A Case Study of Principals' Perceptions in Supporting Teacher Leaders

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A CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS’ PERCEPTIONS IN SUPPORTING TEACHER LEADERS

by

Melissa K. Johnson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
St. Cloud State University
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for the Degree
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Dissertation Committee:
John Eller, Chairperson
Nick Miller
Greg Vandal
Roger Worner
The purpose of the study was to examine select principal’s perspectives of the role of principals in supporting teacher leaders in one Midwestern public school district. The researcher intended to explore the conditions principals employed to support teacher leaders, the communication channels employed to support teacher leaders, and principals’ perceptions of the work of teacher leaders. A case study was used to examine the research questions that relate to the role of the principal in supporting teacher leaders. Four principals from one school district were selected as study participants. The case study format allowed for the collection of individual interview responses from the principals’ perspectives.

Analysis of the data for research question one revealed that the principals provided several supportive conditions including: establishing the teacher leader position, selection of teacher leaders, school district and teacher leader goals, professional development for teacher leaders, and involving teacher leaders in developing school district initiatives.

The findings from research question two revealed that the respondent principals use 10 communication channels to communicate the work of teacher leaders to promote support of their roles throughout the school district. These communication channels are organized into four categories: superintendent to principal, principals to teacher leaders, principals to classroom teachers, and teacher leader to teacher leader.

Research question three examined respondent principals’ perceptions of the work of teacher leaders. Three areas were examined: beneficial skills, work benefits, and challenges experienced with teacher leaders. Principals indicated establishing relationships and content knowledge were beneficial skills teacher leaders must possess in order to be effective. The principals’ responses revealed three benefits of the teacher leaders. The benefits identified by the principals were: providing instructional and curriculum support to classroom teachers, contributing to student achievement growth, and providing and creating consistency among schools. The findings also revealed challenges experienced with teacher leaders. The respondent principals reported the following challenges: teacher leaders report to four principals and work at four buildings, a job description was not written for the teacher leaders, and the three elementary schools are different demographically and in student enrollment.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Leadership and the School Principal

The school principal is a key factor in the support and effectiveness of teacher leaders (Murphy, 2005). Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992) stated, “Because most new teacher leadership roles depend heavily on the principal-teacher leader interaction and collaboration, principals are in first-order positions to block, to support and facilitate, and to shape the nature and function of teacher leadership in their schools” (p. 151). Because of the principal’s leadership role, he or she has control over the supportive conditions in a school building necessary for teacher leadership to mature (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Murphy (2005), principals provide support to teacher leaders by creating vision and goals, developing relationships, recasting decision making, and developing teacher leaders.

Teacher leadership initiatives have been a part of educational reform efforts since the 1980s for many reasons: to reduce the workload of principals and change the decision-making structure in schools to involve those who engage most frequently with students, to professionalize teaching and the workplace for teachers, and to alleviate teacher attrition (Berg et al., 2005; MacNeil & McClanahan, 2005; Murphy, 2005; Wasley, 1991). The Carnegie Report, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), recommended new teacher roles that paired their educational strengths with
specific needs of contribution in their schools. The Holmes Group in 1986, *Tomorrow's Teachers: A report of the Holmes Group* (1986), called for role differentiation between teachers and teacher leaders. Similarly, the *National Commission on Teaching and America's Future* (1996) focused on encouraging and rewarding career-long development for teachers. More recently, teacher leadership was also specified in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* of 2009. To the extent that these initiatives have been perceived as a solution for strengthening schools in the United States, researchers advise that teacher leadership is not meant to be a single answer for school improvement or its own reform movement (Murphy, 2005). At this time, teacher leadership is meant to fit into existing school systems. As Murphy (2005) suggested, teacher leadership is to be explored as a “piece of equipment in the school improvement toolbox” (p. 4).

Teacher leadership emerged to reduce the overwhelming workload placed on principals. The decision-making process and organizational structure that educators adopted from the business management model placed an overload on today’s principals. Responsibility for managing, maintaining order, hiring teachers, working with the community, and addressing unanticipated problems all have fallen to the principal (MacNeil & McClanahan, 2005; Moller & Pankake, 2006). This is in addition to working with “school board members . . . policy makers . . . local business owners . . . [and] union officials” (Mangin, 2007, p. 319). This workload for principals has been reported as overwhelming (Danielson, 2007) and the problems have been found to be “too numerous for one person to address alone” (MacNeil & McClanahan, 2005, p. 2). Furthermore, the top-down business management model that was established in the industrial era, “has not met the challenge of providing quality learning for all students” (Lambert, 2002, p. 37), and has been reported as being outdated and ineffective in schools (Clemson-Ingram &
Fessler, 1997). As a consequence, principals who serve as the sole leader find that the school becomes overly dependent on their leadership (Lambert, 2002). It has been reported that change that occurs under a one-person leadership is not sustained when a principal leaves or when programs lose momentum (Lambert, 2002). This type of leadership has been viewed as leaving the vast talents of teachers untapped (Lambert, 2002).

Teacher leader roles were created to professionalize teaching and the teacher workplace. In 1988, Little described the potential of this new role by examining three highly discussed concerns regarding teacher leadership: (a) conditions of membership in the occupation, (b) structure of the teaching career, and (c) conditions of productivity in schools. Teacher leadership addressed ‘membership in the occupation’ by inviting teachers to assist in creating regulations in teaching. For example, teachers became involved in improving standards in teacher evaluation, teaching licensure, and preservice admission and exit standards. The second concern teacher leadership addressed was restructuring the teaching career. Competition was introduced through career-ladder plans, and teachers were offered positions in special assignments. Third, creating productive and professional workplace conditions were addressed through teacher collaborative work rather than working in isolation (Little, 1988).

Additionally, teacher leadership was to address teacher attrition—the growing number of new teachers leaving the profession. Smith and Ingersoll (2003) stated that 30% of new teachers leave the profession within three years of first employment, and 50% leave within five years due to isolation and lack of career growth opportunities. More recently, new teachers, unlike those of the previous generation, prefer to work collaboratively in school communities and hope to experience professional growth in their careers as teachers (Johnson, 2004).

Researchers Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) categorized teacher leader roles into four
leadership functions: “leadership in governing”, “leadership of student activities”, “leadership in operational tasks”, and “leadership in instruction” (pp. 122-123). Further research delineates the skills and characteristics needed by teacher leaders to operate effectively within these functions. Effective teacher leaders need to have a strong knowledge of content and subject areas (Manno & Firestone, 2008), be proficient in communication skills (Hatfield, Blackman & Claypool, 1986), have an understanding of group dynamics (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), and display an understanding of organizational systems (Killion, 1996).

Researchers have cited a multitude of benefits that arise from the work of teacher leaders when implemented correctly. Along with its intended rationale, teachers have found more satisfaction in leadership roles, have improved their teaching performances, and have been accountable for results and their work (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Research has consistently revealed the principal to be the key factor in supporting teachers in leadership positions (Barth, 2001; Berg et al., 2005; Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Murphy, 2005). Murphy (2005) and Moller and Pankake (2006) have both concluded that a significant contribution to supporting teacher leaders is creating a high functioning principal-teacher leader relationship. Moller and Pankake (2006) report that, “To promote, build, and sustain quality teacher leadership, positive relationships are essential” (p. 8). In addition to creating a strong principal-teacher leader relationship, research has identified many supportive conditions that add to the effectiveness and satisfaction of teacher leader work (Mangin, 2007; Murphy, 2005; Weiner, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

**Key Contributing Studies**

The following three studies have guided the work of this dissertation: York-Barr and

Following a review of literature of teacher leadership that included approximately 140 sources from 1980-2004, York-Barr and Duke (2004) created a conceptual framework for teacher leadership. Within the framework, the authors highlighted the importance of the principal’s role and the conditions that support the work of teacher leaders. The framework consists of seven major components. The role of the principal is embedded within the “conditions” (pp. 289-290) component. The authors theorize that the conditions needed to support teacher leaders include the support of their principal, along with a supportive culture, time, resources, and development opportunities.

Since York-Barr and Duke’s 2004 establishment of their teacher leader framework, Mangin (2007) and Weiner (2011) undertook two studies that investigated the principal’s role in supporting teacher leaders and the possible supportive conditions that are considered pivotal for effective teacher leadership. Mangin (2007) used an exploratory study to examine the supportive conditions among elementary principals and the work of the teacher leaders. The supportive conditions the researcher examined were communication channels used throughout the school district to distribute information regarding the purpose and role of the teacher leaders, in addition to the principals’ knowledge of and interactions with the teacher leader position. From the findings of her study, Mangin (2007) recommended a comprehensive examination of these supports and other conditions to further explore the principal’s role in supporting teacher leadership.

The study conducted by Weiner (2011) involved interviews of principals and teacher leaders to obtain a clearer understanding of how they described their roles and how these
descriptions affected their practices. The specific supportive conditions explored by Weiner (2011) were the principals’ capacities to state a clear and coherent vision, allocate and align resources, and provide ongoing support to teacher leaders.

Statement of the Problem

It is clear that teacher leadership is a “conceptual and practical entity in its own right” (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009, p. 26) and that the level of effectiveness teacher leaders have outside of the classroom is related to the amount of support and understanding a principal has regarding the role of teacher leaders (Murphy, 2005). Although many studies have been completed on teacher leaders, including multiple studies revealing that the teacher leader’s effectiveness relies on the support of principals, little information was found in the literature about the specific conditions that enable principals to support teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007; Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009; Weiner, 2011). Mangin (2007) stated: “Despite the apparent importance of principal support, little research has been conducted on the kinds of conditions that promote support for teacher leaders” (p. 347). This study will explore the principal’s role in supporting teacher leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine select principals’ perspectives of the role of principals in supporting teacher leaders in one Midwestern public school district. The researcher intended to explore the conditions principals employed to support teacher leaders, the communication channels employed to support teacher leaders, and principals’ perceptions of the work of teacher leaders.
Significance of the Study

A review of the literature suggests that the role of the principal is important for teacher leaders to be effective. Teacher leaders are used throughout the nation even though minimal research has been conducted to ascertain how principals can most effectively support this role (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). This study intends to extend teacher leadership research by exploring the role of the principal and seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the principal’s perspective on supporting teacher leaders. The study results intend to identify strategies principals could consider implementing in order to improve relationships with teacher leaders. Finally, the study will attempt to provide evidence that may assist university instructors in more effectively preparing principals to develop and maximize teacher leadership.

Research Questions

Three research questions will be explored in the process of the study:

1. What conditions do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?
2. What communication channels do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?
3. What are principals’ perceptions of the beneficial skills, work benefits, and challenges experienced with teacher leaders?

Assumptions

Assumptions are factors that the researcher takes for granted relative to the study (Roberts, 2010). The study assumed the following:

1. The interviewed principals answered all of the interview questions openly and
Participating principals can remember their perceptions of the teacher leader positions that occurred three years prior to the interview.

3. The interviewed principals were able to articulate their knowledge and practices of working with teacher leaders.

Delimitations

Delimitations are controlled factors that may or will affect the study in an important manner. Controlling delimitations clarifies the boundaries of a study (Roberts, 2010). The following are delimitations of the study:

1. The interviews were conducted in May of 2014.

2. The location of the study was in the Midwest region of the United States of America.

3. The study included one school district that employed full-time teacher leaders.

4. Study participants included selected principals. The researcher focused on principals as participants because principals are responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the school and the work of the teacher leader. Years of experience as a principal or years of experience as a principal in the school district were not controlled for in this study.

5. This study examined certain supportive conditions and communication channels used by the principals.
Definition of Terms

Differentiated Roles: “…roles for teachers that reach beyond the scope of classroom teaching…. differentiated from that of full-time classroom teacher” (Berg et al., 2005, p.4)

Distributive Leadership: “Incorporates the activities of the multiple individuals in a school who work at mobilizing and guiding a school’s staff” (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 16).

Instructional Leadership: “Typically focuses on the behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students. Many versions of this form of leadership focus additionally on other organizational variables (such as school culture) that are believed to have important consequences for such teacher behavior” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 47).

Teacher Leadership: “The process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, pp. 287-288).

Parallel Leadership: “Is a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity. It embodies three distinct qualities—mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression” (Crowther, Ferguson & Hann, 2009, p. 53).

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one will introduce the topic of
the research study and provide the background and key contributing research studies for the study. The chapter further delineates the statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, assumptions, delimitations, and definition of terms. Chapter two includes the review of the literature focused on teacher leadership and the principal’s role in supporting teacher leaders. Frameworks and findings related to the study will also be presented. Chapter three presents the methods and procedures employed in the study including research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Chapters four and five will include study findings, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for professional practice and recommendations for future research studies.
Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is clear that teacher leadership is a “conceptual and practical entity in its own right” (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 26) and that the level of effectiveness teacher leaders have outside of the classroom is related to the amount of support and understanding a principal has regarding the role of teacher leaders (Murphy, 2005). Although many studies have been completed on teacher leaders, including multiple studies revealing that the teacher leader’s effectiveness relies on the support of principals, little information was found in the literature about the specific conditions that enable principals to support teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007; Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009; Weiner, 2011). Mangin (2007) stated: “Despite the apparent importance of principal support, little research has been conducted on the kinds of conditions that promote support for teacher leaders” (p. 347).

This chapter presents the review of literature and focuses on teacher leadership and the role of the principal in supporting teacher leaders. The chapter is organized in two sections. The first section presents the literature on teacher leadership. The second section includes research on the role of the school principal in supporting teacher leadership.
THE ROLE OF TEACHER LEADER

Teacher Leader Defined

Defining teacher leadership has been problematic in research and practice since its formal beginnings in the late 1970s (Murphy, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Brownlee (1979) broadly defined teachers who function in leadership roles as “those teachers who influence the behavior of both students and adults in the school setting” (p. 120). The definition has changed as the role of the teacher leader has evolved. This evolution exists for several reasons. First, considerable progress has been made in school improvement research (Wasley, 1991). Originally, teacher leader roles were initiated as a response to major reform reports, recommending that teachers play a larger role in improving teaching and learning (Wasley, 1991). Second, school employers and employees used varying criteria for defining teacher leadership. Union positions and collective bargaining only distinguished teachers by years of service and by hours of graduate credits, not by descriptions of teacher leader roles (Wasley, 1991). Additionally, researchers used a variety of definitions, which made an empirical comparison of teacher leadership studies difficult to carry out (Smylie, 1995; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Further complicating the development of a consistent definition were teachers themselves, who characterized their leadership roles in terms of their own work, rather than providing a singular definition (Wasley, 1991).

From an in-depth examination of teacher leader studies conducted from the 1980s to 2004, York-Barr and Duke in 2004 defined teacher leadership as “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school
communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (pp. 287-288). Since the York-Barr and Duke (2004) study, teacher leadership continues to be examined and definitions and understanding of the teacher leader position have become clearer in many consecutive studies.

Other leading scholars in teacher leadership have provided definitions of teacher leadership as well. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) arrived at a similar definition of teacher leadership by means of their review of the educational literature. They stated, “Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6).

Crowther et al. (2009) explicitly stated that teacher leadership is a “conceptual and practical entity in its own right” (p. 26) and offered their own definition for teacher leadership:

Teacher leadership is essentially an ethical stance that is based on views of both a better world and the power of teachers to shape meaning systems. It manifests in new forms of understanding and practice that contribute to school success and to the quality of life of the community in the long term. (p. 10)

The researchers’ definitions are different, but they have common elements. The definitions include an emphasis on pedagogy, professional influence (Crowther et al., 2009), and collaboration (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Moller and Pankake (2006), York-Barr and Duke’s (2004) definition regards leadership as an “organizational quality that is influenced by teachers, staff members, and others” (p. 25), and “does not identify a person or a set of characteristics” (p. 25).
Grounding Theories and Concepts

While teacher leadership is a unique type of leadership that is still finding its place in research and practice, it is “legitimately grounded” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 263) in four leadership theories: participative leadership, leadership as an organizational quality, distributed leadership, and parallel leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) aligned teacher leadership with participative and instructional leadership from a review of literature on leadership completed by Leithwood and Duke (1999). They wrote:

Participative leadership stresses \textit{the decision-making process of the group}. One school of thought within this category of leadership argues for such participation on the grounds that it will enhance organization effectiveness. A second school rests its case for participation on democratic principles. (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 51)

Instructional leadership . . . typically focuses \textit{on the behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students}. Many versions of this form of leadership focus additionally on other organizational variables (such as school culture) that are believed to have important consequences for such teacher behavior. (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 47)

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) explained leadership as an organizational quality:

Leadership is not confined to certain roles in organizations. It flows through the networks of roles that comprise organizations. Moreover, leadership is based on the deployment of resources that are distributed throughout the network of roles, with different roles having access to different levels and types of resources. (p. 238)

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) introduced the notion of distributed leadership. This leadership concept is synonymously used with shared, team, and democratic leadership (Spillane, 2005). Spillane et al. (2004) explained “a distributed view of leadership incorporates the activities of the multiple individuals in a school who work at mobilizing and guiding a school’s staff” (p. 16).
Similar to distributed leadership is parallel leadership. Crowther et al. (2009) defined parallel leadership as “a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity. It embodies three distinct qualities—mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression” (p. 53). One distinct fundamental difference between parallel leadership and distributed leadership is that teacher leaders are considered equal in value to principals in parallel leadership (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

The commonality of the leadership theories was that the power and authority of leadership was not based in a hierarchy; rather leadership was shared across multiple positions, including both teachers and administrators (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In essence, the leadership theories embrace shared decision-making, distribution of power, and viewed the teacher leader’s voice and actions as equal to those of the principal (Crowther et al., 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The Role/s of Teacher Leaders

The teacher leader role has continuously evolved over the past 30 years. Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) and Wasley (1991) described how the roles of teacher leaders have developed in three waves. The first wave of teacher leadership focused on the “efficiency and effectiveness” (Silva et al., 2000, p. 780) of the system and was an answer to the 1983 reform report, A Nation at Risk (Wasley, 1991). Teacher leader roles that were created in this wave included “department head, head teacher, master teacher, and union representative” (Silva et al., 2000, p. 780). Teacher leaders in this role were viewed as managerial positions. The second wave was a response to the 1986 reform reports, A Nation Prepared: Teachers For the 21st Century (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) and Tomorrow’s Teachers: A
Report of the Holmes Group (Holmes Group, 1986) (Wasley, 1991). In this wave teachers were recognized as instructional leaders. At this point, leadership positions such as “team leader, curriculum developer, and staff development” (Silva et al., 2000, p. 780) coordinators emerged (Silva et al., 2000). In the third wave, teacher leaders started working with other teachers to improve student achievement (Silva et al., 2000). Lessons learned from the previous waves distanced teacher leaders from being in managerial roles and focused more on collaborating and empowering teacher leaders who were in the classroom fulltime. Schools became known as learning organizations because of these developments (Murphy, 2005).

