles, expectations, and changes) • Ongoing support from school leaders in identifying teacher leader needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and ongoing PD for both school leaders and teacher leaders • Hiring internally

Figure 15: Successful Teacher Leadership implementation factors¹⁴

5.4.1 Community Characteristics

Eighty-three percent of participants mentioned community characteristics as important conditions for successful Teacher Leadership Program implementation. Community characteristics discussed include: collaborative, trusting, and accountable culture and growth mindset.

Collaborative, Trusting, and Accountable Culture

All factors mentioned that fall into this category contributed to the development or the need to already possess a sustainable culture and climate that would be accepting of the type of collaborative model the Teacher Leadership Program prescribes for coaching, feedback, and growth. Participants emphasized the need for a school-wide collaborative staff body, exhibiting openness to change and understanding the Teacher

¹⁴ Many participants asked this question mentioned multiple conditions and needs that fell into several categories. Just because a participant mentioned one type does not mean they did not mention another. 63 participants total were asked the open-ended question.

Leadership Program not as punitive but as a positive growth model to increase shared learning.

Involving teachers in the implementation process and determining the steps in which implementation will unfold was cited as being very helpful in fostering staff buy-in and engaging teacher voice. Engaging teacher voice aids in contextualizing how the program can effectively be implemented in the particular school and identifies any anticipated challenges to confront before rolling out the Teacher Leadership Program.

Growth Mindset

The term “growth mindset” was mentioned 149 times across 39 participants from every participant type except for teachers who do not work with team leads. Having a growth mindset contributes to the acceptance of feedback from peers regardless of how much experience one has in the profession. Having a growth mindset means understanding the importance of continued learning to improve practice. There is always room to grow and new strategies to try to more effectively reach students and meet their learning needs.

5.4.2 Logistical Concerns

Fifty-one percent of participants mentioned logistical aspects as significant to implementing the Teacher Leadership Program successfully. These logical concerns included: scheduling and specialized and defined teacher leader roles.

Scheduling Effectively

Scheduling was mentioned frequently as critically important to supporting the needs of teacher leaders and teachers alike. Participants mentioned the challenges of scheduling especially when staffing capacity had yet to be critically considered. Teacher leaders mentioned having sufficient time to conduct observations, have feedback sessions, lead professional development sessions, among other responsibilities to be challenging. Teacher leaders stressed the need for their release time to be honored and consist of activities concerning the Teacher Leadership Program. Release time should not be filled with tasks outside the scope of the role. A comprehensive schedule that is honored can help smooth out the day-to-day, encourage fidelity, and instill program consistency.

Specialized/Defined Teacher Leader Roles

Participants mentioned having specialized teacher leader roles concerning subject, content, or grade-level as being helpful to aligning to and working towards improving school needs. Some schools have specific teacher leaders who address only math or literacy, school culture, or by grade-level. Teachers working with teacher leaders mentioned this distinction as helpful in receiving differentiated feedback. Specialized roles help effectively match teacher leaders with teachers to forge the most impactful relationships. Teacher leaders also mentioned these roles as being helpful in balancing, focusing, and even scheduling their caseloads.

5.4.3 Support Needs

Thirty-seven percent of participants mentioned aspects of support as being important to Teacher Leadership Program implementation. Participants mentioned the following as important support needs: transparency and open-communication about roles, expectations, and changes, and ongoing support from school leaders in identifying teacher leader needs. Teacher leaders mentioned this category type more so than teachers or school leaders.

Transparency and Open-Communication

Participants mentioned transparency around the program and the processes of implementation being important to sustain open-communication. Participants mentioned the need to be clear about what it means to be a teacher leader, including the amount of release time, and how the system will work in the context of the school. Transparency builds trust and aids in fostering staff buy-in. These are significant elements that aid program fidelity.

Ongoing and thorough communication around roles, systems, expectations, and any changes occurring with all school actors was also mentioned by participants as an important type of support. A teacher leader and a teacher not working with a teacher leader illustrate needed communication support in the following quotes.

I think that's the biggest thing is being transparent with everyone, even the people who are not involved with the [Teacher Leadership Program].
(Teacher Leader)

A better implementation and description to the whole staff about what the [teacher leaders] are doing and maybe do it a little more often versus if it was just

our first school-wide meeting and that was it. So better communication about it.
(Teacher not working with a teacher leader)

Having the knowledge to share and being able to answer questions about the program can help increase implementation confidence in understanding why the school is making changes and improve overall staff buy-in. By communicating with a wide range of stakeholders, tensions rising between teachers who are in the know versus not can be alleviated. When schools scale up the model to include more teachers in the program, the pre-existing knowledge base of the program can ease the transition.

Support Provided by the School Leader or District

Teacher leaders mentioned the need for initial and continued support via a point person from the district or school leader to aid in holding teacher leaders accountable and helping to troubleshoot ongoing issues. The following quote describes why that point person is needed.

I think having a point person for [teacher leaders] is really important, just to help with the stress of how to juggle and how to plan out your day and knowing, like, "Is this taking me too long?" or "Am I devoting enough time to this?"
(Teacher Leader)

Having a point person can provide an outside perspective that informs teacher leader questions about how they can approach their roles through a variety of strategies. Teacher leaders mentioned it being beneficial to have a representative from the district as a support, because teacher leaders are able to become more acquainted with what the district's vision is for teacher leadership compared to their own school goals. Having someone from outside the school, as a support for teacher leaders, was

also cited by school leaders and teacher leaders as a channel for additional insights about best practices to be shared.

5.4.4 Human Capital Management Considerations

30 percent of participants mentioned recruitment and selection considerations to be important to Teacher Leader Program implementation. These considerations included: training and professional development for both teacher leaders and school leaders, and hiring internally.

Training and Professional Development

The most frequently cited aspect in this category was training. Potential candidates may not take interest in the teacher leader position if they believe they need to possess all the skills necessary to fill the role. Making sure teacher leaders know they will be supported with training and professional development opportunities to learn the skills needed to succeed in the role (i.e. difficult conversations, observation calibration) was reported as being important.

School leaders reported needing continued training on how to support their teacher leaders. They mentioned needing skills to coach leaders in skills related to leadership, including coaching teacher leaders on how to deliver feedback and how to facilitate difficult conversations. These trainings would provide school leaders with an understanding of how to hold their teacher leaders accountable and set expectations early on to establish a strong precedent.

Hiring Internally

Hiring internally and providing opportunities to teachers working within the school was mentioned as important to build a strong foundation of teacher leaders who are well-acquainted with the teachers, kids, and school culture was mentioned as important to successfully rolling out the Teacher Leadership Program. The following quotes illustrate the benefits of hiring internally.

We did interview outside applicants, but when we started interviewing them, we found out that even though they may have had a set of skills we liked, there was also the issue of the community and credibility. (School Leader)

They [teacher leaders] have been part of the staff for several years. They know our kids. They know our community. (Teacher Leader)

Participants who discussed external hiring challenges mentioned the importance of relationship building for new teacher leaders in the building. Taking time and effort to get to know teachers, students, and school culture before providing feedback or asking teachers to make changes in classrooms was mentioned as an important step in succeeding in the position.

When participants were asked about qualities and skills needed to fulfill the teacher leader role successfully, they frequently mentioned candidates applying for the position needing to be individuals who have and do the following: have a growth mindset, prioritizes building relationships and trust, are “effective” teachers, are experienced in curriculum knowledge, and are very organized. Participants also frequently reported the teacher leader roles needing to be filled with teachers who have a deep understanding of what it means to be a coach, including how to be supportive, having the ability to provide quality feedback, and having the conflict resolution skills to facilitate difficult conversations.

5.5 Teacher Leadership Program Impacts

Findings Summary:

- Participants mentioned school-level and instructional changes as being the most evident impacts being made due to implementation of the Teacher Leadership Program.
- Teachers who do not work with teacher leaders were unable to identify many impacts related to the Teacher Leadership Program.

