INCREASING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN IMPROVEMENT THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

by

LAKWANZA MONEKE FIELDS

(Under the Direction of Karen Bryant)

ABSTRACT

This action research (AR) case study explored the means to build teacher leadership capacity in sustaining school improvement efforts. A team of teachers and administrators explored strategies to increase teachers' engagement and demonstrations of leadership practices. The primary focus of this study was to determine how administrators at the school can foster greater teacher leadership capacity and to determine any change in perception of leadership by teachers after the exercise. Through data collection and analysis of school surveys, demonstrations of teacher leadership rubric, perception surveys, and focus groups, the team used an action research methodology to broaden the enactment of leadership within the school. Based upon findings of this study (a) teachers need direct support to demonstrate effective participation in school improvement leadership, (b) participating in leadership develops skill and understanding of leadership practice, and (c) mutual engagement in leadership provides valuable development for teachers and administrators. Recommendations are (a) to replicate studies of this topic in the action research approach, (b) to extend the length of subsequent studies, and (c) to draw connections to school achievement data.

INDEX WORDS: Shared Instructional Leadership, Teacher Leadership, School Improvement

INCREASING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN IMPROVEMENT THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

by

LAKWANZA MONEKE FIELDS

B.S.Ed., Florida State University, 1999

M.Ed., Central Michigan University, 2007

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2018

INCREASING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN IMPROVEMENT THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

by

LAKWANZA MONEKE FIELDS

Major Professor: Karen Bryant

Committee Members: Sheneka Williams
John Dayton

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2018

DEDICATION

To

Jimmy Fields, Jr.

You have rearranged your schedule, borrowed time, and encouraged me from the first course through the final stages of this writing.

and

Jaeden Alexander and Meren Aubrey

Always resilient, creative, optimistic, and connected to each other, you do everything with me. Your beauty, kindness, and intelligence are a blessing.

and

Momma, Mama, Nana, Aunt Barbara, Uncle Timmy, and Uncle Smiley

You have given me treasured gifts of love, grace, strength, kindness, and faith.

and

Amy, Auntie Maria, Kelley, Aunt D, Kimberly, CD, Uncle Phil, and Deb

My models, you have set the bar high.

and

Márcia

You filled in the gaps to help us create a seamless covering for our children.

You have enabled me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the members of my doctoral advisory committee: Dr. Karen Bryant, major professor, and members Dr. Sheneka Williams and Dr. John Dayton.

To my colleagues, thank you for engaging with me in this research. This experience has shown us the value of engagement with each other in investigation to benefit our students and our school. You are powerful and I believe in you.

I would also like to thank Dr. Jose Boza and Dr. Lily Kelly Radford, your conversation and perspective at the start of this inquiry were invaluable to me achieving clarity of focus.

To the members of my cohort, you have shared and modeled expertise and professionalism. It was my pleasure to learn alongside of you.

Finally, to my friends, Jesika, and Deborah. I am thankful for the breaks for brunch and nights out, that have helped me to release and keep going. You would not let me be out of touch. Your timing was always perfect!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In my 16th year as a public school educator, I began the doctoral program. As a new elementary school assistant administrator, I frequently heard teacher colleagues express desires for greater input into decision making and direction setting at our school. At the same time, it appeared that efforts by our school administration to prompt independent action and agency by teachers in the areas of needed school improvement were not achieving the desired outcomes. Based upon these voices and administrator evaluation data related to shared leadership practices at our school, I decided to explore ways that administrators could provide effective support for the engagement our teachers desired to have in leading school improvement.

Overview of the Case

Multiple data sources confirm support for finding solutions to the problem of lagging student growth and achievement. Annual reports confirm gross disparities in achievement among high-poverty, minority, and low-poverty, majority schools. The population of children living in poverty is rising across the United States (Cuthrell, Stapleton, & Ledford, 2009). Recent attention to this disparity highlights the extreme difference in opportunities for school completion, education success after school, or a productive adult life depending upon children's achievement levels in elementary school.

Since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, progress toward improved student outcomes has been documented in small measures. However, the achievement gap in performance for some demographic groups of students persists

(Foorman, Schatschneider, Eakin, Fletcher, Moats, & Francis, 2004; Foorman & Moats, 2004; McGee, 2004; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005). Impoverished students enter school with inadequate linguistic skills due to limited literacy and reading readiness experiences (McGee, 2004; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005; Cuthrell, et al., 2009). Despite federal funding and recent efforts to prevent reading failure with adoptions of systematic programs designed to improve literacy development, gaps in student achievement have persisted.

Recent research details the risks of failure for students in urban areas of high-poverty. Among challenges faced by these groups of students are high teacher turn over, insufficient sources of qualified teaching staff, and scarce classroom resources (Foorman & Moats, 2004; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005; Murnane, 2007). These inadequacies contribute to the inconsistent development of requisite skills for students in high-poverty schools. Tivnan and Hemphill (2005) relate how schools comprised of large populations of students living in poverty are more susceptible to underachievement due to the tendency for lessons to be less engaging, less challenging, and more "rote-like" (p. 420). In high-poverty schools, where minority groups are most highly concentrated, there is a greater need for effective teacher practice to ensure the success of all students (Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007). Kannapel, Clements, Taylor, and Hibpshman (2005) find that the largest majority of low performing schools in the US are high-poverty schools. They note, however, the number of schools which fall outside of this trend confirms that background does not necessarily predict student achievement.

Documentation of national concern for students' growth and achievement is evidenced by the 1965 authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and subsequent reauthorizations that followed with the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In the state in which this study was conducted, the state board of

education and governor's office support the College and Career Readiness Performance Index, requiring students to meet or exceed expectations, achieve grade-level proficiency, and demonstrate content mastery yearly.

Local School Context

Metro County School District[1] is a large urban district in the southeastern United States which serves more than 100,000 students. Wide representation from diverse ethnic and racial groups exists within the system. Seventy-two percent of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged, qualifying for free or reduced lunch programs.

Metro County School District aims to "ensure student success, leading to higher education, work, and life-long learning." System leaders have articulated plans to see all schools improve by establishing the primary goal of student success in the mastery of learning standards. With this said, the most significant support is provided to schools with relatively greater needs or those who have been identified by the state education department as needing intervention supports. Parents and community members want to see improvements as well. Parent survey data indicates the desire for higher expectations for student achievement as well as assurance that all students will learn and be successful at school.

In the north-east corner of the district, Sisley Elementary School[1,] (Sisley) houses 744 students, of which 90% are classified as economically disadvantaged. In addition to this demographic, 56% of the school's population is served in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program. The mission of Sisley is to nurture students' development of skills for success beyond elementary school to support lifelong learning.

[1] District and school names used in this report are pseudonyms.

Table 1 displays the comparison of the student demographic composition within MCSS, Sisley, and the state. With a larger proportion of the student population from disadvantaged students than the local system and state average, Sisley is presented with significant barriers to student achievement.

Table 1

Student Demographic within Metro County School District and Sisley Elementary School

	Percentage of Students									
Organization	**Students with Disabilities**	**English Language Learners**	**Economically Disadvantaged**	**Asian**	**Black/African American**	**Hispanic**	**Native American Indian/ Alaska Native**	**White**	**Multi-racial**	**Other**
Sisley Elementary School	10	56	90	2	24	69	2	1	2	<1
Metro County School District	10	17	72	7	64	17	11	11	2	<1
South Eastern State School System	12	8	65	3	38	15	<1	39	<1	3.5

Supports for Sisley Elementary School

The parents of students who attend Sisley are working-class citizens. Most of them work outside the home for all or most of the day and are not able to come to school in support of students. The majority of them ensure that students are present and arrive at school on time daily. The classroom teachers provide instruction and supervision to assigned students, communicate students' progress with their families, and plan collaboratively with team members for delivery of MCSD curriculum. The instructional support staff includes, Special Education, ESOL, Early Intervention Program (EIP), and Title I teachers, who teach with classroom teachers to provide specialized instructional support for students and to reduce the student to teacher ratio at the school. In addition to these supports, the school has an academic data coach and an instructional support specialist, who serve to support the job-embedded learning and professional growth of teachers through coaching.

Historical Context of Sisley Elementary School. Sisley Elementary School is more than 50 years old. The composition of students attending this quaint school, nestled within an eclectic neighborhood of single family homes, has changed significantly in recent years. Many of the veteran teachers on staff can remember when the student demographic was much different. Now students who reside in the neighborhood attend choice or private schools instead of Sisley. Nearly the entire student population, arriving daily by bus, is transported from 14 apartment complexes near the school. In years prior to 2010, students in the ESOL program were pulled out for resource classes, while native speakers received instruction in the general education classroom. Staff members who were present reported that the English Language Learners were largely isolated, even when they returned to class. Homeroom teachers did not receive extensive training in strategies appropriate for English Language Learners; as a result, the effect of

instruction in the classroom was limited. The residual effects of those times are still evident in the dynamic of the school now. While the student demographic changed rapidly, the composition and preparation of the staff within the school and community surrounding the school did not.

As a result of teaching practices in place prior to 2010, Sisley was designated by the state as a focus school for low performance by the sub-group of students with special needs. ESOL students' performance was dangerously close to this level as well. Support provided by the state to ensure positive changes included a state trained specialist who met with school leadership and special education teachers to plan and implement improvements monthly for a period of three years. The end result of that effort was improved performance on the state assessment and an overall increase of 22 percentage points on school rating conducted by the state at the end of the 2013 – 2014 school year. This dramatic improvement resulted in the school being removed from the state list of focus schools, but also the loss of trained support. The following school year brought, a new, more rigorous year-end assessment tool to measure students' growth and achievement. Preparation for success on this assessment required a different set of skills than the previous state assessment. This rapid shift presented a new set of challenges for the staff who were not knowledgeable in instructional strategies to adequately prepare students to demonstrate successful mastery of the state's requirements.

Framing the Problem

While factors such as student background and preparation prior to enrolling in school contribute to students' lack of achievement, Sisley faculty demonstrate inconsistent implementation of effective instructional practices that are shown to generate greater gains than conventional practices. While some teachers at Sisley do not use current practices, others

demonstrate strong implementation of recommended strategies.

External Barriers to Student Achievement

Among primary challenges faced by teachers at Sisley are students' lack of school readiness, limited support for learning in students' homes, and poor attendance by students. The large majority of its students enter kindergarten having no pre-school experience. Many are living in homes where Spanish is the primary language. Students' families are often unavailable to help with homework due to work schedules or limited English proficiency. Some students' parents are not literate in their native languages. While the majority of Sisley students attend school daily, a number of students are significantly late or absent from school, for as long as months at a time. These factors present a challenge for teachers. Communication between teachers and families is at times poor. Finding means to remediate and accelerate the learning of struggling students is difficult. While teachers work to improve students' attendance and readiness for school, these efforts have not significantly changed students' reading outcomes.

Recent changes to state expectations for student performance have drawn attention to the disparity in levels of achievement for students at Sisley. Roughly 80% of students across all grade-levels score below expected proficiency levels in reading and language arts on district and state assessments. Disproportionate numbers of students requiring urgent intervention indicate a strong need to influence general instructional practices to reduce this condition. The fact that 70% of the population stays continuously enrolled in the school also indicates that the usual justification of students' mobility rate is not the primary cause of this widespread under achievement.

Internal Barriers to School Improvement

School administrators review data and plan accordingly throughout the year at Sisley. Often, adjustments to instructional support assignments and budget priorities are made to address identified needs. Teachers are asked to provide input into the focus of professional learning opportunities. On two or three occasions each year all instructional staff participate in an analysis of student performance data from district and state assessments. Teachers are encouraged to use this information to plan and to ensure that the data analysis translates to prioritized adjustments to learning experiences for students. Evidence shows varying levels of application. With this pattern, inconsistent results are achieved across grade-levels. Students in kindergarten, first grade and second grade are particularly vulnerable as sound state assessments are not available to determine their progress annually. District growth measures from initial diagnostic assessments show inadequate progress when compared to assessments given at the middle and end of each school year. In addition, this lapse in close monitoring leads to the large majority of students arriving in state assessment grades ill-prepared to meet the academic demands expected at the upper grade levels.

Drawing on available references and models, federal and state funding through Title I, the EIP, ESOL program, and district-provided support allow for implementation of collaborative teaching approaches in every classroom. In previous years, increased funds have been allocated to provide instructional support for improvement of classroom practice through academic and instructional coaches. As many as three instructional support professionals were employed to serve kindergarten through fifth grade teachers in anticipation of the changes needed to meet current demands for student growth and achievement. Though the justification of this support was to ensure improved instructional practices used by classroom teachers, this atypical level of

support did not produce notable changes in teacher behavior or student outcomes during the 2014-2017 school years.

Despite concerted efforts, this problem has existed in the school for a number of years and appears to be growing. Having spent school improvement funds on extensive professional learning, teaching resources, and classroom personnel, there is a dire need for an approach that will bring much needed improvements to learning experiences for students. Experts have thoroughly outlined the process required to develop a strong community of learners within schools, however, the urgency of the students' needs necessitates implementation of practices that will expedite student success as well as teacher growth and development.

Collaboration Among Grade Levels. In the past two years, the Sisley administrative team has reorganized grade level structures to allow for interdependent teams. Each of these groups is comprised of four to seven general education teachers, one ESOL teacher, and one interrelated special education teacher. Additionally, each of the lower grades has reduced class sizes through the EIP and upper grades share an additional Title I teacher. Teams are afforded 45 minutes of common planning time each school day. The established expectation is to develop common lesson plans, decide common assessments, and review student work during a minimum of two planning sessions each week. Additionally, twice-monthly professional learning sessions allow for all faculty members to gather and focus together on common topics.

While the school provided many instructional and structural supports for teaching teams, changes in teacher practice and student outcomes were slow. Teachers' collaborative participation and engagement in high leverage practices was limited. There is little indication that grade-level teams work together independent of support structures to make evidence-based decisions for instruction and assessment. The lagging development of interdependence among

team members resulted in inconsistent evidence of implementation for recent initiatives and wide variability of learning experiences for students. The school leadership team maintains careful attention to the school improvement focus and regular analysis of data with teachers. Consequently, student growth is beginning to increase in some grades. However, it has yet to achieve consistency across all classrooms and grade-levels throughout the school.

Sisley Elementary School and the Larger Context

The school leadership team has been steadily addressing concerns as a part of the annual school improvement efforts. The challenge of persistently low student growth and performance in reading paired with the wide variability of instructional methods and activities across classrooms is most concerning. Upon examination of national, state, district, and local school data related to student reading achievement there is an apparent disparity in the performance of students at Sisley as measured by standardized assessments in third, fourth, and fifth grades. While Georgia students performed below the national average on NAEP assessments in 2015, average student performance at our school was lower than the both MCSD and state averages (see Table 2 and 3).

Table 2

2015 4th Grade Students' NAEP Reading Scaled Scores from NCES

Students Tested	All	Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch	Not Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch	Hispanic	Black	White
Massachusetts	235	220	247	215	217	242
South Eastern State	222	214	239	211	212	232
New Mexico	207	201	226	202	Not reported	225
National Average	221	209	237	208	206	232

Sisley demonstrated moderate achievement in past years. However, the level of performance took on a downward trend immediately following the institution of the State Year End Assessment. This assessment was designed to match recent revisions to the state learning standards more closely than the state Criterion Referenced Test that was previously administered each year (see Table 4).

Table 3

2015 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade Students' Reading Level on Year End Assessment

Scores from State Office of Student Achievement

Organization	Percentage of Students	
	Below Grade Level	On or Above Grade Level
Sisley Average	77	23
MCSD Average	71.9	28.1
State Average	62.7	37.3

Table 4

Sisley Elementary Yearly Reading and Language Arts Content Mastery

Student Sub-Group	Measured by State Criterion Referenced Test			Measured by State Year End Assessment
	2012	2013	2014	2015
All	89	87	89	44
Hispanic	87	85	90	43
Black	89	88	84	41
White	<1	<1	<1	<1
English Learners	83	83	88	34
Students with Disabilities	50	47.8	77.5	17.5
Economically Disadvantaged	89	87	88	43

Strategic planning and focus by the administration shifted in the development of the school improvement plan at the start of the 2016 school year. Having forecast a significant change in expectations for performance on year-end assessments, an additional instructional coach was added to the existing team of two in an effort to devote more attention to reading and writing instruction. At the end of the school year, the drop in student performance was dramatic (see Table 5).

Table 5

2016 Students Reading at End of Year

Grade-Level	Percentage of Students Reading at Lexile Reading Target		
	Sisley Elementary	**MCSD**	**State**
Third	37	43	51
Fifth	54	57	65

Assessment reports for the 2017 school year showed improvement, however overall performance remained low. Additionally, a district assessment administered at the beginning of the most recent school year, showed an average of 49% of students in kindergarten through fifth grade finished the year with on grade-level reading performance (see Table 6).

Table 6

2017 Students Reading at End of Year

Grade-Level	Percentage of Students Reading at Lexile Reading Target		
	Sisley Elementary	**MCSD**	**State**
Third	47	43	51
Fifth	62	69	75

In classrooms comprised of students with similar abilities, examination of student performance showed some classes achieving higher reading levels and achievement than others over multiple years. In response to this and school-wide needs, district and school administration assigned instructional improvement support for teachers at the school for the past ten years. Informal observation, anecdotal data, and conversation about this role and persons who have served in it has shown that the current culture does not support the required approach. Teachers report unwillingness to work with instructional coaches, disapproval of individuals' delivery styles, and general lack of acceptance of ideas proposed by persons in this role. Some have expressed that in being assigned to work with a coach they have felt targeted or singled out in ways that diminished their confidence.

Using the formal observation process prescribed by the state's teacher evaluation system, administrators recorded a need for improvement in teacher practice. Specifically, there was little evidence to support that teachers at any grade level consistently provided academically challenging instruction to students in reading at the level required to prepare students for expected performance measures. The majority of class time was spent in whole-group lessons, where the teacher was more engaged than the students. In the two most recent school years, school administration devoted time to planning and implementation of lessons and assessments with teacher teams. Due to management concerns and conflicting requirements, administrators' engagement in these meetings has been intermittent at best.

The inconsistency of collaborative focus on student achievement within grade-level teams is a problem for school-wide improvement efforts. While there is a measure of change and acceptance of new processes, the rate is slow. Reported resistance to suggested strategies exists among teachers for various reasons. Commentary has included a combination of

disagreement with the level of instruction required for students, disbelief in students' ability to perform more complex tasks independently, and lack of knowledge, comfort, or confidence with research-based balanced literacy teaching methods. Despite efforts by school leaders to promote teacher use of research based methods that would promote growth, more familiar strategies persist.

An added level of complexity for this issue was the relatively low report of input or influence into decisions at the school by teachers. Possible feelings of disempowerment and low autonomy may contribute to decreasing morale and motivation to work toward overall school improvement in reading instruction and student achievement. Figure 1 displays the percentage of teachers who felt they were afforded opportunities to participate in leadership at the school. A significant number of teachers reported that they were not included in this important role.

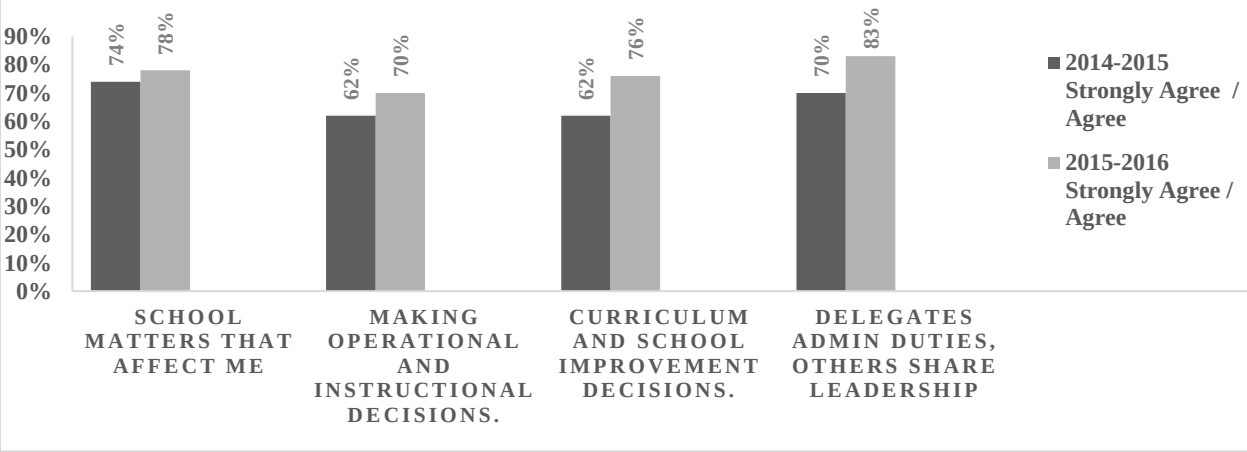

Figure 1. 2014 - 2016 Teacher Responses on School Leadership Evaluation Survey

Upon entry into the doctoral program, I studied practices implemented by school teachers and school leaders which achieved consistently high growth and achievement for learners in their schools. An action research team of teachers and leaders at our school was formed to examine the practices in place in our school context and methods we could employ to improve the desired practices. This team was comprised of five classroom teachers, two instructional support

professionals, and two school administrators who were interested in working together toward improvement of personal and school-wide leadership practices.