These teacher leadership roles are typically separated into two categories: formal and informal roles. Moller and Pankake (2006) described formal and informal roles in their book Lead with Me: A Principal’s Guide to Teacher Leadership. Formal roles embody four leadership functions: leadership in governing, leadership of student activities, leadership in operational tasks, and leadership in instruction (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Moller & Pankake, 2006). There are many formal roles, and schools entitle them differently. Formal roles can include: “instructional coaches, lead teachers, mentors, staff developers, [and] data analysts” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p.121). Other common roles include: master teachers, “teacher-led advisory groups, curriculum developers . . . and school reform leaders” (Stone, Horejs & Lomas, 1997, p. 2). Formal teacher leader positions are typically selected by leaders at the central office, school site leaders, fellow teachers (Moller & Pankake, 2006), or are self-selected (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Moller and Pankake (2006) referred to informal teacher leadership roles as “ubiquitous teacher leadership” (p. 163). The types of roles performed by informal teacher leaders are various, which makes it difficult to group them into categories. Informal teacher leaders are
passionate about whatever issues the school and students are experiencing. They focus their energy on a “teaching and learning issue, a student activity, or even a facility problem . . . . [they] see a problem, identify how to solve it, and rally the needed resources to make it happen” (Moller & Pankake, 2006, p. 28). Moreover, it is believed that the “most powerful influence for improved teaching and learning [typically] comes from informal teacher leadership” (Moller & Pankake, 2006, p. 28). Informal teacher leadership can be seen as “coaching peers to resolve instructional problems, encouraging parent participation, [or] working with colleagues in small groups and teams” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 263).

Whitaker (1995) stated that effective principals are able to select informal teacher leaders based on an instinctual ability. Although the author does not fully define or describe this process, he wrote about an instinctual ability. Whitaker (1995) explained that the principal knows “who they feel provides the informal leadership in the school” (p. 78). Whitaker provided other methods to select informal teacher leaders. They included identifying which teachers get the most respect from other teachers, which teachers are listened to more frequently, and also by asking faculty privately which teachers they value most among the faculty. Additionally, the author found that the most effective principals could identify key informal teacher leaders and incorporated their views in the decision-making process. Whitaker (1995) concluded that less effective principals were unable to identify informal teacher leaders.

Teacher Leader Skills and Characteristics

Formal and informal effective teacher leader positions require specific skills and characteristics. The research findings of needed teacher leader skills and characteristics have consistently revealed similar findings (York-Barr, Sommerness, & Hur, 2008). However,
Murphy (2005) suggested caution when examining the findings for three reasons. First, teacher leaders have a variety of qualifications; second, the tasks they complete are broad; and, third, the environment of his or her setting is diverse.

Research has shown that knowledge of content and subject area is an essential skill for teacher leaders to be effective (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; Hatfield et al., 1986; Manno & Firestone, 2008; Stoelinga & Mangin, 2010; Yarger & Lee, 1994). Focusing on math teacher leaders, Manno and Firestone (2008) found from a two-year study that “teacher leaders’ content knowledge can influence teachers’ receptivity to the role and the overall effectiveness of teacher leadership initiatives” (p. 5). Knowledge of curriculum (Miles, Saxl, & Lieberman, 1988; York-Barr et al., 2008) and instructional expertise (Killion, 1996; Snell & Swanson, 2000) are also needed for teacher leaders to be effective. It has been claimed that to be an effective teacher leader, a teacher must have a strong knowledge of pedagogy (Swanson, 2000) and have modeled that knowledge in the classroom (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; Crowther et al., 2009; Odell, 1997). Additionally, Crowther et al. (2009) reaffirmed the importance of teacher leaders having and striving for pedagogical excellence. Teacher leaders should strive for pedagogical excellence by continuously pursuing an understanding of significant pedagogical practices and refining teacher gifts and talents. In addition, York-Barr and Duke (2004) also stated teacher leaders are known to be excellent teachers with significant teaching experience.

In 1986, Hatfield et al. found that teacher leaders have effective communication skills. Within the scope of communication skills, they highlighted verbal and written communication skills to be important for successful teacher leaders. Since their study, numerous researchers have discovered similar findings (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; O’Connor & Boles, 1992; Swanson, 2000; Yarger & Lee, 1994). Additionally, O’Connor and Boles (1996) included presentation
skills as a key competency for teacher leaders. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) stressed that listening skills, rather than providing answers, are important if teachers want to be successful leaders. They delineated listening skills as (a) focusing on the speaker without judging, (b) listening with open body language, (c) empathizing with the speaker, (d) examining nonverbal cues, and (e) exploring words for meaning and feeling.

An understanding of group skills is another skill identified through research for teacher leaders to possess (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) view specific group dynamic skills (e.g., facilitator, recorder, and reporter) as important because these skills enable teacher leaders to influence colleagues and enhance leadership skills. The authors wrote, “skillful teacher leaders can help the group solve problems, make decisions, and manage the inevitable conflicts” (p. 108).

Another skill needed for successful teacher leaders is an understanding of organizational systems (Killion, 1996). A good understanding of the contexts and the policies of the school district is a key component for successful teacher leadership (Yarger & Lee, 1994). Yarger and Lee (1994) referred to these as institutional factors. They identified the following institutional factors as being crucial if teacher leaders are to be successful outside of the classroom: administrative support and cooperation, shared vision of effective schooling, sufficient resources, and the opportunity to lead.

Crowther et al. (2009) provided a different viewpoint on teacher leader skills. They did not identify teacher leader skills, but instead categorized them as characteristics of teacher leaders. The Teachers as Leaders Framework (Crowther et al., 2009) consists of six elements:

1. Convey convictions about a better world
2. Facilitate communities of learning
3. Strive for pedagogical excellence
4. Confront barriers in the school’s culture and structure
5. Translate ideas into sustainable systems of action
6. Nurture a culture of success (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3)

The researchers cautioned that no one teacher could carry out all six elements at once—even though teachers in their studies demonstrated at some time and in some manner all of the elements (Crowther et al., 2009).

Benefits of Teacher Leadership

The rationale of using teacher leaders has been viewed as vital to school systems and various studies clearly testify to the benefits of effective teacher leaders. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) outlined the rationale for teacher leadership based on a foundation of four perspectives: (a) “building organizational capacity” (p. 24), (b) “modeling democratic communities” (p. 24), (c) “empowering teachers” (p. 24), and (d) “enhancing teacher professionalism” (p. 24). Although they recognize there are other perspectives, they have found these four to be the most advantageous as they study teacher leadership. Additionally, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) identified eight benefits of teacher leadership:

1. Personal efficacy
2. Retain excellent teachers
3. Overcome resistance to change
4. Career enhancement
5. Improve own performance
6. Influence other teachers
7. Accountability for results
8. Sustainability (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2009, pp. 32-34)

Leithwood, Tomlinson, and Genge (1996) claimed that teacher leaders affect student performance. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) acknowledge that more large-scale quantitative studies need to be completed “to establish clear relationships between teacher leadership and its impact on student learning” (p. 31).

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Role and Responsibilities

The school principal is a key factor in the effectiveness of teacher leaders (Barth, 2001; Berg et al., 2005; Camburn et al., 2003; Mangin, 2007; Murphy, 2005). Bleagen and Kennedy (2000) wrote, “The greatest influence on teacher leadership . . . is the principal” (p. 4). Principals can contribute to influencing and supporting teacher leadership in many ways. Moller and Pankake (2006) stated the principal’s main role in supporting teacher leaders is “to create a school culture in which the teachers’ knowledge, interests, talents, and skills are maximized” (p. 25). Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) frame the work of principals as, “principals need to know how to develop, support, and manage these new forms of leadership” (p. 182).

The foremost responsibility and contribution to the effectiveness of teacher leaders is for the principal to create and develop a high functioning principal-teacher relationship (Murphy, 2005). Moller and Pankake (2006) insist, “building relationships with teacher leaders is not only the first step to provide supportive conditions for them, it is critical to the principal’s success and the health of the school culture” (p. 161).
The traditional relationship between principal and teacher has typically been viewed in a hierarchal fashion from the top down (MacNeil & McClanahan, 2005). When teacher leadership is enacted, many scholars have suggested the need for this hierarchal relationship to evolve into a collaborative, shared decision-making relationship (Crowther, 2011; Crowther et al., 2009). Engaging teachers and bringing them into the decision-making circle enormously shifts the relationship from the principal making decisions and teachers carrying them out, to principals and teachers making decisions and carrying them out together (Murphy, 2005). This form of change is difficult for both principal and teachers due to traditional structures and school norms (Coyle, 1997; Murphy, 2005). Barth (1988) acknowledges this difficult change from a principal perspective:

Many principals feel they already have too little power over a tottering building. To convey any to others is illogical. It is against human nature for us to relinquish power when we will probably be held accountable for what others do with it. One should accumulate and consolidate, not relinquish. (p. 139)

There is also evidence that shows how difficult it is for a school district and the community to allow the principal to collaborate and share decision-making processes with teachers (Murphy, 2005).

Moller and Pankake (2006) wrote that principals have “formal power and authority to lead a school, but their effectiveness as leaders depends on the willingness of the people to follow” (p. 9). This willingness to follow depends largely on the relationship between the principal and teacher leaders. Anderson (2004) described his research of the principal-teacher leader relationship in three models of leadership approach, or as Anderson refers to it, “leadership reciprocity” (p. 107).
The first model Anderson (2004) termed was the “Interactive Model” (p. 108). The interactive principal is highly interactive with teachers and involves all teacher leaders in the decision-making process. This principal selects meaningful areas for teacher leaders to work, which provides a sense of trust for all teachers. In the interactive model, the principal is known as being visible and highly interactive with formal and informal teacher leaders, as well as with individuals and groups of staff members. Second, the “Buffered Model” (p. 107) in which the buffered principal is surrounded by a small number of dedicated teacher leaders. These teacher leaders “insulate” (p. 107) the principal. This principal-teacher leader relationship allows the school to operate well, but because it only includes a core teacher leader group, it becomes limited due to lack of outside ideas and feedback. Third, Anderson (2004) described the “Contested Model” (p. 109). The contested principal is described as having inadequate skills and the majority of teacher leaders and teachers oppose the decisions the principal makes in order to protect the organizational structure of the school.

Providing Supportive Conditions

As Berg et al. (2005) claimed, “simply creating differentiated roles does not, in itself, guarantee that the teachers holding those roles will be successful and satisfied” (p. 26). Providing supportive conditions to teacher leaders is an important focus and benefits the success of teacher leaders. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) addressed the meaning of principal support for teachers in leadership roles. They wrote, “supporting teacher leadership means understanding the concept, awakening the understanding of teachers themselves to their leadership potential, and then providing for the development of teacher leadership” (pp. 123-124). York-Barr and Duke’s (2004) teacher leader framework indicated the principal as a
supportive condition for the role of teacher leadership. The framework consists of seven major components. Within this teacher leader framework, the principal is identified and embedded within the “conditions” (pp. 289-290) component.

This section will focus on the supportive conditions that have been identified by researchers as possibly promoting or hindering the level of support principals provide to teacher leaders and to the growth of teacher leadership. Although there are many ways that principals can support teacher leadership, this section of the review of literature focuses on the following supportive conditions: vision and goals, strategies for identifying and selecting teacher leaders, skills, and professional development for teacher leaders. A framework for the role of the principal in supporting teacher leadership is presented.

**Vision statement and goals.** The capacity of the principal to create a clear vision for the teacher leader position has been found to be a critical supportive condition for teacher leaders to be successful (Crowther et al., 2009; Murphy, 2005; Weiner, 2011). Gabriel and Farmer (2009) simply define a vision statement as “your school's goal—where you hope to see it in the future” (p. 45). A more comprehensive stated definition is specified on the Great Schools Partnership (2013) website:

A vision statement, or simply a *vision*, is a public declaration that a school or other educational organization uses to describe its high-level goals for the future—what it hopes to achieve if it successfully fulfills its organizational purpose or mission. A vision statement may describe a school’s loftiest ideals, its core organizational values, its long-term objectives, or what it hopes its students will learn or be capable of doing after graduating. (http://edglossary.org/mission-and-vision/, 2013)

Research has shown that principals who can create and define a clear vision statement, have a clear direction for the school and an understanding of the teachers and students in their schools (Berg et al., 2005). Weiner (2011) explained, “unfortunately, principals frequently do
not have such skills; they fail to create such a vision; and they may operate many disjointed initiatives without a clear path to reform and without strong principal oversight” (p. 13).

The Council of Chief State School Officers also addressed the significance of the principal’s capacity to form a vision statement. The Council of Chief State School Officers articulated this importance in the *Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Policy Standards 2008*. Standard one states, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders” (Council of Chief of State School Officers, 2013).

In addition to a school-wide vision statement, researchers Moller and Pankake (2006) recommend principals prepare a personal vision statement. The authors explained that the purpose of writing and reviewing a personal vision statement is for principals to clarify their own beliefs and values about supporting teacher leadership. Moller and Pankake (2006) provided five steps to help principals illustrate his or her vision statement.

Step one involves “Seeing a picture in your mind” (p. 120). Moller and Pankake (2006) provide six questions for a principal to visualize a picture of what teacher leadership would look like in action. For example, one question asks “How have your roles and responsibilities changed in relationship to the emergence of teacher leaders?” (p. 120). Another question asks “Have teacher and principal learning opportunities changed? How? What do they look like in this future state?” (p. 120). Step two is “Capture the dimensions in words” (p. 120). Step three involves synthesizing the information to a personal vision statement in 50 to 75 words. Step four is to share the personal vision statement with a trusted colleague to provide feedback to clarify the statement. Last, the principal can “Begin moving toward the future” (p. 121) that is
described in the vision statement. Moller and Pankake (2006) believed that the development of a vision statement reminds the principal to create strategies for working toward the personal vision statement of promoting and supporting teacher leadership.

A study by Berg et al. (2005) further indicated the importance of the principal’s capacity to have a vision statement in order to support teacher leaders. The researchers’ goal of the study was to investigate teacher attrition by examining experienced teachers who were in differentiated teacher leader roles beyond their full-time classroom teaching responsibilities. The authors sought to better understand how teachers experienced the differentiated role and whether the teachers found the role satisfying. They interviewed twenty teachers from several different school districts each of whom held distinctly different teacher leader roles. Some examples of the differentiated teacher leader roles were that of elementary math coach, science curriculum coordinator, union president, and technology coordinator. Their study generally found that the principals’ vision and goal statements served as decision-making direction for teacher leaders’ differentiated roles and enhanced overall work satisfaction.

Two findings related to the vision statement were revealed from the study. First, teachers in differentiated roles reported they had experienced success because principals could define how their role contributed within the vision statement (Berg et al., 2005). A teacher leader from the study described:

. . . that her principal’s ‘big game plan’ not only guided the work of the school, but was at the heart of [her] planning process with her principal. Her principal’s vision catalyzed [her] work assuring that, when she worked with teachers, she could help them to meet the goals that the principal had for instructional improvement. (p. 20)

A second finding from the Berg et al. (2005) study revealed that if the principal has a vision for the position but veered from the vision, it could result in frustration for a teacher
leader. For instance, one teacher leader was assigned tasks unrelated to the position. This teacher leader believed these tasks were “assistant principal-ish” (p. 22). The teacher leader was an instructional facilitator and was to implement a school-wide Paideia program that had been funded by the state. Although this teacher leader’s principal was a new principal who did not write the vision, Berg et al. (2005) reported that it revealed the new principal misunderstood the role by asking the teacher leader to do other tasks, which left the teacher leader struggling with the position. Berg et al. (2005) summarized this by claiming, “when turnover does take place in the principal’s office, mechanisms must be put in place to ensure the maintenance of a strong vision for the school, as well as roles linked to that vision” (pp. 27-28).

Recently, Weiner (2011) found parallel results to the Berg et al. (2005) study when examining vision statements as a supportive condition for effective teacher leaders. Weiner (2011) sought to find how principals and teacher leaders understood teacher leadership and its impact on teacher leader practices. The study participants were from an urban school district on the East Coast and included four principals and four teacher leaders—one of each position was selected from the same school. This teacher leader program, entitled the Teacher Connector Program, was created to support new and novice teachers at the school. The goal of the teacher leader position, Teacher Connector (TC), was to create a new teacher induction model that would provide ongoing support and to make connections between all veteran teachers’ expertise and new teachers’ professional needs. Each school site was able to create the roles for the TC position. A nonprofit policy organization supplemented the program and provided funds to pay the TC stipend (Weiner, 2011).

Weiner’s (2011) study found that the TCs had experienced greater effectiveness and knowledge of the role within the larger school vision when his or her principal was able to
clearly define the vision and roles of the position. The author pointed out that this explanation by
the teacher leader is a direct response to the principal’s ability to clearly state the vision for the
teacher leader position. A principal from the study aligned the vision and the work of the TC as
“[The TC] did higher-order thinking, she did looking at work, she did stuff with math, and the
math notebook. It was our way of teaching the new teachers the Armstrong way” (Weiner, 2011,
p. 28).

Weiner (2011) also found the opposite was true in that the TCs reported they had
negative feelings about the position and their abilities when the principals were unable to define
the parameters of the teacher leader role. These principals gave broad generalities or goals
unrelated to the actual responsibilities. For example, principals stated “to improve teachers’
‘caring’ of students” (p. 26) and “to increase teachers’ social interactions” (p. 26) in their
descriptions of the teacher leader role. A TC commented about the ambiguity of the position:

It was so fuzzy from the beginning what the purpose of this position was . . . . [the
principal] didn’t give me any clear guidelines . . . . The way [the principal] was
looking at it was ‘oh yeah, just throw something together and that will be fine.’ (p. 27)

Furthermore, the author wrote that because of the lack of a defined vision, teachers may have
seen the TC position as unimportant, and as a result left the TC feeling more ineffective and
disconnected.

Mangin (2007) conducted another study that showed a link between principals’
understanding of the teacher leader role and the level of support provided to teacher leaders. In
her article, Facilitating Elementary Principals’ Support for Instructional Teacher Leadership,
the author discusses the findings of the principal’s knowledge and understanding of the school
district’s common vision for teacher leaders. The research design and purpose of this study is
similar to the Weiner (2011) study previously presented; however, in the Mangin (2007) study, the vision was written and expressed by the district supervisors and communicated to the principals at the discretion of each of the district supervisors. The key factor in this scenario is how the district supervisors communicated the vision to the principals. Significantly neither the principals nor the teacher leaders were involved with creating the teacher leader position in this study.

Mangin (2007) used an exploratory comparative case study to interview 15 principals, 12 math teacher leaders, and six district supervisors from five school districts in New Jersey. The math teacher leader role was titled differently by the five school districts—specialist, helper, lead teacher, coordinator, and trainer. In each of the school districts, teacher leader positions were implemented to build teachers’ instructional capacity. The teacher leaders were released full-time from teaching responsibilities.