To conclude this chapter, I provide a brief overview about participant satisfaction with the Teacher Leadership Program then I summarize impacts participants mentioned. These impacts provide understanding about what changes can happen in schools that implement teacher leadership elements into their schools. Type of program impacts discussed here include: school-level, instructional changes, learning environment, and student achievement.

Overall, 100 percent of teacher leaders, who answered the specific survey question, reported being glad their school is participating in the Teacher Leadership Program, while 69 percent of the teachers who completed the survey reported being glad their school is participating. Figure 16 represents 71 survey respondent answers conveying whether or not they are glad their school is participating in the Teacher Leadership Program. Moving forward in implementation, it will remain important to gain understanding about what teachers want out of the program and how the programs can be adjusted to meet their needs. Teacher leaders also need to be continually consulted about their needs in order to maintain program fidelity.

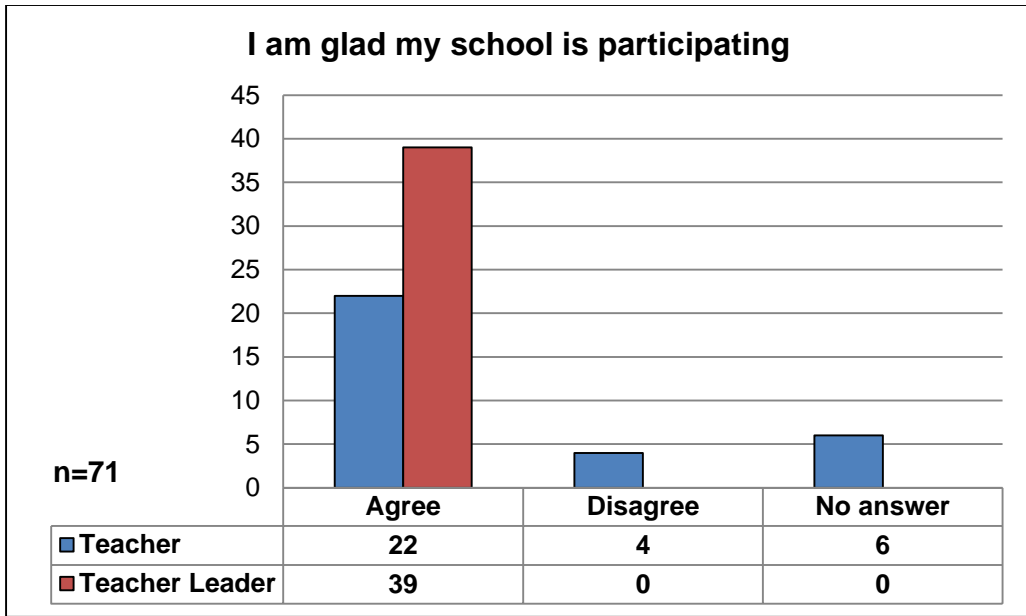


Figure 16: I am glad my school is participating

Ninety-seven percent of teacher leader survey respondents felt that the Teacher Leadership Program is making a positive impact on their school compared to 63 percent of teacher survey respondents. Figure 17 shows the spread of responses across 71 survey participants. Moving forward in implementation, it will remain important to make sure outcomes of the program are communicated to increase visibility. School actors should be consulted about what ideas they have to improve and increase the program's impact and what the best channels of communication are for sharing that information.

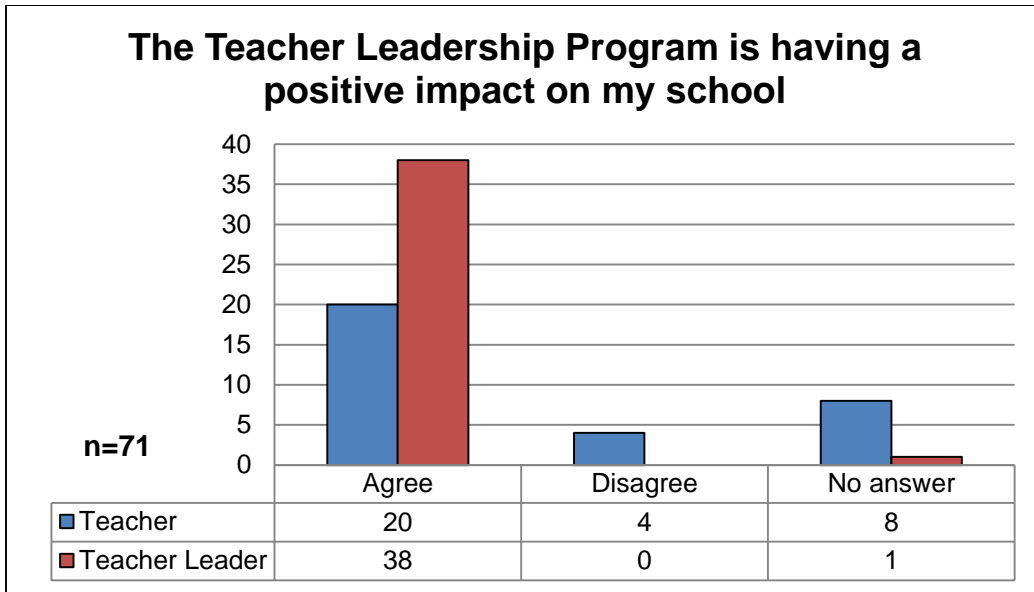


Figure 17: The TLP is having a positive impact on my school

Interview participants were asked to identify any impacts occurring in their schools due the Teacher Leadership Program. During the analysis, impacts mentioned were separated into different descriptive categories. Quote attributions include participant roles and cohorts to provide further context.¹⁵ Teachers not working with teacher leaders mentioned very few impacts. While, no significant differences across school types or cohorts were seen in the analysis concerning impacts, cohort 1 participants were able to provide details with more specificity as to how the program has influenced and impacted their school over time. A study incorporating a larger sample size could yield more specific findings about impacts in correlation to degree to which the Teacher Leadership Program has been implemented. Figure 18 displays the top Teacher Leadership Program impacts.

¹⁵ Cohort 1 reported the most impacts. Cohort 1 schools have implemented the Teacher Leadership Program for over three years.

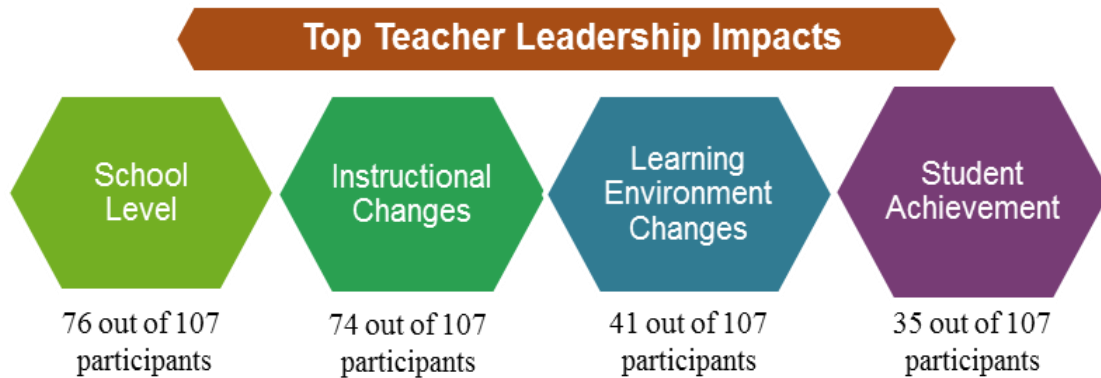


Figure 18: Top Teacher Leadership Program impacts

5.5.1 School-Level Impacts

A majority of participants reported several areas they felt have been impacted at the school level, including school culture, goals and expectations, teacher support, and morale. The following quotes illustrate the variety in which participants described school-level impacts. The most frequently reported impact was school culture. School culture improvements included increased collaboration across classrooms or teams and an increasingly accepted open-door policy.

