BUILDING A LEADERSHIP TEAM: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY OF A HIGH

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM AND ITS WORK WITH TEACHER LEADERS IN A

NEW SCHOOL

by

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(Under the Direction of Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. To address the purpose of this action research study, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

This qualitative study featured the implementation of a series of interventions as designed by the researcher and school administrators for the school-wide leadership team, which was the distributed leadership model at Upper East High School. Data were collected from individual

interviews with three administrators and six department-specific instructional coordinators, along with a focus group with the school administrators.

The following thematic findings emerged related to the research questions: (1) Collaboration builds efficacy; (2) Role definition defines the work; (3) Alignment influences leadership; (4) Voice influences confidence; and (5) Transparency yields trust.

Findings from the study have implications for further research related to the purposeful collaboration of administrative team members in larger schools, as well as the ways that administrative teams can influence the collective efficacy of a group of teacher leaders.

INDEX WORDS: Administrative teams, Collective efficacy, Distributed leadership, School leadership, Teacher leadership

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DEDICATION

Family provides life with meaning, and this dissertation is dedicated to mine. To my wife, Tamara, who has supported me through every aspect of my pursuit of doctoral studies. Thank you for making sacrifices throughout this process, and for keeping me sane with your love and encouragement. I am thankful for every moment with you, and for the life we have together.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have made the connection between instructional leadership in schools and overall school improvement efforts (Mitchell, Kensler, & Tschannen-Moran, 2015). Because of the wide variety of tasks and responsibilities for principals and building leaders, creating strong leadership with classroom teachers increases the overall focus on improvement and achievement in a given school. According to Zepeda (2004), "Principals assert their effectiveness by diffusing leadership to a larger set of stakeholders, that is, teachers" (p. 49). In opening a new high school, the creation of a leadership team to include teacher leaders is recommended as a priority for the principal and other administrators within the school.

The development of teacher leadership increases the focus on classroom instruction and has a direct impact on the level of student achievement in a given school (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Research also suggests that the success of teacher leadership development in schools is directly connected to the culture and climate that leaders create, as well as the opportunities for professional development that exist for teachers (Bubnys & Kauneckiene, 2017; Spillane, Healey, & Parise, 2009; Zepeda, 2019). It makes sense that a focus on developing teacher leadership would be a part of a broader strategy to build the overall capacity of both teachers and leaders.

Leadership matters. Developing a school leadership team with a focus on instructional leadership in a new high school can create a culture in the school that emphasizes high expectations for students, as well as coursework that focuses on standards and relevance.

According to Mitchell et al. (2015), "instructional leadership has a significant direct effect on school academic press" (p. 245). Education researchers use the term "academic press" to refer to "the degree to which a school is driven by a focus on academic achievement" (Mitchell et al., 2015, p. 228). This culture of academic achievement is critical in a new school and starts with the administrative leaders.

There is widespread literature on principals implementing a distributed leadership model to build and extend their capacity (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Spillane, 2006). However, Huggins, Klar, Hammonds, and Buskey (2017) note that school principals may be less willing to distribute leadership and to build the capacity of teacher leaders because of high-stakes accountability measures. According to Huggins et al. (2017), "principals are often less enthusiastic about sharing leadership practices in their schools" because of the notion that they must own the work of leading school improvement (p. 4). Despite this concern, the direct connection between teacher leadership development and student achievement creates the need for principals and school administrators to develop strong leadership teams focused on instruction (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

School leadership teams in high schools that employ or implement the distributed leadership model include the principal working with a team of administrators such as assistant principals, as well as a group of teacher leaders, often referred to as department chairs. The ways that schools use the department chair position vary. However, there is a growing body of research that connects the impact of teacher leaders as department chairs to successful instructional supervision (Ensminger & Gaubatz, 2017; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007; Melville & Peacock, 2018). It is important to note the documented description in research (DeAngelis, 2013; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007) that the role of the department chair tends to carry what DeAngelis

refers to as "routine managerial tasks, such as maintaining the departmental budget, ordering supplies, and assigning teachers to classes" (p. 109). The principal and administrative team who can use the department chair in a true instructional leadership role operate in a model that more closely aligns with distributed leadership practices (Spillane, Healey, & Parise, 2009; Wieczorek & Lear, 2018).

While there is evidence that principals have a significant impact on the culture that builds a leadership team in a school, there is still limited research on the specific methods that principals and school administrators undertake to build the confidence and capacity of teacher leaders (Buskey et al., 2017). Specifically, this study examines a school-wide leadership team in a smaller, theme-based high school, and provides an examination of how school administrators develop teacher leadership while promoting self-efficacy and collective efficacy as a means to school improvement.

The Problem

Upper East High School opened in August 2019 as a health science-themed relief school in an existing attendance zone. Upper East High School created a school-wide leadership team as a critical component of the structure in its overall plan for improvement goals. This team consisted of two groups: school administrators and teacher leaders. Teacher leaders are defined as teachers who lead their colleagues in subject-specific professional learning communities in addition to their core work with students in the classroom. The school administrators are legally charged with evaluation and supervision, and they must create a culture in the school-wide leadership team that builds confident, skillful teacher leaders who can collectively lead the academic programs of the school.

The administrative team at Upper East High School, including the principal and three assistant principals, came together to form common beliefs about the purpose and vision of the new school. Broadly, this study examined the connection between the planning and leadership from the school's administrative team, alongside the collective efficacy and leadership capacity of the school's teacher leaders. In focusing this study on the growth of the school-wide leadership team during the school's first year, the study placed an emphasis on how the school used collective efficacy as a means of addressing school improvement. The study's use of the action research process placed a focus on the perspectives of leadership growth and the increase in leadership capacity by the members of the school-wide leadership team who experienced professional learning throughout the year. The development of this group of teacher leaders was a key initiative during the first year of Upper East High School.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. This study sought to examine the perspectives from two groups that made up the same leadership team. Perspectives were sought from the administrative team about how they viewed developing the leadership capacity of instructional coordinators. Specifically, perspectives were sought from the administrative team and what that team was doing to develop leaders at the classroom level, who are the instructional coordinators on the leadership team. The second set of perspectives that guided this study included those from the instructional coordinators who were part of the same team.

The researcher approached this study with some overall questions: Can school administrators influence the confidence and collective efficacy of a group of teacher leaders

through participation in a school-wide leadership team? Are there lessons that can be learned by using the action research process to influence building leadership capacity and collective efficacy? These questions helped to frame the overall research questions to guide the purpose and focus of the study.

Research Questions

To address the purpose of this action research study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

As this study examined collective efficacy and leadership capacity in the context of Upper East High School, the researcher used specific terms to define key concepts. The next section includes a discussion of the definitions of key terms specifically related to the action research study. While these terms are used in a large body of research, this section discussed the terms specifically related to Upper East High School.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following key terms are defined:

- "Teacher Leadership" is defined as the practice of any teacher who works with students in a classroom, and leads a content-specific department through instructional goals and professional learning. The primary connection for teacher leaders who lead their

colleagues is through the content-specific department structure. The department structure means that, although Upper East High School is a smaller school, teacher leaders have ownership over content areas as a means of addressing school improvement and school goal alignment. According to Wenner and Campbell (2017), "conceptualizations of what exactly is meant by the term teacher leaders are widely varied" (p. 135). Wenner and Campbell assert that teacher leaders are "teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom" (2017, p. 140).

- "Instructional Coordinator" is defined as a department specific teacher leader and is intended to signify a role that goes beyond the traditional notion of one who orders supplies and assists with scheduling planning blocks of time. The instructional coordinator is considered the leader in a given content-specific department such as mathematics or social studies. The term instructional coordinator is used to specifically emphasize the instructional leadership and supervision components of the role. In the context of Upper East High School, an instructional coordinator differs from the traditional notions of the department chair. The administrators at the school selected this term for the teacher leaders to signify a departure from the idea of a person who is responsible for managing processes in a department (DeAngelis, 2018; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007).

This term, instructional coordinator, is an attempt to refocus the evidence that department chairs experience a lack of clear direction for their job definition (Peacock & Melville, 2018; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007). The instructional coordinator instead is a person who leads other colleagues in the department structure, and throughout the school. Mitchell, Kensler,

and Tschannen-Moran (2015) included in their research on the definition of instructional leadership the idea of "managing the instructional program" (p. 225). The administrative team at Upper East High School defined instructional coordinators further as teacher leaders who support other colleagues in a department through coaching to improve the instructional program.

- "Collective Teacher Efficacy" is a term that builds on the work of Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004), as well as Bandura (1977; 1997). For the purposes of this study, collective teacher efficacy is defined as the sense that teachers as a group collectively believe they can accomplish given tasks (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

- "School-wide Leadership" is defined as the group of administrators and teacher leaders who meet bi-weekly to participate in professional learning related to leadership development. The administrators go by the terms Principal and Assistant Principals. The teacher leaders who are a part of the school-wide leadership team include the instructional coordinators who lead departments. Specifically, these departments at Upper East High School are mathematics, English/Language Arts, world languages, career and technical education, science, social studies, and fine arts. This group plays an active role in implementing and leading the school's instructional programming. As described by Flood and Angelle (2017), "professional development allows emerging leaders to grow" (p. 87). This study specifically examined the work in the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School through the professional development that took place on this team. The school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School was the school's distributed leadership model in action.

- "Distributed Leadership" in this study follows a definition used by Spillane (2006), and also explored by a large body of research (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Heck & Hallinger, 2009). In this study, distributed leadership in practice refers to the established structure of the school-wide leadership team that includes the principal and school administrators plus the teacher leaders referred to as instructional coordinators within the building. This team worked to establish a school instructional program and functioned as a group in this effort. Distributed leadership in this context followed Spillane's notion that school improvement work "involved the many and not just the few" (2006, p. 4). Distributed leadership in this study means that the school improvement focus, as well as instructional leadership, was enacted by the principal plus a team of leaders.

These terms are key because they help to contextualize the study. Moreover, these definitions help to describe the details of the research approach as well as the conceptual framework within the context of this study.

Conceptual Framework

This action research focuses on school administrators influencing and building teacher leadership. The goal of the researcher was to build the work of the action research team through the foundations of distributed leadership identified in the literature (Camburn, et al., 2003; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Spillane, 2006). Spillane's concept of distributed leadership emphasizes that principals are not the exclusive instructional leaders in a given school and that in successful schools, instructional leadership decisions are distributed to other building leaders.

The conceptual framework builds on research that suggests that teacher leadership capacity increases when school-level administrators such as the principal and assistant principals provide support and training for teacher leaders (Bubnys & Kauneckiene, 2017). The focus of the

action research training in the context of the present study emphasized support for teacher

leadership and enlisted the planning of school administrators in this process. The conceptual

framework builds on related research that makes the connection between collective efficacy and

increased levels of teacher leadership (Donohoo, 2018; Flood & Angelle, 2017). This means that

a process that emphasizes teacher leadership could possibly support the development of the

collective efficacy of that group.

Leadership from a distributed perspective shaped the conceptual framework for this study

because the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School followed Spillane's leader-

plus model that connected leader actions of a principal to a group of teacher leaders, known in

this study as instructional coordinators, and administrators. The conceptual framework for this

study is illustrated in Figure 1.1
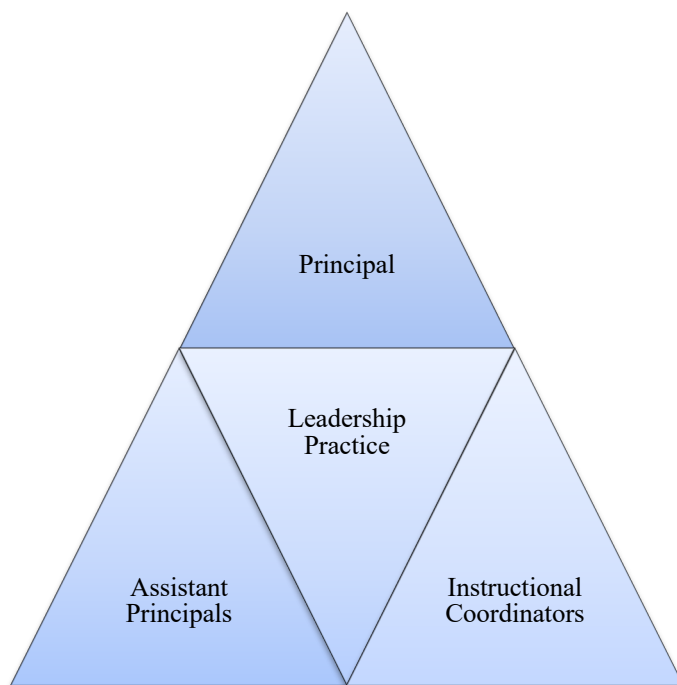
Figure 1.1: Distributed Leadership based on Spillane (2006)

Finally, the conceptual framework capitalizes on an opportunity to document the story of

the development of a leadership team through the work and planning of school administrators at

a new high school. Because Upper East High School is a theme-based school and is smaller than the other high schools in the Central School District, this action research provides an opportunity to place the concepts of teacher leadership and collective teacher efficacy into a context that is unique to this school.

As the central figure of the action research process, the researcher conducted and led all inquiry processes and methods of data collection, as detailed in the following sections. This research coordination included connecting the research questions for this dissertation to the work of the action research team.

Overview of the Methodology

Broadly, action research is a participatory process that includes multiple stakeholders who desire to address a situation or to solve a problem (Glanz & Heimann, 2019). The action research process for this dissertation connected research to the work of building and training a school-wide leadership team at a new high school. This research was connected to the study's purpose, which was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. The building and training of a school-wide leadership team that included both administrators and instructional coordinators was conducted with the hope of developing leadership capacity and collective efficacy with this group of instructional coordinators. The action research process was implemented by the primary researcher in combination with the members of the school's administrative team, who served as the action research team for this study. The overall objective of action research in this context drove the methodology as illustrated in Figure 1.2.
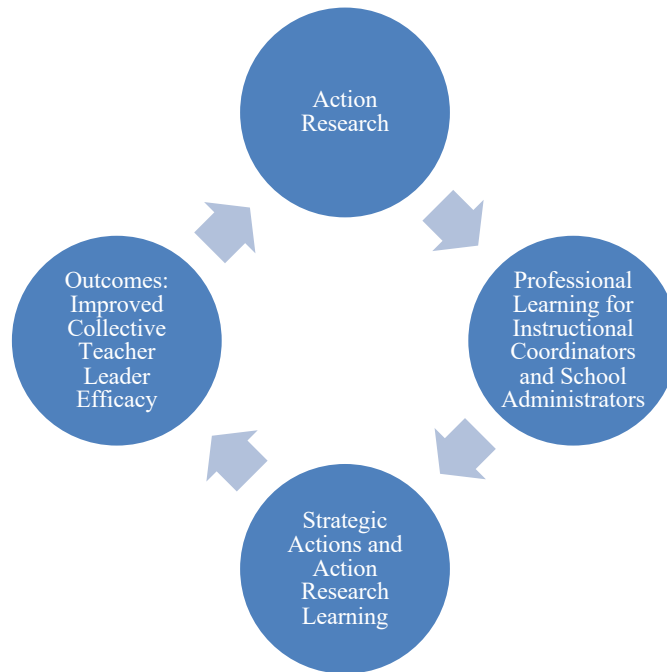
Figure 1.2: The process of action research at Upper East High School

Action research was the preferred method of study to examine the perspectives about leadership capacity and collective efficacy from the members of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), "action research is a collaborative, democratic partnership" (p. 6). Coghlan and Brannick describe a system where members of the system participate in the process of study. The researcher engaged the action research team to provide professional learning to the school-wide leadership team, which included instructional coordinators and school administrators. The goal of the professional learning was to increase the leadership skills of the instructional coordinators at Upper East High School. Simultaneously, the action research team was engaged in evaluating the progress of the research and to examine the evidence of leadership capacity and the collective efficacy of the team. This process started with the origins of the school-wide leadership team and continued through the fall semester of the first year of operation at Upper East High School.

As the school-wide leadership team met weekly at Upper East High School, the action research team members took an active role in the development of professional learning and training for all teacher leaders on the school-wide leadership team. The purpose of this training and professional learning for school-wide leadership was to build capacity for the teacher leaders to then serve as instructional coordinators for the individual department members in each content area. The action research team met on a weekly basis to review the progress of goals for the school-wide leadership team and to plan additional professional learning for the teacher leaders. Additionally, the action research team conducted planning sessions to develop activities for each of the weekly meetings with the school wide leadership team.

The primary researcher in this study, as assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, directed the planning sessions of the school-wide leadership team. This study employed qualitative research methods. The methods began with initial interviews with the action research team on their individual perspectives about leadership capacity. The researcher also interviewed the individual instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team, at the beginning, at the mid-point, and at the end of the study. The researcher formulated questions for the interviews based on ideas measured in the Collective Teacher Belief Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). The Collective Teacher Belief Scale (CTBS) measures areas related to instructional strategies and student discipline. For example, questions related to instructional strategies ask specifically about the ability of the staff at a given school to "help students master complex content" (p. 198). The goal of the interview process was to gain perspectives from the individual members of the school-wide leadership team about their leadership capacity, as well as the collective efficacy of the group. The researcher also used a focus-group method of interviewing for both the school-wide leadership team and the action research team as a means of guiding the

scope of the learning during the semester. This focus-group process served to provide any mid-course corrections during the study.

Data collection for this study incorporated numerous qualitative methods. These methods included:

1. Individual interviews with both the school-wide leadership team and the action research team members at the beginning, middle, and end of the research process;

2. Focus group conducted with the school administrators on the action research team during the mid-point and at the end of the study for the purposes of gaining perspectives about the progress of the school-wide leadership team;

3. Observations of meetings conducted by teacher leaders in their respective departments;

4. Researcher journal notes based on observations during school-wide leadership team meetings and based on observations during the action research team meetings.

5. Documents including school-wide leadership team artifacts provided additional context about the focus of the study, and these documents were used to corroborate observations and other data.

The researcher analyzed the qualitative data generated from the individual interviews using a coding scheme, examined these codes to look for overall patterns, and then generated themes. The analysis of data covered three distinct phases of this study. Because of the need to capture initial perspectives on teacher leadership in the context, the researcher analyzed interview data from the instructional coordinators about school-wide leadership during the beginning of the semester in August. The researcher also captured data from interviews in the middle and at the end of the semester with this group of instructional coordinators. Additionally, the researcher

captured data from interviews from the action research team members at the beginning, middle, and end of the study in August and December.

The focus group data from the action research team was similarly coded to be able to identify patterns and themes. Additional information was gathered for analysis using the participant observations from department meetings. The researcher analyzed observation notes for these activities.

Interventions

The primary intervention of this study took the form of the school-wide leadership team meetings, and the related activities designed to build capacity of the instructional coordinators on the team. The interventions in this study were created and implemented by the primary researcher and the school administrators at Upper East High School. Specifically, the primary researcher and the school administrators serving as the action research team for this study implemented interventions through weekly planning based on the progress and needs of the team. The administrative team meetings served as the mechanism to make mid-course corrections. The administrative team met as an action research team, and the meetings were the event each week where interventions surfaced, based on the work of the school-wide leadership team. The intervention was then implemented in practice as the weekly meeting of the school-wide leadership team, which consisted of administrators and instructional coordinators.

The action research team included a variety of professional learning activities in the implementation of the school-wide leadership team meetings during the course of the interventions. These interventions evolved to fit the emerging needs of the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team. The activities were based on the progress and needs of the team and coincided with the academic calendar at Upper East High School. The

meetings with school-wide leadership then served as a breeding ground to observe additional needed interventions, and to determine additional needs, both of the school and of the instructional coordinators on the team. These activities included:

1. Professional development surrounding a book study;

2. Weekly paired classroom observations in each curriculum department; and,

3. Alignment of department meeting agendas with a PLC structure for the purpose of analyzing student data.

These interventions were designed by the action research team to build a meeting structure that functioned as true professional learning, rather than as dissemination of information.

Significance

There is a direct connection between the existence of a strong school leadership team that includes teacher leaders and school performance as measured by student achievement (Sebastian, Huang, & Allensworth, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). The ability to create strong leadership teams involves school administrators in providing training for teacher leaders, as well as building a culture that promotes confidence and capacity for the members of the leadership team (Bubnys & Kauneckiene, 2017; Buskey et al., 2017). This study hopefully adds to the understanding about the specific steps of this training and the specific dynamics that a school administrative team must create to influence the capacity and confidence of teacher leaders. Additionally, this study adds to the discussion on the formation of a school-wide leadership team through the direction and guidance of school administrators at a new high school. Specifically, this study examines a school-wide leadership team in a smaller, theme-based high school, and provides an examination of how school administrators can develop teacher leadership while promoting self-efficacy and collective efficacy as a means of school improvement.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the study of this dissertation, and lays out an overview of the research questions, problem of practice, and methods for the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the related literature for the study, and discusses teacher leadership, school administrative teams, and distributed leadership research. Chapter 3 describes the methodology involved in action research and the qualitative methods as they relate to this study. Chapter 4 provides a description of the context of the study. Chapter 5 details the findings from the case study related to the research questions that guided this study, and describes the interventions implemented by the action research team. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the major findings using thematic analysis techniques. Chapter 7 summarizes the study, provides discussion on the findings from the research questions, and offers implications for practitioners, as well as implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. To address the purpose of this action research study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

This chapter includes the research questions, along with a review of the related literature on distributed leadership, school improvement, teacher leadership, efficacy, collective efficacy, self-efficacy, and collaboration in professional learning communities.

Distributed Leadership

This study looks at the leadership capacity of instructional coordinators on a school wide leadership team through the lens of distributed leadership. Spillane's work provides a working definition of distributed leadership, and he underscores in his influential book, *Distributed Leadership* (2006) that the definition helps to de-emphasize the notion of a single-hero leader who reforms a school culture and single-handedly improves results for the school. According to

Spillane's (2006) definition, distributed leadership in schools goes beyond just the "leader-plus" notion which defines a school leader as more than just a principal in the building. It is important to note that assistant principals and teacher leaders such as department specific instructional coordinators, grade chairs, and instructional coaches also do the work of leadership. Spillane (2006) posits that this is only part of the essential definition:

> In a distributed perspective on leadership, three elements are essential:
>
> - Leadership practice is the central and anchoring concern.
>
> - Leadership practice is generated in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation; each element is essential for leadership practice.
>
> - The situation both defines leadership practice and is defined through leadership practice. (p. 4)

Spillane further explains that a distributed approach to defining leadership acknowledges that multiple individuals in any school building are responsible for the actions that make up leadership practice.

The notion of sectioning distributed leadership into leadership practice, interacting with school leaders plus followers and the situation, and having this situation define the leadership practice sets a common tone that appears in much of the literature on distributed leadership. According to Spillane (2006), "Individually or collectively, teachers take on leadership responsibilities, including mentoring peers and providing professional development" (p. 13). These leadership responsibilities are directly connected to the leadership practices in the distributed leadership model.

Leadership practices in the distributed leadership model focus on instructional needs which will improve student learning (Spillane, 2006). Spillane's model also emphasizes that

practices are not merely distributed among capable teachers and administrators. Orchestration and design are key to the success of using a distributed model to address major school problems of practice. In this way, "formally designated leaders and teachers together or on their own can influence the distribution of responsibility for the performance of leadership functions and routines" and this comes out of the design process (Spillane, 2006 p. 41).

Table 2.1 examines the overall research questions of this study aligned to the construct of distributed leadership as espoused by Spillane (2006).

Table 2.1

Distributed Leadership Connection to Research Questions

Research Question	Connection to Spillane's Definition of Distributed Leadership (2006)
1. How can a new school create a school wide leadership team to establish teacher efficacy and overall collective efficacy?	Leadership practice as central anchoring concern
2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?	Leadership practice is generated in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation
3. How does a new school wide leadership team develop collective efficacy?	The situation both defines leadership practice and is defined through leadership practice

Increased Level of Ownership

Overall, the literature on distributed leadership brings several common themes into focus. First, the literature elaborates that a distributed leadership model increases the level of ownership and expertise for its teacher leaders (Burch et al., 2002; Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, & Steinbach, 1997). Teachers who have the opportunity to participate in leadership decisions have a greater ability to design solutions for a school's challenges. Liu and Werblow (2019) further describe

this level of ownership in relation to "teachers' organizational commitment and job satisfaction" (p. 52). This organizational commitment comes from what Liu and Werblow describe as "shared decision-making" (p. 52). Distributed or shared leadership and shared decision-making, rather than leadership from one person, creates a culture that, according to McBrayer, Chance, Pannell, and Wells (2018), "may result in a greater commitment to organizational goals" (p. 29).

Distributed leadership is described as democratic leadership (Kilicoglu, 2018) and distributed instructional leadership (Bredeson, 2013; Klar, 2012; Wieczorek & Lear, 2018). Democratic leadership and distributed instructional leadership as terms connect to the concept of increased organizational commitment. Kilicoglu (2018) defines democratic leadership as an approach where "all school members engage to work as a team in the decision making, implementation or monitoring processes, and sense of ownership is developed with the participation of all school members" (p. 7). This definition makes the natural connection to organizational commitment, and it is a conclusion Kilicoglu (2018) drew on the basis of the quantitative study of 22 schools in Turkey (2018).

In addition to organizational commitment, research shows a connection to teachers and leaders feeling a sense of autonomy that is fostered by distributed instructional leadership (Kilicoglu, 2018; Klar, 2012). Kilicoglu (2018) describes a connection through "democratic leadership" that builds "coherent leadership team characteristics" (p. 17). When leadership practices are distributed, teachers have autonomy to make decisions and participate in instructional leadership (Klar, 2012). In particular, Klar (2012) describes research findings that provide "insight into the development of instructional leadership capacity in middle-level school leaders" (p. 176). Klar (2012) also makes the connection that principals in schools should be the primary builder of leadership capacity for department chairs. Klar's (2012) study helps to

"illustrate the potential of urban high school principals to foster the instructional leadership capacities of their department chairs given the time and resources to do so" (p. 193).