According to the results of the study (Mangin, 2007), the district supervisors uniformly stated the common vision of the teacher leadership initiative when asked by the researcher; however, the district supervisors differed greatly with how they communicated information and the amount of information they communicated to the principals about the district vision for the teacher leaders’ roles and responsibilities.

Mangin (2007) measured the principals’ knowledge of the vision statement based on three components in comparison to the “district-level supervisors’ vision and written job descriptions” (p. 338): “(a) familiarity with the teacher leader’s formal responsibilities, (b) familiarity with how the role was enacted, and (c) familiarity with the teacher leader’s short- and/or long-range goals” (p. 330). Based on these three components, the researcher found that 7 of the 15 principals demonstrated high knowledge, 3 principals demonstrated moderate
knowledge, and 5 principals demonstrated low knowledge of the teacher leadership position. It was found that the more the principals knew and understood about the teacher leader role, the higher the level of support they provided to the teacher leaders. The principals with lower levels of knowledge provided no support and in some cases were viewed by the teacher leaders as making their work more difficult (Mangin, 2007).

Strategies for identifying and selecting teacher leaders. Interconnected to creating a clear vision statement is establishing guidelines for the selection process of the teacher leader position (Killion, 1996). Killion (1996) stated that by having specific processes of identifying and selecting teacher leader positions that align with the school district vision and goals, it sends the message that teacher leadership is respected and valued throughout the school system. Although scholars have outlined this process (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; Killion, 1996), research has shown that not all principals are trained in establishing hiring criteria or selecting a qualified candidate for teacher leader positions (Weiner, 2011).

Killion (1996) provided key points for identifying and selecting teacher leaders in her work, *Moving Beyond The Classroom: Teacher Leaders in the District Office*. She suggests that teacher leaders are best selected in a systematic process rather than on a voluntary basis. “Voluntary selection may result in teachers who are enthusiastic and willing but lack the necessary skills to be successful” (Killion, 1996, p. 65). Killion (1996) additionally recommended three strategies for identifying and selecting teacher leaders: application, nomination, or invitation. The application process allows all interested teachers to apply and also indicates that the position is more than that of a volunteer. More importantly, this process aligns the desired skills for the position and the skills of the applicant. The second strategy
Killion (1996) recommended is nomination. In nomination, teachers are identified by their peers and principals to assume a leadership role. Finally, teacher leaders can be ‘invited’ by the principal to fill a role that is specific to their skills.

Researchers Berry and Ginsberg (1990) recommended strategies for identifying and selecting teacher leaders. First, the authors emphasized that the selection criteria be comprehensive, rigorous, and reflect the demands of the teacher leader role. They further recommended that a district-wide committee be formed to develop “job descriptions, application procedures, and protocols for interviews and observations” (p. 620). This committee should rate and agree upon the best teacher leaders from the selection criteria. This process forces the committee to “articulate clearly its vision of effective schooling and leadership” (p. 620) and allows for a “greater investment” (p. 620) in the selection of the teacher leader and how it is aligned with the school vision. Berry and Ginsberg (1990) stressed that this process needs to include both teachers and administrators.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) promoted a different position on identifying and selecting teacher leaders. They stress the point of engaging all teachers in leadership activities to ensure a community of teacher leaders becomes fully materialized. The authors proposed that the principal develop leaders in all teachers “to build relationships and identify the niche where each person’s skill, talent, or passion can be tapped” (p. 35). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) propose this because without all teachers invited to be leaders, leadership roles are continuously offered to the same, select few, which sends a negative message to others. The result of only selecting a few teachers as leaders creates a group of professional teachers versus the remaining teachers who carry out the decisions made by others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).
The Weiner (2011) study examined principals’ understanding of how they identified and selected teacher leaders. Three of the four principals invited teacher leaders to fill the position while the fourth principal conducted a formal hiring process. Two significant findings relating to selection criteria were found. First, the findings revealed the importance for an open selection process. Weiner writes, “This would increase the transparency about why an individual was hired for the role and what he or she was expected to do in the position. Ideally, such information would help to increase teachers’ acceptance of the process and the person who fills the position” (p. 37).

Second, Weiner (2011) concluded there is a need for principals to have training regarding the creation of selection criteria for teacher leaders. Even when principals were able to create and verbalize their school vision, and even if the teacher leader role was embedded in the school vision, neither the principals nor the teacher leaders had a clear sense of the skills and knowledge that were needed for teacher leaders to be successful. For example, the teacher leaders, TCs, attributed their hiring to their personality traits. Weiner (2011) reported that hiring based on personality traits “. . . is inherently problematic—namely, because it downplays the specialized skills and knowledge required to be an effective TC and it gives power to those who might question whether such a role is necessary” (p. 32). Moreover, principals reported they looked to the “TCs’ instructional success with students and their relative popularity among the staff” (p. 32) to select a teacher leader. Weiner points out, “misaligned hiring criteria suggest that principals may have some misconceptions about the skills and knowledge that are necessary to be an effective teacher leader” (Weiner, 2011, p. 14).

Overall, the author’s final conclusions were that “none of the TCs or principals interviewed clearly understood the skills and knowledge required to implement the TC role
effectively” (p. 37). As evidenced in this study, there is a gap in the findings of needed teacher leader skills and principals’ perceptions of skills teacher leaders should possess.

Skills. Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) sought to identify the types of skills principals’ perceived teachers needed to possess to become leaders. Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) surveyed 68 practicing administrators and 80 teacher leaders from a suburban county in the Midwest region of the United States. Principals reported communication, creating a vision, teamwork, and courage when asked to identify skills they believed teacher leaders needed. Additional skills principals reported were: positive disposition, commitment to student learning, organizational skills, and good decision-making skills. The author also reported that principals identified behaviors related more to attitudes and dispositions, rather than skills, as important components of a teacher leader (Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009).

The Boes and Halsall (2009) study revealed similar findings as the Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) study. The researchers analyzed the perceptions of three British head teachers and three principals from the United States on the qualities of teacher leaders. Although this study was a pilot study to predict the need for a larger study, their findings were aligned with previous studies (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988; Stone et al., 1997) that identified effective teacher leader skills. Principals and head teachers reported the following skills for successful teacher leaders: good interpersonal skills, good communication styles, ability to give and receive feedback, ability to manage and work well with others, giving a sense of positivity to others, organization, ability to manage resources, involving teachers in the school’s mission, and curriculum development (Boes & Halsall, 2009).
Professional development and training for teacher leaders. Professional development is another vital supportive condition for principals to provide teacher leaders. As Feiler, Heritage, and Gallimore (2000) indicated, “the principal has primary responsibility for developing the leadership skills of . . . teacher leaders” (p. 69). The importance of principals providing professional development and improving the skills of teacher leaders is clearly documented in the literature (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Yet research has shown that teachers are being placed in leadership positions with little or no training (Murphy, 2005). It is assumed too frequently that because a teacher is competent and credible in the classroom that this will transfer to success in a leadership position (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Scholars have indicated two significant explanations for why professional development should be provided to teachers once they accept a leadership position (Murphy, 2005). First, teacher preparation programs typically do not provide opportunities or knowledge in leadership skills outside of the classroom (Buckner & McDowelle, 2000; Smyser, 1995). Second, the skills needed to lead other adults are different than teaching students (Little, 1988).

Murphy (2005) explained that the principal’s main responsibilities of training teacher leaders are to model, participate, coach, and mentor throughout an ongoing professional development process. The knowledge and skills teacher leaders should possess were discussed earlier in this literature review. Murphy (2005) has categorized the knowledge and skills for a successful model of professional development for teacher leaders as: “understanding and navigating the school organization, working productively with others, and building a collaborative enterprise” (p. 153). To ensure professional development is effectively designed for teacher leaders, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) adapted guidelines from Hawley and Valli
The following guiding questions should be used to ensure thorough professional development planning (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009):

1. “Are adult learners, such as teacher leaders, involved in the identification of what they need to learn and in determining the process to be used for learning?” (p. 47).
2. “Is school-based learning that allows for transfer and application of learning to immediate workplace problems provided in the work setting?” (p. 47).
3. “Are teacher leaders engaged in collaborative professional development?” (p. 47).
4. “Is professional development for teachers sustained and ongoing through follow-up coaching and support?” (p. 47).

Framework: The role of principal. Crowther et al. (2009), while studying teacher leadership, developed a framework for the role of the principal in supporting teacher leadership. This framework was developed out of a decade of studies of teacher leadership that started in 1996. Crowther et al. (2009) asked the question, “What is the principal’s role in enabling the development and maturation of teacher leadership?” (p. 80). The answer and ultimate framework implies a new role for principals and new insight for how principals might encourage and use teacher leadership in their schools. The Principal’s Role in Promoting Teacher Leadership framework (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 93) provides seven roles that principals will have to encounter in order for the full ‘maturation’ of teacher leadership (Crowther et al., 2009):

1. *Communicate a clear strategic intent.* Communication should be through “words and deeds” (p. 81), and principals should promote a “clear sense of purpose” (p. 81) in their schools and provide direction regarding school and educational issues.
This allows for teacher leaders to “reflect, explore, and experiment with a sense of security” (p. 81).

2. *Incorporate the aspirations and views of others.* Principals need to allow for passion to drive teacher leaders’ ideas, which builds trust and commitment from teacher leaders. For example, one teacher stated, “the way [the principal] listens, we know that our ideas can go somewhere. It makes us eager to sort out our priorities and get on and do new things” (p. 82).

3. *Pose difficult-to-answer questions.* Posing difficult questions indicates to the school and community “that taking an informed stance on an issue is valued” (p. 83). For example, a principal asked, “What if…?” and “I wonder what...?” (pp. 82-83). Asking questions such as this opens dialogue about complex matters and examines and challenges practices, “language, artifacts, slogans, and behaviors” (p. 83) of the workplace. Principals who encourage and pose difficult-to-answer questions allow for groups of teachers to become teacher leaders that otherwise would not be involved in the communication.

4. *Make space for individual innovation.* In order for innovation to take place, and for potential teacher leaders to develop, they need opportunities to explore and express their talents in a safe environment. For instance, one principal administered a school-code of the following questions: “How can we help remove obstacles in your way? How can we build on the positives in your innovation? How can we help you to create strong links between your work and the school’s vision?” (p. 84). These types of processes, and other examples in the study, revealed teacher leaders were supported by administrators, thus allowing
infrastructural barriers to be overcome. Crowther et al. (2009) identified that from this type of support, “the likelihood increases that potential teacher leaders will look to innovation with confidence and enthusiasm” (pp. 84-85), and enhance the stature of teachers.

5. **Know when to step back.** By stepping back from their leadership roles, principals can encourage and empower teachers to “step forward” (p. 85). Principals are encouraged to support teachers’ work in school planning and decision-making. The stepping back role is “at odds” (p. 86) with most longstanding views of the principalship and education systems. However, it is imperative for the role of teacher leaders for them to develop their leadership capabilities, and be put in a leadership position that allows for “recognition, confidence, and trust” (p. 85).

6. **Create opportunities from perceived difficulties.** Each school and community will eventually encounter difficulties. For example, a case study described a situation in which several students were causing disruption in the community and the principal was the object of community member attacks on his/her skills. The principal allocated funds to hire a teacher who had empathy for this group of students. Within a year, the teacher leader developed relationships with the students and community and thus, delinquency rates dropped, and public support was gained. Once principals establish a method of creating opportunities from difficulties, there is greater potential for teacher leaders to assume a leadership role.

7. **Build on achievements to create a culture of success.** In a culture of criticism toward teachers and educators, the principal needs to relay the positive messages
and the success of the work teachers perform. The authors report teachers will “feel much more inclined to assume leadership roles if they see their vocation as a leading profession” (p. 92).

Summary

The review of the literature focused on teacher leadership and the principal’s role supporting teacher leaders. Teacher leadership was introduced and defined. Needed skills and characteristics for teacher leaders to be effective were presented. Additionally, the rationale and benefits of teachers in leadership roles were addressed. The second section presented the role of the principal. The importance of the principal-teacher leader relationship and significant supportive conditions for effective teacher leadership were discussed. In chapter three the methods and procedures are presented including research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and the type of data analysis that will be used in the study.
Chapter III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is clear that teacher leadership is a “conceptual and practical entity in its own right” (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 26) and that the level of effectiveness teacher leaders have outside of the classroom is related to the amount of support and understanding a principal has regarding the role of teacher leaders (Murphy, 2005). Although many studies have been completed on teacher leaders, including multiple studies revealing that the teacher leader’s effectiveness relies on the support of principals, little information was found in the literature about the specific conditions that enable principals to support teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007; Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009; Weiner, 2011). Mangin (2007) stated: “Despite the apparent importance of principal support, little research has been conducted on the kinds of conditions that promote support for teacher leaders” (p. 347).

The purpose of the study was to examine select principals’ perspectives of the role of principals in supporting teacher leaders in one Midwestern public school district. The researcher intended to explore the conditions principals employed to support teacher leaders, the communication channels employed to support teacher leaders, and principals’ perceptions of the work of teacher leaders. This chapter presents the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis used for the study.
Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What conditions do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?
2. What communication channels do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?
3. What are principals’ perceptions of the beneficial skills, work benefits, and challenges experienced with teacher leaders?

Research Design

A qualitative case study was the methodology used to examine the research questions that relate to the role of the principal in supporting teacher leaders. According to Cresswell (2009), a case study is a “strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 13). The case study design was selected to provide an in-depth description of how principals in one school district regarded their work with teacher leaders and the supportive conditions that encompassed their experiences and interactions. The case study format allowed for the collection of individual interview responses from the principals’ perspectives (Merriam, 2009). The researcher pursued opportunities to ask clarifying and follow-up questions to elicit greater details from participants that further enriched study results (Creswell, 2009). Finally, the majority of the research studies that guided this study used a qualitative approach when investigating the principals’ support of teacher leadership (Mangin, 2007; Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009; Weiner, 2011).
Participants

This study obtained information from principals in a school district that used teacher leaders in their organizational structure. Four principals were selected as participants for this study. The selection was accomplished in two phases: (1) a school district was selected based on established selection criteria, and (2) principals were selected from within the district who work with and were responsible for the teacher leaders in their buildings.

In phase one of the study, a school district was selected through purposeful sampling. Such sampling is a method of selecting the site and participants in a study that include identifying specific criteria vital to investigating the case (Merriam, 2009). The criteria for selecting the district to participate in this study included the following:

1. The selected school district site had full-time formal teacher leader positions or full-time classroom teachers with teacher leadership as an additional role (e.g., instructional coaches, mathematic specialists, technology specialists).

2. The teacher leader positions were selected by school administrators, teacher colleagues, or by volunteer participation.

3. The school district employed a minimum of four principals.

Potential school district candidates for the study were identified in consultation with the researcher’s doctoral cohort, dissertation committee, and professional networks or associations. Doctoral cohort members identified several candidate school districts. From the generated list, the researcher selected one school district that fulfilled all three of the study criteria. The researcher invited that school district to participate in the study. The superintendent of the candidate school district authorized to conduct the study. The superintendent then notified the principals of the approval of the study. Subsequently, the superintendent wrote a letter
supporting the study to accompany the IRB application (Appendix C).

If necessary, the researcher was prepared to use convenience sampling if a school district could not be identified or if a voluntary school district had a variety of informal to formal teacher leader positions. A convenience sample would have been selected based on “time, money, location, [and] availability of sites or respondents” (Merriam, 2009, p. 79).

Phase two of the study included selecting principals from within the school district. Principals are responsible for the day-to-day supervision of their schools and the work of the teacher leader in those schools. The selected school district employed three full-time teacher leaders who served all four school buildings. The four principals serving the buildings in which the teacher leaders functioned were selected and consented to participate in the study (Appendix D). Prior to the study, it was determined that no more than six principals would be selected, as Kornuta and Germaine (2006) recommend for a qualitative study that uses interviews:

Interviews in qualitative research are likely to produce large amounts of data, and therefore the number of participants should be limited to keep the study manageable. For this reason, few qualitative studies conducted by individual researchers have more than six participants. (p. 49)

**Instrumentation**

Data were collected using a semi-structured format and interview questions. Since the literature review did not reveal an exact interview instrument to replicate, interview questions were created by the researcher based on the findings from the related literature and recommendations for further study from Crowther et al. (2009), Mangin (2007), Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009), and Weiner (2011). In addition, interview questions from the Mangin (2007) and Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) studies were adapted for this study. These qualitative case studies examined the role of the principal in supporting teacher leadership.
In creating the interview questions, the researcher followed two guidelines suggested by Merriam (2009) to increase the validity of the instrument. First, the researcher designed a variety of types of questions. The initial instrument questions that were posed in the pre-interview were “background/demographic” (p. 96) questions. These questions furnished deeper understanding of the case study and the participants (Merriam, 2009). Data were gathered in paper and pencil format completed by each participant before the interview. The background/demographic questions requested of participating principals were as follows:

1. Number of total years as head principal
2. Number of years working in the school district
3. Highest degree/education level
4. Number of years working with teacher leaders
5. Types of training or coursework on the topic of teacher leaders (provided by the school district or outside of the school district)

Additional information regarding the teacher leaders was collected from the principals at the pre-interview stage. This information included:

1. Teacher leader title
2. Years in teacher leader position
3. Previous teaching experience:
   a. Grade-level or subject taught
   b. Years of experience teaching

The remainder of the interview questions focused on “experience and behavior” (Merriam, 2009, p. 96) and “knowledge” (Merriam, 2009, p. 96). Second, as recommended by Merriam (2009) when writing interview questions to increase validity, the following three types of interview
questions were avoided: multiple topics in one question, leading questions, and yes-or-no questions.

A pilot study was conducted on the interview questions to increase instrument validity (Merriam, 2009). An educational administration and leadership doctoral cohort reviewed the interview questions for clarity. This ensured that the interview questions were familiar to principals (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002) suggested “using words that make sense to the interviewee, words that reflect the respondent’s world view, will improve the quality of data obtained during the interview” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 95). Input from the pilot study was used to improve data collection instruments and processes.

The interview protocol (Appendix A) outlines the procedures that guided the researcher through the interview process (Creswell, 2009) to ensure consistency with each participant. The interview protocol included components recommended by Creswell (2009): Pre-Interview (date, place, interviewee, welcome the participant, and information regarding the interview), Interview (interview questions), and Post-Interview (final thank-you to interviewee).

A semi-structured interview format was employed, although the majority of the interview questions were predetermined. The researcher was prepared to respond to answers the interviewee provided which revealed new ideas and directions of the topic (Merriam, 2009). Here, the researcher used follow-up or probing questions. “It is virtually impossible to specify [follow-up questions] ahead of time because they are dependent on how the participant answers the lead question” (Merriam, 2009, p. 100). Follow-up questions were used to ask “for more details, for clarification, [or] for examples” (Merriam, 2009, p. 101).

