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**FOSTERING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: TRANSFORMING LEARNING AND
LEADING TO ENHANCE SCHOOL CULTURE**

by
Jennifer Mufferi Luff

A dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
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Dissertation Chair: Joanne K. Damminger, Ed.D.

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Dedication

First and foremost I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Richard Luff, Sydney Ryan Luff, and Kasey Marie Luff, I could not have done this without your understanding, support, and love. To my mom, Diana Travis and my dad, Joseph Mufferi, without your enduring confidence, example, and encouragement I would not be the person I am today. To my sisters Dana Mufferi and Brooke Mufferi, I appreciate your help and friendship throughout this process and life. I love you all so much!

Second, this is dedicated to my friends and colleagues whose support throughout the pursuit of my doctorate has been consequential in its attainment. I enjoy learning and laughing with you, and it makes me a better person.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to the teacher leaders in the Ryan School District and around the world. It is these teachers who devote their lives to improving outcomes for our children. The work of teacher leaders is not without challenge, but as they toil in the arena they make our schools and our world a better place.

*It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles
or where the doer of deeds could have done better.
The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,
whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood,
who strives valiantly,
who errs and comes up short again and again,
because there is no effort without error or shortcoming,
but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions,
who spends himself for a worthy cause;
who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement,
and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly,
so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory
nor defeat." – Theodore Roosevelt*

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I want to recognize my family and friends who provided unwavering support throughout the doctoral process. Special appreciation goes to my family, Rich, Sydney, Kasey, Mom, Dad, Dana, and Brooke. I owe you for your encouragement and patience. Thanks to my friends and colleagues who make me think and help me laugh.

Finally, to the teacher leaders in the Ryan School District, this dissertation would not be possible without your dedication to improving student outcomes. I am proud to work with you – you inspire me everyday.

Abstract

Jennifer Mufferi Luff

FOSTERING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: TRANSFORMING LEARNING AND
LEADING TO ENHANCE SCHOOL CULTURE

2010/2011

Joanne K. Damminger, Ed.D.
Educational Leadership

The complexity associated with educational leadership and the challenges related to school change require schools to cultivate new sources of leadership (Anderson, 2009; Copland, 2003, Danielson, 2007, Goldstein, 2004). Literature demonstrates that teacher leadership is linked to increased professional learning, sustained change, and improved student achievement (Hart, 1995; Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond, 2003; Trachtman, 1993). The purpose of this action research study was to evaluate the Teacher Leadership Coalition, a cadre of teachers developed to empower teachers, increase professional learning, and improve culture in the Ryan School District. While implementing interventions to improve the Coalition, I sought to learn more about teacher leadership and my development as a leader.

Findings collected through this mixed method study demonstrate that the Teacher Leadership Coalition impacted the culture of the district by increasing collaboration, professional learning, and empowering teachers. Moreover, methods to foster teacher leadership and common obstacles emerged. These findings could provide techniques to develop teacher leadership in other districts wishing to do so.

Furthermore, as a leader of this change project, I assessed my development as a leader who employs traits from servant, transformational, and distributive leadership

theories. Through a comparison of my espoused leadership theory and my actions throughout this project, I gained a better understanding of leadership, and thus improved my practice (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement

Introduction

Educational leadership has become increasingly complex in this age of accountability (Anderson, 2009). School administrators are called upon to improve student achievement and avoid the penalties associated with “failing schools.” To do so, school administrators must take a greater role in instructional practices (Egley & Jones, 2005; Hambright & Franco, 2008; Ylimaki, 2007). In fact, when school administrators’ practices are targeted on improving instruction, student achievement improves (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003)

However, the increased responsibility associated with instructional leadership and additional external challenges often overwhelm principals (Danielson, 2007; Goldstein, 2004; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Ylimaki, 2007). As a matter of fact, research demonstrates that traditional role-based leadership strategies have been unable to meet the complex challenges associated with school change (Anderson, 2009; Copland, 2003). Historically, educational leadership has been modeled after business and schools continue to employ hierarchal top-down methods (Anderson, 2009; Callahan, 1962; Tyack, 1974). However, by breaking free of this hierarchal model, schools can capitalize on greater instructional leadership without overwhelming school administrators.

Only by cultivating teacher leadership and toppling the status quo, can schools foster increased instructional leadership. Teacher leadership can lighten the school

administrator's load, create a culture of professional learning, and develop a school environment more conducive to change (Hart, 1995; Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond, 2003). Teacher leadership offers an untapped resource to increase instructional leadership, and therefore, improve student achievement (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Trachtman, 1993).

As the Director of Curriculum in the Ryan School District, I seek to capitalize on the previously untapped resource of teacher leadership. (The Ryan School District is a pseudonym used to protect the anonymity of research participants.) Recently, the Ryan School District experienced challenges in meeting monitoring requirements and benchmarks for student achievement. The Ryan School District has not been immune to increased accountability and the audit culture associated with it (Anderson, 2009). The number of students in poverty, as measured by free and reduced lunch status, continues to grow. Concurrently, test scores are falling placing the Ryan School District in the category of a "District in Need of Improvement." Amidst these challenges, it was my hope that teacher leadership would increase professional learning, thereby influencing instructional practices of colleagues and improving the organization as a whole (Anderson, 2004; Ryan, 1999).

As a result, in the spring of 2009 I formed the Teacher Leadership Coalition with approval of the superintendent and Board of Education to begin work in the 2009-2010 school year. The purpose of the Coalition was to empower teachers, increase teachers' professional learning and, as a result, improve the professional culture in the school district. This Coalition would provide a new source of instructional leadership within the school district. Upon successfully recruiting 10 members for the Coalition, teachers

began planning action research projects to work on during the 2009-2010 school year. Once the school year commenced, the Coalition began meeting monthly and teacher leaders began to work on their individual projects. The purpose of my action research study is to evaluate the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Based on this evaluation, I designed improvements for the Coalition to maximize the benefits of teacher leadership.

Teacher leadership has the potential to improve a school district. Teacher leadership is a valuable resource; it fosters professional learning and sustains change within organizations (Collinson, 2004; Copland, 2003; Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995). A culture of professional learning encourages teachers to work together to identify and solve complex problems affecting schools (Copeland, 2003; Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). “Schools are beginning to discover that new ideas, knowledge creation, and sharing are essential to solving problems in a rapidly changing society” (Fullan, 2001, p. vii). By harnessing the power of teacher leadership we have the opportunity to improve outcomes for students (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In order to do so, I conducted a mixed method action research study consisting of four cycles that examined the Teacher Leadership Coalition and resulted in interventions to improve the Coalition. I used both quantitative and qualitative data in the form of surveys, interviews, fieldnotes, focus groups, and historical documents.

After reviewing program evaluation data, I worked with teacher leaders to design improvements and new initiatives for the teacher leadership coalition within the district. Through my action research study, I learned about the conditions that foster and inhibit teacher leadership. I planned to use these data to increase teacher leadership in the district. Additionally, I learned ways in which teacher leadership positively influences

teachers' professional growth and the culture of the organization. Finally, through this study I gained greater insight into my own leadership capacity.

Problem Statement

Since the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act, there is increased pressure to improve student achievement (Anderson, 2009). Benchmarks for student achievement are clear, and failure to meet benchmarks results in penalties and identification as a failing school or district. Under the Obama administration, \$4.35 billion is earmarked for The Race to the Top Fund that mandates eligible states implement internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments (Duncan, 2009). Leaders holding formal positions of leadership cannot tackle the consequences of increased accountability alone nor sustain any true change initiatives without the expertise of teacher leaders (Hart, 1995; Spillane et al., 2003).

However, teacher leadership continues to be an under utilized resource (Danielson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1984; Trachtman, 1993). Life in schools and the methods used to initiate reform have changed little over the past 100 years (Callahan, 1962; Tyack, 1974). Organizational defenses and a desire to maintain the status quo stifle any new or creative mechanisms to overcome the challenges we face in education (Arysis, 1990). Moreover, a reliance on hierarchical forms of leadership modeled first after factories, then later after corporations, has failed to achieve sustained improvements in education (Anderson, 2009; Copland, 2003; Tyack, 1974). Empowering teachers to take leadership roles within the school has the potential to reform education through greater professional learning and sustained change (Copland, 2003; Lambert, 2006;

Ryan, 1999).

The benefits of teacher leadership inspired administrators in the Ryan School District to create the Teacher Leadership Coalition. However, program development was incomplete because when developing the program a method to measure program effectiveness was not incorporated. Brown (2003) outlines the following steps in creating career development programs; conceptualization, develop program philosophy, establish needs, goal development, implementation, and evaluation. When I developed the Teacher Leadership Coalition I failed to include an evaluation. Product evaluation enables program developers to determine if program goals are met (Brown, 2003). Process evaluation provides the information necessary to improve the program (Brown, 2003). It is important and valuable to determine if the program met the intended goals. More importantly, I am interested in finding methods to improve the program. Therefore, the first component of my action research study was to evaluate the current Teacher Leadership Coalition.

I assessed the program in order to learn how the organization could increase teacher leadership. Based on the assessment, I enhanced the Teacher Leadership Coalition and created new initiatives designed to further empower teachers in the district. Throughout this process I learned more about the relationship between teacher leadership and professional learning, the organizational culture, and myself.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined to provide clarity surrounding the concepts of professional learning and teacher leadership.

Professional learning	The continuous effort to increase efficacy and improve one’s practice (Gray, 1934).
Teacher leadership	“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” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 6).

Rationale for Study

The Ryan School District services approximately 1,100 public school students, grades preschool to 8, within three buildings: Madison Avenue School, Dorchester Drive School, and the Franklin Avenue School. The Madison Avenue School houses grades prekindergarten through 6 with approximately 400 students enrolled. The Dorchester Drive School, a kindergarten through 8th grade facility, enrolls approximately 700 students. The Franklin Avenue School houses five preschool classrooms with approximately 75 students, as well as offices for district staff.

Over the last few years, the number of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch has grown. In fact, according to district ASSA data in 2007, 43% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch, in 2008 this rose to 47%, and review of the 2009 data shows the count at 53%. The increased number of students receiving free or reduced

lunch demonstrates that the socioeconomic health of the community has fallen significantly over the past decade.

The increasing free and reduced lunch percentage coupled with lower than average test scores, NCLB accountability, and stricter monitoring in the form of New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJ QSAC) has resulted in many changes in the district. Changes included new approaches to literacy instruction, curriculum revision, assessment revision, a change in the evaluation procedure, a new science program, a new lesson planning format, and the beginnings of professional learning communities.

The district staff dealing with these changes is made up of 110 teachers, 20 educational specialists, 40 staff members, including secretaries and aides, and six administrators. All of the district's teachers are highly qualified in the areas in which they teach and many have Masters degrees. Most teachers hired in Ryan stay until retirement, few leave to seek a teaching position in another district. A school culture survey from DuFour and Eaker (1998) administered in April 2009 provided insight on the attitudes of faculty and staff. The survey was created on Google Docs and broadcast via email and completed by 51 respondents (See Appendix A). A scale of 1 to 10 was used with 1 representing "we are not at all like this" and 10 representing "we are very much like this." Most respondents indicated that they did not believe that the school district was a top-down bureaucracy as evidenced by an average of 3.6 that leaned toward "we are not at all like this." The faculty was split on their perception of change in the district. About half the respondents reported an endless cycle of change in the district that often has been unproductive demonstrated by an average response of 5.8, which places it closer

on the scale to “we are very much like this.” Similarly, teachers reported an average score of 5.9 when given this statement, “For teachers, the concept of change becomes a matter of coping with management’s tendency to introduce and then abandon educational fads” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). These results indicate that some teachers in the Ryan School District were struggling with change.

During the 2008-2009 school year the district began voluntary after school workshops for teachers in the area of literacy and technology. Attendance at the literacy workshops varied. The workshops at the kindergarten to grade 3 level were often well attended, while the workshops geared to teachers in grades 4 to grade 6 were not. Further, technology workshops were not well attended when considered that on average, 10 out of approximately 130 faculty members attended. Finally, the district initiated PD on Demand that allows teachers to request training in any area they are interested in the format that they prefer. Only three teachers took advantage of the offering. The lack of interest in professional learning was a great concern to me considering the change initiatives and poor student achievement.

This concern led to the creation of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. In spring 2009, I pitched the idea of creating a cadre of teacher leaders to the superintendent. It was my goal that teacher leaders would bring and sustain positive change in the district to improve student achievement. Further, teacher leaders would implement and model research-based instructional practices and effective technology integration, as well as demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning. Ultimately, this group of teachers would enhance the culture of the organization. The superintendent supported the idea and we allocated Title I professional development funds to provide a stipend for approximately

10 teacher leaders.

The teacher leader positions were posted and 10 teachers expressed interest. A panel of three administrators interviewed the teachers and all 10 were appointed to the new positions. The teacher leaders met in August 2009 to discuss the coalition and plan activities. It was decided that each teacher leader would choose an action research project of her choice. They would eventually share what they learned with the rest of the faculty. In addition, teacher leaders developed book clubs and colloquiums to engage colleagues in learning. The Teacher Leadership Coalition started meeting monthly in September 2009 and continued to do so to discuss projects and set new directions.

The Teacher Leadership Coalition offered a new source of leadership in the district and the 2009-2010 teacher leaders engaged colleagues in diverse learning situations. However, as I reflected on a possible topic for my action research study, I believed that improvements to the Teacher Leadership Coalition would broaden its impact and increase the successful attainment of its goals. Furthermore, through my interactions with the teacher leaders and my observations of their projects, I concluded that the Teacher Leadership Coalition could have a positive impact on the school district. Lastly, I was interested in learning more about teacher leadership while studying my own leadership in relation to teacher leadership.

Purpose of Study

This action research falls into the category of practical action research, a process in which the researcher identifies a problem and systematically works to develop action

strategies (Hinchey, 2008). Specifically, my purpose is to evaluate the Teacher Leadership Coalition launched September 2009 in the Ryan School District to determine what improvements and/or new initiatives are needed to increase teacher leadership in the district. While implementing interventions, I seek to learn about the influence of teacher leadership on professional learning and organizational culture. The goal of this action research study is to increase teacher leadership and in doing so increase professional learning and improve the school culture.

I have a central role in the study. I am an administrator in the school district, and I coordinate the Teacher Leadership Coalition. I have a vested interest in the success of the Teacher Leadership Coalition to increase professional learning and sustain change in order to improve student achievement. It is expected that through this action research study I will better understand and develop my leadership capacity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

As a situational leader, I employ various leadership skills to negotiate the complexity of my responsibilities. I draw my leadership theory in use from transformational, servant, and distributed leadership theories. Many of my leadership characteristics are founded in principles that support and foster teacher leadership. Through my research and practice, I have come to believe that teacher leadership has the potential to create a culture that values professional learning.

I believe that professional learning is essential in education. Unless teachers are committed to life long learning, they will be unable to help their students achieve success. As detailed in my leadership theory in use found in Chapter 2, commitment, reflection, and life-long learning are key components in my practice. This study is particularly

meaningful, because it allows me to make improvements in my organization while studying many elements of leadership theory.

However, the quest for learning and leading is not without challenges of time, past expectations, and organizational capacity. Lack of time is always an obstacle in education. Teachers' professional and personal demands can cause professional learning and leading initiatives to be pushed aside. In the past, the expectation was that teachers coming into the profession knew all they needed to be effective teachers (Elmore, 2002). Now we know that teachers need to invest in ongoing learning to refine practice. Instead of taking a leadership role in the learning process teachers may feel as though they are being criticized and labeled ineffective. The next challenge is whether the organization has the capacity to support and foster teacher leadership and professional learning. Through this study I learned steps the organization can take to increase teacher leadership, but the administration will have to be receptive and willing to implement recommendations.

Research questions. This study seeks to answer the following questions about teacher leadership and professional learning.