Connection to Student Learning

The second major theme in the literature is that distributed leadership models can have a specific connection to improved student learning (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2009). Teachers in a distributed model develop skills to help students learn, and therefore could potentially make a greater impact on the school (Bredeson, 2013; Camburn et al., 2003). Specifically, Bredeson (2013) wrote that distributed leadership as distributed instructional leadership promotes an environment that enhances "conditions, structures, processes, and communities of practice to influence instructional designs and practices that affect student learning in their schools" (p. 365).

Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, and Steinbach (1997) used distributed leadership to examine specific practices and characteristics for teacher leaders in secondary schools. Leithwood et al. (1997) found that teacher leaders had a strong influence on school planning, as well as the structure and organization of the school. This influence was measured as stronger than the influence of school principals. Camburn et al. (2003) looked at distributed leadership through elementary schools implementing a "Comprehensive School Reform" model and found that the creation of an instructional coach, known as a "CSR Coach," was a main factor in classroom leaders performing instructional leadership tasks and functions (p. 366). Camburn et al. (2003) referred to the performing of instructional tasks by classroom leaders as "developing instructional capacity," and they noted that the specifically designed roles and responsibilities were factors in a more successful model for distributed leadership, leading to instructional improvement.

Heck and Hallinger (2009) additionally looked at distributed leadership as a means of contributing to school improvement in the form of math achievement scores. In their longitudinal study, Heck and Hallinger (2009) found a reciprocal relationship between improved academic capacity as it relates to math instruction and building school leadership skills. Heck and Hallinger (2009) also noted that there was limited data to suggest a direct correlation linking distributed leadership as a sole contributor to improved academic capacity.

Distribution of Leadership Practices

An additional benefit of the distributed model is a school leader's increased opportunity to access professional development that is focused on instruction. In their study on the concept of "opportunities to learn" for school leaders, Spillane, Healey, and Parise (2009) focused on schools that use this model to add opportunities during the school day for leaders to participate in and lead professional development designed around instruction. The study by Spillane et al. (2009) also takes the position that professional learning and "opportunities to learn" do not just occur through leadership practices in professional development, but more through "social interactions on-the-job," which Spillane et al. (2009) describe as less formal interaction among colleagues with common practice problems (p. 409).

Perhaps the most important finding from the Spillane et al. (2009) study, which used survey information from school principals and other certified personnel, was the idea that teacher leaders, "whose primary responsibility is teaching, reported less formal OTL [Opportunities To Learn] than administrators whose primary responsibility is leading and managing" (p. 426). The idea of teacher leaders not gaining access to formal opportunities to learn speaks to the need for increased usage of the distributed model for leadership practices.

The idea of schools distributing leadership practices specifically to teacher leaders, thereby creating autonomy and ownership of school-wide initiatives, is a concept on which

Spillane et al. (2002) focused their study. Spillane et al. (2002) used data from the longitudinal Distributed Leadership Project to analyze and discuss teachers' roles in district-wide accountability processes for school improvement. Spillane et al. (2002) found that the district leaders attempted to use their accountability policies to connect testing results as a way to change classroom-level instruction. A group of district leaders using policy to change and improve classroom instruction is an important step forward. As Spillane et al. (2002) noted, previous literature suggested that "school management and teaching are 'loosely coupled'" (p. 756).

Spillane and Healey (2010) further examined distributed leadership through the lens of "study operations" which translate theory and ideas into actual measures to collect data for research studies. This examination then allows the idea of distributed leadership to be used to examine specific studies for the framework. In this regard, Spillane and Healey (2010) argue that the conversation is not simply a discussion on whether distributed leadership works but focuses on whether specific leadership configurations in each school contribute to desired school outcomes that foster school improvement.

In the next section, the research examines the concept of analyzing a problem for the purpose of addressing school improvement. Because this study examines the development of teacher leaders as a means of implementing a school improvement plan, this literature is considered. School improvement is examined through the idea of improvement science.

School Improvement

School leaders can create a culture of school improvement (Fullan, 2001; Schmoker, 2016 The work of change and school improvement requires what Fullan (2001) refers to as "moral purpose" (p. 3). Fullan describes moral purpose as "acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole" (p. 3). Fullan's

use of moral purpose drives his definition of school improvement and captures the theme in the research of schools choosing to focus on the work that makes a difference (Elmore, 2000). This theme is further elaborated by Schmoker (2016) who adds that clarity and simplicity are essential to leading a successful school. According to Schmoker (2016), educational leaders specifically need to provide teachers with clarity based on the language used. Schmoker explains that "some of our most popular terms never acquired a clear definition in the first place and can thus mean almost anything to anyone" (pp. 18-19).

Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu (2015) provide a framework to guide the process of school improvement and improvement science and to ensure that school leaders are making decisions based on carefully-considered information. The work of Bryk et al. (2015), in alignment with the components of improvement science, takes analysis and data into account. More importantly, Bryk et al. (2015) look at the systems in place that created and produced the results that currently exist. Bryk et al. (2015) explain the concepts involved in improvement science by noting that it places a focus on "the specific tasks people do; the processes and tools they use; and how prevailing policies, organizational structures, and norms affect this" (p. 8). Improvement science, then, focuses on systems, and on how to make those systems run at high levels. Bryk et al. (2015) also specify that improvement science has at its core the idea that practitioners and researchers should "make the work problem-specific and user-centered" (p. 12). Focusing on the problem at the heart of a school improvement study is applicable to all levels of educational research.

If the goal of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School is to improve overall levels of instruction through reduction of variability across the building, Bryk et al. (2015) detail an avoidance of "solutionitis" where leaders and decision-makers move to a

solution before they really understand the problem and its root causes as also critical (p. 24). To understand these root causes, the team needs to be comprised of both school leaders in administration and teachers who are doing the work with students on a daily basis. Because teachers have a voice in the process, it is teachers who can address concerns about context and the teacher-created climate within a classroom.

Typically, educators have concerns about the scalability of an initiative based on their unique contexts in their rooms. For this reason, teachers can focus the work in the team based on how they collectively "understand how contextual factors shape this work" (p. 30). In the context of the school-wide leadership team, Bryk et al. (2015) would more than likely advocate framing the work by discussing why the work is important. This series of "why" questions helps a leadership team understand why certain results exist, and to propose a set of steps to address the concerns. For example, Bryk et al. (2015) ask "why do we get the results observed?" along with questions like "why does that matter?" (p. 67).

The power, then, of school leadership exists in building environments that encourage and expect teacher collaboration, common goal-setting, and designing instruction collectively in the best interest of the students in the building. Successful school organizations, according to Elmore (2000), especially those engaged in significant improvement, are constantly engaged in "problem-solving, structured by a common set of expectations about what constitutes a good result" (p. 13). An environment devoted to school improvement expects teacher collaboration as the main means of professional development and continuous improvement. Elmore purports that leaders are crucial in creating these environments where:

    individuals expect to have their personal ideas and practices subjected to the

    scrutiny of their colleagues, and in which groups expect to have their shared

conceptions of practice subjected to the scrutiny of individuals. Privacy of

practice produces isolation; isolation is the enemy of improvement. (Elmore, 2000, p. 20)

Elmore (2000) also places importance on demystifying the notion of leadership in that the main

focus needs to be on developing instructional leadership especially "If the purpose of leadership

is the improvement of teaching practice and performance, then the skills and knowledge that

matter are those that bear on the creation of settings for learning focused on clear expectations

for instruction" (p. 20).

The next section of this literature review will examine the definitions and importance of

the concepts of teacher leadership. This section will place teacher leadership in the context of the

role of the department chair and discuss environments that school leaders can create to support

and sustain teacher leadership. Because this study examined the perspectives of a leadership

team that included teacher leaders, referred to as instructional coordinators, this section

influences the overall direction of the research focus.

Teacher Leadership

The concept of teacher leadership has been the subject of a large body of research and has

evolved to include a variety of definitions. Much of the research of the last two decades was

summarized and captured by the work of Wenner and Campbell (2017), who completed a review

of all notable teacher leadership research from the previous 13 years. The study from Wenner

and Campbell (2017) was, in several identified ways, a follow-up to a seminal study from York-

Barr and Duke (2004), who compiled a comprehensive review of literature spanning two decades

of research on the topic. Wenner and Campbell's (2017) study was an update on the research for

the topic in the years after York-Barr and Duke's initial seminal work. Both studies came to

similar conclusions in key areas. Wenner and Campbell (2017) concluded that major gaps still exist in the research on teacher leadership as applied to schools.

The first similarity between both studies is that, while the concept of teacher leadership is prominent in schools, the actual definition remains vague (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Specifically, Wenner and Campbell (2017) note that "we were struck by how few authors explicitly described their particular definition of teacher leadership" (p. 145). In this regard, the authors note a lack of specific definition for most studies in the review. Unspecified teacher leadership definitions are a quality of the research that has not kept pace in the intervening 13 years after York-Barr and Duke (2004) study. The lack of a specific and consistent definition of teacher leadership is also a critical consideration in the research because of the large number of definitions of teacher leadership in the overall body of literature.

The second similarity between the studies by both Wenner and Campbell (2017) and York-Barr and Duke (2004) is the focus on the same research questions. Specifically, both studies focus on what teacher leadership is and what workplace conditions influence its production (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). There is a specific focus on connecting the concept of teacher leadership to student achievement and school improvement.

The third major similarity of the studies by both Wenner and Campbell (2017) and York-Barr and Duke (2004) is that both studies put teacher leadership in the context of distributed leadership as a theoretical framework. York-Barr and Duke (2004) place this framework and its corresponding definition in the context of Spillane's (2006) work, and note that research on teacher leadership through the lens of distributed leadership "would reflect teachers' roles in instructional, professional, and organizational development" (p. 262). Wenner and Campbell (2017) describe a connection to the distributed leadership framework, specifically referring to the

groundwork from York-Barr and Duke (2004), stating that many studies mentioned theoretical frameworks only indirectly.

Because of the comprehensive nature of the studies by both Wenner and Campbell (2017) and York-Barr and Duke (2004), they can form a basis for themes of additional literature on teacher leadership. Additional research on the topic focuses on teacher leadership through a distributed leadership framework, discusses clear connections on supporting teacher growth and leadership through professional learning, and makes specific connections to student growth.

Teacher Leadership as Distributed Leadership

Through the defining of specific roles for teacher leaders, and through the focus on the inclusion of teachers in school wide decision-making processes, a body of research highlights teacher leadership in the context of distributed leadership as a theoretical framework (Klar, 2012; McBrayer et al., 2018). Key in this discussion is the idea that teacher leaders play a significant role in helping their colleagues in classrooms (Cherkowski, 2018; Sebastian, Huang, & Allensworth, 2017; Smylie & Eckert, 2018). Principals specifically connect the idea of defining specific roles for teachers through shared leadership, as described by Sebastian et al. (2017). Sebastian et al. note that teacher leaders are more successful when they have defined roles, through a set vision from their principals. In contrast to this notion of defined roles, Cherkowski (2018) also reports that specifically designed roles for teacher leaders can sometimes cause frustration for teachers.

The majority of research, however, advocates for specific defined roles, or what Wenner and Campbell (2018) referred to as thick identities. Specifically, Wenner and Campbell (2018) conclude that "rather than teacher leadership being a 'hat' that one wears from time to time, thick [teacher leadership] identity may allow a [teacher leadership] to maintain a unified vision for

moving the school forward" (p. 15). According to Wenner and Campbell (2018), when schools show consistency in the use of teacher leaders in specific roles, the work of the teacher leaders improves. Wenner and Campbell's use of the idea of a thick identity for teacher leaders further develops the notion that teacher leaders need a clear definition in the role of the job to be successful (Peacock & Melville, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

As distributive leadership is specific to context (Spillane, 2006), additional research by Bubnys and Kauneckiene (2017) suggests that school leaders are responsible for creating this context by giving teacher leaders opportunities to participate in school improvement. Bubnys and Kauneckiene further note that, "leadership could be shared, involving as many employees as possible in school improvement activities, giving them certain powers to act and make decisions" (p. 72).

Regarding the creation and definition of specific roles for teacher leaders, the research highlights a gap in this aspect of distributed leadership. However, Smylie and Eckert (2018) highlight several specific traditional roles in schools such as team leader, master teacher, and coach. In addition, Smylie and Eckert (2018) explain that, "it is difficult to predict just what such roles and tasks might be or where among all the functions of leadership they may fall" (p. 564). Smylie and Eckert, and their research on creating specific domains for teacher leaders, add specific ideas on how organizational context can create a distributed or shared structure for school improvement.

In echoing Wenner and Campbell (2017), Bagley and Margolis (2018) detail a gap in specific definitions for teacher leadership. However, their case study of the hybrid teacher leader role in the Washington state school system details a model for teachers to lead from the classroom, and to participate in leading their colleagues and their school simply because they

have remained connected to students in classrooms. Bagley and Margolis (2018) explain that "the ability for teacher leaders to take on meaningful and necessary leadership work while staying close to the classroom, and most importantly, teaching children" is a main reason for the potential influence of a hybrid teacher leader role (p. 38).

Teacher Leadership Supported by School Leaders and Professional Growth

School leadership that is deliberate in supporting the growth and development of teacher leaders tends to have the most cohesive plan for using these leaders (Bubnys & Kauneckiene, 2017; Parlar & Cansoy, 2017; Sebastian et al., 2017). The concept that school leadership is needed to support the development of teacher leadership is consistent across a wide variety of literature and across multiple study methods. Quantitative studies (Eckert & Daughtrey, 2019; Moran & Larwin, 2017) as well as qualitative case studies (Weiner & Woulfin, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2018) reach a general consensus that teacher leadership development needs both time and support to ensure successful implementation. The research from Bubnys and Kauneckiene (2017) specifically emphasizes the importance of school leaders' creating an atmosphere that allows teacher leadership to grow.

When leadership opportunities for teacher leaders do not materialize, or are insufficient, research shows that this is detrimental to building authentic instructional leadership in the classroom (Eckert & Daughtrey, 2019). Weiner and Woulfin (2018) describe in their study the pitfalls of a school leadership atmosphere where the administrative team does not create opportunities for teacher leaders to grow. In this case, Weiner and Woulfin (2018) report that "if teacher leaders lack venues in which to operate as leaders, they will continue to have limited opportunities to engage in substantive leadership activities" (p. 230). Similarly, Eckert and Daughtrey (2019) discussed in their study that development of teacher leadership was

"inadequate to meet the demands of the district" (p. 13). Eckert and Daughtrey explain, as a form of distributed leadership, "teacher leadership needs to expand to collective leadership" (p. 13).

In more specific examples of teacher leadership growth, the research posits that this growth is directly tied to the principal of a given school (Parlar & Cansoy, 2017). For example, Sebastian et al. (2017) explain that an essential focus for high school principals is, "to guide teachers and give them the authority to address common issues around safety and school expectations together" (p. 18). Parlar and Cansoy (2017) note that school leaders and principals who empower teachers to lead will be more successful. Administrators who support and lead through their flexibility are perceived as positive in leadership development (Parlar & Cansoy, 2017). In addition to providing this type of support, Moran and Larwin (2017) reported that there are significant benefits for school leaders to provide professional learning that grows teacher leaders. Administrators directly planning professional learning, thereby creating new leaders in the building, relieves pressure from school leaders to be the sole leaders in the building, and creates an infrastructure of distributed leadership.

Connections to Student Growth

An additional commonality in the research findings shows that there is a direct connection between teacher leadership and student achievement growth (Ingersoll, Sirinides, & Dougherty, 2018; Sebastian et al., 2017; Smylie & Eckert, 2018). In this regard, the research makes a connection between teacher leadership and instructional leadership. Ingersoll et al. (2018) explains that instructional leadership as a pathway to strong teacher leadership "are independently and significantly related to student achievement" (Ingersoll et al., 2018, p. 16). If the connection between principal leadership and instructional leadership is strong, this in turn has a positive direct impact on student achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017). Specifically, the exact

ways that principals support the building of instructional leadership currently lacks clarity, according to Sebastian, et al. (2017) and in this portion of the literature a gap exists. Because of this gap in the literature, the present study will explore the potential connection between teacher leadership and principal support.

The next section of research examines the problem within this dissertation related to the concepts of efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, and collective teacher efficacy. This section connects the concepts related to efficacy with the concepts related to building teacher leadership in schools, which is a primary focus of this study.

Efficacy

This section examines the concepts of efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, and collective teacher efficacy, and then connects these concepts to teacher leadership in schools. More specifically, the section begins with a broad discussion of efficacy and self-efficacy through the work of Bandura (1977; 1997), and then looks at the works of Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998).

Efficacy

Much of today's research in education on efficacy and self-efficacy traces back to theories put forth by Bandura (1977; 1997). Bandura (1977) used the phrase "efficacy expectation" to describe the "conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 193). Bandura (1977) also argues that this idea of an efficacy expectation differs from an outcome expectancy because, while there may be knowledge of specific actions leading to an outcome, "if they entertain serious doubts about whether they can perform the necessary activities, such information does not influence their behavior" (p. 193).

Bandura (1997) further defined the idea of perceived self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Bandura's foundational work in this theory, related to social cognitive theory, connects to organizational structures further with the idea that "people do not live their lives in isolation; they work together to produce results they desire" (1997, p. 3). Moreover, Bandura (1997) explains that "perceived self-efficacy is not a measure of the skills one has but a belief about what one can do under different sets of conditions with whatever skills one possesses" (p. 37).

Self-efficacy

Much of the research on self-efficacy in education references the work of Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998), and builds on ideas from their research. Building on previous work from Bandura (1977; 1997), Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) built a model through the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) that measured efficacy. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) defined teacher efficacy as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (p. 233). Of particular note in their research, Tschannen-Moran et al. discovered that time of service in education played a role in changing a teacher's efficacy beliefs. According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), "evidence suggests that input during initial training has a different impact than input received after teachers are in the field" (p. 242).

Subsequent quantitative research on teacher efficacy and self-efficacy has implemented the TSES as a measurement (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2010; Yoo, 2016; Zhu et al., 2018). Research suggests that self-efficacy for educators is not a fixed concept (Yoo, 2016). In particular, Yoo found that "teachers' professional development effort does have a positive effect on teacher efficacy" (2016, p. 91). Yoo's study added to evidence that school leadership

supporting a specific professional development program can have a direct impact on efficacy (2016).

Research has linked self-efficacy to a variety of aspects of teaching as a product of school culture. When leaders create a supportive culture, teachers' self-efficacy improves, as does overall job satisfaction (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). Additionally, when leaders are open and accessible to a staff, as Aldridge and Fraser (2016) discuss, there is a greater opportunity to build a positive culture where teachers share ideas. The research describes self-efficacy as having a direct connection to teachers' job satisfaction (Cevik, 2017) as well as the rate at which teachers face burnout (Fu et al., 2018). Self-efficacy relates to specific formats of instruction, such as forms of literacy instruction. For example, Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2010) connected self-efficacy in teachers to literacy instruction.

Collective Efficacy

The idea of collective teacher efficacy came into further focus through the works of Goddard and Goddard (2001) and Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998). Goddard and Goddard (2001) note a specific connection between teacher and collective efficacy. More specifically, Goddard and Goddard explain, "where teachers tend to think highly of the collective capability of the faculty, they may sense an expectation for successful teaching and hence work to be successful themselves" (2001, pp. 815-816).

Overall, research in education on a teacher's sense of self-efficacy and about the ideas of collective teacher efficacy shows several basic trends. The first idea is that there is a connection between collective teacher efficacy and student achievement (Donohoo, 2018; Kim & Seo, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). The second trend is that there is a positive connection between a teacher's self-efficacy and positive job satisfaction (Flood & Angelle, 2017; Hallinger,

Hosseingholizadeh, Hashemi, & Kouhsari, 2018; Sehgal, Nambudiri, & Mishra, 2017; Turkoglu, Cansoy, & Parlar, 2017). The third trend is that schools can build a connection between teacher leadership and collective teacher efficacy (Donohoo, 2018; Flood & Angelle, 2017).

Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) refer to the idea of collective teacher efficacy as "collective self-perception that teachers in a given school make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of their homes and communities" (p. 190). Schools that have a positive collective teacher efficacy have a large number of teachers who believe that they can and do make a positive impact with their students. The teachers in these schools also believe that they can make a positive difference in helping their students improve their levels of achievement. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) state that the concept of collective teacher efficacy is different from "teachers' individual sense of efficacy, in that collective teacher efficacy is a property of the school" (p. 191). And because collective teacher efficacy is a property of the school, Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) note that when a faculty has the belief that they can contribute positively to their school's results, there is a positive correlation with student success.

Kim and Seo (2018) conducted a meta-analysis on the relationship between teacher efficacy and student achievement. While the authors of this study found little or no correlation between teacher efficacy and student achievement across a number of factors, Kim and Seo explain that teacher efficacy is context specific. Furthermore, Kim and Seo (2018) state that results of their study change based on the efficacy scale that was used. Kim and Seo note that the relationship between teacher efficacy and student achievement "depends on the length of the teacher's professional experience" (p. 537). The longer a teacher has been practicing, the more likely that there will be a relationship based on the teacher's efficacy.

Donohoo's (2018) research found that there was a clear correlation in the literature between collective teacher efficacy and student achievement through increased levels of teacher leadership. Donohoo (2018) also posits, as is part of the second trend in the research, that there is a positive relationship between collective teacher efficacy and job satisfaction.

The concept of positive job satisfaction and the connection to teacher's self-efficacy is further echoed by Turkoglu et al. (2017), when they stated specifically that "self-efficacy correlated positively with teacher job satisfaction, which shows that when teacher's perceptions of self-efficacy increase, their job satisfaction will also increase" (p. 770). Hallinger et al. (2018) conclude that there is a positive relationship between teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. In their study, Hallinger et al. (2018) explain even further that, "principal self-efficacy, instructional leadership, and collective teacher efficacy evidenced moderately strong, statistically significant, positive relationships with each other as well as with teacher commitment" (p. 811).

The study from Hallinger et al. (2018) leads to the third overall trend connecting teacher's sense of efficacy to an increase in teacher and instructional leadership in schools. Flood and Angelle (2017) conducted research about the connection between collective teacher efficacy and teacher leadership and found that "schools that had high levels of collective efficacy and trust fostered the necessary conditions and cultures to realize high levels of teacher leadership" (p. 95). Flood and Angelle connect collective teacher efficacy to the idea of trust with principals and school leaders. Donohoo (2018) makes the connection between collective teacher efficacy and teacher leadership, explaining that, "studies showed that when educators share a sense of collective efficacy, teacher leadership is more prevalent in schools" (p. 340).

The next section of this literature review further examines the definitions and importance of the concepts of collaboration and professional learning communities. This section also places

collaboration and professional development in the context of the present study. Furthermore, this section is included because the school-wide leadership team context at Upper East High School functions as a professional learning community.

Collaboration and Professional Learning Communities

Collaboration and professional learning communities are forms of professional development that are both widely advocated and also the subject of a large body of research (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Marzano, Heflebower, Hoegh, Warrick, & Grift, 2016; Zepeda, 2019). When professional development in the form of professional learning communities is consistent and ongoing, research suggests it translates to professional learning (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). School leaders should actively seek to create a culture that champions professional learning. According to Zepeda (2019), "school leaders must be able to nurture a learning culture that fosters agency for teachers, encouraging them to take an active lead in learning alongside their peers (p. 9).

DuFour's and Eaker's work (DuFour, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998) in collaboration and specifically in defining professional learning communities (PLC) provides a structure and definition for groups undertaking this type of professional learning. Based on the research of DuFour and Eaker (1998), making sure that students are learning is the most important goal of any professional learning community. This placement of the focus on learning by students, rather than on whether something was taught changes the conversation in any productive collaborative setting with teachers. DuFour (2007) argues that many schools misuse the phrase professional learning community, and he advocates that schools should build a collaborative culture while also studying positive examples through schools with highly effective PLCs to prepare teachers for this kind of work.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) again posit that success for a school using the PLC model begins with those teachers in the PLC creating common goals and visions, in alignment with those of the school. Using a collaborative approach means that PLCs need to create and act on a "statement" of core values," which according to Dufour and Eaker, "asks people to clarify how they intend to make their shared vision a reality," (p. 88). As DuFour and Eaker (1998) list and describe the characteristics of successful PLCs, they place a particular emphasis on the importance of "collective inquiry" and discuss that "the engine of improvement, growth, and renewal in a professional learning community is collective inquiry" (p. 25). DuFour and Eaker's concept allow people to want to continuously improve, and describes an environment where people are not satisfied with current practices just because they are established routines. Also essential in DuFour and Eaker's vision of professional learning communities is the concept that the team is "action-oriented" (p. 27) where the team meets to solve specific problems and to create collective solutions based on their current information. Battersby and Verdi (2015) advocate that PLCs are an effective means of professional development provided that there is teacher willingness. According to Battersby and Verdi (2015), "successful implementation of effective PLCs requires wholehearted commitment by teachers and administrators in order to make this reform a reality" (p. 28).

Owen (2016) states that the role of the teacher in a PLC transforms from passive to active. Teachers go from just receiving information as teachers participating in the PLC to teachers actively serving as a coach or a co-learner with other colleagues. Under the proper training and structure, teachers become the creators of the professional learning programs that address school goals. The other benefit of collaboration and PLCs, according to Owen, is that it changes the concept that instruction and curriculum planning was "privatised" (p. 406). The

tradition of individual planning, long-held in the high school setting, changes to a collaborative process where teachers hold common goals through effective PLCs. Ndunda, Van Sickle, Perry, and Capelloni (2017) state that effective PLCs place an emphasis on these common goals with a particular focus on shared and supportive leadership to guide the structure. Marzano et al. (2016) state that the work of a PLC is done "with the primary goal of increasing student learning" (p. 6). Marzano et al. add to the importance of a PLC and its direct impact on school improvement by placing the emphasis directly on "how students learn" (p. 6).

An important distinction for school leaders to make with teachers, according to Lofthouse and Thomas (2017), is that collaboration and cooperation are not identical concepts. Teachers can engage in cooperative practices, which help determine specific processes. However, collaborative teaching and planning requires active focus on student best interests and use of data derived from learning. This, according to Lofthouse and Thomas (2017), is overall much more effective than cooperation. PLCs and teacher collaboration, then, require a professional learning structure that allows for continued guidance of the work by teachers. Sjoer and Meirink (2015) argue that teachers can participate in PLCs and have specific roles, and still have challenges in implementing the new learning that occurs from these collaborative meetings. This is where school leadership and training are essential.