I think it's [the Teacher Leadership Program] changed the culture within the building. There's such a great level of respect for the teacher leaders and there's staff on board who want to be teacher leaders in the futures whether it's here or in another school. Our building has a lot of support for teacher leaders so it's a great piece for culture. (School Leader, Cohort 2)

That kind of culture of "we're all coachable, we're all trying to get better at our practice." (Teacher working with a teacher leader, Cohort 2)

While teachers who do not work with teacher leaders rarely mentioned impacts, six of the eight interviewed did mention school-level impacts in terms of being able to see collaboration amongst teachers and seeing teachers entering their colleagues' classrooms more frequently.

5.5.2 Instructional Changes

Impacts related to instruction ranged from targeted practice through co-teaching or planning to student-focused through lesson modeling. The following quotes illustrate how increased rigor, quicker paced lessons, and more engaging lessons have resulted due to teacher leaders frequently visiting classrooms and providing specific and “bite-sized” feedback.

Our instruction has gotten much tighter and I think kids, everything from behavior management to their rigor in the classroom. That's improved, because you have multiple eyes in there. You also have people who can deliver it in different ways. (School Leader, Cohort 1)

You would see a quicker paced classroom. You would see clear systems and routines. You would see higher rigor, and less teacher talk and more student talk. (Teacher working with a teacher leader, Cohort 1)

I think the biggest take away from last year was to make sure my lessons related to the real world. It was the one thing that was hammered. (Teacher working a teacher leader, Cohort 3)

Interactions between teacher leaders and teachers provide time and space for brainstorming potential strategies and critical thinking about instruction differentiation to happen. Having a “think partner” enables teachers and teacher leaders alike to face classroom challenges together, providing additional support and fostering a sense of a collaborative community.

5.5.3 Learning Environment Changes

Participants cited the following as changes in learning environment: clearer expectations, structures, routines, and rituals; relationship building to better identify student needs; and reflexive practice. The following quotes illustrate how learning

environments can be transformed from collaborative efforts between the teacher leader and the teachers with whom they work.

I'm working on collaboration between students. They're using academic vocabulary and what that looks like. It's not that it didn't exist, but what my coach is helping me do is get the kids to a higher place simply, not by rewriting my lesson plan but asking just for a few little things for them to do while they're talking to each other. (Teacher working with a teacher leader, Cohort 1)

I think if you were to walk into the science classrooms, you would find that the kids are doing you know, maybe a writing activity for 10 minutes followed up with a discussion for 10 minutes, followed up by the hands on activity. So, teachers are chunking and you see the student engagement increasing because of it. That's something huge that I feel like we've seen a big difference in. (Teacher Leader, Cohort 1)

That authority piece, the willingness and the courage to slow down is something that I think that you would see a major change in rather than a teacher trying to rush through an instruction, talk over kids and get to point A or B by the time the bells rings. I said, "Let's stop thinking about learning like that." I think that has been one of our major pieces of growth. (Teacher Leader, Cohort 1)

Teachers are moving from the teacher-focused classroom environment to a more student-centered and driven environment through increased effort to have student collaboration and foster discussions in classrooms. Teacher leaders are continually working with teachers to not only improve student engagement in their teachers' classrooms, but their own as well.

5.5.4 Student Achievement Impacts

Although a majority of participants did not point to any specific data as evidence of changes in student achievement, some participants reported being able to observe the changes in student outcomes, student behavior, and student engagement. They described the achievement results as coming soon. Examples of student achievement

such as increased literacy and mathematics scores, or individual student progress can be noted in the following quotes.

Our literacy, our math scores. I think any time you get teachers better trained student growth happens. Our behavior and discipline problems are greatly reduced because there's someone helping you in the classroom.
(School Leader, Cohort 3)

I think especially with the extreme focus on data and using the data to drive instruction. We've been really focusing on finding those gaps and seeing what we need to do to shorten those gaps essentially. Then, we've been putting in place a reteach model and a reassessment. I think that you definitely would see an impact on students. (Teacher Leader, Cohort 2)

Last year, we had tremendous success in our literacy and getting kids to perform through the read-act assessments. I believe we're in the 90% for kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade for proficiency versus in the past we were around 60, 70 in those grades. So, that was a one year impact on that, because we had somebody [teacher leader] specifically working with teachers around their instruction and then we specifically had data team cycles weekly talking about that data and student learning in that. (Teacher Leader, Cohort 2)

Schools implementing the Teacher Leadership Program are working out the design of the program as it is contextualized within their school and aligns with the school community's goals. Once that foundation has been set, like we see in several of the cohort 1 schools, we anticipate seeing an increase in student achievement as measured by internal, district, and state assessments. Student achievement data were not analyzed for this thesis project.

5.6 Suggestions, Recommendations, and Additional Observations

Suggestions below represent areas participants identified frequently as important to consider. Recommendations are based on observations across schools and from responses directly from participants. The purpose of this section is not only to provide schools with areas to think about, but to also give voice to participant experiences they

chose to share and emphasized as significant for others to consider critically before teacher leadership and distributive model implementation.

5.6.1 Communication

- When developing the teacher leader role, consideration of what potential teacher leaders want out of the role (i.e. career and skill development) should be prioritized. By creating clear descriptions of what the role will entail, what skills will be developed, and the type of training that will be provided, candidates will have a more informed understanding of how they can grow into the role and what types of career mobility exists if any. Clarity around roles and increased communication through multiple channels and media has the potential to increase buy-in to the program and decrease teacher leader turnover.
- Conducting a survey with questions similar to that of the Teacher Leadership Progress Survey (Teacher Leader POV) concerning expectations and holding comprehensive stakeholder meetings concerning career goals can provide valuable insight into how to anticipate stakeholder wants, questions, and potential challenges.
- If the implementation model is targeted versus comprehensive, communication about the program still needs to be widespread. Teachers not working with teacher leaders need to know what is going on in the program to understand why their school is changing and what their colleagues are doing. Direct and transparent communication can foster a stronger and more collaborative culture more welcoming to new models emphasizing peer-to-peer learning.

- Teacher leadership should be an empowering experience. By being an instrumental part of the solutions and having a voice in solution strategies, teachers are able to help shape and implement initiatives that address the issues they see every day in their schools. Keeping essential stakeholders informed and engaged in changes to programs motivates school actors' continued participation and maintains change momentum.

5.6.2 Community Culture

- Take the time and make the effort before implementation to involve as many voices as possible in the process to encourage staff buy-in, increase transparency around the program and how implementation will roll out, and identify any challenges that will need to be worked through.
- Define what collaboration looks like in your school currently and examine and communicate how that definition will change and improve through teacher leadership implementation. Provide concrete examples of how collaboration takes form, what interactions will be new, and what purposes they serve.
- Foster collaboration by providing autonomy and instilling trust in teacher leaders, but also implement through a gradual release model. This will ensure that teacher leaders do not get too overwhelmed with their responsibilities and can help increase confidence in staff that the program is a growing process not just a one-size-fits-all packaged solution.

5.6.3 Logistical Considerations

- Scheduling was considered a big challenge and an important aspect to take care of early on in implementation and even during pre-implementation to help determine staff capacity and inform to what extent the Teacher Leadership Program can feasibly be implemented. Working with school leaders and teacher leaders on time management and feasibility of Teacher Leadership Program scaling in their particular schools early on could help deter implementation issues in the long-term.
- Examine the school's capacity for Teacher Leadership Program implementation. Do you have the capacity for a comprehensive model or should a targeted model be piloted?

5.6.4 Support Needed

- Setting up a solid support system, where communication about the program is thorough and ongoing is critical for implementing with fidelity. Teacher leaders need to have someone to go to for additional assistance whether that person is the school leader or a district representative. Opportunities for training need to be available in order to facilitate continual learning and teacher leader competencies.
- Professional development opportunities should be designed and offered for varying skill levels and diverse subjects to dissuade exclusion. Designing flexible and challenging work roles encourages teachers to stay at current school assignments and continue growing alongside their peers inside renewed collaborative school cultures built on teamwork and trusted accountability systems.