1. What conditions influence teacher leadership?
2. What are the obstacles to teacher leadership?
3. How can the organization better foster teacher leadership?
4. In what ways can teacher leadership influence teachers' professional growth?
5. In what ways can teacher leadership influence the organizational culture?
6. How did this action research study impact and develop my leadership?

Significance of Study

My action research project has the potential to increase teacher leadership in the organization. Empowerment of teachers and shared leadership benefits the organization. The result of an improved educational organization is a better learning experience for students. The ultimate goal as educators is to improve outcomes for students. Through my study of teacher leadership, I uncovered how teachers can be empowered to change the organization for the better. Though my study is specific to the Ryan School District, I believe that many of the lessons learned can be generalized to other educational organizations. The results of my study could guide other educators to harness the power of teacher leadership to improve their organizations.

Conclusion

The next few chapters will lay the groundwork for my action research study. In Chapter 2, I detail my leadership theory in use. This gives insight into my leadership and how it both influences and changes as a result of the study. Chapter 3 includes a review of the literature that focuses on distributed leadership, professional learning, and teacher leadership. Chapter 4 focuses on the methodology, which will better describe the study context and the data collection and analysis technique. The action and data collection in four cycles of my study are reported in Chapters 5 through 8. Chapter 9 consists of a final analysis of the data and a discussion of study implications. Finally, Chapter 10 describes by leadership reflections and growth.

Chapter 2

Leadership Platform

Introduction

My evolution as a leader has been shaped by my own development and the changing context of my work. My leadership style is molded through the situations I encounter. These situations are influenced by my personal growth and experiences as well as by broader policies and politics that reach far beyond my organization. Just as I am shaped by the situations I encounter, the leadership style I practice is dictated by the situation. As I transitioned from teacher leader to administrator, I have found the complexities of educational leadership and the challenge to sustain change calls for leadership that is situational. Situational leadership is considered a model for leadership in which leadership behaviors adapt to the needs of the individual or group one is working with (Schermerhorn, 1997).

The complex nature of change contributes to the complexities and challenges associated with educational leadership. School improvement implies change and therefore periods of transition (Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Berk, 2003). “In almost all cases of school improvement, educators and their schools need to transition from one modus operandi to another” (Goldring et al., 2003, p. 473). These transitions create the need for situational leaders.

Effective managers adapt their style to match developmental levels and meet changing demands (Blanchard, 2008). The process of leading is so complex, I have found to be successful I must be a situational leader. Unique situations present their own challenges requiring different dimensions of my leadership style. The better I am able to understand each of these dimensions, the more effectively I can draw on them as the situation dictates.

As a situational leader, I draw most often on servant leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership characteristics. However, at times I employ transactional leadership characteristics. Throughout this paper I will detail the characteristics under each leadership style that I depend on as a situational leader.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership seeks to involve others in decision-making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and enhances the growth of workers while improving their quality of life (Spears, 2009). Servant leaders are committed to the growth of their people, doing all in their power to nurture their personal and professional growth (Spears, 2009). I believe that because servant leadership is tied to serving others, it gives my work as a leader a noble purpose.

Like servant leaders, my theory of leadership positions me at the center of the organization and in contact with all members of the organization (Marzano et al., 2005). As in the study of spiritual leaders by Capper, Hafner, and Keyes (2002), I view myself as part of the community and believe I have a sense of responsibility to that community. Beck (1994) researched caring leaders and found that their participation in the

community was an opportunity to further educational practices. Community participation benefits both the leader and the community as a whole when the leader is a central contributor. Sernak (1998) writes that it is necessary to change ideas about the organizational structure to foster relationships that stimulate community growth.

Not only do I believe that my role is at the center of the community, as a leader, I am responsible for building that community. Furman (2002) states, “Leadership for community-building involves knowing, understanding, and valuing all the participants in the school community” (p. 286). I agree with Furman (2002), but I believe that community-building requires more. To reap the benefits of collaboration and community I must rely on these aspects of servant leadership: awareness, reflection, trust, and caring.

Awareness. General awareness and self-awareness help servant leaders to understand issues (Spears, 2009). The servant leader has an acute awareness of the organization and the people within that organization. In the biography of the great leader J. Robert Oppenheimer, Bird and Sherwin (2005) cited instances in which his awareness helped him build community within organizations. Oppenheimer, as a professor, had the ability to look in the faces of his students and change his entire teaching approach because he was aware that they were having particular difficulties (Bird & Sherwin, 2005). Later, Bird and Sherwin (2005) wrote about Oppenheimer’s leadership at Los Alamos:

Within a very few months, Los Alamos’ residents forged a sense of community – and many of the wives credited Oppenheimer. Early on, in a not too participatory democracy, he appointed a town council. It met regularly to keep Oppie in touch with the community’s needs. (p. 256)

Oppenheimer’s awareness allowed him to build a community of learners as a professor and a community of scientists and their families at Los Alamos.

Deal & Peterson (1999a) share how awareness benefits school leaders:

Effective school leaders are always alert to the deeper issues agitating beneath a seemingly rational veneer of activity. They read between the lines to decipher complex cultural codes and struggle to figure out what's really going on. (p. 197)

Awareness of individuals within the organization gives leaders the background knowledge they need to make the most effective decisions for their organization.

Grundy's (1993) research concurs that practical interests inform an emancipatory leader's work. As a leader, I have a keen awareness of the current occurrences in the lives of my teachers and the organization as a whole. For example, when we implement a new initiative I ask a few key teachers how the initiative is progressing. Their responses help me to make decisions about changes needed to ensure the success of the initiative. Beck (1994) held that caring leaders seek to understand the perspectives of others in the organization. It is important as a leader, to put oneself in the shoes of the people within the organization. Gaining this perspective can provide valuable information about the past that influences them, the present they deal with, and the future they hope for.

Additionally, awareness of organizational history is invaluable to a leader.

Gardner (1990) states, "Leaders cannot be thought of apart from the historic context in which they arise, the setting in which they function, and the system over which they preside" (p. 17). Leaders must act as historians to understand the social and normative past of the school (Deal & Peterson, 1999b). Through the act of being aware a leader gathers important information about the organization and the people within the organization. The leader then needs time to reflect on this information.

Reflection. Servant leaders must reflect to gain a greater sense of self-awareness.

It is only through reflection that one can hope to improve their practice. I constantly

think about my past and present practices. As a leader, my reflection allows me to plan and organize. The time spent reflecting also permits me to develop new methods to address the needs dictated by evolving situations or projects. I think about what I need to change or do differently. I find that sometimes when a teacher confronts me with a problem, I want to solve it right away. Doing so has not always served me well, because I did not have time to consider all the effects of my solution or have time to realize a better one. From this, I have learned to listen to the problem, ask appropriate questions, and then give myself time to reflect. The time spent in reflection is time well invested as it often wards off bad decisions and allows a more proactive approach.

Much research highlights the importance of reflection in a leader's practice (Grundy, 1993; Jaworski, 1998; Rodgers, 2002; Senge, 1990a; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Feminist theorist, Grundy (1993), believes that critical reflection is required for emancipatory praxis. "Dewey reminds us that reflection is a complex, rigorous, intellectual and emotional enterprise that takes time to do well (as cited in Rodgers, 2002, p. 3). Research by Senge (1990a) says:

Mental models start with turning the mirror inward. It also includes that ability to carry on learningful conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make their own thinking open to the influence of others. (p. 8)

To be able to expose one's thinking, one must already have taken the time to reflect.

Though it may not be easy, as Dewey pointed out above, it is necessary for one to find success as a leader. Leaders cannot assess their organization or where it is going without taking the time for proper reflection.

Trust. Trust is another characteristic of servant leadership that I incorporate into my practice. The teachers I work with must trust that it is safe to take risks in their

teaching and try new practices. It is important for them to trust me when I tell them it is okay to try something new, even when it might not work out. For example, integrating technology can be a risky endeavor. There is always the possibility that the technology will fail. I give the teachers my word that I will not hold failed attempts against them, and this inspires a feeling of trust between us. Trust is an essential block in building a connected, collaborative community and a necessary element in effective leadership (Covey, 1998; Evans, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Covey (1998) stresses that if we inspire trust, we can work together to reach a solution that is the better for all concerned. Evans (1996) points out that trust is a vital part in increasing job satisfaction and loyalty.

Covey (1998) states that a leader can build trust by being loyal and defending those that are not present. As an educational leader, my number one priority is the students; as a result my loyalty lies with the students that I represent. This inspires trust in teachers because they know that I work with them for the best interests of our students.

Caring. A foundation of trust allows a leader to display another important characteristic of a servant leader – caring. Once a leader exhibits caring, she inadvertently cultivates more trust. Kouzes and Posner (2002), along with Sernak (1998), agree that caring can be an impetus in moving the community forward while uplifting the spirits of those involved.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) put caring in the job description of an effective leader, “It is part of the leader’s job to show appreciation for people’s contributions and to create a culture of celebration” (p. 69). As a leader I work to create this culture of celebration by recognizing teachers for both their achievements and efforts. For example, one

teacher in my district worked with her class on an online math contest. This contest took place over a 4-week period and the teacher invested time and effort. Students and teachers were victorious and earned second place and a pizza party. I felt that more should be done to recognize the class, not only because they got second place, but because they took part in the process. I asked our web master to post their achievement on the web page. The entire school community would see the achievement and also realize that the community cared about their practice.

Caring also means using the awareness and acting on it. When there are major events in people's lives a school leader should know and act on them. Whether it is a kind word, a card, or the offer of help, the school leader must make each person feel like an individual. As Sernak (1998) found in her study, "Persons most often felt cared for when their individual needs or desires were met" (p. 144). As the school leader works to meet the needs of the individual, she is creating a climate of caring for the entire organization.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is built upon the notion that a leader can inspire followers to do more than intended or thought possible (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders enhance the self-concepts of the followers while encouraging them to collectively identify with organizational goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leithwood (1994) identified six dimensions of transformational leadership including building vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, symbolizing professional practices and values, demonstrating high expectations,

and fostering participation in decision-making. These dimensions of a transformational educational leader impact the collective teacher efficacy in a school, as teachers commit to the school mission and community partnerships (Ross & Gray, 2006a). A transformational leader provokes additional effort by directly increasing the follower's confidence as well as by elevating the value of outcomes through expanding interests in Maslow's hierarchy to self-actualization – transcending self-interests (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders induce followers to work long hours to extend and develop themselves (Bass, 1985). As a situational leader, I often pull from the tenants of transformational leadership. My leadership is grounded in my intellect, sustained by my commitment to a model of life-long learning, centered on my values, and articulated through a shared vision. These characteristics have the potential to motivate others to better themselves and the organization.

Intellect. Intellect is essentially who we are. All our emotions, experiences, and knowledge are rooted in our brain and make up our intellect. Intellect also includes what Evans (1996) would call native strengths, temperament, personality, common sense, empathic sensitivity, courage, and resilience. Essentially, this intellect is what makes one a leader and inspires others to follow. Covey (1998) explained it like this:

The most important ingredient we put in any relationship is not what we say or what we do, but what we are. And if our words and our actions come from superficial human relations techniques rather than from our own inner core others will sense that duplicity. (p. 187)

I believe that one's "inner core" is grounded in their intellect, and therefore, this intellect drives leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2002) would agree that before people will follow the leader's plan they must follow the leader, the person. The person we are is ingrained

in our intellect, which contains components necessary for effective leadership, including commitment, life-long learning, values, and vision.

Commitment. An effective leader must have a strong sense of commitment. Throughout my life I have shown my commitment in various ways. As a child I worked at the family garden center and I was dedicated to my work there. Every weekend when most kids were sleeping in I was rising at the crack of dawn to go to work with my dad. When the business failed and my parents could no longer afford to pay for college, I did not give up on my education. I was committed to finishing school, in fact I was so sure that I would get a college degree that I never even entertained the thought of quitting. Instead, I finished the last three years of my undergraduate degree commuting to school an hour away and working full time.

As a runner, I am committed to meeting mileage, physical fitness, and personal goals. Time, weather, and fatigue do not keep me from donning my sneakers and hitting the road. This commitment is well described by Jaworski (1998), “In this new commitment we take on major challenges, seemingly impossible challenges, and we work extremely hard and stay totally focused – yet it’s not a struggle. In fact it’s effortless” (p. 134).

These examples of commitment have had a major impact on my leadership and through my leadership I continue to display and value commitment. In democratic leadership theory, Dewey recognized the importance of commitment, “Whole-heartedness, also called single mindedness in democracy and education indicates a genuine no hold barred enthusiasm about one’s subject matter” (as cited in Rodgers, 2002, p. 864). When leaders are enthusiastic and committed to initiatives the people they

lead are conscious of that and are inspired to follow. Gladwell (2002) would call this emotional contagion, the ability to influence others with emotions. To hope to achieve this, leaders must not only talk the talk, but walk the walk.

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003) leaders pursue goals with tenacity that comes from a commitment to their ends. Evans (1996) argues that exceptional leaders keep high-standard commitments with a self-discipline that can appear fanatical. Evans (1996) also says that this significant commitment must be apparent in one's behavior. A firm sense of commitment is apparent in all I do as a leader, from my enthusiasm in new initiatives, to building committees to work toward common goals, to working long hours. As Furman (2002) suggests, community-building involves commitment. The people I work with appreciate my commitment, and I believe that it inspires commitment in them. They know that like them, I am putting in extra hours when they get my emails at midnight or see me leaving the office at 6:00 p.m.

Life-long learning. With a solid commitment an effective leader will be a life-long learner and continue to evolve as new information and technologies present themselves while the culture of their organization changes. To be great leaders, we must be constantly evolving to best meet the needs of our organization and our constituents. Transformational leaders inspire organization members to do more than they thought they could do. I use this aspect of transformational leadership when I make my learning a model to inspire others in the organization to become life-long learners.

Before entering the doctoral program I was talking to a friend and said that I missed going to school. He said that at my level I really did not need school; that I could select books that interest me and educate myself. I understood his point, however it was

not only the books I missed. I missed the exchange of ideas that came with the educational setting. This led me to start a book club. I am constantly looking or creating opportunities for myself to evolve as a person and an educational leader while including others in my pursuits.

Grundy (1993) states that in emancipatory education administrators become students of their own work and that of their institution. In Beck's (1994) writing about the caring practitioner, she stated, "Administrators seeking to bolster, support and enhance instructional programs certainly would seek as much knowledge as possible about this topic" (p. 88). Both feminist and caring theorists stress the ideal of life-long learning.

Senge (1990a) says that by being dedicated to life-long learning, "People with a high level of personal mastery are able to consistently realize the results that matter most deeply to them – in effect, they approach their life as an artist would approach a work of art" (p. 7). Senge (1990a) could not have made a more eloquent or striking analogy for the importance of life-long learning. A work of art is not completed in one sitting, neither is the work of a leader. Constant work, revision, and reflection are needed to make an effective leader; thus, a commitment to life-long learning must be made.

Specifically, knowledge of the organization and change is essential for a leader. Bolman and Deal (2003) provide school leaders with a framework to view their organization. Through the lens of the political, symbolic, human resource, and structural frames one can learn information that is essential to any change initiative. Learning what is really going on in one's organization allows one to better plan for change.

Not only should leaders know their organization, they should also have knowledge of the change process itself (Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2001, 2008; Kotter, 1996). Only when leaders are equipped with the possible pitfalls and strategies for a change initiative can they hope to find success. True sustained change is difficult, but I find that my knowledge of the process has helped me as I consider initiatives in the district. I use this knowledge as I plan and take part in the curriculum review process and other new initiatives. Recently, we adopted a new literacy program in the middle grades and I used my knowledge of change to support its implementation. A year before the implementation we began to discuss it with the teachers to get their input and concerns. I chose a few key players and had them attend in-depth training. We then piloted the program during summer school allowing the key players an opportunity to practice the model. The rest of the teachers were paid to come in the summer to receive training. We continued training and planning as a team throughout the first year of adoption. We made it clear that teachers would not be formally evaluated on the literacy block and they were encouraged to take teaching risks. We continued a dialogue with teachers and made changes to the curriculum based on their feedback. This year we continue to provide training and coaching to support the teachers. As an educational leader, I am in the game of change (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). A better understanding of the process will only make me more effective.