Chapter Summary

The role of the teacher leader is critical to the overall success of a school. Research shows that there is a direct link between teacher leadership and student achievement gains (Donohoo, 2018; Sebastian et al., 2017; Smylie & Eckert, 2018). When teachers have the leadership tools to guide their colleagues as well as students in instructional strategies, students have demonstrated improved achievement.

The challenge for schools exists when there is a lack of building leadership support for growing teacher leaders. In other words, teacher leaders cannot build skills or gain confidence with leading their colleagues when they do not have adequate professional learning dedicated to instructional leadership and support for improved student learning (Bubnys & Kauneckiene, 2017; Parlar & Cansoy, 2017). Schools like Upper East High School can address this challenge by devoting professional learning and planning time to building teacher leaders through specific group events, such as the school-wide leadership team and the related interventions designed to support the development of teacher leaders.

Research shows a clear connection between collective teacher efficacy and teacher leadership skills (Donohoo, 2018; Flood & Angelle, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). When a staff, and specifically a group of teacher leaders, has a higher sense that they can perform instructional tasks, the group is then more likely perform leadership tasks within the building.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology, explores the foundation for further development of research, data collection methods, the action research methodology, and the data analysis techniques. The next chapter also describes in detail the interventions of this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

This chapter includes the conceptual framework that guided the study, an explanation of the research design, data collection methods, data analysis, and a discussion of the ethics and validity of the study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study builds on research that suggests that teacher leadership capacity increases when school-level administrators such as the principal and assistant principals provide support and training for teacher leaders (Bubnys & Kauneckiene, 2017). The focus of the action research in the context of the present study emphasizes support for teacher leaders referred to in this study as instructional coordinators. This action research study utilizes

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the planning of school administrators throughout this process. The conceptual framework builds on related research that makes the connection between collective efficacy and increased levels of teacher leadership (Donohoo, 2018; Flood & Angelle, 2017). This means that a process that emphasizes teacher leadership is supporting the collective efficacy of that group. Leadership from a distributed perspective shaped the conceptual framework for this study because the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School followed Spillane's (2006) leader-plus model that connected leader actions to a principal plus a group of teacher leaders and administrators. This conceptual framework was illustrated further in Figure 1.1 (See Chapter 1).

Action Research

Because action research was the method of research for this study, it is critical to define action research as a concept. Glanz (2014) explains that "administrators and supervisors (and other educational leaders) conduct action research in order to address a specific problem by using the principles and methodologies of research" (p. 8). Action research is a type of qualitative research, and Glanz further details that qualitative research "relies on detailed verbal descriptions of the phenomena observed" (p. 9). From the perspective of using action research with teachers, Zepeda (2019) finds that action research "is a highly collaborative and job-embedded form of professional learning that engages teachers as researchers, actively inquiring and reflecting on their practices" (p. 170).

Further placing action research in the context of qualitative research, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that the practice helps researchers attempt to "understand how participants make meaning or interpret a particular phenomenon or problem in their workplace, community, or practice, but it also usually seeks to engage participants at some level in the process in order to solve a practical problem" (p. 49). Merriam and Tisdell assign key principles to action research

in defining it. Primarily, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that action research focuses on a practical problem and more importantly Merriam and Tisdell explain that, "its purpose is to either solve this practical problem or at least to find a way to further enhance what is already positive in a practice situation" (p. 50).

According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), "action research is a collaborative, democratic partnership" (p. 6). Coghlan and Brannick describe that in action research members of the system participate in the process of study. The researcher used the action research team to provide professional learning to the school-wide leadership team (including instructional coordinators). The goal of the professional learning was to increase the leadership skills of the instructional coordinators at Upper East High School. Simultaneously, the action research team was used to evaluate the progress of the research through the series of interventions planned for the school-wide leadership team, and to evaluate collective teacher efficacy. This process started with the origins of the school-wide leadership team in early August 2019 and continued through the fall semester of the first year of operation at Upper East High School, a newly-opened high school.

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) detail a system within action research designed to change the result or a process, and they state in their review of research that action research means that "human systems could be understood and changed only if one involved the members of the system in the inquiry process itself" (p. 54). As there was a need to create a teacher leadership team at the new school, this study was less about change than it was about the creation of processes and the implementation of interventions through action research. Similarly, Glanz (2014) posits that the process of action research "has reemerged as a popular way of involving practitioners, both teachers and supervisors, so that they better understand their work" (p. 16).

Herr and Anderson (2015) explain that action research differentiates from other forms of social science research. According to Herr and Anderson, "unlike much traditional social science research that frowns on intervening in any way in the research setting, action research demands some form of intervention" (p. 5). In the case of this study, the set of interventions was the creation of leadership processes at Upper East High School, as well as the creation of professional development for the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team.

Along the lines of creation of processes, Stringer (2014) advocates a definition of action research that focuses on meaning-making for the participants in the process. Action research is a process conducted and created by the action researcher. As Stringer elaborates, "the task of the action researcher, therefore, is to develop a context in which individuals and groups with divergent perceptions and interpretations can formulate a construction of their situation that makes sense to them all" (p. 75). The process of action research, in this context, places a focus on developing common definitions and goals within the action research team. Because Upper East is a new school, the school-wide leadership team created all new processes and goals from the outset of the planning process.

The action research that drove this study is critical to the development of the school because of the previously established connection between teacher leadership and student achievement, and because of the goal to influence and develop the collective teacher and leader efficacy on the school-wide leadership team. Action research is critical to the development of the school also to develop teacher leadership processes at Upper East High School.

Action Research Facilitator

In this study, the researcher is the action research facilitator, coordinating the efforts of the school-wide leadership team. As the action research facilitator, all efforts were led by the

facilitator. As Stringer (2014) explains that the action research facilitator should be aware of dynamics of the group, the responsibility of the researcher in this process is to be available for debriefing and to be aware of the roles that each person plays on the action research team. According to Stringer, "the major purpose of the process is to achieve a higher-level synthesis, to reach a consensus where possible" (p. 75). The process of building a consensus within the action research team respects the idea that each member of the team brings their own biases and perspectives to the process. In the interest of research coordination, the researcher led each session of the action research team and actively pursued feedback from the team members. In the context of this study, the action research team meetings occurred as a standing agenda item during administrative team meetings.

Action Research Team

The principal and the assistant principals who served on the action research team were veteran educators in school leadership who brought their own experiences to the group. The school's principal was also a veteran school leader, who previously served as the principal of a middle school in the Central School District and was named to the principalship of Upper East High School after having served in the neighboring community for seven years. She was a veteran high school administrator, who worked in the high school setting as a teacher and administrator prior to becoming a principal. This principal's experience as a previous principal guided the work of the school's administrative team. The administrative team at Upper East High School included the primary researcher as assistant principal, who was previously an administrator at another large high school in the Central School District. The other two administrators on the team were veteran assistant principals who both brought experience as high school assistant principals from other schools in the Central School District. The members of the

action research team are detailed in Table 3.1, along with primary duties assigned at school and

official job titles.

Table 3.1

Explanation and Description of Action Research Team Members

Team Member	Primary Role at Upper East High School	Action Research Role
Primary Researcher	Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction	Leads and conducts all research with the action research team, for the purpose of data analysis. Brings seven years of previous administrative experience to the team.
Principal – Mrs. Natalie Mason	Principal of Upper East High School	Provides context and charge for school-wide leadership team, as well as perspective for action research. Brings 12 previous years of administrative experience, including 5 as a principal.
Dr. John Montgomery	Assistant Principal for Testing and upper grade students at Upper East High School	Provides critical tie to assessment results for the school-wide leadership team and brings knowledge and experience of the attendance zone, as he served previously at Reynolds High School as an administrator for three years.
Mrs. Karen Sanders	Assistant Principal for ninth grade academy at Upper East High School	Provides experience from over 10 years in a previous administrative role prior to Upper East High School, and provides context working with new teachers

Because the school-wide leadership team met weekly at Upper East High School

throughout the first three months of the school year, and then bi-weekly at the end of the

semester, the action research team members took an active role in the development of professional learning and training as a series of interventions for all instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team. The purpose of this training and professional learning for the members of school-wide leadership was to build capacity for the instructional coordinators so that they would be better prepared to serve as instructional leaders for the individual department members in each content area. The training and professional learning for the members of the school-wide leadership team was also designed with the hope that the experience would influence the collective efficacy of the school-wide leadership team. The action research team met on a weekly basis to review the progress of goals for the school-wide leadership team and to plan additional professional learning for the instructional coordinators. Additionally, the action research team conducted planning sessions to develop activities for each of the weekly meetings with the school-wide leadership team. Moreover, the action research team engaged in discussions about the data and its analysis to support mid-course corrections, and to support any potential for revising the focus of the study.

Action Research Timeline

The timeline for action research team meetings followed a basic action research cycle. Herr and Anderson (2015) describe a traditional action research cycle for the researcher. According to Herr and Anderson, "these interventions constitute a spiral of action cycles" in which the authors describe developing a plan, followed by implementing, observing and reflecting on the implementation plan (p. 5). Herr and Anderson describe, in further examining the action research process that "this cycle of activities forms an action research spiral in which each cycle increases the researcher's knowledge of the original question, puzzle, or problem, and, it is hoped, leads to its solution" (p. 5).

The timeline in Table 3.2 followed the basic instructional calendar at Upper East High

School, with respect to action research planning and meeting prior to school-wide leadership

team meetings.

Table 3.2

Timeline and Activities for Action Research Team

Date	Action Research Activity
July 2019	Action Research Team Meetings / curriculum and professional learning planning for school-wide leadership; (Initial consent to participate in research explained by the researcher)
August 2019	Weekly Action Research Team Meeting / Alignment of goals between research and school-wide leadership team goals; Weekly school-wide leadership team meeting conducted; Individual teacher interviews conducted; Individual action research team member interviews conducted
September 2019	Weekly Action Research Team Meeting / Alignment of goals between research and school-wide leadership team goals; Weekly school-wide leadership team meeting conducted

Table 3.2 Continued

October 2019	Focus group conducted for Action Research team members; Weekly Action Research Team Meeting / Alignment of goals between research and school-wide leadership team goals; Weekly school-wide leadership team meeting conducted; Individual teacher interviews conducted; Individual action research team member interviews conducted; Department meeting observation conducted for department-specific instructional coordinators
November 2019	Weekly Action Research Team Meeting / Alignment of goals between research and school-wide leadership team goals; Bi-weekly school-wide leadership team meeting conducted
December 2019	Weekly Action Research Team Meeting / Alignment of goals between research and school-wide leadership team goals; Bi-weekly school-wide leadership team meeting conducted; Individual teacher interviews conducted; Individual action research team member interviews conducted
January 2020	Follow-up as needed

Interventions

As discussed in Chapter 1, the intervention in this study was created and implemented by the primary researcher and the school administrators at Upper East High School. The school administrators served as the action research team for this study to plan and implement the professional learning activities for the members of the school-wide leadership team, which

included both the school administrators and instructional coordinators. While the primary intervention in the study was the act of participation in the school-wide leadership meetings, the administrators monitored the progress of the team throughout the semester and used the action research process to provide any needed mid-course corrections for the team. An example of a mid-course correction, which was ultimately requested by the group of instructional coordinators, and implemented by the school administrators was the creation of a schedule that brought the full school-wide leadership team together on a bi-weekly basis, rather than weekly. In addition, the administrators convened the group of core academic instructional coordinators during the alternating weeks to discuss district and state assessment progress and to further discuss student intervention needs. This group consisted of the instructional coordinators for math, language arts, science and social studies, as well as the instructional coordinator for special education. This group began to meet as a response to the necessity to lead these departments in data analysis discussions. Table 3.3 illustrates the specific professional learning activities conducted as a part of the weekly intervention, which was the participation in the school-wide leadership team.

Table 3.3

Professional Learning Activities During the Intervention Implementation

Intervention Activity	Target Group	Frequency
Book study	School-wide leadership team	Monthly during fall semester
Paired classroom observations of the faculty at Upper East High School	School-wide leadership team; Administrators pair with instructional coordinators	Weekly throughout the school year
Alignment of department meeting agendas for a PLC format for data analysis	Instructional coordinators	Weekly throughout the school year

Research Design

The action research study follows a meta-learning approach, as described by Coghlan and Brannick (2014). Coghlan and Brannick state that "in any action research project there are two action research cycles operating in parallel" (p. 12). Coghlan and Brannick explain that this parallel action research cycle involves both a "core action research cycle" and a "thesis action research cycle" (p. 12). Coghlan and Brannick (2014) use this explanation to refer to the process of participating in and leading the action research cycle while at the same time reflecting on the learning from the study. This meta-cycle for action research as adapted from Coghlan and Brannick (2014). is illustrated in Figure 3.1.
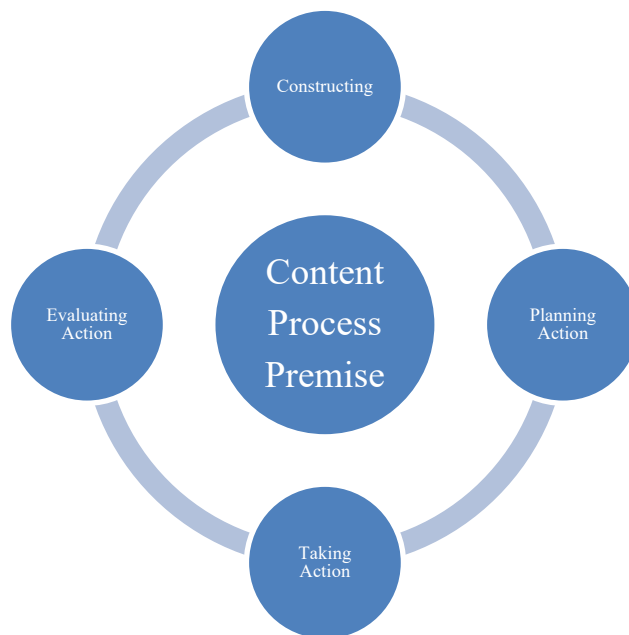
Figure 3.1: Meta-learning Action Research Cycle. Adapted from Coghlan and Brannick (2014).

While the cycle described in Figure 3.1 includes a cyclical inquiry process beginning with constructing and moving through the various phases of action, Coghlan and Brannick (2014) argue that analysis of action research is done in three forms of reflection: content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. According to Coghlan and Brannick, "all

three forms of reflection are critical" (2014, p. 13). Content reflection refers to the actual content of the action research interventions. In the case of this study, the content reflection centered around the professional development in the school-wide leadership team. Process reflection refers to the decision-making behind the methodology for collecting data for a given action research study. In this case, the methodology was implemented by the action research team and led by the action research facilitator. Premise reflection refers to the variables related to the context of the school. Most specifically, this action research study positions the work in a new high school. In this sense, the person conducting action research must consider these three views of the process to evaluate progress.

Contextual Setting

This action research placed a focus on building and defining teacher leadership at a new high school, and on the perspectives of the members of the administrative team on teacher leadership. Both Wenner and Campbell (2017) and York-Barr and Duke (2004) noted that there is a lack of a clear definition of teacher leadership and classroom-level leadership within the literature. One of the goals of this study was to define teacher leadership while placing this concept in the specific context of Upper East High School, which operates as a theme-based high school.

The action research took place at Upper East High School, which opened in August 2019 as a healthcare science themed high school. Upper East High School opened with the intent of relieving the attendance and overcrowding at Reynolds High School, which is located in the same attendance zone. Moreover, Upper East High School was designed with a capacity of 1,500 students, which is approximately half the size of the majority of high schools in the Central School District. An additional component to the context of the action research and inquiry

approach is that Upper East High School opened as a high needs school, based on the free and reduced-price lunch percentage of the total student population. The context of the research site, Upper East High School, is examined more fully in Chapter 4.

Purposeful Selection

According to Stringer (2014), "in most research studies, one of the first tasks is to decide which people to include" (p. 77). Stringer refers to the process of "purposeful sampling" when the researcher selects participants who have a vested interest in the topic (p. 77). Because this study employs the methods of action research, the research used purposeful sampling in choosing the specific members of the faculty. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) state specifically in elements of selection that "fieldworkers develop a set of attributes or dimensions characterizing a group or setting" (1993, p. 69). This sampling is based on the fact that the members of the faculty in the study were composed of two groups: the administrators and the instructional coordinators serving on the school-wide leadership team. In their discussion of case study research, Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that this type of research typically "begins with the identification of a specific case that will be described and analyzed" (p. 97). Additionally, the researcher worked directly with the school's principal, Mrs. Mason, to select and form the school-wide leadership team.

The target population for interventions and for study in this action research cycle is the group of instructional coordinators who comprised the majority of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School. This group was representative of all major curriculum departments at Upper East High School. The school administrators who comprised the action research team worked collaboratively to develop interventions and training for this target group of instructional coordinators. The school-wide leadership group also included the school's

technology coordinator, a registered nurse serving as the school's health science coordinator as well as the lead counselor. For the purposes of this study, the targeted group of instructional coordinators within the school-wide leadership team included the group of core instructional coordinators from math, language arts, science, social studies, and special education, along with the instructional coordinator for career and technical education.

The researcher led the school-wide leadership team meetings during the school year and used this group as the primary focus for influencing teacher leadership at Upper East High School, as illustrated in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Teacher Leader Members of School-wide Leadership Team at Upper East High School

Name	Role
Jessica Smith	Language Arts Instructional Coordinator
Leann Draper	Science Instructional Coordinator
Sharon Kane	Math Instructional Coordinator
Joseph Gary	Social Studies Instructional Coordinator
Sarah Teague	Special Education Instructional Coordinator
Veronica Harris	Career Tech Instructional Coordinator

Because the group of instructional coordinators within the school-wide leadership team represents all major curriculum areas, this collection of teachers qualifies as representative of the interests of the faculty and staff at Upper East High School. The school administration's careful selection of teachers to represent all curriculum areas on the school-wide leadership team signified a focus on including voice for all stakeholders on the faculty. Stringer (2014) advocates for the importance of including all stakeholders, and explains:

Although it is not possible for all people to be thus engaged, it is imperative that all

stakeholder groups feel that someone is speaking for their interests and is in a position to

inform them of what is going on. (pp. 77-78)

It was imperative then for the members of the team to serve as stakeholders for the staff, and to

be a voice for the other teachers in the building.

This study sought to inquire about the ways that a school administrative team can

influence the confidence and collective efficacy of a group of teacher leaders. To this end,

sampling analysis illustrates that the teacher leadership group in this study was representative of

the entire staff.

The next section of this chapter describes the data collection methods included in this

action research study.

Data Collection Methods

Stringer (2014) describes the objective of what he refers to as the "look phase" of the

action research process. Stringer states that this objective is "to gather information that enables

researchers to extend their understanding of the experience and perspective of stakeholders"

(2014, p. 101). Because of this objective, as Stringer posits, "the first cycle of an action research

process is therefore qualitative" (p. 101). In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach

to data collection and analysis.

As noted in the conceptual framework, there are two groups of targeted focus in this

dissertation: the action research team made up of the school's administrative team, and the

teacher leadership team as represented by school-wide leadership (Table 3.3). As a part of the

discussion on the data collection methods, this section describes the involvement of both groups

throughout the study. The researcher used numerous qualitative data methods to conduct this

study, including:

1. Individual interviews with both the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team and the action research team members;

2. Follow-up interviews at the middle and conclusion of the study with key instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team, as well as with the action research team members;

3. Focus group conducted with the school administrators on the action research team during the mid-point of the study for the purposes of learning perspectives on the progress of the school-wide leadership team;

4. Observations of meetings conducted by key instructional coordinators in their respective departments;

5. Researcher journal notes based on observations during school-wide leadership team meetings and based on observations during the action research team meetings; and,

6. Document analysis of school-wide leadership team artifacts to provide additional context for the focus of the study.

Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with both the action research team of administrators and the teacher leaders on the school-wide leadership team. Roulston (2010) describes the process of the research interview where "an interviewer generates talk with an interviewee or interviewees for the purposes of eliciting spoken, rather than written data to examine research problems" (p. 10). Because the purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team, the interview protocols were a critical component

of the study. The primary researcher in this study used what Brinkmann (2018) describes as "semi structured interviews" (p. 579). According to Brinkmann (2018), "semi structured interviews can make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee" (p. 579).

For the individual interview component with instructional coordinators, which connected to all three research questions, the researcher used open-ended questions adapted from and based on the Collective Teacher Belief Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). DeMarrais (2004) explains that using a small amount of open-ended questions to guide the interview tends to work better "than a long series of closed-ended questions" (p. 62). The categories in the Collective Teacher Belief Scale served as a guide for the discussions for each individual teacher leader. Table 3.5 illustrates a sample of the connection between the CTBS and the open-ended interview questions. Interviews were recorded via voice recorder for the purposes of analysis.

Table 3.5

Connection Between Collective Teacher Belief Scale and Open-Ended Interview Questions

CTBS Questions	Open-Ended Interview Question
CTBS Question 2. How much can your school do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	Can you talk about a specific professional learning topic we covered in School-wide leadership that promoted student learning?
CTBS Question 4. To what extent can school personnel in your school establish rules and procedures that facilitate learning?	What key initiatives has leadership promoted that facilitate learning?
CTBS Question 9. How much can teachers in your school do to help students think critically?	What can teacher leaders do to promote critical thinking in your department?

The researcher also conducted individual interviews with the members of the action research team during the middle and the end of this study. The goal of this interview process with the action research team was to document the perspectives of the team throughout the study. The researcher conducted interviews at both the beginning, middle and at the end of the study to document any potential changes in perceptions from the members of the school-wide leadership team, as well as from the members of the action research team. Additionally, as DeMarrais argued, the researcher in this process should "be sure to have the participant explain in more detail even those concepts where meaning might be assumed" (as cited in DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004, p. 64). Because of the shared experiences of the researcher and the members of the school-wide leadership team, this clarification of meaning was essential.

The interviewing schedule included 19 interviews during the fall semester. The researcher interviewed six instructional coordinators from the school-wide leadership team, as outlined in Table 3.4, at three specific intervals during the semester. The researcher conducted a first round of individual interviews with the six identified instructional coordinators at the beginning of the semester, in the time frame from August through mid-September.

The researcher conducted a second round of interviews in October with Sarah Teague (instructional coordinator for special education), Sharon Kane (instructional coordinator for math), Jessica Smith (instructional coordinator for language arts), and Joseph Gary (instructional coordinator for social studies). These instructional coordinators were selected for this second round of interviewing to gain information as key members of the school-wide leadership team on their perspectives on the process of developing leadership capacity.

The researcher conducted a third round of interviews in December with Sarah Teague (special education), Sharon Kane (math), Jessica Smith (language arts), and Leann Draper

(science). These specific instructional coordinators were selected for this final round of interviews with key members of the school-wide leadership team to gain their perspectives on the overall trajectory of the semester, as well as to learn information about their own development and degree of efficacy as instructional coordinators at Upper East High School.

In addition to the individual interviews with instructional coordinators, the researcher conducted two rounds of individual interviews with the other two assistant principals, Mrs. Karen Sanders and Dr. John Montgomery, who were both members of the action research team. The first set of individual interviews with the action research team members took place in September, toward the end of the first cycle of action research. The second set of individual interviews with the other two assistant principals took place in December at the conclusion of the study, and was conducted to gain their perspectives on the development of the school-wide leadership team, as well as the ways that the administrative team works to build the leadership capacity of the instructional coordinators at Upper East High School.

The researcher also conducted one individual interview with Natalie Mason, the principal of Upper East High School. This interview took place in early December and was conducted to gain Mrs. Mason's perspectives on the development of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School specifically in terms of leadership capacity and the sense of collective efficacy of the group. Additionally, the researcher sought ideas and perspectives from Mrs. Mason regarding the collaboration of the school's administrative team, as related to how the team worked directly with instructional coordinators and planned interventions for the school-wide leadership team.

Interviewing was important because of its alignment to the purpose of the research study. Roulston (2010) explains that, "once researchers have formulated research questions, they must

consider the kinds of methods that might be used most effectively to inform questions" (p. 80).

The researcher used an interview guide to conduct the individual interviews for both the school-wide leadership team and the action research team (Appendix A).

Focus Group

The researcher conducted a series of three focus group sessions as a method of data collection for this study. The focus group sessions took place in August, October, and December 2019 with the action research team as a means of documenting the collective perspectives of the administrators who served on the action research team, and who planned the interventions of the school-wide leadership team meetings. As Roulston (2010) writes, "focus groups are particularly useful for researchers who want to examine the possible ways that people talk about and make sense of topics, and the kinds of issues that they see as relevant" (p. 38). While the focus group is not the primary method of data collection for this study, the researcher included this activity with the action research group to capture the perspectives of the school administrators who have a significant vested interest in the growth and increased capacity of the teacher leaders at Upper East High School. Additionally, the administrators collaboratively planned the interventions for the instructional coordinators as members of the school-wide leadership team.

This focus group specifically included the principal, Mrs. Mason, along with the other two assistant principals on the administrative team, and took place in Mid-October. The researcher structured this focus group to last one hour, and followed a focus-group interview guide, similar to the individual interview guide (Appendix B). The goal of the structured interview guide was to allow the focus group members to share their thoughts in the collective group. As Stringer (2014) describes, "participants in a focus group should each have opportunities to describe their experience and present their perspective on the issues discussed"

(p. 111). The members of the action research team were selected for this focus group because of their involvement in the direction and development of the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team. For the purposes of analysis, the researcher recorded the focus group interview with a digital recorder.

Researcher Notes of Participant Observations

The researcher conducted observations of instructional coordinators as they led department meetings in their respective content areas. These observations took place in September, October, and December 2019 during the beginning, mid-point, and end of the study and were designed to collect data connected to school-wide leadership team meetings. Stringer (2014) argues that "observation enables researchers to record important details that become the basis for formulating descriptions from which stakeholding groups produce their accounts" (p. 113). These observations added additional information about the instructional coordinators who participated in the school-wide leadership team. The observation notes from department meetings added data about the professional development of the school-wide leadership meetings.

School-wide Leadership Team Artifacts

The researcher used school-wide leadership team agendas and meeting materials as additional data for this study. The documents included for analysis were selected working agendas for the school-wide leadership meetings and were selected from specific points in the study throughout the semester. The agendas were analyzed to gain insight into the professional development of the school-wide leadership team.