Purpose and Research Questions

Teachers and school leaders at Sisley have met regularly to determine the focus of lessons and evaluations of student performance. Despite time spent planning with a group, results show an inconsistency of engagement, instruction methods, tasks assigned to students, and student performance outcomes on annual standard academic assessments. Additionally, evidence of effective collaboration to address students' challenges varies widely across teams within the school.

This problem indicates an opportunity for empowerment and increased leadership capacity among teachers. The implied need for teacher leaders to address school improvement efforts requires intentional development. Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) clarify that direct and indirect support from formal school leadership is necessary for the success of teacher leaders.

Based upon the local context and insight gathered from the review of relevant literature the primary focus of this team was to explore how formal school leaders could facilitate increased demonstration and engagement of teachers in the leadership of the school.
The research questions for this study were:

1. How can administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity within schools?
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

This research focus is informed by a conceptual framework which is built upon the theoretical practices of shared leadership, instructional leadership, and teacher leadership. Figure 2 demonstrates how these components work together to support broad participation in leadership leading to school-wide improvement.

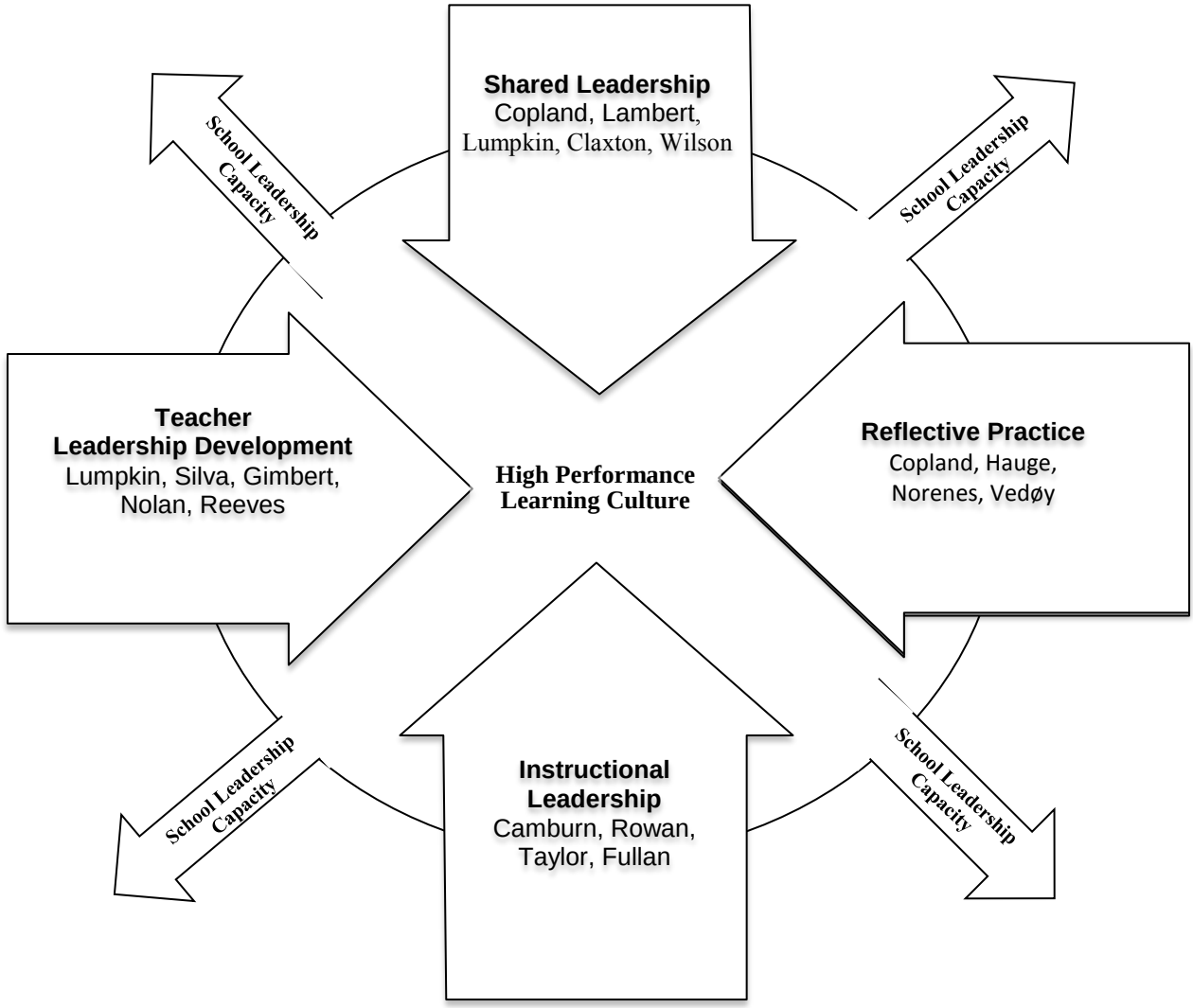

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Significance

Achieving sustainable growth and achievement for students is not likely to occur in isolation. Strong networks of informed professionals at all levels of an organization are required

to make lasting improvements. Effective school principals who assume a role of active involvement in the work of improving instructional practices through communication and collaboration can produce sustainable improvements in outcomes and lead to closing the achievement gap for students (Fullan, 2002).

Studies make only indirect links between instruction focused principal actions and teacher commitment to goals for school-wide or classroom practice improvements (Ebmeier, 2003). It is noted that teacher practice is more directly influenced by the level of collegiality and trust among their peers. While a collection of research has examined the practices that principals employ to strengthen the leadership capacity of their schools, more investigation is needed to determine which formal leadership practices best support this development. Further, there is not adequate support in the form of action research for teams of teachers and leaders who have undertaken this aim as actors within their systems.

As the feasibility of sustaining school improvements continues to gain local and national focus, developing teacher leaders as a force for school change is desired by many in the education community. This work will contribute to what is known about the development of teacher leadership and will support the work of local school leaders who may engage in action research within their own contexts. Leaders within the local context of Metro County School District may wish to create a forum to support principals to replicate this work in similar settings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The population of children living in poverty is rising across the United States. Attention to this national concern has increased in recent years. Impoverished students often enter school with inadequate linguistic skills due to limited literacy and reading readiness experience (Cuthrell, Stapleton, & Ledford, 2009; Baker & Cooper, 2005). Al Otaiba and Fuchs (2006) note "the gap between proficient and less proficient readers widens during the elementary years" (p. 414). Additionally, reading difficulties are less likely to be remediated after third grade. Collective achievement within schools serving such populations is often low.

Since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001, small measures of progress toward improved student outcomes have been documented. Simultaneously, research and annual reports confirm that the achievement gap between students from high-income and low-income families persists (Foorman, et al., 2004; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005). In high poverty schools, where minority groups are most highly concentrated, this equates to a greater need for effective leadership practice to ensure the success of all students (Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007).

Extensive research and practice has been directed toward professional learning in specific teaching practices (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; Foorman, & Moats, 2004; Foorman, et al., 2006). It is equally important to identify and to focus on precisely what students need to learn (Chenoweth, 2015). Tivnan and Hemphill (2005) relate how schools comprised of large populations of students living in poverty are more susceptible to underachievement due to the tendency for lessons to be less engaging, less challenging, and more "rote-like" (p. 420).

Research identifies weaknesses in teachers' capacities to improve outcomes for poor students (Murnane, 2007). Teachers need experiences that deepen their capacity to understand and address barriers to ensure that students in high poverty schools become successful readers (Foorman, et al, 2006; Milner, 2012; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekkelsen, 2004; Pianta, Belsky, Houts, & Morrison, 2007). While this knowledge is critical for teachers, it does not ensure equitable delivery of the best possible instruction across classrooms within schools. Currently, school leaders are accountable for progress and improvement of teaching and learning **(**Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Strategies for Successful Leadership

Elmore (2000) highlights the variety of challenges for leaders in multiple educational settings. Researchers have examined characteristics common to schools, which achieve high levels of success for more than the majority of their students from backgrounds of poverty. While the largest majority of low performing schools in the US are high-poverty schools, a number of schools fall outside of this trend, confirming that background does not necessarily predict student achievement (Chenoweth, 2010; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Chenoweth, 2015; McGee, 2004). Some research into these schools has defined the role of the principal as a strong directive, instructional leader, who focused efforts within the school to improve classroom practice. Creating a safe and positive learning environment, a clear mission, high expectations for student performance and time on task are key functions of effective leadership in this role. (Ylimaki, Jacobson, et al., 2007). Other researchers attribute increased student achievement and sustained improvements to collaborative practice between school leaders and teachers (Chenoweth, 2010; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Chenoweth, 2015; Kannapel, Clements, Taylor, & Hibpshman, 2005; Reeves,

2003). Ultimately, a keen and frequent focus on individual students' progress and precise needs are among successful practices of the highest performing high poverty schools (Chenoweth, 2010; McGee, 2004; Reeves, 2003).

Instructional Leadership

Some dispute the quality and effectiveness of public schools. According to research in The Wallace Foundation's report, Building Principal Pipelines (2015), children must obtain a strong education in order to be successful in society. This need is hinged upon effective instruction. Elmore (2000) defines instructional leadership as the improvement of instructional practices and performance regardless of individual roles, requiring constant learning and respectful modeling. Principals strengthen schools' ability to foster high performance amidst high poverty through "strong, visible leadership" (McGee, 2004, p. 115) while advocating for high learning standards and high expectations for all students. Setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program are essential practices for effective leaders. Effective school leadership is second only to good teaching among school influences on student achievement.

Instructional leadership remains a focus in research and educational policy (Hoy & Miskal, 2013). Lambert (2002), however describes how singular instructional leadership by principals is inadequate to sustain school improvement goals in the quality of learning outcomes for all students. Similarly, Lumpkin, Claxton, and Wilson (2014) maintain that principals cannot effectively manage and operate schools and provide the broad level of instructional support needed for teachers all on their own. Administrators benefit from fostering the leadership and instructional expertise of the teachers who know the most about what works in classrooms to help students learn (Danielson, 2006).

According to research, the changes necessary for sustainable improvements require significant changes to the structure of schools. Elmore (2000) concludes that principals must be willing to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to develop others in order to positively impact student achievement. They must create a climate that encourages learning and achievement, throughout a school. They must foster quality instruction school-wide. Principals nurture talent and support their work with analysis of school data. In addition, they hire, retain, and develop effective teachers in their schools.

Though the leadership focus may vary in early stages of school improvement, researchers found that those leaders who sustain improvements progress toward more democratic and distributed styles. Encouraging professional learning communities or structures and processes that encourage collaboration and dialogue among teachers are observed. Bringing staff into the development of achievable, shared goals, common purpose, and high expectations for student performance reinforces this success (Ylimaki, Jacobson, et al., 2007; Foorman, Schatschneider, et al., 2004).

Distributed or Shared Leadership

The concepts of distributive, shared, or collaborative leadership identify the need for school leaders to balance the demands of leadership required to successfully manage the process of school improvement. Strong principal leadership alone is inadequate to ensure sustainable improvements to teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Studies indicate the benefit of democratic leadership in data-driven inquiry to realize sustainable school improvement (Barth, Haycock, Jackson, Mora, Ruiz, Robinson, & Wilkins, 1999; Copland, 2003; Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, & Ylimaki, 2007; Timperley, 2005; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). School leaders must find means to distribute leadership responsibilities within the organization to ensure

that social trust and professional networks are adequately developed. Opportunities for collaborative learning and participation in school leadership and staff development are necessary for teachers as well (Quinn, 2002; Spillane & Louis, 2002).

The complex demands of leadership in today's schools cannot be adequately addressed singularly by school leaders (Copland, 2003). Distributing leadership activities throughout the organization is desirable when the quality of those tasks aids teachers in providing more effective instruction. Effective distribution of leadership has the potential to develop collective capacity across the school, resulting in increased ability to meet many challenging demands (Timperley, 2005).

There is some controversy among researchers about the topic of distributed leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2008) and Hartley (2007), (as cited in Bolden, 2011) relate discrepancies noted in research related to distributed leadership such as: how frequently distributed leadership is viewed as inclusive or democratic; when it should be taken as a framework for improving leadership practice or simply describing it; and whether the concept may be part of a sociopolitical effort to reform schools and improve efficiency (p.13). While the term shared leadership is often used with distributed leadership (Leithwood, Mascall, Sacks, Strauss, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007). Bolden (2011), found that the design structure and purpose of any given research creates a distinction between these terms.

Correlations between the level of effectiveness demonstrated in school leadership practice and student achievement are noted in recent research (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty 2005). Marks and Printy (2003) identified variance in outcomes for students in schools ranging from "low leadership" to "integrated leadership." On one end of the spectrum were schools characterized by ineffective principals, an absence of instructional leadership, and limited

teacher engagement with leadership. At the other end were those leaders exhibiting shared instructional leadership practices. The authors found strong school performance to be the norm in schools where integrated approaches lead to collective implementation of high levels of teaching and learning. The use of distributed leadership practices empowers teachers to make decisions affecting themselves and their work (Hoy & Miskal, 2013). Sweetland and Hoy (2000), (as cited in Hoy & Miskal, 2013) explain that evidence is beginning to emerge that shows empowering teachers in relation to the curriculum is connected to improved student performance (p.240). Blending practices of shared instructional leadership with distribution of leadership, school principals may find sharing responsibilities with assistant principals, instructional coaches or teacher mentors, and teacher leaders are more likely to realize school improvement goals.

School Climate and Culture

Principals of high-performing, high-poverty schools share high expectations for staff and students, strong positive relationships, high instructional and academic focus, and collaborative decision making practices (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Kannapel, Clements, et al., 2005; Foorman, Schatschneider, et al., 2004; Reeves, 2003). According to Blasé and Blasé (2000) teachers value engagement from principals that aims to develop cooperative partnerships among teachers. The existence of trust, coaching support, and guidance through reflective discussion are meaningful forms of leadership. In such climates, empathy, passion, persistence, and flexibility in thinking are commonly displayed. However, these successful leaders and teaching professionals do not use identified barriers to excuse poor performance (Quinn, 2002; Ylimaki & Jacobson, et al., 2007).

Principals are a determining factor in the development of professional learning communities where teachers may support and challenge one another to improve instruction and student achievement (Hallinger, 2011). The Wallace Foundation (2013) found that stronger working relationships between principals and teachers are evident in student achievement. Frequent practices in these contexts are conversations about pedagogy and curriculum, peer observation, and critique of instruction. Clearly established norms of inspection and innovation are created by leaders who have developed the cognitive, organizational, social, emotional, environmental, and analytical skills needed to build a school staff into a team of learners.

John Hattie (2015) summarizes realizations taken from his Visible Learning (2008) research. In this account, a high impact leader is one who aims to seek the greatest outcomes for the widest possible set of students. These leaders foster cultures that value collaboration and risk taking. New and old strategies are examined closely to determine which yield the most significant results for the largest number of students. In addition to encouraging teachers' beliefs in students' capabilities, clarifying the meaning, validity, and equity of outcomes for students are considered.

Highly successful leaders build and support collaborative teams to analyze data and decide whether to continue using particular strategies. In schools with the highest impacts on students' achievement, leaders help connect students' achievement to teacher practice. By asking questions of teacher teams, these administrators and teachers impacted more than average growth for students in one school year. Keen focus on measurable student growth occurs when learning teams collectively set goals, share understandings use data collected add, center lessons on students (Hattie, 2015).

Although research supports increased student achievement with the correlation of an effective principal, Hallinger (2011) reports no direct effect of leadership capacity on the growth of student learning. Collaborative leadership, however, demonstrated an effect size of (.31) on student learning indirectly. In building the capacity of others within the school, leaders can impact student performance (Lambert, 2006; King, 2002). This finding provides evidence and supports conclusions of other research that principals add value to the improvement of student performance through active participation.

Teacher Leadership Development

Though "teacher leadership" is not a new term, the realm of educational leadership has been researched more broadly. Teacher leaders have diverse and often fluid roles (Nappi, 2014). Generally, classroom teachers, the professionals share their expertise in many ways with other colleagues. In this current research, the collective efforts of teachers and leaders show promise for increasing school improvement with the goal of increasing student learning (Lambert, 2002; Nappi, 2014; & Ringler, 2013).

The work of several researchers suggests the critical value school administrators can offer in the development of strong teacher leadership and sustained school change. Teachers and other school staff develop increased capacity by working with others to find collective solutions to problems (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013). Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000), explain that "teachers are leaders when they function in professional communities; inspire excellence in practice; and empower stakeholders to participation in educational improvement." They further clarify that teachers can contribute to moving the practice of other teachers toward the aims of larger school improvement efforts. Professional learning communities (PLCs) are effective support structures for expanding shared leadership practices and fostering teacher leadership

(Lumpkin, et.al, 2014). These support structures facilitate skillful participation, shared vision, inquiry-based decision-making, broad involvement, reflective practice, and increasing student achievement (Lambert, 2002). Principals need to support this form of participation by teachers. With guidance and professional learning support, teachers can develop an increasing capacity for leadership as principals expect, trust, empower, protect, and recognize their efforts. Further, sharing authority and responsibility for failure is key (Barth, 2001).

The sharing of instructional school leadership with teachers generates expertise among teachers. Expertise increases the collective instructional capacity of all teachers through collaboration, coaching, and mentoring to build a greater sense of ownership. At the heart of shared leadership is the collective effort of individuals, which yields greater results than that of isolated individuals (Copland, 2002; Nappi, 2014; & Ringler, 2013). Nappi (2014) further describes shared leadership as building social capital, or the sharing of resources in a school for the school vision of learning. Nappi suggests that when teachers' expertise or intellectual capital is recognized and purposefully incorporated into the decision-making process in schools, teachers feel a greater sense of investment and ownership and teacher leaders are formed.

A study by Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) found that leadership within Title I elementary schools that utilized the Comprehensive School Reform model demonstrated successful implementation of essential elements of teamwork, leadership, action plans, implemented activities, evaluation, and networking, which have explained improvement in programs of family and community support. These Title I schools typically had more personnel in program and subject area coordination, and mentor teacher roles. They also had a lower ratio of teachers to leaders than comparison schools. Camburn et al.(2003) reported higher levels of leadership providing direct support to the instructional program with participating

Comprehensive School Reform models and attributed this to roles that focused almost entirely on the performance of other instructional leadership functions.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Fink and Markholt (2013) explain that based on the fundamental principle that continued learning is key to improving practice, PLCs engage members in the social learning process. In order to build teacher capacity, a PLC must have the expertise to accelerate the learning of the group (Fink & Markholt, 2013). Fink and Markholt state "expertise makes expertise" (p.322). Careful consideration on the part of school leaders is necessary to create the conditions so that group and individual expertise and public practice can be developed (Fink & Markholt, 2013, p.323). Lumpkin, et al., (2014) explain that the development of successful PLCs requires principals and other school administrators to share power, authority, and decision-making with teachers through distributed leadership practices. Thus, leadership shifts from traditional leadership structures to those where boundaries remain strictly separate between formal leadership roles and teacher roles to a value of expertise over formal position (Fink & Markholt, 2013). This paradigm of leadership utilizes a wider base of the school community who share responsibility for leadership (Copland, 2003). The result of this shared leadership empowers teachers to work collaboratively toward school improvement goals.

Lumpkin et. al (2014) assert that a supportive culture for PLCs requires time, financial resources, effective feedback, and practical ideas to foster an environment that supports the development and use of teacher leaders. Essential conditions for the success of shared leadership models in schools include mutual collaboration, trust, professional learning, accountability, agreement on problems, and expertise in improvement methods according to Lumpkin et al. (2014). A positive school culture is the foundation for sustained school improvement initiatives

including the establishment of PLCs. Building and maintaining relationships is another critical component for teacher leaders. School leaders who make their practice public and are willing to talk about their own metacognitive processes regarding their practice generate an environment of reflection and growth.

Developing Reflective Practices

Research related to reflective methodologies holds the potential to support schools in the development of PLCs to develop teacher leader capacity. Using the CHAT method (cultural historical activity theory), Hauge, Norenes, and Vedøy's (2014) study of an upper secondary school leadership team that sought to enhance school improvement through shared leadership. CHAT seeks to transform a culture through the reflective dialogue of its members about how current practices align with the main goal of an organization. In this process, dialogue emerges that conceptualizes the resources, structures, and tools of the organization related to a school improvement goal. The above process includes analysis and reflection on student learning and facilitates the development of teacher expertise. Hauge et al. (2014) describe how the school in the study designed a Wiki Space to serve as a shared and open platform for information and communication between the researchers and school leaders. At the conclusion of the intervention study, the school's leadership roles and practices began to transform toward shared leadership and teacher expertise emerged (Hauge, et al., 2014). Another study demonstrating success of engaging in reflective practices is Copland's (2003) findings on the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC).