Values. As a transformational leader, it is vital to not only have a strong set of values, but one must also be able to interpret them for the people that one leads. Begley (2005) states:

Understanding how values reflect underlying human motivations and shape subsequent attitudes, speech and actions is essential knowledge for any person in

a leadership role. Leaders should know their own values and ethical predispositions, as well as be sensitive to the value orientations of others. (p. 9)

Values are anchored in our intellect and through our experience and learning we build and rebuild our set of values. These values then guide us as we make decisions.

Vision. Through dialogue and awareness, an effective leader works to build a common vision for the organization or activity. Kouzes and Posner (2002) agree that leaders inspire a shared vision. Senge (1990a) states the importance of a shared vision, “When there is a shared vision people excel and learn, not because they are told to but because they want to” (p. 9). Allowing the members of the organization to help create the vision gives them ownership in the vision. It also makes working toward that vision more meaningful to the people involved. Through committee work, teachers help to define the vision and goals for each new initiative. The committee then communicates this vision to the rest of the staff. I have also found how important it is to continually come back to the vision and consider if the committee’s actions are reinforcing it.

Distributed Leadership

The foundations of distributed leadership lie in the idea that no leader can single-handedly lead organizations to greatness (Spillane, 2005). Instead, to successfully lead and sustain change, leaders must enlist members of the organization in the process.

When leadership is viewed as an organization-wide phenomenon, it has many potential sources including administrators, teachers, parents, and students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998). Therefore, leadership practice takes shape in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation, thus breaking new ground rather than simply relabeling old ideas (Spillane, 2005).

Harris (2005) asserts that because distributed leadership takes shape in interactions it offers leaders a framework to think about exactly how and in what form leadership is distributed in their organization. Distributed leadership provides an opportunity to see leadership as more than a narrow set of roles and responsibilities (Harris, 2005). I often and purposefully apply features of distributed leadership in my own leadership practice. These features include initiating dialogue, empowering members of the organization, and sustaining change through a broader view of leadership.

Dialogue. Furman (2002) and Senge (1990a) agree that dialogue is required for community-building which fosters fruitful interactions. Furman (2002) states: “Leadership for community building involves building relationships through facilitation of communication, collaboration, and dialogue” (p. 286). Dialogue differs from discussion. During a discussion you come with a set agenda and you do not deviate much from your original stance. During a dialogue you share, reflect, revise your ideas, share, reflect, and so on. There is no winner, no loser, and sometimes no definitive answer. But in a dialogue you get closer to the authentic truth. It is far more difficult to replicate this in educational administration, but as a leader this is what I am striving to do.

Within dialogue it is necessary to accept conflict. In fact, conflict centered on issues is healthy for an organization (Bennis, 1989; Giuliani, 2002; Lencioni, 2002). Lencioni (2002) points out that consensus can really be an organizational defense in which everyone agrees to please each other. With conflict and open dialogue about the issues, better solutions can surface. However, once a decision is made, it is necessary for all team members to commit even when they do not agree (Lencioni, 2002). I work with

professional learning communities, and I begin each year by discussing characteristics of functional teams. I believe that starting the school year with an understanding of the role of the team will make the learning communities more successful.

Empowerment. Creating a culture that fosters dialogue is the first step to empowerment. Within distributed leadership it is empowerment that allows members of the organization who may not hold a formal leadership role to contribute in powerful ways. Kouzes and Posner (2002) state, “The leader’s primary contribution is in the recognition of good ideas, the support of those ideas and the willingness to challenge the system to get new products, processes, services and systems adopted” (p. 67).

Kirkpatrick (1996), in thoughts about situational leadership, cautions that too often employees have been punished for speaking up and their behaviors must be unlearned to take advantage of empowerment. Kirkpatrick (1996) shares his experience:

Far too much responsibility for learning is placed on the trainers; far too little responsibility is transferred to participants, even in courses that are supposed to teach empowerment and participation. The irony reminds me of a graduate school when I took a class on group dynamics in which the professor taught exclusively by lecturing. (Now section, para. 9)

My experiences cause me to strongly believe that as a leader I must empower the people with whom I work.

I have gained my own sense of empowerment through running. People said that running a marathon would change my life; I did not believe it. Sure it was an impressive distance and it would take a lot of work to finish, but I did not think it would change my life. I was wrong. Finishing the Marine Corp Marathon was the hardest thing I have ever done (including childbirth and working full-time through college). Nothing can compare to how empowered I felt after the race. It changed me because I realized that I have the

capacity to do more than I ever imagined. I went through intense physical and mental turmoil during those 26.2 miles and I finished. I did that; I can do anything.

If the people I lead can feel even a little of that, great things will happen. I want them to take initiative and be the best that they can be. I am happiest when I see others reaching heights that they did not recognize they could achieve. As a leader, if the people that work with you are successful, then so are you. As a teacher, I always believed that the greatest reflection of my work was in my students' work. When they succeeded, I felt that I had succeeded as well. Now as an administrator, when teachers are motivated, excited by their lessons and students are engaged in higher order, collaborative activities, I feel the same sense of accomplishment.

My parents always empowered me as a child and I seek to replicate that because it meant so much to me. As stated before, my parents owned a business and at about the age of six I began working there. By the time I was eight I was running the cash register on a busy spring day. Customers had a difficult time believing that such a young child could possibly give them correct change. By the time I was in sixth grade, I was calculating the daily deposits. It might seem that I was helping my parents but it was they who gave me the greatest gift. They allowed me to do things many people would never think a child could do. They had high expectations for me and they empowered me to reach them. They provided the foundation of knowledge, and I knew they were there if I needed them. I hope to replicate this with my own daughter and my colleagues.

Sustainability. What could be a more timely and needed area to explore than sustainability? We are living in a globalized society dealing with financial, environmental, and energy problems resulting from decades of leadership that was not

concerned with sustainability. Public education is threatened by privatization aimed not at reforming students' realities in school but in fattening pockets (Anderson, 2009).

Improving outcomes for our neediest children would lead to sustained improvements in society. Instead, those in power seek to maintain the status quo and increase the inequities inside and outside schools (Anderson, 2009). Our world is in peril because of a lack of focus on sustainability; I believe the same can happen to our organizations.

Sustainable leadership is healthy leadership. It is hale, and it heals. (Hale means "vigorous and healthy", as in hale and hearty.) Healthy organizations renew and recycle their resources; unhealthy ones exhaust and abuse them. Healthy organizations promote development and growth that respects the finite aspects of the earth's and our own ability to sustain life; unhealthy organizations are greedy organizations that exploit natural and human resources for the self-interest of a few. Dead leaders don't improve much. But when leaders feel energized and alive, there is almost no limit to what they can achieve. (Hargreaves, 2006, p. 470)

Renewal is an essential aspect of sustainable leadership and sources of this renewal like trust and emotion are already part of my leadership theory-in-use (Hargreaves, 2006). However, concepts such as restraint and confidence are areas that I seek to explore in the future.

Confidence and restraint can lead us to see organizations as self-organizing. Wheatley and Kellner-Rodgers (1996) assert that when we see organizations as self-organizing we get healthy systems adept at exploring their identity. Moreover, these systems are better adapted to deal with change. Self-organizing organizations cannot situate all the power in positions at the top of the hierarchy. Instead, they must use authentic distributed leadership to share the decision-making and organizing tasks.

I believe that as an effective leader I must empower the teachers with whom I work. By fostering teacher leadership I have a better chance of sustaining change and moving from single-loop to double-loop learning (Argyris, 1990). In single loop

learning, organizational defensive routines and fancy footwork make it very difficult for individuals to correct errors (Argyris, 1990). Double loop learning allows members of the organization to correct errors by learning from mistakes and changing behaviors. Double loop learning means that the governing values must be changed. Individuals must learn a new theory-in-use called Model II. “The governing values of Model II theory-in-use are valid information, informed choice, and responsibility to monitor how well the choice is implemented” (Argyris, 1990, p. 104).

I came to a formal leadership position after many years as a teacher leader. It was the administrators that I worked with that encouraged me and gave me opportunities to exercise my leadership. Because of this I believe I improved teaching and learning both inside my classroom and within the organizations that I worked. Further, through my leadership I gained a greater sense of self-worth and purpose. Now that I am in a formal leadership role, I want to be the kind of leader that promotes teacher leadership. Not only will it better student outcomes, it will also contribute to teachers’ satisfaction with their work. The mark of a truly powerful leader can sometimes only be determined after they leave the organization. If the culture and initiatives they have created persist, then they have really impacted the organization. I look at teacher leadership as an untapped resource that can be used to reform and sustain public education. I believe that the goal of my dissertation, to foster teacher leadership, will add to the sustainability of reform and in turn make me a better leader.

Transactional Leadership

The tenants of the servant, transformational, and distributed leadership theories guide my practice. However, as situations arise I have realized that I may draw more heavily on one aspect or another. In fact, there are times that I have had to abandon most of them and become a transactional leader. When a teacher will not respond to the other methods and becomes insubordinate, punishment through a letter in the file or a poor evaluation is necessary.

Transactional leadership is built on the premise of transactions between the employee and the leader. When employees do something well they are rewarded; when employees do not do good work they are penalized (Bass, 1990). This type of leadership does not inspire empowerment, and therefore is not my theory of choice. However, when I have exhausted my other leadership capacities, and a teacher is still not serving students to my expectations, I resort to transactional leadership. As a situational leader, I find that even transactional leadership can have its place in practice, albeit a small one.

Conclusion

The theory of leadership to which I ascribe cannot neatly fit into any existing model of leadership. Instead, the principles that guide my journey as a leader are best described by my individualized theory of leadership. No one existing leadership style fits me perfectly. I choose pieces of each and attempt to find balance in my practice. As I gain experience and insight I can better apply characteristics depending on the situation. My leadership theory-in-use will continue to be refined as my learning and experience grow.

In the next chapter, I will explore the literature that is relevant to my action research study. Through the literature review I am able to make connections between my study and others that have come before (Hinchey, 2008). Further, “Familiarity with relevant literature can enhance sensitivity to subtle nuances in data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 37). In my literature review, I explore research in the areas of distributed leadership, professional learning, and teacher leadership.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

Leadership capacity is imperative to sustain school improvement and student learning (Waters et al., 2003; Williams, 2009). Moreover, superior teaching is usually found in schools led by capable instructional leaders (Gray, 1934). However, the increased responsibility associated with instructional leadership and external challenges overwhelm principals (Danielson, 2007; Goldstein, 2004; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Ylimaki, 2007). Further, traditional role-based leadership strategies have been unable to meet the complex challenges associated with school change (Copland, 2003).

Where will we find the leadership we need to reform our schools? A major factor in sustaining change and improving student achievement lies in the effectiveness of teachers (Cooper, 1993). Teachers' influence on student achievement is larger than school effects and student background factors such as poverty, language background, and minority status (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). In fact, as we are confronted by an achievement gap that will not budge, it is important to note that teacher effects have a greater impact on low socioeconomic status schools (Nye et al., 2004). If effective teachers have a significant influence on student achievement it only makes sense to broaden their impact beyond the classroom.

Many researchers and education writers who recognize the challenges facing schools today emphasize the need for teachers to take a leadership role within the organization (Danielson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1984; Gabriel, 2005). A task force on teacher leadership found that teachers are a squandered resource in leadership because they have the experience, ideas, and capacity to lead, however they are not given the opportunity to do so (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001). The existing research in the area of teacher leadership demonstrates its benefits, not only for the individual teacher, but the teaching community as a whole.

Before looking at teacher leadership it is necessary to explore the question of the distributed leadership within an educational organization (Frost & Harris, 2003).

Through distributed leadership, teachers have a greater role in decision-making. As teachers make more decisions, they are more likely to take part in professional learning communities. Therefore, this review of literature will look at distributed leadership and professional learning communities of teachers who work and learn together. Finally, I will examine the research surrounding teacher leadership.

Distributed Leadership

Darling-Hammond (1984) warned of a coming crisis in the American teaching force due to a decline in the recruitment and retention of teachers, the quality of teachers, and the attractiveness of teaching. Teaching lost attractiveness partially because teachers have limited input to decisions that critically affect their work environment, and they see little opportunity for professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 1984). In fact, conditions that undermine teacher efficacy are strongly related to teacher attrition (Darling-

Hammond, 1984). Without improving working conditions, schools will not attract or retain the qualified teachers able to meet the needs of students. Professionalizing teaching is one way to improve working conditions. One feature of professionalizing teaching is an increased responsibility with increased competence (Darling-Hammond, 1984). Therefore, within the educational organization, effective competent teachers are given greater responsibility and decision-making power.

Traditional structures in K-12 schools that place all the responsibility at the top of the hierarchy, situated within formal leadership roles are ineffective. Teachers should take an active role in setting the stage, planning the agenda, and governing the school, as they know best, but they are often asked last (Trachtman, 1993). In a study of teachers' perspectives on effective leadership, teachers reported that effective principals were able to delegate authority to teachers (Blase, 1987). Receiving authority from principals was correlated with trust, respect, self-concept, and teacher involvement (Blase, 1987). In organizations where teachers had more authority, the school culture was more productive (Blase, 1987). Therefore, distributing authority among teachers has the potential to improve school culture.

School based management is another way to expand our thinking beyond the principal as instructional leader to the school staff as a team of instructional leaders (Wright, 1991). Leadership teams have the potential to better improve instruction than the principal alone (Wright, 1991; Ylimaki, 2007). In fact, findings from a qualitative study indicated that the propensity to share instructional leadership was one factor that accounted for differences in curriculum and leadership capacity between schools (Ylimaki, 2007).

Schools with more distributed leadership are better able to improve their academic outcomes. A longitudinal study by Heck and Hallinger (2009) of teachers and students in 195 elementary schools revealed the reciprocal relationship between distributed leadership and academic capacity. This study offers an early contribution to evidence that distributed leadership is linked to capacity building strategies designed to impact teaching and learning (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Therefore distributed leadership that encourages teacher leadership has the potential to improve working conditions, student achievement, and increased teacher participation.

Teacher participation. Empowering teachers to participate in school and district decisions increases their leadership capacity. Leadership capacity is defined as broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership and a way of understanding sustainable school improvement (Lambert, 2006). A study by Ross and Gray (2006b) of 205 elementary schools demonstrated that the principals' influence on collective teacher efficacy led to teachers' willingness to engage in community partnerships. Teachers who believe that they constitute an effective instructional team are more likely to take responsibility for school outcomes (Ross & Gray, 2006b).

As we seek to initiate educational reforms designed to improve student achievement, it is important not to assume that teachers will take a passive, accepting role. Teachers' professional relationships, learning, recognition, and empowerment must be addressed to improve prospects of gaining teacher support for new programs (Smylie & Smart, 1990). Likewise, implications from a qualitative study of three schools points to the need to shift focus to a more inclusive form of leadership, to the empowerment of teachers, and the promotion of positive collegial relationships (Ryan, 1999). Distributive

leadership can provide the capacity, coherence, and ownership necessary to sustain and deepen reforms (Copland, 2003). Therefore, if we hope to implement and sustain change initiatives in schools we have to empower teachers. One way to empower teachers is to involve them in the decision-making process.

Teacher participation in school-based decision-making is related positively to student academic outcomes (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Hirsch & Emrick, 2006; Smylie, Lazarus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996). In a study by Hirsch and Emrick (2006), an analysis of 8,500 survey responses led researchers to conclude that administrators should engage teachers in decision-making as a way to improve teachers' working conditions. Data collected from surveys, observations, and student learning outcomes showed that teacher participation in school-based decision-making is related positively to instructional improvement (Smylie et al., 1996). When teachers participate in the decision-making process they are more likely to see their decisions through (Trachtman, 1993). Often administrators do not see decisions through, because they tend to change positions more frequently than teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999). When teachers are invested in the decisions they make they are more likely to remain at the organization and work toward sustained change.