Researcher Journal Notes

The researcher kept a written journal throughout the study taking notes during 1) observations of the school-wide leadership team meetings and action research team meetings, 2)

interviews; and 3) the focus group sessions. The researcher also kept a journal to document more accurately the events related to the study as they occurred. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) similarly describe the act of keeping a journal as a common practice because it "imposes a discipline and captures your experience of key events close to when they happen, before the passage of time changes your perception of them" (p. 34). The researcher's journal was designed to be supplemental as a form of data, so that the researcher had a record of a more specifically time-stamped set of observations.

Another reason to include notes from the research journal as a form of data collection was to add a representation of the thought process of the researcher and the action research team during the action research meetings. As action research is a form of continuous improvement, the research journal represented the process that the team undertook to improve the development of teacher leaders. In further emphasizing journaling as an ongoing task, Coghlan and Brannick (2014) note that the researcher "may learn to experience learning as a continuous life task" (p. 34). Because the action research process was designed to examine the progress of the intervention, the research journal is another method of data collection conducted throughout the study that helped the researcher and the action research team make decisions on mid-course corrections. The research journal captured results and observations at each point of the study and helped the action research team determine if specific activities needed to be changed.

Data Collection Connected to Research Questions

Data collection for this study took place over the course of the first semester of work at Upper East High School. The primary researcher used the action research cycle to conduct this data collection as a result of the interventions implemented by the action research team. The methodology timeline and the connection to the three research questions are shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

Research Question Connection to Methodology

Research Question	Method of Data Collection	Method of Analysis	Approximate Timeline
Q 1: How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?	Individual Interview Protocol	Coding/Analysis of Themes	August 2019 October 2019 December 2019
	Focus Group	Coding/Analysis of Themes	October 2019
	Researcher Journal Notes	Researcher Reflection	Ongoing through December 2019
	Participant Observations	Researcher Reflection	October 2019
Q2: How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?	Individual Interview Protocol	Coding/Analysis of Themes	August 2019 October 2019 December 2019
	Researcher Journal Notes	Researcher Reflection	August 2019 October 2019 December 2019
	Focus Group	Coding/Analysis of Themes	Ongoing through December 2019
Q3: In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?	Individual Interview Protocol	Coding/Analysis of Themes	August 2019 October 2019 December 2019
	Researcher Journal Notes	Researcher Reflection	Ongoing through December 2019
	Document Analysis	Coding/Analysis of Themes	Ongoing through December 2019

Qualitative methods were used to address the research questions. These qualitative methods took the form primarily of individual interview protocols for both the teacher leadership team and the action research team. The qualitative approach was used for the purpose of

collecting stable data throughout the study, including later in the analysis of data. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) explain, "as action research is conducted in the present tense, you are always making choices as you reflect on what is happening, wonder what to do next and make choices and decisions" (p. 15).

With respect to the focus group, the researcher adapted protocols from School Reform Initiative (2019) to guide the questions and discussion in this setting. The purpose of using these protocols such as the "descriptive consultancy protocol" was to frame the conversation in an open-ended manner related to the research topic. Specifically, the researcher wanted the members of the action research team to be able to discuss the progress of the school-wide leadership team in a structured way. The purpose of using a protocol is to guide the members of the focus group to consider factual evidence about the progress of school-wide leadership prior to formulating suggestions about improvement items. For example, this protocol provides a specific amount of time to clarify questions about the purpose of the discussion, and a specific amount of time to clarify evidence that exists about the progress of the school-wide leadership team.

The relationship between the research questions and the methods for research detailed by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) provided, "a framework for collaborative creativity that deals with different kinds of questions, each with its own objective" (p. 28). In addition to the connection between the research questions and the methods used for this action research, the researcher triangulated data from the qualitative interview process using multiple data points. Glanz (2014) points out that triangulation brings together multiple data points to enhance the strength of the results in a given research study. These data points included the focus group discussions, as well as field journal notes and artifact from the school-wide leadership team.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this action research was conducted using what Coghlan and Brannick (2014) described as the context-specific "meta learning action research cycle" (p. 13). In other words, the evaluation of data was based on action conducted during action research. The analysis of all data was the researcher's attempt to create what Coghlan and Brannick (2014) refer to as an "extrapolation to a broader context" (p. 172). Glanz (2014) states that analyzing qualitative data "is the process of bringing structure and meaning to the mass of data collected" (p. 165). Glanz posits that analyzing data in qualitative research does not have one specific "preestablished criteria to follow" (p. 165). Additionally, the data analysis was the researcher's attempt to connect the results of the data collection to the three research questions.

The researcher used multiple sources of data for qualitative analysis: the action research team focus groups and individual interviews, the teacher leadership team (school-wide leadership) individual interviews, observation notes of participants related to department meetings, and researcher journal notes from both the action research team and the school-wide leadership team meetings, and artifacts. For this data, the researcher analyzed all information from the participants and directly connected them to the research questions that guided the study. In addition to pattern and coding analysis at the end of the process, the researcher also used the focus group protocols to guide the study while in the active process.

The researcher used an inductive approach to analyzing individual interview data as well as the data from the focus group session. According to Roulston (2010), "inductive analysis is based on the assumption that inferences can be developed by examining empirical data for patterns" (p. 150). More specifically, the researcher used a process of applying themes and codes to the qualitative data. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "forming codes or categories (and

these two terms will be used interchangeably) represents the heart of qualitative data analysis"
(p. 189). Roulston (2010) defines codes as "labels that researchers apply to sections of data –
whether interview transcripts, documents or field notes – that represent some aspect of the data"
(p. 151). The action researcher uses coding to accomplish meaning making based on the data and
text collected through the variety of data collection methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this
study, the researcher based these codes on the patterns that were present as a result of
interviewing the members of the school-wide leadership team and the action research team.

As the researcher was investigating collective efficacy development on a new leadership
team, the labels and codes aligned closely to the categories covered in the Collective Teacher
Belief Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). This scale predominantly covered areas related to
instructional strategies and student discipline. The interview protocol for the individual
interviews specifically included themes related to instructional strategies in the classroom, and
on how the teacher leaders at Upper East High School influenced these strategies. Assigning
these codes to the content accomplished the construction of categories, as noted by Merriam and
Tisdell (2016).

Similar to the explanations by Coghlan and Brannick (2014), the analysis of the data was
used to add to the quality of the research design. The researcher used the interview results as
analysis in writing the overall story of the research process in an attempt to address the three
research questions.

Analysis of focus interviews with the action research team was done with the goal of
examining patterns in responses. As Stringer (2014) shared, "in the Think phase of the research,
analysis of information emerging from responses to questions provides insights from which
'interventions' – actions to remedy the situation – are formulated" (p. 102). Stringer's

description of data analysis applies specifically to analysis of interview answers with the action research team.

Creswell and Poth (2018) discuss the concept of in vivo codes, or "names that are exact words used by participants" (p. 193). The researcher used a variation of in vivo coding to categorize the data derived from the individual interviews, as well as the data derived from the focus group session. Because the researcher was attempting to use codes and categories to describe patterns in the data, transcription quotes and lines were entered into a Microsoft excel document, along with corresponding code words and themes. The researcher also undertook this process for the transcription of the focus group session. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that in case study research, "analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting" (p. 206). The researcher used this coding to add to the descriptive analysis of the case.

Reliability and Validity

As Coghlan and Brannick (2014) report, "action research projects are situation-specific and do not aim to create universal knowledge" (p. 172). Because the study was situation-specific, extrapolation to a larger audience is difficult. However, because the researcher addressed each question with multiple methods of data collection, triangulation of the data could take place within this study. In addition, the information analyzed from the qualitative data connects to the overall study based on the research questions in focus.

In attempt to address researcher subjectivity, the researcher kept a research journal throughout the process for the purpose of capturing accuracy in the process. This research journal was designed to capture the discussions of the action research team throughout the process. The researcher also consulted with the major professor throughout the data collection and analysis process for feedback and guidance. Additionally, as the researcher serves as an

assistant principal at Upper East High School, there is an inherent dynamic of hierarchy in that the researcher serves as a direct supervisor for some of the instructional coordinators in this study. Throughout the individual interview portion of data collection with the instructional coordinators, the researcher emphasized that participation was voluntary and not a requirement of participation in the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School.

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the methods of data collection and analysis for this action research study. Because the purpose of this study was to examine the perspective about leadership capacity and collective efficacy from the members of a school-wide leadership team, the researcher predominantly used individual interview protocols to attempt to capture these perspectives. The researcher used a focus group protocol to attempt to capture the perspectives of the action research team during the study. Participant observation notes and the researcher journal notes were used to add additional elements of qualitative data. Finally, the researcher analyzed documents from the school-wide leadership team as a means of attempting to measure progress of the professional development during the study.

The next chapter of this dissertation presents the context of Upper East High School, describes the pre-existing cluster of schools, places the problem-framing in the context, describes the problem framing based on the site, and compares the context of the site and the problem based on other schools.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

This chapter includes the context, a description of the pre-existing cluster of schools, problem-framing in the context, problem framing based on the site, and the context of the site and the problem based on the data from other schools.

The Context

Upper East High School (this and all proper nouns related to the context of the problem are pseudonyms) opened in August 2019 as a second, high school within an attendance area for another high school in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. Upper East High School was created with the intent of relieving overcrowding at Reynolds High School. Upper East High School places a content focus on healthcare sciences and related fields, and it is

a choice school within the Reynolds cluster of schools. The idea of a choice school means that students and families can choose Upper East High School as an option for high school instead of attending the traditional model found at Reynolds High School. The coursework itself features a traditional set of graduation requirements from all academic areas, with the addition that students will focus on healthcare science areas such as patient care, healthcare informatics, and medical office support in their electives and in some of their core areas such as biology and language arts.

One of the goals of Upper East High School is that students can earn health science-related certifications that will help them differentiate their resumes for college and for work. The school has designed a curriculum that provides multiple career and course pathway options to its students. For example, students can take Advanced Placement coursework, and they can also participate in dual enrollment classes, partnering with local universities and technical colleges. This dual enrollment program provides opportunities for students to earn credits toward a two-year Associate Degree while simultaneously earning a high school diploma.

The establishment of Upper East High School is designed to allow for guidance and partnerships with local medical facilities, such as healthcare providers and hospitals. This partnership assists the school in creating internships and work-based learning opportunities. The goal of these internships is to continue to extend learning that supports the development of problem-solving skills with hands-on learning experiences through a problem-based approach that moves the student experience beyond the classroom.

Because of the health-sciences and problem-based learning approaches to the curriculum, it is hoped that students will experience a more integrated curriculum and skills in their core classes. For example, at Upper East High School, students have opportunities learn more specifically about health science topics in the core areas such as language arts, science, and math.

In addition, a social studies elective called medical ethics and the law was created and designed exclusively for Upper East High School, providing students at the school with a unique introduction to health science through a social studies lens at the beginning of their experience.

Adding to a Pre-Established Cluster of Schools

Upper East High School, as a new school in the Reynolds High School cluster of schools, which also contains two feeder middle schools and six elementary schools, opened for the first time in August 2019. Upper East High School is located within the Central School District, a large urban school district, adjacent to a large metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States. Upper East High School was designed as a smaller school in a district where most other high schools are large. For comparison purposes, the maximum capacity of Upper East High School is 1,500 students, while Reynolds High School's enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year was 2,811 students. Upper East High School projects enrollment in its second year to include another ninth-grade class of more than 300 students, which will increase the student population to close to 1,000 students.

Upper East High School's attendance numbers also represent the fact that the school is a choice high school, where all students in attendance have chosen to attend as full-time students. The component of choice means that Upper East High School must annually recruit eighth grade students to attend the school for high school. Where traditional high schools simply draw from an existing attendance zone, the process of recruitment is another unique aspect of Upper East High School.

Because Upper East High School operates within the attendance zone of Reynolds High School, the context overview includes demographic data for Reynolds High School and its

surrounding attendance zone. Figure 4.1 illustrates the Reynolds High School demographic data by race for the 2018-2019 school year.
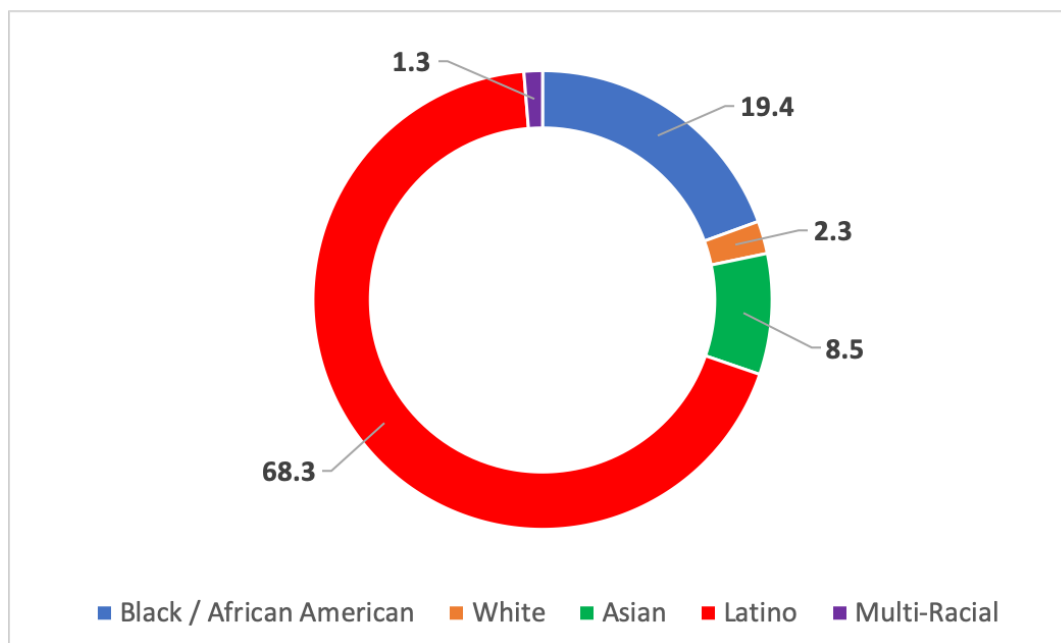
Figure 4.1: Reynolds High School demographic data by race percentages

In addition, according to data from the 2018-2019 school year, Reynolds High School had a free and reduced-price lunch population of 78%, as the school qualified for Title I funding status. Eight percent of the student population was identified as Gifted, and 11% of the population received services through special education programs. Twenty-three percent of students were identified as English Language Learners. Reynolds High School employed 193 certified staff members. Overall, the school's graduation rate for the 2018-2019 school year was 77.2%.

The racial demographic data for Upper East High School reflects the reality that these two high schools share an attendance zone. Figure 4.2 shows the racial demographic breakdown by percentage for the first year of operation at Upper East High School.
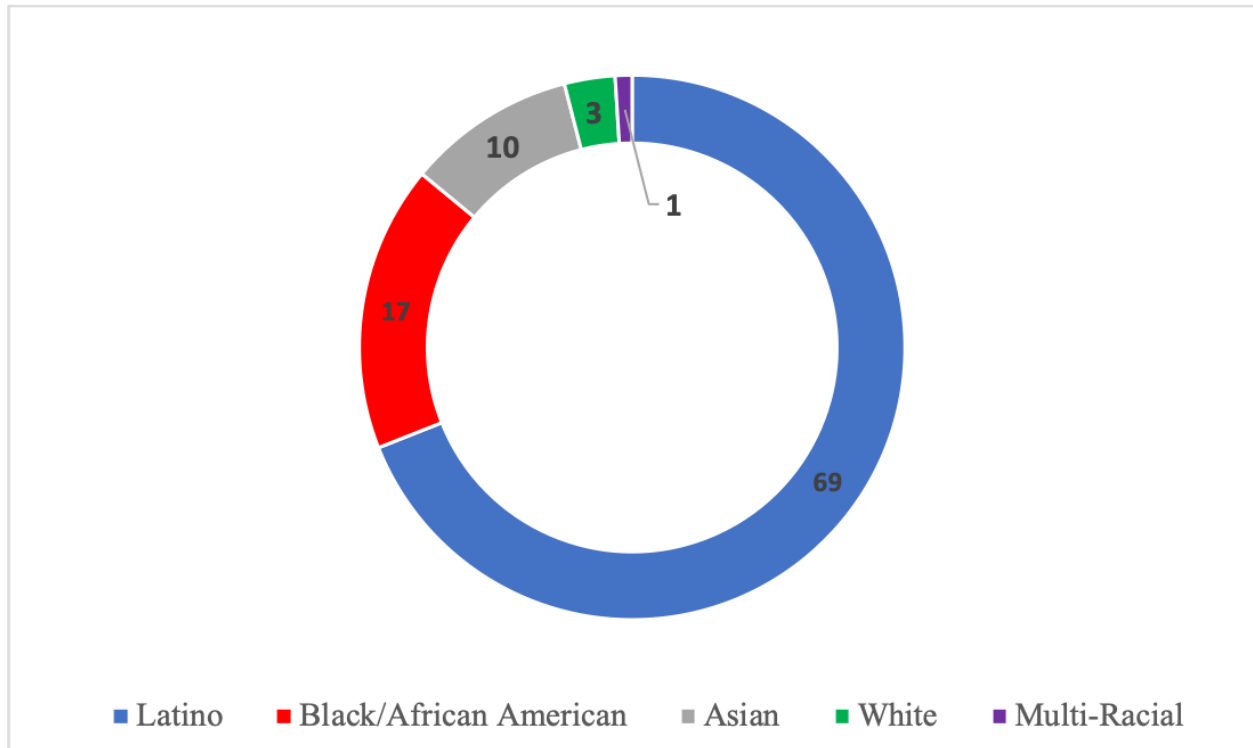
Figure 4.2: Upper East High School demographic data by race percentages

The school opened during the first year with 610 students, making it a much smaller student population than the traditional high school setting in Central School District. The student population includes 88% of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, which qualifies the school for Title I funding status, and is a higher percentage than the student population at Reynolds High School. This percentage qualifies as the highest percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch for all high schools in the Central School District. Nine percent of students were identified as Gifted, 11% of students received special education services, and 22% of students were identified as English Language Learners. The large majority of students during the first school year was ninth-graders, which made up more than 50% of the student body. The senior class was the smallest group of students at Upper East High School in the first year, with just 54 students in the class set to graduate during May 2020.

The Reynolds and Upper East High Schools operate within the Central School District, which is a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. Upper East High School opened as the 22nd attendance zone high school in the Central School District. The district served 182,050 students as of Fall 2019, in an ethnically and racially diverse area within the metropolitan area. Overall, 55% of the student population in the district qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Additionally, 14% of the students in the district qualify as gifted, while 13% receive special education services.

In addition to its overall large size, the Central School District has a history of high student achievement. The overall graduation rate among all high schools in the Central School District for a four-year cohort was 80.9% in 2019, with 8 high schools reporting a four-year graduation rate above 90%. Of note, 2019 was the first year that the Central School District fell below the state average for graduate rate, as the state average was 82% during the 2018-2019 school year.

The researcher serves as an assistant principal in the office of curriculum and instruction at Upper East High School. Among the variety of duties and shared commitments with this title include directing and shaping curriculum alignment for the new school. Additionally, the researcher worked with the school's principal to select and create a school-wide leadership team, which consisted of the principal, assistant principals, and teacher leaders from the major curriculum departments such as mathematics, science, and English Language Arts.

The next section frames the problem in the context of the school and the study.

Problem Framing in the Context

To describe the full context of Upper East High School, information and data from Reynolds High School is included as it resides in the same attendance zone as Upper East High

School. Because Upper East High School's first school year included participation from students who started their high school experience at Reynolds High School, this discussion about relevant demographic information and performance from Reynolds High School provides additional context. This section includes an analysis of the problem based at the site of the study and at other schools within the district.

Problem-framing Based on the Site

Reynolds High School is situated in the Central School District in the Southeastern United States. Upper East High School opened in the fall of 2019 to relieve attendance and overcrowding at Reynolds High School. In attendance, Reynolds High School showed a mobility rate of 34% in the 2018-2019 school year. For comparison, the Central School District average mobility rate for all schools was 16.3% in the 2017-2018 school year, the most recent year reported for district-wide data. The state of Georgia defines mobility rate as the percentage of students among the total population of students in a given school who enter or withdraw from the school between October 1 and May 1 in a given school year. Mobility rate is calculated because Georgia generally uses October 1 as the date to finalize most funding models for schools, based on attendance. Therefore, if students leave or enter a given school after October 1, schools generally do not receive funding for these students. As Welsh (2017) argues, "student mobility may affect schools by influencing the school climate and creating burdens in the classrooms of both sending and receiving schools" (p. 489). To this end, when schools are preoccupied with the transitions of their students, it can take away from school improvement planning because of a lack of continuity (Welsh, 2017). Table 4.1 shows a five-year comparison of the mobility rate for the Central School District overall and the mobility rate for Reynolds High School.

Table 4.1

Mobility Rate Comparison by Percentage of Total School Population

Year	Central School District (All Schools)	Reynolds High School
2018-2019	NA	34
2017-2018	16.3	30
2016-2017	16.4	40
2015-2016	16.6	33
2014-2015	15.7	33
2013-2014	16.4	34

Note: Mobility rate is calculated based on the total population of a school as compared with number of students who enter or withdraw from the school between October 1 and May 1. Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement (2019)

Mobility rate calculations are an example of a school demographic that examines factors related to the surrounding community. Similarly, poverty levels are another indicator of the context of the school in determining the background of the school's community. Public schools measure levels of poverty based on the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. In taking a closer examination of the surrounding community using census data from PolicyMap, the community in the attendance zone of Reynolds High School contains multiple neighborhoods with at least 16% of people living in poverty as depicted in Figure 4.3. The context of the Reynolds High School mobility rate is included to add context to the school attendance zone in relief by Upper East High School.
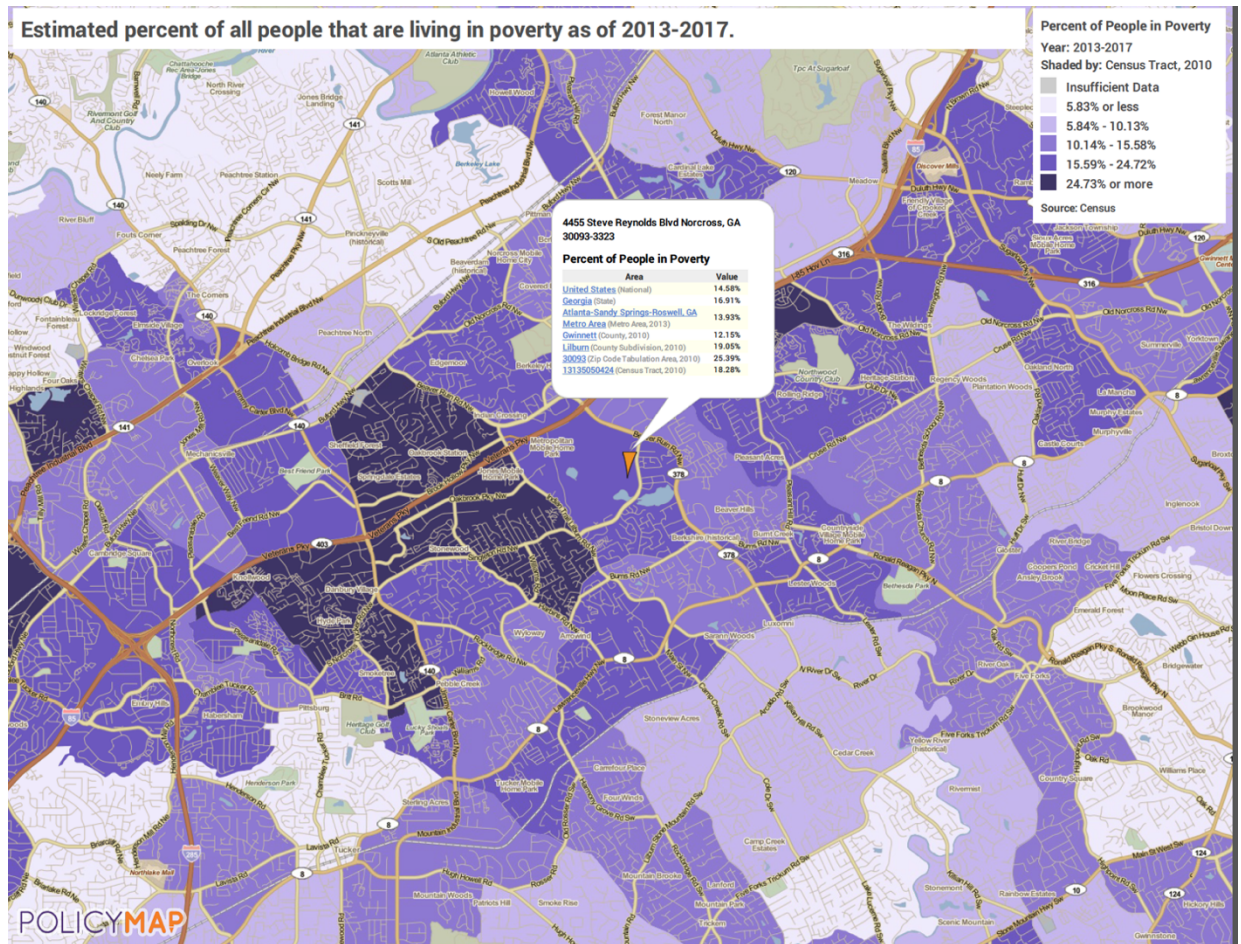
Figure 4.3: Estimated Percent of People in Poverty Based on Census Data as of 2017

The Context of the Site and the Problem Based in Other Schools

While schools are situated within specific neighborhoods, a main goal of all high schools is to graduate students at a high rate within a four-year cohort time frame. Graduation rate data are an annual number established based on rules created at the state level. Reynolds High School posted a four-year cohort graduation rate of 77.2% for the 2018-2019 school year. In comparison, the Central School District posted an overall four-year cohort graduation rate for all high schools of 80.9% during the same school year. Figure 4.4 shows a four-year comparison between Reynolds High School and the overall Central School District in terms of the graduation rate for all four-year cohort students.
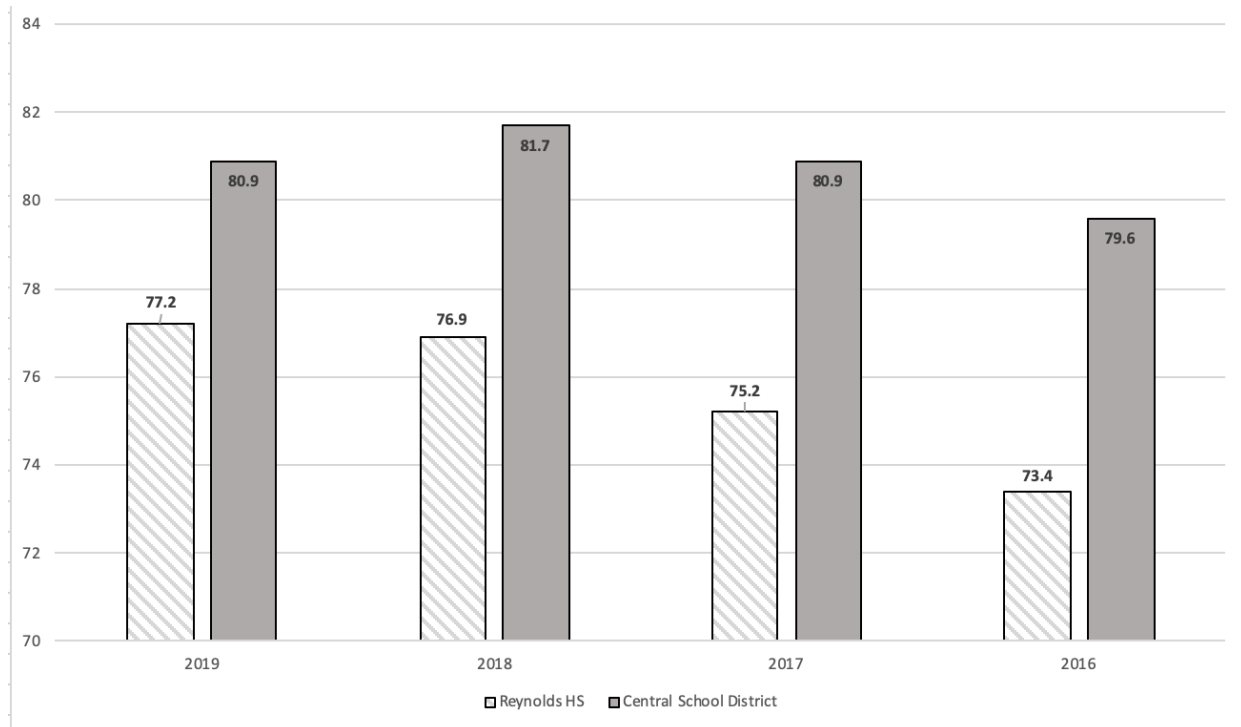
Figure 4.4: Comparison of Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate for All Students

Although examined in Chapter 2, research shows a connection between teacher leadership and student achievement (Campbell & Wenner, 2017; Duke & York-Barr, 2004). For this reason, the graduation rate history of Reynolds High School is an additional challenge that provides an impetus to focus on the development of teacher leadership and the work that school administrators do to support it at Upper East High School.