- Holding teacher leaders accountable and having a system in place that measures the effectiveness of their leadership could provide more actionable steps towards improving their leadership practices and identifying where additional support or training is needed.
- Recruiting teacher leaders with the understanding that they will need to grow in some areas (i.e. leadership responsibilities) and that professional development and training will need to be ongoing could help the position seem more feasible and appealing to potential candidates.

CHAPTER 6

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL THEORIES

What follows is an exploration and analysis of the ways in which theories rooted in anthropology and social learning deepen the understanding of the research findings I presented above. This chapter provides a foundational theory-based context in which to situate teacher leadership.

6.1 Applied Anthropology

The study and exploration of “culture” is ingrained in the discipline of anthropology. Anthropologists study so many things about the world we live in—the interactions and relationships in which people participate, how humans live in and shape the environment; identify formulation and the exploration of how identity is maintained, and changed; the shared links between people, objects, and places. We seek to understand the complexity and the significance within cultures and through cultures themselves. Clifford Geertz (1973) describes culture as a semiotic concept, where the study of culture is not an investigation of “experimental science of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (5). By extension, applied anthropology is about how we can utilize the interpretations of meaning to inform and improve practice. I studied teacher leadership to seek out meaning across schools to better understand the interpretation of the concept and how it was implemented given those interpretations. Those interpretations gave rise to understanding about how challenges and successes in the field could inform future implementation and current program development. Several applied sub-fields of applied anthropology influenced how I conceptualized

teacher leadership. The field that has been particularly useful to situating teacher leadership and understanding school culture as it exists and is foundationally structured in the United States is anthropology of education.

6.2 Anthropology of Education

Anthropology of education encapsulates studies of cultural processes in which knowledge is constructed, shared, and adapted through informal education and formal schooling. These studies attempt to understand how cultural learning processes work and where gaps and challenges may exist. The definition is meant to be broad in order to capture the vast literature that has been both theoretical and applied within the field. Below I discuss a couple studies and concepts that have directly influenced my understanding of and approach to school communities.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the extent to which the Teacher Leadership Program is successfully implemented is heavily influenced by school culture and cohesive social order between actors. Evelyn Jacob's work on cognition and learning (1997), and reflective practice (1995) emphasizes that "contextual features" heavily influence opportunities for learning (10). That context is made up of so many features—a diverse student body, teachers with varying levels of experience and expertise, school leaders who are obligated to meet district and state policies, multicultural classrooms, new teacher effectiveness measures, etc. The culture within a school is dynamic and evermore fostered with arrivals of new students and new reform policies. Jacob (1997) writes, "Social meanings and goals can be viewed as both stable and emergent, with the stable aspect being what a group recognizes as the prevailing meaning, and the

emergent aspect being what is created between individuals during their interactions” (11). School actors are active agents embedded in the life of the school and together they define and make meaning of their learning experiences.

The Teacher Leadership Program emphasizes collaboration between and across teachers so much so that participants reported it as one of the factors critical to successful implementation. While collaborative learning strategies are typically used for students, they are well-aligned with how the Teacher Leadership Program is designed for teachers to work together. Deering, Meloth, and Sanders’ (1993) work on cooperative learning demonstrates the importance of “authentic” meaningful activities and dialogues in any school-based collaborative initiative. Deering Meloth, and Sanders’ (1993) write, “By engaging in collaborative dialogues with the teachers about their instruction, and scaffolding such discussions with relevant research and theory, we have been able to promote a high degree of reflection and sharing of thinking among the participants” (32). Teachers, by participating in similar corroborative practices as their students, were better able to understand the dynamics and challenges of what they were trying to implement in their classrooms. Similar models of cooperative learning were found to be a potential strategy for bringing teachers together to work towards promoting healthy reflection and collaborative practices.

Learner identities are the products of educational experiences. School actors all take on and develop learner identities as they engage in their school and learning communities. Jacob (1997) writes, “Educational innovations attempt to change educational contests, and through those changes, to influence students’ learning. When using an innovation, teachers are also learners” (13). Schultz and Ravitch’s (2013)

study about teacher professional identities highlights similar understandings found in my study concerning teacher relationships with their mentor teachers (i.e. teacher leaders). Schultz and Ravitch's study explored the notion of what it means to be a teacher and how the interactions with mentors both aid and hinder the process of developing into a teacher. Schultz and Ravitch (2013) write, "An analysis of these teachers' narratives reveals that their professional identities were shaped by their membership in a range of knowledge communities" (43). In the next sections of this chapter, I explore how learning is facilitated between teachers and their teacher leaders and illustrate how teacher identities are shaped through engagement in and membership to communities of practices.

Below I discuss a framework in which to situate teacher leadership. Many of the scholars and practitioners mentioned in this section helped shape and provide additional insight into the topics shared below. The sociocultural approach to learning elicited from these thinkers prove again and again how theory does not have to stay grounded in academia, but has a relevant and insightful multi-faceted lens into practice that can be applied to our daily lives, our policies, program evaluation and development, and to the systems we design. The applicability potential is endless and thus I have attempted here to show how concepts about learning, communities of practice, and identity can provide lenses in which to view the interactions between school actors as meaningful, influential, and so very complex.

6.3 Learning

We learn every day in a variety of contexts and it is an action that takes on many forms. Much of our lives can be defined by the action. We've learned; We learn; We continue learning. To learn is to create a foundation of knowledge and to build upon that foundation as we live through our experiences—our successes, our failures, our mundane days, our busy days, and amongst all the old and new interactions we share with others, our fellow learners. But what the focus is here is the way in which we try to define, design, and pass on learning via institutions that act as the grounds for formalized learning cultivation, schools.

While there are both federal and state-level acts and reforms in place that attempt to define what learning should look like in schools across the United States. Research on learning in many fields including anthropology, has yielded evidence that learning is influenced by contextual factors. Jacob (1995) explains that “different contexts present varying opportunities for demonstrating abilities, and slight changes in contexts can bring out improved performances” (458). Learning then is not something that can be defined within one rubric, book, or pedagogy. This truth is learning is something that must be carried with us if we are to make improvements in our schools.

Our *knowledgeability* is often tested in schools and those tests define our competence and act to hold us accountable for retaining knowledge. What that knowledge should be and the extent to which we should be held accountable are in constant flux. They cannot remain static. To do so, we would be pushing ourselves even farther away from the competitive edge in a globalized education scape. Standards and expected knowledge emerges in the form of curriculum that is delivered through the

interpretations of those who have continued their learning in higher educational facilities, who have earned certifications that identify them as competent learners, as knowledgeable and capable citizens, as *teachers*.

However, teacher learning can never be complete. Teachers need to continue growing in their practice. They will need to continue honing their practices in order to keep up with the changing educational landscape, defined by the changing world and the steady stream of policies and reforms that attempt to keep up. While their students learn to build their foundations, teachers need to build evermore on their existing groundwork. I offer here the perspective that communities of practice are a way in which teachers can and do facilitate the continuation of their learning. Through participation in communities of practice they foster meaning, cultivate their practices, build community, and shape their identities as educators. Learning in this context inspires teacher leadership, where those who have increased their competence and have grown their knowledge of best practices can share their experiences with their colleagues. Strengthening communities of practice by both acknowledging their usefulness and supporting their practice can increase the continued fostering of collaborative learning within our school cultures today.

6.4 Communities or Practice

Community of practice (CoP) is not a new framework to education. The idea for fostering them within schools leading to successful implementation of learning environments for educators has been supported by several education theorists. In fact, Kimble, Hildreth, and Bourdon (2008) provide two volumes of essays written about the

usefulness and applicability of communities of practice in a variety of education contexts. These contexts cover a wide range of topics such as: networking, educational research groups, mentor models, higher education, teaching with technology, and adult learning. Communities of practice hold great promise for fostering continued learning and collaboration in educational environments. Practitioners of anthropology have also studied communities of practice within schools (Levinson, Sutton, Winstead 2009).