The BASRC reform effort was based on the use of the "Cycle of Inquiry" (Copland, 2003). The Cycle of Inquiry includes teachers and school leaders reflecting on current practices related to school culture. This process empowered teachers to design surveys, decide goals,

implement actions, evaluate and analyze results related to school culture. Participation in the BASRC reportedly improved teachers' agreement on what needed to change, increased the use of data for decision-making, promoted regular analysis of student performance data, and encouraged teachers' participation in discussions of teaching, learning, and school decision making (Copland, 2003).

The theoretical practices of shared instructional leadership and teacher leadership present a picture of successful school leadership yielding school improvements driven by the resultant high-performance learning culture. Figure 3 illustrates the connection of these core concepts to practices evident in sustained school improvement. A summary of the empirical findings underlying the basis of this research is included in Table 7. A full list of the empirical research guiding this study is included in Appendix A.

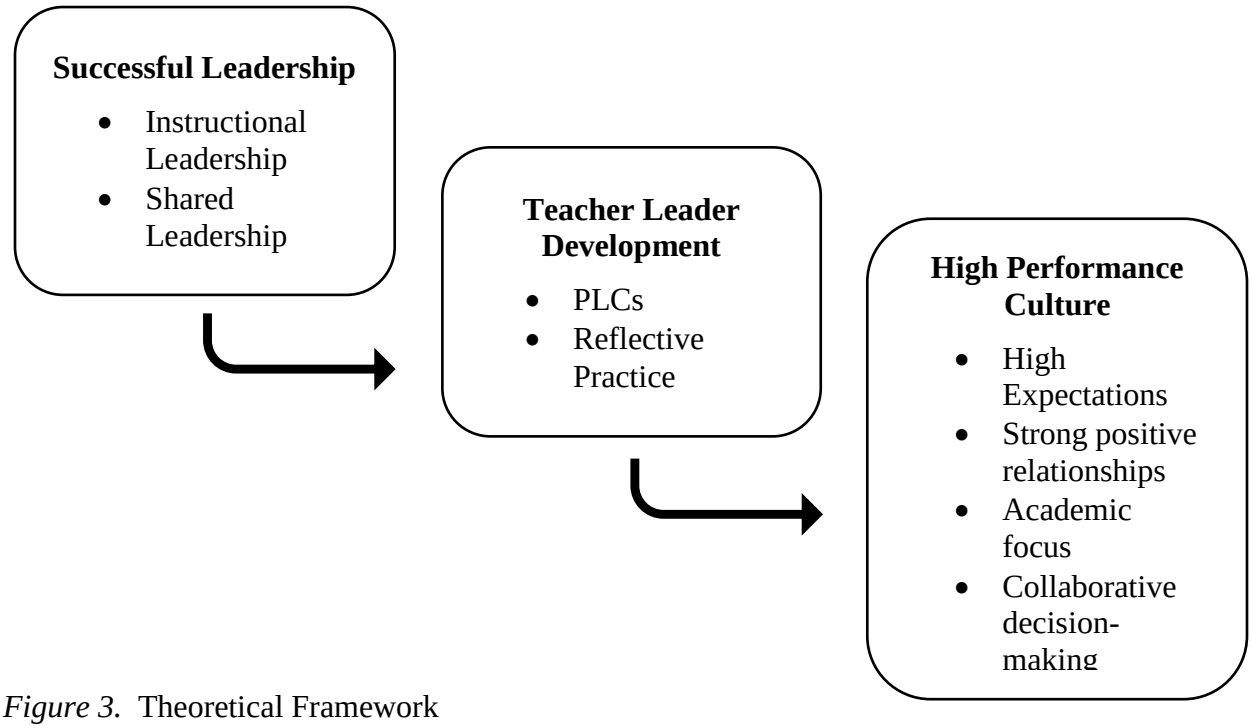

Figure 3. Theoretical Framework

Table 7

Empirical Table of References

Author(s)	Methodology & Sample	Key Findings
Hauge, T., Norenes, S., Vedory, G. (2014)	Qualitative study utilizing the Developmental Work Research (DWR) (Daniels et al., 2009; Edwards 2005; Engestrom 2007).	Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Cole and Engestrom 1993, 1999; Engestrom 1993, 1999, 2007) At the conclusion of Hauge's (2014) intervention study, the school's leadership roles and practices began to transform toward the main object of shared leadership.
Leithwood, K., Mascall, B., Strauss, T., Sacks, R., Memon, N., & Yashkina, A. (2007)	Two-stage qualitative multi-methods study Conducted interviews of 67 district and school-level administrators and teachers	Distribution of leadership to independent teams of teachers is unsuccessful without some form of regular monitoring by the principal. Informal leaders were most often attributed more positive characteristics and utility. Approach most likely to succeed within an open organizational culture. Authors note a need for additional study into organizational effects and outcomes for student learning. Identifies need for examination of impact from greater participation by formal leaders in interdependent team activities.
Ringler, M., O'Neal, D., Rawls, J., Cumiskey, S. (2013)	Qualitative study utilizing the practical participatory evaluation approach (Cousins & Whitmore, 1999) to analyzing the implications of professional development on developing teacher leaders.	Teachers' perception of the principal changed from a manager to an instructional leader. Teacher leaders emerged from the principal's use of shared leadership as instruction focused on academic language proficiency. Student achievement increased as a result of the study.
Spillane, J. P. (2005)	5-year longitudinal study of elementary school leaders. Conducted • interviews, • observations, • videotaping leadership practice.	This study of school leadership concludes distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practices and not leaders' role or function within the organization.
Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001)	Qualitative study of 13 elementary schools in Chicago, Illinois. Examined execution of leadership tasks distributed to school leaders.	The ability of the school leader to organize these day to day tasks correlates to instructional leadership through creating a vision, establishing norms for behavior, collaboration, building teacher capacity, and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Distributive leadership is not a function of an individual leader's ability, skill, charisma or cognition.

Through the use of shared leadership practices, trust is built and maintained. However, it is only through a positive and responsive environment that these can thrive. School leaders can increase instructional capacity and build teacher leadership through the use of PLCs, reflective

practices, and by facilitating meaningful professional learning. When teachers are empowered to share their expertise with other teachers a culture of shared responsibility for all learners is the result.

Much of the research available about high-performing schools identifies leadership behaviors which will lead to replication of success, despite conflicting factors. Examining details related to the collaborative decision making and instructional practices needed to develop strong and nurturing cultures for students and teachers is important. Teachers whose students succeed after strategies are implemented should model and support others in adopting those improvements (Reeves, 2003). Effective school principals who assume a role of active involvement in the work of improving instructional practices through communication and collaboration can influence sustainable improvements in outcomes and lead to closing the achievement gap for students (Fullan, 2002).

Effective leadership that leads to high levels of student achievement, in high-poverty schools is possible. However, it is not at all haphazard. Driving a collaborative community of professionals who work together flexibly to investigate and implement research based strategies that improve students' learning outcomes should be the principal's primary focus. While there is significant descriptive research about the value of distributive or shared practices in building increased capacity among teachers and leaders, little has been collected as evidence of student improvements. Existing qualitative collections are fairly broad. In the frame of action research, exploration of methods school leaders can use to strengthen teacher leadership capacity is needed. Determining the effect of democratic decision making within collaborative inquiries on teachers' demonstration of leadership capacity among their colleagues to achieve school improvement goals will be useful to school leaders as well.

Gap in the Literature

Studies make only indirect links between instruction focused principal actions and teacher commitment to goals for school-wide or classroom practice improvements (Ebmeier, 2003). It is noted that teacher practice is more directly influenced by the level of collegiality and trust among their peers. How school principals can act to improve collegiality and trust among teachers is one area in need of further research. While a collection of research has examined the practices that principals employ to strengthen the leadership capacity of their schools, more investigation is needed to determine which formal leadership practices best support this development. Further, there is not adequate support in the form of action research for teams of teachers and leaders who have undertaken this aim as actors within their systems.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this action research case study was to explore how school leaders can strengthen the capacity of teacher leaders to lead school improvement at Sisley. Despite time spent planning in groups with administrators, there is inconsistency of teacher engagement, instruction methods, tasks assigned to students, and student performance outcomes throughout the school. This study sought to address the need for empowerment and self-directed demonstrations of teacher leadership toward improved student performance. Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) clarify that direct and indirect support of formal school leadership is necessary for the success of teacher leaders. Research questions for this study included

1. How can administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity within schools?,
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?, and
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

Informed by the methods of recent research in teacher leadership, this action research study employed surveys, self-assessments, and focus group interviews. The research team analyzed these data sources and related artifacts to gather information about how teacher leadership was enacted and supported within the context of Sisley.

Action Research Approach

Action research (AR) is a methodology that enables actors to change an organization from within, while gathering data about the process. It offers iterative cycles of diagnosis, preparation, action, and evaluation. This collaborative inquiry process allows teams within an organization to investigate solutions to a common problem of practice. Following an explanation of the process provided by Coghlan and Brannick (2014), the AR team at Sisley (a) planned for action, (b) took action, (c) evaluated the actions taken, and (d) examined data to determine next steps. This process and format placed the researchers in a position to decide the design and methodology of the research. Further, it intended to develop research team members personally and professionally, leading to the empowerment of teachers within the organization (Anderson & Herr, 2015). The theoretical basis for this approach was supported by the suggestion of community inquiry and reflective practice as a means to build teacher leadership. The iterative cycles of action research, being reflective in nature were deemed most suitable to the team of researchers who were active members of the organization. Data were gathered to inform improvements in the demonstrations of leadership toward achieving identified improvement goals for the organization. The study engaged formal and informal leaders within the school staff, to understand the effects of efforts to develop the leadership capacity of teachers across the school while examining the work and experience of the AR team. As Figure 4 illustrates, the AR team undertook three cycles of action research that explored the school-wide leadership practice of shared vision and teachers' leadership development. The AR team collectively examined data to decide interventions, implement those interventions, evaluate the effect of their actions, and determine focus and direction for next steps (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

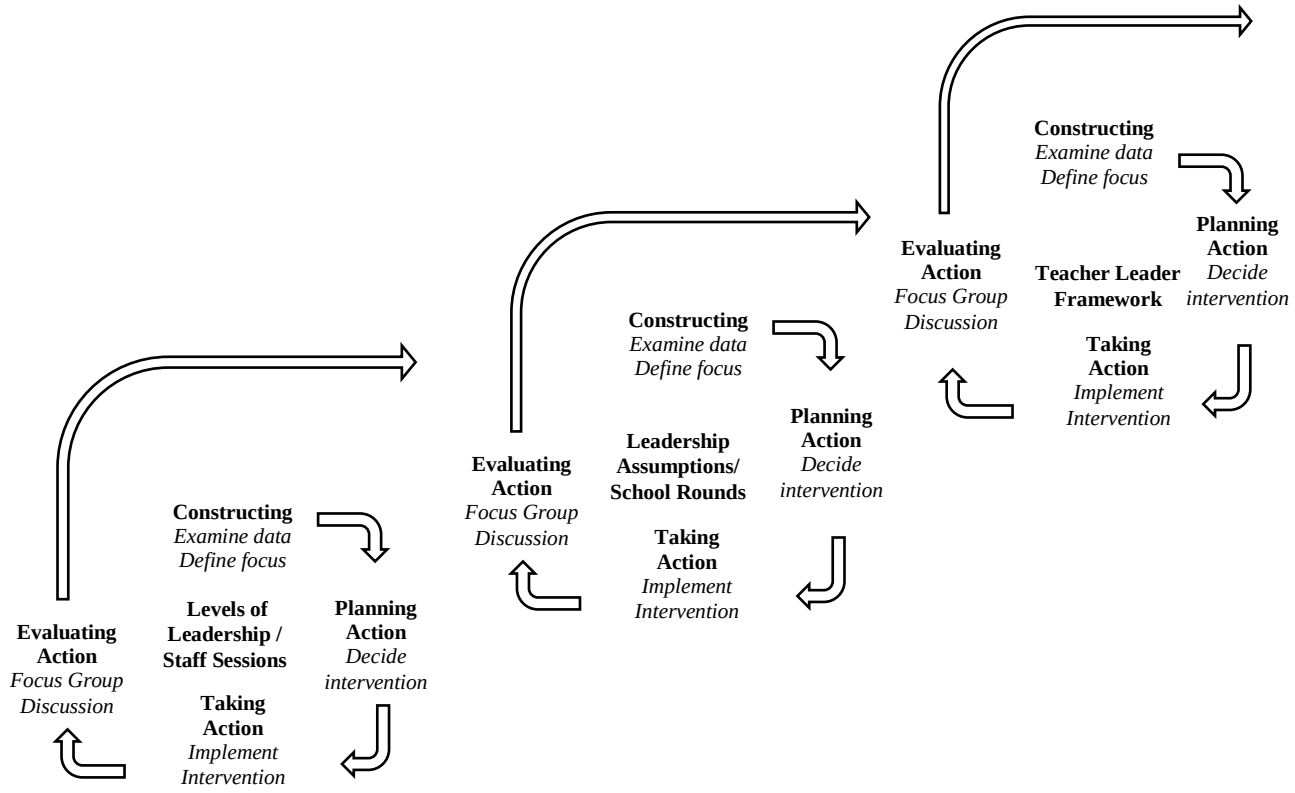

Figure 4. Cycles of Action Research (adapted from Coghlan & Brannick, 2014)

The action taken by this team of teachers and administrators at the school, began the opening of dialogue necessary to build and maintain a shared vision and broad distribution of leadership within the school. School staff and AR team members were empowered to choose areas of development and believed their input was valued in the process of determining the current and future direction of the school. The selection of this action research methodology supported the development of shared leadership practices characteristic of high-performance learning cultures (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Kannapel, Clements et al., 2005; Foorman, Schatschneider et al., 2004; Reeves, 2003).

Case Type and Boundaries

According to Simons,

> "Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action (2009, p 21)."

The AR team used several different methods to understand how administrators can encourage increased leadership demonstrations among teachers in our school. This study considered the perspective of the entire school staff, each teacher participant, and the school administrators about this issue.

Finally, the nature of this study was both "intrinsic" (Stake, 1995), with members of the school seeking to better understand their own condition, and "collective", as participants aimed to understand the perspectives and actions for both teachers and administrators. Attention to the implementation the theoretical practices within instructional and shared leadership approaches was the foundation for this theory-led micro-ethnography. This study tested these specific perspectives to determine the focus and design of interventions. Multiple sources of data were generated with observations, artifacts, surveys, and interviews to understand participants' points of view. As the AR team met and worked together in a "social group" of teacher and leaders within Sisley (Gibbs, 2012), this single-case study sought to understand this specific context (Stake, 2013). The AR team worked together as one community of actors to improve shared leadership practices enacted within the school. Considering the perspective of school-wide staff

and administrators, we studied how teachers perceived their role as leaders of improvement, how they exercised leadership, and how they responded to intentional development or support of their leadership. While this case is bound to the context of Sisley, there are some commonalities among school leadership and practice that would allow for generalization to similar contexts in districts, and states nationwide.

Case Study Design

After the team chose research questions, a plan to implement interventions based on the literature and initial collection of data was developed. An embedded-mixed methods approach was used by the AR team to gain an understanding of the teachers' and leaders' perspectives on interventions implemented within the study's context (Creswell, 2014). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the start of the project and for comparison at the end of the project. Qualitative data were collected throughout the project to ensure deeper understanding and to provide stories to explain participants' experiences in exploring identified questions.

The Sisley AR team agreed that school administrators could serve as *facilitators* of learning and leadership skill development by teachers as Sagor (2011) suggests. This description equates the teachers' leadership role in the classroom to that of the administrators' role in support of teachers' leadership development in school settings. Formal leaders' involvement in collecting, analyzing, and acting on data reinforce positive beliefs in the value of organizational improvement. Consequently, research questions and actions for this team of researchers were decided and ultimately executed collectively. The team desired for the work to be authentically grounded in the broader leadership needs of the school. Any implemented actions were required to be closely tied to data collected in the school-wide survey. Interviews were conducted to

understand how interventions were affecting the overall leadership capacity and teacher leadership enacted in the school.

Process of Investigation

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) relate the distinction between concurrent cycles of action research while attending to reflection on the meta-cycle of content, the process, and the premise of the project. In this study visioning with the whole school while simultaneously working to further develop teachers' leadership demonstrations, required continual reflection on the entire process. These iterative cycles ensured thoughtful monitoring and adjustment (Sagor, 2011).

The first decision for the research team was to determine which data were needed to answer the research questions. Since the initial data prompting this study had become dated, researchers decided to collect school-wide information about the perceptions and practice of shared leadership at the start of the study. Researchers also needed to know how AR team members perceived and enacted leadership.

The AR team looked at relevant elements of the *Leadership Capacity School Survey* (Lambert, 2003), which was distributed school-wide, to determine the focus of interventions. Additionally, survey data from teacher members of the action research team were collected with the *Self-Assessment of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The teachers' sense of empowerment and practices in leading grade-level team members were gathered through the *Demonstrations of Leadership Rubric* (Rubenstein, Miles, & Bassi, 2009). Data collected from members of the school staff and AR team were examined by the group to determine leadership capacity and needs for further development.

Reflective discussions in the form of focus group interviews about demonstrated leadership, teacher leadership development, and subsequent experiences were gathered from these

collaborations. With these activities, the team sought to understand the effects of interventions implemented and planned next steps to build further capacity of teacher leaders at the school. The team compiled and analyzed the summary of observations and understandings. The AR team examined interview, survey and observation data to compare results looking for confirming or disconfirming patterns among the data. This supported a thorough analysis of the data by the team to determine subsequent iterations within the AR study cycle.

Other intended results of the interventions implemented by the team were increased distribution of leadership throughout the school and a broader incorporation of instructional leadership practices among teacher leaders. Distributive leadership theory posits that

> "the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the "collective result" (Elmore, 2000, p. 15).

This project sought to establish the need for continuous professional development of teachers' leadership in advancing school improvement goals.

Research demonstrates the relationship between reflective practices, building collective instructional capacity, and the development of teacher expertise (Lambert, 2002; Timperley, 2005). Teacher leaders emerge from this development and work to strengthen instructional equity throughout their schools. Reflective practices lay the foundation for meaningful learning.

As the feasibility of sustaining school improvements continues to gain local and national focus, developing teacher leaders as a force for school change is desired by many in the education community. This work will contribute to what is known about the development of

teacher leadership and support the work of local school leaders who may engage in AR within their own contexts. Leaders within the local context of Metro County School District may wish to create a forum to support principals to replicate this work in similar settings.

Intervention Plan

The primary aim of this study was to create a cohort of teachers and leaders who could begin to accomplish two goals by working together. The first was the advancement of each teachers' demonstrations of leadership and the second was broader demonstrations of leadership throughout the school. Based on empirical literature, AR team members participated in leadership development exercises with embedded reflection and facilitated shared leadership practice with the rest of the staff at the school. Focus group interviews were used throughout the study to monitor and adjust where needed. Post survey data were collected to complete the understanding developed about individual and school wide exercises.

Teacher Leadership Development Exercises

The first activity the AR team engaged in was a specific teacher leadership development exercise. There were no meetings for teacher leadership development at the school before this project. Teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were invited to engage in learning together. The school administrators facilitated the learning sessions for teachers. Meetings were held after school on alternating Fridays. The sessions were brief and included discussion and reflection of ideas presented. During the initial sessions, teachers discussed and reflected upon new ideas. During later research cycles the activity progressed to include individual action planning with follow-up coaching discussions.

Evaluating Demonstrated Leadership. The first development session centered on the "Four Levels of Leadership" presented by Rubenstein, Miles, and Bassi (2009) (Appendix B).

This tool included concentric levels of leadership which included taking action to (a) self-assess leadership ability, (b) gain and share perspective, (c) engender trust to motivate and maximize potential in others, and (d) create shared vision, transcend the organization, and demand integrity of all members. The premise included in this framework was that leadership at each level could be intentionally developed with exercise and practice either facilitated by organization leaders or by teachers themselves.

The teacher and administrator members of the action research team considered the four levels and discussed demonstrations of each. After the group completed the self-assessment rubric as an entry data collection exercise, the group discussed its collective level of demonstrated leadership and decided on an area of focus, which was to establish goals and clarify purpose. The team felt deeply committed to enacting leadership among the school staff who were not participating directly in the study. As a result of this first exercise, the second focus of the AR team was established. This cycle will be described in the section to follow.