The overall four-year cohort graduation rate for all students has lagged behind the district average for all high schools. However, examination of the data suggests that Reynolds High School has a history of performing above the district average related to students who identify as Hispanic/Latino. For example, Reynolds High School posted a Hispanic/Latino student graduation rate of 74.22% during the 2017-2018 school year, compared with a Hispanic/Latino student graduation rate of 70.21% for all other high schools in the Central School District. Hispanic/Latino student graduation rate is an especially critical number for Reynolds High

School to consider, as the high school is majority Hispanic/Latino at 68.3% of the total school population, as of 2018.

The Characteristics of the Teaching Force

Upper East High School opened with 41 certified teachers, with an additional 6 certified staff members in school leadership, including administration, school counseling and the parent instructional coordinator. The certified teaching staff included 11 teachers who were new to the profession out of 41 certified teachers. This is a total of more than 26% of the teaching staff with no prior teaching experience. This new staff total included two health science teachers who are registered nurses, and who came directly from the healthcare industry in a career change to education.

The School-Wide Leadership team featured 18 certified staff members, including 11 teachers. The school's Health Science Coordinator, a registered nurse who came directly from healthcare to oversee the coordination of the health science curriculum in the new theme-based high school, also served on the School-Wide Leadership team. By the start of the school year, three members of the School-Wide Leadership team had earned a PhD. An additional seven members of the School-Wide Leadership team had earned a Specialist in Education Degree by the start of the first school year. Additional information and discussion about the members of the School-Wide Leadership Team are provided in Chapter 5.

Chapter Summary

Upper East High School opened as a smaller health science-themed high school in Fall 2019 and was designed to relieve attendance from Reynolds High School. Students attending the school made the choice to attend instead of Reynolds High School, which is in the same attendance zone. Students complete basic high school graduation requirements in core academic

areas such as math, language arts, science, and social studies. Additionally, students at Upper East High School participate in a health-science focused curriculum led by instructors from healthcare fields.

The demographic breakdown of the student population at Upper East High School compares with the student population at Reynolds High School. However, Upper East High School had a higher free and reduced-price lunch population than Reynolds High School at 88% of the students. Reynolds High School, which shared the same surrounding attendance zone as Upper East High School, held a higher student mobility rate than all other high schools in the Central School District at 34%. Additionally, Reynolds High School held a four-year cohort graduation rate that was annually lower than the district average.

The next chapter of this dissertation presents a detailed discussion of the case study in the context of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School. Chapter 5 also contains a detailed description of the interventions of the study as designed by the administrative team who worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were on the school-wide leadership team.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

This chapter includes a description of the creation of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School, detailed information on the members of the action research team for this study, detailed information on the participating instructional coordinators from the school-wide leadership team, and a detailed description of the action research process conducted during fall semester 2019.

Building the School-Wide Leadership Team

As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, a qualitative research approach was used in this study. The action research team consisted of four total people in the form of the school administrative team. Because the purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an

administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were a part of the school-wide leadership team, this group of administrators, which included the principal, two additional assistant principals, and the primary researcher who was also an assistant principal at the school, made up the action research team.

The process of planning the school-wide leadership team and the study began in early January 2019, during an early meeting between the primary researcher and the principal, Mrs. Natalie Mason. At this time, the researcher was one of only three employees of Upper East High School, along with the principal and the principal's administrative assistant. During this meeting, Mrs. Mason and the researcher discussed the importance of a strong leadership group in a new school, and that a model of leadership that empowered teacher leaders as instructional coordinators working alongside the administrative team would be critical in developing this group. Mrs. Mason agreed on the direction of this action research study at this time. When IRB approval was acquired during the Summer 2019, Mrs. Mason's approval for the study was obtained officially.

The Hiring Process for Upper East High School

The primary researcher officially joined the staff of Upper East High School in January 2019, after having previously served as the assistant principal for curriculum and instruction at another high school in the Central School District. As of January, there were just three total employees for the school. The hiring process for the rest of the school would begin on a timeline as determined by the school district and became a primary responsibility of Mrs. Mason and the primary researcher. Among the highlights of this first week on the job was a day-long meeting at the district office where the administrative team of two met with each curriculum director for the school district to determine a potential course of study for Upper East High School. The day also

featured a meeting with the school district's Human Resources Department so that the Upper East team could begin the hiring process with accurate information on the number of teachers, administrators, and counselors that would need to be hired. The staffing process included key non-certified positions such as the head custodian and the school nutrition manager.

Because Upper East High School was created as a relief high school for Reynolds High School, a pre-existing school in an established attendance zone, the hiring process began initially with interviews at Reynolds High school for staff members who were interested in transitioning to the new school. This interview process at Reynolds was important to the school district because Reynolds High School, in reducing their student population, was going to need to reduce their teaching staff totals. Because multiple schools were involved in the process of voluntary displacement to Upper East High School, the introduction to this set of interviews was conducted by the Central School District's Human Resources Department in January at Reynolds High School. Both Mrs. Mason and the primary researcher were present, along with the principal of Reynolds High School, for a full faculty meeting with the staff of Reynolds High School.

At the conclusion of the interview process with Reynolds High School staff, Upper East High School took 11 total staff members for the new school. The new team included Dr. John Montgomery, who was an assistant principal at Reynolds High School, and who would become an assistant principal at Upper East High School and member of the action research team for this study. The group from Reynolds High School included Dr. Leann Draper, who the Upper East team selected to lead the Science Department as the instructional coordinator.

Based on follow-up conversations with Mrs. Mason, it became clear that the next priority in completing the full hiring process for the staff of Upper East High School would be to make sure that key positions on the school-wide leadership team were filled by the start of the summer

months. This was an important goal because the newly assembled administrative team, in building processes for the new school, was eager to begin the work of developing leadership capacity with the group of instructional coordinators would be tasked with coordinating initiatives at the classroom level.

The full process for hiring every certified staff position at Upper East High School concluded in early June 2019. The primary researcher worked directly with Mrs. Mason to conduct over 200 interviews for the staff. In accordance with district guidelines, Upper East High School was also able to add several teachers through the district transfer process. The remaining staff members, including key members of the school-wide leadership team, came from outside the district. The most unique aspect of the hiring process for Upper East High School was the selection of teachers to fully staff the health science programs for the school's signature curriculum area. This group of teachers, along with a health science coordinator, all came directly from the healthcare industry, and had no previous teaching experience. While most new teachers in the Central School District came from teacher training programs at the collegiate level, and spent a year in a student teaching internship, the health science teachers were registered nurses who have no prior experience with lesson-planning and working with students.

The full hiring process produced over 40 certified teachers for the new school. Ten staff members, including the health science teachers who came directly from the healthcare industry, are first-year teachers. This dynamic placed a greater importance on the new teacher mentoring and induction program that the school would need to create, and also created additional urgency for strong teacher leadership.

In addition to the hiring process for teaching positions at Upper East High School, the administrative team worked collaboratively to discuss and finalize the list of instructional

coordinators for the school-wide leadership team. Selecting this staff by the start of our Summer

professional development sessions meant that the administrative team could start the process of

mentoring and guiding the instructional coordinators for each department.

The Title Decision: Instructional Coordinator

During a meeting with the administrative team at the end of May, the primary researcher

led a discussion of the team on the differences between the traditional notion of a department

chair, and the desired creation of a group of teachers who were true instructional leaders in the

building. With the blessing of Mrs. Mason, the team discussed that the term department chair

carried connotations that were managerial in nature. Traditional department chairs were

primarily tasked with ordering supplies and with delivering information. If the Upper East High

School administrative team wished to truly develop the leadership capacity of its teacher leaders

for each department, and in specialty areas, the group of teachers needed a name that implied

instructional leadership. It was at this time that the administrative group agreed to use the name

instructional coordinator rather than department chair for each teacher leader participating in the

school-wide leadership team.

This meeting was an important moment that occurred prior to the beginning of the action

research study because it created the common language that the school would use in setting a

leadership structure for teachers. The meeting discussion on using the term instructional

coordinator prompted the discussion for the administrative team that a clearly defined role for the

instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team was going to be critical for a

successful set of interventions and professional development experiences that would lead to true

instructional leadership at the classroom level. The team made the decision during this meeting

to discuss this topic of using the term instructional coordinator at a summer staff development

session by discussing key differences with the teacher leaders between the traditional roles of department chairs and the aspirational goal of creating instructional leaders. This group decision by the administrative team also established an atmosphere within the team that critical decisions related to school-wide leadership needed to be discussed as a team. Because the administrative team was small compared with other high schools, all members of the team needed to have a role in planning the school-wide leadership discussions.

Summer Staff Development at Upper East High School

The final major event for Upper East High School prior to the opening of the school year and the commencement of this action research study was a mid-Summer professional development session with the entire staff. During this professional development, featured district office personnel led the staff through a series of modules related to the concept of case study instruction. Case studies were used in classes across multiple content areas as a way to help students develop critical thinking skills while also building literacy practices. The three-day event was attended by the majority of the teaching staff and jump-started the school's literacy focus by providing direct professional learning on strategies that all departments and curriculum areas could use with students.

The event became important for the culture of the school because of the administrative team's decision to post a parking lot-style question board where teachers could ask any question they wanted about school procedures, curriculum, or logistics. This question board stayed up throughout the three days and allowed the administrators to directly address a large number of questions for the whole staff. The majority of the questions on the board were operational in nature. For example, teachers wanted to know how to sign up for computer labs, and whether there was a specific lesson plan template that teachers were required to submit (there is not).

The administration took the opportunity to meet informally with the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team. Much of this meeting was operational in nature, but the administration began the discussion about the definition of instructional leadership, which was an important discussion that was held prior to the start of this action research study. In addition to this important discussion on instructional leadership and on defining the roles for the teacher leaders, the administration received feedback from several instructional coordinators that helped the school make a critical adjustment to the bell schedule for the school year. In this moment, the administration showed transparency and a willingness to listen to the instructional coordinators. If the administrators of Upper East High School wanted to develop a successful school-wide leadership team, administrators needed to listen regularly to the instructional coordinators.

The Action Research Team Members

Through a series of collaborative sessions, both formal and informal, the administrative team of Upper East High School worked throughout the Summer prior to the first semester of school in order to prepare the staff and the building for teaching and learning. When the Fall semester 2019 began, the members of the administrative team worked as an action research team in planning weekly and bi-weekly professional development sessions for the school-wide leadership team. This section contains a detailed description of the members of the administrative team, as well as the individual contributions of each member for the school-wide leadership team.

Natalie Mason, Principal of Upper East High School

At the start of the 2019-2020 school year, Natalie Mason had been working with the Central School District for 24 years. A veteran administrator in the district, Mrs. Mason was a

social studies teacher during her teaching career, which started in middle school. She also taught at two high schools in the district, and predominantly taught a course for ninth grade students called Advanced Placement Human Geography. Mrs. Mason was an assistant principal first at Baron Middle School, and then at Park Crest High School, where she ran the office of curriculum and instruction. Prior to taking on the role of principal at Upper East High School, Mrs. Mason was the principal at Baron Middle School for over four years.

Mrs. Mason brought this experience to the job of leading Upper East High School when she was appointed at the end of 2018 and directed every aspect of the formation of the school. This process started for her in the early stages with learning about the goals and vision behind the school's creation from the district office. For Mrs. Mason, developing the leadership capacity of the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team began with putting the right people on the team. According to Mrs. Mason, "The most important thing was to get highly qualified people that were committed to developing teachers." Mrs. Mason's ideas on finding highly qualified people meant that the candidate search process for the school-wide leadership team members needed to involve directly asking questions in the interview process about what instructional leadership looked like.

Mrs. Mason believed that it was important to make sure that the members of the school-wide leadership team did not come from just one school, and that the experiences varied. She explained:

> They were very high performing with a series of proven results, so we knew that they had the capacity to lead their teachers based on their experience in the classroom. Also making sure we had a diverse background of experiences, and making sure we weren't pulling from one school, but really looking at a variety of people with different types of

backgrounds to help bring together a brand-new school-wide leadership team.
From her position as the principal of the new school, Mrs. Mason believed that developing the team of instructional leaders could only happen if the school made the right decisions from the beginning regarding who would participate in the team.

Regarding the make-up of the school-wide leadership team as a divide between experienced and novice teacher-leaders, Mrs. Mason explained that it does cause the new instructional coordinators (those who have no teacher leadership experience) to lean on the veterans. She elaborated:

> The new ones ask a lot of great questions, and I would use Jessica Smith (Language Arts instructional coordinator) as an example. She appears to be a veteran (leader) just because of her experience, and it's nice to see them…gravitate toward her.

As everybody on the team was new to the school because of circumstance, the new leaders gravitated toward veteran teacher leaders during discussions.

Because of Mrs. Mason's vision for the school and because of her belief that leadership at the classroom level matters, she described an effective team as one that is a partnership between administrators and instructional coordinators. This is a sentiment that surfaces in the final analysis of this action research study. Mrs. Mason explained:

> I think one of the things that we did that was very intentional was that they see this as a partnership…In particular with classroom observations….We might not have all the answers, but we're going to figure this out together.

Mrs. Mason used the word "intentional" to describe the effort that the administrative team used to make sure that the instructional coordinators understood their role as more than just conduits of information to be passed down to teachers in each curriculum-specific department.

Mrs. Mason's goal was to use the time with instructional coordinators to develop their abilities to lead departments of teachers. Additional perspectives from Mrs. Mason are included in Chapter 6 within the discussion of thematic findings.

Karen Sanders, Assistant Principal at Upper East High School

In her official job title and capacity, Mrs. Karen Sanders serves as the assistant principal for ninth grade students at Upper East High School. Mrs. Sanders joined the administrative team as a veteran assistant principal, having previously served as the ninth-grade assistant principal at Durant High School, also in the Central School District. Mrs. Sanders has worked in Central School District for 13 years, having previously served in the district as a special education teacher, and then as an assistant principal in a middle school. Among her many responsibilities at Upper East High School, Mrs. Sanders also supervises the ESOL Department, the Special Education Department, and the Social Studies Department as a main contact to the instructional coordinators in each department.

As a key member of the action research team, Mrs. Sanders described the progress of the school-wide leadership meetings in September as slow, but deliberate, noting:

> I think the meetings have developed and moved along in a very systematic but slow, not slow in an unproductive way, but slow in the sense that there aren't initiatives that are thrown out in this top-down way to the teacher leaders, and I think that's by design.

In echoing some of the same themes that were mentioned by other administrators, Mrs. Sanders described a goal of wanting to empower the instructional coordinators through the meeting process so that they would feel more comfortable in leading groups of teachers in a department setting. Mrs. Sanders further explained:

> I think one of the things that has been a focus has been this notion of empowering them to

empower teachers, and us do our work through them, instead of us telling them what we want to happen.

The notion of empowering instructional coordinators to empower teachers relates to the themes of leadership capacity and collective efficacy.

In addition to her assigned duties and responsibilities, Mrs. Sanders is a primary advocate for school-wide interventions and discussed the role that the meeting activities played in addressing school concerns in real-time. Mrs. Sanders stated:

In the intervention conversation that happened just recently…We started noticing that we were having some challenges that some of our students were needing extra help, and so. This is a problem that we see. How together are we going to address the needs of our kids? Rather than make an intervention plan for (the instructional coordinators)….I think all of the topics have been really timely like that. And I think that they feel very authentically part of the conversation.

In this explanation, Mrs. Sanders elaborated on the idea that instructional coordinators felt a part of the problem-solving process during school-wide leadership. Here, Mrs. Sanders's explanation echoes a theme of collaborative partnerships and will be explored further in Chapter 6 in the discussion of the thematic findings.

Mrs. Sanders shares a portion of the instructional supervision of Upper East High School, and this is an example of the distribution of leadership responsibilities from the administrative level. Additionally, the four members of the administrative team operate as a collective group in order to provide instructional supervision to every department in the school. In her work throughout the semester, Mrs. Sanders was a key example of the administration using action research to build professional relationships with the instructional coordinators.

Dr. John Montgomery, Assistant Principal at Upper East High School

Dr. John Montgomery is the lone member of the administrative team who joined Upper East High School from within the attendance zone. Dr. Montgomery previously served as an assistant principal at Reynolds High School, where he worked primarily with ninth grade students. Dr. Montgomery has been with Central School District since 2004, having previously taught in Tennessee. Dr. Montgomery's background is as a fine arts teacher, as he was the band director at Reynolds High School, prior to becoming a department chair at another high school in the district. Among the many duties and responsibilities at Upper East High School, Dr. Montgomery serves as the school's testing coordinator, and supervises both fine arts and the Science Department as a primary contact for the instructional coordinators. Because of his background, Dr. Montgomery brings the perspective of understanding the background of the attendance zone.

Dr. Montgomery works directly with Leann Draper (instructional coordinator for science) on a weekly basis. He elaborated:

> We've talked about CLTs, or collaborative learning teams. We've mentioned that in a big way, and so with that, it has transitioned our conversation to the Science Department and the structure of the Science Department in the way that we work as a team and hear from one another, collaborate with one another. And so each week I meet with Dr. Draper, and from there we look at the agenda for the previous week and take the key initiatives from the previous instructional coordinators' meeting.

Dr. Montgomery's explanation reflected a focus on alignment between the weekly collaborative meetings with the Science Department and the school-wide leadership meetings. Dr.

Montgomery believes that this alignment exists because he is able to take the time each week to meet with Dr. Draper to plan collaborative discussions for science.

Dr. Montgomery explained that the variety of experiences on the school-wide leadership team led to a difference in the levels of readiness for instructional conversations at the beginning of the semester. He explained:

> You try to research yourself as opposed to being hesitant just to ask the person with the answer to the question. So I think that's where there may be a little bit of a gap. Asking questions in terms of logistics, sure. I think our instructional coordinators do that. The new instructional coordinators do that….But when you get to the instructional piece, I think there may be a little bit more hesitancy because they are new, don't want to come across as not being professional or for us to have second-guessed them being in the role that they're in.

Dr. Montgomery's discussion of the readiness to discuss instructional topics came in the first half of this study. His additional perspectives on instructional leadership are included in Chapter 6 during the discussion of the thematic findings of this study.

Dr. Montgomery was a member of the administrative team, and he worked with upper class student interventions. His perspectives and feedback on the action research study was valuable. The primary researcher, with the addition of the three other administrative team members at Upper East High School, worked both collectively and individually with the instructional coordinators on school-wide leadership to align the practices of each department with major points of discussion during weekly school-wide leadership meetings. The next section provides a discussion of the instructional coordinators who participated in this study.

Instructional Coordinators on the School-Wide Leadership Team

The school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School is a collaborative team interaction between the school administrators and the department-specific instructional coordinators. The full team also included a health science coordinator, a local school technology coordinator, the head counselor, and other support personnel such as the parent instructional coordinator, who runs the parent outreach center as a component of Upper East High School's Title I funding status. For the purposes of this study, the primary researcher initially identified six department-specific instructional coordinators to provide perspectives on the development of their own leadership capacity, as well as the progress of the team's collective efficacy (Table 3.4).

In the second half of this study, the primary researcher refined the focus to the perspectives from those instructional coordinators who were also participants in the core leadership group. This group of instructional coordinators at the end of the study led departments containing assessments and content that directly aligned with school accountability measures, and that are considered graduation requirements. The team members considered a part of core leadership led science, social studies, math, and language arts, along with special education. This section contains background information on the group of instructional coordinators who shared their perspectives as a part of this action research study. Additional perspectives and information from this group of instructional coordinators is included in Chapter 6 during the discussion of the thematic findings of this study.

Dr. Leann Draper, Science Instructional Coordinator

Dr. Leann Draper is in her fourth year as a teacher of science. Her background is in molecular biology, but she is broad-field certified in science and teaches all levels of physics at

Upper East High School. Her course load includes a section of Advanced Placement Physics I, as well as sections of on level and honors/gifted physics, which is a graduation requirement in Central School District. At the start of the school year, Dr. Draper's weekly professional learning meetings included the health science teachers and the health/physical education teachers. This collaboration included these staff members because of the need to expose these elective teachers to collaborative practices.

As a teacher still in her first four years in the profession, this school year was Dr. Draper's first as a member of a leadership team. She brought very few pre-conceived notions about the role of a department chair versus the role of an instructional coordinator because her experiences in education are limited to the current attendance zone in the past four years.

In describing her early experiences at Upper East High School, Dr. Draper said:

I think in general my experience here is so different from my experience in my previous schools, and some of that, I think, is the fact that I'm a leader. Some of it is just the culture of the school in general.

Because Dr. Draper was not previously a teacher-leader, she did not have other experiences to compare to the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School.

Mrs. Jessica Smith, Language Arts Instructional Coordinator

Mrs. Jessica Smith is a veteran teacher who has been with the Central School District for 14 years. She previously served in a leadership capacity as the eighth-grade chair in a middle school in the district and worked as a course team lead at Park Crest High School in the same school district. Her experience as both a teacher and a veteran leader provide valuable contributions to both the school-wide leadership team and the action research study. Currently, Mrs. Smith teaches sections of ninth grade Language Arts, Advance Placement Literature and

Composition, and Advanced Placement Language and Composition. Mrs. Smith has taught every level of Language Arts in middle and high school, and she leads a department that includes two teachers who are new to the profession in their first years as teachers. Because of the emphasis on literacy skills for all students, Mrs. Smith is responsible for serving as a professional learning voice in the school.

Mrs. Sarah Teague, Special Education Instructional Coordinator

Mrs. Sarah Teague is another veteran teacher who has been in the Central School District for 10 years, all in the special education collaborative classroom. Mrs. Teague is uniquely qualified as an educator because she is certified to teach high school science, language arts, and health and physical education. The majority of her teaching experience from Park Crest High School was in a collaborative biology classroom. At Upper East High School, she currently collaborates with social studies classes in support of students who receive special education services.

Mrs. Teague also serves as the lead mentor teacher for the Upper East High School new teacher network and is a lead teacher sponsor for the student leadership team. While Mrs. Teague was a veteran classroom teacher, this was her first year as an instructional coordinator. As a new leader with many responsibilities, Mrs. Teague provided an essential perspective in this study.

In making the transition to leadership, Mrs. Teague said, "It's been kind of a weird transition from being one that asks questions to one that is expected to have answers…It's been unique in the fact that since we are new, there may not be answers available." Mrs. Teague was included in this study because she provides a link to all departments with her special education role, and because of her role in aligning the protocols from school-wide leadership with multiple departments through collaboration.

Ms. Sharon Kane, Math Instructional Coordinator

Ms. Sharon Kane, like Dr. Leann Draper, is in her fourth year as a teacher. Unlike Dr. Draper, Ms. Kane has previous leadership experience as a grade chair at her previous school, Baron Middle School. Ms. Kane leads a Math Department of six total teachers in a subject that requires students to earn a credit each year of high school. Ms. Kane teaches Algebra I along with one section of Advanced Placement Statistics. In 2019-2020, Ms. Kane was a first-year high school teacher. In addition to her responsibilities as the math instructional coordinator, Ms. Kane works closely with Mrs. Teague as a lead teacher for the new teacher network at Upper East High School.