The concept of communities of practice (CoP) was developed by a social anthropologist, Jean Lave, and an Information and Computer Scientist, Etienne Wenger. Lave and Wenger worked closely in the early stages of conceptualizing communities of practice, drawing on various anthropological and social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Julian Orr, Anthony Giddens, Erving Goffman, and Michael Foucault (Wegner 1998). Communities of practice live within a larger framework of learning that describes group induction, membership, and interactions through acculturation. Learning is what Lave and Wenger (1991) define as “an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (31). Together, Lave and Wenger, created two key terms to define a learning style that is facilitated through group interactions and memberships to CoPs.

Learning, taking place through practice, is called “situated learning,” meaning learning is defined within context and “legitimate peripheral participation.” Legitimate peripheral participation refers to how newcomers become members of a community of practice through apprenticeship experiences. Through the process of legitimation and the experience of participation, members construct their meaning of belonging to the community. Peripheral and participation are concerned with location and identity in the social world (Lave and Wenger 1991, 29). Through a process of legitimate peripheral

participation, the structure for a community has evolved over time. Three structural characteristics of a community of practice have been identified: domain of knowledge, community, and practice (Squires and Van de Vanter 2012, 291).

CoP investigates how identities and subsequent behaviors are shaped within the community. I am not attempting to explore all aspects of communities of practice and learning here. My goal is to illustrate a framework that can help illuminate learning interactions within and through communities of practice. CoP learning theory is one way of gaining insights about teacher leadership and the cultures within schools. These observations can then act as models for fostering collaboration, increasing communication, exploring different teaching styles and pedagogies, and linking practice to outcomes.

The concept of communities of practice, operating within a landscape of social practice, “presents a theory of learning” that assumes that “engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are” (Wegner 1998, 1). Analyzing a community of practice means to investigate the shared ways in which participants engage and conduct activities together, making sense of the learning, negotiation, and member identities. Eckert (2006) provides a simplified definition of communities of practice, “A community of practice is a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor...and emerge in response to common interest or position” (1). While this is a broad definition, it makes it clear that communities of practice can be very diverse and come together for a multitude of reasons. The general definition also brings to mind that multi-membership is very possible and common. Belonging to more than one community of practice makes

sense, especially when we think about how many interests and obligations we accumulate over a lifetime. However, while the concept has been defined broadly here, not just any group of individuals spending time together can be considered a community of practice. In fact, doing so would detract from the applicability and value of the concept. Communities of practice share three main defining components described by Wegner (1998) as mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.

Communities of practice establish norms as they share experiences overtime, fostering a mutual engagement and commitment towards shared understanding. Community members engage in pursuit of a joint enterprise, whereby participants know “what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute” to their negotiated enterprise (Wegner 1998, 125). The enterprise does not remain static but continues to develop and change overtime. Continued participation is contingent on mutual engagement in the processes of persistent pursuit of shared goals and objectives towards formulating collective understanding and organizational coherence.

Additionally, participation in a community of practice requires contribution to a shared repertoire that can take on many forms within a community of practice including, “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or content that a community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice” (Wegner 1998, 83).

Communities of practice play an important role in shaping the worldviews of the people who participate, or choose not to participate within, amongst, and across them. They also operate within social practice, where actions occur not for just the sake of action, but it is the “doing” that happens “in a historical and social context that gives

structure and meaning to what we do” (Wegner 1998, 47). I turn now to applying these foundations to the complexity of interactions resulting as products of the Teacher Leadership Program. Figure 19 summarizes the communities of practice framework as it applies to the Teacher Leadership Program.

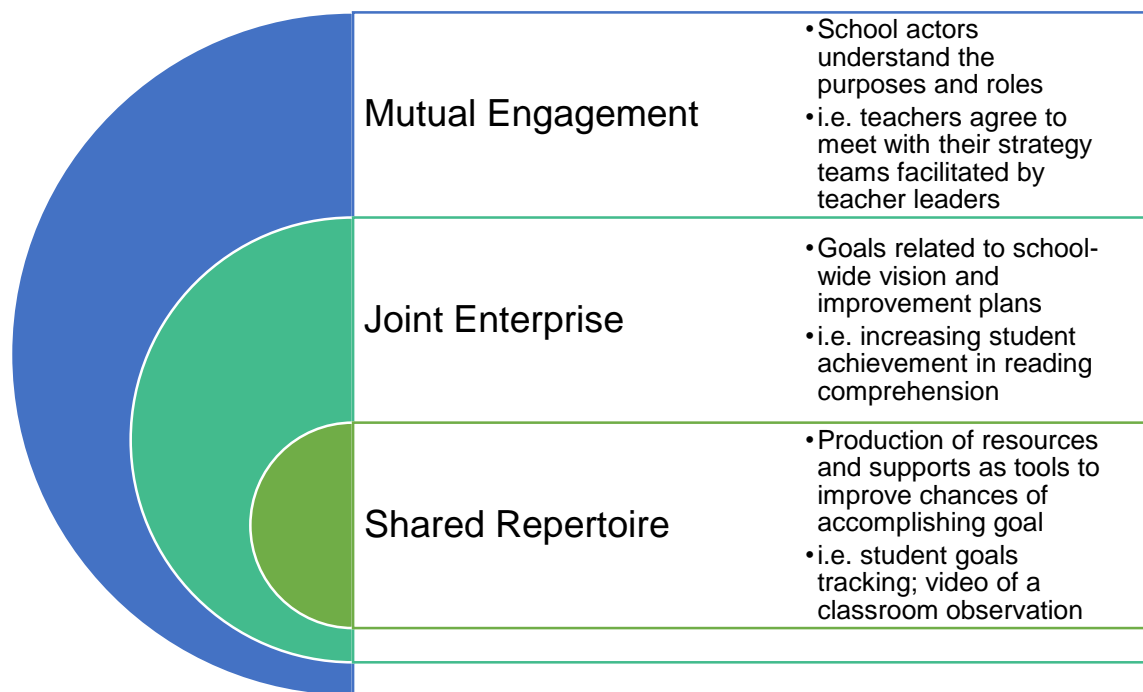


Figure 19: COP framework components in the Teacher Leadership Program context

The Teacher Leadership Program gives rise to the formation of communities of practice within schools and throughout the district. The Teacher Leadership Program does not form these groups, but it does provide purpose for particular school actors to interact. It also encourages a culture of collaboration, enabling communities of practice space to thrive. Kimble, Hildreth, and Bourdon (2008) write, “It is difficult to create a CoP formally—a better approach is to coach and nurture a group and provide the right environment so that it can be helped to develop into a CoP” (xii). Wegner (1998) also mentions the informal nature of these groups coming together under similar interests

and passions. The Teacher Leadership Program encourages interactions between different types of school actors. These interactions take on numerous forms to create varying groups of communities. It remains important for schools implementing teacher leadership to keep in mind a balance of encouraging interactions to happen versus forcing them to. Communities take time to develop. They need time and space to develop their own norms, shared understanding of why they meet, and how they will define productivity as a group.

A school district broadly and a school locally are spaces that provide grounds for communities of practice to develop. In these spaces full of actors working together, constellations of practices are born, living through the fostering of engagement within their communities of practice. These practices become established through the pursuit of a joint enterprise and result in shared resources that perpetuate continued practice. Communities of practice either follow the many paths in which they can be further developed through continuous participant negotiation or they can wink out of existence, where members disband. Members from disbanded communities of practice may form a new community of practice in a different space with different members under new contexts (Wegner 1998). The lifespan of a community of practice is dictated by the regular social negotiations amongst community members. The state of their shared understandings provides reason to continue or discontinue efforts towards a shared enterprise and continual production of communal resources.

Several communities of practice form when the Teacher Leadership Program is implemented. Figure 20 portrays a constellation of communities of practice within a school that has implemented the Teacher Leadership Program.