In studies of school turnaround, researchers found that in the beginning leadership was focused on one person or small teams (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). However as the school began to improve, the leadership became more collaborative (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). As leadership became more collaborative the following changed perspectives were observed among teachers, (a) their willingness to be held responsible for what students learned, (b) their growing awareness of the long-term effort that would

be required to sustain and improve students' performance, (c) a new awareness of just how interdependent were the efforts of elementary and secondary schools if student performance was to be successfully nurtured, and (d) a broader view of the factors that account for student success (Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). Teacher participation in decision-making also impacts students.

Teacher participation effects on students. The principals' ability to involve teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies is correlated with student achievement (Waters et al., 2003). When teachers reform their work, they alter the work of their students (Trachtman, 1993). When teachers have a voice, students have a voice (Trachtman, 1993). Similarly, when teachers are learners, students value their own learning (Trachtman, 1993). Student learning is directly related to how and if teachers learn to become better (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991).

Students are affected as teachers work to reconceptualize student evaluation practices, strengthen curriculum, deal with severe student behavior problems, and integrate technology into the curriculum (Griffin, 1995). Furthermore, much of this work influences both teachers and students across schools (Griffin, 1995). Distributed leadership does not only influence teachers' work but it also directly affects students' experiences.

The principal's role in distributed leadership. Distributed leadership does not occur naturally; the principal plays a critical role in its development (Clift, Johnson, Holland, & Veal, 1992; Copland, 2003). Principals that are successful in promoting shared leadership protect the reform vision, engage in framing questions and problems, and provide space and support for inquiry to occur (Copland, 2003). These principals

view teaching colleagues as professional equals and seek to include others in the work of change (Copland, 2003). Principals must demonstrate that they are willing to listen, respect teachers' decisions, and follow through on teacher-led initiatives (Clift et al., 1992).

In fact, teachers' willingness to participate in school decision-making is influenced primarily by the relationships they have with their principal (Smylie, 1992a). They are more likely to participate when their relationship with the principal is more open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive (Smylie, 1992a). Participation is less likely when the relationship is closed, exclusionary, and controlling (Smylie, 1992a). Principals, through their interactions with teachers, can facilitate an environment that cultivates shared leadership.

Principals in schools that have high leadership capacity have the following characteristics: (a) a clarity of self and values, (b) strong beliefs in democracy, (c) strategic thinking about the evolution of school improvement, (d) a deliberate and vulnerable persona, (e) knowledge of the work of teaching and learning, and (f) an ability for developing capacity in others (Lambert, 2006). The willingness of the principal to be vulnerable evokes teachers' participation because teachers realize that the principals do not have all the answers (Lambert, 2006). When teachers realize that principals cannot do it alone, they move toward greater participation.

Principals can also reduce the hierarchal structure through inquiry. In a study by Copland (2003), principals in 16 sampled schools engaged in asking questions, exploring data, and engaging faculty and the broader community in inquiry-based activities that can potentially move the school forward. The principals also provided the regular time and

space for this to occur (Copland, 2003). Principals gave teachers the opportunity to collaborate and moved them outside the confines of their classroom. Distributed leadership has the potential to help teachers see themselves as team leaders instead of solitary practitioners (Copland, 2003; Frost & Harris, 2003). In addition, organizational learning fosters teacher participation; this leads to a discussion of teachers' professional learning communities (Smylie et al., 1996). This connection between shared leadership and communities of learners moves me to look at literature in the area of professional learning communities.

Professional Learning Communities

Distributed leadership is linked to collaborative leading and learning, a hallmark of professional learning communities. Furthermore, teacher leadership is inextricably connected to teacher learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). The professional teacher is one who learns from teaching rather than one that has learned how to teach (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995).

A study in the late 1920s highlighted the importance of professional learning. Gray (1934) found that little or no progress was made in schools taught by teachers who were not committed to learning more about their profession. Gray (1934) surmised that only teachers who were willing to exert continuous effort in increasing their efficacy should be retained. Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of teachers is invested in the profession and takes any opportunity to improve their practice (Gray, 1934; Waters et al., 2003).

Lambert (2006) viewed greater teacher leadership capacity as linked to reciprocal, purposeful learning in communities. When learning is continuous and participation is broad-based and skillful the result is high leadership capacity and the potential of sustained school improvement (Lambert, 2006). Shared decision making creates a more community-oriented approach to enhancing teaching and learning (Griffin, 1995).

Professional learning communities increase the quality and quantity of learning within an organization (Eraut, 2007). However, to achieve this, leaders must develop a culture of mutual support and learning and share leadership with experienced staff (Eraut, 2007). Therefore, the relationship between professional learning communities and distributed leadership can be mutually reinforcing. To foster professional learning communities, the principal must rely on experienced teachers for support. Professional learning communities increase learning in the organization and prepare teachers to take leadership roles.

Organizational professional communities are defined as a school organizational structure with an intellectually directed culture (Louis & Mark, 1998). A professional community has the following characteristics: shared values, focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatized practice, and reflective dialogue (Louis & Mark, 1998). Team structures and activities that enhance relationships, participation, and skillfulness are linked to effective school improvement initiatives (Lambert, 2006).

Teachers who participate in professional communities have higher levels of shared standards for curriculum and instruction, have a stronger service ethic in relations with students, and show stronger commitment to the profession (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). In a study of high school teachers collaborating to learn about content literacy,

teachers reported that they were able to solve problems more effectively because they benefited from the collective knowledge, expertise, and experience of the group (Thibodeau, 2008). Leithwood and Strauss (2009) in their study of turnaround schools found that as the school began to improve, teachers looked more to their immediate colleagues as sources of insight. Likewise, structures in the schools changed from reinforcing isolation to promoting collaboration (Leithwood & Stauss, 2009)

Teachers are more willing to meet and collaborate when they see that planning leads to classroom change and participation leads to outcomes (Trachtman, 1993). Teacher collegiality requires increased teacher affinity (Trachtman, 1993). Hence, a result of professional learning communities is more warmth between teachers.

Principals' build teachers' beliefs in their instructional capacity by diagnosing specific instructional needs and arranging for teacher access to suitable professional learning opportunities (Ross & Gray, 2006b; Smylie, 1992a). Through staff development, principals can persuade teachers that they can become an effective organization (Ross & Gray, 2006b). Professional learning provides teachers and principals opportunities to reexamine or redefine their work roles and working relationships in ways that contribute to participatory decision-making (Smylie, 1992a). Professional learning leads to a more confident, persistent, and ambitious staff (Ross & Gray, 2006b). Distributed leadership and professional learning communities promote a school culture that fosters teacher leadership.

Teacher Leadership

Anderson (2004) defined teacher leadership as a means to set directions and influence others to move in those directions. However, teacher leadership could be defined as division of managerial labor (Little, 2003). The real meaning of the term teacher leader is found in the work of teacher leaders. Teachers can come to leadership roles as a result of their subject expertise or their appointment as a department head (Little, 1995).

Teacher leaders can have formal roles or informal roles. Informal roles are without titles and preconceived positions. Teacher leadership emerges as a contrast to the typical school hierarchy power and is not consolidated in a particular role that has predefined functions (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Instead, it is widely diffused and flows from matches between teachers' expertise and interests with the inventive work that needs to be done (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). In a study of teacher leaders in five schools, researchers found as teacher leaders developed there was a progression from initial role ambiguity, through periods of overload and conflict, toward a tentative, shared consensus on the value and importance of teacher leadership for school wide initiatives (Clift et al., 1992). When teacher leadership emerges rather than being assigned it has a fuller more wide-ranging professional role (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995).

Policy movements. According to Little (2003), 14 years of case study data provide an understanding of history and development of teacher leadership (Little, 2003). During the 1980s there was not a proactive or strategic position related to teacher leadership (Little, 2003). Instead, teacher leaders situated their leadership within their daily work (Little, 2003). The work of teacher leaders may not have had influence far beyond the walls of the classroom.

In the Early 1990s teacher leadership became associated with the whole school reform agenda (Little, 2003). Teachers were oriented toward larger reform issues ensuing conflict over the meaning of teacher leadership (Little, 2003). Further formal leadership roles lacked long-term institutional support (Little, 2003).

Extending to present time, teacher leadership exists in a paradoxical environment. There is both an expanded role for teachers that includes a collective responsibility for student success and heightened control over teachers' work (Little, 2003). Little (2003) concludes that over 14 years there has been a shift from teacher leadership as a localized and personal activity to a more systematic effort by school officials to mobilize teacher leadership in the service of institutional agendas and external accountability. However, while teacher leadership has broadened its scope, it may have become focused on management functions instead of teaching and learning.

The work of teacher leaders. The roles and work of teacher leaders vary depending on the organization in which they work. Teacher leaders may contribute through extra-curricular activities, teaching outside the school in the community or higher education, belonging to professional organizations, and/or providing peer leadership (Collinson, 2004). Teacher leaders may also be heavily involved in how teachers are prepared, mentored, selected, and hired (Collinson, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Teacher leaders are unafraid to make their teaching public, and they display a sense of responsibility to the education community at large (Collinson, 2004).

While working in areas such as curriculum development, teacher leaders are often highly responsive to the rest of the staff (Collinson, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Leander & Osborne, 2008). Reshaping curriculum often leads teacher leaders to develop

and utilize richer forms of assessment to understand how their students learn as well as what they know, therefore enabling teachers to be more effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Henning, 2006).

As teacher leaders continue to learn and stretch themselves in new directions, they can become involved in research as they pursue inquiry related to their own curiosities (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). In another study, teacher leaders wrote grants for both their classroom and the school (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999). Teacher leaders are problem solvers and change agents within their organization (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). When teachers are empowered to pose and solve problems, they assume leadership for change (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Further, teacher leaders are better able to envision the broader impact of decisions (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999).

Relationship with principals. The school principal has a large influence on the development of teacher leaders and their potential influences within the school (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Anderson, 2004; Goldstein, 2004; Ryan, 1999). A single case study of one urban K-12 school in California demonstrated that although principals may have difficulty relinquishing control in some areas, they have confidence in teacher leaders suggesting the possibility of a successful task division model (Goldstein, 2004).

Teachers have the most influence when they have empowering principals (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999). Therefore, it is important to examine the relationships between the teacher leaders and the principal and the principal's place in the school context. Relationships between teacher leaders and principals are mutual and interactive (Anderson, 2004). In a study of six schools noted for teacher leadership, the principal fell into one of the following models: the buffered principal who was surrounded by teacher

leaders but isolated from the rest of staff, the interactive principal who worked with all staff and distributed decision making, or the contested principal who was outside the loop and stood against teacher leaders (Anderson, 2004). The role that a principal takes can influence the effects of teacher leaders within a school.

Effects of teacher leadership. Though the literature is more centered on the argument and rationale for teacher leadership, some researchers are beginning to look for evidence related to the effects of teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Putting teachers in leadership roles can, (a) shift control to “bottom-up,” (b) break up the bureaucracy allowing schools to be more responsive to parents and student, and (c) create greater flexibility in schools and programs (Cooper, 1993). Collaboration is a vehicle for teacher leaders to make an impact (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Roby, 2009). In interviews of teachers considered leaders by their peers, findings indicate that overall teacher leaders have significant influence on the instructional practices of their colleagues (Ryan, 1999). Teacher leaders offer assistance to teachers and students; have input in curriculum, program selection, and professional development; and they contribute to the professionalization of teaching (Ryan, 1999).

Some studies demonstrate that teacher leaders’ influences reach beyond the walls of their classroom (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Anderson, 2004; Collinson, 2004; Roby, 2009; Thibodeau, 2008). Teacher leaders influence schools to the point that the entire organization can be transformed (Anderson, 2004). In one study the participants’ high level of involvement suggested that participants have influence at increasingly wider levels, from school, to district, region, state, and nation (Collinson, 2004). When teacher leaders have a definite purpose, morale increases and results in higher levels of

contribution (Roby, 2009). Further, teacher leaders who use the structures of shared leadership to demonstrate the positive influence on teacher working conditions have a broader influence in their organization (Thibodeau, 2008).

However, some research points to factors that inhibit the influence of teacher leadership (Smylie, 1992b). The more strongly teachers believe that exchanging advice implies obligation and the more strongly teachers believe in professional equality among teachers, the less likely they are to interact with teacher leaders (Smylie, 1992b). Therefore teacher leadership may conflict with two important professional beliefs, equality of status and independence (Smylie, 1992b). Policymakers must consider and address the professional beliefs of the organization if they wish to encourage teacher leadership (Smylie, 1992b). This points to the importance of the context in which teacher leaders work.

Promoting teacher leadership. Research provides a wealth of information on ways to build leadership capacity in schools. Administrators should encourage broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership (Williams, 2009). Successful examples of distributed leadership should be shared throughout the educational organization (Hirsch & Emrick, 2006; Williams, 2009). Once teachers have seen what is possible they need the openness to seize the opportunity for participation, inquiry, and engagement in the continual rethinking of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Principals should also foster reflective practice and common planning times for teacher dialogue (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999).

Inquiry-based use of information and reflective practice should be part of the school culture to advance leadership capacity (Harris, Lowery-Moore, & Farrow, 2008;

Williams, 2009). When teachers use information and reflect on their practice it leads to empowerment. In addition, teachers should also be encouraged to serve as role models (Harris et al., 2008). As role models, teachers can encourage other teachers to take leadership roles.

To further foster teacher leadership, organizations need to promote risk-taking around teaching and learning (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999). As a result, trust emerges as a crucial element in the development of teacher leadership (Frost & Harris, 2003). Teacher leaders must trust that administration and peers will support their risk-taking endeavors.

Professional development on school leadership, data-driven decision-making, and team building prepares teachers to serve as leaders within their schools (Hirsch & Emrick, 2006; Smylie, 1993). Teacher leaders can also learn from supervisor feedback (Harris et al., 2008). Teacher leaders require skills that will make them more effective in sustaining change in their districts.

Likewise, principals and other school administrators would benefit from training and professional development in working with and fostering teacher leaders (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Hart, 1995). Researchers from Wright State University reported that merging teacher leader and principal preparation helped emergent principals view and relate to teachers as vital components of a team approach for building success and not as isolated classroom teachers (Hambricht & Franco, 2008). There is certainly reason to encourage teacher leadership but it does come with challenges.

Challenges of teacher leadership. In the age of accountability, teacher leaders are caught in the middle of two strategies for reform, more involvement and commitment

of participants versus more control over participants' work (Little, 1995, 2003). The pressure of state tests has led to stricter control over teachers' work. Additionally, the external pressure breeds stress (Little, 2003; Lindqvist & Nordanger, 2006; Reid, Brain, & Boyes, 2004). Time is a resource that teacher leaders find scarce and often becomes a barrier to teacher leadership (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Reid et al., 2004). English teachers dealing with an increase in leadership responsibilities as a result of England's educational policies, reported that they experienced an overwhelming workload that negatively impacted their ability to teach and led to lack of sleep (Reid et al., 2004).

External pressures and lack of time are not the only challenges that teacher leaders face. Teacher leaders also report feeling unprepared and unsupported when undertaking leadership roles (Reid et al., 2004). Focus has not been on equipping teachers with the skills to engage in professional development, to develop evidenced-based practice, to facilitate teams, or to innovate (Reid et al., 2004).

In interviews, teacher leaders emphasize that their work and decision-making occur within the school hierarchy (Conley & Muncey, 1999). This demonstrates that teacher leadership can exist in an organization that has the traditional top-down structure of schools. However, one questions the effectiveness of teacher leadership if teacher leaders are situated at the bottom of the hierarchy. Further, placing teacher leaders above the rest of the teaching staff may create tensions in the organization (Anderson, 2004). Findings suggest understanding both teacher leadership and teaming are essential (Conley & Muncey, 1999).