Examining Leadership Assumptions. In the second leadership development exercise the team reviewed Crowther, Ferguson, and Hann's (2009) *Framework of Assumptions* (Appendix B). The purpose of this activity was for team members to consider one another's perspectives and understand that teachers and leaders may have different expectations for school leadership. Recognizing these differences was an important step toward achieving effective and coordinated sharing of leadership within the group. While this framework did not include an exhaustive list of assumptions about school leadership, it provided a basis for understanding how various assumptions might impact the success of a collective leadership initiative.

Each team member identified where their ideas fit on each continuum of the framework and discussed reasons for their thinking. The exercise did not create an evaluation of the

assumptions. Rather, at the end of the discussion, group members were asked to consider how an assumption that they held might affect the school's ability to enact shared leadership practices.

Establishing Leadership Goals. The final leadership development exercise completed by the team used Crowther, Ferguson, and Hann's (2009) *Teachers as Leaders Framework* (Appendix B). This tool describes how teachers can lead in schools. In the current landscape, teacher leaders can (a) convey convictions about a better world, (b) facilitate communities of learning, (c) strive for pedagogical excellence, (d) confront barriers in school structures and cultures, (e) translate ideas into sustainable systems of action, and (f) nurture a culture of success.

In this activity, AR team members discussed the framework, identifying the area most compelling to each of them. Having chosen one of the six core areas of teacher leadership, team members were led through coaching conversations to establish immediate, specific, and actionable goals. In the weeks following this exercise, each team member scheduled a follow-up discussion with an administrator to check on progress and determine needed supports.

Developing School-Wide Vision for Improvement

During implementation of the first intervention for teacher leadership development, the AR team decided to engage in an additional activity which could lay a foundation leading to stronger collective leadership capacity across the school. Guided by data collected in the *School Leadership Capacity Survey* (Appendix B), the team decided to invite the entire staff to reconnect with the school's vision by identifying specific goals areas and needed improvements.

School-Wide Goal Areas. The AR team planned and led faculty input sessions, which invited all staff members to express the attributes they valued most and achievements they

wanted to see in our school. The AR team chose specific protocols for these sessions and hosted meetings in multiple locations on different days after school. Face-to-face sessions were successful, but drew limited numbers of staff due to conflicts with other commitments. The AR team decided to publish the protocol in survey format. It was distributed online and printed on paper. Both formats were provided to the entire staff. When this still resulted in a limited response, the team decided to go door to door. The Team divided the staff into groups by department and sought out each individual to solicit their input.

After the faculty responses had been collected, AR team members gathered to generate a list of goal areas that reflected the input provided. This list was published with an invitation to add or clarify where revisions were needed. The timing of these exercises conflicted with preparation for multiple major testing sessions and after-school program commitments; staff engagement in this additional exercise was limited.

School Improvement Planning. Staff members at the school are typically invited to give input into next steps each year, though there is rarely a direct connection drawn publicly to that feedback when changes are made. Teachers and staff reported feeling excluded from school improvement decisions and were not aware of the sources for those decisions. As a result, the final intervention executed by the AR team sought to address this need for collection of input and clear communication of the results from school-wide decision making. First, the team gathered school-wide input into the school improvement plan for the upcoming school year. The team identified the key areas to be assessed, created the template for collecting staff input, and set the protocol for analyzing results. Staff members were invited to reflect on all instructional initiatives and elements, operational structures and processes, departments, and programs within

the school. In order to support thorough review, the templates were posted with relevant data collected about program implementation and student year-end performance.

Topics were separated into logical groups to be addressed over a three-day period. Each day a new group was introduced to the staff and members gave feedback to inform planning with consideration for which elements were working well, not working well, and needed to be changed. The protocol requested detailed feedback in a format that afforded participants anonymity, but identified which department or area had provided the input. Staff members were invited to review the input provided by others on the previous day and a summary of identified needs and areas of focus was presented to the staff in an after-school session.

Sample Selection

The teachers and leaders participating in the AR team for this study were the identified samples of the project. Each AR team member consented to participate in advance and each AR team member was "not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual" (Patton, 2015, p. 284). Varying years of experience, tenure at the school, genders, and levels of engagement of the school staff were represented by members of the team. Some members of the team held formal leadership positions in the school, while others had not been identified as leaders prior to this project. While the AR team implemented interventions with the entire school, they were the intervention group within this study.

Process of Enrolling Study Participants

All teachers and administrators at Sisley were eligible to join this study. The staff members were notified and given a brief introduction to the premise of this study in a faculty session. Researchers informed the staff that participation was voluntary, would not affect their job responsibilities, and that should they choose to engage, they could withdraw from

participating in the study at any time for any reason. A study information flyer was provided by email and in printed form through interoffice mailboxes to minimize undue pressure. A hard copy of the notice and recruitment/informed consent letter were provided upon request to interested individuals. This message included a brief description of the study and a recruitment/informed consent letter. Potential participants were offered opportunities to ask questions about study participation privately and in a small group session after school before signing and returning consent forms (Appendix D).

Members of the AR team

The AR Team and study sample included two teachers who did not serve in any particular leadership capacity; two teachers who were identified as grade-level chair persons; one teacher who served as a school committee leader; two lead teachers who provided support to other teachers across the school; and two school administrators, a principal and an assistant principal. Each member consented to participate in interventions and recorded focus group interviews. They also agreed to allow observations and to provide artifacts when needed.

Data Collection

The plan for data collection enabled the team to gain the perspectives of school staff who were not participating directly in the study. It also supported gathering insight from members of the AR team. At the start of the study, a school-wide survey of the existing leadership capacity at the school was administered. AR team teacher participants completed an initial self-assessment of their attitudes about teacher leadership and demonstrations of leadership. These survey results were coded and analyzed to determine themes and areas of focus for the AR team.

This study intended to advance teachers' individual demonstrations of leadership after participating in specific leadership development. Based on teachers' self-assessment data and

artifacts the AR team met to participate in its first leadership development exercise. The group engaged in a reflective discussion about the learning experience and decided next steps. During the first meeting, the group chose a secondary intervention to examine and begin the work of improving shared leadership practice throughout the school. The AR team chose intervention activities that were supported by the literature. After three cycles of action research, post-survey data were collected from the staff and AR team members to support analysis of themes identified throughout the study.

Pre and Post School Leadership Capacity Survey

School staff members were invited to complete Lambert's (2003) *School Leadership Capacity Survey* as a means to examine the staff's view of leadership exhibited within our school (see Appendix B). The survey examined six primary areas of school leadership with a Likert-Scale ranging from "we do not do this at our school" to "we are refining our practice in this area." Each topic was explored with detailed statements. The main categories included broad-based, skillful participation in leadership; shared vision resulting in program coherence; inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice; roles and actions reflecting broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility; reflective practice consistently leading to innovation; and high or steadily improving student achievement. Open-ended responses that allowed justification or explanation of ratings were added to the instrument to deepen insight gained. Staff members voluntarily completed the survey, Identifying data were not collected from individuals.

Pre and Post Self-Assessment of Teacher Leadership

The *Self-Assessment of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership* (Appendix B) was used to determine how closely AR team participants' views paralleled those

related to teacher leadership. This tool elicited responses of strongly disagree, disagree, no opinion, agree, and strongly agree to 25 statements. The focus of the statements included confidence in instructional practices, influence or support of other colleagues, and impact on school success (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The self-rating scale identified whether virtually all, a majority, some, or few responses matched those essential to teacher leadership.

Focus Group and Individual Interviews

This study used standardized interview protocols to ensure each respondent provided perspective for similar topics (see Appendix B). This was important to provide depth of understanding for each participant's point of view. The questions were prepared ahead of time and initially presented the same way. Varying prompts were used with respondents to elicit greater detail when warranted. A focus group discussion was conducted with the AR team members, after completion of the first and third cycle of the AR process. Due to feasibility concerns, the second cycle of action research was evaluated through individual interviews of the AR team.

Interviews were recorded in audio format and transcribed by an independent company. Unique identifiers were assigned to each speaker in the transcripts instead of the participant's names. Due to the small number of participants in this study, the AR team members will not be specifically described in order to further protect their identity. Participants agreed to maintain confidentiality in the study. Their identities should not be revealed unless members of the group disregard this agreement.

Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure the reliability of instruments used in this study, the AR team identified tools used by experts in the field. Among early research writers on the topic of teacher

leadership, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), provide the *Assessment of Attitudes about Teacher Leadership*. The *School Leadership Capacity Survey* was developed by established shared leadership researcher, Lambert (2003). The *Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment*, developed by Rubenstein, Miles, and Bassi (2009), provides a solid basis for consistent determination of the actions and evidence of emerging teacher leadership. The use of these established tools supported the development of sound and reliable conclusions.

Furthermore, the AR team recorded all interview and data review meetings. These records were transcribed and checked for accuracy and consistency of coding. Team members articulated and performed checks of the transcribed materials to ensure the validity and reliability of data collected. To assess the accuracy of the research findings and convey this accuracy to readers, the team employed several recommended strategies (Creswell, 2014, pp. 201-202):

1. Triangulate multiple data sources to build understandable justification of themes identified.
2. Using detailed language to describe the findings.
3. Presenting information which counters themes identified.
4. Spend extended time becoming familiar with the participants and their setting to be conveyed in the resulting narrative.
5. Debriefing by peer(s) to confirm resulting interpretations of the data.

Table 8 illustrates how these data were related to the research questions for this study and clarifies which analysis methods were used for the respective data collected. This triangulation increased the validity of these measures by providing a "coherent justification" for identified themes (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

Table 8

Triangulation of Data for Study Validity

Research Question	Qualitative Data Collected	Quantitative Data Collected	Analysis Approach	Trustworthiness
1. How can administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity within schools?	• Focus Group Interviews • Pre/Post Demonstrations of Leadership Rubric • (artifacts & observations)		• In Vivo Coding/ Analysis of Transcripts • Descriptive analysis of quantitative data • Compared patterns in artifacts and observations	• Member Checks • Triangulation
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?	• Focus Group Interviews	• Pre/Post Self-Assessment of Attitudes about Teacher Leadership	• In Vivo Coding/ Analysis of Transcripts • Descriptive analysis of quantitative data	• Triangulation
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?	• Focus Group Interviews	• School Leadership Capacity Survey	• In Vivo Coding/ Analysis of Transcripts • Descriptive analysis of quantitative data	• Triangulation

Qualitative researchers increase the credibility of study findings using strategies such as triangulation, which involves two or three instruments to create convergence of the data. In this view, making “use of more than one data collection method, multiple sources of data, multiple

investigators, or multiple theories" strengthens the internal validity of research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245). As such the AR team used focus group interviews, surveys, observation, and artifact review for this study. It also employed a team approach to the collection and analysis of study data. Finally, the underlying theories for this study presented a strong basis for the methods implemented. In an effort to ensure respondent validation, AR team members provided feedback on emerging findings of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This permitted avoidance of misinterpretation of the participants' experiences.

Data Analysis

The nature of the action research approach required that the AR team generate and analyze data simultaneously from the start of this study. Preliminary coding of data began within the early iterations of the research process. This involved assigning "short-hand designations to various aspects" of the data. Quantitative data collected were analyzed by mean and standard deviation because the sample size did not require more complex methods. The AR team reviewed the qualitative findings in conjunction with quantitative information to inform decisions about next steps in the action research process.

Analysis of Survey Data

Data collected in the form of surveys included the *Self-Assessment of Attitudes about Teacher Leadership* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), the *School Leadership Capacity Survey* (Lambert, 2003), and the *Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment* (Rubenstein, Miles, & Bassi, 2009). Descriptive analysis of the quantitative survey data collected was completed by the AR team. These descriptions were limited to means and ranges of scores, as the sample size did not allow for advanced, inferential analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Completed analysis of the *School Leadership Capacity Survey* (Lambert, 2003) led the AR team to identify the broad area of need for collaboration about the school vision to improve the coherence of existing programs. AR team members felt that it was important to respect the input and indicated needs in the school-wide survey. This data was used to focus the selection of a school-wide intervention. The chosen actions included faculty input sessions, program evaluation, and planning to narrow the focus of next steps for school improvement.

Data collected for the internal work to be conducted with the AR team confirmed patterns noted in the staff survey. The *Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment* (Rubenstein, Miles, & Bassi, 2009) also showed a need to address the development of shared vision. AR team members were compelled to address the convergence of these patterns. As a result, the first cycle of action research implemented for the AR team members' leadership development involved exercising leadership in the facilitation of shared vision among staff members.

The pre- and post- survey formats of these two instruments allowed the team to gather a sense of the impact from this period of engagement. This process started as the team approached the halfway point in the school year, so a noted change in perception or sense of value associated with this step was to determine whether it was beneficial for this work to continue into the next school year.

Analysis of Artifact and Observation Data

In addition to quantitative data, the *School Leadership Capacity Survey* (Lambert, 2003) and the *Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment* (Rubenstein, Miles, & Bassi, 2009) requested open ended responses or artifacts as evidence of responses provided. In addition, observations of teacher participants during meetings at the school also generated non-standard data. As such, it was necessary to identify an appropriate method to code data generated. The descriptive coding

method proved useful to create categories for effective analysis by the AR team (Saldaña, 2016). This format was most compatible with the second cycle pattern coding method used to recode and combine the data with interview data generated.

Observations of artifacts and practice are a natural and required part of administrators' work in education settings. However, the non-administrative members of the AR team were not typically subjected to this exercise. Analysis of these data provided the AR team with confirming and disconfirming information to balance the perspective of perceptions reported by participants in interviews and collected in staff surveys. AR team participants provided artifacts as demonstrations of ratings in the leadership rubric. These items helped to provide an added layer of perspective that allowed the team to determine the focus of next steps during the AR cycles.

Analysis of Focus Group and Individual Interviews

Audio recordings of focus group and individual interviews were submitted electronically to a transcription service. Upon completion, transcriptions were reviewed against audio files for accuracy. In an initial coding cycle, these transcripts were marked using the in vivo or "verbatim" as participants' actual language generated the terms used to protect the authenticity of qualitative data collected and to accurately capture the participants' experience in this action research case study. A second coding cycle was to review the data, condensing the categories previously found into a more concise set for analysis. In this pattern coding process the data were grouped to create fewer units to aid in the development of common themes that existed among study participants. In this way, researchers were able to establish "shared" perceptions and changes in those (Saldaña, 2016).

A rich dimension was added to the work of analysis by the AR team in the focus group interviews. The depth of perspective and description of experiences was compelling. This format also provided some unique variation among study participants. When survey results were similar, the focus group interviews revealed somewhat different perspectives that created a realistic sense of conflict in the data collected. The similarities and differences in the interview responses helped to identify variations required in interventions during the second and third iterations of the research cycle.

Limitations of the Study

The research questions for this study have been explored with attention to a variety of data sources. While creating a full picture of the problem addressed by the AR team, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations presented during this study. Several conditions of the context of Sisley were identified for future research.

Conflicting Activities

Research approval was required from the Metro County School District in addition to the University. Due to the timing that district research approval was received and conflicting activities happening inside the school, the project started two months later than anticipated. Consequently, the intended start time for the project being early Fall was not achievable. The late start date pushed the study period forward on the school calendar to a busy time when district and state assessments were administered. This significantly limited the availability of participants in the study. The AR team decided to address this timing concern by compressing the study activities into a tighter schedule requiring more frequent meetings. This further limited the extent to which the team was able to implement interventions with the school staff.

In addition to the matter of timing, the AR team met many conflicts with school activities. The personal schedules of staff members who taught after-school tutorial classes or led student clubs limited flexibility for some participants and prevented participation for others. In the school-wide intervention effort revisions were primarily centered around finding the best ways to engage a representative number of staff persons. While this was an important problem to solve, it detracted from time intended for investigation of the larger concern with the school vision and goals.

Finally, due to conflicting responsibilities related to school management one of the administrators on the AR team was not able to participate fully in the professional development exercises and coaching support provided to teachers. This additional support did not stop the implementation of intervention though it may have affected the richness of each participant's experience and contributed to differing conclusions.

Teacher Participation

The group of nine participants in this study included teachers and administrators. This presented team members with a fair amount of accessibility to another for this first exercise at the school. It was, however, limiting that teacher participants were members of only five of the 12 departments within the school. AR team members felt that the scope of this work would have been enhanced by through participation by at least one representative from each department at the school.

Insider Action Research

Our AR team decided to engage in an 'organistic-oriented' or self-study of our actions, as our school was not directly committed to this engagement (Coghlan & Shani, 2015). The team was aware it was guided by individual assumptions, thoughts, and actions. Because of this, the

AR team selected the most compelling area of our data to address collectively. While this area was deemed the most critical, the results of actions would not have immediately transformative results. It is more likely that the continuation of habits started with the team will be necessary to effect change in the long term. It was important for this team to think in terms of the possibilities for divergent ideas to address its problem of practice. Due to the existing school culture, it was also important to reframe the group thinking continually to view challenges with shared leadership as areas for improvement. Given that this research offered such an "opportunity" for Sisley to strengthen its effectiveness, the team hoped to begin cultivating a "risk-taking culture" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014 p. 66).

The AR team attempted to gain input and insight from district-level experts in leadership development. It was expected that this input, though limited, would offer significant balance to the internal perspective on analysis of the data and implementation of interventions. This expectation was not realized due to the constrained schedules of study participants at the school, which did not coincide with district timelines. Consequently, this insider engagement will require more time and perhaps outsider perspectives, to fully realize this goal in the coming school year.

Researcher Subjectivity

As a child, I was able to attend schools with a diverse student population. Some of my peers were impoverished, others' parents held working-class jobs, and still others were quite privileged. While I did not primarily live at either extreme for most of my childhood, my background has allowed me to experience both. As early as third grade, I can remember making what I thought were keen observations about my peers and teachers. I remember being deeply eager to know what life was like inside my neighbors' homes and in other classrooms. Being

innately curious, I asked many questions and befriended people not obviously like myself. I went to classes and played with a mixture of ethnic and racial groups from a variety of countries around the world. At the age of 10, I decided to embark on a quest to learn about as many unknown people, places, and things as possible. It was a rich experience, which shaped my awareness that what we experience is often not equal to what we could experience. With eyes and ears open wide, I collected information for years.

By the time I reached high school, I had a firm set of ideas about how experience could shape outcomes. Having attended a magnet school for college preparation, I knew first-hand how challenging learning experiences could have a transformational impact on the learners. Also, being cared for by my grandmother, I held what I thought to be an unusual amount of power to make my own decisions about education. I realize now that the alignment of my desire to make positive choices with supports available at my school and in my social network was the true enablement of this power. Nonetheless, I had been conditioned to expect a high measure of influence into matters around me.

Conversely, the same conditions that taught me to maximize my power also afforded me the opportunity to learn 'work arounds' for things outside of my control. Some unpleasant life and learning experiences left memorable impressions of how barriers can be overcome. I was both compelled to replace some of those negative experiences and inspired to replicate positive ones with my own "good" efforts. I entered young adulthood with a somewhat no-nonsense commitment to make a difference in the world. Being an avid learner, it made perfect sense for me to become an educator 19 years ago. I brought the necessary passion and commitment to this work.

To date, I have worked in two southern states with both disadvantaged and privileged students. My early teaching experiences placed me with an efficacious team of teachers who exercised autonomy in instructional decisions. It was in this context that I learned the power that I held to shape and guide the experiences of my students. This setting and that of my second assignment taught me to expect influence in classroom and school leadership. In addition to this benefit, I was able to learn about teacher leadership through a district initiative in my early years as a teacher. Being afforded the opportunity to develop expertise in instructional pedagogy and demonstrate leadership among my peers created my views of agency in education. Being a team member in many respects and a leader in others, I have experienced rapport with my peers and administrators throughout my career.

I still hold strong convictions that I can make a difference for students by being an uncommon educator. In my current role as an elementary school administrator, I do not observe the same measures of autonomy and agency as in my classroom experience. Noticing this difference has prompted me to question whether teachers are afforded agency or if it is inherent. I believe that the leadership approaches taken by school leaders can support autonomy and thereby promote demonstrations of agency. My view of education motivates me to work with teachers to bolster their sense of empowerment and build an interdependent relationship between administrative and teacher leadership.

My current position as assistant principal at Sisley gives me some measure of authority required to promote change in this respect. I have access to teams of teachers and influence over some operational aspects of the school such as the student schedule. This assignment also presents some limitations as the expectations of my work require a certain order of priorities, which conflict with the ideals to advance shared leadership in my school. I attempt to operate

with as much transparency as possible so that my colleagues understand where I do not have flexibility.

Finally, I have yet to earn the trust of some teachers who appear skeptical of my position in the school. To mitigate this, I have been careful to demonstrate democratic leadership and clear communication to support deeper understanding by all members of our organization.