Constellation of Communities of Practice School A

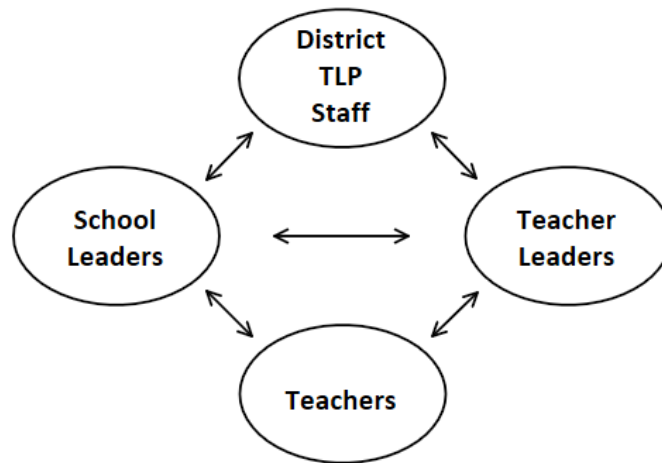


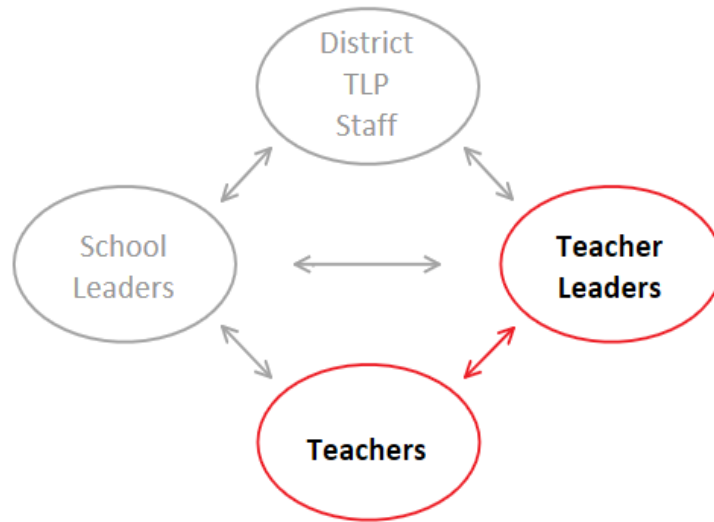
Figure 20: A constellation of interactions within a school¹⁶

Wegner (1998) describes the trouble of defining a whole school for instance as a community of practice. The interactions are different among actors, their repertoire may vary, but they can share a joint enterprise (i.e. increase student achievement in reading comprehension). However, he writes, “Whereas treating such configurations as single communities of practice would gloss over the discontinuities that are integral to their very structure, they can profitably be viewed as constellations of interconnected practices” (Wenger 1998, 127). Keep in mind a school may have many other groups and practices. Other groups may be and likely are influenced by those resulting from the Teacher Leadership Program and vice versa. For clarity sake and initial efforts to build a foundation for applicability of the concept, only practicing groups resulting from the formalized Teacher Leadership Program are mentioned and shown here. Below, I have created diagrams to illustrate varying interactions supported by the Teacher Leadership

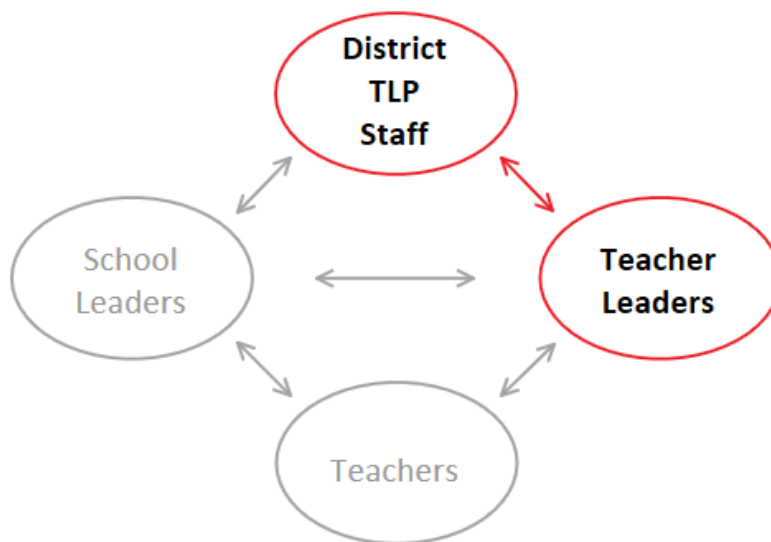
¹⁶ TLP= Teacher Leadership Program

Program. Four main communities of practice are supported by data collected in my study including:

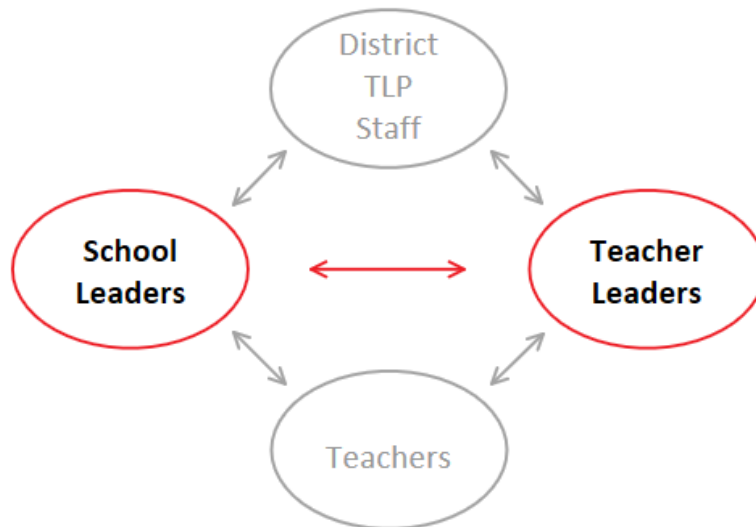
(1) Teachers and Teacher Leaders,



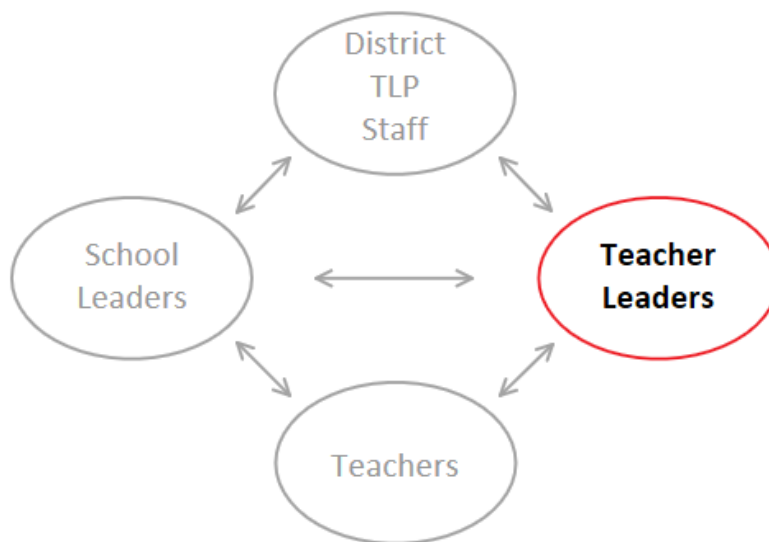
(2) District Teacher Leadership Program Staff and Teacher Leaders,



(3) Teacher leaders and School Leaders,



(4) Teacher Leaders within the same school.



To illustrate how the concept of communities of practice is supported through these interactions, I discuss a particular community of practice that interviews with study

participants yielded the most descriptive data, teachers and teacher leaders (refer to (1) above). Discussion about how identity influences and comes into play within communities of practice follows.