The work of teacher leaders often does not focus on teaching and learning; instead teachers are delegated administrative tasks (Little, 2003). To combat this the following

factors are cited as ways to encourage leadership based on educational purpose, teaching practice, and pupil learning: (a) teacher leaders devote time to issues of teaching and learning and finding other ways to deal with routine administrative business, (b) teacher leaders are explicit and consistent when expressing the importance of working together, (c) practices and routines are adopted to organize task, and (d) teachers maintain a network for intellectual, social, and material resources for their work (Little, 2003).

Teacher leaders have to struggle with the traditions of autonomy and establish a legitimate basis for their leadership (Little, 1995). In a study of teacher leaders, Griffin (1995) found that the culture of isolation persisted. In fact, some teachers cited the privacy of practice as a reason not to address pedagogy (Griffin, 1995). Knowledge of the challenges facing teacher leaders is important to those who wish to foster teacher leadership within their organization.

Conclusion

Through reconstruction of Dewey's account of vocation, Higgins (2005) found "With its shabby surroundings, its disruptions of continuity and purpose, its nagging asceticism, and its distinctive kitsch, the world often exerts a narrowing influence on the intellectual and emotional life of teachers" (p. 461). However, distributed leadership, professional learning communities, and teacher leadership can mitigate the traditional structure of schools that narrow both the emotional and intellectual life of teachers.

Through my action research, I learn how to promote teacher leadership and reduce the challenges teacher leaders face in the context of the Ryan School District. Further, I add to the growing body of literature on the effects of teacher leadership on

professional learning, fellow teachers, and the organizational culture. Through my action research I was able to effectively encourage and enhance teacher leadership to positively influence the Ryan School District. The next chapter focuses on the methodology I used to study teacher leadership in the Ryan School District.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

This practical action research will enable me to learn more about teacher leadership in the Ryan School District while I systematically work to develop action strategies (Hinchey, 2008). This action research study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. What conditions influence teacher leadership?
2. What are the obstacles to teacher leadership?
3. How can the organization better foster teacher leadership?
4. In what ways can teacher leadership influence teachers' professional growth?
5. In what ways can teacher leadership influence the organizational culture?
6. How did the study impact or develop my leadership?

Action research will allow me to answer these questions within the community that I work, on a topic I consider important, and take practical actions for improvement (Hinchey, 2008). A benefit of action research is that it empowers the researcher to unite theory and practice (Deemer, 2009). Throughout this action research project I had the opportunity to observe the way in which my leadership theory impacts my practice. Furthermore, action research enables me to take immediate action for school improvement (McMillian, 2000). "The knowledge that emerges has the capacity to be actionable, that is, at the service of both the academic and practitioner communities"

(Coghlan, 2007, p. 301). Said another way, “Action research strengthens one’s commitment and encourages progress toward particular social goals” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 240).

I followed the steps of action research outlined by Fleming (2000): (a) choose a focus and identify a problem, (b) develop an action plan, (c) collect and analyze data, and (d) engage in reflection and introspection. However, as Hinchey (2008) points out, though the steps may seem linear, they are actually recursive. “Researchers commonly move back and forth among various activities, for the simple reason that later work often produces ideas for useful changes to original plans” (Hinchey, 2008, p. 52). Action research allows cycles of thinking, doing, and watching to be interwoven and repeated throughout the project (Coghlan, 2007; Hinchey, 2008; Taylor, 2002).

Through this cyclical process I studied a problem that was personally meaningful and germane to the organizational context. Through data collected in the first cycle and literature gathered about teacher leadership, I developed and implemented a plan of action. Throughout the cycles of my study, I used surveys, interviews, focus groups, fieldnotes, and historical data to gather information related to my action. Then I looked for patterns in the data and used coding to identify individual pieces of data that belong to a category (Hinchey, 2008). Once my data were organized, I used evidence to construct findings. Finally, I theorized after thoughtful reflection on the findings (Hinchey, 2008).

In my action research project, mixed methods were employed to study teacher leadership in the district. Mixed methods research focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination

provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Considering timing, weighting, mixing, and theorizing, I used a concurrent triangulation strategy for data collection (Creswell, 2009). Using the concurrent triangulation strategy I collected both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently and compared the data to determine if there was convergence, differences, or some combination (Creswell, 2009). Through both qualitative and quantitative methods I triangulated the data to increase confidence in my findings (Creswell, 2009; Hinchey, 2008). The limitation of this method is that I may have difficulty resolving the discrepancies that emerge as I compare the data (Creswell, 2009). However, because I am using action research I can conduct additional data collection or develop a new intervention that addresses the possible discrepancies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

As Director of Curriculum and Instruction in the district and creator of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, my role is central to my action research project. As the researcher, I utilized the existing literature on teacher leadership and the data I gathered to better foster teacher leadership in the district. Because of my central role in the research, it was essential that I engaged in reflective, critical thinking about the research process and took time to build sound relationships with participants (Glesne, 2006).

Context

My study takes place in the Ryan School District, a Pre-K to eighth grade district consisting of three schools. The 1100 students attend the Franklin Avenue School (Pre-K), the Madison Avenue School (Pre-K-6), or the Dorchester Drive School (K-8). The

district staff is made up of about 110 teachers, 20 educational specialists, 40 staff members including secretaries and aides, and 6 administrators.

Faculty members have been struggling with an increase of at-risk students as measured by free and reduced lunch status and declining student performance. Much professional development has been offered to teachers, but in some grade levels teachers do not take part in voluntary learning opportunities. The district administration views professional development and life-long learning as essential elements in providing a sound educational experience for students. The Teacher Leadership Coalition was formed in 2009 with the intent to model and provide opportunities for professional learning while bringing about sustained change in the district.

To effectively make improvements to the Teacher Leadership Coalition it is essential that I have a clear understanding of the context in which it exists (Fullan, 2001; Senge, 1990b). A closer look at the organization through the frames identified by Bolman and Deal (2003) make it possible to reframe the organization in a manner that will allow me to gain greater clarity and identify new strategies for improving the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Upon reflection, it is clear that the structural and human resource frames are most dominant.

The structure of the organization is a blueprint for formal expectations and exchanges among the various stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2003). In the Ryan School District, the superintendent is at the apex of the organization, making final decisions regarding all matters in the district and advising the Board of Education on policy matters. The director of curriculum and supervisor of special education have district-wide responsibilities, while principals and assistant principals are responsible at the

building levels. All administrators report to the superintendent and meet with him biweekly to apprise him of current projects and situations. Teachers have input through membership on district committees. Currently, parents and students do not play a major role in the district decision-making process.

Over the last seven years, the superintendent exercised authority and put in place many rules and procedures to govern the operation of the school district and formalize the work of staff. Since his appointment, the power in Ryan School District has become situated in formal positions of leadership. Only those that have garnered the superintendent's trust are empowered within the district. The benefit of the strong structural frame is a district that is well run with clear expectations. The detriment has been a top-down form of leadership that failed to empower stakeholders.

In a stark paradox to the superintendent's structural approach to leadership, other administrators have deepened the human resource frame in the district. These administrators believe that it is important to invest in and empower staff members (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Administrators are sensitive to the needs of staff and are willing to let them leave early and extend deadlines when necessary. Furthermore, these administrators empower staff by encouraging their participation in change initiatives. The benefits of the human resource frame in the Ryan School District are evidenced through greater buy-in for change initiatives and a positive working environment. However, this frame has been detrimental when the needs of staff are put over what is best for students. For example, feedback to teachers on their evaluations is filtered to protect their feelings.

As director of curriculum in the district I work closely with the superintendent and other administrators and realize that it is important to strike a balance between the structural and human resource frames within the district. The role of director of curriculum is defined differently in each school district and is often dependent on the size of the district and the superintendent's definition of the role. In my district, I wear many hats, a result of the size of the district and the empowerment of the superintendent. I am coordinator of the following programs No Child Left Behind, Basic Skills, English Language Learners, and Technology. In addition, I am responsible for assessment, instruction, staff evaluations, state reporting, professional development, affirmative action, and the ongoing revision and improvement to district curriculum and programs. Over my last three years in the district, I have worked with administrators and teachers to institute many changes in the district.

As director of curriculum, I have worked with most staff members in some capacity and they are the participants in my study. Specifically, the Teacher Leadership Coalition members, as well as the rest of the teaching and educational specialist staff, and five school administrators took part in the study. All teacher leaders were interviewed. The rest of the school faculty was included in the sample for surveys about teacher leadership and school culture. All administrators participated in a focus group. Then I used convenience sampling to select willing faculty members for participation in a focus group. Convenience sampling allowed me to access participants that are willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2007). As an administrator in the district, it is important the participants do not feel coerced in participating. Although convenience

sampling can hinder credibility, it offers the best approach for my action research (Creswell, 2007).

Data Collection and Analysis

Through surveys, interviews, focus groups, journal writing, and historical data I gathered information about teacher leadership to inform my actions. The combination of data collection methods provided convergent and divergent evidence about teacher leadership (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Convergent evidence brings corroboration of findings, while divergent evidence allows one to identify unique paths in the findings (Johnson & Turner, 2003). The more sources used to understand teacher leadership, the richer the data and the more reliable the findings (Glesne, 2006).

For each cycle of my action research study, qualitative and quantitative instruments were utilized. Surveys, used to collect quantitative data, included open-ended questions, Likert scales, and checklists (Patten, 2001). Questionnaires or surveys are an efficient way to collect data from a large number of participants because they include data that can be easily analyzed, they are anonymous, therefore encouraging participants to be truthful, and they are economical (Patten, 2001). Colleagues and my dissertation chair reviewed and/or piloted each survey so I could improve the questionnaires and thus the validity of my results (Patten, 2001).

In Cycle One I used criterion sampling and selected all 2009- 2010 members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition to participate in interviews. Criterion sampling allowed me to select participants who have specific knowledge that will shape future cycles in my study (Creswell, 2007). In the fourth cycle I used convenience sampling to select

teachers willing to participate in a focus group. Including the rest of the staff in the study enabled me to broaden my view on teacher leadership. Both interviews and focus groups were conducted using semi-structured method because it enabled me to get comparable data across subjects (Bogdan & Biklin, 2007). However, I allowed questions to emerge from the content of the interviews. “In the process of listening to your respondents, you learn what questions to ask” (Glesne, 2006, p. 81). I tape-recorded the interviews and focus groups and transcribed the recordings for data analysis.

Journaling is another method used to remain aware of how I was influenced by the data. “It seems that good inquiry is a reflective process wherein all questions, assumptions, methods, and relations are considered grist for the deliberative mill of the researcher” (Cornett, 1995, p. 123). I wrote in a journal throughout the action research process as a way to reflect on emerging patterns, the research process, and my role in the research. Through journaling and later analysis I learned more about my leadership theory in use and how it has impacted the research and/or changed through the process.

Finally, I used historical data to compare past survey results to current surveys to determine if the action initiated at each cycle has impacted perceptions in the district. “You might see differently the patterns of behavior that were evident from current data and you might perceive a relationship of ideas or events previously assumed unconnected” (Glesne, 2006, p. 65). Specifically, I compared past results of the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI), which assesses the quality of professional learning occurring in the school district, to fall 2010 results of the SAI to determine if there were changes to the culture related to professional learning. Historical documents are commonly used as a way to verify or support data gathered through fieldnotes and

interviews (McMillan, 2000). Using interviews, surveys, focus groups, fieldnotes, and historical data can provide the triangulation necessary to attribute changes in culture to the teacher leadership initiatives.

Once the data were collected, I moved into the data analysis phase. In my action research study, data analysis was ongoing. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation was recursive and nonlinear in nature (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). That is, data collection occurred at the same time that other data were being analyzed. As I collected the data, I conducted preliminary data analysis to determine if other questions should be asked, or if a particular question was misinterpreted by participants (Hinchey, 2008). As ideas and understanding come to me, I recorded them in my journal.

I used *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) software to organize and analyze my quantitative data. Grounded theory was applied to analyze the qualitative data because it allowed theories to be “ever-developing” and therefore more complex and rich (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is a research design that allows the researcher to generate a theory based on the views of a large number of participants (Creswell, 2007). Using grounded theory permitted me to develop ideas to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Further, I formed a more general theory about the impact of teacher leadership on professional learning and school culture in the Ryan School District. After gathering data using grounded theory, I looked for patterns in the data through a process called interrogating the data. Interrogating the data consists of asking questions of the data collected as a way to make sense of it (Hinchey, 2008). Once the patterns were identified, I organized them into themes. Then I color-coded to develop a system to identify individual pieces of data as belonging to one of the identified themes.

Coding the qualitative data enabled me to count the number of times the themes emerged, then I compared these to the quantitative data (Creswell, 2009).

I compiled data as the study evolved to find patterns and pose new questions to inform each upcoming cycle of my action research project. This empowered participants in my research study to help determine the direction of the project. At the end of my last cycle of research I examined the data to answer each of my research questions and wrote a final report to detail the findings. Finally, I reflected on my leadership throughout the study and reported what I uncovered in a final chapter.

Validity and Confidentiality

“Validity refers to the appropriateness of the interpretation of the results, not to the procedure or measure itself” (McMillan, 2000, p. 133). As a researcher, validity is very important to me, and therefore I took a number of steps to strengthen the validity of my findings. I began by going through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Rowan University to assure the safe and ethical treatment of human participants in research. Through the IRB process I gained the approval needed to conduct an ethical study in January 2010.

To additionally strengthen the validity of my findings I used the eight verification procedures identified by Creswell (2007): (a) prolonged engagement and persistent observation, (b) triangulation, (c) peer review and debriefing, (d) negative case analysis, (e) clarification of researcher bias, (f) member checking, (g) rich, thick description, and (h) external audit (as cited in Glesne, 2006). These eight procedures were used in my study in the following ways. First, because this is action research and as a result job-

embedded, I continued to learn about the culture, build relationships, and follow-up on ideas. Second, as stated earlier, I used multiple sources of data to increase the trustworthiness of data through triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Hinchey, 2008). Third, critical friends and my dissertation chair read my research and gave me feedback. Fourth, I continued to explore the latest literature in the area of distributed leadership, professional learning, and teacher leadership for unconfirming evidence so that I could refine my research questions if necessary (Glesne, 2006). Fifth, I reflected on my subjectivity and bias through fieldnotes and journaling. Sixth, I shared interview transcripts, field notes, analysis, and drafts with participants to insure that I was accurately expressing their ideas and that they agreed with my interpretations. Seventh, I used rich, thick descriptions to allow the reader to enter the research context (Glesne, 2006). Finally, critical friends and my dissertation chair conducted an external audit by examining my research process and products (Glesne, 2006). Through these procedures I sought to increase the trustworthiness of my data and interpretations.

Confidentiality, like validity, is important in the research process. Throughout the research process I secured confidentiality by keeping the participants' responses anonymous in interview transcripts and fieldnotes. No names were used to protect the identity of the participants. Electronic files were stored on a password-protected computer.

Limitations

Identifying limitations is another method to increase the trustworthiness of my data (Glesne, 2006). The need for teacher leadership and professional learning is my

theoretical framework and because of this there is danger of a halo effect. The halo effect occurs when an observer allows an initial impression to influence observations on other aspects (McMillan, 2000). Because I believe in the power of teacher leadership to increase professional learning and sustain change, I was careful not to assume that teacher leadership is beneficial. Instead I looked at the data for real evidence of the impact of teacher leadership.

Another limit of my study comes from my role as an administrator in the district. As an administrator one of my responsibilities includes evaluation of teachers. As a result, I was sensitive to the possibility that participants have felt coerced to respond in a certain manner. Further, some potential participants may not have responded to surveys or interview questions because they feared coercion.