I sought to minimize the effects of my own subjectivity in this research, by taking into account the biases I hold about leading in teaching and learning. The nature of AR is a "somewhat unpredictable process" which requires help to "hold and honor issues that emerge out of a student's critical subjectivity" (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As suggested, I employed safeguards to ensure thorough understanding of this study. My researcher's journal provided a means of capturing and tracing my subjectivity during the research process. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) provided a model for this exercise which guided my practice. In this format, I listed concrete experiences, reflections, conceptualizations, and experiments. Confronting or tracing my own bias and opinions about the existing leadership in my context helped me to acknowledge and reduce the effect of subjectivity in the reports of study findings. Further, I have reported vignettes of the participants' own words during focus group interviews in an effort to reduce existing subjectivity. One final strategy was to interrogate with the AR team the varying perspectives presented in the report of this case study's findings.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY

Metro County School District is a large urban district in the southeastern United States. This district is diverse in racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and economic classifications. The student population of Sisley, however, is not very diverse. More than half of the students are English Language Learners, the families of close to 70% of students speak Spanish at home, and nearly all of the students qualify for free or reduced price meals. Though an increasing amount of funds have been dedicated to instructional improvements to boost student outcomes in recent years, progress has been slow. With direct assistance from academic supports and administrative focus, some notable shifts in student progress have begun. Since 2012 the school has progressed from its designation as a school sanctioned by the state to a school noted for above average achievement by students in similar subcategories in other state schools. Surprisingly, this achievement is a source of contention, as some within the school desire to maintain to old practices while others desire to keep pressing forward with relatively new initiatives that are attributed with recent improvements in student outcomes. This challenge is specific to the context at Sisley and has implications for other schools within the district and state which may be presented with similar struggles to realize the expected improvements for students after changes have been implemented.

Description of the Context

When Sisley was under sanction by the state, it received focused guidance from a trained school improvement specialist. At this time, a select group of teachers participated with school

administrators and district leaders to attend to areas of student concern identified by the state. When the desired improvements on year-end assessments were achieved, the sanctions and support from the improvement specialist were removed. While the procedures for improvement continued and were adapted each year, teacher participation in this planning was limited. School-wide decisions were informed by teacher input, classroom observations and student performance. However, over the course of several years it became evident that some teachers across the school felt excluded from the 'behind-the-scenes' decision-making processes that guided many of the school improvement foci over the past several years. Others expressed disagreement in meetings and several chose to execute actions other than those directed by the school improvement plan

Over the past four years, school leadership worked to support the growth of instruction and assessment practices on each grade-level team to promote interdependent, collaborative planning with the hope that this would build sustainable improvements in students' progress and achievement. Implementation of current research for high-performance learning cultures has led to significant student progress, though discontinuity of classroom practice, assessments, and student outcomes have persisted through many progressive adaptations made each school year. It became apparent that the structures for school improvement alone could not build the continuity needed to support sustained school change.

In my second year as the assistant principal of this school, I enrolled in the doctoral program and began to consider deeply our problem of practice. As I monitored adjustments in our implementation of collaborative practices for planning instruction, assessment, and student outcomes, I noticed inconsistent execution of the chosen curriculum and assessments despite supports for implementation. By talking with several of the teachers, I was able to confirm

these issues from their point of view. A kindergarten teacher shared a concern for the failure of team members to follow through with needed tasks related to team planning and implementation of agreed upon actions. A first-grade teacher and her teammates expressed concerns that teachers were not clear about the reasons for many actions they are required to take. The team concurred that they felt disconnected from decision-making at the school. In addition, my annual evaluation at that time included a survey of teachers and staff within the school. While survey data suggested improvement in teachers' perception of their inclusion in meaningful decisions, 30% still reported exclusion from information and decision making-about key matters at Sisley. A few teachers on one team expressed confusion about the importance of the structured time for planning meetings within the school. They changed one weekly meeting to another day and time, which created conflicts with other structures, and some members of the team and school leadership could not participate at the new time. Over a period of time, teacher perception data, conversations, and informal observations confirmed a lack of coherence in our decisions-making processes.

At the same time, school leaders expressed frustration with the demonstrated leadership of teachers who were tasked with leading the implementation of curriculum efforts, team planning, and the work of committees at Sisley. The leadership team, comprised of persons not assigned a homeroom class at the school, met bi-weekly during the school day to analyze data and plan school improvement efforts. Leadership team members included school counselors, the librarian, instructional support professionals, and administrators. The team's work involved careful monitoring of student progress and the progress of instructional initiatives at the school. In these meetings, assignment of student supports, selection of curriculum tools, arrangement of program structures, and professional learning

decisions were made. Monitoring the level of implementation for each of these areas within classrooms confirmed the frustration with barriers to the progression of our desired outcomes. Over the course of the past two years, I spoke frequently with the school principal and members of the leadership team to ensure that the issues the team intended to address with this research project remained aligned with the most current needs of Sisley. They agreed with the need to strengthen teacher awareness of and cooperation with school improvement goals.

In addition to members of the school organization, I discussed Sisley's needs and my research topic with education leaders outside of the school and its district. An executive leadership development coach and a director of leadership development in education offered advice that helped me to consider possible root causes contributing to the seeming lack of engagement in improvement efforts by teachers within the school. This discussion opened my eyes to the fact that when teachers seemed unwilling to prioritize our collective needs for improvement, they were likely feeling disempowered.

Clarifying this focus aided in the identification of the primary stakeholders to be included in the exploration of this study. The largest stakeholder group in this study is classroom teachers. There are 60 classroom teachers at Sisley. Teachers are responsible for planning and implementing daily classroom lessons to build students' mastery of state performance standards, monitoring student progress on those standards, and communicating that progress to parents. They are also responsible for providing remediation when students are performing below the assigned grade-level. In addition, to these primary responsibilities, teachers must complete a number of managerial functions related to these tasks. At Sisley, the administration prioritizes

teachers' collaboration with team members to ensure continuity of learning experiences and assessments to enable strong data-driven planning by the teams.

Another important stakeholder group at the school includes instructional support teachers. These teachers do not have assigned classes, rather the work to support classroom teachers' professional growth and implementation with school curriculum and assessment initiatives. Sisley has five of these support professionals. Each supporting teacher is assigned a particular area of focus, such as special education; intervention supports; literacy; mathematics; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics integration. They are not responsible for evaluation of their peers and are prohibited by district policy from conducting many administrative duties. At Sisley, these professionals have not typically received any specific professional development and they frequently express difficultly with gaining cooperation from colleagues.

The final stakeholder group included in this study is administrators, the principal and the assistant principal, at Sisley. This group is responsible for ensuring growth and achievement of all students in the school. Students' needs and learning outcomes are prioritized above all other demands. This means spending a significant amount of time learning what is needed for instruction and working to ensure that those needs are consistently addressed. Other responsibilities we manage include supervising and conducting evaluations of staff members. We must organize and coordinate the engagement of students, staff, and community members and ensure the accomplishment of district expectations. Finally, we are held accountable for the overall climate, culture, financial efficiency, and operation of the school.

As assistant principal of Sisley, I assist in setting instructional expectations and focus for the school. The principal and I participate in instructional planning with all grade-level teams at

the school. Though we have reorganized structures and supports to allow for interdependent teams, which should develop common lesson plans, assessments, and expectations for student work, we have struggled to embed the value of these collaborative practices deeply in the school. Managing other responsibilities within the school limits our ability to attend meetings and observe classrooms frequently enough to ensure consistent implementation of collaborative plans.

When engagement with the AR team began, we had already implemented the structural and collaborative practices necessary for instructional leadership. Based on the literature, this left the question of how we could improve leadership in our context. As such, the intent of this study was to provide intentional development of leadership growth among teachers, enabling successful use of shared leadership practices at Sisley.

Story and Outcomes

I was admitted to the doctoral program in August of 2015 and was drawn to the subject of successful school leadership almost immediately. When I entered the program, I had completed my second year of work in a school that was almost entirely comprised of economically disadvantaged students and under state sanctions for extremely low performance by students with special needs and students who were learning English as a second language. This was also the end of my first year as assistant principal of Sisley. I was intrigued by early research that suggested that schools similar to ours were achieving outstanding results for their students. While investigating early problems of practice in the program, I began to share and implement those researchers' strategies for improvement at my school.

In the second year of the doctoral program, I obtained the approval of the school principal to pursue this research project within the school (Appendix E). Because this project aimed to

improve an important component of our continuous improvement plan, it was determined to be an agreeable focus. The principal further agreed to sponsor my work with the AR team and the group of teachers who would participate in the project.

After submitting the required proposal demonstrating how this research would be aligned with the vision, mission, motto, and goals of the district's strategic plan, I obtained approval from the Metro County School District's Research Review Board at the end of August 2017. Having previously submitted the project for approval to the University Institutional Review Board this final detail afforded confirmation of university approval in early September 2017 (Appendix E).

I agreed to remain focused on the continuous improvement plans established for Sisley during the study period. I also committed to maintain focus on the work of the school during the school day. Managing my time and remaining attentive to outcomes for students while working side by side with teacher teams to plan for instruction and assess results were my primary foci.

I considered several limiting factors prior to recruiting participants for this study. The school had a structure for two team meetings with each grade-level during the week. I needed to be very conscious of teacher and leader time for the AR effort. Balancing this work with the already demanding schedule at the school was a significant challenge. The AR team would be constrained to afternoon meetings on Fridays to avoid conflicts with the school's existing schedule. Non-contracted staff members would not be available to participate in these meetings due to the time being after their daily scheduled work time. The original intent of the project was to include members in the AR team who were not assigned at the school and who would participate virtually through a video conference tool, however this did not prove possible. The

schedules of these individuals would not allow for interaction with the team. The busy season of student entry assessments in September, followed by scheduling for state funding in October, prevented and early start for the study. It was apparent that the team would need to meet twice monthly for an hour and a half.

A strong connection existed with this research from which the district could benefit. Similar to the school district commitment, this study aimed to improve organizational effectiveness through skilled school leadership, improved instruction, and renewed stakeholder participation in the work of the school. After receiving district approval, I recruited members of the AR team and started collecting data from teachers and staff who consented to participate in this study.

Action Research Team

I informally discussed the broad topic of my research with members of our school staff during my first year of enrollment in the doctoral program. Several staff members and the school leadership team were aware of my research. After obtaining IRB approval from the university and the school district to begin formal research, the purpose of the study was briefly introduced to the entire staff by an announcement after a faculty meeting in November 2017. I also sent an email with the research project flyer and consent form to all certified staff members (Appendix D). Interested individuals were invited to a session after school to ask questions about the project. It was important to me that this research represent an inclusive opportunity, so any teachers who were wiling were invited to join. There were no other limiting criteria imposed. I discussed the problem and purpose of this study with each individual, I gained their agreement to participate in exploring this problem and implementing interventions within the school. I then collected the Informed Consent forms from each individual. The final AR team members

included five classroom teachers, two instructional support professionals, the principal, and the assistant principal. With consent for participation completed, we were able to gather data to explore the research questions posed.

The previous section of this chapter identified stakeholders whose perspectives were important to this study. Considering the important influence that each of these groups held in our students' progress through Sisley, it was most suitable that the action research team include representatives from each of the primary stakeholder groups named. The members of the team had education experience ranging from four years to more than 20 years. In addition, team members had worked at Sisley from as little as one year to as many as 15 years in a variety of roles. Several team members received promotions from paraprofessional to teacher, teacher to instructional support professional, and from instructional support to administrator while at Sisley. None of the participants were new to their roles and all members of the team had at least three years of classroom teaching experience. The composition of this team enabled us to engage teachers and administrators at our school together in exploring ways that we could broaden the leadership enacted at our school.

In order to bond the team prior to beginning the project, I developed an agenda for the first meeting with the AR team. We met to review the study purpose and research questions for this project in late November 2017. We agreed upon the format of scheduled meetings and established group norms. After preliminary commitments were achieved, the detailed work of exploring the problem began. Because Metro County School District does not permit research with teachers and students to be conducted in the months of April and May, the data collection was planned to be concluded in March 2018. The research schedule engaged the AR team in

December 2017 prior to starting interventions from January 2018 to March 2018. A summary of data the team intended to collect is included in Table 9.

Table 9

Data Collection Timeline

Research Question	Anticipated Data to be Collected	Timeline
1. How can administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity within schools?	• School Leadership Capacity Survey • Leadership Teacher Self-Assessment • Focus Group Interview	• December 2017 • March 2018 • End of AR cycle
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?	• Pre/Post Self-Assessment of Attitudes • about Teacher Leadership • School Leadership Capacity Survey	• December 2017 • March 2018 • December 2017 • March 2018
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?	• Leadership Teacher Self-Assessment • Pre/Post Self-Assessment of attitudes • about Teacher Leadership • Focus Group Interview	• December 2017 • March 2018 • End of AR cycle

Intervention Implementation Plan

The AR team distributed the *School Leadership Capacity Survey* (Lambert, 2003) to the entire school staff in early December 2017. The anonymous survey was provided to staff members in paper and online format. Teacher participants who had agreed to participate in the study were asked to complete the Self-Assessment of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and the Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment (Rubenstein, Miles, & Bassi, 2009). The AR team met as a group at the end of December 2017 to examine the data and determine patterns of teacher participation in leadership activities and school-wide needs.

Upon review of the initial data collected, it was evident to the team that there was a need to increase teachers' demonstrations of leadership. It was also apparent that one focus of the exercises needed to be in developing a shared school vision. In the format of AR, the decision of

exact interventions within the two identified areas happened in logical progression of the action research cycles. Table 10 summarizes this progression. A detailed description of the cycles of AR is included in the following sections of this chapter.

Table 10

The Intervention Plan

Intervention	AR Team Activities	Connection to Theoretical Framework	Timeline	Data Collected from the Intervention
Teacher leadership development exercise (AR Team Members – AR Cycle 1)	• Complete Levels of Leadership Rubric • Examine team leadership data • Discuss implications	• Professional Learning Community • Reflective Practice	• December 2017 • March 2018	• Pre Levels of Leadership Demonstration - artifacts - observations • Pre Attitude Survey • Focus Group Interview 1
(AR Team Members – AR Cycle 2)	• Examining leadership assumptions • Discuss implications for shared leadership at Sisley	• Reflective Practice	• January 2018	• Individual Interview 2
(AR Team Members – AR Cycle 3)	• Examining the Teachers as Leaders Framework • Establishing Leadership goals in coaching conversations	• Instructional Leadership • Professional Learning Community • Reflective Practice	• February 2018 • March 2018	• Post Levels of Leadership Demonstration - artifacts - observations • Post Attitude Survey • Focus Group Interview 3
Developing school-wide vision for improvement (All school Staff – AR Cycle 1)	• Staff input Sessions	• Positive School Climate • Shared Leadership • Collaborative Decision Making	• January 2018	• Focus Group Interview 1 • Pre School Leadership Capacity Survey
(All school Staff – AR Cycle 2)	• "Door-to-door" Staff visits • Identifying goals to support school vision	• Positive School Climate • Shared Leadership • Collaborative Decision Making	• February 2018	• Focus Group Interview 2 • Pre School Leadership Capacity Survey
(All school Staff – AR Cycle 3)	• School Rounds • Suggestions for improvement plan	• Positive School Climate • Shared Leadership • Collaborative Decision Making	• March 2018	• Focus Group Interview 3 • Post School Leadership Capacity Survey

Cycles of Action Research

The AR team implemented interventions that included leadership development exercises for the teacher participants and school-wide exercises to advance a shared vision for school improvement at Sisley. Becoming familiar with action research process as illustrated by Coghlan and Brannick (2014), the AR team took steps including constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action. During the engagement, this translated into reviewing data to define a focus and form ideas. Next, the team decided interventions or adjustments, implemented interventions, and evaluated the results to guide further action. In the evaluation step of each cycle, a combination of focus group and individual interviews were conducted to gather information and note adjustments needed as the cycles continued.

The first intervention by the AR team directed leadership development exercises toward itself. The second intervention involved the AR the team in further shared leadership practice directed toward the school staff. These interventions were completed in three cycles. The participants of the AR team were engaged in each of the research cycles for both interventions. The entire staff participated indirectly during the cycles of research as the AR team implemented interventions in the course of our regularly assigned responsibilities concerning the work of our school. AR team meetings and development sessions were held after school on Fridays, however, interventions were implemented at a variety of times to gain optimal participation from the AR team and staff members.

Action Research Cycle 1

Guided by the literature, we decided to provide leadership development exercises to teacher participants in the AR study. Examination of the leadership demonstration assessment provided the content for the first development activity and reflective discussion.

In addition, the group began considering ways to implement shared leadership practices with the entire school staff. To inform our work, the AR team provided the *School Leadership Capacity Survey* (Lambert, 2003) to the entire staff. In addition, the AR team members completed the *Assessment of Attitudes about Teacher Leadership* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and the *Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment* (Rubenstein, Miles, & Bassi, 2009).

Teacher Leadership Development. Leadership development was offered to the AR team as a group exercise and included reflective discussion to reinforce learning. After reviewing initial leadership data collected from the team we determined a need to assess our demonstrations of leadership as a group and build awareness among group members about the present levels of functioning. The *Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment* (Rubenstein, et al., 2009) described four progressive levels of leadership which included taking action to

1. Self-assess leadership ability;
2. Gain and share perspective, strive for excellence and continue to learn;
3. Engender trust to motivate and maximize potential in others; and
4. Create shared vision, transcend the organization, and demand integrity of all members.

The degrees of performance on the indicators at each level were (a) basic, (b) effective, and (c) distinguished. Looking at the data we learned that members of our group exhibited varying levels of leadership. The mean response showed members of the team exhibited basic abilities in self-assessment at the first level and generally effective abilities at the second level. Team members' perception of their leadership indicated a collective need to improve skills at the third level to motivate and lead change in others. This discussion prompted the decision that we needed to closely examine the staff response to the *School Leadership Capacity Survey*

(Lambert, 2003) and look for areas identified by the staff to focus attention for leadership by the team. After extensive discussion, to narrow the choices for intervention, it was decided that the areas of mission and vision come before everything else. The team discussed the potentially combative nature of disagreements among teachers about preserving old ways instead of replacing them with new ones and the feeling that administrators and staff were not always on the same page in thinking about how to make improvements at the school. The AR team agreed that if a teacher leadership team was started as the first intervention, it might be largely unsuccessful due to conflict and timing. The team felt agreement in the area of vision would be necessary before other concerns such as a formally structured leadership team including teacher participation could be successful.

First feasible interaction for the AR team was deepened to our understanding of the demonstrations of teacher leadership. As a result, the group analyzed data from the leadership demonstration assessment with a structured protocol. The discussion of this rubric and data generated from the team created an opportunity for team members to consider others' perspectives and ability to lead change in their roles at the school. Some team members expressed a need for "permission" to lead and did not "feel like telling other people" how to do things. Further, members of the group expressed concern that leading change in others had been equated to telling others "that they are wrong" and often leads to "push back," because some suggestions for change are not received positively. The team agreed that the "in-depth discussion" of demonstrated leadership exercise was "valuable" and identified a desire to discuss the topic further.

Developing School-Wide Vision for Improvement. During the first development exercise, the AR team members stated that giving input into a vision for the school would help

staff members feel more valued and willing to collaborate to make changes. The team also felt that wide input would increase staff members "responsibility and accountability for school improvement." Because the team members acknowledged that the existing vision did not need to be rewritten, it was further decided that the group would exercise leadership by inviting the input of all staff members into the development of future goal areas for the school improvement efforts. The team agreed to use a template from strategic planning processes to facilitate the staff discussion. Once the protocol was identified, team members set up a plan for the session. Members of the team were assigned specific roles in the initial preparation. Some initial tasks were to notify staff about the session by email and intercom announcement and to make copies of staff feedback sheets. These session were set to take place after school.

The initial discussion protocol had three sections. The first section gathered staff perspectives about their first and most memorable experiences at the school. It also asked staff members to relate aspirations for school improvement and contributions each person could make. Finally, the input session required a synthesis of expressions by the group. This first after-school session drew strong participation with 26 of the 91 staff members attending. While the protocol was executed aloud for all participants to hear, written notes were made by each person to capture a record of his or her perspective. Feedback to the AR team from staff indicated that this session was a "refreshing experience." However, other staff members expressed discomfort or sensitivity about saying their opinions out loud.

Action Research Cycle 2

After interventions were completed for the first cycle of AR, the team engaged in a reflective discussion about apparent outcomes and the process. The team felt the activities were meaningful, but expressed concerns about the number of conflicting commitments.

Adjustments were made to the proposed face-to-face meeting schedule for the teacher leadership development exercise. The group agreed to individual conferences for the next activity cycle. This condition of timing also affected the work to be completed with staff in school-wide vision development. The adaptations, progress, and outcomes of these next steps are detailed below.