Ms. Kane's contributions to the school-wide leadership team helped keep the meeting topics focused on scenarios that each instructional coordinator can use. Ms. Kane described her desire to model math meetings in a similar format to school-wide leadership where meetings are more than simply informational in nature. She explained, "since we're meeting as a department rather than curriculum teams, I don't have the time to be wasteful. I want (weekly department collaboration) to be used meaningfully, so our very first meeting, we talked about it." Ms. Kane's thought's on collaboration were frequently used as examples during discussion in school-wide leadership meetings.

Dr. Joseph Gary, Social Studies Instructional Coordinator

Dr. Joseph Gary taught 21 years in Central School District, all at Northern High School, prior to joining the inaugural staff of Upper East High School. Dr. Gary has taught all levels of social studies in high school, was a department chair in his previous school, and regularly works with the district office to develop curriculum for teachers throughout the district. Dr. Gary's previous experiences with the traditional department chair role made for an important

comparison with his current experiences on the school-wide leadership team. Dr. Gary's current course load is devoted to a medical ethics course that he personally designed for Upper East High School, in collaboration with the district social studies office.

Dr. Gary's department includes three teachers who are new to the profession. On leading teachers through this experience, Dr. Gary said:

> Sometimes it's just to take a deep breath and when not to worry about the little things, kind of not sweating the small things but maintaining the focus in the long run. I think there's a bit of quiet confidence that comes from having that experience that the new teachers recognize just to settle the situations.

Because of Dr. Gary's large body of experience as a teacher leader, his perspectives on the development of leadership capacity and collective efficacy provided context in this study that the other instructional coordinators did not have.

Mrs. Veronica Harris, Career Tech Instructional Coordinator

Mrs. Veronica Harris is a veteran teacher in Career and Technical Education and had experience in leading a department prior to joining Upper East High School. On her previous experiences, Mrs. Harris said, "this marks my 30th year in education, so I started out my first year of teaching in a tech school. Then I went on to teach high school business education for 17 years." Mrs. Harris holds a national board certification for media and technology and was previously a media specialist. At Upper East High School, Mrs. Harris runs the marketing program which includes leading students in the management of the school store. Mrs. Harris leads a department that includes the health science teachers in a school with this theme. Her experiences both as a teacher in business education and marketing, and also as a veteran leader provided valuable insight to the study. Additionally, Mrs. Harris works with a department of

almost exclusively novice teachers. While Mrs. Harris is a veteran, the other four members of her department have a combination of less than three years teaching.

School-Wide Leadership: A Chronology of the Interventions of the Action Research Study

As noted in Coghlan and Brannick (2014), "in any action research project there are multiple action research cycles operating concurrently" (p. 12). In this study, the action research team began to develop and design the series of interventions that would comprise the professional development opportunities at school-wide leadership team meetings during the weeks leading up to the opening of Upper East High School's fall semester. There were two distinct action research cycles during the course of this study. The first cycle included the development of practices, operations and processes during the July and August work sessions with the action research team and the school-wide leadership team. The first cycle also included the book study to discuss the implementation of learning intentions in each class, analysis of paired classroom visits, and discussion of gradebooks as a means of communicating progress with classes.

The second action research cycle began following an action research team focus group sessions, and included discussions on interventions for all classes and students, in-depth analysis of data based on district assessments, and ways that instructional coordinators can serve as instructional leaders in each department for the purposes of providing support for all students including students who received Special Education services.

Throughout the study strategies and protocols were implemented to train and develop the instructional leaders on leading department-specific collaborative learning teams. These collaborative learning teams were Upper East High School's implementation of a weekly PLC-style professional development and collaboration for departments in all curriculum areas and

were the most consistent weekly opportunity for instructional coordinators to practice

instructional leadership with the members of their respective departments. Because each school-

wide leadership team meeting included interactions between the administrative team and the

instructional coordinators, the study was designed to examine alignment between the two

specific groups that made up the school-wide leadership team. This alignment was implemented

to determine the ways that the administrative team worked together to develop leadership

capacity. The monthly breakdown of interventions that made up the study are illustrated in Table

5.1 and are further detailed chronologically in this section.

Table 5.1

Monthly Activities for School-Wide Leadership Aligned to Meetings

Time Range	Intervention / Action Research Activity	Meetings Held
Summer 2019	Norm-setting; Discussion of titles; Operational information; Alignment of goals	1
August 2019	Classroom walk-through protocol; Student engagement discussion; Operational information; Book study discussion	4
September 2019	Book study discussion; Data protocol for pretests; Discussion protocols for interventions by department	2
October 2019	Gradebook discussion; Classroom walk-through discussion; Student work analysis protocol; Instructional alignment to assessments discussion; Dilemma protocol discussion; School-wide intervention plan	3
November 2019	Core academic data protocol; Student progress updates; Leader actions	2
December 2019	ESOL and Special Education discussion; End-of-semester grading discussion; Eighth-grade course articulation plan discussion	2
January 2019	Follow-up as needed	2

Summer Planning Work and Operations Meetings

The first official full meeting with the school-wide leadership team followed seven months of planning and design devoted to building the curriculum and processes for the school by the primary researcher and the administrative team. This meeting during Summer professional development sessions for the entire faculty was designed to establish norms for the beginning of the school year, and for the ways that the school-wide leadership team would operate as a group during regular meeting sessions. All instructional coordinators who participated in this study were present at the summer meeting and participated in the series of discussions on this day.

Because the administrative team used a parking lot-style feedback wall during the three days of professional development that was devoted to operations questions, the summer meeting did feature time devoted to topics that allowed the team to cover answers to these questions. For example, teachers wanted answers to protocols with students related to tardiness to class and late work. Because of this discussion on operations, the instructional leaders asked several questions related to the proposed bell schedule. Math teachers in particular were concerned about an aspect of the schedule that was set to alternate the days for block scheduling on non-consecutive days.

This concern was raised during this initial meeting, and the administrative team immediately realized that an adjustment was needed. While the bell schedule discussion was ultimately a small portion of the meeting, it was an early example of the administrative team making sure that the instructional coordinators were an active part of the discussion and not just present to receive information. In reflecting on this seemingly brief moment, language arts instructional coordinator Mrs. Smith pointed out a specific environment that showed an administrative team wanting honest feedback and listening to the feedback. Mrs. Smith said:

That sent the message that you as an administrative team were going to listen to us, and

we weren't just voicing our concerns as teachers but concerns for our students. You all

heard the concern about the block schedule, it being on Tuesday and Thursday, and

especially for math teachers….and you listened and adjusted the schedule, so that to me

is already what you did best for students.

While changing a major component of the school operational system such as the bell schedule is

not always an outcome that can be accomplished, this moment in this first meeting as a team

allowed the entire group to understand that school-wide leadership aspired to work

collaboratively to solve problems.

The meeting closed with a discussion about the school's proposal for a Local School Plan

for Improvement. This improvement plan is a feature of every school in the Central School

District and guided the work in the classroom by aligning to performance goals as established by

the state and the school district. The administrative team used the improvement plan in meetings

throughout the semester. It is noteworthy in explanation that the school-wide leadership team and

the administrative team used the term "operations" to refer to any discussion topic related to

functions and processes of the school outside of instruction. Examples of an operations topic

include the bell schedule discussion, the discussion on student dress codes, and the discussion

related to safety and security of the building.

August 2019: Walk-Through Protocols, Operations, Student Engagement, and Book Study

The first cycle of action research began officially with the set of August school-wide

leadership team meetings. School-wide leadership met four times during the month of August

2019. Throughout this first month of the school year, the focus for both the administrative team

and the school-wide leadership team was on operations and on starting the year by emphasizing

processes that allowed school leaders to run a school. The meetings for school-wide leadership also placed a focus on using the time together for discussion and practicing protocols that instructional coordinators could use in their meetings with departments. During the first meeting on August 1, the administrative team introduced the concept of learning intentions as a way of helping teachers make their learning targets based on the standards more relevant to the students at Upper East High School.

While much of the content of the first month of school-wide leadership and administrative meetings was operational in nature, the school-wide leadership team did create a form for classroom walk-throughs and observations. This form was designed to allow instructional coordinators to provide feedback to their teachers during classroom visits and was not designed to be evaluative in nature. The design for this observation form came from an action research team conversation that took place in the administrative team meeting leading up to the August 13 school-wide leadership team meeting.

The goal in creating a process for instructional coordinators to visit classrooms was to add a task to their responsibilities that was in support of the instruction of the school. In a related note, the administrative team also agreed that instructional coordinators would not play a part in the official evaluation of the teachers. While some high schools in the Central School District use the traditional department chair in an evaluative capacity, Upper East High School made a specific decision to use instructional coordinators as teacher leaders outside of the evaluation process. During the school-wide leadership discussion on classroom walk-throughs, the administrative team made specific note of the role distinction.

Administrators also used a portion of the August 20 school-wide leadership meeting to discuss the operational nature of the approaching Fall Semester Open House event. The primary

researcher and Mrs. Mason both felt that this topic was important as a discussion exercise so that the instructional coordinators could assist in the planning of this significant family outreach event.

During the final school-wide leadership team meeting of August, the administrative team agreed that the work based on a book study needed to take place. While introduced in an early August meeting, the concept of learning intentions was the main discussion subject for the August 27 meeting. Administrators used sections from the book *Teaching Literacy in the Visible Learning Classroom* by Fisher, Frey, Hattie, and Thayre (2017) to drive discussion for this topic. The activities on learning intentions and the book study continued into September meetings, but the initial activities were introduced during the August 27 meeting.

The goal of conducting the discussion on learning intentions was to help the instructional coordinators develop ideas to have similar discussions with their departments during the course of the semester. The math instructional coordinator Ms. Kane used this protocol with a math-related discussion for her teachers. In connecting to the school-wide leadership activity, Ms. Kane said, "definitely using the learning intentions…making sure that they're broken down into student-friendly language and that it gives students the opportunity to own their learning." Based on the goals of the administrative team during action research discussions, the idea behind using learning intentions was to add layers of teacher clarity to each lesson.

September 2019: Data Protocols and Interventions

In the days following the Labor Day holiday, Mrs. Mason discussed during administrative team meetings that she wanted to shift the topic of conversation and the focus of professional development to instructional support. The administrative team needed to focus on operations throughout the summer work sessions and the first month of school. During the

administrative team's planning for school-wide leadership meetings and the continued development of leadership capacity with the instructional coordinators, the team decided that additional protocols for leading teachers in discussions related to student work and student performance data were needed. The goal of the continued professional development was to build on the work that began in August, but to continue to add to the structure of each week's collaborative learning team meetings for each department.

In another attempt to determine the level of readiness for the instructional coordinators to lead collaborative learning teams, the administrative team conducting an inventory-style activity that used a rubric to determine the level of collaboration for each department. In conducting this activity, the administrative team wanted to determine the level of support that individual instructional coordinators needed in leading these conversations. One of the conclusions the administrative team reached was that the team would add weekly strategic planning sessions with the individual instructional coordinators for the departments throughout the building. For example, Dr. Montgomery would schedule meetings with Dr. Draper, as he supervised the Science Department. Mrs. Mason would schedule meetings with Ms. Kane, because Mrs. Mason is the administrative contact for the Math Department.

During the school-wide leadership meetings, the primary researcher led the instructional coordinators through a practice of a data protocol that helped each department discuss pretest data that was derived from district-wide assessments. This data practice took place on September 10 and used language arts pretest data as the example data. The team chose this data because language arts pretest data are a reflection of literacy skills, which is an area that affects every content area in the building.

The other primary topic of conversation during September was on the plan for student performance intervention for each department. Prior to the September 24 school-wide leadership meeting, the primary researcher asked each instructional coordinator to consider the plan for interventions based on the goals and conversations from teachers in each department, and to bring that plan to the meeting. The primary researcher conducted a conversation during the meeting that was designed to allow each instructional coordinator to share the goals and the details of the department plans for intervention. The only non-negotiable from the administrative perspective was that each department needed a plan for interventions for students who are struggling to perform.

In addition to the set of interventions implemented by the administrative team for the school-wide leadership team, the primary researcher conducted a first round of individual interviews that concluded during September. In the first round of interviews, the primary researcher interviewed six instructional coordinators and the other two assistant principals. As discussed in Chapter 3, the individual interviews were conducted to collect the perspectives from each participating instructional coordinator on the development of their leadership capacity, and to collect the perspectives from the other assistant principals on the action research team on their work to develop the leadership capacity of the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team.

October 2019: Gradebooks, Classroom Walk-throughs, Student Work Protocols, and School-wide Intervention Plans

The transition from the first action research cycle into the second action research cycle took place in October on the basis of the work of the action research team. The school-wide leadership team met three times during October. Based on conversations during administrative

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team planning meetings and based on the focus group conducted on October 8, the planning for school-wide leadership meetings shifted significantly in the direction of helping instructional coordinators see the school-wide vision for student interventions. One of the activities that administrative team members planned was to conduct paired classroom walk-throughs with each instructional coordinator. For this activity, an administrator and an instructional coordinator would visit multiple classrooms from a given department in the same class period. The visit was followed by debriefing conversations and a discussion of how each teacher observed would receive feedback from the visits.

On October 1, the school-wide leadership team meeting included an examination of gradebook practices. The discussion was conducted to allow instructional coordinators to discuss the level of teacher collaboration in the area of grading and assignment recording for students. The general consensus during this meeting was that gradebooks were adjacent from teacher to teacher. Ms. Kane pointed out that vertical alignment in grading practices was important, and that this needed to be another conversation on the leadership team. One other major point of discussion from the gradebook topic was the return to interventions for students.

The October 15 meeting gave the school-wide leadership team the opportunity to practice a protocol that allowed a group to look at student work. The protocol used a template provided by the district office and allowed instructional coordinators to practice a conversation for their teachers that focused on the alignment between classroom instruction and high stakes assessments. This conversation took place because the administrative team agreed that it was important to continue to build the set of skills for instructional leadership with the team.

Intervention was the primary topic on October 29 during the school-wide leadership team meeting. Based on the previous meeting's conversation about grading practices, the group

including instructional coordinators and administrators collectively decided to continue the topic of interventions in order to create a more cohesive plan for the school. The teachers were interested in creating a plan that allowed students to see consistency of practice across the school. A concern was raised by several instructional coordinators during the meeting that there was not significant time to work with students who had fallen behind. Assistant Principal Mrs. Sanders made the statement during this discussion that teachers need to be more stubborn than the students in terms of not allowing a pattern of missing work. The result of the conversation was that the school created a Saturday work session for students where teachers would work with large groups of students to re-teach content to students. This would be supervised each week by one of the four administrators and would allow students to catch up on work that was missed.

The other main topic for this meeting was a re-visiting of the protocols for collaborative learning time in departments each week. It was noteworthy in this conversation that Ms. Kane explained her use of modeling common assessment items for her group of math teachers. This became a regular feature of her meetings and allowed her math teachers to determine what student achievement really looked like for each assessment. In discussing her meeting topics with the group, Ms. Kane said, "if it's in the LSPI (the local school plan for improvement), it has to be a priority." She used this theory to guide her work with her math teachers each week.

Administrative Team Focus Group

As discussed in this section, the first action research cycle concluded during October 2019, and transitioned into the second action research cycle for this study. This officially occurred following a focus group that was conducted on October 8 during the administrative team meeting. The primary researcher led this focus group protocol with the other three administrators on the team. The main topics addressed during the conversation were backwards

design for instructional planning, teachers using sacred time each week to plan collaboratively, supporting instructional coordinators by helping them focus meeting agendas on instructional items, and maximizing the bell schedule each week to increase opportunities for student achievement.

In clarifying her desire to increase the social studies teacher focus on backwards design, Mrs. Sanders said:

> We've made a lot of progress, but we're still not at a place where math is, for example, where they're aligning assessment items with instructional pieces and looking at rigor. We need to get to a place where we are implementing backwards design….We haven't spent enough time with the other subject areas to really look at whether those individual teachers are doing backwards design.

Mrs. Sanders made the goal to have this conversation with Dr. Gary, the instructional coordinator for Social Studies.

Dr. Montgomery spoke about the work in science meetings to continue to devote collaborative learning team time to instructional conversations instead of operational items, and also echoed Mrs. Sanders's goal of increasing backwards design planning. In explaining his progress with Dr. Draper and science, he said:

> We've had conversations about the backwards design just this past week….We just need to act on it and see evidence of it that we are aligning the day-to-day instruction to the assessment, and so very intentionally with a few teachers along with the instructional coordinator. ….ask the teachers to create the common assessments prior to teaching.

Dr. Montgomery spoke about this progress with science to illustrate the overall progress of the school-wide leadership team. In his opinion, the work of building leadership capacity with the

instructional coordinators must happen individually. In order for the group to collectively grow as instructional leaders, according to Dr. Montgomery, each individual instructional coordinator must grow, and this is the responsibility of the full administrative team.

Mrs. Mason turned the focus to the topic of student achievement and on what instructional coordinators can do to lead this work with department members. In discussing the progress related to the math time, Mrs. Mason said, "you can't lose the focus on the agenda which is student achievement. I love Sharon because she's so hyper-focused on that." Mrs. Mason explained that the Math Department, led by Ms. Kane added a process for teachers to use planning time to design the interventions for the students.

Overall, the focus group session gave the administrative team an opportunity to shift the direction of school-wide leadership through the lens of a mid-course correction. The direct result was that each administrator committed to holding weekly conversations with instructional coordinators as a means of additional planning for collaborative learning team time in departments. Because the focus on the end of any semester in high school is on student performance, topics for school-wide leadership were going to reflect this through interventions and final grade reporting.

During the month of October, the primary researcher also conducted mid-point interviews with four instructional coordinators. Second interviews were conducted with Social Studies Instructional Coordinator Dr. Gary, Language Arts Instructional Coordinator Mrs. Smith, Special Education Instructional Coordinator Mrs. Teague, and Math Instructional Coordinator Ms. Kane.

November 2019: Core Academic Data Protocol, Student Progress, and Leader Actions

In differentiating from the first half of the semester, the school-wide leadership team added the core academic sub-committee group during November and December. This decision

was made to allow time for data protocols specifically related to district-wide assessments in the core subjects of math, Language Arts, science and social studies. The administrative team met with the core group on November 5, which included Mrs. Teague, the Special Education instructional coordinator. This meeting used a data protocol to help instructional coordinators see the information related to assessment scores for the core area classes at the mid-term of the school year. Because district assessment data is a critical indicator of overall school success, it was important for the core instructional coordinators to practice this conversation with each other prior to leading the data talk in departments.

The full school-wide leadership group met on November 12 for the final session prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. The administrative team designed a conversation for this meeting that centered on leader actions that the group could take to influence teacher actions and ultimately student performance. The conversation allowed the instructional coordinators and administrators to brainstorm strategies for supporting teachers. The administrators designed this conversation in order to allow the instructional coordinators to make the natural connection collectively that their actions as leaders have an impact on all classrooms. During this discussion, Mrs. Smith explained that she led the Language Arts Department in looking at their assessment data objectively rather than emotionally. This approach, according to Mrs. Smith, allowed the team to connect specific instructional standards to the results.

December 2020: Final Data Collection, ELL and Special Education Focus, Final Grading

During the final month of the semester, the school-wide leadership team met once as a full group. The core leadership team also met one time for the purpose of finalizing plans for school interventions related to graduation requirements. Planning for the final full session of the school-wide leadership team meeting, which took place on December 3, was a collaborative

effort between the administrative team and the instructional coordinators. The topic of discussion was the school's need for additional training on working with students identified as English Language Learners. While the English Language Learner population at Upper East High School is smaller than the district average at 22%, the administration and instructional coordinators both recognized a need for additional training for the whole teaching staff.

To facilitate this conversation on December 3, Mrs. Teague and Mrs. Sanders led a chalk-talk conversation that was designed to get the administrators and instructional coordinators to share initial thoughts on topics related to supporting students who either receive Special Education services or who are identified as English Language Learner. As a result, the team decided to pursue additional district support in the form of spring semester professional development for the staff. This meeting was significant for the school-wide leadership team in that it was the first full meeting that was collaboratively planned by both administrators and instructional coordinators. In the interest of distributed leadership, this collaborative dynamic was a step forward.

In reflecting on the final full school-wide leadership meeting for fall semester, Mrs. Sanders said:

> What I did see in our last meeting is a greater degree of trust within that particular group of people. They showed freedom and confidence to speak. Before I think there may have been a sense of folks not knowing how much influence they would have.

Mrs. Sanders referred to the results of the conversation on December 3 as a moment where the instructional coordinators collectively showed confidence and trust that they were a true part of the school-wide leadership team in alignment with the theories of distributed leadership.

The core leadership team met with the administrative team during December in order to determine the final details of a program that created intervention opportunities for students who struggled with Algebra I and Biology during fall semester. These courses were the main focus of the intervention plan because they are both graduation requirements and because they were classes taken by a majority of ninth-graders.

The primary researcher concluded data collection for the second cycle of action research by conducting final individual interviews for both the administrative team and the instructional coordinators. The researcher interviewed Principal Mrs. Mason along with the two assistant principals to gain the administrative team's perspectives on the progress of the school-wide leadership team at the end of the semester related to leadership capacity and the collective efficacy of the team. The researcher also interviewed instructional coordinators Leann Draper, Jessica Smith, Sarah Teague, and Sharon Kane to record their perspectives on their own leadership development at the end of the semester.

Summary of the Interventions of the Action Research Team

As illustrated in Table 3.3, the interventions of the action research team were designed to influence the building of leadership capacity and collective efficacy of the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team. The primary intervention designed and implemented by the researcher and school administrators at Upper East High School was the act of participation in the school-wide leadership team meetings throughout the year. Instructional coordinators representing each curriculum department participated in the professional develop-based meetings on a bi-weekly basis. Additionally, instructional coordinators in the core areas collaborated during the alternating weeks to discuss district and state assessment progress and to discuss potential student intervention programs.

In addition to participating in the school-wide leadership team meetings, the researcher and the school administrator designed the following activities and protocols:

1. A book study for the purpose of framing a conversation around teacher learning intentions for all classes;

2. Paired classroom observation protocols designed to focus instructional support of all classroom teachers; and,

3. Purposeful alignment of department collaborative meeting agendas to the activities and data protocols practiced during school-wide leadership team meetings.

The intervention activities were implemented throughout the semester as the primary method of professional development for the instructional coordinators.

Chapter Summary

The school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School was a collaborative group that included both the administrative team members and the department-specific instructional coordinators. The team was created and developed as a key component of the distributed leadership model of Upper East High School. The instructional coordinators on the team were purposefully selected by school principal Mrs. Mason and the members of the administrative team.

This action research study was conducted during the first semester classes at the new school and followed months of planning and design by the primary researcher and the administrative team who served as the action research team. The action research in this study featured two distinct cycles during the semester and was designed to allow the administrative team to make mid-course corrections to enhance the interventions for the instructional coordinators on the team. Thematic findings of individual interviews are discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

Thematic Analysis

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from data collected throughout the action research cycles. The themes and analysis are the researcher's responses to the research questions that guided the study. The action research cycles and the data collected were described in detail in Chapter 5. Data collection took place during Fall 2019 at Upper East High School. The action research study involved participation from both the department-specific instructional coordinators and the administrative team members. Both groups collaborated as the school-wide leadership team which formed the Upper East High School implementation of a distributed leadership model. The school followed Spillane's (2006) leader-plus model where the principal distributed leadership activities to a team that included assistant principals and teacher leaders in

the form of department-specific instructional coordinators. The school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School placed an emphasis on instructional leadership activities and protocols as a way to train and develop the instructional coordinators on the team.

A summary of analysis of the findings through themes connected to the research questions is illustrated in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

Summary of Findings Through Themes Connected to Research Questions

Research Question	Theme
1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?	Theme 1: Collaboration Builds Efficacy
2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?	Theme 1: Role Definition Defines the Work Theme 2: Alignment Influences Leadership
3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?	Theme 1: Voice Influences Confidence Theme 2: Transparency Yields Trust

Analysis of the findings for this study was based on 1) the collection of data from individual interviews conducted by the primary researcher with both the administrative team and a group of instructional coordinators from the school-wide leadership team; 2) school-wide leadership team meeting artifacts; 3) meeting agendas for the action research team meetings conducted during school administration meetings; 4) meeting agendas for the school-wide leadership team meetings; 5) A research journal which was compiled during this study.

Analysis of the findings resulted in making the connections to the research questions and the six major themes that emerged. The themes emerged based on the data presented in

individual interviews, which were conducted at three intervals during the semester, and through analysis of the meeting agendas and documents based on school-wide leadership meetings and administrative team meetings. Overall analysis illustrated for this group at Upper East High School that there was a direct connection between participation in the school-wide leadership team and an increase in the leadership capacity and level of collective efficacy for the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team. Before proceeding with this chapter, the reader is reminded that this study employed action research where the primary researcher was an assistant principal. With this caveat, the discussion continues in this chapter.

The next section of this chapter contains an analysis of each thematic finding aligned to the research questions that guided the study.

Research Question 1

As the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team, the research questions guided the study by providing a framework for individual interviews and data analysis. Based on analysis of the data collected, one central theme emerged related to the first research question – Collaboration Builds Efficacy.

Collaboration Builds Efficacy

One of the goals of the administrators who served on the action research team was to train instructional coordinators during school-wide leadership meetings by practicing specific protocols. Designing and practicing protocols with instructional coordinators was designed to build collaboration on the school-wide leadership team. Additionally, the protocols were designed to help teachers at Upper East High School have meaningful instructional conversations while examining student achievement data. The protocols to accomplish this goal were implemented at the beginning of the semester and continued throughout the study. Because the

goal was to help instructional coordinators align their department's collaborative learning team time with common practices, school-wide leadership team meetings featured discussions and data analysis practices that were designed to be immediately implemented with departments. The work with protocols in the professional development setting included the book study work as well as specific activities surrounding topics such as school-wide interventions and student achievement data.

Based on participation from the beginning, the administrative team actively worked with instructional coordinators to create alignment of protocols between the two sets of meetings. In detailing the discussion and data protocols, Assistant Principal Dr. Montgomery said:

> One thing that I have seen with Lee Ann (science instructional coordinator) is that she's reached out to another coach and so that has helped in terms of her leading the meetings. The focus is on observing the meetings and so there is a lot of great feedback there. I'm really looking forward to seeing our team grow in the way that those meetings are run.