Change Theory

My action research project was centered on implementing interventions, and therefore change will occur. As a researcher implementing change, it is important that I approach change initiatives with an awareness of the change process and my own conceptual framework for change. I used a framework developed by Michael Fullan (2001) to guide my actions. Fullan (2001), in his book *Leading in a Culture of Change*, asserted that leaders who focus on five components of leadership effectively operate in a complex society. Educational leadership has become increasingly complex in this age of accountability (Anderson, 2009). Fullan's (2001) five components, including moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge building, and coherence making

guided my conceptual framework as I sought to sustain change through my action research project.

Moral Purpose. The first component, moral purpose, refers to a commitment of betterment. Fullan (2001) wrote, “Thus leaders in all organizations, whether they know it or not, contribute for better or worse to moral purpose in their own organizations and society as a whole” (p. 15). Therefore, interest in moral purpose is natural for human beings.

Fullan (2001) explained that moral purpose has certain characteristics. Moral purpose makes a difference in many lives, must be accompanied by strategies, must have measurable indicators, and ultimately moral purpose must mobilize people’s action. The greatest difficulty comes in mobilizing everyone else. In education, teachers are in pursuit of noble goals as they seek to help every student achieve. In my action research project, I reminded the Teacher Leaders that their work as part of the Coalition was grounded in moral purpose.

As Fullan (2001) stated, moral purpose is often pluralistic. This means that as our actions benefit the organization they also make us feel good. So not only does the organization benefit, but we do too. Capitalizing on this factor can make change initiatives more successful. I believe that my study is steeped in moral purpose because I believe that teacher leadership empowers teachers and brings greater satisfaction to their work. More importantly, when teachers are engaged in professional learning they have the opportunity to improve practices that will benefit students in the school district. I chose this action research study because I believed it had the potential to improve outcomes for teachers and students in the district. If I am able to achieve my goals, this

action research will also benefit me because I will feel a sense of achievement. Education itself is steeped in moral purpose and offers those that enter its ranks the opportunity to achieve the pluralistic benefits to which Fullan (2001) refers. In fact, Tyack and Cuban (1995), in their study of education reform, concluded that there is a tradition of trusteeship of the public good and this is why Americans seek education reform. Understanding that reform is the next leadership component that Fullan examined.

Understanding change. Fullan (2001) wrote, “Understanding the change process is less about innovation and more about innovativeness” (p. 31). Fullan (2001) claimed that the advice that we have received about the change process is too general and unclear. Fullan then offered his own list of items to understand the change process.

First, Fullan reported that the goal is not to innovate the most. Leaders that employ the pacesetter style try to do too much too quickly. Currently in our district we have been working on revamping the literacy program. We have implemented guided reading, literacy centers, screening, mapped out the curriculum aligned to the standards (for the first time), and began to prepare for benchmark tests. We still have a lot to do, but upon reflection I realized at times I might have tried to do too much at once. As I worked to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I set a realistic timeline for interventions.

Second, Fullan (2001) argued that it is not enough to have a great idea; you need buy in. He warned that visionary leaders or authoritative leaders must be able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in this area. To be an effective leader reflection is essential. Different situations call for different leadership styles. It is important to be

thoughtful and reflective so one knows which style is most appropriate. My research journal provided a place for reflection about my leadership.

Third, Fullan (2001) suggested it was necessary to appreciate the implementation dip. Fullan (2001) described how people in the throes of change can react, “People feel anxious, fearful, confused, overwhelmed, deskilled, cautious, and - if they have moral purpose - deeply disturbed” (p. 40). I have witnessed this in our literacy initiatives. Teachers are deskilled because they feel that if they are told to try something in a different way what they had been doing for years is wrong. Again, I considered this throughout my action research and helped the Teacher Leaders understand that these feelings are common.

Fourth, Fullan (2001) asserted that we must redefine resistance and realize that we can learn most from those that disagree with us. If leaders are surrounded only by yes people than they can lose sight of what is really happening in the organization. Collins (2001) stated that being a charismatic leader can be a detriment because it can deter people from bringing you the brutal facts. In my project I invited frank and open discussion so that I could learn from those who disagreed with me. I carefully considered and reflected on criticism and used it to guide future actions.

Fifth, Fullan (2001) argued that organizations must reculture. Changing the culture of an organization may almost be an impossible task. Fullan admitted that it does take a long time and much work. Even if it is impossible, I think it is imperative that we realize that ultimately what we want to do is change the culture. Through my action research study I wished to reculture the organization to a true learning community and only with reculturing can change truly be sustained.

Relationships. Fullan (2001) highlighted the importance of relationships when he warned, “The lesson: never be complacent; reality-test your own rhetoric with outside (and inside) skeptics and dissenters” (p. 54). Fullan, like Argyris (1990), recognizes the importance of one’s actions matching one’s espoused beliefs. Leaders cannot inspire confidence or build relationships if individuals in the organization believe they are insincere and uncommitted.

Relationships are formed when members of an organization have a shared moral purpose. These relationships allow leaders to build a collective that is working toward common goals. Sergiovanni (1992a) said this about collegiality, “The more this virtue becomes established in a school, the more natural connections among people become, and the more they become self-managed and self-led, so that direct leadership from the principal becomes less necessary” (p. 86). Throughout my study it was essential that I developed relationships with teacher leaders as I empowered them to lead their action research projects.

Finally, Fullan (2001) points out that, “The absence of conflict can be a sign of decay” (p. 74). This is not unlike Argyris (1990) who warned of the organizational defenses that reward meritocracy. As a leader, one must be comfortable with some form of conflict. Throughout this action research project I may encounter resistance that could lead to conflict. Anticipating and accepting this conflict will enable me to better deal with conflict and learn from resistance.

Knowledge building. Relationships are fueled by knowledge sharing, the next component for change leadership (Fullan, 2001). However, it is necessary to make a distinction between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is the

understandings that are below the level of awareness. “Leaders in a culture of change realize that accessing tacit knowledge is crucial and that such access cannot be mandated” (Fullan, 2001, p. 87). Leadership and change researchers often find that what is not spoken is more important than what is (Argyris, 1990; Bolman & Deal, 2003). As I proceeded through my study I accessed the tacit knowledge in my organization.

Coherence making. Leaders must take on the task of coherence making while remembering that persistent coherence is dangerous (Fullan, 2001). I agree that building coherence is important. If administrators are the only ones who can articulate the change initiative, there is something wrong. The teachers who implement the change must be able to describe what they are doing and why they are doing it. The leader must become a coherence maker (Fullan, 2001).

The question becomes, how do you build this coherence? Again this ties into my action research initiative as teacher leaders took responsibility for building coherence in the school district. Teacher leaders were able to successfully articulate their own projects just as I was able to articulate the changes to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Moreover, as teacher leaders they had the ability to build coherence for district initiatives.

Change summary. As I worked my way through my practical action research study, I employed Fullan’s (2001) five components of change leadership as my theoretical framework. Specifically, I reflected on moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge building, and coherence making as I proceeded through my study (Fullan, 2001). Carefully considering these components through my action research cycles allowed me to implement change with greater success.

Timeline of Action Research Study

Developing a timeline is a useful tool for researchers. Creating a timeline enabled me to (a) anticipate requirements for each cycle, (b) insure that enough time is allocated for writing, and (c) check on the feasibility of research components (Glesne, 2006). Therefore, my timeline for the study began in fall 2009 when I created my project proposal, wrote my leadership theory in-use, conducted my literature review, and developed a tentative plan for each cycle of research. In January 2010 I gained approval from the IRB to commence my research.

The first cycle of research took place from January to April 2010. During this cycle I interviewed each member of the Coalition using a semi-structured design (see Appendix B). The results of these interviews helped to determine changes that needed to be made in the Teacher Leadership Coalition. These interviews also provided information about teacher leadership in general that enabled me to begin to answer some of my research questions.

The second cycle began in April 2010 with the Teacher Leaders presenting their action research projects from the 2009-2010 school year to the rest of the faculty. Following the presentations, participants took a short survey focused on action research, professional learning, and teacher leadership (see Appendix C). During this time period interviews and selection of the next cohort of teacher leaders occurred, and the new cohort of teacher leaders participated in the third cycle of research.

Based on my review of literature and interviews with teacher leaders, the third cycle began in August 2010 with training for teacher leaders. The training included adult learning theories, leadership theories, planning of future action research projects, and

topics identified by teacher leaders in Cycle 1. Following the training, teacher leaders completed a survey centered on the effectiveness of the training (see Appendix D). Teacher Leaders and I also reviewed findings from Cycle 1 in order to make changes to the procedures and operation of the Teacher Leadership Coalition to increase its effectiveness.

This leads into Cycle 4 which transpired from September to December 2010. During this cycle I implemented the changes to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. I collected data about these new initiatives and teacher leaders with focus groups of administrators and the rest of the teaching staff. Finally, I administered the SAI survey to staff again in November 2010. I compared these data to the historical data from the previous SAI survey in fall 2009.

Following the last cycle of action research I analyzed all data and wrote up a final report. The following chapters detail each cycle of research and include preliminary data analysis. An additional chapter includes a final analysis of all the data and implications for further research. My final chapter consists of a report on the evolution of my leadership throughout the project.

Conclusion

My study consists of a practical action research project (Hinchey, 2008) in which I employed a mixed method approach that enabled me to use a mix of both qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). To achieve validity I used Creswell's (1998) eight verification strategies. Limitations of my study are my own beliefs in the effectiveness of teacher leadership and my role as an

administrator in the district. My conceptual framework of change was guided by Fullan's (2001) five components including moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, knowledge building, and coherence making. The next chapter will detail the first cycle of my research in which I evaluated the Teacher Leadership Coalition program and developed interventions to improve the program. The next chapter will include data about the Teacher Leadership Coalition through interviews of the teacher leaders and use it to inform future cycles of research.

Chapter 5

Cycle 1

Introduction

The goal of action research, an ongoing process of systematic inquiry, is to take action that will generate school improvement (Hinchey, 2008; McMillian, 2000). School improvement initiatives often focus on leadership. Specifically, instructional leadership is an essential element in creating successful schools (Egley & Jones, 2005; Hambright & Franco, 2008; Ylimaki, 2007). In fact, a 6-year study to better understand how leadership could improve educational practices and student learning found that not one school had made gains in student achievement without talented leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004). However, educational leaders are increasingly overwhelmed with external challenges as well as the responsibilities associated with instructional leadership (Danielson, 2007; Goldstein, 2004; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Ylimaki, 2007). Through a review of relevant literature, I found that teacher leadership offers the instructional leadership necessary to create a culture of professional learning and one that is more conducive to change (Collinson, 2004; Hart, 1995; Spillane et al., 2003). Therefore, to improve the Ryan School District I conceived of and implemented the Teacher Leadership Coalition.

The Teacher Leadership Coalition was created to empower teachers, thereby increasing professional learning and improving the culture in the school district. However, in creating the program I failed to include an assessment plan, a necessary

element for improvement (Brown, 2003). Therefore, to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition and learn more about teacher leadership I designed a research study to put assessment measures for the Teacher Leadership Coalition in place. I began my study by gathering information about the current status of the program. Collecting and analyzing data in Cycle 1 then enabled me to plan, act, observe, and reflect in Cycle 2 (Fleming, 2000).

Cycle 1 was designed to learn more about the current Teacher Leadership Coalition so I could plan interventions to improve it. Additionally, I wanted to learn more about teacher leadership in general so that as an administrator in the school district I could better foster the development of teacher leaders. While establishing baseline data on the performance of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I also wanted to learn about its impact on the Ryan School District. I collected both qualitative and quantitative data through interviews and historical survey data. I interviewed current members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition to evaluate the current program and learn more about teacher leadership in the Ryan School District. Beginning in February 2010, I interviewed eight of the 10 current teacher leaders.

During this cycle I also reviewed historical data to gain greater insight into the culture of the district. Specifically, I was hoping to learn more about professional learning in the district using the Standard Assessment Inventory (SAI) created by the National Council of Staff Development. The SAI helps school districts gather data about professional development. “The results can help educators focus on ways to improve the quality of their professional learning and create overall school improvement that contributes to student achievement” (Roy, 2010, p. 2). Historical data permit researchers

to see different patterns of behavior or better connect ideas or events (Glesne, 2006).

Cycle 1 concluded with my last interview in March 2010.

Cycle 1 Methodology and Data Analysis

To investigate and improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I used a grounded theory strategy. Grounded theory enabled me to compare the data collected from various groups in each cycle with the emerging themes to maximize the similarities or differences in the data (Creswell, 2009). In my action research project, I employed a mixed methods approach, which allowed me to collect both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2009). In Cycle 1, I collected qualitative data through interviews and quantitative data by examining historical survey data.

To collect the qualitative data, I used purposeful sampling for the interviews because the current teacher leaders could offer particular insight to my research questions (Creswell, 2007). Purposeful sampling is based on the researcher's informed idea of who has the information needed (Ukaga & Maser, 2004). I asked all 10 teacher leaders if they were willing to be interviewed. All 10 indicated that they were willing, however due to time and scheduling constraints I was unable to interview two members. Seven of the eight teacher leaders took part in semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview protocol allowed me to prepare questions (see Appendix B) but also allowed me the opportunity to explore other areas that may be relevant (Hinchey, 2008). One interviewee was unable to conduct the interview in person but offered to take the questions and answer them via email. Therefore, one respondent took part in a structured interview in which I emailed the questions and the respondent emailed back answers.

To verify the effectiveness of the interview questions, I requested that three peers review the interview questions to be sure that they understood what was being asked. I revised the questions based on their feedback. Peer review provides external reflection and input on my work (Glesne, 2006). As I began each interview, I explained the purpose of the study and assured the interviewees that all responses would be kept anonymous and confidential. Each interviewee signed an informed consent document and agreed to be recorded.

After the interviews I transcribed the data and emailed the interviewees a copy of the transcript to allow for member checking. Through member checking, I was able to insure that I was representing the participants' ideas accurately (Hinchey, 2008). Finally, I used a system of coding to identify individual pieces of data as belonging to a particular theme (Hinchey, 2008). The system I used consisted of color-coding and abbreviations. I then reduced the codes by condensing the codes into themes (Creswell, 2007). The themes that emerged in this cycle were (a) professional learning, (b) leading shared learning, (c) recognition, (d) challenges to teacher leadership, (e) the impact of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, and (f) proposed improvements to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Each theme will be addressed in this chapter. Also, I will explain how the data from Cycle 1 was used to inform my actions in Cycle 2.

Professional learning. Each of the teacher leaders interviewed demonstrated a strong commitment to learning. All eight respondents have Masters degrees in areas such as educational leadership, counseling, special education, and/or reading. One respondent explained her desire for continued education, "I feel like I was always interested in the latest information and changing what is going on in my classroom to adapt to the needs of

my students.” Five of the eight teacher leaders sought higher degrees to enable them to take on formal leadership roles in education. Three of the eight teacher leaders interviewed have their Masters in Educational Leadership. Two respondents have Masters in reading that allows them to hold the reading specialist position, and they also have supervisors’ certificates.

When asked to define professional learning and to explain how it related to their practice, the teacher leaders expressed the importance of learning to their practice. When asked to define professional learning one teacher leader said, “To me, I think of professional learning as being a life-long learner, staying on the top of my game academically and learning new strategies to succeed at my job.” Another respondent shared her thoughts, “I don’t think you have to be an intellectual or an academic to be a good teacher but I do think you have to be constantly updating your game.” One teacher leader simply stated, “Well I think true professionals are always trying to do better and keep up.”