Ethical practices were employed throughout the interview process. Ethical concerns include “protection of subjects from harm, the right to privacy, the notion of informed consent,
and the issue of deception” (Merriam, 2009, p. 230). These ethical concerns were avoided by interviewing participants in their own settings, allowing participants to halt the interview at any time, and permitting them to refrain from responding to questions they chose not to answer. Responses and recommendations of the pilot study participants and the study participants, whether stored electronically or on paper, were protected to insure confidentiality throughout the study and stored in a secure, locked cabinet. The confidentiality of the participants was insured by renaming the respondent principals, school buildings, and school district. Following the completion of the study, responses were erased, deleted, or shredded and destroyed.

**Data Collection**

Data collection included individual interviews with principals regarding their roles in supporting teacher leadership. The interview responses were the source of data. DeMarrais (2004) described an interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 87). The purpose of the interview was to “allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). An Olympus Digital Voice Recorder and a cassette recorder were used to audiotape the interviews.

**Data Analysis**

Rossman and Rallis (1998) define data analysis as “the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data” (p. 176). Data analysis included organizing the data, coding, categorizing the interview responses, and writing the findings (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Interview analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection (Creswell, 2009). Notes were taken on the interview protocol form for each interviewee, and categories
began to present themselves, as noted by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), who stated: “the ideal interview is already analyzed by the time the sound recorder is turned off” (p. 190).

Subsequently, the researcher transcribed the interviews using the interview transcript format suggested by Merriam (2009):

1. At the top of each page identifying information: date, and the interviewee name (e.g., Principal A, Principal B)
2. Line numbering down the left-hand side of the page. Numbering sequentially to the end of the interview. Start with one for each interviewee.
3. Interview questions in bold
4. Interviewer and interviewee names in bold
5. Single space between narrative
6. Double space between speakers
7. Two margins on the right side. The first column for notes and the second column for coding and categories.

Following the interview, the researcher reviewed the responses to answer the following question: “What general ideas are the participants saying?” (Creswell, 2009, p. 185). Then, interview responses were coded into common themes (Creswell, 2009). Rossman and Rallis (1998) defined coding as “the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information” (as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 186). The coding process involved making a list of themes from the text, abbreviating the themes as codes, and writing the codes next to the appropriate text. For this study, words or phrases were used as a code rather than a number or symbol. Additionally, Creswell (2009) strongly advised coding material that address the following:
1. “Codes on topics that readers would expect to find, based on past literature and common sense” (p. 187).

2. “Codes that are surprising and that were not anticipated at the beginning of the study” (p. 187).

For example, in research question two, four themes emerged from the principals’ responses regarding communication channels. The four themes were organized into four categories and coded as communication channel categories (e.g., superintendent to principals, principals to teacher leaders, principals to classroom teachers, and teacher leader to teacher leader). Within each communication channel category, subcategories emerged and were coded as a word or phrase that best represented the principals’ responses. Leadership Team A meetings, Leadership Team B meetings, and meeting individually were subcategories, or themes, revealed from the superintendent to principal communication channel category.

The principals’ interview responses were analyzed and presented in chapters four and five based on the organization of the Matrix of Research Questions and Interview Questions (Appendix B) and related to the literature from chapter two (Creswell, 2009).

Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology of the study. Research design and study criteria were outlined for the selection of the participants. The instrumentation was described with details on how it was created, the use of the interview protocol and the procedures that were employed to conduct the study. Data collection and data analysis were also presented. Chapter four presents the findings of the research questions.
Chapter IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to examine select principals’ perspectives of the role of principals in supporting teacher leaders in one Midwestern public school district. The researcher intended to explore the conditions principals employed to support teacher leaders, the communication channels employed to support teacher leaders, and principals’ perceptions of the work of teacher leaders. This chapter presents the findings of the study.

Summary of Research Methodology

A case study was used to examine the research questions that relate to the role of the principal in supporting teacher leaders. The case study format allowed for the collection of individual interview responses from the principals’ perspectives. Since the literature review did not reveal an exact interview instrument to replicate, interview questions were created based on the findings from the related literature and recommendations for further study from Crowther et al. (2009), Mangin (2007), Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009), and Weiner (2011). Interview questions from the Mangin (2007) and Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) studies were adapted for this study. Data analysis included organizing the data into common themes and categories. The data are presented by research question. Three research questions guided this study:
1. What conditions do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?

2. What communication channels do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?

3. What are principals’ perceptions of the beneficial skills, work benefits, and challenges experienced with teacher leaders?

This study obtained information from principals in a school district that employed teacher leaders in their organizational structure. Four principals were selected as respondents in this study. The selection was accomplished in two phases: (1) a school district was selected based on established selection criteria, and (2) principals from within the district who work with and were responsible for the teacher leaders in their buildings were selected. In phase one, the criteria for selection of the district to participate in this study included the following: (1) the selected school district site was required to have full-time formal teacher leader positions or full-time classroom teachers with teacher leader as an additional role in select district buildings, (2) school district’s teacher leader positions were selected by school administrators, teacher colleagues, or by volunteer participation, and (3) the school district was required to have employed a minimum of four principals. In phase two, four principals from the selected school district were chosen to participate in the study. The selected principal respondents were expected to be responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the work of the teacher leaders.

The study examined teacher leadership in relation to three teacher leaders: intervention coach, literacy coach, and math coach. The teacher leader positions had been in existence in the school district for approximately three years at the time of the study. The three teacher leaders
were assigned to work in four school district buildings. The four buildings included one middle school and three K-5 elementary schools.

FINDINGS BY RESEARCH QUESTION

Research Question One

What conditions do principals report are employed to support teacher leaders?

The first research question addressed the conditions that select principals create to support teacher leaders. The findings revealed that the principals employed several conditions to provide support for the teacher leaders. The reported supportive conditions will be presented in the following five subsections: (1) establishing the teacher leader position, (2) selection of teacher leaders, (3) school district and teacher leader goals, (4) professional development for teacher leaders, and (5) school district initiatives.

Establishing the teacher leader position. The first condition examined by the researcher was the background of and manner in which teacher leadership positions were originally created. Mangin (2007) illustrated the importance of involving principals throughout the process of creating teacher leader positions to increase principal support for the teacher leader role. The findings revealed that the teacher leader positions were created to implement the school district’s new mathematics and language arts curriculum, increase student achievement growth, and increase the effectiveness of classroom teachers. The process of creating the teacher leader positions was initiated through discussion between the superintendent and Leadership Team A. How the positions were funded was also reported.
The four principals reported similar perceptions on the background of how the teacher leader positions were created. The principals’ responses indicated that the teacher leader positions were created to implement the new mathematics and language arts curriculum, increase student achievement growth in mathematics and language arts, and increase the effectiveness of classroom teachers by maximizing support to them. Principal C cited the purpose of creating the positions, “We weren’t nearly getting the growth that we thought we should be getting from our students. We were peaking at a certain point, and then we were kind of flat lining.” Principal C reported she did not have information related to creating the teacher leadership position since it happened before she was the principal. However, she did sit on the interview process for the math coach position as a teacher representative. Principal C explained that the teacher leader positions were created to improve student achievement growth by increasing the effectiveness of classroom teachers.

Principal A stated her perception of the background to create the teacher leader positions as follows, “our math scores were pretty abysmal. They were not—we were not doing well, and we were going through a curriculum adoption.” Principal B explained that the purpose of creating the position was to implement new curriculum:

I did not have a role, because it was before I came . . . but my understanding is that the coaching positions kind of evolved, partly based on evolving rules around certain funding sources and partly based on implementation of curriculum. For example, when the literacy coach and the math coach were put in place, it was largely a part of a curricular implementation.

Principal D reported that the teacher leader positions were created to maximize support for teachers in mathematics and language arts:

Trying to maximize support for staff, support for classrooms and really in math and language were the first two focal points. The development of a math coach was built out
of the necessity of improving math scores . . . That was done at [the Leadership Team A] level.

Three of the four principals reported the process of creating the teacher leader positions started through discussion between the superintendent and Leadership Team A. Leadership Team A includes the K-12 principals and district-wide directors (Business Manager, Community Education Director, Early Childhood Director, and Special Education Director). Principal A and Principal D were principals in the school district throughout this process, as Leadership Team A members, and participated in developing the role of the coaches. Those principals reported key decision-makers who were members of Leadership Team A and a part of creating the teacher leader positions. Principal D reported the importance of involving key decision-makers in creating the teacher leaders positions.

Two of the principals reported on securing funding for the position. Principal C related the following:

[Through the superintendent and Leadership Team A] we decided that we needed to make a valid effort at increasing the effectiveness of our teachers . . . We recouped funds that were other places. We ended up cutting programs, doing different things . . . in order to fund some of these positions. We applied for grants that we had never applied for, our Access grants, integration grants, things like that, and through those grants, we were able . . . to fund those positions.

Selection of teacher leaders: Job description, selection criteria, and interview process. The second condition examined by the researcher was the process employed in selecting teacher leaders. Teacher leadership literature delineated the importance of the principal’s role in the selection process to insure support of the position (Mangin, 2007; Weiner, 2011). Principals reported not having a written job description for the teacher leader position, the complexities of the teacher leader position and
writing a job description, selection criteria and skills, and how they conducted the interview and hiring process.

Three principals reported similar perceptions related to not having a written job description for the teacher leader position, although one of those principals was a teacher in the school district at the time of the hiring but involved in the hiring process as a teacher representative. The fourth principal was not employed in the school district when the teacher leaders were hired. The three principals involved in the teacher leaders’ hiring reported they did not have a written job description for the position, however, all principals reported a similar focus for the positions.

Another area related by two of the principals was about the complexities of writing a job description for the teacher leader position. Two principals reported about the complexities of the teacher leader position and how those complexities made writing a teacher leader job description difficult. Principal D listed the specific skills and responsibilities that made the job description difficult to write as follows: Working with K-8 staff, good relationship skills, organized, content knowledge, master teacher, ability to write grants, plan professional development for staff, co-teach with classroom teachers, problem solver, and have the ability to work independently.

Principal D reported:

I think why we fall short on the job description is because their jobs are so varied. They do so many things... be able to work with staff from kindergarten through eighth grade... relationship skills. You absolutely need to be an organized individual. You absolutely need to be able to talk the math language and understand basic components of what good math looks like and how that works. You need to be a master teacher... They’re also the people who write the Access grants, the people who are meeting with the [State Department of Education Specialist] to set up professional development for the entire district, the people who go into classrooms to co-teach, the people who are bringing resources to the table in terms of staff meetings... being able to be problem solvers and figure things out independently.
Principal B also reported on the complexities of the job description for a teacher leader position. Principal B was not in her current principal position or a part of the hiring process when the teacher leaders were selected; however, her previous work with teacher leaders in other school districts gave her insights into the complexities of the position in general. Principal B explained that the complexity of the job description itself is because the teacher leader position evolves over time based on events occurring in the school district. Also, the position often crosses several school organizational levels. Principal B explained:

What’s complex about those position descriptions is the sometimes almost unpredictable evolution or even constant bouncing back and forth between system wide kinds of things and very either classroom-specific or child-specific kinds of things, and it makes it difficult to define that role and makes it difficult to define what percentage of their time would preferably be spent in one or the other, because, again, it evolves based on what else is happening in the district at the time.

Principals reported about the selection criteria and skills they desired the applicants to possess. Principal B reported the selection team members were focusing on hiring a teacher leader who was knowledgeable and licensed in a specific content area. Principal D reported the team was seeking a candidate who “could build relationships, people that could build trust,” had pedagogical skill, and knowledgeable in the content area. Principal D reported the teacher leader positions were purposefully posted internally to ensure classroom teachers held a certain comfort level with the positions since the positions were new to the school district. Principal C reported her perspective on the selection criteria:

We knew we wanted somebody who could make connections with teachers. We knew we wanted somebody who had a certain amount of presence in them and that they could kind of own a room, and we knew that we wanted somebody who had a belief in a growth model for not only students but also for teachers.

The interview process was cited by three of the principals who were a part of the interview process, though one principal was a teacher in the district at the time of the interviews.
Principal C reported the interview process was similar to the interview process used in the selection of school administrators in the school district. This process included a formal interview with multiple stakeholders from within the school district and the community serving on the interview team. Members of the interview team consisted of administrators, teachers, and parents. Furthermore, two of the principals strongly recommended not filling the position if there was no qualified candidate and if the hiring committee was not confident the person would be successful; and they followed this suggestion by not filling the open math coach position for the approaching school year. Principal A reported on the importance of hiring well:

I just think that it’s hire well. You have to hire your superstars, because, if you don’t, it could fail really, really miserably. You have to make sure almost that you’re positive this person can be successful and can pull it off before you hire them.

School district and teacher leader goals. The third condition examined by the researcher in the principal interviews was related to school district and teacher leader goals. Literature cited the importance of the principal in creating clear goals for the teacher leader position as a critical condition in supporting the success of teacher leaders (Crowther et al., 2009; Mangin, 2007; Weiner, 2011). The findings revealed that the teacher leader position did not typically have specific goals written by principals. The findings also divulged that the principals tended to frame the teacher leader position within the scope of the school district goals, and that teacher leaders, classroom teachers, and administrators set individual goals that were consistent with school district goals.

All of the respondent principals reported that the teacher leaders did not have specific written goals established by the principals; however, the principals reported several responsibilities, which were focuses of the teacher leaders’ work. Principal B reported that
Leadership Team C defined the focus of the teacher leaders from an elementary perspective.

Principal B explained the focus of the work of the teacher leaders from her perspective:

Helping teachers define as a grade level, preferably district-wide, instructional priorities, i.e., instruction outcomes, what should kids be able to do as they leave that grade level and then moving towards some common assessments across the district for measuring those outcomes.

Two respondent principals framed the teacher leader position within the scope of the school district goals. Principal A stated:

As a district, we have goals that we work on, and kind of everything that we do falls under those goals, and their primary one is preparing students to be college and career ready, and . . . achievement . . . . Their biggest goal is just helping us with achievement and supporting teachers.

Principal D had a similar perspective as Principal A. He reported on the work of the teacher leaders within the scope of the school district goals stating, “Our district’s goals really speak to community outreach. They speak to student achievement and access for all students.” Principal D explained how teacher leader roles are within the scope of the district goal on community outreach:

One of our goals is to foster and maintain an informed public—so one of the things that our coaches would do in terms of informed public would be to host different events that are math-related or literacy-related. I think of our One District, One Book. Our coaches really drive our One District, One Book event, and that’s a national award—winning event for our district. Those are things where we outreach to our community, and [the teacher leaders are] vital in some of those things.

Principal D affirmed how teacher leader roles are within the school district’s goal to increase student achievement through improving teacher support and teacher effectiveness:

[The teacher leaders] are really important components of being able to identify where things are not working and being able to problem solve, being able to meet and support teachers who need more support, to be able to push teachers who want to be pushed, who are ready to be pushed, to be up to speed on best practice, especially at an elementary—in an elementary world. When you are prepping for everything it helps to have somebody
that is passionate about math, who’s passionate about literacy . . . They definitely play that role, and it fits exactly into our district vision and goals.

Two of the responding principals reported that teacher leaders, classroom teachers, and administrators are expected to set individual goals that are within the scope of the district goals. Principal C referred to the teacher leader positions having no set goals, but highlighted the importance of all school employees having written individual goals that aligned with the district goals:

All of us are required to write goals and to give those goals to our superintendent and to reflect on our goal progress . . . You have to have personal goals, and then you have to have data to support where you’re making the progress in those goals . . . All of those would be personal goals that should fall in the realm . . . [of] our three district goals . . . They’re about student achievement . . . fostering an informed public.

Principal D reported a similar perspective to Principal C:

I would say that we all have professional goals within our district. We meet with [the superintendent] as a principal group to talk through our goals personally, professionally, and within our buildings . . . I would say that if you were to ask [the teacher leaders], they would have goals in terms of we would like to grow in proficiency status by this number at the middle school—those things aren’t as clear. We don't have meetings and talk about specifics.

**Professional development for teacher leaders.** The fourth condition examined by the researcher during interviews with principals was related to professional development for teacher leaders. The findings revealed the teacher leaders received considerable professional development and used that training to support classroom teachers. Teacher leaders invited classroom teachers to conferences to enhance their instructional practices.

The four respondent principals reported similar perceptions related to professional development for their teacher leaders. They stated that teacher leaders in this study received considerable professional development sessions. The majority of professional development had
been on content. Principal A reported, “Mostly it’s been on content.” Principal C related, “They probably get the most professional development of anybody in our district.” Principal A cited that the importance of the teacher leaders receiving training was to assist them in using that knowledge to support classroom teachers:

We really believe that we have to train our teacher leaders in order to be able to bring things back to support our teachers . . . We try very hard to provide them with opportunities, and they’re really good at seeking out opportunities and letting us know. They do get some support that way.

Another finding noted that teacher leaders invited classroom teachers to attend professional development sessions with them. According to Principal C, inviting classroom teachers to attend conferences and professional development sessions with teacher leaders is a strategy used to enhance the instructional practices of classroom teachers. One approach is to invite classroom teachers who need improvement with select instructional practices, while another is to invite classroom teachers to training opportunities who are already proficient with the content or instructional practices. Principal C explained this strategy:

Sometimes they take teams of teachers. They’ll go together . . . [The literacy coach] will select different teachers that she thinks are important—that it would be important for them to go, and then we’ll send out an email, ‘We’re looking for some teachers to go to this.’ I might personally email some of the people that she told me that might be good people to go.

All principals identified professional development sessions that the teacher leaders had attended. Principal C reported some teacher leaders had attended the L.E.A.R.N. Conference or the [State] Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Principal A reported the [literacy coach] had attended the International Reading Association Conference, several workshops through the [State] Department of Education, and is very involved in the Central [State] Reading Council. Principal A also indicated that the math coach had attended several mathematics conventions.
Principal D identified [State] Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the International Reading Association Conference. Principal D also reported that the math and literacy coaches work closely with the [State] Department of Education. For example, the math coach works with a mathematics specialist from the [State] Department of Education in content and instructional practices. Principal D summed up the training of the math coach and the mathematics specialist as focused on acquiring learning strategies and practices and “all kinds of different things, but really around mathematics, mathematical reasoning, best practice, all those pieces.”

School district initiatives. The fifth condition examined in the principal interviews was related to school district initiatives. The findings revealed that teacher leaders assist in the development of school district initiatives. The findings also revealed that at times, teacher leaders are in the forefront leading school district initiatives.