6.5 Community of Practice: A Teacher Leadership Program Example

One community of practice that includes teachers and teacher leaders forms when these two types of participants meet during “team time.” The activities conducted during this time differ across schools and are influenced by school needs and goals as defined and negotiated within Teacher Leadership Program design plans. Examples of common types of activities seen in schools across the client school district included: co-planning, data teams, and targeted professional development. Despite differences in activities, teachers and teacher leaders agree to common norms. They meet regularly. They know that getting together means working on focused exercises towards short-term and long-term goals. The communities of practice that form during team time can have different configurations across and even within schools. Some schools have team time that involves teachers from particular subjects or content areas while other schools may involve teachers from across different grade levels working together. The extent to which the community of practice is cohesive is determined largely by the extent to which teachers identify with the joint enterprise.

When teachers mentioned challenges about team time in interviews, they cited grade-level or subject mix-match as being difficult to coordinate and define a clear purpose. Practices across grade levels and subjects can vary drastically. While some teachers did cite mix-match as being useful to work with other grades and subjects to

learn more about how the school could work more holistically around student learning, other teachers felt that groups targeted with similar subjects yielded more productive time. Teachers and teacher leaders need to work together to decide what the best group configurations should be. This point goes back to what Kimble, Hildreth, and Bourdon (2008) say about forcing formal communities of practice. Teacher Leadership Program design needs to allow enough flexibility for school actors to form communities around interests that members will mutually engage in regularly. Otherwise, community of practice fidelity will suffer.

Teachers and teacher leaders participated during regularly scheduled team time to collaboratively work towards a common goal. How to achieve this goal may differ, but their overall understanding of their purpose of getting together is commonly understood. Participants from my study articulated their goals or purpose of getting together in various ways across schools. A couple of examples include: addressing specific disparities, strategizing how to increase student achievement in particular assessment areas (i.e. math, reading comprehension), and developing community projects to foster collaborative culture. Coming together as a community of practice facilitates the discussion where strategies can be debated in order to produce helpful resources.

Teachers and teacher leaders during team time produce a wide range of shared repertoire from the stories a teacher shares about a new strategy she piloted to analysis of student data to a revised list of grade-level objectives. Their repertoire provides evidence of their pursuit towards achieving goals determined by their joint enterprise. Participants continue to mutually engage, because they believe overall in their joint enterprise to increase student achievement and they want to learn best practices to

make strides in succeeding at achieving their common goals. Their swapping of success stories, their honesty about challenges in their own classrooms, their sharing of useful books or articles all provide evidence of their belief that they can make changes and impact outcomes in their school by working together.

The extent to which this repertoire is helpful to community members can be dictated by how clear the joint enterprise has been defined by the group. What are the purposes for meeting? Do they understand their roles? When teachers were asked about challenges during their team time, they often cited time being productive when they had a clear purpose, agenda, and understanding of their role. Communication within communities of practice is vital for describing expectations and instilling the community's purpose. Without these elements, production of what teachers can gain (i.e. strategies for improved practice; tools to pilot) decreases. CoPs also provide additional understanding of what purposes shared repertoire serve. Actors within educational communities of practice admit failings of practice, prepare datasets for analysis, and work together to pinpoint growth capacities in their subject areas. What community participants do with this information produces a shared knowledge base. What makes up this knowledge base can take on many mediums, but it is all some form of capital.

The formation of shared repertoire can be explained further by Bourdieu's (1986) theories on forms of social and cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) defines capital as "accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups, enables them to appropriated social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (46). Capital is not

only fundamental in defining one's own social life, but the life of the community as well. The capital accumulated by those within a community of practice within a school for instance is that of intellectually shared resources taking on the form of tools to inform teaching practice and fostering professional knowledge. The work conducted to formulate instructional ideas, student engagement strategies, grade-level objectives, etc. create a wealth of cultural or intellectual and social capital.

Cultural or intellectual capital includes skills, tastes, mannerisms, competencies, etc.—the symbolic elements that define the cultures we identify with. Social capital includes the social ties, relationships, and partnerships between people and networks—the strength of our relations with others (Bourdieu 1986). Shared repertoire produced within and across communities of practice defines the types of capital accumulated, shared, and exchanged. Caldwell (2008) writes that in education, “intellectual capital and social capital are as important as other forms of capital related to facilities and finance. Knowledge management takes its place beside traditional management functions related to curriculum, facilities, pedagogy, personnel, and technology” (3). In the case of a community of practice consisting of teachers and teacher leaders, the teacher leaders potentially hold a wealth of intellectual or cultural capital (i.e. experience, skills, understanding) and are in a position to share that capital through their leadership role.

Svendsen and Walstrom (2013) define four types of social capital and explain their positive and negative effects on organizations. Positive bonding social capital defines what the Teacher Leadership Program strives for. Bonding social capital includes the whole organization (a school) and its subgroups (communities of practice)

within it and works towards “securing happy employees who care for, trust, and help each other.” These serve as “social cohesion (or glue) within the organization” (Svendsen and Walstrom 2013, 320). Teachers are introduced and forge relationships with other teachers via their communities of practice set in motion by the Teacher Leadership Program. For instance, a teacher leader can recommend a couple of teachers go observe another teacher’s classroom to view how a particular instructional strategy can be effectively practiced. That teacher then models the lesson and thereby has the potential to influence the observing teachers. That teacher and the teachers observing and learning together can all increase their social capital by adding the connections they have made to their network. They increase their intellectual capital by maintaining the knowledge and lessons learned from their observations. The capital increases their understanding of efficient and non-efficient teaching practices.

One of the main purposes of the community of practice consisting of teachers and teacher leaders is to improve practice. They work towards accomplishing goals related to that purpose by maintaining and continually growing a shared repertoire. That shared repertoire is created through the exchange of cultural and social capital. As people in the community increasingly share their capital, the more capital wealth the community as a whole accumulates. However, as Bourdieu (1986) notes, capital “takes time to accumulate,” but by participating in communities of practice, the ability to accumulate that capital quickly increases (47). For schools, this presents an opportunity to improve more rapidly towards improving student achievement and making school improvements.

Wegner (1998) argues that communities of practice “are a context for new insights to be transformed into knowledge” (214). Those communities develop a culture that shapes individual and school community practices. The application of those practices, the interactions between community members and the negotiated experience of each individual member influence and shape the identities and mindsets of school community members.

6.6 Shaping Teacher Identity and Making Meaning

Our identities are shaped by many things. In the workplace, interactions are influenced by how we perceive ourselves and how our peers see us. The work we conduct and the profession we choose is closely tied to our identity (Kenny, Whittle, and Willmott 2012). Who is a teacher? What makes a teacher successful in their practice? Communities of practice within a school can act as hubs to influence those teacher identities on the basis of school actor decisions to engage or not engage within those social bodies. Wegner (1998) points out “participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do” (4). The community is responsible for the learning of its participants. Within communities of practice where teacher leaders and classroom teachers work together, teacher leaders facilitate learning of classroom strategies and approaches to challenging problems. They identify themselves as leaders and, through continued participation of teachers, have opportunities to continually develop their leadership skills. Teachers shape their developing identity as effective educators by engaging in communities practice.

Communities of practice facilitate a communal identity that is contributed to and influenced by individual identities of each group member and the interactions they have with each other. Wegner (1998) writes, “In everyday life it is difficult—and, unnecessary—to tell where exactly the sphere of the individual ends and the sphere of the collective begins” (146). For teacher leadership, this union holds great promise. While individual identities are respected, collective identities have the power to heavily shape school culture. Culture change, as discussed in Chapter Five, is paramount to fostering the kind of collaboration needed to implement the Teacher Leadership Program successfully. A coaching culture that is built on trust, flexibility, and transparency situates the ability to instill the purpose of teacher leaders to pass their knowledge on to their peers. Part of building positive culture is positively influencing the identities being formed within.