It was also clear from the teacher leaders’ responses that professional learning was critical to their practice as a teacher and a leader. Speaking about the impact of professional learning on her, one interviewee shared, “Professional learning has an impact on my teaching because it gives me additional skills to use in the classroom.” The following responses reveal the importance that professional learning has for teacher leaders. One teacher leader asserted, “Oh it is very important because if I don’t stay up to date with current practice, I wouldn’t know how to do my job.” Another summed it up like this, “So without professional development in my field you cannot be effective at all.” One respondent said that she applied for the Teacher Leadership Coalition because

she believed that she would learn and therefore become a better teacher. The topic of professional learning was so engaging that one teacher leader went back to it at the end of the interview when I asked if there was anything else I should know. She said, “Professional learning is critical to everything we do.” I was not surprised that the teacher leaders expressed such a commitment to professional learning. Research has demonstrated that teacher leadership is tied to professional learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995).

Leading shared learning. Professional learning surfaced in another way throughout the interviews. The teacher leaders agreed that with leadership comes the responsibility to share learning. As the teachers spoke, it was clear that collaborative learning was intrinsically tied to leadership. A teacher leader said, “I think that is where the leadership is, to share your learning.” Another teacher leader indicated that when one has a leadership role other teachers will come to them for information, and it is the leader’s job to share their learning. Another teacher leader concurred, “As a leader, I think of professional learning as a way of turn-keying information learned that could improve others’ teaching methods or the school climate.” Another said, “As a leader I try to spread the word about the information I used, I usually get really excited about it and pass it off to everyone else around me and try to get buy-in so that the other people use that information as well.”

Teacher leaders were asked if they believed they were informal leaders prior to joining the Teacher Leadership Coalition. The majority of respondents would have characterized themselves as a leader primarily because other teachers saw them as someone from whom they could learn. One teacher leader said, “I started to notice that

people were coming to me. People that had been teaching for 20 years would come in and ask me for things or say what would you do with this.” Another teacher leader said she was a go-to person for other teachers when it came to literacy instruction.

One respondent felt it was part of her personality and something she did unconsciously, “I guess my nature is that I want to help other people whether it is the students or the teachers, I just want to continuously pass off what I learn.” Conversely, some teacher leaders were very purposeful in their desire to share learning. One interviewee said, “It also had to do with wanting to make sure that everybody had a common vision for the school, and that we were all working together toward making it the best place it could be for the students.” Another described her role as, “As a liaison between peers and district goals, it was my job to guide teachers towards better teaching standards.”

Being an informal teacher leader and sharing learning was not enough for some teacher leaders. Two respondents indicated that they applied for the Teacher Leadership Coalition because they believed it would give them a greater opportunity to share their learning in a formal way with other teachers. One teacher leader commented, “It seemed that it was some things I was already doing and then it would just give me more opportunity to spread it across the entire district.”

Recognition. Learning was not the only theme to surface. The teacher leaders also spoke about the importance of recognition in their practice. When asked why they applied for the Teacher Leadership Coalition, four of the eight interviewed talked about the importance of recognition and believed that membership on the Coalition would provide that recognition. One teacher leader said, “I guess I sort of wanted to have some

actual authority. Not authority but I think sort of the legitimacy of it or the recognition of it.” Another teacher leader said she applied because she felt that she needed other teachers to look at her like a leader. Another teacher leader agreed that the recognition was important, “It is important to me to have the status of a leader to get things done.” Finally, one respondent indicated that the Teacher Leadership Coalition offered her a chance she did not have before:

I don’t think that I really had as many opportunities to have a leadership role prior to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. I feel like now that we have the name and the label that it enables us to do the things that we want to do.

Not only was recognition a reason to apply for the coalition, some teacher leaders indicated that as a result of membership they felt they had garnered recognition. One interviewee said, “I think that the Teacher Leadership Coalition has enabled me to stand out to some of the veteran teachers in the district as a person who wants to make changes for the good of the school.” Another said, “It feels like collaboration and sort of that recognition that we know what we are doing.”

Recognition also emerged as a theme when the teacher leaders were asked how we could better foster teacher leadership. A teacher leader stated, “I think that just acknowledgement of the teacher leaders because some people don’t really know.” Later she continued, “I think that once in awhile at a faculty meeting, in an email, an administrator would acknowledge something that a teacher leader was doing it would get word out.” When talking about how to get more people involved in the Teacher Leadership Coalition a teacher leader suggested boosting their egos to get them to join. Another teacher leader summed it up like this, “Recognition and participation in events, shows support and cultivates the goals of leadership.”

After reviewing the interview data, I turned to relevant literature to look for possible connections that were not immediately apparent. Recognition was a theme that I had not expected to emerge, and I was even more intrigued when I found a connection in the literature. Researchers indicated that to promote teacher leadership, successful examples of distributed leadership should be shared throughout the organization (Hirsch & Emrick, 2006; Williams, 2009). Sharing these examples would serve as the recognition that the teacher leaders felt was so important. I began to think about ways I could better recognize teachers throughout the school district. I thought about the importance of having teacher leaders share their work with the rest of the staff. I planned to have the teacher leaders present their projects to the staff in May. This would be one of my first actions in Cycle 2. I also decided that a newsletter emailed to the staff monthly, highlighting best practices in learning and leading, would be a great way to share successful examples of distributed leadership while recognizing the positive forces within the school district. I planned to start this newsletter in the fall 2010, when teachers returned from summer break

Challenges to teacher leadership. Time was the most commonly cited challenge to teacher leadership. One teacher leader put it this way, “It takes your time away from things that you would normally be doing, and now you are putting it into the coalition.” Another said of teacher leaders, “They might be spread a little too thin and they don’t want to take on anything else.” Like other studies have found, lack of time makes the increased workload associated with leadership difficult for teachers to balance (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Reid et al., 2004).

Another teacher leader described the poor attitudes of some staff members as a challenge. This could be related to the phenomena that was coined as the “crab bucket culture” portrayed by Duke (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 272), comparing teachers to crabs in a bucket who reach up and drag each other down during their attempts to climb out. This type of betrayal can have a detrimental effect on teachers’ willingness to be open in sharing teaching strategies, ideas, and resources (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). In effect, this betrayal silences teacher leaders and reinforces isolation. The importance of trust as highlighted by one teacher leader might help mitigate this phenomenon. The teacher leader shared, “I think people are not always sure that they can trust that whomever the teacher leaders are that they are not going to be snitching on them if they say something.”

The impact of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Though the teacher leaders identified challenges to teacher leadership in the interviews, all of them described positive impacts to either themselves and/or the school district. Six of the eight respondents said that the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the school district.

Two teacher leaders were not convinced that the Teacher Leadership Coalition had impacted the school district. One teacher leader was unsure of the impact in the first year. Another interviewee thought that because it was the first year it did not yet impact the school district, “I think no, I will say not this year, and the only reason is I think those that were not involved in it might not be that aware of it.” It may take several years to grasp the full impact of the Teacher Leadership Coalition because sustained change takes

time. Fullan (2007) reports that large-scale change efforts, such as redefining school leadership, can take 5 to 10 years.

Though there was not consensus about the impact on the school district, all respondents said that being a member had a personal impact. After a careful examination, some patterns emerged in the types of impact that the Coalition had on the school district. Teacher leaders' responses centered on themes of voice, collaboration, increased professional learning, and improvement in school culture.

Teacher leaders highlighted the importance for teachers to be heard and they asserted that the Teacher Leadership Coalition gave teachers that opportunity. One teacher leader said,

I think people are more open and willing to talk about things that we weren't talking about before and I think it gives people a sense of belonging that what they are saying matters and that we are being heard and so it entices us to use our leadership qualities.

Another teacher leader shared a similar perspective and said:

I think it also gave some of the teachers a voice that they didn't have before because now I see some teachers speaking up at meetings or PLCs that really kept quiet and never really talked much but now they are either running the PLC or they are setting the agenda for it and I think it really changed some of the other teachers.

Later she highlighted what she believed was the importance of voice, "I think once teachers have a voice and they think they can change something that they see as wrong or needs improvement, it gives them a whole new perspective on their career." Having a voice contributed to teachers experiencing more shared decision making, less of a hierarchal leadership model. One teacher leader contributed,

I think it has made me feel like I have more of an input more of a say you know, that it is not top-down, that as a team we can look at things and feel

open to say this worked or this didn't. I think having our voices as part of the administrative decisions in whatever capacity is always helpful.

Another teacher leader expressed the same notion, "It feels like we are respected, and I feel more invested now in changes. I don't see it coming from the top. I see more people buying in."

Teacher leaders not only reported gaining a greater voice, they also revealed a perceived increase in collaboration. One teacher said, "I think it is a great collaborative effort to share in a common vision for increasing student achievement in a lot of different ways." She offered this observation, "I think that everybody has so many good qualities to share but in the past they were kind of stuck in their rooms and those different qualities weren't being brought out in teachers." Many teacher leaders commented on the opportunity the Teacher Leadership Coalition offered to collaborate with their peers. A teacher leader shared,

I think its been a good experience to meet with teachers across grade levels that I wouldn't get to meet with and hear things they are doing and to see if other people feel that things have made a change.

Similarly, another teacher leader said, "I met a lot of people that I wouldn't have met or worked with but I think it has made me understand more of what they are interested in and what interests them."

Many of the teacher leaders pointed out that through this collaboration they were able to increase their professional learning. A teacher leader said:

I also think it spread out into the district because some teachers who were not even on the Coalition set up book clubs. I also think that the leaders being more teacher leaders this year than in the past it spread it more across the district so that if you were interested in something that came up you may join that book club or pilot and there were more options than there were in the past because there were more teacher leaders with varied projects they were looking into.

Later the same interviewee offered, “I think I gave a lot of the teachers confidence to try things they weren’t sure about.” Another teacher leader who took part in action research for the first time said, “I think it makes me look at new initiatives like it has to be research and not just like you are going to do this but like you are going to study it and analyze it.”

Overall, teacher leaders expressed that the coalition had a positive impact on the school culture. One teacher said that a lot of the impact was in attitude. She spoke about the concept that we are all in this together. Other teacher leaders shared this sentiment of unity, “I think it also creates a unity for me that I am part of a good cause for student achievement and improving district goals.” Another teacher leader stated,

This year, many more teachers became involved in extra curricular, Teacher Leadership Coalition activities. The overall school climate was more positive than my first year. We also have been able to offer a plethora of activities for parents and students to be involved in the district, enabling those involved to have more school pride.

Later, the teacher leader shared this observation:

As a whole, the team members on the Teacher Leadership Coalition want to make the district a better, more successful environment. Using this as a common ground, there has been a visual presence in the connection between teachers, both on the Teacher Leadership Coalition and those just being involved, that desire and strive to accomplish this goal.

Proposed improvements to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Though all the teacher leaders identified successful aspects of the Coalition, most identified interventions to improve the program. Two of the teacher leaders said that training would be helpful. One shared a topic for the workshop, “Maybe even professional development on being a good leader and maybe coming up with common goals of what

good leaders look like to us.” Another said that having some training on action research would be helpful.

Other teachers believed in the importance of developing a mission statement for the Teacher Leadership Coalition. One said, “We have to come together to find the mission, vision, the goals of the Teacher Leadership Coalition.” Another respondent shared, “This year, most importantly, the Teacher Leadership Coalition should come up with their mission statement, enabling a bigger stance in the district.”

Many of the teacher leaders talked about the importance of building awareness. A teacher leader wondered, “I do not know that they were aware.” Another teacher leader felt it was important to share what the teacher leaders accomplished as part of the coalition. She said, “People would be more aware of who we are and what we did.” Teacher leaders spoke about the importance of branching out to new members. One interviewee said that we needed to get some of the negative teachers to buy in.

After reflecting on the suggestions of the teacher leaders and the current research I decided try to enlist new members to the coalition. I planned to reach out to potential candidates in Cycle 2 and encourage them to apply. I decided that training would better prepare teacher leaders to work in the 2010-2011 school year while coordinating their projects. In addition, the data demonstrated a need to increase awareness about the Coalition. I planned to have teacher leaders present their action research projects to the rest of the staff in Cycle 2. Finally, I thought that one task during our monthly meetings in the next school year would be to create a mission and vision for the Teacher Leadership Coalition.

Historical Data

In fall 2009, the Standard Assessment Inventory (SAI) created by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) was administered to the teaching staff in preparation for the creation of the district professional development plan. Out of approximately 110 teachers, 52 responded to the online survey created to assess the quality of professional learning occurring at each school (Vaden-Kiernan, Jones, & McCann, 2009). Southwest Educational Development Laboratory researchers developed the survey into 12 standards that fall into three overarching categories corresponding to context, process, or content standards. The SAI measures the degree to which school level professional development adheres to the standards for educational professional learning created by the NSDC (Vaden-Kiernan et al., 2009). A recent study of the SAI demonstrated that it was a reliable measure at the school level to capture important aspects of professional development (Vaden-Kiernan et al., 2009). Therefore, the SAI can be used to guide improvements to the school's professional development programs.

The survey was administered while the Teacher Leadership Coalition was in its infancy and therefore provides preprogram data about the state of professional development in the district. Reports generated from the online survey show an average score for each standard from Never (0), Seldom (1), Sometimes (2), Frequently (3), and Always (4). Never, seldom, and sometimes comprise the needs attention category, frequently falls in the progressing category, and always is the skilled category (Roy, 2010). Table 5.1 shows the averages for each school in 2009 when the SAI was first administered to teaching staff in the district including those in the Franklin Avenue, Dorchester Drive, and Madison Avenue Schools.

Table 5.1

Average SAI scores by school

Standard	Franklin Avenue & Dorchester Drive Schools	Madison Avenue School
Learning Communities	2.4	2.2
Leadership	3.1	3.2
Resources	2.9	2.4
Data Driven	2.9	2.6
Evaluation	2.6	2.3
Research-Based	3.1	2.8
Design	3.0	2.7
Learning	2.9	2.6
Collaboration	2.9	2.6
Equity	3.4	3.2
Quality Teaching	3.0	2.7
Family Involvement	2.6	2.4

Note. Franklin Avenue & Dorchester Drive Schools $n = 34$
 Madison Avenue School $n = 18$

The five standards at the Franklin Avenue and Dorchester Drive Schools that needed the most improvement were learning communities, data driven, evaluation, learning, and family involvement. The five standards at the Madison Avenue School that needed the most improvement were learning communities, resources, evaluation, learning, and family involvement. See Table 5.2 for the standards defined by Roy (2010) that both schools commonly shared as those needing the most improvement.

Table 5.2

Madison Avenue School areas for improvement

Area	Description
Learning Communities	Organization of adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.
Evaluation	Use of multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate impact.
Learning	Application of knowledge about human learning and change.
Family Involvement	Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders.

After reflecting on the SAI data in conjunction with what I learned from the teacher leaders, I created action plans for upcoming cycles. In general, the Madison Avenue school’s average scores were lower and the school had greater areas in need of improvement. I wondered if this was related in anyway to the fact that only one member of the Teacher Leadership Coalition was from the Madison Avenue school. Only one teacher from that school applied for the Coalition and this concerned me from the beginning because this was a district-wide endeavor, not school specific. I decided that during Cycle 2 I would reach out to staff members at Madison Avenue and encourage them to apply.

I also wondered if the low participation on the Teacher Leadership Coalition had anything to do with school principals. The literature emphasized the importance of the school principal in developing the capacity for distributed leadership (Clift et al., 1992; Copland, 2003; Smylie, 1992a). I planned to conduct a focus group with the principals in Cycle 4 to learn more about the ways in which principals influence teacher leadership in

their schools. The school district was in a time of leadership transition. The superintendent was retiring and one of the principals was deciding between retiring or applying for the superintendency. By waiting until Cycle 4, I would have a more stable group of administrators for my focus group. Additionally, many of the principals took extended vacations over the summer months, and it would be difficult to assemble them for a focus group. In addition, I would be able to conduct the focus group as part of our regularly scheduled administrative meeting.