Two of the four principals reported that teacher leaders assist in the development of school district initiatives. Principal C and Principal D related that teacher leaders serve on a number of district-wide and building-wide committees that allow them to be a part of the discussion and decision-making processes for school district initiatives. Principal C noted that on select occasions the principal and teacher leaders’ develop initiatives together. She stated, “We typically develop all of those together, and [the teacher leaders are] usually at the table when we’re doing that type of stuff . . . . those types of discussions we have when they’re in the room.” Principal D provided a similar perspective and explained how teacher leaders are a part of the decision-making process and at times are in the forefront leading initiatives:

[The teacher leaders] sit on a number of different committees, groups, leadership teams . . . . They’re always a sounding board, they’re always at the table giving input, talking through initiatives as we move things forward, so that’s important . . . . In this building there’s a school improvement team that’s been here for a long time. They sit on that. At
the elementary there’s [Leadership Team C], and they sit on that, and so they just always have input at the table as we move things forward, and many times they’re out in front, they’re leading some of those initiatives.

Research Question Two

What communication channels do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles? The second research question was related to the communication channels principals employed to support teacher leaders. Mangin (2007) suggested that school districts need to develop better communication systems to increase principal support for teacher leaders. Interview responses from the responding principals revealed various communication channels used to support teacher leader roles throughout the school district. Ten communication channels were used by principals to establish and communicate the work of the teacher leaders that supported their roles throughout the school district. The 10 communication channels are organized into four categories: (1) superintendent to principals, (2) principals to teacher leaders, (3) principals to classroom teachers, and (4) teacher leader to teacher leader.

Superintendent to principals. The first line of communication revealed during principal interviews focused on communication from the superintendent to principals. The teacher leadership literature illustrated that communication from district supervisors could influence the level of support principals provide to teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007). The findings from principal interviews revealed that the superintendent communicated information regarding the work of the teacher leaders to the principals at Leadership Team A meetings, Leadership Team B meetings, and in individual meetings with the principals.

The four respondent principals confirmed that the superintendent communicated information regarding the work of the teacher leaders to them at Leadership Team A and
Leadership Team B meetings. Leadership Team A meetings occur semi-monthly and are comprised of the following members: superintendent, K-12 principals, and district-wide directors (Business Manager, Community Education Director, Early Childhood Director, and Special Education Director). Leadership Team B meets monthly and includes the superintendent, the K-12 principals, and teacher leaders. The principals reported that the superintendent leads and facilitates both meetings, and all team members can contribute items to meeting agendas.

Principal D reported on the importance of the superintendent communicating information regarding teacher leaders and also the inclusion of teacher leaders in the Leadership Team A and Leadership Team B meetings:

All of the coaches will be in the room with all of the administrators and directors. That meeting will take place once a month, so we get that vertical discussion going. That’s where a lot of that happens, but then we follow up in [Leadership Team A] afterwards. Sometimes we’ll continue with discussion in [Leadership Team A], sometimes it’s email, sometimes it’s phone calls but, again, really transparent. We talk through a lot of different things, and there’s a high level of trust there as well.

Principal D explained further that the teacher leaders share information about their work at the Leadership Team A and Leadership Team B meetings:

[The superintendent] will have [the teacher leaders] report out . . . ‘What’s pressing in your world, what’s happening here?’ . . . He’ll ask questions on the front end. That takes a long time. It takes sometimes like an hour to get through everybody in the room and be able to talk through all of the different things that are happening through our district, and sometimes . . . as principals, we’ve got to go, and that’s frustrating, but I think it’s really important. It’s a necessary step, because we are able to hear, listen . . . you can hear tone of voice, you can hear frustration, you can hear joy, all of those things, and that’s good for us to experience together . . . [The superintendent] likes to get the people in the room, likes to hear kind of their tone and what they’re doing and how they’re feeling, how they relate to each other and everybody else, so he gets that cybernetic piece of it and [he] can understand that better.

Another means of communication used by the superintendent was by convening meetings with individual principals. Principal C reported the superintendent meets individually with the
principals at their buildings to communicate information regarding the teacher leaders and other topics:

Typically, when [the superintendent] comes to my school, I just walk around with him at my school, and he talks to me just kind of informally as we’re walking around, unless it’s something where we would need to say specific names or something.

**Principals to teacher leaders.** A second line of communication was communication from principals to teacher leaders. The teacher leadership literature conveyed the importance of communication and interactions between principals and teacher leaders as a means of increasing support for teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007; Weiner, 2011). Principals in this study reported they interacted with teacher leaders through three lines of communication: Leadership Team C meetings, weekly or bi-weekly meetings, and informal interactions.

All four principals reported Leadership Team C meetings were a means of communication that support the teacher leader role. The elementary principals, teacher leaders, and additional employees (e.g., Special Education Coordinator, Title Coordinator), if pertinent, attend Leadership Team C meetings. These meetings occur approximately every other month. Principal B reported, “So, of course, the most formal and most consistent has been our Leadership Team C meetings.” The Leadership Team C meetings are agenda driven, and all of the principals and teacher leaders contribute to the agenda. When describing the Leadership Team C meeting, Principal B stated:

Right at the moment, it’s kind of evolved to where our most experienced elementary principal just kind of takes the lead on it, but it really is very much a team effort. As we go down through the agenda, basically whoever put that item on the agenda is the one that takes the lead in the discussion.

Items on the Leadership Team C agenda include district-wide items, initiatives, and academic trends that relate to the elementary schools. Principal A stated, “In the Leadership Team C
group, that’s more of long range planning, and district-wide goals and how we’re going to—for example, like the testing things, and those types of things happen in that bigger group.”

Principal C explained that Leadership Team C meetings provided an opportunity to present and discuss new ideas. For example, the intervention program, WIN Time, was generated at the Leadership Team C meetings for the elementary schools. Moreover, even though Principal D, the middle school principal, does not attend the Leadership Team C meetings, he conveyed that the Leadership Team C meetings are a significant line of communication for principals and teacher leaders at the elementary level.

Scheduled weekly or bi-weekly meetings with the teacher leaders were reported by three of the four principals as another line of communication from principals to teacher leaders. These meetings include the principal and the teacher leaders at each of the buildings. The principals do not have formal agendas for such meetings. The three principals’ indicated that the topics discussed in each of the weekly or bi-weekly meetings were building specific and district-wide. Meetings consist of two-way conversations between the principal and teacher leaders. Principal A reported the topics discussed at the meetings include teachers who need classroom support, resources needed, and troubleshooting/problem solving. Principal A explained:

We talk about certain teachers, what’s going well, who needs support . . . things that are really specific to my building. They kind of are our radar piece—what’s going on out there that I need to know about . . . We maybe need more resources, we may need something—have you thought about this? They really are helping me troubleshoot what I need to do with my staff.

Principal B reported that together the principal and teacher leaders problem solve, clarify misunderstandings, and decide how to proceed in the future. Principal B explained that in her weekly meetings teacher leaders are able to communicate their observations of classroom teacher
needs. The meetings typically include topics introduced from grade-level or data meetings and items that need further discussion from the Leadership Team C meetings.

Principal C reported that her bi-weekly meetings with teacher leaders follow a series of questions: “What are the areas that I need to be concerned with? What are the areas that we’re rocky on in your eyes? . . . Where do I look compared to the district? Where am I too much? Where am I too little? What’s coming?” Principal C and the teacher leaders also discuss in bi-weekly meetings how they can better support new staff members. The principal stated, “We almost always talk about new staff, how are they doing, what support do they need, what are you working on them with.”

Principals reported communicating to teacher leaders through informal interactions. Such interactions were reported by three of the respondent principals. One of those principals, Principal D, reported frequent informal conversations as a form of interaction and communication with teacher leaders while Principal B and Principal C reported they desired more frequent informal conversations. Principal D noted he has an open door policy and that either he or the teacher leaders will initiate communication. He explained the interactions he has with the teacher leaders as follows:

At times I’ll pull a coach in and say, ‘Here’s what I’m thinking about. What do you think?’ Every single day we meet in the hall and talk about something that’s happening and touch base and move on, so the informal thing happens all the time.

Informal communication involves topics such as planning interventions, reviewing teacher growth improvement plans, and funding requests.

In contrast to Principal D’s response, Principal B and Principal C reported the need to have more informal conversations. Both principals cited a concern that because teacher leaders were spread among four school buildings their accessibility for informal interactions was limited.
Principal B described a need to resolve issues quicker and easier through informal interactions. She stated limited accessibility to the teacher leaders reduced the opportunities of “by the way, so-and-so is needing some help with this. Which part do you want me to take in that?” Principal C had a similar perception as Principal B in desiring more informal interactions with teacher leaders. Principal C reported an interest in having more frequent discussions about academic topics with the teacher leaders, “It would be nice to have a coach that you could talk about academics, and you could really say, ‘Let’s try this. Let’s just see if we could have a couple of teachers just try this and just see.’”

**Principals to classroom teachers.** During the course of the interviews, respondent principals revealed a third line of communication was directly from principals to classroom teachers. Teacher leadership literature reported the importance of principals providing support to teacher leaders by communicating directly to classroom teachers about the role of teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007). Grade-level and staff meetings, weekly email updates, and informal interactions were cited as primary methods principals used to communicate with teachers about the teacher leader role.

Three of the four principals reported grade-level and staff meetings as a means of communicating to classroom teachers about teacher leaders. Principal B reported:

> Teacher leaders are scheduled into certain grade-level meetings . . . I think the staff in my building would acknowledge this, just by the fact that I’ve scheduled the coaches to be at those meetings is a message around empowering the coaches in the discussion.

Principal B further explained the manner in which information is communicated to classroom teachers about teacher leaders. She related that twice monthly grade-level meetings were conducted that focused on mathematics and on language arts. Almost always the literacy coach
has been present at the language arts meeting. Likewise, the math coach has been present at the mathematics meetings. Principal C reported that teacher leaders attend the grade-level meetings and lead the teachers through writing common formative assessments and essential learning outcomes. Principal C additionally related that teacher leaders attend the staff meetings if they are in the building on the day of a scheduled meeting.

Principal B and Principal D reported communicating about the teacher leader position through a weekly update to the classroom teachers. Principal B stated that all principals write weekly updates for their buildings, though, only two principals related using it as a method of communicating information about the teacher leaders. Weekly updates are posted once a week on Google Docs for teachers to read in all buildings. The teacher leaders are accorded a section in each weekly update and according to Principal B it is an opportunity to communicate to classroom teachers that the work of teacher leaders is valued and important. Principal B explained:

We also as principals do weekly updates, and often the coaches will add a piece to those weekly updates, so that serves as one opportunity for us to, as principals, to value that coaching input and therefore communicate with teachers that we see it as important.

Principal D also reported the math and literacy coaches have sections in each weekly update. He uses the weekly update in his building through team leader meetings and department meetings held twice a month. These provide multiple opportunities for team leaders and classroom teachers to read and discuss the teacher leader sections. Principal D reported:

A lot of the communication about what’s happening or what they need to communicate is in there as well. Both [the literacy coach and math coach] . . . have a blurb in my update every week, where they speak to the staff in regards to math, and that’s okay for our science teachers or our language arts teachers to read [the math coach’s] message about best math practice.
Respondent principals related that they communicate about the role and importance of teacher leaders through informal interactions. Principal C spoke of the teacher leader role through informal interactions with classroom teachers. Although not always agreeing with the teacher leaders’ philosophies, Principal C reported she always speaks in support of the teacher leaders when communicating with classroom teachers: “I always talk in support of them . . . whether I agree with their idea or not philosophically, my teachers always think I do. I think that’s really important to do that.” Principal C described a strategy she uses to support the work of the teacher leaders by following up with classroom teachers:

Sometimes the math coach or the literacy coach or the interventionist will go in and will offer suggestions to the teacher . . . and to support [the teacher leaders], what I like to do is . . . for [the teacher leaders] to tell me . . . what they’re working on, and then I come in and I’ll make almost the same exact suggestion [to the teacher].

Principal C further stated that through informal interactions with classroom teachers she always encourages them to interact with the teacher leaders:

I always encourage my teachers to ask them for help. And not help when they need it . . . when they’re in dire straits . . . but when . . . they have an idea that they’re really excited about, I say, ‘Yeah, you should talk to [the math coach] or you should talk to [the literacy coach] and see if they can help you with that.’

Teacher leader to teacher leader. A fourth line of communication for teacher leaders was from one teacher leader to other teacher leaders. The findings revealed that the teacher leaders communicated with each other through a formal scheduled coaches’ meeting. Interview findings also divulged that the teacher leaders have frequent informal conversations with one another.

All four respondent principals reported the teacher leaders main communication with each other was at scheduled coaches’ meetings. Principal A explained, “They have ample opportunity to work together.” According to the principals, the teacher leaders schedule
coaches’ meetings, without principals present, once a month for half a day. At these meetings, teacher leaders are allotted the time and resources to work together. In addition, all principals reported the teacher leaders work well together and according to Principal D, “They absolutely have to [communicate with one another]. They depend on each other.” Principal D noted that although their positions are in different areas (intervention, literacy, mathematics) they perform similar tasks, “They hold coaches’ meetings, instructional coaches’ meetings along with each other. They work on data together . . . . They oftentimes lead in professional development together, so they work very closely with each other all year long.” Principal B identified topics such as troubleshooting and preparing for Leadership Team C meetings as examples of responsibilities teacher leaders may discuss and also pointed out that they communicate well with each other:

They will gather in scheduled coaches’ meetings . . . to troubleshoot things that they’re trying to navigate and/or to discuss something they might want to present to our whole [Leadership Team C] group so that there’s definitely some thought going into that ahead of time . . . I think they do a lot of informal communication.

Principal C cited three of the most frequent opportunities teacher leaders have for informal conversations: unified schedules, traveling together, and shared space. Principal C stated, “Because they write their own schedules, they spend a lot of time together . . . but they often go in pairs or in groups to different buildings . . . . They all share offices everywhere.”

Research Question Three

What are principals’ perceptions of the beneficial skills, work benefits, and challenges experienced with teacher leaders? The third research question focused on the principals’ perceptions of the work of the teacher leaders. Respondent principals were asked to discuss the work of teacher leaders in three areas: (1) the skills that are beneficial for teacher leaders to be
effective, (2) the benefits of the work of teacher leaders, and (3) the challenges experienced by teacher leaders and principals.

Skills. Respondent principals shared their perceptions of the skills teacher leaders needed to be effective. The findings from this study revealed establishing relationships and content knowledge as primary skills beneficial for the teacher leaders to be effective. The principals also reported communication and several additional skills.

All four principals related that the primary skill of teacher leaders must be to establish relationships with teachers. The principals reported building and fostering the teacher leader-teacher relationship allowed for classroom teachers to feel “comfortable” with the teacher leaders, allowed teacher leaders to be “approachable,” and positioned teacher leaders as people teachers can “confidently rely on” and “trust.” Principal B explained the relationship, “The ability to build quick, hardy relationships so that teachers see them as someone they can confidently rely on.” Principal A also reported relationships as being a pivotal skill:

Relationships. I think that is the number one thing. If a teacher doesn’t like you or doesn’t want to work with you, no matter how smart you are and how much you know, it’s not really going to make a difference. So I think relationships is huge.

Principal A further explained the importance of teacher leaders establishing relationships with teachers by stating, “Teachers need to feel comfortable going to the [teacher leaders], and if they don’t, their position isn’t worth much.” Principal C had a similar perspective in explaining the need for approachability in order for classroom teachers to feel comfortable working with teacher leaders:

I think [the teacher leaders] need to be approachable . . . . they have to be, ‘Yeah, I can help you,’ but not, ‘I’m going to show you what to do’ . . . . They have to be a real—almost like a servant leader . . . ‘I’m here to serve you,’ and they need to not only say
that, but they need to believe that, because if they don’t believe that, then they’ll be frustrated with the job, because it is a service job.

Principal D reinforced relationships as being an essential skill for teacher leaders to be effective. He identified “soft skills” as secondary in establishing teacher leader-teacher relationships. Principal D stated, “The only way we grow as a staff, as a teacher, as a building is to be able to safely challenge, and so you can’t safely challenge if you don’t have the relationships, if you don’t first build and foster those things.” Principal D continued describing the necessity of soft skills in establishing relationships, “There’s just so many of the soft skills. Because they work with teachers so closely, and because they’re out in front leading initiatives, there has to be a level of trust, there has to be that level of comfort.” Principal D described the soft skills as the key to fostering and building relationships and listed those skills as, “a good communicator, being able to listen, being able to create safe dialogue and being responsive to what the needs are.” Principal D added a key point of clarification. Teacher leaders cannot just have soft skills; they must slow down and take the time to use soft skills in order to build the teacher leader-teacher relationship. He described a situation in which a previous teacher leader failed to slow down and use the soft skills to foster the teacher leader-teacher relationship:

When those things don’t occur, whether it’s somebody that has the skill and just chooses not to use it because we’re running them so fast, or at times there have been people in instructional leadership positions in our buildings that have not been successful, and it comes down to slowing down to listen and communicate almost all the time.

Principal D reported another example of teacher leaders establishing relationships:

As a new coach going in and saying, ‘We’re going to do something this way,’ to a teacher or a teacher team without them . . . knowing or trusting, and for them to . . . push back and say, ‘Who are you? No, we’re not.’ That creates, from the start, a very difficult environment . . . . That took that coach some time to back up, to slow down, to reestablish that relationship, to reestablish trust, but because we didn't take the time on the front end to load the relationship and build the relationship, because we want to mark things off our list, he ended up spending months and months on end . . . repairing the relationship.
Responses from two of the principals indicated the necessity of teacher leaders possessing a strong understanding of content and instructional knowledge as additional skills. Principal B stated, “Having a strong background in research-based instructional approaches.” Principal A reported, “Strong content, of course, but content’s something you can learn.”

Communication was another skill cited by two respondent principals. Principal D emphasized that being a good communicator and listener insured “being able to create safe dialogue.” Principal B noted that teacher leaders should display a certain savvy-ness in navigating communication between teachers and principals that demonstrates supporting teachers rather than “spying on teachers.” Other skills were also enumerated as being beneficial to the effectiveness of teacher leaders. In this instance, Principal C reported: flexible, confident, a natural leader who has a presence, able to practice confidentiality, and taking initiative. Principal D offered skills that include being able to agree to disagree, and being a strong person who has emotional consistency when navigating the in-between of not being an administrator and not being a classroom teacher.

Benefits of teacher leaders. Another area examined in the principal interviews related to the benefits of the work of teacher leaders. The respondent principals cited the following three benefits of the teacher leaders: providing curriculum and instructional support to classroom teachers, contributing to student achievement growth, and providing and creating consistency among the elementary schools.

All four respondent principals spoke about the benefits teacher leaders provided in the curriculum and instructional support of classroom teachers. Curriculum and instructional support was provided to teachers in the forms of pedagogical growth, knowledge of student data,
and identifying best practices. The principals credited teacher leaders for improving teachers’ pedagogical growth. This was accomplished by the teacher leaders supporting teachers in their examinations of instructional practices. According Principal B, pedagogical growth was one of the most beneficial impacts teacher leaders provided: “I think the most direct impact is on assisting teachers in analyzing their instructional practices and potential instructional changes to increase the impact on students.” Principal D had a similar perspective:

Their direct impact is really on how we provide instruction . . . how deeply we can make change within the classroom to help teachers grow . . . . Their job is to support the teacher to grow and build capacity within their classroom . . . . at times they will go in and take a class for a teacher and teach for the day, but, again, the goal is that the teacher is then doing something that grows their pedagogy, grows them academically, and so it’s really about teacher support.