Dr. Montgomery's work with Dr. Draper in the Science Department, and on running science collaborative meetings reflected an effort to get science teachers to objectively examine science standards and assessments. Dr. Montgomery explained that he and Dr. Draper take their cues directly from the agendas in the school-wide leadership meetings to plan effective discussions in the Science Department. He elaborated:

> We've talked in school-wide leadership about CLTs or collaborative learning teams. It has transitioned our conversation to the Science Department and the structure of the Science Department in the way we work as a team and hear from one another. Each week I meet with Dr. Draper every Friday, and from there we look at the agenda for the

previous week and take the key initiatives from the previous school-wide leadership meeting.

Dr. Montgomery maintained that this connection between department work and the school-wide leadership team's protocols increased productivity in the Science Department meetings on a weekly basis.

From the perspectives of the instructional coordinators, using basic protocols to run their own meetings helped to maintain a focus on meaningful collaborative time with teachers. Ms. Kane (Math Instructional Coordinator) explained that math team meetings followed a similar structure based on her experiences in school-wide leadership. Mrs. Kane noted:

> You do the clearing protocol, which I used, and then you also do the lightning round at the end. I just think that's a really good way to run the conversation. I have them say one thing that they're excited about with their students.

Ms. Kane discussed the book study protocols related to visible learning and on how she adapted that for her department, explaining:

> In the leadership team, we're reading about visible literacy, and I've taken that to my department as well. Actually, the district just purchased for me the visible literacy mathematics book for the whole department….(We've discussed) learning intentions and making sure that they're broken down into student-friendly language and that it gives students the opportunity to own their learning.

According to Ms. Kane, the school-wide leadership discussion of visible learning and using student-friendly language with learning intentions allowed her to help her teachers focus on student abilities aligned to state standards instead of deficits. From Ms. Kane's perspective, "a lot of times in math, people get so focused on what kids can't do or what their gap is, we often

don't set the bar here and give students the opportunity to rise." The protocols from the school-wide leadership meetings related to learning intentioned helped Ms. Kane shift math conversations away from criticizing students and in the direction of teacher moves.

Language Arts Instructional Coordinator, Jessica Smith, also made the connection to protocols in the school-wide leadership meetings from an early stage in the semester. Mrs. Smith explained:

> I like that you do the clearing protocols, just checking in with everyone because then also we can figure out how to address other challenges. Especially if someone is struggling somewhere and someone else has a helpful tip that could help them. I've also liked the strategies that we have used because it makes me think how I can use this in my classroom, or how I can share with the department.

Mrs. Smith explained that the book discussion protocols were useful in helping her explain the concept of student-friendly learning intentions to her department members.

Protocols led by administrators during school-wide leadership team meetings helped Science Instructional Coordinator Dr. Draper make a connection with her department members to teacher moves in a classroom. Dr. Draper said:

> One of the things I've noticed that we always do is it's very different than a traditional meeting. We are using protocols that could be effective in a classroom. And we're actually utilizing those as a group so we can see how those might play out in our classroom.

According to Dr. Draper the focus on discussion and protocol during school-wide leadership changed the atmosphere of the meeting setting. Dr. Draper noted, "I think it has brought in some

much deeper discussion about the topics that we've been looking at as opposed to just running down an agenda with one person leading."

The administrative team continued the task of creating opportunities for collaboration on school-wide leadership team through the practice of analyzing data. Like all public high schools, student achievement on high stakes assessments was a critical focus at Upper East High School. As instructional leaders in each department, the team of instructional coordinators needed practice leading productive discussions about student achievement data. Continued practice with leading data discussions furthered the development of collaboration between administrators and instructional coordinators. In making the comparison with her previous experiences, Science Instructional Coordinator Dr. Draper explained:

> I think the perception from teachers was often that that was very punitive or trying
>
> to embarrass or call out people, and it moved away from being a productive discussion to
>
> people feeling penalized by seeing their data compared to everybody else's data.

Given that discussing data, as Dr. Draper noted, is a traditionally sensitive topic for teachers, the administrative team placed an emphasis during meetings on analyzing root causes and classroom practices that make an impact on student achievement rather than just on comparing performance results among each teacher.

During individual interviews with the participating instructional coordinators, the concept of modeling best practices was frequently described and mentioned. Teachers who lead other groups of teachers must be able to do so by modeling research-based instructional practices for the group. Social Studies Instructional Coordinator Dr. Joseph Gary explained the modeling approach within his department that helped new teachers by supporting their instructional

questions. In terms of his teachers being able to work with an experienced teacher in a co-taught setting, Dr. Gary shared:

> That's been a really good experience because they're working one-on-one with a teacher in the classroom who is experienced and has patience and can model the behaviors. When they have an issue they can immediately get some feedback from somebody.

Because the Social Studies team has three new teachers, modeling promising instructional practices has been a focus for Dr. Gary.

Ms. Kane also echoed the concept of modeling in discussing data protocols during her math collaborative learning team meetings. In explaining how she starts the conversation, Ms. Kane elaborated:

> For example, if my kids just took my first unit one test, and I had a big chunk of kids at 85 to 100. But then I had a big chunk of kids in the beginning level. I'd say, 'This is what I'm experiencing. I know that you are valuable, so what advice do you have for me before I have advice for you?' It's giving people the opportunity to analyze my data with transparency and see that I too have areas of growth.

For Ms. Kane, it was important to model data talks as a way to be open to feedback from her department members so that they saw her as part of a team and not just someone who was relaying policy.

In the case of Dr. Draper, modeling meant sharing a teaching practice that gave her department members an additional way to look at working with students. Dr. Draper said, "I modeled a stations activity that I had done with my students just as another way of seeing a different instructional strategy that can be more engaging for students." The sharing of instructional practices for Dr. Draper helped the creation of an atmosphere during her meetings

that encouraged teachers to discuss research-based practices that aligned to the new science standards for each core science class.

The administrative team used protocol practice during each meeting of the school-wide leadership team to address building the leadership capacity of the instructional coordinators. Protocols were designed and practiced to increase the sense of urgency surrounding each meeting and to build the confidence for each instructional coordinator as related to leading departments. The administrative team charged the instructional coordinators with serving as the instructional authority and leaders of each department. The professional development derived from protocol practice was a designed attempt to accomplish this mission.

Using protocols in each school-wide leadership meeting was an effort by the administrative team to use the instructional coordinators in a position of instructional leadership. During the administrative team focus group session, instructional leadership was the main focus of the conversation. The focus group provided the administrative team with the opportunity to assess the interventions currently in place with the instructional coordinators and allowed for mid-course corrections as needed. To the administrative team, training the instructional coordinators with skills and protocols related to instructional leadership meant keeping the focus during meeting times on student achievement and instructional conversations. During this discussion, Principal Mrs. Mason explained that a team focus on student achievement and instruction needed to be at the forefront.

Assistant Principal Mrs. Sanders made the connection to her work with the Social Studies Department and explained, "In social studies we have made a lot of progress in terms of focusing on the work, removing the housekeeping, establishing norms, providing equity for all the subject areas." Mrs. Sanders explained that in the beginning of the semester, the idea of voice equity and

focus on instruction was not always happening during social studies meetings. An example of the focus on instruction in social studies, according to Mrs. Sanders, was the focus on student work samples generated from teacher assignments. Social studies teachers followed a protocol to examine student work that came directly from school-wide leadership meetings.

Summary of Analysis of The Theme for Research Question 1

In attempting to address Research Question One, the primary researcher discovered one common theme from the analysis of data. The central theme that emerged was that collaboration builds efficacy. Specifically, administrators designed and implemented opportunities for leader collaboration through protocol practice to train the instructional coordinators to hold meaningful conversations during department collaborative learning time. In addition, administrators implemented data protocols and discussion protocols that were designed to develop the leadership capacity of the instructional. The consistent practice of designed protocols during school-wide leadership meetings increased opportunities for collaboration between instructional coordinators and school administrators.

Research Question 2

In attempting to address the ways that administrators used the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders, the researcher analyzed data collected from individual interviews with the school administrative team that made up the action research team. Additionally, the researcher conducted a focus group session with the administrative team. Based on analysis of the data, two themes emerged.

1. Role Definition Defines the Work
2. Alignment Influences Leadership

Because the action research process focused on a collaborative effort with the administrative team at Upper East High School, the perspectives of the individual administrators on the team shaped the themes that emerged.

Theme 1: Role Definition Defines the Work

Upon the creation of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School, the administrators agreed that department-specific teacher leaders needed the title instructional coordinator. The title suggested a departure from the traditional role of department chair, a role that had traditional connotations with managing processes and budgets rather than instructional leadership. In implementing this philosophy, the set of tasks that each instructional coordinator received was directly tied to the philosophy that the administrative team wanted to use teacher leaders at Upper East High School to move instruction rather than to manage budgets and supplies. The development and implementation of this philosophy took place during each school-wide leadership meeting. While the majority of the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team did not have previous experience specifically as a department chair, the administrators at Upper East High School wanted to set the tone from the beginning of the year that participation in school-wide leadership was about instructional leadership.

Analysis of the perceptions of the administrators showed a team that deliberately used the action research process to reinforce the definition of the role of instructional coordinator. The administrators used opportunities both during school-wide leadership meetings and in individual conversations with the instructional coordinators to define the role. Assistant Principal Mrs. Sanders pointed to the idea of full collaboration during school-wide leadership team meetings as a way to empower teachers. In discussing the atmosphere of meetings, Mrs. Sanders explained, "It is not a mandate-driven team. It is truly collaborative in that you put something out there and

then you let them lead the discussion. And that's really stood out." Mrs. Sanders reiterated that the meeting style was slow but purposeful as related to initiatives.

Mrs. Sanders contrasted school-wide leadership at Upper East High School with her previous experiences and said, "in my experience (department chairs) have been treated as almost like information warehouses. And then they get sent off to deliver information to the teachers. This doesn't feel like that at all." Mrs. Sanders described the role of the traditional department chair as being vague, noting "department chairs are given this task to be the leader of a department, but then aren't necessarily given clear parameters of what their roles exactly are." In Mrs. Sanders's view, instructional coordinators have a lot more influence in the discussion on instruction and school success than they typically realize.

Principal Mrs. Mason viewed the role of instructional coordinator as a group capable of taking on professional development for the staff as the school progressed into the second semester. In streamlining the focus for professional development at Upper East High School, Mrs. Mason detailed:

> I would love for them to be an active leader in all of our PD next year. Right now we've got a hodgepodge. Ideally, we'll get to a point where the language arts instructional coordinator was leading one month, Social Studies the next month, and just a very cohesive plan where they own the PD for the year.

Mrs. Mason described a scenario where instructional coordinators would lead all professional development in the school on a monthly basis. The opportunities to lead did begin to occur at the end of the semester. For example, administrators called on Mrs. Teague to lead a discussion with the school-wide leadership team about accommodations for students with Special Education

services. This discussion formed the basis for additional training that took place during the beginning of the second semester of school.

Assistant Principal Dr. Montgomery described instructional coordinators as being in a position where they are not supervisors, but they are seen as leaders in the building. In discussing the need to consistently work with Dr. Draper to help define her role, Dr. Montgomery said, "a teacher leader is in a very peculiar place because they are that liaison between administrators and other teachers." Dr. Montgomery explained that defining the role of instructional coordinator brought a level of urgency to the work, "even though we plan instructionally as we make adaptions, as we change, we plan for now as opposed to later." In Dr. Montgomery's explanation, one of his goals in helping Dr. Draper understand the job was to create a sense that instructional coordinators can make an impact immediately.

In addition to the administrative perspectives on defining the role of the instructional coordinators, teacher leaders serving in the role also shared perspectives on the role. Mrs. Smith shared that visibility and checking in with the members of the Language Arts Department was critical to her understanding the role and this is why "I check with my teammates, not that I need to, but I want to check in constantly and seeing how things are going, seeing how I can help in the process." Mrs. Smith further explained that leading a Language Arts Department to her meant "a lot of hearing other points of view" and understanding why specific curriculum decisions were made. Mrs. Smith also clarified that she does not see herself as a supervisor, but that she does recognize her position within the leadership team. In emphasizing collaboration, Mrs. Smith added, "I don't feel like I am their superior, but I am their leader. I try to tell them we're working here collectively." The notion of a time working together to create meaningful instructional experiences for students was critical to Mrs. Smith.

Dr. Gary had previous experience as a department chair in another high school and defined his role at Upper East High School through how he worked with new teachers. In describing the difference Dr. Gary claimed:

> I find myself doing a lot more directly mentoring them as opposed to kind of overseeing, so that's probably been the biggest difference. In the previous role, a lot of it was more infrastructure management with a department that size. A lot of that was scheduling, dealing with room assignments.

Because of the number of novice teachers in the Social Studies Department, Dr. Gary felt the need to spend his time making sure that instruction was in alignment across the department. Dr. Gary's views on the traditional role of the department chair echoed the research that suggested that department chairs were managerial rather than instructional leaders (DeAngelis, 2013; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007).

Dr. Draper, who was in her first year as a teacher leader, explained a component of the role as helping the department focus on student work samples to align practices. In looking at student work, Dr. Draper noted that the Science Department had more to improve, and stated:

> We're trying to get to a point where we're able to look more at student work samples across the subjects. Things like writing and literacy that, no matter what the content is, we can at least get a picture of where the kids are in that vertical progression.

Dr. Draper echoed Mrs. Smith's belief that the role of the instructional coordinator meant that she needed to be able to help the Science Department work as a collaborative team.

An additional primary topic related to the theme of instructional leadership that was generated both from administrators and instructional coordinators was the concept of backwards design in classroom planning. Both administrators and instructional coordinators agreed throughout the

semester that using assessments and common standards to plan instruction was critical to student success and an area of growth for the teachers at Upper East High School.

From the administrative team perspective, both Dr. Montgomery and Mrs. Sanders discussed progress related to backwards design implementation during the administrative focus group meeting. Mrs. Sanders described a plan with Social Studies Instructional Coordinator Dr. Gary to help the department think about instruction with the end of the unit in mind. In explaining that Social Studies had work to do with the concept, Mrs. Sanders said, "We really need to start looking at the backwards planning in World History, U.S. History, Economics and AP Human Geography, and continue to work on this in Medical Ethics." While the department was making progress in planning for assessments, Mrs. Sanders explained that this would be a focus throughout the rest of the semester.

Dr. Montgomery looked at backwards design as an opportunity to create an atmosphere during science meetings that produced actions in the classroom, rather than just polite agreement during meetings. Dr. Montgomery explained:

> We ask the teachers to team in and create the common assessment prior to teaching the unit, as opposed to creating the assessment while you're inside of the unit. So now that gets into acting because everyone nods their heads. Everyone has a good understanding, so how to actively engage the teachers.

From Dr. Montgomery's perspective, backwards design was key to the teachers planning more efficiently by looking at student work throughout a given unit. Dr. Montgomery noted, "I think we have to have more intentionality with student work with the science team." While the concept of team planning looked different at Upper East High School because of the small course teams, collaborative planning still mattered to the administrative team.

Instructional coordinators also discussed backwards design as a key element in moving instruction forward at Upper East High School. Special Education Instructional Coordinator Sarah Teague leads the new teacher mentoring program at Upper East High School and works directly with the Social Studies Department and their new teachers. Mrs. Teague detailed:

> What I am seeing now, and I'll just say in the department that I'm working with, I think they are struggling to plan with the end on mind. I think that we've started to put that on our radar that we need to have some conversations.

Mrs. Teague explained that alignment and collaboration sometimes only happened for the novice teachers when they needed something specific to teach, or when they had questions about how a concept was implemented. According to Mrs. Teague, a focus on backwards design as the semester progress would help the novice teachers in all departments in terms of thinking about instruction as connected to assessments.

Ms. Kane explained that the Math Department would use backwards design as a means of connecting instruction to student standards for assessments. According to Ms. Kane, the Math Department needed to grow in backwards design thinking and explained, "Because we are working as individuals and not as course teams, I think a lot of time assessment is coming as the end result of teaching and not teaching as the result of assessment." Ms. Kane referenced individual planning in math because, like the other core departments at Upper East High School, the department had a limited number of courses with multiple teachers. For example, the Algebra II classes were taught by just one teacher during the 2019-2020 school year. Ms. Kane's effort to counter-act the process of assessment design after teaching led to a series of activities during math meetings where each teacher brought upcoming assessments for the purpose of collaborative analysis based on standards.

Another topic that placed a focus on instructional leadership during meetings was student interventions. Mrs. Sanders led a majority of these discussions during school-wide leadership team meetings and commented that instructional coordinators needed this topic to keep the focus on instruction. According to Mrs. Sanders:

> I think what we need for them is to see this through from philosophy all the way through to implementation down to the nitty-gritty of how we schedule kids and how many hours….And I think that's going to be something that probably takes us through January.

Mrs. Sanders used the topic of intervention to explain that instructional coordinators had a large responsibility in terms of helping the school create a program that was designed to help all students. Because intervention was a topic that school-wide leadership discussed throughout the second half of the study, the concept became an opportunity for instructional coordinators to take the lead in conversations during the meetings.

For the administrative team to build the leadership capacity and collective efficacy of the overall school-wide leadership group, the administration collectively decided to keep the focus for instructional coordinators on tasks that would help teachers make an impact on student achievement at Upper East High School. The administrative team focusing on student achievement emerged as an important theme in the analysis of the study because meeting agendas during school-wide leadership were designed to allow instructional coordinators to practice the discussions that each department needed to have about student achievement. Because of the limited time available during the week, Upper East High School needed Instructional Coordinators to have the confidence to keep collaborative meetings focused on teacher moves and assessment results.

In discussing the push to focus on student achievement and the corresponding connection to classroom instruction, Dr. Montgomery noted:

> Amping up the rigor and having the conversation with students to make sure that we are teaching at a proficient or distinguished level on a day-to-day basis has been at the forefront of recent conversation. One of the things we will do as a science team here within the next week is look at the task screener.

The task screener discussed by Dr. Montgomery was a district-aligned planning tool that helped teachers determine if a particular assignment was aligned to an existing science standard. The term rigor emerged in this study as a frequently used word in discussing student achievement related to teacher moves. In the Central School District, rigor is frequently discussed as a concept that helps schools align instructional practices with specific performance on assessments.

Mrs. Mason made the distinction that administrative support of instructional coordinators was critical in moving the conversation about student achievement. In describing what support looked like, Mrs. Mason elaborated:

> Maybe the next step in supporting our instructional coordinators is to encourage them to think outside the box and knowing they have our support. Because those tough conversations are about to come with the grades and grade books. I don't think the conversation will be so hard if you're adding a 30-minute meeting with your other biology or algebra people.

Mrs. Mason pointed out that part of supporting instructional coordinators in having conversations about student achievement was the simple act of administrators being present in collaborative planning meetings. The appearance of support through presence added a sense of urgency for the teachers.

Mrs. Sanders added detail and specificity to the theme by breaking down the conversation for instructional coordinators into two areas. Mrs. Sanders added:

'Are our teachers teaching the standards' and 'how are our kids performing' are the two most important things we need to make sure our instructional coordinators are talking about with our teachers. And for our kids who are not performing, how are we addressing that?

In order for instructional coordinators to have conversations related to student performance and teaching standards, administrators needed to regularly plan the conversations collaboratively with each department.

While administrative support and action was critical to a focus on student achievement, instructional coordinators also contributed to the school-wide leadership focus. Instructional coordinators pointed to departmental discussions about aligning classroom assessments with state and district assessments, a department focus on high-quality instruction, and examination of student performance as essential to building collaboration in each department.

In further describing conversations related to student achievement and rigor, Mrs. Teague said, "we know that we want to have rigorous content for them, but what do we need to do right now to meet them where they are to then pull them up?" Mrs. Teague described a series of discussions that teachers had related to attempting to meet students at their instructional levels, but also pushing students to perform at proficient or exemplary levels.

Dr. Draper discussed instructional coordinators and the focus on student achievement. Because science had multiple course teams with one teacher, it was important for her team to have discussions about assessment alignment. In describing the match between student achievement and instruction, Dr. Draper added:

I think where we're not quite hitting the mark is matching instruction to those

assessments. We're giving the kids pretty rigorous tests, but they're not doing very well

on them because we're not giving them the opportunity in class to practice.

Student expectations and conveying a consistent message about those expectations was another

aspect of the theme as analyzed in this study. Career Tech Instructional Coordinator Veronica

Harris tied expectations and achievement back to instructional areas that were key to the school.

In discussing a grading format that was in place in her department which included health science,

Mrs. Harris said, "With CTE we like to do rubrics and we like to set up a grading process that the

kids know ahead of time what their expectations are on what product we wish them to produce."

As a veteran teacher in career tech education, Mrs. Harris had the ability to help the novice

teachers in health science by sharing grading practices.

Theme 2: Alignment Influences Leadership

While defining the role of the instructional coordinator was critical to the administrative

team in the use of action research, the other primary theme that emerged in examining

administrative perspectives was the goal to align school-wide leadership team practices during

meetings with the topics implemented during each department's collaborative learning time.

Similar to the concepts of a traditional professional learning community, Upper East High

School used weekly department meetings to practice elements of collaboration among teachers.

Because the time for teachers in core departments was provided weekly, the administration

viewed alignment between school-wide leadership protocols and the scheduled department time

as critical to the overall success of the school, and critical to the development of instructional

leadership.

The first level of alignment for administrators was to match the instruction in each department with published achievement descriptors and course standards. The instructional coordinators played a role in this by designing conversations and protocols during department meetings based on the practices from school-wide leadership. According to Dr. Montgomery, alignment meant science teachers matching instructional practices with assessments. In describing the alignment goal, Dr. Montgomery stated:

> The instructional coordinator plays a key role in the conversation to make sure that we are aligned with a blueprint. We are aligning so that we are on the same pace with everyone, and so the students are also prepared for the interims that are coming up.

Dr. Montgomery further explained that school-wide leadership was an opportunity to help instructional coordinators practice conversations that could also take place during department meetings.

A second level of alignment was in making sure the meetings during department collaboration matched the practices in school-wide leadership. Dr. Montgomery further described that conversations and practices that took place in school-wide leadership helped the Science Department create a structure for collaboration on a weekly basis. Alignment for Dr. Montgomery meant working on a weekly basis with Dr. Draper to make sure that the time with science teachers was used to advance the conversations surrounding instruction.

Mrs. Sanders added to the conversation on aligning departmental meeting time by explaining that school-wide leadership team meetings provided instructional coordinators with opportunities to decide specific questions for their team. In explaining the connection, Mrs. Sanders added, "we started presenting questions to them in our meetings that allowed them to determine what things should look like." Mrs. Sanders further explained the meeting set-up

during school-wide leadership, noting that meetings broke into small groups which allowed instructional coordinators to talk through a variety of questions that aligned to instruction and examples from each department.

A third strategy to create alignment from the administrative team was the practice of visibility by administrators leading to sharing information from instructional coordinators at each departmental collaborative meeting. Mrs. Sanders explained the importance of visibility by administration by noting, "The four of us (administrators) need to cross over a little bit more about the conversations that we're having with folks outside of this room." In pointing out the need for additional administrative communication, Mrs. Sanders highlighted the ongoing need for administrators to be able to share information in planning sessions that would lead to additional opportunities for alignment in each department.

Dr. Montgomery added to the goal of sharing and visibility leading to alignment by explaining, "I think having that sacred time just with the teacher leaders, one-on-one, is very important." Dr. Montgomery reiterated his belief that consistency with each instructional coordinator was critical to the ongoing building of leadership capacity. In connecting the administrative goal to increase visibility, the four administrators committed again at the end of the semester to continued support of each instructional coordinator by maintaining presence at the departmental collaborative team time.

Summary of Analysis of Themes for Research Question 2

In analyzing the data related to Research Question Two, two main themes emerged. The first theme that emerged was that role definition defines the work. The administrative team used the action research process to build leadership capacity of the instructional coordinators first by defining the role clearly and concisely throughout the semester. In relation to the first theme of

defining the role of instructional coordinator, the goal of the administrative team was to consistently give tasks to the instructional coordinators related to instructional leadership and aligning best practices in each department's classroom. Instructional leadership was presented as a contrast to the instructional coordinators compared with the traditional notion of a department chair who manages processes and operations. Administrators kept a focus on student achievement by devoting meeting agenda items in school-wide leadership team meetings to the topic throughout the semester. In addition, administrators met with individual instructional coordinators to develop related student achievement topics of discussion for departments.

The administrative team used the action research process to attempt to accomplish the goal of defining the leadership role of the instructional coordinator. The administrative team attempted to accomplish this goal 1) by discussing instructional leadership in school-wide leadership meetings throughout the semester; and 2) by intentionally working with individual instructional coordinators to discuss ways that instruction would remain the focus of departmental collaborative meetings. The theme emphasized that teachers who led departments at Upper East High School kept the focus of their work in their departments during collaborative learning time on instruction and student achievement, rather than on operational information. Very little time in departmental collaboration was spent on operational items as a result.

The second theme that alignment influences leadership was addressed through action research during the study. Administrators planned weekly as a team to discuss the most critical conversations and topics for instructional coordinators. The most important topics then became a feature of the school-wide leadership team meetings. In addition, administrators agreed to meet weekly with individual instructional coordinators for the purpose planning activities for departments in alignment with school-wide leadership goals. Due to the planning and of the

administrators on the action research team, school-wide leadership team became the opportunity for instructional coordinators to practice discussions and protocols that would be used in each department's collaborative learning time.

Research Question 3

In attempting to address the influence of participating in school-wide leadership in a new school on the collective efficacy of a group of instructional coordinators, the primary researcher analyzed data collected from individual interviews from both school administrators on the action research team and individual instructional coordinators who participated in the study. Two themes emerged from the data analysis.

1. Voice Influences Confidence

2. Transparency Yields Trust

The action research in the study used a qualitative approach toward data collection. For this reason, perspectives from individual interviews of both administrators and instructional coordinators were used in the thematic data analysis. Because the primary researcher attempted to respond to the research question related to collective efficacy of a group of teachers, the interview protocol for both administrators and instructional coordinators used a series of open-ended questions that aligned to the Collective Teacher Belief Scale, which was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004). The individual interview guide (Appendix A) for this action research study was used to from a framework for the conversations that contributed to the data collection.