Teacher Leadership Development. During this iteration of the research process, the AR team met with me to participate in an exercise to identify and reflect upon assumptions they held about teacher leadership. Each individual session followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix C). The *Framework of Assumptions* (Crowther, et al., 2009) offered 10 sets of opposite views about teacher leadership. In completing the exercise, each AR team member identified his or her position and discussed their perspective for each continuum of ideas included in the framework. The final step in this exercise required members to name an assumption they held about teacher leadership and to reflect on the potential it had to affect our efforts to advance shared leadership in the school.

Several of the teachers' reflections were about "problematic" assumptions they held, while others were somewhat optimistic. Team members expressed somewhat differing opinions. Some thought that leadership needed to be clearly defined so that everyone within the organization could have a common expectation for the performance of leaders, while others felt a more open view accepting varied forms of leadership was necessary. One teacher challenged her belief that there is a clear division between teachers and leaders, stating "it's like you're blaming this one and they are blaming you…and instead of working together, we're trying to figure out whose fault this is." Another member of the team expressed the view that teachers cannot lead in collaboration without specific action from administrators. This exercise

identified many areas from the teachers' and leaders' perspectives when it would have been helpful to have opportunities to clarify and set expectations of teachers' leadership in relation to their peers and administrators. As each teacher shared reflections about his or her personal assumptions related to leadership, we determined a need to take specific action within the school as our next development exercise.

Developing School-Wide Vision for Improvement. After this first encounter, the AR team desired to delve more deeply into this exploration with the staff, however the timing of the intervention significantly limited participation by staff members. In order to get more responses from staff, the team needed to find a creative solution to the challenges with time. The first attempt to include wider participation offered multiple sessions on a variety of days. Though the team believed it was important to solicit the perspective of even more staff members, additional sessions were not well attended.

In the final solution, team members were assigned segments of the staff by department and went "door-to-door" to gain their participation in a modified version of the first visioning exercise. The team felt this approach would be more comfortable for some staff. This questionnaire was offered in paper or discussion format with an AR team member noting the staff members' responses. To accommodate the volume of these "door-to-door" visits, the team shortened the focus to include only the aspirations for school improvement and personal contributions section of the initial protocol. Following these visits, the AR team summarized the ideas collected into a set of goal areas for consideration by the school leadership team. This final listing was published for review and additional input by staff members.

Action Research Cycle 3

With the school year quickly coming to a close, the AR team engaged in one final series of interventions to advance our shared leadership efforts. Having become more familiar with varying displays of teacher leadership, the team completed a somewhat personalized goal-setting and coaching exercise. In addition, we wanted to lead the school in one final attempt to broaden input into our school's vision for improvement. In the last round, we were almost overcome by conflicting demands within the school. This cycle required the flexibility to engage the team and invite staff input in an open format designed to avoid conflict. Both activities were set up to allow for AR team members and staff to engage at a time that best suited their schedule.

Teacher Leadership Development. The final teacher leadership development exercise arranged personal goal-setting meetings with the assistant principal and individual teacher members of the AR team. This exercise followed a semi-structured protocol to review research supporting Crowther et al. (2009) *Teachers as Leaders Framework*. During this activity, the assistant principal provided a brief description of the progression of theoretical perspectives of teacher leadership and shared the framework which related how teachers can lead in their schools. After discussing the framework, teachers were prompted to select an area of current or intended focus. Then they identified a goal related to the item. After clarifying which specific actions they would take and what support they needed, we agreed to have follow-up discussions about the progress each team member was making with their goals. Both administrators on the AR team supported teachers with discussion in the weeks that followed. Each team member scheduled a follow-up discussion with an administrator to check on progress and determine needed supports.

Teachers' identified areas of focus crossed the span of the framework. There was no overlap in their choices. Some were able to actualize very specific actions, while others stayed at the level of interrogating ideas. Observing evidence of the teachers' progress toward the goals confirmed this point.

Developing School-Wide Vision for Improvement. Due to time constraints with staff participation, further exploration of the school vision needed to be extended into the next school year, but the team suggested a closing action to involve staff input into our vision for school improvement. Following the idea of "rounds" used in the medical profession, it was decided that the school would engage in improvement rounds to evaluate school processes and programs. It was agreed that this exercise could invite further opportunities for staff input and create a strong basis for the next steps to be written into our improvement plan for the next school year.

First, the elements and sub-elements of all school programs and processes needed to be listed. When this task was complete, the items were grouped into logical categories for a simple feedback protocol. We created posters and provided sticky notes for each area of the school to give feedback about what was going well, which practices needed improvement, and suggestions to address how concerns. Staff members were able to openly view the comments of others over the course of the three-day exercise. At the end of the rounds, a summary of noted successes and needed changes was presented to the staff. This activity drew wide participation.

Researcher Reflections

The impact of timing on the implementation of interventions in the project cannot be ignored. The process of building leadership in any professional, teacher or administrator, takes time. It is also important to acknowledge that increasing school-wide leadership capacity is a lengthy process as well. While the defined time period for this study was brief, there are some

implications of the work in our context that provide hope for future exercises in shared leadership of planning and implementing school improvements.

One of the AR team members a experienced more limited ability to engage in the process than others. This individual reported fewer benefits and positive perspectives on the exercises. In hindsight, it may have been most appropriate to engage team members who had participated fully in the exercises in the evaluation processes. The views and experience helped to inform important considerations related to monitoring to ensure high levels of engagement from AR team group members. This is one area that may have warranted intervention by the team but was not addressed within these cycles.

Despite pressing demands for focus on academic progress, the AR team's value of this project as meaningful work is very encouraging.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this AR case study was to design and explore ways that teachers and leaders could work together to broaden demonstrations of leadership in a school. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How can administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity within schools?
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

Multiple data sources were evaluated to inform findings presented in this chapter for each of these questions. AR team and staff responses to the *Pre and post School Leadership Capacity Survey* (Lambert, 2003), *Pre and Post Self-Assessment of Attitudes Values and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), *Demonstrations of Teacher Leadership Assessment* (Rubenstein, et al., 2009), focus group, and individual interviews have informed this portrayal of the impact of study interventions. AR team members' names are not used in this report to protect their identity.

Table 11

Research Findings

Research Question	Findings
1. How can administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity within schools?	a. Creating and discussing personalized leadership goals with administrators improved accountability and provided a sense of support. b. Group and individual discussions about leadership practices encouraged self-reflection. c. Interventions directed to small groups or individuals help teachers realize their power to make changes; changes within small groups were evident more quickly than large-scale effects.
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?	a. Working to plan leadership and solve problems with others helped change the view that only certain positions or personalities can lead. b. Working collaboratively with a team to solve a problem made the work more manageable instead of more challenging. c. Open talks between teachers and administrators helped create a sense of professionalism and value for teachers' input.
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?	a. Participating with administrators in the AR process encouraged motivated more understanding about leadership roles. b. Raised awareness of other successful leadership strategies; positive actions helped make progress.

Research Question 1: How can school administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity at Sisley Elementary?

This AR study intended to discover how administrators at Sisley Elementary could encourage more demonstrations of leadership by teachers at the school. Data were generated from multiple sources to support consideration of the interventions from varying perspectives, including surveys, interviews, and observations. Pre and post assessments of teachers'

demonstrations of leadership were determined by the *Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment* (Rubenstein, et al., 2009), focus groups and individual interviews. These instruments provided the participants' views of the team's learning experiences and support provided by school administrators. The data for this question presented three key ideas:

1. Creating and discussing personalized leadership goals with administrators improved accountability and provided a sense of support.
2. Group and individual discussions about leadership practice caused more self-reflection.
3. Interventions directed to small groups or individuals helped teachers realize their ability to make changes; changes within small groups were evident more quickly than large-scale effects

Goal Setting Discussions Improved Accountability and Sense of Support

The AR team considered the effectiveness of the goal-setting leadership development activity through interviews and demonstrations of leadership data. Interview and leadership demonstration data suggested positive benefits for teachers as a result of personalized goal setting discussions and follow-up conversations with an administrator. Table 12 summarizes teachers' self-assessments of their ability to motivate, engender trust, maximize potential, and lead change increased from a range of mean responses from 1.57-1.86 before the study activities to a mean response of 2.33 after the study. The standard deviation among participants' responses decreased in two areas and remained relatively small in the others. In addition, team members reported increased ability to create shared vision among colleagues and to establish goals or clarify purpose.

Table 12

Mean Responses on Pre and Post Study Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment

Leadership Activities		AR Team Mean Responses on Pre-Assessment	Standard Deviation	AR Team Mean Responses on Post-Assessment	Standard Deviation
Level 3	**Motivates**	1.86	0.690	2.33	1.15
	Engenders trust	1.86	0.377	2.33	0.58
	Maximizes potential	1.57	0.786	2.33	0.58
	Leads change	1.57	0.534	2.33	1.15
Level 4	**Creates a shared vision**	1.71	0.755	2.67	0.58
	Establishes goals and clarifies purpose	1.67	0.816	2.67	0.58

In group and individual study interviews, the AR team members shared related perspectives about the experience. AR team members spoke about how goal setting helped them stay focused. There was consistent agreement that team members felt an increased sense of support from administrators regarding the teachers' values. Some responses from participants include:

- "Talking about it with you made me accountable, that it wasn't just an idea . . . It helped me to really address my team and make progress."

- "It forced me to work harder to meet a timeline. It made it more urgent for me to accomplish the goal I set out to achieve."
- "I think when we set out to meet as a team it keeps everyone pushing forward, keeping the goals in mind and striving to meet what we set out to do."

Similar perspectives were repeated in the group. In addition, the principal and assistant principal noted in observations that teachers had begun implementing their goals within their teams. A few of them had independently worked through problem-solving with their teams, but others readily adjusted when provided practical suggestions in follow-up discussions. Though the execution of this intervention was time consuming, the teacher's responses made the exercise worthwhile.

Discussions about Leadership Practice Encouraged Self-Reflection

As the team worked through the action research process, reflection was a necessary step. This practice was intentionally built into the leadership development activities and included in the AR cycles and interviews. AR team members reflected frequently as a group and individually. The reflections included looking at our practice, the development tools implemented, the outcomes of interventions, and our thinking about leadership. One common theme among participants' responses was that the frequency and type of discussions in this project lead to more self-reflection. Members who were not able to participate in all of the discussions with the group had differing perspectives about their meaning.

According to one participant, "Participating in this study made me reflect on my own leadership skills and make changes of how I interact with teachers/parents/and superiors." Two group members missed some of the discussions. One of the members missed many reflections and was not responsive to opportunities to follow-up outside of the group meeting

times. This team member stated, "While the discussion was helpful in encouraging me to reflect on the goal, it didn't provide strong enough impetus to result in change or progress."

Individual or Small Groups Interventions Helped Teachers Make Change

The AR Team expressed enthusiasm about the value of the cohort of teachers working together in a peer group with administrators to identify and address needs for shared leadership in the school. The group members reiterated a desire to continue their engagement during development sessions and interviews. In relating the value of the group's support for members to participate in making changes, some team members said,

- "It was encouraging to feel support in an area that I wanted to personally develop. It was also good to have the follow-up conversation for accountability and reflection."
- "I loved it! It inspired me and it really makes me want to keep moving with that sort of thing. Seeing a little impact, makes me want to do even more."
- "I feel like I'm saying I need someone to hold my hand as I do this, but with teaching it is helpful to have someone say 'we are going to work on this.' So the conversation that is professional and about goals is helpful to me."

Evidence of change was apparent during the study period for small group interventions, however, intended school-wide changes were not entirely realized. While some change appeared possible, time to continue the interventions with the larger group would be necessary to determine benefits there. As one group member stated,

> "I think this opened everyone eyes that decisions/next steps are not easy to come about. There is no quick fix/answer when you are responsible for making the best decision. I am not saying that everyone is on board but I do think that some have started viewing the role of leadership differently."

The view that this work would take more time and needed continued problem-solving was consistent for all team members. Table 13 confirms this point in summarizing the relevant sections of survey data administered to school staff before and after interventions were implemented in this study.

Table 13

Mean Responses on Targeted Areas of Leadership Capacity Survey

Shared vision results in program coherence In our school we:	**School Staff Pre-Assessment Mean Responses**	**Standard Deviation**	**School Staff Post-Assessment Mean Responses**	**Standard Deviation**
Develop our school vision jointly	3.11	0.834	3.21	1.234
Ask each other questions that keep us on track with our vision	3.3	0.676	3.15	1.148
Think together about how to align our standards, instruction, assessment, and programs with our vision	3.42	0.498	3.31	1.130
Keep our visions alive by reviewing it regularly	3.19	0.455	3.15	1.241

It must also be acknowledged, that we did not have unanimous agreement for the value of the small group and individualized activities. One group member said, "I think this type of conversation is a good starting point, but for me personally it just wasn't enough." As an

administrative supporter of teachers' growth, the experience and perspective of this individual confirms that infrequent engagement, though personalized, may not be considered valuable.

Research Question 2: What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?

This research team wanted to understand how teachers' thoughts and attitudes about leadership might change as a result of this study's focus on the topic. Using pre and post intervention results from the *Self-Assessment of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and interview data, the group made a few common discoveries:

1. Working to plan leadership and solve problems with others helped to change the view that only certain positions or personalities can lead.
2. Working collaboratively with a team to solve a problem made the work more manageable instead of more challenging.
3. Open talks between teachers and administrators helped create a sense of professionalism and value for teachers' input.

Problem-Solving and Planning for Leadership Changes Views about Who Can Lead

The activities included in the study and the timing of other events at the school required the use of collective problem-solving skills from the group. While implementing plans the group created, we needed to make adjustments fairly frequently. This contributed to an understanding by the team about the complexity of coordinating engagement with others as a leader. As AR team members engaged in the project, those who had been reluctant to speak out were asked to participate in more vocal or direct ways with the team or the school. The group came to realize

how, even those persons who would not have been considered leaders were growing their leadership by participating in this work. Some of the team's views were:

- "Being a leader isn't as much about having a charismatic personality, it is more about these simple practices . . . practicing leading . . . I have always felt, I am a follower . . . we need those too . . . anyone can be a leader if they are willing to do the work...even if they don't have the traits usually considered for strong leaders."
- ". . . flipping the notion I had to where it is someone else doing the leading to making me feel like . . . if I think something being improved, I might be the person to do it. It has made me consider things differently. That was important for me to have that change."
- "I felt like a leader in my classroom, but not the school. I feel like a leader in my community. I did not feel like a leader outside my classroom at work. This helped pull out my inner leader. All it took was doing something. Normally when I am around outspoken people I would step back, but now I feel like all types of people can be leaders and this made me want to work on my outward leadership, take on more active roles and do more in the school."
- "I think it awakened some people to realize that we are all leaders and if you want to hear your voice, speak up. If they wanted to see change, they needed to get involved. It seems like this made a lasting impact in others, but it has made me want to do some things differently next year. It's sort of cool to see the little chain reactions."

One response in particular referenced the leadership development as a source of self-actualization or empowerment for teachers. That team member suggested, " pick the non-obvious leaders . . . we often pick the people who are most apt to speak . . . you need to pull on

some of the unsuspecting people and unlock or unleash their potential . . . maybe the quiet ones should be the leaders. Help the shy people realize they are leaders too. And help them figure out how to apply leadership in different ways. Help them find their voice."

Collaborative Problem-Solving Helped Change Management

Dealing with the change required by intentional development of leadership practice was feared by some members of the team. While this did not prohibit them from joining the study, they expressed initial concern about how to find more time for activities outside of classroom requirements. This theme was also evident in school leadership survey data. Some individuals' comments suggested that participation in leadership was a luxury that they could not afford due to time constraints. In the final focus group interview, members of the team expressed appreciation for the collaboration they had experienced associated with our study. These were particularly focused on the help they received such as:

- "This isn't really something I typically do, hearing how other people spear head things or bring things up . . . hearing how others lead as teachers is eye opening, because I have only thought about interactions between teachers and kids...and this is a new thing that I didn't think about before. Before I thought it would be more of a burden on top of everything else, but it eventually makes our job more manageable, because it is more focused and leads to more collaboration . . . so everyone is on the same page and there is not confusion about what we are doing . . . and it directly relates to what we do with the kids."
- "The discussions with other colleagues of varying grade levels is very helpful. It points out some different needs across the school and begins the process of thinking of how we can help each other."

Teacher / Administrator Talks Build Professionalism and Value

One final idea related to this question about teachers' change in perceptions was the increased sense of value for their input and a feeling of being recognized as professionals due to the direct interactions with administrative leaders. AR team members reported that being treated professionally with recognition of the teachers' ideas and input led to more displays of professional behavior from teachers. Team members said:

- "I think that sharing the research was good, because it changed the expectation that I thought administrators had for us. You were committed to getting us talking and having our own ideas, even though we wanted you to tell us what to do. Having time like that to talk, made things more cohesive . . . it was the only conversation I have had with an administrator that wasn't about something I hadn't done or asking permission for something. It felt like I was being treated as a professional."

- "I think the most effective way for school administrators to foster greater teacher leadership capacity is to encourage and support a sense that teachers are respected as professionals with unique skills and perspectives as opposed to a one size fits all approach that is so tightly structured that it doesn't give teachers a sense of ownership."

Data available in the self-assessments from AR team members confirmed these views. The change in teachers' willingness to engage in leadership with peers increased (see Table 14). The standard deviation indicated less variation in team members' willingness to lead from the beginning of the study compared to the end.

Table 14

Mean Responses on Pre and Post Self-Assessment of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership

Attitude, Value, and Belief Statement Item	AR Team Mean Responses on Pre-Assessment	Standard Deviation	AR Team Mean Responses on Post-Assessment	Standard Deviation
5. I am willing to observe and provide feedback to fellow teachers.	3.77	1.31	4.8	0.4
13. I can continue to serve as a classroom teacher while serving as a leader in my school.	4.44	0.49	4.8	0.4
16. My work contributes to the overall success of our school program.	4.33	0.47	5	0
21. I am effective in working with almost all of my colleagues.	3.88	0.993	4.6	0.489

Research Question 3: What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

The AR team gathered pre and post assessment data to determine whether any noticeable growth or change in individual or school-wide leadership happened during the course of this study. The survey data combined with interview responses indicated valuable lessons gleaned from the work of this team of teachers and administrators. In thinking about the process

throughout the study and in reflection after the study, the team identified that participating with administrators in the AR process encouraged understanding about leadership roles: and awareness of successful leadership strategies; positive actions helped make progress.

Combined Teacher/Administrator AR Team Improved Understanding of Leadership

Teacher and leader members in this study described deeper understanding of leadership from the interventions. Teachers expressed new awareness about roles where teachers can serve as leaders and also developed a different perspective of the role of formal leaders. Responses included:

- "This year I had to come to terms with the fact that I will not be able to satisfy everyone but if I stick to the data based upon what our students' needs are and plan/collaborate first from that perspective then I am doing what's best for the students we serve."
- "Participating in the research made me want to learn more about leadership in every capacity. I know that this will come along with time but it made me curious to read, to attend meetings that I would have never attended before, made me take a closer look at others who lead at a higher level."
- "I guess I've come into teaching with an isolationist perspective . . . I thought if I can handle myself and my classroom, that is as much as I can do . . . this helped me look at things differently and realize that the strongest teams at our school are teams that work together . . . not just side by side . . . it made me more collaborative . . . I need to take responsibility if our team is not the strongest . . . it is not that the people are better, but it is the specific way they work together that makes them more successful. I became less self-conscious about throwing things out there and felt more reliant on

my teammates . . . If I act more like a leader, this could be helpful to a new person and their experience."

- "Yes, I thought leadership within the school was one way. I think there are different ways that you can be a leader."

Along with these reports, the administrators who participated in this study learned about the teachers' perspectives as well. One administrator on the team reported being previously unaware that teachers wanted to have input into some topics of school leadership, such as the vision. Learning to recognize and enable teachers' leadership in areas of importance to them invited more teacher leadership than these administrators had previously seen at this school.

Raised Awareness of Successful Leadership and Effects of Positive Actions

In tracing our steps to review what we learned, the AR team drew one final conclusion. This experience taught the group that successful leadership requires revisions and a willingness to work at "getting it right." Members of this team needed to offer solutions for each other in finding ways to work around challenges and limitations we faced. The first AR cycle did not completely fix things and the last cycle did not either, but this process helped all of the team to see in short period of time how we could benefit from working together and learning with each other. A few team members in the final focus group interview summarized this very well by saying:

- "I learned through this process that we have to always revisit and even perhaps go back to the drawing board and start over. I mean we just can't look at one piece and decide what to do . . . . We have to look at data at all angles and really discuss the good, bad, and the ugly, not just from teachers but what the data is telling us about the students because it all connects with each other . . . one impacts the other . . ."

- "It was very helpful. When colleagues sit around and talk about things that they want to work on and then move on to the next step . . . I felt like it was refreshing. This was very productive and we didn't get stuck on what was wrong . . . we moved on to what we wanted to work toward . . . . It helped me realize the power in doing something like this effectively, being supportive and positive and makes you realize the impact it could make."