Teacher leaders have enabled teachers to improve their understanding of student achievement data. The respondent principals related that the teacher leaders assisted teachers’ in improving their knowledge and understanding of student data, in identifying trends, and in analyzing student data. Principal A described how the teacher leaders had an impact on the use of student data: “They have also done a great job of helping us interpret data . . . and providing teachers ideas with what to do with those struggling kids.” Principal C related the benefit the teacher leaders provided to classroom teachers through identifying best practices, “There is no way that [classroom teachers] would have time to do the research that needs to be done . . . to know what the best practice is.” Principal C explained the growth of teachers’ knowledge and understanding of student achievement data during the three years teacher leader positions have been in existence. Initially, the teacher leaders identified trends in the student data, provided resources, and proposed best practices for the teachers at meetings or data days. Now, when teachers attend data days, they have already identified trends in their students’ achievement data
themselves, have submitted their findings prior to the meetings, and identified questions and topics on which they want the teacher leaders to present.

Three respondent principals provided comments about teacher leaders’ contributions to student achievement growth. Two principals reported that though the teacher leaders’ impact was not verifiable by data, they still believed the teacher leaders’ work improved student achievement growth. Principal B reported, “I think there’s some student data to indicate that it has likely . . . contributed to student growth.” Principal C offered that select, additional practices may have contributed to student achievement growth including better use of student data, adapting a new mathematics and language arts curriculum, and 16 elementary teachers receiving their reading license. Principal C continued:

To isolate it just to say that it was teacher leaders, I don’t know, but I would say it’s significant, because without [the teacher leaders] those curriculums would not be integrated. They were absolutely essential to getting . . . the scope and sequence . . . the mapping, the calendar, this is what we’re expecting.

Respondent principals related their belief that teacher leaders provided a benefit to the school district by creating consistency among the elementary schools. Principal C reported, “With the coaches there too, there’s more of a this is the whole picture and to keep us to see that whole picture.” Principal A reported:

One of the main things at the elementary level is they provide some consistency between the three buildings, because we have three elementary buildings, and we want to send the same type of student on to the middle school . . . . They are kind of our eyes and ears in other buildings in keeping everybody on track moving the same way.

Principal C related the impact teacher leaders had on creating consistent practices in the three elementary schools:

[The teacher leaders] really are the people that . . . make sure that we’re being equal across the district, because our schools are so different in demographics and so different in size . . . they really are the equity piece of the curriculum being developed, is it being
delivered, are we expecting the same types of things, are kids getting the same experience in every building . . . because they have that global piece where they go to the other buildings, they see that before anybody else.

Principal C continued to explain:

But it has been good in terms of . . . what we’re offering for students and . . . everybody’s getting a balanced education . . . . There would definitely be some inequities if [the teacher leaders] weren’t there, if they weren’t part of that discussion at the table of, ‘No, you can’t do that. That wouldn’t be fair for everybody else.’

Principal C summarized the overall benefit and impact teacher leaders have had on the classroom teachers:

Our teachers at first thought that it was a waste of money, and they thought you should just lower the class sizes instead of paying for one more—to take somebody out of the class . . . . Now the teachers would absolutely probably fight for those positions. I mean, they would say those positions need to stay. The [teacher leaders] have done a really good job of selling their job, of telling people, ‘This is important. This is what I’m doing to support you.’ And so I think our teachers absolutely see them as support.

Challenges. When interviewed respondent principals addressed challenges experienced by teacher leaders and principals. Four challenges emerged: the teacher leaders report to four principals and deliver services in four buildings rather than reporting to a single district administrator and working in one building; there was no written job description for the teacher leaders; the three elementary schools vary demographically and in student enrollments; and the four principals defined the instructional leader role differently in each of their buildings.

A Director of Teaching and Learning was hired shortly before the research study interviews were conducted with the principals. As a result of that hiring, principals spoke of the challenge for the teacher leaders of reporting to four principals and how they anticipated resolution of this issue with the hiring of the Director of Teaching and Learning for the coming school year.
Respondent principals discussed the challenge of the teacher leaders reporting to four principals rather than a single district-wide supervisor. Principal D spoke about the challenge of reporting to four principals:

Our old model, prior model, was that the coaches really reported to all of the principals, which sometimes lent itself to challenges and confusion or different answers from different people . . . . We’re close enough that we usually can navigate those things, but it definitely had challenges. And now we’re really looking at being able to report to one person.

Principal A explained how teacher leaders being housed in four buildings did not allow for them to have a consistent schedule or the ability to maximize their time:

They are all assigned to a building, but . . . they aren’t in that building specifically. Like [the intervention coach] is assigned to this building—I am her direct supervisor, and [the literacy coach] is at [School C], and [the math coach] is at the middle school, but they divvy out their time, which is one of the challenges that we’ve had . . . [the literacy coach] comes here and works with a teacher of mine for a couple of days, and then she may not be back in my building for a week or two . . . . it’s tough to have any consistency beyond a day a week or so. So that’s a challenge.

Principal A cited the challenge of teacher leaders reporting to several principals and not having a job description for the position:

They report to different principals, they report to a superintendent, and I think having somebody that kind of coordinates them . . . will help immensely . . . because they really are kind of out there on their own. They’re the first ones we’ve had in our district, so they have paved the way. They have kind of decided what they’re doing and what their job description should be.

Principal A continued:

Because we didn’t have . . . job descriptions going into these positions . . . that is something that we certainly need to do better, and I’m hoping once we get the Director of Teaching and Learning [we will] have more of a flow chart and what everybody’s responsibilities are . . . . how does that person fit with the principals, and how does that person fit with the coaches, and now how do the principals fit with the coaches?

Principal D reported about the challenge for both principals and the teacher leaders because a job description was not written and also how they resolved this challenge:
I think where the challenges have come in on both sides of this discussion have been about the variability of the position, because we can’t put together a specific job description for these people because they wear so many hats. ‘Who do I report to? I have one principal telling me this, I have another principal telling me that.’ Is it better to have a model where there’s one instructional coach in one building rather than I’m the math coach, and I’m going to all the buildings, because I can’t be in all the places at the same time? Those are conversations, if we’ve had them once, we’ve had them 100 times . . . . And those discussions really help us to grow and to think differently about it, and, again, having another person in that dialogue [the incoming Director of Teaching and Learning] will be a good piece as well, but there have been challenges, mostly around consistency, around, ‘What is my job? What should I be doing today?’

Another challenge addressed by the principals was that the three elementary buildings vary in student enrollment and student demographics. This challenge requires the principals and teacher leaders to modify training and interventions in their buildings to fit the needs of classroom teachers and the students. Principal A reported that aligning the work of the teacher leaders at each of the three elementary schools is a challenge for both the teacher leaders and principals. Principal A explained:

One of our biggest challenges has been the three elementaries, keeping them all on track . . . . They’re doing this there, and they’re doing this here, and trying to . . . make sure that we’re all on the same page but then also realizing that we’re all different buildings . . . That’s been a struggle both on the principals’ side and the coaches’ side.

Principal B highlighted the difficulty of consistent messaging:

[The teacher leaders] report to all principals in terms of how are we moving forward, and what can we do to help our whole system move forward? . . . That’s difficult, because even if we’re all moving in the same direction, we might all be moving in the same direction in a slightly different way and trying to figure out how to navigate . . . and keep messaging somewhat consistent between administration and coaches, but then also between coaches and the various buildings of teaching staff, has been something that we’ve noted to be difficult and that coaches have noted to be difficult.

Principal B highlighted the complexities of alignment. It extends beyond teacher leaders having to report to four principals in four different buildings to the classroom teachers’ work and the messaging among principals to teachers and principals to principals:
Consistency of messaging. I think we would all . . . say that’s been a little bit of a challenge . . . I think that consistency in message comes from person-by-person messaging . . . Depending on the training that each staff as a building has had, that messaging might need to be a little bit different, or the stages of implementation might need to be a little bit different in one building versus another . . . Basically just even the challenge of coaches sort of staying on their toes around in this building this is how we usually explain it, or this is where we are and then that building we’re at a different place . . . The complexity of that situation makes it difficult to keep messaging consistent.

The final challenge to teacher leaders is that the principals have different instructional leadership roles in their buildings. For example, as a result of principal role shifts within the district, principals new to their current positions wanted more instructional leader roles during in-service data days in their buildings. This required the teacher leader to defer to the principal as leader. Principal C is the only respondent who reported this as a challenge. Her reported response shows that this impacted several of the principals and the teacher leaders:

I do know at [another school] too that the [integration coach] did most of the in-service of data and things like that, but that was the first time that a principal was at in-service and did those instructional types of things . . . then as we’ve added now another principal that’s really an instructional leader. And there was a principal that started right before me also who kind of has that same philosophy. I think with that, that’s been difficult for the coaches. ‘Is this my job? Is that not my job?’ I know that we’ve had lots of hard discussions about people’s feelings being hurt and, ‘You’re stepping on my job. You’re stepping on mine,’ that I feel we’re better for that, because everybody’s really informed, but that’s been difficult and mainly because it’s a switch in philosophy.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the three research questions. Interview responses were reported from four principals regarding their roles in supporting teacher leaders. The first research question was related to the conditions that principals create to support teacher leaders. The findings revealed that respondent principals employed several conditions that provided support to the teacher leaders. The reported supportive conditions were: establishing the teacher
leader position, selection of teacher leaders, school district and teacher leader goals, professional development for teacher leaders, and school district initiatives.

The second research question was related to the communication channels principals employed to support teacher leaders. Reports from the principals revealed various communication channels were used to support the teacher leader roles throughout the school district. Ten communication channels were identified for establishing and communicating the work of teacher leaders that promoted support of their roles throughout the school district. These communication channels were organized into four categories: superintendent to principals, principals to teacher leaders, principals to classroom teachers, and teacher leader to teacher leader. The third research question addressed the principals’ perceptions of the work of the teacher leaders. Principals reported skills that were beneficial for teacher leaders to be effective, the benefits of the work of teacher leaders, and the challenges experienced by teacher leaders and principals.

Chapter five examines the findings in relationship to the literature and presents the conclusions of the study. Limitations of the study are also presented. In addition, the researcher provides recommendations for professional practice in supporting teacher leaders and recommendations for future research studies.
Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine select principals’ perspectives of the role of principals in supporting teacher leaders in one Midwestern public school district. The researcher intended to explore the conditions principals employed to support teacher leaders, the communication channels employed to support teacher leaders, and principals’ perceptions of the work of teacher leaders. A case study was used to examine the research questions that relate to the role of the principal in supporting teacher leaders. The case study format allowed for the collection of individual interview responses from the principals’ perspectives. This chapter presents the conclusions of the study in relation to the research literature presented in chapter two on teacher leadership and the principal’s role in supporting teacher leaders. Limitations of the study and recommendations for professional practice and future research studies are presented.

CONCLUSIONS

Research Question One: Supportive Conditions

The first research question addressed the conditions that have been identified by researchers as possibly promoting or hindering the level of support principals provide to teacher
leaders and the growth of teacher leadership (Mangin, 2007; Murphy, 2005; Weiner, 2011). Although there are many ways that principals can support teacher leadership, this research question and the principals’ responses focused on the following conditions: establishing the teacher leader position, selection of teacher leaders, school district and teacher leader goals, professional development for teacher leaders, and school district initiatives.

Establishing the teacher leader position. Principals’ responses about the types of conditions provided to teacher leaders revealed that the school district and principals had an established purpose and process for enacting the teacher leader positions. Principals reported similar perspectives of the school district’s need for these positions and how they were originally created. The principals’ responses indicated that the teacher leader positions were created to implement the school district’s new mathematics and language arts curriculum and increase growth in student achievement in mathematics and language arts. Furthermore, the positions were established to increase the effectiveness of classroom teachers by maximizing support to them.

Decision-makers at two different levels were a part of the process of establishing and developing the teacher leader positions. Participating principals reported the district’s need for establishing the teacher leader positions was initiated at the Leadership Team A level by the superintendent and the K-12 principals. This aligns with the research of Mangin (2007). Mangin (2007) reported “involving principals in teacher leadership role design” (p. 351) would promote principal’s knowledge and increase principal support for the teacher leader role. Principal C cited the purpose for establishing the teacher leader positions:

[Through the superintendent and Leadership Team A] we decided that we needed to make a valid effort at increasing the effectiveness of our teachers . . . We recouped funds
that were other places. We ended up cutting programs, doing different things . . . in order to fund some of these positions. We applied for grants that we had never applied for, our Access grants, integration grants, things like that, and through those grants, we were able . . . to fund those positions.

Principal D reported his role in the process and explained how key decision-makers were a part of establishing the teacher leader positions:

My role in this process . . . participant in developing the plan, developing the roles of the coaches . . . We’re able to get the decision-makers . . . in the room that need the input to bring it to the next phase of whatever plan it was.

Principal D explained the need to establish the teacher leader positions with the outcome of maximizing support of teachers in the mathematics and language arts:

Trying to maximize support for staff, support for classrooms and really in math and language were the first two focal points. The development of a math coach was built out of the necessity of improving math scores . . . That was done at [the Leadership Team A] level.

The two principals new to their position had a clear understanding of the purpose for creating the positions. This aligned with the research findings of Berg et al. (2005). Berg et al. (2005) stated it is imperative that principals new to the district understand the role of the teacher leaders in order that they not assign those staff members responsibilities outside the scope of the positions’ intended purpose. It is unclear in this study how the new principals were informed of the purpose and the process of establishing the positions. If they were formally and systematically informed, informally informed, or if they inquired out of their own interest for better understanding.

In accordance with Mangin (2007), principals in this study who were involved in the decision-making process had a clear understanding of the background for and manner of creating the positions. Therefore, when creating a teacher leader position, principals should be involved in the establishment and role development processes. Involving principals ensures they will have
a clear understanding of the purpose for and a vested interest in the position. A clear understanding of the purpose and development of the position leads to proper enactment of the position and allows principals to better support teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007). Additionally, if principals are new to their positions or were not participants in the development process, the school district should provide a systematic approach for informing these principals about the teacher leader positions (Berg et al., 2005; Mangin, 2007).

Selection of teacher leaders: Job description, selection criteria and interview process. Mangin (2007) recommended a rigorous selection process for teacher leader positions. The teacher leader positions in this study were posted internally, and the district used an open selection process. Principal D stated that these initial positions were purposefully posted internally to ensure classroom teachers held a certain comfort level with the candidates since the positions were new to the school district. Candidates for the position underwent a formal interview similar to the process employed in selecting school administrators. Members of the interview team included administrators, teachers, and parents. It was noteworthy that three principals reported they did not have a specific written job description for the positions, however, they did report a similar focus for the teacher leader role. Respondent principals stated selection criteria and the skills they desired applicants to possess. This aligns with the research of Weiner (2011) when she stressed the importance of an open selection process that includes two components: (1) “the job and its requirements are well publicized in the school community and (2) multiple stakeholders serve on the hiring committee” (p. 37). Weiner (2011) stated that this increases the “transparency about why an individual was hired for the role and what he or she was expected to do in the position.
Ideally, such information would help to increase teachers’ acceptance of the process and the person who fills the position” (p. 37).

Three of the four principals in the study were involved in the hiring process—the fourth principal was not employed in the district at the time of the hiring process. This aligns with the work of Mangin (2007) when she suggested school districts should solicit the input of principals in the hiring process. Furthermore, two of the principals strongly recommended not filling the position if there was no qualified candidate and if the hiring committee was not confident the person would be successful; and they followed this suggestion by not filling the open math coach position for the approaching school year. The concept of hiring well had a stronger emphasis in this study than prior findings (Weiner, 2011). Principal A reported on the importance of hiring well:

I just think that it’s hire well. You have to hire your superstars, because, if you don’t, it could fail really, really miserably. You have to make sure almost that you’re positive this person can be successful and can pull it off before you hire them.

Principal D had a similar perspective as Principal A and reported on the importance of hiring well:

As a principal, I couldn’t do my job without them, and so they are a key component to our success and our continued growth. And that’s in large part due to the person that we hire and the personality of the people that are in there . . . . it’s very, very important that you get the right person, and we’ll leave it open. Right now we interviewed for math last week, and we’re going to leave it open right now, because we’re just not ready. And if you visit our district in September, it would not surprise me if that position is still open, because it absolutely needs to be the right person in the position. That’s how important it is.

School district and teacher leader goals. The ability of the principal to create a clear vision and goals for the teacher leader position has been found to be a critical supportive condition for teacher leaders to be successful (Crowther et al., 2009; Mangin, 2007; Weiner,
All of the principals reported that the teacher leaders did not have specific written goals established by the principals. All of the principals reported a similar perspective on the focus of the work of the teacher leaders. Principals reported the teacher leaders’ work should be focused on implementing the new mathematics and language arts curriculum and increasing student achievement in mathematics and language arts. They explained this would be achieved by teacher leaders increasing the effectiveness of classroom teachers’ instructional practices by maximizing support to those teachers. Furthermore, the principals tended to frame the teacher leader position within the scope of the school district goals, and that teacher leaders, classroom teachers, and administrators set individual goals that were consistent with the scope of the school district goals.

Professional development for teacher leaders. Professional development is another vital, supportive condition for principals to provide to teacher leaders (Murphy, 2005). According to Murphy (2005), teachers are being placed in leadership positions with little or no training; that was not the case in this study. All principals reported the teacher leaders received considerable opportunities for professional development. The principals expressed a belief that the teacher leaders receive professional development and use that knowledge to support teachers. According to Principal A, “We really believe that we have to train our teacher leaders in order to be able to bring things back to support our teachers . . . We try very hard to provide them with opportunities.”

Respondent principals identified several of the professional development sessions that teacher leaders had attended. Furthermore, the principals stated that the teacher leaders were knowledgeable in their identification of quality professional development opportunities.
It was reported teacher leaders and classroom teachers attended professional development sessions together. According to Principal C, having classroom teachers attend conferences and professional development sessions with teacher leaders is a strategy used to enhance the instructional practices of classroom teachers. Principal C explained that the principals and teacher leaders typically selected teachers to attend conferences and workshops with teacher leaders. One strategy was to invite classroom teachers who need improvement to accompany classroom teachers who are already proficient with the content in attending professional development sessions. Principal C explained this strategy:

S sometimes they take teams of teachers. They’ll go together . . . . [The literacy coach] will select different teachers that she thinks are important—that it would be important for them to go, and then we’ll send out an email, ‘We’re looking for some teachers to go to this.’ I might personally email some of the people that she told me that might be good people to go.