Theme 1: Voice Influences Confidence

The working definition of collective efficacy as used in this study described the degree to which the collective group of instructional coordinators who participated in school-wide

leadership believed and had the confidence that the group could perform given tasks related to their assigned position. Efficacy for individual leaders was a term that related to the confidence each instructional coordinator had in his or her own ability to lead a department given the context of instructional leadership. It was noteworthy that the perspectives of both the administrative team and the instructional coordinators who participated in the study highlighted growing levels of confidence in the assigned leadership tasks during the semester.

The majority of the instructional coordinators who participated regularly in school-wide leadership contributed to an overall increase in the confidence to participate in discussions during meetings, as well as a confidence to lead groups of teachers in weekly collaboration meetings. Mrs. Sanders explained that elements of developing efficacy with a group follow a process. According to Mrs. Sanders, when instructional coordinators believe:

> I am allowed to speak. I am allowed to do. My voice and my opinion are heard and are valued.' I think this is the beginning of a group of people feeling like they can do a task that's assigned to them.

Mrs. Sanders referred to participation during meetings as indicative of growing confidence for instructional coordinators. In further explaining her description of the process, Mrs. Sanders posited:

> If you were to look at efficacy like this developmental journey, I feel like we've moved from this quiet, timid group of people to now a group of people who are just willing to speak up, even when the topic is hard.

While not a universal circumstance, Mrs. Sanders specifically referred to the school-wide leadership meeting on accommodations for Special Education students as a meeting that allowed the instructional coordinators to showcase their participation on the team.

Mrs. Mason similarly noted a change in a growing confidence with the instructional coordinators. In connecting the work to collaboration, Mrs. Mason elaborated:

I think people had a lot of moments to say, 'okay I learned this. Now I know I can do this.' And that constant collaborative spirit and relying on your colleagues. I think efficacy has probably grown a lot in an environment that is comfortable to take risks and be free to say, 'I don't know the answers, but let's go find them out together.'

Mrs. Mason referred specifically to the intentional use of dialogue to solve problems during school-wide leadership team meetings as making an impact on confidence.

Another component of instructional coordinators gaining in leadership capacity and contributing to the overall collective efficacy was the ability for instructional coordinators, in the words of Dr. Montgomery, to be "intentional with looking at data." Dr. Montgomery described the progress with instructional coordinators relating to data as, "looking at the students that we serve and assisting with being proactive rather than reactive to move students forward." According to Dr. Montgomery, the instructional coordinators that he worked most directly with needed to demonstrate a proactive mindset in order to move the rest of the department.

The ability to take information and provide context to teachers in a given department was a concept that emerged as contributing to the theme of teachers growing in confidence during the semester. Ms. Kane described her role also as a form of liaison between teachers and administration. In describing her contributions to formulating solutions, Ms. Kane noted, "I feel like my real job is hearing concerns and gathering questions, and then communicating those questions to administrators. Sometimes we have answers, sometimes not." Ms. Kane played a large role in solving any challenges that came to school-wide leadership. Instructional

coordinators at Upper East High School, by virtue of their proximity to the staff, became aware of concerns related to instruction much sooner than administrators.

The finding from Ms. Kane that she played the part of liaison between teaching staff and administrators was reported back to the administrative team for context and planning. Because of the continuous nature of the role of administrators using action research to plan for professional development in school-wide leadership team meetings, Ms. Kane's description was used to attempt to continuously improve communication between administrators and instructional coordinators.

Mrs. Teague mentioned a combination of operational knowledge and ability to lead instructional conversations as contributing to her growing confidence. In contrast to the beginning of the semester, Mrs. Teague detailed:

> I feel like, whereas at the beginning of the semester I was leaving with more questions than I was answers, I feel like I am still leaving with questions, but I'm also leaving with answers now. Especially as we get to the end of the semester. We have a bunch of people such as new teachers or new people to the district who didn't know what our grading policies were. Being able to have those conversations has been helpful.

Mrs. Teague's growing confidence was especially impactful on the school because of Mrs. Teague's role as the lead mentor for novice teachers in the building. Because she worked directly with teachers who were new to the profession, it was critical for Upper East High School to provide Mrs. Teague with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead professional development.

Another instructional coordinator who had regular interaction with novice teachers during the course of the first semester was Mrs. Smith in Language Arts. Taking the approach of participating on a team, Mrs. Smith described the atmosphere on school-wide leadership. In

describing collaboration as a model, Mrs. Smith said, "You have to be open and vulnerable and let everyone know how you're feeling and what's going on. Otherwise nothing is going to get solved, and that's always been my take." Mrs. Smith described examples of school-wide leadership meetings where the conversation continued after the official meeting ended. However, instructional coordinators felt comfortable continuing the conversation with administrators present rather than in another location. Mrs. Smith used the model of openness to run the Language Arts Department throughout the semester, noting that a true collaboration model helped the teachers in the department maintain a focus on moving students.

Dr. Draper in the Science Department was another instructional coordinator who was joining a leadership team for the first time in her career. The experience on school-wide leadership at Upper East High School gave Dr. Draper the opportunity to learn from a model that was designed to provide teacher leaders with specific professional development related to holding instructional conversations. In echoing a growing sentiment from other instructional coordinators, Dr. Draper explained, "I feel more confident in what is a productive use of that collaborative planning time, and I think part of that plays into the nature of the people that are in the room now." As Dr. Draper led the Science Department's collaborative learning team meetings, administrators made the decision to support her conversations by moving the health science teachers to a different collaborative setting, which streamlined the conversation for Dr. Draper.

Dr. Draper also specifically discussed protocols from school-wide leadership meetings, and noted:

I do typically rely on those protocols to give us a framework for our discussion of the day. So that actually has been helpful just to give me an idea. As a new instructional

coordinator, I don't always know the timely thing for us to be talking about. So that

sometimes give me an idea about that.

In addition to practice with protocols for department collaboration, Dr. Draper echoed Mrs.

Smith in mentioning the time for collaboration with other instructional coordinators as being

most beneficial for her as a teacher leader on the team.

One final indication from Dr. Draper that the school-wide leadership team had achieved

an increase in collective efficacy was that the team was tackling more challenging conversations

related to school-wide instructional planning. In using interventions for English Language

Learners as an example, Dr. Draper explained:

We are starting to approach some conversations that we kept saying we need to deal with

later because we had all these other things to deal with. Now we're able to start having

some of those conversations. To me that suggests that we're feeling more confident in

where we are as a school-wide leadership that we're ready to approach some of those

other topics.

The overall findings related to the theme that instructional coordinators comfort in having a

voice leading to confidence was reported back to administrators as a means of continued

advanced planning for improvement.

Theme 2: Transparency Yields Trust

One finding that was more unique to the context of Upper East High School as a new

school with a new team was the fact that all members of the school-wide leadership team were

beginning the work with each other for the first time at the start of the school year. To develop an

atmosphere on school-wide leadership that allowed instructional coordinators the opportunity to

learn and grow, administrators needed to be aware of the level of trust in the room. In other

words, instructional coordinators needed to trust administrators, and feel as though they as teachers had a voice in the room. Mrs. Sanders reflected on the process that school-wide leadership undertook to build trust, and stated:

> Because most of us were strangers to one another, I think that there was just a period of having to learn [about] one another, and learn the [from] leadership team, and learn [about] Mrs. Mason in particular to try to figure out just how much they were going to be allowed to do.

Mrs. Sanders explained that consistent conversations and time during the semester built a sense of trust, and noted, "it took us a minute via meetings and conversations that you facilitated for them to realize that they actually do have a large amount of influence."

Mrs. Smith reiterated that the administrative team's modeling of openness contributed to the atmosphere of trust, and explained, "the transparency was what I think has helped you all with us, know that we're okay." Mrs. Smith used the example of the beginning of the school year and the administrative team needing the opportunity to collaborative separately in order to build responses to operational questions and school discipline practices. According to Mrs. Smith, "I appreciated that more instead of someone saying they have all the answers. No one has all the answers at that moment."

One of the purposeful attempts by the administrative team to build trust on the school-wide leadership team was to routinely build in time for practice of conversations that allowed instructional coordinators to feel confident with their own departments. School administrators planned data protocols and dilemma-based conversations in order to model for the instructional coordinators. Additionally, school administrators planned a conversation about gradebooks for

the instructional coordinators to help gauge the level of alignment in each department related to student progress reporting.

Among the discoveries of the gradebook conversation was the admission from several instructional coordinators that the work with English Language Learner populations was new. Mrs. Teague described this moment as being critical to building trust on the team:

> We had a particular teacher who was just very open and honest about how she was going to have to look at her own gradebook at the end of the semester because she's working with a new population in our building that she's never worked with before. To hear her be so open and honest about it. I think it made everyone else feel a lot more comfortable.

While the administrative team did not necessarily plan for the type of response that Mrs. Teague described, the discovery during the meeting helped the team continue to plan interventions for the entire staff heading into the second semester.

Summary of Analysis of Themes for Research Question 3

An analysis of the findings related to instructional coordinators participating in school-wide leadership and the development of collective efficacy produced two themes. The first theme based on the data was that voice influences confidence. Findings suggested that instructional coordinators at Upper East High School generally developed overall confidence in their ability to perform their given tasks during the course of Fall 2019. The administrative team which served as the action research team for this study purposefully implemented activities during school-wide leadership team meetings that were designed to allow instructional coordinators to practice instructional conversations and data protocols. Administrators also provided instructional coordinators with timely information related to student achievement which allowed the

instructional coordinators to speak confidently about performance-related topics with each department.

The second theme that emerged was transparency yields trust during the course of the semester. Instructional coordinators discussed that trust developed from an atmosphere of transparency that was cultivated by administrators. In addition, the consistent reinforcement by administrators that instructional coordinators were valuable members of the school-wide leadership team contributed to developing trust.

Chapter Summary

As the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team, the primary researcher used three research questions to guide the study and the corresponding analysis of themes. The researcher conducted individual interviews with the administrators who made up the action research team as well as individual interviews with a total of six participating instructional coordinators. The administrators and the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School formed the basis for the study and were the high school's establishment of a distributed leadership model (Spillane, 2006) during the first semester of the new school.

Findings from the data led to the development of themes which emerged related to each research question. Among the thematic findings that emerged was the process the administrative team used to provide professional development that placed a focus on instructional leadership to build leadership capacity and overall collective efficacy with the group of instructional coordinators. Through the use of the action research process, school administrators purposefully defined the role of the instructional coordinator by connecting the position to instructional

leadership. Administrators used action research to align school-wide leadership meetings to weekly departmental collaborative meetings. Analysis of findings showed that instructional coordinators at Upper East High School grew in confidence during the course of the semester and developed trust in the administrative team.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the thematic analysis related to the research questions, and presents discussion based on the research as well as implications for further research.

CHAPTER 7

Summary, Discussion, and Implications

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How does an administrative team comprised of a principal and three assistant principals work with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team?

2. How can school administrators use the action research process to grow leadership skills with teacher leaders?

3. In what ways does participating in the school-wide leadership team of a new school influence the collective efficacy of the group?

The researcher addressed the research questions by using audio-recorded individual interviews of both school administrators and department-specific instructional coordinators, along with an audio-recorded focus group session with the administrative team and documents from the school-wide leadership meetings.

Summary of the Study

This action research case study began in August 2019 at Upper East High School, a new health science-themed choice high school situated in an existing attendance zone in the Central School District. A qualitative case study approach was used in the research design for the present study. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe qualitative research that is "flowing from philosophical

assumptions, to interpretive lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems" (p. 43). The researcher led the administrative team at Upper East High School in a series of action research cycles that began with the beginning of the school year and the formation of the school-wide leadership team which included department-specific instructional coordinators from each curriculum area at the school.

The school-wide leadership team met weekly at the beginning of the school year in order to provide operational support and infrastructure to processes that would allow each department and instructional coordinator lead students through the first quarter of the school year. Each school-wide leadership meeting was planned collectively by the administrative team to include professional development opportunities during the meeting. Additionally, each meeting was designed to allow the individual instructional coordinators to practice modeled protocols that could form the basis for weekly departmental collaborative learning team meetings.

Data collection for this qualitative action research study was conducted by the primary researcher, and included individual the following methods:

1. Individual interviews with all members of the administrative team, which included the school's principal and two additional assistant principals;

2. Individual interviews with participating instructional coordinators. Interviews were conducted with both administrators on the action research team and instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A). The individual interviews for both groups were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder for the purposes of transcription and analysis of themes;

3. A focus group session with the members of the administrative team during the end of the first action research cycle. This audio-recorded focus group was conducted by the

primary researcher and was used in order for the action research team to make any

needed mid-course corrections during the study;

4. Document analysis from the school-wide leadership team meeting agendas and materials

from professional learning activities conducted during school-wide leadership;

5. Researcher journal notes from the administrative team's action research process was used

in the analysis of this study.

Discussion

Based on analysis of the data, multiple themes emerged that were connected to the

research questions which guided this study. In addressing each research question, the researcher

used the evidence to formulate themes from the data and its analysis. Themes emerged from the

review of related literature included teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and efficacy,

including collective efficacy and teacher efficacy.

Discussion of Findings from Research Question 1

The school-wide leadership team was the Upper East High School model for distributed

leadership. A large body of research exists to suggest that principals in schools implement a

distributed leadership model to build and extend their leadership capacity in the school

(Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2009, Spillane, 2006). The findings from

the present study indicates that building a distributed leadership model can lead to the

development of leadership capacity for a group of teacher leaders, which in turn, can directly

address school improvement areas with the principal and administrative team. Moreover, the

school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School used Spillane's (2006) theory that a

distributed leadership model should include the structure of distributing acts of leadership, but

also should emphasize that the "leadership practice is the central anchoring concern" (p. 4). The

administrative team designed professional development for the instructional coordinators using instructional leadership as a frame so that the leadership practices would remain the focus of the training.

The structure of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School followed the model from research (Klar, 2012) that posited that the principal and administrators can and should develop leadership capacity with teacher leaders in schools. While the administrative team at Upper East High School replaced the term department chair with instructional coordinator, the structure of the team followed the distributed leadership model.

Findings also emerged related to the concept of efficacy and the collective efficacy of the instructional coordinators on school-wide leadership. Research on collective teacher efficacy (Donohoo, 2018; Kim & Seo, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004) makes a direct connection to improved student achievement. While the present study did not directly focus on a connection to improved student achievement, the goal of the school-wide leadership team in developing the collective efficacy of the group was that the team would grow in confidence and therefore have the capacity to lead groups of teachers in discussing student performance related to teacher actions. The present study placed opportunities for leadership development in the context of the school-wide leadership team and activities related to leading student achievement discussions.

Overall analysis of data of the first research question related to an administrative team working with a group of teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy as a leadership team produced one central theme: collaboration builds efficacy. The administrative purposefully designed opportunities for collaboration on the school-wide leadership team through the use of protocols related to data analysis and leading discussion. The protocols were designed to help the instructional coordinators carry the same conversations into department-specific collaborative

team meetings. Both administrators and instructional coordinators noted that the use of the protocols were key in contributing to the development and building of leadership capacity of the instructional coordinators. Administrators specifically noted a need to use the protocols to build a sense of urgency with the instructional coordinators. The teacher leaders who served as instructional coordinators provided examples of data protocols and components of a book study that were instrumental in helping them lead department collaboration meetings.

Discussion of Findings from Research Question 2

As the purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of an administrative team as they worked to build the capacity of the instructional coordinators who were part of the school-wide leadership team, the administrators and their weekly work to plan and design activities for the instructional coordinators was a critical focus. Research on teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) suggests that there is a direct connection between developing teacher leadership and improving student achievement. Additionally, research posits that teacher leaders are more successful with specifically defined roles as developed by administrators and principals (Sebastian, Huang, & Allensworth, 2017; Smylie & Eckert, 2018). The present study concurs with this finding as the goal of the administrative team at Upper East High School was to develop the leadership capacity and collective efficacy of the instructional coordinators through specifically defining the role during professional development of the semester.

Additional analysis of data of the second research question related to administrators using the action research process produced two themes. The first theme that emerged related to administrators using action research was that role definition defines the work. School administrators attempted to accomplish defining the role of instructional coordinator at Upper

East High School through instructional leadership. The point of defining the role and naming the teacher leaders as instructional coordinators as opposed to department chairs was to attempt to clearly define that teacher leaders and members of the school-wide leadership team were given the task of leading conversations in the school at the department level related to student achievement and aligning instructional practices.

Administrators shared the perspective that each school-wide leadership meeting needed to serve as a model for practicing instructional leadership activities for the instructional coordinators. First-time teacher leaders on the school-wide leadership team shared the perspective that having a clearly defined role was important to their overall growth as leaders. The administrative team focused on student achievement during school-wide leadership activities as was evident by discussions and meeting agenda items throughout the semester. The mandate to focus on student achievement started with the school's principal, Mrs. Mason, and was echoed by the other administrative team members.

The administrators used instructional coordinators as instructional leaders in each department, rather than as managers of operations and processes. Specifically administrators provided the instructional coordinators with tasks that were related to student performance and teacher instructional moves. This philosophy contrasts with the traditional definition of the department chair (DeAngelis, 2013; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007). While research (Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007) describes the traditional role of a department chair as related to operational tasks, the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School kept the focus on student achievement and instructional leadership throughout the duration of the study

The second theme that emerged related to school administrators using action research was that alignment influences leadership. Perspectives from administrators revealed that the

alignment of practices between the school-wide leadership team and departmental collaborative learning time was intentional as a means of helping instructional coordinators develop as leaders. Administrators agreed based on analysis during action research team meetings to meet with specific instructional coordinators on a weekly basis in order to assist with the plan for each week's departmental collaborative meeting. The perspectives shared from the instructional coordinators revealed that activities in school-wide leadership such as the data protocol practice and discussions regarding interventions for students served as a model for department conversations.

The findings from the present study align with research that relates successful teacher leadership development to administrative support that includes consistent time for alignment and guidance (Weiner & Woulfin, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2018). The school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School was designed to provide consistent contact between administrators and instructional coordinators as the semester progressed. Because the administrators collaborated during action research to design and implement the professional development in school-wide leadership meetings, action research cycles supported the theory of consistent support and time leading to a development of leadership capacity.

Discussion of Findings from Research Question 3

The design of school-wide leadership meetings at Upper East High School attempted to create an atmosphere for instructional coordinators to develop leadership skills, and also attempted to influence the collective efficacy of the group of teacher leaders on the team. Research explains that schools with higher levels of collective efficacy tend to have similarly high levels of teacher leadership (Donohoo, 2018; Flood & Angelle, 2017). Through analysis of the perspectives of the individual instructional coordinators, the present study found that similar

themes emerged. The present study focused on the collective efficacy of the instructional

coordinators on the school-wide leadership rather than on the entire school. However, findings

from the present study support Flood and Angelle's (2017) research that there is a connection

between collective efficacy and the development of leadership capacity with teachers.

Analysis of data of the third research question related to participation in the school-wide

leadership team and the influence on collective efficacy produced two themes. The first theme

that emerged related to participation in the school-wide leadership team was that voice

influences confidence. Based on descriptions in interviewing during the study, instructional

coordinators experienced an increase in confidence during the course of the semester.

In describing a team that grew in confidence collectively based on the leadership tasks

that were assigned, school administrators shared the perspective that most instructional

coordinators felt comfortable sharing their voice during meetings and had grown in the ability to

lead instructional conversations with individual departments. Specific examples of the school-

wide leadership team discussion about special education accommodations as well as the protocol

related to individual gradebooks were given related to this theme. Individual instructional

coordinators shared the perspective that an understanding of how to solve problems as well as an

understanding of the role of the instructional coordinator were key in a growth in confidence

during the course of the semester.

The second theme related to participation in the school-wide leadership team was that

transparency yields trust. Individual instructional coordinators contributed to this theme through

the perspectives that administrators were intentionally transparent in sharing information. An

additional perspective from one of the instructional coordinators led to the finding that

administrators had created a culture that allowed for instructional coordinators to show

vulnerability during team discussions.

Implications for Practitioners

The findings from the present study offers implications for practitioners at Upper East

High School, as well as practitioners in other school contexts. Most critically, the findings from

the present study suggest that the collaboration by an administrative team to develop the

leadership capacity of teacher leaders is an imperative. If leadership matters, it must be the

charge of all members of administrative teams to develop the leadership capacity of the teacher

leaders in schools.

In particular, high schools and middle schools with larger administrative teams may tend

to implement distributed leadership models through the dividing of administrative and

management tasks. At Upper East High School, for example, the administrative team has a

designee who runs the curriculum office and a designee for the administration all major student

assessments. However, the principal and all three assistant principals collaborated weekly to

support and develop the instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team.

Leadership professional learning and interventions were designed collectively by the

administrators. The present findings suggest that the practices of administrators collaborating to

develop leadership capacity with teacher leaders is a model that should be considered for schools

with administrative teams.

While focusing on a collaborative effort by administrators, the present study also

emphasized clearly defining the role of teacher leaders by aligning the job description and set of

charges with instructional leadership rather than managerial tasks. Simply using the term

instructional coordinators to refer to the teacher leaders in the building was only one step in the

process of defining leadership roles. In the distributed leadership model at Upper East High School, instructional coordinators practiced instructional leadership tasks during school-wide leadership meetings, and then implemented the practices with teachers in each department. The findings of the present study suggest that administrative teams should take the time to clearly define duties and responsibilities for teacher leaders as a means of addressing student achievement goals.

In addition to clearly defining the roles and job responsibilities for teacher leaders in schools, the findings from the present study support the need for teacher leaders to have opportunities for consistent weekly support. Based on the findings of the study, ideas and perspectives emerged to suggest that the act of consistent support and guidance for teacher leaders is critical in the development of leadership capacity. Moreover, consistent support through regular training sessions may influence the collective efficacy of teacher leaders.

Implications for Policy

The present study may offer implications for policy related to local schools as well as larger school districts. Instructional coordinators at Upper East High School regularly implemented instructional and data protocols with colleagues that were designed and then practiced during the school-wide leadership team meetings. It was the task of administrators to collectively ensure that alignment of practices existed for the instructional coordinators.

Based on the finding related to alignment of practices the present study offers conclusions about the development of teacher leaders. Aligning the leadership practices between school-wide leadership meetings and the weekly department collaboration meetings may have influenced the leadership capacity of instructional coordinators as well as the focus on instructional leadership for the school. Larger school districts with multiple schools in each level

may consider exploring opportunities to support similar leadership actions through district-wide professional learning. An established system of professional development activities related to the development of teacher leaders in larger school districts may offer a solution to the challenge of creating a leadership pipeline for schools.

The discussion of alignment of practices based on the perspectives of both administrators and teacher leaders may also suggest that larger school districts should consider opportunities to implement professional learning that is aligned between administrators and teacher leaders. At Upper East High School, the administrators designed professional learning that related directly to the work of developing instructional coordinators on the school-wide leadership team.

Finally, while training programs targeting aspiring assistant principals and principals exist in larger school districts, the present study offers the suggestion that a similar training may benefit aspiring teacher leaders. School districts should consider a systematic approach that develops and trains teachers who aspire to positions related to teacher leadership.

Implications for Further Research

As the present study was conducted in a specific context at Upper East High School, further research on the ways that an administrative team works with teacher leaders to develop collective efficacy should be studied. Upper East High School opened as a smaller health science-themed high school where 610 students chose to attend rather than the previous zoned high school. The findings of the present study are specific to the context and the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School. Most high schools in the Central School District, for example, hold 3,000 students. Larger high schools employ a greater number of administrators. Regarding a larger school setting, additional research on the collaboration of administrative teams may uncover additional findings.

In addition to potential future research on administrative teams from other settings, a multi-year case study of the school-wide leadership team at Upper East High School may uncover additional thematic findings with the same team. Potential additional variables to the school-wide leadership team could include changing the overall staff of the school through growth and changing the members of the school-wide leadership team in subsequent school years. A longitudinal study of the school-wide leadership team or the administrative team could offer additional context for the findings related to collective efficacy.

Additional research is needed on the collaboration of high school administrative teams featuring a principal and multiple assistant principals. In particular, a comparison study of the collaboration of administrative teams at multiple high schools in the same district may uncover the degree of common practices that exist across a larger school district.

Concluding Thoughts

At the time of the beginning of this action research study, Upper East High School opened its doors for the first school year and semester. Findings from the study indicated that an administrative team that works collaboratively can design professional learning opportunities for teacher leaders that could influence building leadership capacity and collective efficacy on a leadership team. The administrative team at Upper East High School bears the responsibility for continuing the work of action research and leadership development during future semesters. Additionally, the administrative team bears the responsibility to continually work collaboratively to address leadership development, even as the school and team grows.

Instructional coordinators at Upper East High School were given specific roles and jobs directly related to instructional leadership. Findings suggested that administrators should consistently support the instructional coordinators by meeting weekly with each individual

instructional coordinator. The work of improving student achievement is continuous in all schools and developing effective teacher leaders is a critical component of a distributed instructional leadership approach.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

The following open-ended questions guided the interviews with both the action-research team and the target group (the school-wide leadership team) at Upper East High School. These questions are based on the work of Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) and are designed to ask the members of these teams about their perspectives on collective efficacy and leadership development.

1. What does the school-wide leadership team specifically do to develop protocols that help produce meaningful student learning at Upper East High School?
2. What are some specific activities that the school-wide leadership team has created to help students believe that they can do well in schoolwork?
3. Talk about a time that school-wide leadership has practiced and implemented protocols that help your department facilitate student learning? How have you implemented these protocols in your department meetings and the work of your department? How has it gone?
4. Talk about the ability of the teachers in your department to specifically help students master difficult or complex content?
5. What are some ways that you as a leader can help your teachers promote a deep understanding of the academic concepts at our school?
6. Talk about a time that school-wide leadership has implemented a protocol designed to help your teachers minimize disruptive behavior.
7. What examples of critical thinking based on teacher guidance can you describe within your department?
8. What are some ways that you as a leader can help students in your department's classes find opportunities for creativity?