Summary

The findings presented here are of greatest significance to the context of Sisley Elementary School. As evidence of the hope that exists in further development of shared leadership and of the work yet to be done, this study has encouraged a group of teacher and administrator actors in our school to cross the 'divide' and work together. We primarily succeeded in suspending the disbelief that this type of engagement between formal leaders and those not recognized as leaders is not fruitful. The most encouraging perspective of all is the view that members of this team expressed in the value of our interactions and the desire that they be expanded to include more teachers and to continue in the coming school year.

One team member, who happened to be the least engaged member of the team, reflected: "I think that there is beginning to be a feeling that teachers are at least being asked by leadership for their input. I don't think they will feel more empowered until they see changes that reflect the input that they have given."

In light of our development exercise, it must be understood that members of our school will have differing assumptions and expectations about the work of leading in our organization. If some members are working to be the change they want to see in our school, while others expect someone else to make needed changes, this variation is to be anticipated. It is true that

some staff members, who were skeptical or not able to manage participation in what seemed like a low priority, may come along in time.

Another AR team member made an excellent point that some people in our organization will prefer to be followers. In developing our leadership, we can respect all forms of participation, work to build shared vision, and seek wide input to gain cooperation for consistent school improvement. While I did not anticipate these findings, they are well supported by the literature, which reinforces the power of shared instructional leadership that places particular emphasis on teachers' leadership development to enable the shaping of a strong culture of high-performance within schools.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to engage a team of teachers and administrators in the process to learn how formal school leaders could support increased demonstrations of teachers' leadership within Sisley. This research explored the following questions:

1. How can administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity within schools?
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers after receiving leadership development support?
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

This chapter summarizes implications of this AR case study, its findings and conclusions, and makes suggestions for future study of teacher leadership development through AR.

Analysis

Guided by the literature and research questions for this study, the AR team built a plan for interventions to address a need for wider sharing and demonstrations of leadership within Sisley. Employing an AR approach, the team came to understand how teachers and administrators could work together to support the development of teacher leaders to empower greater change in the school. This study took place in a metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. The AR team chose this problem in response to specific needs related to the context and history of this school in struggling to make changes for lasting improvements. To understand this problem, the team reviewed literature supporting teachers' participation in

leadership at the most successful schools. With this model, the team built a structure to provide support for teacher leadership development.

The resulting intervention plan included three cycles of AR focused on improving the school's leadership capacity with teacher focus interventions and school-wide intervention. These interventions included teacher leadership development exercises with embedded reflection and school-wide sessions to support the future vision for school improvement.

In an attempt to limit researcher bias, the team collected multiple forms of data to answer the study questions. Recognizing the collective nature of action research, the AR team reviewed that data throughout the process to ensure perspectives of team members were reflected. In the final phase of data coding and review, AR team members were invited to review study findings and give feedback for inclusion in this report (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This final input from members of the research team informed the conclusions and implications for the next actions to be taken at the school, further closing the gap in application of current literature for shared-leadership in high-performing schools.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the action research team has identified next steps needed to ensure further advancement of both shared and teacher leadership at Sisley Elementary School. Staff input from the staff interventions during this project was used to support the development of school improvement plans for the next school year. As this project directly supports the district's mission and strategic plan, support for this effort will continue to be available.

Conclusion 1

Teachers need administrators' direct support at their schools to develop and enact effective participation in leadership of school improvement. Based on the experiences within this study and the resulting findings, the AR team suggests specific actions from the study to validate this claim. Administrators should offer teachers an opportunity to participate in formal leadership activities or teams to solve real problems at the school. This service may take on a variety of forms, but opportunities to engage in conversations about their leadership aspirations are a must. Teachers currently serving as grade-level chair persons need to participate in a group with other teacher leaders to specifically learn the structure and function of professional learning communities (PLCs). They will also need training in leading effective data analysis and decision making with their teams. In creating PLCs, principals can create an authentic venue for leadership development, which will support teachers' focus on the professional improvement of teaching practice and stakeholder engagement (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner, 2000). Broadening skillful participation in decision making will further equip schools to achieve established goals for improvement.

This point reinforces the desire of teachers at the school to reestablish the school leadership team to include teachers from each department. This study confirmed the positive momentum that is gained from taking a positive approach to moving forward. As such, it is recommended that staff be led through a process to redesign the leadership team structure to include features of the skillful participation described in current literature about high performance learning cultures. Direct actions such as offering coaching support, leading reflective discussions, and establishing trust from school administrators lead cooperative engagement among teachers (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). The school principal sets the tone and

establishes a climate to support high expectations, positive relationships, academic focus, and collaborative decision making practices (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013; Kannapel et al., 2005; Foorman et al., 2004; Reeves, 2003).

Conclusion 2

The second study question sought to understand changes in teachers' perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment related to specific leadership development. This team used an AR approach to engage teachers with leaders in the exploration of this question. The collaborative nature of the AR process required democratic or shared strategies for decision making. The AR team used a collective approach to decide data sources, generate data, analyze data, decide interventions, and implement interventions. The team also decided together which adjustments or next steps needed to be implemented for the interventions. This shared approach to leading the project prompted the conclusion that the act of participating in leadership develops skill and understanding of leadership practice. It was further concluded that professionals who do not display typical signs of leadership might need specific engagement to learn how they may lead or to see the value their leadership can offer.

Empirical literature identifies the connection between integrated leadership and high school performance. Instructional leadership combined with the enactment of teacher leadership led to high levels of teaching and learning (Marks & Printy, 2003). A focus on the quality of instruction encourages improvement with limitations. In order to maximize the potential for success, leadership approaches must support the most effective engagement of stakeholders to solve problems blocking students' growth and achievement in schools.

Conclusion 3

The final conclusion of this study, supported by the literature, addresses the intent to relate what teachers and administrators can learn from the process of AR. This team realized the immediate value of mutual engagement of teachers with administrators in efforts to improve leadership. The positive focus on what was needed, without getting stuck in the past, was a core component of this team's ability to make progress together. Copland's (2003) BASC reform effort demonstrated the use of "cycles of inquiry" to build reflection on current practices and adjustments in school culture. In this model, teachers collected data, decided goals, implemented actions, evaluated and analyzed results of their practice. In the conclusion of this study, data confirmed improved agreement on needs for change, data-based decision making, and analysis of student performance data. The study at Sisley implemented similar features over a shorter period of time, however the AR team was able to see increased agreement within the group and improving participation in data-based decision making. Time spent in authentic school-need based inquiry is worthwhile.

Additional Considerations

Study limitations including conflicting activities, limited teacher participation, and the insider AR approach were described in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the limited engagement was mentioned as a possible explanation for the variation of one team member's experience from the rest of the group. This AR team was not monitoring team members' participation in the interventions. Consequently, it was not noted by the researcher that a strategy beyond the flexible options for engagement by the group was needed to support improved engagement.

It is also important to address the possible effects of insider knowledge, managing existing roles within the research context, and access (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

Insider Knowledge

Formally called "preunderstanding," this is information research participants have about the context before the study begins (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). The researcher who initiated this study and each participant held assumptions and perspectives about the study content prior to entry. To reduce concerns about preunderstanding, the team used protocols to facilitate thorough analysis of data and effective conclusions. Group discussions and analysis and drawing on input from the team instead of single individuals provided protections during the research process.

Managing Roles Within the Organization

As the assistant principal and initiator of this research study, there was an overlap of my responsibility as a researcher and as a subject of the study. The influence of my supervisory position with teachers was apparent at the start of the study. Team members often asked my perspective about what I wanted and whether I approved of their ideas. I continually reinforced to the group that for this study I would be facilitating the shared input of the group, instead of advancing my ideas. As the months passed participants were more comfortable and less apprehensive about getting it right. This said, there still may have been some unintended effects of my dual role in the school (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014)

Access

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) relate the levels of access one may have to an organization during AR. As assistant principal in the school where I led this study, I was afforded primary and secondary access to this site. As an insider I was able to use available information about school and district calendars to arrange study activities with the team. While this dual role may have presented barriers in the study, it also facilitated moving forward with the study despite those challenges.

Implications

Case study findings suggest implications for leadership practices at Sisley and future research. Informed by the theoretical and empirical literature, this study gathered practices suitable for application in our context. Schools with similar cultural, structural and performance descriptions to Sisley, may find it useful to implement strategies outlined in this study. The literature justifies the use of strategies employed in this study, while the research grounds those strategies in this local context.

Sisley Elementary

Findings of this study suggest that the administrators of Sisley can support continuity of teacher practice through the support of teacher leadership in the school. Structured development opportunities to participate in PLCs that are facilitated by teacher leaders, continuing the practice of goal setting with reflective discussion will be most beneficial. Continuing an AR approach to discovering solutions to common problems is a suggested starting point based on this research.

Metro County School District

Beyond implications for Sisley, this study may provide insight into methods for similar studies of schools where student progress has stalled based on an assessment of leadership practices. Further, the district leadership development division could provide support to school administrators in developing and implementing the tools and processes needed to support skillful teacher leadership in school improvement. From the districts' vantage point it might also be helpful to establish laboratory schools where teachers and administrators may observe effective engagement in shared school leadership. Finally, establishing networks for principals to develop PLCs which work to solve problems of school improvement, including teacher leadership

engagement, might advance deeper development and connection of leaders' ability to coach the leadership of others.

Future Research

This is one of a few studies addressing teacher leadership development through an action research case study. More research in this format is necessary to support a strong theoretical basis for this approach. An additional area of attention is timing. This procedure could be extended to a longitudinal format. The extended time period would allow deeper understanding of the effects of interventions, support more causal explanations of findings, and connect to school performance, changes in teacher practice and other school improvement data. Lengthening subsequent studies will lend more complex analysis and wider application to other contexts. Finally, future research should address changes in teachers and leaders' perceptions and interactions over a longer period of time, in connection with school climate and culture data.

Summary

This action research study completed three research cycles with a team of teachers and administrators. Each cycle was comprised of teacher leadership development exercises with embedded reflection and school-wide engagement in input for school improvement goals. Findings for this study suggest (a) teachers need direct support to demonstrate effective participation in school improvement leadership, (b) participating in leadership develops skill and understanding of leadership practice, and (c) mutual engagement in leadership provides valuable development for teachers and administrators. Recommendations are to (a) replicate studies of this topic in the action research approach, (b) extend the length of subsequent studies, and (c) draw connections to school achievement data.

The results of this action research study are supported by the literature on shared leadership, teacher leadership development and strong school cultures (Copland, 2003). Teacher Leadership development led by principals within the school setting should be informed by studies advancing these ideas.

REFERENCES

Al Otaiba, S., & Fuchs, D. (2006). Who are the young children for whom best practices in reading are ineffective? An experimental and longitudinal study. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *39*(5), 414-431.

Baker, B. D., & Cooper, B. S. (2005). Do principals with stronger academic backgrounds hire better teachers? Policy implications for improving high-poverty schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 41*(3), 449-479.

Barth, P., Haycock, K., Jackson, H., Mora, K., Ruiz, P., Robinson, S., & Wilkins, A. (1999). Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations.

Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *38*(2), 130-141.

Bolden, R. (2011). Distributed leadership in organizations: A review of theory and research. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 13*, 251–269.

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. University of Chicago Press.

Camburn, E., Rowan, B., & Taylor, J. E. (2003). Distributed leadership in schools: The case of elementary schools adopting comprehensive school reform models. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 25(*4), 347-373.

Chenoweth, K. (2010). Leaving nothing to chance. *Educational Leadership*, *68*(3), 16-21.

Chenoweth, K., & Theokas, C. (2011). *Getting It Done: Leading Academic Success in*

Unexpected Schools. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Chenoweth, K., & Theokas, C. (2013). How High-Poverty Schools Are Getting It Done. *Educational leadership*, *70*(7), 56-59.

Chenoweth, K. (2015). How Do We Get There from Here?. *Educational Leadership*, *72*(5), 16-20.

Childs-Bowen, D., Moller, G., & Scrivner, J. (2000). Principals: Leaders of leaders. *NASSP bulletin*, *84*(616), 27-34.

Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2014). Doing action research in your own organization (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Coghlan, D. & Shani, A. B. (2015). *Developing the practice of leading change through insider action research: A dynamic capability perspective.* In Bradbury, H. (Ed.). (2015). *The Sage handbook of action research*.(47-54) Sage.

Copland, M. A. (2003). Leadership of inquiry: Building and sustaining capacity for school improvement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *25*(4), 375-395.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. Sage Publications.

Crowther, F., Ferguson, M., & Hann, L. (2009). *Developing teacher leaders: How teacher leadership enhances school success*. Corwin Press.

Cuthrell, K., Stapleton, J., & Ledford, C. (2009). Examining the culture of poverty: Promising practices. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *54*(2), 104-110.

Danielson, C. (2006). *Teacher leadership that strengthens professional practice.* ASCD.

Ebmeier, H. (2003). How supervision influences teacher efficacy and commitment: An investigation of a path model. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, *18*(2), 110-141.

Elmore, R. F. (2000). Building a new structure for school leadership. *Albert Shanker Institute.*

Fink, S., & Markholt, A. (2013). The leader's role in developing teacher expertise. *The embodiment of leadership,* 317-333.

Foorman, B. R., & Moats, L. C. (2004). Conditions for sustaining research-based practices in early reading instruction. *Remedial and Special Education, 25*(1), 51-60.

Foorman, B. R., Schatschneider, C., Eakin, M. N., Fletcher, J. M., Moats, L. C., & Francis, D. J. (2006). The impact of instructional practices in grades 1 and 2 on reading and spelling achievement in high poverty schools. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *31*(1), 1-29.

Fullan, M. (2002). The change. *Educational leadership, 59*(8), 16-20.

Gibbs, A. (2012). Focus groups and group interviews. *Research methods and methodologies in education*, 186-192.

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of educational administration, 49*(2), 125-142.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School leadership and management*, *30*(2), 95-110.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2008) Distributed leadership: democracy or delivery? *Journal of Educational Administration, 46*(2), 229-240.

Harris, A. (2004). Distributed leadership and school improvement leading or misleading? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 32*(1), 11-24.

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.

Hattie, J. (2015). High-Impact Leadership. *Educational Leadership, 72*(5), 36-40.

Hauge, T. E., Norenes, S. O., & Vedøy, G. (2014). School leadership and educational change: Tools and practices in shared school leadership development. *Journal of Educational Change, 15*(4), 357-376.

Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2015). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Sage publications.

Hoy, W. K. & Miskel, C. G. (2013). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice, 9th edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Jacobson, S. L., Brooks, S., Giles, C., Johnson, L., & Ylimaki, R. (2007). Successful leadership in three high-poverty urban elementary schools. Leadership and Policy in Schools, 6(4), 291-317.

Jossey-Bass Inc. (2000). *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kannapel, P. J., Clements, S. K., Taylor, D., & Hibpshman, T. (2005). Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools. *Report, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.*

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2009). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Helping teachers develop as leaders*. Corwin Press.

King, D. (2002). The changing shape of leadership. *Educational leadership, 59*(8), 61-63.

Lambert, L. (2002). A framework for shared leadership. *Educational leadership, 59*(8), 37-40

Lambert, L. (2003). Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement.

Lambert, L. (2006, September). Lasting leadership: A study of high leadership capacity schools. In *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 70, No. 3, pp. 238-254). Taylor & Francis Group.

Leithwood, K., Mascall, B., Strauss, T., Sacks, R., Memon, N., & Yashkina, A. (2007). Distributing leadership to make schools smarter: Taking the ego out of the system. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *6*(1), 37-67.

Leithwood, K. A., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

LePine, J. A., Erez, A., & Johnson, D. E. (2002). The nature and dimensionality of organizational citizenship behavior: a critical review and meta-analysis. *Journal of applied psychology*, *87*(1), 52.

Lumpkin, A., Claxton, H. & Wilson, A. (2014). Key characteristics of teacher leaders in schools. *Administrative Issues Journal*, *4*(2), 59-67.

Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational administration quarterly*, *39*(3), 370-397.

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. ASCD.

McGee, G. W. (2004). Closing the achievement gap: Lessons from Illinois' Golden Spike high-poverty high-performing schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, *9*(2), 97-125.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Designing your study and selecting a sample. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*, 73-104.

Milner IV, H. R. (2010). *Start where you are, but don't stay there: Understanding diversity,*

opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Milner, H. R. (2012). Beyond a test score: Explaining opportunity gaps in educational practice. Journal of Black Studies, 0021934712442539.

Mosenthal, J., Lipson, M., Torncello, S., Russ, B., & Mekkelsen, J. (2004). Contexts and practices of six schools successful in obtaining reading achievement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 343-367.

Muijs, D., & Harris, A. (2007). Teacher leadership in (In) action three case studies of contrasting schools. *Educational management administration & leadership*, *35*(1), 111-134.

Murnane, R. J. (2007). Improving the education of children living in poverty. *The Future of Children / Center for the Future of Children, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 17*(2), 161-182.

Nappi, J.S. (2014). Teacher leader: Improving schools by improving social capital through shared leadership. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 80*(4), 29-34.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative research and methods: Integrating theory and practice.

Pianta, R. C., Belsky, J., Houts, R., & Morrison, F. (2007). Opportunities to learn in America's elementary classrooms. Science (New York, NY), 315(5820), 1795.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of management*, *26*(3), 513-563.

Quinn, D. M. (2002). The impact of principal leadership behaviors on instructional practice and student engagement. *Journal of educational administration*, *40*(5), 447-467.

Reeves, D. B. (2003). High performance in high poverty schools: 90/90/90 and beyond. *Center*

for performance assessment, 1-20.

Ringler, M., O'Neal, D., Rawls, J., Cumiskey, S. (2013). The role of school leaders in teacher leadership development. *Rural Educator, 35*(1), 34-43.

Rubenstein, H., Miles, F. M., & Bassi, L. J. (2009). *Leadership development for educators*. R&L Education.

Sagor, R. D. (2010). *The action research guidebook: A four-stage process for educators and school teams*. Corwin Press.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Silva, D. Y., Gimbert, B., & Nolan, J. (2000). Sliding the doors: Locking and unlocking possibilities for teacher leadership. *Teachers college record, 102*(4), 779-804.

Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. SAGE publications.

Smylie, M. A., Conley, S., & Marks, H. M. (2002). Reshaping leadership in action. *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the, 21*, 162-188.

Somech, A., & Bogler, R. (2002). Antecedents and consequences of teacher organizational and professional commitment. *Educational administration quarterly, 38*(4), 555-577.

Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed leadership. *Educational Forum (69)* 2, pp.143-150. Taylor & Francis Group.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher, 30*(3), 23-28.

Spillane, J. P., & Louis, K. S. (2002). School improvement processes and practices: Professional learning for building instructional capacity. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 101*(1), 83-104.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2013). *Multiple case study analysis*. Guilford Press.

Timperley, H. S. (2005). Distributed leadership: Developing theory from practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 37*(4), 395-420.

Tivnan, T., & Hemphill, L. (2005). Comparing Four Literacy Reform Models in High-Poverty Schools: Patterns of First-Grade Achievement. *The Elementary School Journal*, *105*(5), 419-441.

Touchton, D., & Acker-Hocevar, M. (2001). Using a Lens of Social Justice To Reframe Principals' Interviews from High Poverty, Low Performing Schools.

Ylimaki, R. M., Jacobson, S. L., & Drysdale, L. (2007). Making a difference in challenging, high-poverty schools: Successful principals in the USA, England, and Australia. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 18*(4), 361-381.

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of educational research*, *74*(3), 255-316.

APPENDIX A

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS TABLE

Author(s)	Methodology & Sample	Key Findings
Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2010)	Longitudinal study of hundreds of elementary schools in Chicago, conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research	Five essential supports for school improvement: • Coherent instructional guidance system; • School's professional capacity; • Strong parent-community-school partnerships; • Student-centered learning climate; and • Leadership that drives change. Strong evidence of these supports indicated greatest likely hood of student achievement. School leaders need to build capacities in others if sustainable achievements are to be realized.
Camburn, E., Rowan, B., & Taylor, J. E. (2003)	Comparative metropolitan school sample School Leader Questionnaire and School Characteristics Inventory • Analyzed responses • Conducted two-level hierarchical linear model analysis to control for variations in respondents roles and contexts.	Outcomes of instructional leadership can be enhanced by distributed leadership. Leadership functions are more widely distributed in schools which implement comprehensive school reform (CSR) models than those which do not. Leaders in these CSR schools fill both specialized and redundant roles. In addition CSR models employ processes define and embed leadership processes more effectively than non-CSR schools.
Copland, M. A. (2003)	Qualitative study of 16 elementary, middle, and high schools Complied and analyzed Teacher / leader • surveys, • interviews, • artifacts, and • observations	The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative "Cycles of Inquiry" about increasing student learning led schools to collectively determine problems to solve and promoted shared leadership. Data reported positive growth in teacher leadership and reduction of traditional leadership functions held by the principal in the most advanced schools studied. This study did not report concrete data on any subsequent increase student learning or consistency of implementation of collectively decided strategies by teachers.
Harris, A. (2004).	Case study of 10-12 schools	There is very little empirical evidence that suggests distributed leadership directly correlates to school improvement. There is evidence however that suggests this leadership theory provides a shared leadership approach to school improvement which connects informal leaders to the academic performance of students.
Hattie, J. (2008)	Meta-analysis of more than 800 meta-studies (over a 15-year span) Incorporates work from over 50,000 studies	Most strategies in education improvement demonstrate some positive effect. Found "Visible Learning" strategies among the largest effect sizes for student achievement. This study demonstrates little or no direct, measureable impact from building leaders on student achievement.