Teacher leaders selecting teachers to attend professional development sessions together were not mentioned in the literature research. This could serve as a new strategy for principals to employ in supporting the work of the teacher leader position. First, by providing time and financial resources for teacher leaders and teachers to attend professional development sessions together the teacher leader position is supported and credibility is enhanced. Second, this strategy shows importance to and improves the classroom teachers’ instructional growth, a focus of the teacher leader position, which contributes to the school district’s goal of improving student achievement. Third, it provides opportunities outside of the school building for the teacher leader and teacher to learn together and build relationships.

**School district initiatives.** When asked, “How do school improvement plans or initiatives in your school district allow for you to support teacher leaders?” two of the four principals
reported that the teacher leaders assist in the development of school district initiatives. Principal C and Principal D related that teacher leaders are on numerous district-wide and building-wide committees that allow them to participate in the discussion and decision-making processes for school district initiatives. Principal C described the principals’ and teacher leaders’ roles in developing initiatives together and how this process unfolds: “We typically develop all of those together, and [the teacher leaders are] usually at the table when we’re doing that type of stuff . . . . those types of discussions we have when they’re in the room.” Principal D provided a similar perspective and explained how teacher leaders are a participant in the decision-making process and at times are in the forefront leading initiatives:

[The teacher leaders] sit on a number of different committees, groups, leadership teams . . . . they just always have input at the table as we kind of move things forward, and many times they’re out in front, they’re leading some of those initiatives.

The principals’ responses support the notion that the principal-teacher leader relationship is a collaborative, shared decision-making relationship (Crowther, 2011; Crowther et al., 2009). Principal D indicated that the teacher leaders are a “sounding board . . . they’re always at the table giving input, talking through initiatives as we move things forward,” and “those types of discussions we have when they’re in the room.” Moller and Pankake (2006) stated this type of principal-teacher leader relationship is considered the first and most important step in providing supportive conditions to teacher leaders. The researchers stated, “It is critical to the principal’s success and the health of the school culture” (p. 161).
Research Question Two: Communication Channels

Research question two examined communication channels principals employed to support teacher leader roles. Mangin (2007) reported from her findings that to “increase principal support for teacher leaders, districts need to develop better systems of communication that promote principals’ knowledge of teacher leadership” (p. 351). The principals participating in this study reported that 10 communication channels were used to communicate the work of teacher leaders to promote support of their roles throughout the school district. These communication channels are organized into four categorizes: (1) superintendent to principals, (2) principals to teacher leaders, (3) principals to classroom teachers, and (4) teacher leader to teacher leader.

Superintendent to principals. Mangin’s (2007) research on principal support to teacher leaders related that high levels of communication from district supervisors could influence the level of support principals provide to teacher leaders. Principals were considered highly supportive if they met on a regular basis with the district supervisor because it increased accurate enactment of the teacher leader position (Mangin, 2007). In the study, the principals reported the superintendent communicated information about the teacher leaders with the respondent principals and other principals in the district through two regularly scheduled meetings—Leadership Team A and Leadership Team B meetings. Leadership Team A meets semi-monthly and Leadership Team B meets monthly. Leadership Team A includes the superintendent, K-12 principals, and district-wide directors. Leadership Team B includes the superintendent, K-12 principals, and teacher leaders. Principal C related the superintendent meets individually with
the principals at their buildings approximately once a week to communicate information regarding the teacher leaders and other topics.

As evident from the principals’ responses in research question one, the principals had a clear and thorough understanding of the teacher leader roles. One could argue the superintendent’s communications with the principals at the regular meetings were highly influential in the amount of support principals provided to the teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007). Along with the superintendent and principals, teacher leaders report at the Leadership Team A and Leadership Team B meetings. As Principal D explained:

At one of those [Leadership Team A] meetings we split it between [Leadership Team A and Leadership Team B], so the [Leadership Team B] will start us off. All of the coaches will be in the room with all of the administrators and directors. That meeting will take place once a month, so we get that vertical discussion going. That’s where a lot of that happens, but then we follow up in [Leadership Team A] afterwards.

This strategy extends beyond what Mangin (2007) recommended because teacher leaders are members of Leadership Team B and report and discuss their work directly with the superintendent, directors, and K-12 principals at the Leadership Team A meetings.

**Principals to teacher leaders.** Creating opportunities for interactions between principals and teacher leaders has been recommended to increase support for teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007; Weiner, 2011). Mangin (2007) stated about interactions and meetings that highly supportive principals had two-way conversations with teacher leaders compared to low supportive principals who had one-way conversations. Two-way conversations consisted of instructional topics, curriculum implementation, data analysis, and teachers’ progress on new instructional methods. One-way conversations entailed check-ins, updates, and pleasantries (Mangin, 2007). In the Weiner (2011) study, principals who had conversations and interactions
consisting of pep talks and encouragements to the teacher leaders were reported as not having a clear understanding of the teacher leader role.

In this study, respondent principals related they shared information and had interactions with teacher leaders in three primary ways: Leadership Team C meetings, weekly or bi-weekly meetings, and informal interactions. Leadership Team C meetings included district-wide topics and initiatives and academic trends. Principals described the Leadership Team C meetings as being formal. Principal C reported the meetings as a place to bring ideas and discuss questions, for example, “This is kind of what I was thinking, how is this working, how is this not working?”

Principals also communicated with teacher leaders through weekly or bi-weekly meetings. Each of the three elementary principals met with the teacher leaders in their building. Principal C reported using this meeting as a vehicle for her to meet and communicate more frequently with the teacher leaders. From the principals’ reported perspectives, the meetings would be considered two-way conversations with the teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007). The topics discussed were mainly building specific such as: which teachers need support, what resources are needed, problem solving together, and deciding how to move forward. Principal C reported that her bi-weekly meetings with teacher leaders follow a series of questions: “What are the areas that I need to be concerned with? What are the areas that we’re rocky on in your eyes? . . . Where do I look compared to the district? Where am I too much? Where am I too little? What’s coming?”

Principal C and the teacher leaders also discuss at the bi-weekly meetings how they can better support new staff members. She reported, “we almost always talk about new staff, how are they doing, what support do they need, what are you working on them with.”

Informal interactions were cited as an important means of communication. Principal D reported having informal interactions that included such topics as planning interventions,
reviewing teacher growth improvement plans, and funding requests. Principal B and C reported they wanted more informal interactions. These principals desired more informal interactions but believed communication efforts were limited because teacher leaders were spread among four school buildings.

**Principals to classroom teachers.** Mangin (2007) stated that principals who were considered to be highly supportive of teacher leaders “actively supported teacher leaders by communicating with teachers about teacher leadership” (p. 348). Reports from the respondent principals revealed three primary ways in which principals communicated with classroom teachers about the teacher leader role: grade-level and staff meetings, weekly email updates, and informal interactions. Principals reported that through these forms of communication with classroom teachers they were sending a message of empowerment, value, and credibility of the teacher leaders and the work they perform.

Three of the four principals reported communicating to classroom teachers through grade-level and staff meetings. Principals stated teacher leaders are scheduled into meetings and even provided leadership at the meeting if appropriate. Principal B stated that because she scheduled the teacher leaders into meetings, her intention was to empower the role of the teacher leader:

One foundational thing is that those teacher leaders are scheduled into certain grade-level meetings, so, to me, and I think the staff in my building would acknowledge this, just by the fact that I’ve scheduled the coaches to be at those meetings is a message around empowering the coaches in the discussion.

Another manner of communicating the value of the teacher leader position to teachers was through a weekly email update to all classroom teachers. Teacher leaders contribute to each weekly update about their content area. Principal B related that by providing the teacher leaders
an opportunity to communicate to teachers in the weekly update demonstrates their work is valued and important:

We also as principals do weekly updates, and often the coaches will add a piece to those weekly updates, so that serves as one opportunity for us to, as principals, value that coaching input and therefore communicate with teachers that we see it as important.

Along with emailing and posting the weekly update to all teachers, Principal D explained that he strategically uses the weekly update at team leader meetings and department meetings in order to ensure that the teacher leader sections have multiple opportunities to be discussed.

Principals spoke highly of the teacher leader role through informal conversations and interactions with classroom teachers. Principals noted these conversations were to confirm the position’s credibility and to speak in support of the teacher leaders. Principal C reinforced with classroom teachers the same message teacher leaders provided as a strategy to support teacher leaders. She spoke to the expectation that classroom teachers would interact with the teacher leaders regarding content and instructional strategies. Principal C illustrated this support by stating:

Sometimes the math coach or the literacy coach or the interventionist will go in and will offer suggestions to the teacher . . . and to support [the teacher leaders], what I like to do is . . . for [the teacher leaders] to tell me . . . what they’re working on, and then I come in and I’ll make almost the same exact suggestion [to the teacher].

Principal C also provided support to the teacher leaders by stating she always communicates her agreement with support of the teacher leaders with classroom teachers—even if she disagrees with the teacher leaders. She demonstrated this by stating: “I always talk in support of them . . . whether I agree with their idea or not philosophically, my teachers always think I do. I think that’s really important to do that.”
Based on the principals’ responses, principals provided support to the teacher leaders by speaking highly of the work they perform. Principals indicated they were conveying position empowerment, value, and credibility to classroom teachers. This finding aligns with the research of Mangin (2007) when she stated that principals indicated that speaking highly of the teacher leaders gave credibility to the role.

It is evident that the respondent principals provided opportunities for the teacher leaders to lead at grade-level and staff meetings. It was reported throughout the interviews that teacher leaders provide leadership on data days and at various professional development sessions for all staff. Providing teacher leaders opportunities to lead is stated in research conducted by Crowther et al. (2009) and Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009). Crowther et al. (2009) referred to this as knowing when to step back. The researchers stated that by stepping back from their leadership roles, principals could encourage and empower teachers to “step forward” (p. 85). The stepping back role is “at odds” (p. 86) with most longstanding views of the principalship and education systems. It is imperative to the success of teacher leaders that their leadership capabilities be developed and used as this allows for “recognition, confidence, and trust” (p. 85).

Lack of opportunities to lead was addressed in the Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) study. They stated that teacher leaders identified “lack of opportunities to lead” (p. 44) as a significant barrier teacher leaders encounter. In this same study the principals did not list opportunities to lead as a perceived challenge for teacher leaders. The findings reinforce the literature on this topic: principals provide support to teacher leaders by providing opportunities to lead.

Teacher leader to teacher leader. The final form of communication this study explored was teacher leader to teacher leader communication. Neither the Mangin (2007) study nor the
Weiner (2011) study reported this as a method of communication. Respondent principals in this study reported that teacher leader to teacher leader communication provided opportunities to communicate, align practices, and work collaboratively with one another. The three teacher leaders have coaches’ meetings, without principals present for a half day each month. Principal A stated, “They have ample opportunity to work together.” Principal D reported, “They absolutely have to [communicate with one another]. They depend on each other.” At the coaches’ meetings teacher leaders analyze data, problem solve, prepare reports for Leadership Team C meetings, and share office space at each of the buildings. This study presents evidence from the principals’ perspective that an additional strategy to support teacher leaders is through principals and school districts encouraging teacher leaders and allotting time and opportunities to communicate and work collaboratively with one another.

In this study the school district and principals have an extensive, formal communication network established at all organizational levels as evident by regularly scheduled meetings and informal interactions to support the teacher leader position. The findings revealed that not only were there multiple communication channels at which teacher leader positions were established and discussed, teacher leaders were invited into these meetings, and as a result they became part of the decision-making process for the school district. Principals also provided the teacher leaders opportunities to lead.

The principals’ further responses regarding communication channels suggest that they were invested in the work of teacher leaders and they valued their contributions, problem solving skills, and pedagogy and content knowledge. Principals displayed they were invested in and supported the position by providing time for teacher leaders to attend Leadership Team A,
Leadership Team B, Leadership Team C, weekly or bi-weekly meetings, coaches’ meetings, and by encouraging teacher leaders to work collaboratively with one another.

**Research Question Three: Principals’ Perceptions of the Work of Teacher Leaders**

Research question three examined respondent principals’ perceptions of the teacher leaders’ work. Three areas of the work of teacher leaders were examined: beneficial skills, work benefits, and challenges experienced with teacher leaders.

**Skills.** Teacher leaders require specific skills for them to be effective (Murphy, 2005). The four principals reported that establishing relationships was a beneficial skill that the teacher leaders must possess in order to be effective. This was consistent with the findings of Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009). However, in the Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) study, while teacher leaders listed relationship building as a skill needed for teacher leaders, principals did not. The study’s respondent principals aligned their thinking with the perspectives of the teacher leaders in the Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009) study. Principal D stated about establishing relationships:

I think you always think about your teacher leaders in your district and how can you build capacity, who can do that, who can bridge those gaps . . . That’s a dynamic piece, and so you absolutely need the relationship skills.

Principal A also noted relationships as a primary skill:

Relationships. I think that is the number one thing. If a teacher doesn’t like you or doesn’t want to work with you, no matter how smart you are and how much you know, it’s not really going to make a difference. So I think relationships is huge.

Principal B reported a similar perspective and stated, “The ability to build, quick hardy relationships so that teachers see them as someone they can confidently rely on.”
The second skill reported was content and instructional knowledge. Teacher leaders’ knowledge of content as a requisite skill in order to be successful aligns with the work of Boes and Halsall (2009), Manno and Firestone (2008), and Stoelinga and Mangin (2010).

Benefits of teacher leaders. Providing instructional and curriculum support to teachers was cited by respondent principals as the primary benefit of the teacher leaders. Support of teachers was delivered in the instructional and curriculum realm in the following manner: providing curriculum and instructional support to classroom teachers, contributing to student achievement growth, and providing and creating consistency among the elementary schools. This finding was consistent with Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) who stated a benefit of teacher leadership is improving the instructional practices of teachers. Principal B’s response reflects this statement: “I think the most direct impact is on assisting teachers in analyzing their instructional practices and potential instructional changes to increase the impact on students.” Principal D related, “Their direct impact is really on how we provide instruction . . . how deeply we can make change within the classroom to help teachers grow.”

The second benefit reported by the principals was the work teacher leaders contributed to student achievement growth. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) stated in accordance with improved practice, increased student performance is the ultimate value of teacher leadership. Respondent principals additionally reported that teacher leaders alone were not the only factor impacting student achievement growth. This assertion supported Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) statement, which acknowledged that more large-scale quantitative studies needed to be completed “to establish clear relationships between teacher leadership and its impact on student learning” (p. 11). Principal B confirmed this when she stated, “I think there’s some student data
to indicate that it has likely, even though it’s not controlled enough to attribute a cause here, but likely contributed to student growth.” Principal C reported, “For sure our growth has grown—and we’ve never isolated it to just that, because we’ve done some other significant things in our district, to know if it was actually just [teacher leaders] or not.” Principal C offered that select, additional practices may have contributed to student achievement growth including better use of student data, adapting a new mathematics and language arts curriculum, and sixteen elementary teachers having received their reading licenses. Nevertheless, teacher leaders prominently implemented the aforementioned practices. Principal C illustrated this point:

   To isolate it just to say that it was teacher leaders, I don’t know, but I would say it’s significant, because without [the teacher leaders] those curriculums would not be integrated. They were absolutely essential to getting . . . the scope and sequence . . . the mapping, the calendar, this is what we’re expecting.

   The third benefit reported by the principals was that teacher leaders provided and created consistency among the elementary schools. Principal C reported, “With the coaches there too, there’s more of a this is the whole picture and to keep us to see that whole picture.” Principal A explained:

   One of the main things at the elementary level is they provide some consistency between the three buildings, because we have three elementary buildings, and we want to send the same type of student on to the middle school . . . . They are kind of our eyes and ears in other buildings in keeping everybody on track moving the same way.

   Challenges. In this study principals reported four challenges they and teacher leaders experienced. The four challenges reported differ from previous research findings. A significant challenge offered by the principals was that teacher leaders report to four principals and deliver services in four buildings rather than reporting to a single district administrator. This challenge was magnified in the participating school district because the three elementary schools are
different demographically and in student enrollments. This created challenges for principals and teacher leaders because the principals required the teacher leaders to perform dissimilar tasks at each school to meet the unique needs of the schools’ classroom teachers, student demographics, and student enrollments. Principal D reported these challenges when he stated:

Our old model, prior model, was that the coaches really reported to all of the principals, which sometimes lent itself to challenges and confusion or different answers from different people . . . . We’re close enough that we usually can navigate those things, but it definitely had challenges. And now we’re really looking at being able to report to one person.

Principal B also addressed this challenge by stating:

[The teacher leaders] report to all principals in terms of how are we moving forward, and what can we do to help our whole system move forward? . . . That’s difficult, because even if we’re all moving in the same direction, we might all be moving in the same direction in a slightly different way and trying to figure out how to navigate . . . and keep messaging somewhat consistent between administration and coaches, but then also between coaches and the various buildings of teaching staff, has been something that we’ve noted to be difficult and that coaches have noted to be difficult.

Respondent principals did not discuss funding, time, or resources as a challenge. This was a departure from the literature findings. Each of these issues had been stated in literature as a challenge to teacher leadership (Mangin, 2007; Weiner, 2011). Mangin (2007) and Weiner (2011) reported that providing funding, time, and resources to the teacher leader role was viewed as support from the principal and also “indirectly influenced teachers’ receptivity to teacher leaders” (Mangin, 2007, p. 349).

Principals reported how funding was secured, affirming that the school district was financially invested in the positions. Principal C explained how funding for the teacher leader positions was secured:

We recouped funds that were other places. We ended up cutting programs, doing different things . . . in order to fund some of these positions. We applied for grants that
we had never applied for, our Access grants, integration grants, things like that, and through those grants, we were able . . . to fund those positions.

Time with teacher leaders was stated in the research literature as a challenge. Principals typically could not and did not reserve time in their schedules to meet with teacher leaders (Weiner, 2011) nor did principals attend district level meetings that involved teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007). In the Mangin (2007) study, low supportive principals canceled meetings with teacher leaders to “address more pressing matters” (p. 343). In this study respondent principals related it was imperative to communicate and interact with teacher leaders. Two of the principals reported they wanted more informal interactions with teacher leaders, but often found that teacher leaders’ time was “spread thin” across four buildings. Three of the four principals scheduled weekly meetings with the teacher leaders to communicate with them more frequently. Teacher leaders also attended monthly Leadership Team A and Leadership Team B meetings that provided an opportunity for teacher leaders to communicate with district-wide administrators.

Office space as a resource was provided at each of the four buildings for teacher leaders. Teacher leaders not allotted office space had been identified as a challenge in the research literature. Providing office space was cited as a method of giving credibility to the position (Mangin, 2007). Principals in this study provided common office space for their teacher leaders. Providing common office space to multiple teacher leaders allowed them to have frequent informal interactions and work together.