Identity is lived, negotiated, social, and a learning process. It becomes a link to defining the differences and similarities of the actors within a given community of practice. Wegner (1998) writes, “Learning transforms our identities. It transforms our ability to participate in the world by changing all at once who we are, our practices, and our communities” (227). Teachers and teacher leaders’ exchange of information and storytelling of experiences enables participants to grow personally and professionally. Their identities are forged in the social world within their schools from being continually supported and developed within their communities of practice. Orr (1990) in his ethnography about copier technicians explains how the sharing of knowledge creates a community memory. This communal memory is maintained through the telling of stories. The way the story is told determines the depth of the identity within that particular

profession. As a teacher, the stories told to other teachers continually feed the communal knowledge base. Teachers learn from each other's' mistakes and they learn from reported successes in the classroom. The lessons learned are celebrated by being acknowledged as "effective" via formal evaluations or put into action within other classrooms across the school.

Interactions in communities of practice must be meaningful to its members. Teachers and teacher leaders have to feel like they are gaining something out of their interactions and not just putting in the time. Otherwise, the community of practice will eventually dissolve as mutual engagement deteriorates, the joint enterprise becomes increasingly unclear, and shared repertoire decreases in production and quality. Wegner (1998) explains, "The meaningfulness produces new relations with and in the world. The meaningfulness of our engagement in the world is not a state of affairs, but a continual process of renewed negotiation" (54). Teachers will continue to ask questions that push the community of practice to evolve. What more can I learn? How can I improve further? What resources can help take me to the next level of effective practice? Should our community goals shift? Communities of practice are responsible for the continued engagement of their members and continual renegotiation of what it means to belong to the group. While not every member has to agree on what exactly their joint enterprise is defined, everyone does have to acknowledge the social fact that a community of practice, like culture, is not static, but a fluid and ever-changing social body.

6.7 Conclusions

I utilized communities of practice to better understand the interactions between school actors within their social groups. My recommendations presented in Chapter Five describe how communities of practice across schools define successful teacher leadership systems. Successful systems for teacher leadership must be well planned, aligned with school and district priorities, and above all, meaningful and useful to both teacher leaders and those with whom they are working. Members of communities of practice define what those systems will look like and, through their participation and non-participation, define success. They develop expectations and compete with external group priorities (i.e. district goals) to maintain and evolve their notions of success.

Understanding how identities can be shaped within a community of practice and how and why individuals come to join a community of practice was relevant to conceptualizing why teachers want to become teacher leaders and their expectations. Wegner (1998) explains, “In the process of sustaining a practice, we become invested in what we do as well as in each other and our shared history. Our identities become anchored in each other and what we do together as a community of practice” (89). Teachers engage in an apprenticeship facilitated by teacher leaders to become better teachers. Through their shared best practices, as a community, they are able to influence and directly impact student learning. Impacts of communities of practice within a school are created by those members implementing the lessons learned in the classroom. They ultimately affect how instructional practices shape student identities and worldviews. “Students first” is frequently mentioned in school mission statements. The Teacher Leadership Program works towards providing educators with the tools to

improve how they shape student worldviews through effective practice. With the high stakes of shaping future minds, communities of practice situated within schools can empower teacher identities to make lasting impacts.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTIONS

In practice, understanding is always straddling the known and the unknown in a subtle dance of the self. It is a delicate balance.

Étienne Wegner

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work on this project and work with a diverse team of researchers. Working with expert researchers who have a wealth of knowledge about policy, teaching, school dynamics, mixed methods, and so much practical experience was an exciting, challenging, sometimes intimidating, and often fun journey. The progression of this project really hit home about how working with a team is not just logistically convenient, but essential to producing thoughtful findings surfaced through multiple lenses.

I also learned about client relationships. While AIR was my primary client, I sat in on meetings and presented with my team to the client school district. I was able to observe how complicated obligations to the client can be. Sometimes you feel exploring other topics would be more informative or impactful, but you ultimately have to ask questions around what your client believes are valuable. There is definitely a negotiation of balance between client, study participants, and yourself. It is not always clear as a researcher where you fit in. However, bringing up your concerns, continually questioning the client about expectations, and voicing study participant concerns are critical to project outcomes and fostering a relationship built on mutual trust.

My time at AIR continually proved to me how not just anthropological methods but an anthropological lens is applicable in a multitude of ways. I will continue lugging

around my theoretical toolkit wherever I go and add to it as practitioners continue to contribute to the field.

Communities of practice as a theoretical framework has clarified, yet also muddied, my understanding of my workplace, the schools I visit, and even the game shops I frequent. We can try to structure processes. We can name things. We can even try to map them. However, the complexities within the communities of practice we witness and participate in everyday change, shift, and evolve. They are always more complicated than they appear from the outside and even the inside. I have been thankful to have been a part of my own community of practice at the University of North Texas among my fellow cohort members. Wegner writes, (1998) “We all have our own theories and ways of understanding the world, and our communities of practice are where we develop, negotiate, and share them” (48). My ever-evolving identity has indeed been shaped by the late night conversations, the shared stress over deadlines, and the banter in class discussions.

Finally, I enjoyed meeting teachers, school leaders, and teacher leaders, hearing about their successes, and how they are working on facing their challenges. They are truly change agents working hard towards a brighter future for next generations to come. They will need ongoing support and time to implement their ideas. I am grateful to have been a part of the efforts to make their voices heard at the district level. My hope is that this thesis has also given them voice and that one, two, or any number of findings written here will be transformed into insights for other districts. A selfish hope of mine as well is that this thesis will encourage other students to study teacher leadership. I hope they will tear this study down and build on a foundation on what parts

work for them and throw out the parts that do not work in their context. I hope they will take note of the limitations mentioned and use them to design a deeper study and empower their own study participants.

APPENDIX A
SAMPLE SITE VISIT PROTOCOL TOPICS

School Leader Protocol Topics

1. Leadership strategies
2. Roles shifts
3. Examples of distributive leadership
4. Important leadership skills
5. Teacher leader supports provided by school leader
6. Release time protection
7. Instructional differences over time
8. Systems, processes, mindsets, or plans needed before Teacher Leadership Program is implemented

Teacher Leader Protocol Topics

1. Understanding of the Teacher Leadership Program
2. Distributive leadership strategies
3. Working with teachers on teams and one-on-one
4. Lessons learned
5. Successful and challenging teams
6. Instructional, student growth, and school level changes over time
7. Framing of evaluator role
8. District supports
9. Teacher leader recruitment and selection
10. Teacher leader skills and qualities
11. Systems, processes, mindsets, or plans that needed before the Teacher Leadership Program is implemented

Teacher Working with a Teacher Leader Protocol Topics

1. Understanding of Teacher Leadership Program
2. Communication around Teacher Leadership Program
3. Leadership roles and distributive leadership
4. Time spent with teacher leader
5. Quality of feedback received from teacher leader
6. Implementation of feedback into teaching practice

Specific questions are not provided as to maintain intellectual property agreement with AIR.

7. Instructional, student growth, and school level changes over time
8. Evaluation as part of the coaching process
9. Recruitment and selection process for teacher leaders
10. Systems, processes, mindsets, or plans that needed before the Teacher Leadership Program is implemented

Teacher Not Working with a Teacher Leader Protocol

1. Understanding of the Teacher Leadership Program
2. Communication about Teacher Leadership Program
3. Leadership roles and distributive leadership
4. Professional learning opportunities
5. Teacher voice
6. Instructional, student growth, and school level changes over time
7. Systems, processes, mindsets, or plans that needed before the Teacher Leadership Program is implemented
8. Recruitment and selection process of teacher leaders

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTION TOPICS

Teacher Leader Survey Topics

1. Current satisfaction in role
2. Current responsibilities
3. Reflection on skills and abilities
4. Role as being critical
5. How important retaining classroom responsibilities is
6. Growth in profession
7. How clear role expectations are
8. Program impact
9. Role impact
10. Where I see myself in 2 years and then in 5 years

Teacher Survey Topics

1. Current satisfaction with program
2. Trust of teacher leaders
3. Teacher leader role as being critical
4. Program impact
5. Teacher leader impact
6. Feedback usefulness
7. Support

Specific questions are not provided as to maintain confidentiality agreement with district.

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