Hauge, T., Norenes, S., Vedory, G. (2014)	Qualitative study utilizing the Developmental Work Research (DWR) (Daniels et. al, 2009; Edwards 2005; Engestrom 2007).	Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Cole and Engestrom 1993, 1999; Engerstrom 1993, 1999, 2007) At the conclusion of Hauge's (2014) intervention study, the school's leadership roles and practices began to transform toward the main object of shared leadership.
Leithwood, K., Mascall, B., Strauss, T., Sacks, R., Memon, N., & Yashkina, A. (2007)	Two-stage qualitative multi-methods study Conducted interviews of 67 district and school level administrators and teachers	Distribution of leadership to independent teams of teachers is unsuccessful without some form of regular monitoring by the principal. Informal leaders were most often attributed more positive characteristics and utility. Approach most likely to succeed within an open organizational culture. Authors note a need for additional study into organizational effects and outcomes for student learning. Identifies need for examination of impact from greater participation by formal leaders in interdependent team activities.
Ringler, M., O'Neal, D., Rawls, J., Cumiskey, S. (2013)	Qualitative study utilizing the practical participatory evaluation approach (Cousins & Whitmore, 1999) to analyzing the implications of professional development on developing teacher leaders.	Teachers' perception of the principal changed from a manager to an instructional leader. Teacher leaders emerged from the principal's use of shared leadership as instruction focused on academic language proficiency. Student achievement increased as a result of the study.
Spillane, J. P. (2005)	5-year longitudinal study of elementary school leaders. Conducted • interviews, • observations, • videotaping leadership practice.	This study of school leadership concludes distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practices and not leaders' role or function within the organization.
Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001)	Qualitative study of 13 elementary schools in Chicago, Illinois. Examined execution of leadership tasks distributed to school leaders.	The ability of the school leader to organize these day to day tasks correlates to instructional leadership through creating a vision, establishing norms for behavior, collaboration, building teacher capacity, and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Distributive leadership is not a function of an individual leader's ability, skill, charisma or cognition.

APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

School Leadership Capacity Survey

This survey is designed to assess the leadership capacity of our school. When responding to each question, think about all members of the organization (formal and informal leaders as well as administrators). You may add description to clarify your responses in the spaces provided for each area.

The numbers on the 1–5 scale represent the following:

1 = We do not do this at our school. 2 = We are starting to move in this direction.
3 = We are making good progress here. 4 = We have this condition well established.
5 = We are refining our practice in this area.

A. Broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership. In our school, we:					
1. Have established representative governance groups	1	2	3	4	5
2. Perform collaborative work in large and small teams	1	2	3	4	5
3. Model leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5
4. Organize for maximum interaction among adults and children	1	2	3	4	5
5. Share authority and resources	1	2	3	4	5
6. Express our leadership by attending to the learning of the entire school community	1	2	3	4	5
7. Engage each other in opportunities to lead	1	2	3	4	5
Example(s) as evidence of these ratings: (List the item number to which your explanation applies.)					

B. Shared vision results in program coherence. In our school, we:					
1. Develop our school vision jointly	1	2	3	4	5
2. Ask each other questions that keep us on track with our vision	1	2	3	4	5
3. Think together about how to align our standards, instruction, assessment, and programs with our vision	1	2	3	4	5
4. Keep our vision alive by reviewing it regularly	1	2	3	4	5
Example(s) as evidence of these ratings: (List the item number to which your explanation applies.)					

C. Inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice. In our school, we:					
1. Use a learning cycle that involves reflection, dialogue, inquiry, and action	1	2	3	4	5
2. Make time available for this learning to occur (e.g., faculty meetings, ad hoc groups, teams)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Focus on student learning					
4. Use data/evidence to inform our decisions and teaching practices	1	2	3	4	5
5. Have designed a comprehensive information system that keeps everyone informed and involved	1	2	3	4	5
Example(s) as evidence of these ratings: (List the item number to which your explanation applies.)					

D. Roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility. In our school, we:					
1. Have designed our roles to include attention to our classrooms, school, community, and profession	1	2	3	4	5
2. Seek to perform outside of traditional roles	1	2	3	4	5
3. Have developed new ways to work together	1	2	3	4	5
4. Have developed a plan for sharing responsibilities in the implementation of our decisions and agreements	1	2	3	4	5
Example(s) as evidence of these ratings: (List the item number to which your explanation applies.)					

E. Reflective practice consistently leads to innovation. In our school, we:					
1. Make time for ongoing reflection (e.g., journaling, peer coaching, collaborative planning)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Encourage individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, and time	1	2	3	4	5
3. Have joined with networks of other schools and programs, both inside and outside the district, to secure feedback on our work	1	2	3	4	5
4. Practice and support new ways of doing things	1	2	3	4	5
5. Develop our own criteria for accountability regarding individual and shared work					
Example(s) as evidence of these ratings: (List the item number to which your explanation applies.)					

F. High or steadily improving student achievement and development. In our school, we:					
1. Work with members of the school community to establish and implement expectations and standards	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teach and assess so that all children learn	1	2	3	4	5
3. Provide feedback to children and families about student progress	1	2	3	4	5
4. Talk with families about student performance and school programs	1	2	3	4	5
5. Have redesigned roles and structures to develop resiliency in children (e.g., teacher as coach/advisor/mentor, school-wide guidance programs, community service)					
Example(s) as evidence of these ratings: (List the item number to which your explanation applies.)					

What is your role at the school? (Circle One) Classified Staff Member Para-professional

Instructional Support - Staff Teacher

How Many Years of Experience do you have at this school? (Circle One) 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26+

How many total years have your worked in education? (Circle One) 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26+

Self-Assessment of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership

From Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2009). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Helping teachers develop as leaders*. Corwin Press.

To be read aloud to the group of participants of this study.

Respond to the following statements on your response form in terms of how strongly you agree or disagree.
1. I use a variety of teaching strategies to meet student's needs.
2. Individual teachers can influence hoe other teachers think about, plan for, and conduct their work with students.
3. Teachers should be recognized for being innovative in classrooms whether they succeed or fail.
4. Teachers should decide on the best methods of meeting educational goals set by policy making groups such as school boards or State Departments)
5. I am willing to observe and provide feedback to fellow teachers.
6. I would like to spend time discussing my values and beliefs about teaching with colleagues.
7. It is important to me to have the respect of the administrators and other teachers at my school.
8. I would be willing to help a colleague who was having difficulty with his/her teaching.
9. I can see the points of view of my colleagues, parents and students.
10. I would give my time to help teachers select new faculty members for my school.
11. I am a facilitator of the work of students in my classroom.
12. Teachers working collaboratively are able to influence practice in their schools.
13. I can continue to serve as a classroom teacher while serving as a leader in my school.
14. Cooperating with my colleagues is more important that competing with them.
15. I am comfortable working with parents and I know my school's community well.
16. My work contributes to the overall success of our school program.
17. Mentoring new teachers is part of my responsibility as a professional teacher.
18. School faculty and university faculty can mutually benefit from working together.
19. I would be willing to give my time to participate in making decisions about such things as allocation of resources, professional development, or student assignments.
20. I value time spent working with my colleagues on curriculum and instructional matters.
21. I am effective in working with almost all of my colleagues.
22. I have a responsibility to help all student in my school be successful.
23. I recognize and value points of view that are different from mine.
24. I am effective in working with almost all of my students.
25. I want to work in an environment where I am recognized and valued as a professional.

Self-Assessment of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs about Teacher Leadership

From Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2009). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Helping teachers develop as leaders*. Corwin Press.

Response Recording Form

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.						15.					
2.						16.					
3.						17.					
4.						18.					
5.						19.					
6.						20.					
7.						21.					
8.						22.					
9.						23.					
10.						24.					
11.						25.					
12.						**TOTALS**	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
13.											
14.											

Scoring Protocol

Name _____ Preferred Contact Number _____ This information will be used to share eligibility results with the interested party.	**Record Number**
1. The number of times respondent chose "Strongly disagree" multiplied by negative two.	
2. The number of times respondent "Disagree." multiplied by negative one.	
3. The number of times respondent chose "Agree."	
4. The number of times respondent chose "Strongly Agree" multiplied by two.	
Sum of these four numbers.	

Rating Scale

How many of the individual's attitudes, values, and beliefs parallel those related to teacher leadership?				
Sum	50 - 35	34 - 20	19 - -5	-6 and below
	Virtually All	Majority	Some	Few

Interview Protocols

1st - Focus Group Interview Protocol

Thinking about your areas of focus and identified goal from the "Teachers as Leaders Framework" (Attached):

1. How did our individual discussion affect your progress, outlook, or outcome with the goal you set or your personal leadership practice?
2. What help or support would you need from me or others to make further progress in this area?
3. What are your thoughts about this type of conversation as a method to encourage or support your individual growth in leadership?

1st Individual Interview Protocol

Thinking about our meetings, data-analysis, team plans, and the "Framework of Assumptions" (Attached):

1. What steps in our Action Research process have encouraged a higher level of leadership capacity for you?
2. How has the engagement of our AR Team with the school affected the overall leadership capacity of our school?
3. If you could choose a next step for this AR team, what would it be?

2nd – Focus Group Interview Protocol

1. How can school administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity at Sisley Elementary?
2. What is the change in perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment after leadership development?
3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

APPENDIX C

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

Demonstrations of Leadership Assessment

Key Action			Basic	Effective	Distinguished
Level 1	**Self-Assess**		Personal talents and preferences	Areas for growth, actively seeks input, self-identifies as a leader	Acts upon feedback, studies leadership, others identify leadership
Level 2	**Perceive**	Seeks to understand perspective of others	Builds relationships, listens	Understands others' viewpoints, reserves judgment	Uses active listening, seeks others' points of view, seeks opposing voices
		Gains others' perspective	Understands organization's goals/priorities	Coordinates with others at all levels of organization, makes senses of policies and practices	Understands decision making structure
	Perform	Strives for excellence	Does best work capable of	Understands levels of quality in organization, tries to be an expert	Helps define excellence for colleagues, creatively solves problems, synergizes groups
		Continues to learn	Observes, reads professional literature,	Stays current in the fields, applies new learning to great extent	Demonstrates growth, shares knowledge gained, positively affects attitude of others

Level 3	**Inspire**	Motivates	Acts positively, believes organization can improve	Takes deliberate action, models personal conviction, recognizes good performance in others	Secures others commitment, encourages others, highlights others strengths.
		Engenders trust	Listens	Shows consistency, transparency, respect to opposition, and can be confided in	Rationale and actions are understood by others, others feel decisions are made with their interest in mind, does not take things personally, uses problem solving approach, follows norms of collaboration
	Develop	Maximizes potential	Encourages others to think for themselves	Encourages others to exert influence over work, provides clear direction, sets parameters, supports creativity, prompts leadership attributes in others	Allows day-to-day decisions by appropriate individuals, Connects each person's talents and passion to the work, builds leadership density, encourages leadership in all
		Leads change	Looks for ways to improve the organization, is receptive to new ideas	Serves as a responsible change agent, builds acceptance to change, is adaptable	Challenges the way things have been, seeks good ideas and works to implement them, secures cooperation, is comfortable with ambiguity

Level 4	**Envision**	Creates a shared vision	Has a vision, efforts have meaning for some in the school	Articulates vision that provides meaning to others, secures enrollment of others to validate a mission	Engages everyone in vision, takes steps to secure long-term success, supports all staff-working in mutually reinforcing ways.
		Establishes goals and clarifies purpose	Develops general goals	Develops measurable goals, provides clarity and focus for goals, uses goals and indicators to guide efforts	All stakeholders use goals and indicators of success to guide their efforts, these exceed established requirements
	Serve	Transcends organization	Is service oriented	Makes personal sacrifices for the organization, influences others to become committed to a cause beyond school/students	Helps others to support the larger concept or greater good, makes sacrifices for the common good
		Maintains integrity	Follows accepted moral, ethical practices, follows customs, rules, laws, policies	Maintains highest standards of personal integrity and ethics, does the right things for the right reasons.	Helps others to do the right thing through exemplary behavior

A Framework of Assumptions

from *Developing Teacher Leaders: How Teacher Leadership Enhances School Success*, 2nd ed.

Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, (2009).

Schools do not need teacher leadership.	1	2	3	4	5	Schools need leadership form teachers.
Teacher leadership is distinctive.	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher leadership is like other forms of leadership.
Teaching, learning, and assessment are the focus of teacher leadership.	1	2	3	4	5	Organizational issues are the focus of teacher leadership.
Teacher leadership is enduring and sustainable.	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher leadership is episodic ad situational.
Teacher leaders are identifiable through scientific and personality analysis.	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher leaders may emerge unexpectedly.
All teachers are potential leaders.	1	2	3	4	5	Some teachers are potential leaders.
Teacher leadership can be nurtured.	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher leadership is inherent.
Teacher leaders have pedagogical credibility.	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher leaders do not need to have pedagogical credibility.
Teacher leaders work as individual professionals.	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher leaders work as collaborative individuals.
Teacher leaders are popular with colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher leaders are seen as difficult by colleagues.

Teachers as Leaders Framework

from *Developing Teacher Leaders: How Teacher Leadership Enhances School Success*, 2nd ed. Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, (2009).

Table 1.1 The Teachers as Leaders Framework

Teacher leaders . . .

Convey convictions about a better world by

- articulating a positive future for all students
- contributing to an image of teaching as a profession that makes a difference

Facilitate communities of learning by

- encouraging a shared, schoolwide approach to core pedagogical processes
- approaching professional learning as consciousness-raising about complex issues
- synthesizing new ideas out of colleagues' professional discourse and reflective activities

Strive for pedagogical excellence by

- showing genuine interest in students' needs and well-being
- continuously developing and refining personal teaching gifts and talents
- seeking deep understanding of significant pedagogical practices

Confront barriers in the school's culture and structures by

- standing up for children, especially disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups
- working with administrators to find solutions to issues of equity, fairness, and justice
- encouraging student "voice" in ways that are sensitive to students' developmental stages and circumstances

Translate ideas into sustainable systems of action by

- working with the principal, administrators, and other teachers to manage projects that heighten alignment between the school's vision, values, pedagogical practices, and professional learning activities
- building alliances and nurturing external networks of support

Nurture a culture of success by

- acting on opportunities to emphasize accomplishments and high expectations
- encouraging collective responsibility in addressing schoolwide challenges
- encouraging self-respect and confidence in students' communities

APPENDIX D

STUDY RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Study Announcement Flyer

Have you ever…

- Wished to have input into school improvement decisions?
- Wondered how to accomplish more student improvements on your team?
- Wanted training to lead members of your team to make changes?

Then engaging in an action research study might be just for you!

Increasing School Leadership Capacity to Sustain Improvement Through Action Research is a project being conducted by [redacted], Clinical Professor of University of [redacted] with [redacted] at [redacted] Elementary.

This mixed methods action research study will explore how school leaders can strengthen the capacity of teacher leaders to improve the engagement and outcomes of collaborative planning teams at our school.

In this project, we seek to understand:

1. How can school administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity at an elementary school?

2. What is the change in perception about leadership and sense of empowerment among teachers?

3. What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

Please consider participating in this study. You may notify [redacted] of any questions you have regarding the study to learn more detail about student participation. A signed letter of informed consent is required for participation.

Email Invitation

Email Invitation/Announcement

To: All certified Teaching Staff and Administration

From: [redacted]

Hello!

I will be conducting and action research study at our school this year. Attached to this message, you will find a flyer briefly describing the project.

Please read the attachment carefully and consider participating in the study.

I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
[redacted]

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Increasing School Leadership Capacity to Sustain Improvement Through Action Research

Researcher's Statement

As a teacher or administrator in a school seeking improvement in leadership practice, you are being asked to take part in an action research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: 

Purpose of the Study

This study will focus on ways teachers and administrators can work with teachers to improve demonstrations of leadership within the school. It will examine how specific support can foster greater consistency of leadership practice and how these can lead to more sustainable improvements at the school. As a teacher or administrator at this school, your participation is important because you have valuable perspectives and insights to contribute to our school's long-term improvement.

Study Procedures

This action research study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- How can school administrators foster greater teacher leadership capacity?
- What is the change in teachers' perceptions of leadership and sense of empowerment after leadership development?
- What is learned by a teacher and leader group of action researchers as they work to implement leadership strategies in their respective teams?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- Participate in action research process to select, perform, and share outcomes of leadership development exercises, with teachers and administrators at your school.
- At the beginning of the study, you will be asked to complete self-assessment of your perspectives about teacher leadership and a self-assessment of your current level of leadership at the beginning and end of the study. This assessment requires a description of tangible, observable, and/or quantifiable evidence for chosen ratings. Completion of both items should take about 30 minutes, totaling 1 hour of participation. Additional time may be needed to gather desired evidence of leadership practice in the second assessment. This procedure is for research and is voluntary.
- Agree to recording of data about your leadership engagement during regular meetings and functions at the school. This procedure is for research and is voluntary.
- Engage with a team of teachers and school administrators in audio recorded reflective discussions, at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. These conversations will last for approximately 1 hour, totaling 3 hours of participation. This procedure is for research and is voluntary.

Two action research teams will investigate the purpose and questions of the study.

- A team of teachers and school based administrators will engage in leadership development exercises and reflective practice to build support for effective implementation of leadership strategies by members of the group
- An additional team school administrators and district leadership developers will plan leadership development exercises for teacher participants. This team will ensure that effective development strategies are implemented with the group of teachers. It will also serve to balance expected leadership demonstrations by members of the first team.

Risks and Discomforts

Possible risks of participation in this research include breach of confidentiality agreement or some affect to social dynamic with non-participants. These risks will be reduced by the use of pseudonyms instead of participants and the

school's names. All paper files will be kept in a locked cabinet that can only be access by me, the research facilitator. All paper, electronic, and audio files will be destroyed when the study is completed. Codes and indirect identifiers will be sued to ensure that no one can determine the identity of participants in the study.

As an administrator at the school, the research facilitator has influence over study participants. To ensure participants do not experience undue influence or coercion, several safeguards will be implemented during the study. First, participation is entirely voluntary and not at all related to perceptions of job performance. Teachers and administrators who agree to participate in this study, will sign the consent form being aware that they are not required to participate for the entire study. Participants may end their participation in the study at any time and for any reason. Second, administrative team members will examine data with individual identifiers removed. Identifiable data will be coded during data collected and pseudonyms will be used in the study data collection and reporting process.

Benefits
Teacher and administrator participants will benefit from this study. Team members will become more familiar with school improvement plans and goals. They will gain confidence in working with other adults on their teaching and administration teams. Finally, this research will help the school make a stronger contribution to the school districts strategic goals of greater accountability and leadership capacity for school improvement at the school site.

As little research has been conducted in the area of teacher leadership, this study will benefit educators more broadly to demonstrate how increase teachers' capacity to make change within their own schools. It will provide an internal approach to identifying a needs within a specific school context and how administrators can engage teachers in leadership seeking collective solutions.

Audio/Video Recording
Audio recordings will be used to obtain complete and accurate record of research related discussions and activities. These events will be transcribed using codes to protect participants' privacy. Recordings will be deleted immediately after transcription is completed and will not be maintained after the study is complete.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have your participation audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____I do not want to have my participation in meetings and discussions recorded.
_____I am willing to have my participation in meetings and discussions recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality
Even though the investigator will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the focus group session should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. We will use codes to identify the data collected from you so that you will not be identified directly. Your privacy and confidentiality will be protected by destroying personal identifiers immediately after data is transcribed. The projects research records may be reviewed by the [redacted] School District Research Review Board and by departments the University of Georgia responsible for regulatory and research oversight. Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Voluntary Participation
Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate in the research will not affect your employment of employment evaluations. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

Questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Karen Bryant, a clinical professor at the [redacted]. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact [redacted] at [redacted] or at [redacted]. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at [redacted] or [redacted].

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. As a participant in this study, you agree to keep confidential all information you learn during study related discussions and meetings. Your signature

below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.