Based on principals’ perceptions, this study suggests promising benefits from teacher leaders when challenges such as funding, time, and resources are removed by school leaders.
When implementing a teacher leader position, school leaders should evaluate whether or not the school district is able to provide the necessary resources to support the teacher leader position.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations of a study are potential weaknesses that are beyond the control of the researcher (Simon, 2011). The limitations within this study included:

1. The study was conducted in one school district. Consequently, the small number of participants restricts the ability of the researcher to generalize the results to other educational settings.

2. Participants self-reported the findings of this study. Self-reporting may lead to under-reporting or over-reporting results. Participants were informed at the beginning of the study that names and additional identifying information of respondents would remain confidential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the principals’ responses and the conclusions from this research study. Recommendations for professional practice in supporting teacher leaders are presented. Recommendations for future research studies involving superintendents, K-12 principals, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers are presented.
Recommendations for Professional Practice

1. To increase principal support of teacher leaders, principals are encouraged to be involved in the following processes:
   
a. Developing the teacher leader position. Involving principals in these processes may improve principal understanding of the teacher leader position and better ensure proper enactment of the position. Additionally, school districts are encouraged to have a systematic approach of informing new principals about the teacher leader positions.
   
b. The hiring process. Principals emphasized to a greater extent than found in the research literature the importance of the hiring process. The principals strongly recommended not filling a teacher leader position if there was not a qualified candidate available.
   
c. Establishing goals for the teacher leader position. Additionally, ensuring that the teacher leader position fits within the scope of the school district goals.
   
d. Developing a shared decision-making relationship with teacher leaders. Principals are encouraged to include teacher leaders into the decision-making process by inviting teacher leaders to be members of building-wide and district-wide committees.

2. School districts and principals are encouraged to establish communication channels at several organization levels that (a) increase the understanding of the teacher leader roles to principals and classroom teachers, (b) schedule opportunities for principals and teacher leaders to work frequently together to plan, align practices, and engage in two-way conversations, and (c) provide time
for teacher leaders to communicate and work collaboratively together with other teacher leaders.

3. The findings suggest that school districts and principals can alleviate reported challenges of funding, time, and resources. School districts are encouraged to address these challenges before implementing a teacher leader position as to how they may affect the effectiveness of the teacher leader position.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Conduct a study from the inception of a teacher leader position to examine the perceptions of teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and the superintendent. The supportive conditions may be dissimilar for a new teacher leader position compared to a longstanding teacher leader position.

2. Conduct a study about the communication channels of a school district that are used to support teacher leaders. To ensure in-depth responses, the researcher will conduct interviews, attend meetings, and observe the principal, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers. The researcher would gather artifacts that represent communications that involve the principal and teacher leaders. For example, meeting agendas and newsletters.

3. Conduct a study that examines for student achievement growth and the benefits of the work of teacher leaders.

4. Conduct a study on the role of the superintendent in supporting teacher leadership from the principal’s perspective.
5. Replicate the study and examine the perceptions of the principals, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers.

Summary

Chapter five examined the findings of the study in relationship to the literature and presented the conclusions of the study. Limitations of the study were also presented. In addition, recommendations were tendered in support of teacher leaders in professional practice, and recommendations for future research studies were presented.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PRE-INTERVIEW

Date:
Interviewer: Melissa Johnson
Interviewee/Participant (Principal A, B, C, D):

1. Welcome the participant
2. Share information about myself and the study

I am interested in your perspective on the role of teacher leaders [state specific name of the teacher leader role when selected, e.g., instructional coach, technology specialist] in your school. The interview is intended to be noninvasive and confidential. It will last approximately one hour, and you are free to stop the interview at any time.

INTERVIEW

1. Describe the process that was used to establish the teacher leader positions in your district. If you had a role in this process, please describe your role.

2. Describe the hiring or selection process. Were there any specific job requirements? Please describe them if yes.

3. Do the teacher leaders have particular goals that they are focusing on this year? If yes, tell me how these goals were determined.

4. Describe how the teacher leader position fits within the larger context of the school district’s vision and goals.

5. How do school improvement plans or initiatives in your school district allow for you to support the teacher leaders?

6. Are you able to provide training or professional development activities for the teacher leaders? If yes, please describe the areas and professional development that was needed.

7. Describe the kinds of interactions you have with the teacher leaders. Are they scheduled meetings or more informal conversations? What are some of the topics you might cover in the meetings or conversations?
8. Are the teacher leaders across the school district able to communicate and work together? If so, please describe how they work together?

9. How do district administrators share information about the teacher leaders with you and other principals in the school district?

10. Describe how you communicate information about the teacher leaders within your school to teachers.

11. What skills have you found to be beneficial for the teacher leaders to be effective?

12. What has been the impact of the teacher leaders in the school? (On students, teachers, school district, or other areas?)

13. Have you experienced challenges while working with the teacher leaders? If yes, please explain. Have the teacher leaders experienced challenges in their roles? If yes, please explain.

14. Is there anything you would like to add about working with teacher leaders?

POST-INTERVIEW

1. Do you have any questions or comments?
2. Thank the participant for their participation.
APPENDIX B

Matrix of Research Questions and Interview Questions
This matrix aligns the research questions and interview questions for this study. Research questions and interview questions were generated from the following studies on the role of the principal in supporting teacher leaders: Crowther et al. (2009), Mangin (2007), Maxfield and Flumerfelt (2009), and Weiner (2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. What conditions do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?</td>
<td>1. Describe the process that was used to establish the teacher leader positions in your district. If you had a role in this process, please describe your role.</td>
<td>Principal Interview</td>
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<td>2. What communication channels do principals report are employed to support teacher leader roles?</td>
<td>7. Describe the kinds of interactions you have with the teacher leaders. Are they scheduled meetings or more informal conversations? What are some of the topics you might cover in the meetings or conversations?</td>
<td>Principal Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Are the teacher leaders across the school district able to communicate and work together? If so, please describe how they work together?</td>
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<td>10. Describe how you communicate information about the teacher leaders within your school to teachers.</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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<td>3. What are principals’ perceptions of the beneficial skills, work</td>
<td>11. What skills have you found to be beneficial for the teacher leaders to be effective?</td>
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<td>benefits, and challenges experienced with teacher leaders?</td>
<td>12. What has been the impact of the teacher leaders in the school? (On students, teachers, school district, or other areas?)</td>
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Principal Interview
APPENDIX C

IRB Application
Institutional Review Board Application
For
Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project Title: The principal's role in supporting teacher leaders
Project Summary (3-5 sentences, include method of data gathering):

The purpose of this project is to examine the role of principals in supporting teacher leaders. The researcher seeks to explore how principals understand their roles, the conditions that affect how principals support teacher leaders, and to identify strategies principals use to support teacher leaders. For this qualitative case study, data will be gathered by interviewing 4 to 6 principals from a K-12 school district.

Data Collection (note: must be a future date and allows sufficient time for IRB review)

Start Date: April 16, 2014

Ending Date: May 16, 2014

Location of the Research:

RESEARCHERS

Principal Investigator (PI): Melissa Johnson
Type of Research:

☐ faculty/staff
☐ undergraduate
☐ graduate masters
☒ graduate doctoral

Mailing Address:

Telephone: Email: jomo0503@stcloudstate.edu

Advisor or Course Instructor (if PI is a student): Dr. John Eller

Other Investigators: None

If you collaborate with an individual from another institution, the research must be submitted to that institution's IRB as well, and a copy of the approval letter must be filed with SCSU's IRB.

SPONSORS

Is there potential or confirmed external funding sources for this research project?

☒ No
☐ Yes

Funding Agency

Account #

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

The undersigned acknowledge: 1) application represents a complete and accurate description of the proposed research, 2) research will be conducted in compliance with IRB recommendations and requirements, 3) research will not begin until IRB approval received, 4) modifications will not be made prior to obtaining IRB approval, 5) PI responsible for reporting to the IRB any adverse or unexpected events, 6) PI to report to IRB any significant new findings which develop during the course of the study and increase the risk to participants and 7) expedited or full IRB approval in effect for up to one year and PI is responsible to request continuing review or file final report (exempt research is exempt from continuing review process).

Investigator Name/Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Advisor/Instructor Name/Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

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REVIEW WORKSHEET

Check ALL categories—if any—that apply to your research.

Common Categories of Exempt Review

- i. Research conducted in an educational setting involving normal education practices, such as research that examines or compares regular and special education:
  instructional strategies/techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods
- ii. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior if confidentiality or anonymity is maintained.
- iii. Research involving activities in category 2 with subjects who are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office—regardless of whether the subjects may be identified or the information is sensitive.
- iv. Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if one of the following is true:
  - the sources are publicly available or information is recorded by the investigator in a way that subjects cannot be directly or indirectly identified.
- v. Research subject to the approval of Federal Department or Agency heads and designed to study or evaluate public benefit or service programs.
- vi. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, if one of the following is consumed:
  - wholesome foods without additives, or a food that contains a food ingredient, agricultural chemical, or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe by the Food and Drug Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, or U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Common Categories of Expedited Review

- i. Clinical studies of drugs or medical devices only when research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review.) or research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.
- ii. Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows:
  - from healthy, nonpregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds (collection may not occur more than 2 times per week or exceed 550 ml in any 8 week period), or from other adults and children, considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects and the collection amount, frequency, and procedure (collection may not occur more than 2 times per week or exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period).
- iii. Collection of biological specimens by noninvasive means for research purposes.
  Examples include:
  - hair and nail clippings in a nondisfiguring manner;
  - teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
  - excreta and external secretions (including sweat);
  - uncanulated saliva;
  - placenta removed at delivery;
  - amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor;
  - supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques;
  - mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings; or
  - sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

Rev. 11/4/13
iv. Collection of data through noninvasive procedures routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving general anesthesia, sedation, x-rays, or microwaves. Any medical devices used must be approved for marketing. Examples include:
- physical sensors that do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject;
- weighing or testing of sensory acuity;
- magnetic resonance imaging;
- electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electoretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography;
- moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

v. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

vi. Research on individual/group characteristics or behavior or research employing oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies on areas such as perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, social behavior, etc. if confidentiality or anonymity is maintained.

Other

Other, please explain

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Briefly summarize the proposed research and its significance. Include explanations of the following: 1) research question/hypothesis, 2) research design, including independent/dependent variables, if appropriate, and 3) relevant theory.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of the principal in supporting teacher leaders. The study seeks to explore how principals understand their roles, the conditions that affect how principals support teacher leaders, and to identify strategies principals use to support teacher leaders.

This study is significant because it extends the teacher leadership research by exploring the role of the principal. Additionally, teacher leaders are used throughout the nation even though minimal research has been conducted as to how best principals can support the work of teacher leaders.

The three research questions are: (1) What are principals’ reported understandings of teacher leader roles in their school? (2) What strategies do principals report using to support the teacher leader roles? (3) What communication channels do principals report using to support the teacher leader roles?

The research design used will be a qualitative case study. Principals will participate in an approximately one hour-long interview with the researcher.

SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will participate in the research? Who will the subjects be?

The subjects/participants will be 4 to 6 principals within a K-12 school district.

2. What are the ages of potential subjects? (Check all that apply.)

☐ 0-7    ☐ 8-17    ☐ 18-64    ☐ 65+

3. Some populations are considered “vulnerable” to coercion or undue influence. Will any of these populations be invited to participate in the research? (Check all that apply.)

☐ children (under age 18)    ☐ elderly individuals (over age 65)
prisoners  non-English speakers
pregnant women mentally disabled individuals
economically/educationally disadvantaged individuals

If any of the above vulnerable categories have been checked, provide rationale for using these vulnerable populations and detail the safeguards that will be included in the research to protect their rights and welfare.

☐ no vulnerable populations

SUBJECT IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT

4. How will potential subjects be identified and recruited? (e.g. college classes, phone books, membership directories, etc.)

Participating subjects and a school district were identified through doctoral cohort members who were aware that this school district and principals worked with teacher leaders.

5. Copies of advertisements, bulletin board notices, telephone scripts, letters, and other recruitment materials are attached. ☐ Yes ☐ N/A

6. Written documentation of cooperation/permission is REQUIRED from any individual or organization that assists you in identifying and recruiting subject:
The following are attached and MUST be submitted simultaneously with this application:

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7. Will subjects be compensated for participating in the research? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, what kind of reward will be given (monetary, extra credit, or other) and when will subjects receive it (e.g. the beginning of the study, the end of the study, or at each visit)?

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

8. Describe the research procedures and list tasks/activities that subjects will be asked to complete.

1. Participants will be asked to participate in an interview.
2. The interview will include the subject/participant and the interviewer (the researcher).
3. The interview will take approximately one hour.

The following are attached and MUST be submitted simultaneously with this application:

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<th>Yes</th>
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9. How will data be collected, recorded, and stored?

Interview responses will be recorded on an electronic device. Following the interview, the participants’ responses will be transcribed and stored on a password protected computer and also stored within the St. Cloud State University password protected File/Web Space. In addition, the recorded interviews will be transferred to and stored on the St. Cloud State University password protected File/Web Space.

10. Will the data include names or other identifiers? □ Yes □ No

If yes, will the data be coded and identifiable information removed? □ Yes □ No

If yes, explain the coding process, what additional measures will be taken to keep your data secure and who will have access to it?

11. The raw data and/or coding key from this research will be destroyed (Check ONLY one):

☐ when the study is complete
☐ within three years
☐ when my degree is awarded
☐ other: RISKS AND BENEFITS

☐ Yes ☐ No

*Minimal risk means that the harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is no greater than that encountered in daily life or during routine physical/psychological examinations or tests.

12. Will the research present more than minimal risk* to subjects? □ Yes □ No

13. Does the research involve:

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Physical pain, discomfort, or injury from procedures or drugs
☐ Undesired and/or unexpected psychological changes (e.g. depression, anxiety, emotional discomfort, confusion, hallucination, stress, guilt, embarrassment, loss of self-esteem, etc.)
☐ Invasion of privacy/absence of informed consent (e.g. covert observation, review of private medical or educational records, etc.)
☐ Sensitive information (e.g. alcohol/drug use, sexual orientation, illegal activities, suicidal thoughts, physical/mental illness, violence, depression, psychological/physical abuse, gang related activities, pro-life/pro-choice, relationship issues, etc.) that could result in social and economic harm (e.g. civil/criminal liability or damage to financial standing, employability, insurability, reputation, etc.) if a breach in confidentiality occurred.
☐ Deceptive techniques (e.g. giving false feedback about performance, staging an event or situation, concealing the purpose of the research, etc.) A debriefing statement is required.

If yes, how will subjects be misled (i.e. what information will be withheld or what false information will be provided)? Describe when and how this deception will be revealed to subjects and provide a copy of the oral or written debriefing statement. See the IRB’s handout on deception and the debriefing process for information, examples, and a template.

14. What precautions will be taken to minimize or prevent potential risks, inconveniences, and discomforts (e.g. anonymous data collection, presence of trained personnel who can respond to emergencies, etc.)?
Participants will be interviewed in their own setting, individually and anonymously. Participants are allowed to stop the interview at any time and may refrain from responding to questions they choose not to answer.

INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

The informed consent process begins when you first approach potential subjects and continues throughout your research. Typically, it involves:

• presenting information that enables an individual to knowledgeably and voluntarily decide whether or not to participate as a research subject.
• documenting consent with a written form signed by the subject or an implied consent form for surveys
• responding to the subject’s questions/concerns during the research and communicating any new findings that may affect the subject’s willingness to continue participating.

When your research involves individuals under the age of 18, you must obtain and document the consent of parents or guardians. If your research involves subjects who are between the ages of 8 and 18, child/minor assent must be documented as well. A single project could require an adult consent form, a parental consent form and a child/minor assent form.

15. Minimally consent forms MUST include the following information, please verify that your consent process addresses the following:

- [ ] Provides a clear understanding of the project to potential participants.
- [ ] Explain the voluntary nature of the research and give the option to withdraw at any time.
- [ ] Include researcher and advisor contact information for questions.
- [ ] Explain to participants how to request study results.
- [ ] Adult consent states the individual is “at least 18 years of age” to consent.
- [ ] Confidentiality states data will be presented in aggregate form or with no more than 1-2 descriptors presented together.

16. All projects require consent forms for potential participants: The following are attached and MUST be submitted simultaneously with this application:

- [ ] A cover letter/page accompanying a confidential anonymous survey
- [ ] Adult consent form
- [ ] A parental/guardian consent form
- [ ] A child assent form

17. If applicable, explain the procedures that will be used to obtain child/minor assent and attach a copy of each assent form.

IRB APPLICATION CHECKLIST

(Submission of a complete IRB application results in a quicker response from the IRB)

- [ ] IRB training completed
- [ ] All questions answered on IRB application
- [ ] Application fully signed
- [ ] Question #6 written support attached
- [ ] Question #8 data collection instrument(s) attached
☐ Questions 15 & 16 consent form(s) attached
☐ Submit completed IRB application to Sponsored Programs in AS 210
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form and Stamp
Background Information and Purpose
Many school districts are implementing teacher leaders in a variety of roles (math specialists, instructional coaches, technology specialists, etc.). The purpose of this study is to get your perspective on the role of teacher leaders in your school.

Procedures
If you decide to participate, you will be asked a list of questions that will take approximately one hour. The interview will take place at your school building or at a location of your preference within the school district. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Also, quotes will be used from the interview in the dissertation. Please feel free to refrain from responding if you are not comfortable with a question.

Benefits
It is hoped that the results will help identify strategies school administrators may use to support teacher leaders and impact university programs in better preparing school administrators for developing and maximizing teacher leaders.

Confidentiality
The only person who will have access to the data is the researcher. Your responses are completely confidential. In addition, data will be presented with no more than 1-2 descriptors presented together. Participants will be referred to as Principal A, B, etc. in the dissertation paper. The data will be destroyed when my degree is awarded.

Study Results
If you are interested in learning the findings of the study, feel free to contact me at jome0503@stcloudstate.edu or (612) 916-9549; or John Eller at jteller@stcloudstate.edu or (320) 308-4241.
Contact Information
If you have questions right now, please ask. If you have additional questions later, you may contact me by email at jome0503@stcloudstate.edu or by phone at (612) 916-9549. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal
Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University or the researcher. You may request to stop the interview at any time or refrain from responding to questions you choose not to answer.

Acceptance to Participate
I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form. I have read all the information on this consent form and agree to participate in the study.

_______________________________     _________________
Signature           Date
Contact Information
If you have questions right now, please ask. If you have additional questions later, you may contact me by email at jome0503@stcloudstate.edu or by phone at (612) 916-9549. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

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Acceptance to Participate
I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form. I have read all the information on this consent form and agree to participate in the study.

__________________________  __________________________
Signature                                      Date

St. Cloud State University
Institutional Review Board
Approval date: 4-18-14
Expiration date: 4-17-15