Another theme emerged from the SAI survey that I thought was important. Learning communities emerged in both schools as an area that needed improvement. Specifically, the survey showed that there were not opportunities for peer observation. I decided to revise the job description for the Teacher Leader Coalition to include willingness to be an observation classroom. The posting would go out during Cycle 2 to find interested candidates for the 2010-2011 school year. Additionally, I would work with teacher leaders to develop protocols for the peer observation program. The peer observation program would be unveiled during fall 2010 coinciding with Cycle 4 of my research.

Finally, I was interested in the SAI survey because I believed that this historical data collected before the teacher leaders did much of their work could serve as a baseline. I planned to administer the same survey in the fall 2010. Then I would compare the data to determine if the averages improved and if any of the areas of weakness were improved. These data would reveal if the professional learning had improved in the school district.

Limitations

To increase the trustworthiness of the data it is necessary to realize the limitations of the study (Glense, 2006). As a district administrator I am responsible for evaluating teaching staff. The teacher leaders interviewed may have felt that they needed to respond in a way that would please me. Therefore, respondents may not have demonstrated their true feelings. Additionally, only about 50% of the staff responded to the SAI survey. The SAI survey data may not truly reflect the feelings of the entire staff.

Leadership Application

As a situational leader I draw on servant, transformational, and distributed leadership styles. While interviewing the teacher leaders I felt that their empowerment demonstrated my espoused belief in distributed leadership. While listening to teacher leaders respond, I realized that I had developed relationships with each and every member of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. I experienced what Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) described as emergence, “We witness emergence any time we are surprised by a group’s accomplishments or by our own achievements within a group” (p. 67). I was surprised that I was able to build so many great relationships over a year and I by the accomplishments of the Teacher Leadership Coalition as a whole. I believe that the trust I had cultivated with the teacher leaders was a major factor in the development of relationships.

One teacher leader highlighted the importance for teacher leaders to cultivate trusting relationships with other staff. Likewise, my ability to cultivate trust with the teacher leaders allowed me to build relationships that were productive and rewarding.

Tschannen-Moran (2004) points out that the traditional school hierarchy can create barriers to developing relationships between administrators and teachers, however building trust can help administrators overcome these barriers. Tschannen-Moran (2004) writes:

Despite the dividends of a culture of trust, organizational dynamics often complicate things because the power differences imposed by hierarchical relationships add complexity to interpersonal interactions. School leaders can overcome these potential barriers through genuine caring and steadfast commitment combined with thoughtful action and initiative. (p. 16)

Trust was not the only quality that contributed to the relationships I developed. My propensity to take a risk was also a benefit. This emerged when I spoke to a colleague about the positive relationships I had developed with the teacher leaders. She asserted that these relationships were possible because I was willing to take a risk. I asked her what she meant and she said that starting the program was a risk. There was a risk it would fail, and that it would not be sustainable. I had never considered that I was taking a risk. I recognized that there was a need and acted to find an intervention to fill that need. Covey (1998) says, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but the awareness that something else is more important” (p. 95). I realized that I see my desire for school improvement more important than protecting myself from failure.

Reflecting on my leadership during this cycle helped me to recognize that trust and risk-taking enabled me to build relationships with teacher leaders that were productive and enriching. Though I have not experienced resistance from the teacher leaders, I think that building trust with resisters in contexts will enable us to better work together to deal with the complex challenges we face. Modeling my willingness to take a risk may empower others to take those same risks and try new teaching practices or share

their learning with peers. Fullan (2001) states, “The role of leadership...is to ‘cause’ greater capacity in the organization in order to get better results” (p. 65).

As a school leader, I build capacity by building relationships because as Fullan (2001) says, “It is actually the *relationships* that make the difference” (p. 51). The relationships that evolved with teacher leaders will help sustain this change initiative. Through our relationships, the teacher leaders and I work to establish greater coherence of the Teacher Leadership Coalition (Fullan, 2001).

In fact, relationships are a major component of my change philosophy because it is these relationships that make the difference between a sustained change initiative and a fleeting idea (Fullan, 2001). Relationship building is not just about caring for the teacher leaders; instead it is my job to create conditions that enable them to succeed (Fullan, 2008). Throughout this action research project I must build relationships with the teacher leaders that encourage risk-taking and help them navigate through resistance. Moreover, it is important to provide with training that will enable them to successfully work with adult learners. Finally, by creating trusting relationships with teacher leaders they will know that they can come to me and share concerns. It is imperative that I am aware of the challenges and naysayers so that I can learn from them and create interventions to the Teacher Leadership Coalition that will lead to greater implementation (Fullan, 2001).

During this cycle I had an opportunity to demonstrate distributed leadership. There was a workshop on technology to support the implementation of the new standards adopted by the state. The workshop description suggested that the appropriate audience was the technology leadership in the district. I decided to bring teacher leaders who were leading technology integration in the school district. At the workshop, the presenter

polled the audience on their positions in their schools. When he got to our section and the teachers introduced themselves he said, “You know this workshop was for school leaders.” I said, “These are our teacher leaders, they are leading the way in the district with technology.” I wrote in my journal about this experience and again expressed a sense of pride or “emergence.” After this cycle I realized that the pride and “emergence” I felt helps to sustain me as a leader. Kouzes and Posner (2002) would categorize this as one little victory on my journey to achieve change. “Little victories, when piled on top of each other, build confidence that even the biggest challenges can be met” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 67).

The challenges that teacher leaders identified in the interviews are the same that I deal with as an administrator. Time and dealing with negative people are like an albatross around my neck. Some days I come home from work and feel as if there should be visible battle wounds on my body. I am ceaselessly plagued by my race against time. What I get personally from working with and learning from teacher leaders sustains me through adversity. The Teacher Leadership Coalition may not only help sustain change and/or an improved culture in the district, it will also help to sustain me in my pursuits for school improvement.

Conclusion

Both interview data and historical SAI data provided a solid foundation for Cycle 1 of this study on teacher leadership. The teacher leader interviews revealed a need to provide training for future teacher leaders. Furthermore, data demonstrated the need to increase awareness and broaden the participation for the Teacher Leadership Coalition.

In addition, the SAI data showed that teachers wanted the opportunity to learn from each other.

The Cycle 1 data informed actions for the next cycle. In Cycle 2 the teacher leaders would present their projects to the entire staff. Following the presentations, I planned to administer a brief survey to the staff. I would revise the teacher leader job description to include peer observation. Then I intended to post the job description and interview prospective candidates. In Cycle 2, I also planned to encourage teachers from the Madison Avenue School to apply for the Coalition to garner a more representative group.

Cycle 1 data also helped to inform actions that would take place in future cycles. I planned to provide training to the new teacher leaders during summer 2010 to better prepare them for the school year. I also planned to have the teacher leaders create a mission and vision for the Teacher Leadership Coalition during the 2010-2011 school year. Finally, I intended to interview the principals in the fall 2010 when they would be available to learn more about the ways in which they influence teacher leadership.

Chapter 6

Cycle 2

Introduction

Cycle 2 began in April and concluded in June 2010. Although this was a short cycle in terms of time, it was laden with action and data collection. Following interviews with eight of the 10 teacher leaders from the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I felt a sense of excitement. I found the teacher leaders to be intelligent, well-spoken people with a major commitment to learning, who had good ideas for the Coalition, and overwhelmingly expressed the notion that the Coalition was good for the school district. As I entered Cycle 2 I was poised to plan, act, observe and reflect, as I worked through the recursive components of action research (Hinchey, 2008).

Fleming (2000) defines action research as, “A systematic inquiry into a school or classroom situation with the intent of improving the quality of teaching and learning and gaining a deeper understanding of the complex context in which it occurs” (p. 11).

After reflecting on the data collected in Cycle 1, I began to create a plan of action to improve the teacher leadership coalition in Cycle 2. I used data collected in Cycle 1 from interviews of teacher leaders and historical data from the Standard Assessment Inventory (SAI) administered in Fall 2009 to develop interventions.

The first intervention I carried out in Cycle 2 was the presentation of the Teacher Leadership Coalition members’ action research projects to faculty and staff, which was

designed to increase awareness of the Coalition. I worked with the teacher leaders to plan presentations in which they would share their projects with the rest of the faculty. Following these presentations, I surveyed staff members in attendance to learn more about their perspectives on the Teacher Leadership Coalition (see Appendix C). The presentations were intended to increase the level of awareness about the Teacher Leadership Coalition in the school district and were offered as a result of interview feedback from Cycle 1.

Not only did I hope to increase awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition during Cycle 2, I also hoped to broaden participation in the 2010 – 2011 Teacher Leadership Coalition to be more reflective of the school district. Because the current coalition only had one member from the Madison Avenue School, I decided to approach teachers at the Madison Avenue School and encourage them to apply. The need to develop a Teacher Leadership Coalition that was more representative of the school district emerged in Cycle 1. In fact, during interviews of teacher leaders in Cycle 1, teacher leaders expressed the need for the Coalition to branch out to new members. In addition, the SAI data suggested that there was a need for improved professional development at the Madison Avenue School. Average scores on the SAI were lower at the Madison Avenue School, and the school had more areas in need of improvement on the SAI.

Along with expanding participation in the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I augmented the Teacher Leader job description. I included willingness to be an observation classroom to the job description for the Teacher Leadership Coalition (see Appendix E). The SAI survey demonstrated that the district did not offer opportunities

for peer observations. Correspondingly, teacher leaders linked leadership to shared learning. Peer observations would encourage shared learning and could also help to encourage teacher leadership within the district.

Additionally during Cycle 2, I interviewed prospective members for the 2010-2011 Teacher Leadership Coalition. During these interviews I took field notes. I used analytic notes to jot down ideas and impressions and make speculations during the interviews (Glense, 2006). Throughout Cycle 2, I reflected on my own leadership through journaling. I gained a better perspective on my leadership through reflection of events and happenings throughout the cycle. The subsequent sections of this chapter will detail the actions in Cycle 2, review the data collected, and offer my own learning reflections.

Teacher Leader Presentations

In an attempt to increase awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I met with teacher leaders in April and pitched the idea for teacher leader presentations. I explained to the teacher leaders that the data I collected from their interviews indicated that there was a need to increase awareness of the work that they did this year. I proposed that each teacher leader would briefly describe her project, the results, and what she learned from the process. Each teacher leader agreed to create a PowerPoint slide that corresponded to their presentation.

Presentations took place during the regularly scheduled May monthly meeting, usually reserved for workshops or vertical articulation for faculty and staff. I introduced the Teacher Leadership Coalition, described the goals of the Coalition, and how it was

formed, then I turned it over to the teacher leaders. As each leader spoke about their project I noticed that the faculty and staff were attentive and engaged. Evans (1996) discusses what happens when teachers are seen as leaders, “The individual voice is empowered, not suppressed, but as a respectful, contributing part of a harmonious, reflective, self-renewing choir” (p. 231). The teacher leaders were confident and empowered as they spoke about their unique projects. And although the projects were diverse in nature, they all were focused on improving student outcomes. In addition, each teacher leader modeled reflective thinking about their work when they spoke about the strengths and challenges of their projects and what they learned.

During the presentations I passed out a short survey about the Teacher Leadership Coalition for faculty and staff. The survey consisted of three Likert-type items used to identify attitudes about the Coalition. The items were constructed so that they were easy for respondents to understand. There was one yes/no question used to gain factual information about whether teachers participated in teacher leader projects. Finally, the survey contained two open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate on their responses and address issues not already covered by earlier items (Patten, 2001).

In preparing the survey to be used, three teacher leaders, who were not respondents, previously reviewed the survey to identify areas that were ambiguous or unclear. They participated in a “think aloud” in which they shared what they were thinking as they read the questions to insure that items were not ambiguous (Patten, 2001). Based on their feedback I revised the survey.

The survey sample consisted of all the teaching staff and educational specialists present at the meetings. Because all teachers and specialists are required to attend these

meetings I was able to sample the entire assessable population. Only staff absent from work or with a coaching obligation did not take the survey, although some staff in attendance did not return the survey. I was able to obtain a sample of 62 respondents out of a possible 120 teachers and specialists.

Survey Analysis

I collected the surveys following the presentations and entered the data in SPSS to assist with analysis. I used descriptive statistics to describe and summarize the data (Cronk, 2008). To analyze the open-ended responses I recorded them and used coding to identify themes. Values coding allowed me to apply codes that reflect a respondent's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives (Saldaña, 2009). In addition, I calculated the frequency with which each theme surfaced.

The survey showed that almost half the respondents did not have an understanding of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. In fact, only 30% of respondents participated in the teacher leaders' activities. As a result of the presentations, 98% of the participants gained a better understanding of teacher leaders' work. Eighty-eight percent of respondents believed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the school district (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1

Knowledge and Attitudes about Teacher Leadership Coalition (Spring 2010)

n = 62

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Before the presentation today, I knew what the Teacher Leadership Coalition was.	3	46	37	12
The teacher leaders' presentations helped me to better understand the work they did this year.	39	59		2
The Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the school district.	13	75	7	5

An open-ended response allowed respondents to explain why or why not they thought the Teacher Leadership Coalition impacted the school district. For those respondents that agreed or strongly agreed that the Coalition impacted the school district, the most common reasons were that it brought new programs to the district, benefited students, and encouraged collaboration between teachers. One participant wrote, "Anytime teachers involve themselves outside of the classroom the district is positively impacted." Two respondents felt it benefited the school district because it fostered reflection. A respondent wrote, "I believe it helped people to 'think' about their practices. Hopefully, these ideas can be expanded for the future." Finally, one respondent felt that the coalition had impacted the participants' classrooms but that the impact could be broadened, "I think it certainly impacted the classrooms involved. I

think the more that people become aware of the TLC, the greater impact it will have in the future.”

Of the seven participants that disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the school district, only two recorded an open-ended response indicating why it did not. Both responses centered on themes that emerged in Cycle 1 when teacher leaders were asked how to improve the coalition. One respondent commented that we needed to better explain the coalition. Another said that it was not distributed evenly across schools. Both of these comments were already being addressed during Cycle 2. However, continued work to better explain the coalition and the work of teachers may need to be addressed in later cycles.

The last survey item asked respondents to provide suggestions on how to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition. The majority of suggestions concentrated on increasing awareness and involvement. One respondent wrote, “I think this meeting/presentation was a good start to increase awareness. I think the more people get involved and share ideas across schools (both in district and out) the more successful and influential this group will be.”

Overall, the survey demonstrated the need for greater awareness of the initiative. Prior to the presentations there was limited awareness but even after the presentations respondents indicated a need to continue to work to increase awareness. In addition, the survey data emphasized the importance of insuring that the 2010-2011 Teacher Leadership Coalition had a better distribution of teachers across both schools. I realized that during this cycle it would be important for me to encourage teachers from the Madison Avenue School to join the Coalition. Sergiovanni (1992b) notes that teachers

may not always respond to opportunities to be involved. “In most cases, however, this lack of interest is not inherent but learned” (Sergiovanni, 1992b, p. 132). Teachers at the Madison Avenue School may have had bad experiences with involvement, and I would have to overcome that to engender their participation. This led me to believe that leadership at the school level did not encourage involvement of teachers in decision-making. I planned to find out more from focus groups with teachers and administrators in Cycle 4.

Posting the Positions

As I considered and reflected on the possible challenges surrounding building a more representative Teacher Leadership Coalition, I went to work revising the job description. Based on both the teacher leaders’ interviews and the data from the SAI survey, I added willingness to become an observation classroom to the description. The job description was superintendent approved and emailed out to the staff.

Teachers began submitting emails expressing interest in the Coalition, and I set up interviews with interested candidates. During this time a few current teacher leaders took me aside to tell me that they were not applying because they wanted to open up the positions for new members. I received interest from a few new candidates, but I still did not get a strong response from the Madison Avenue School.

In an attempt to encourage participation, I approached three teachers at the Madison Avenue School. I told them that I thought they would have a lot to offer the Coalition, and that I was hoping to create a Coalition that had representation from all schools in the district. Two said they had been thinking about it and immediately agreed

to send an email of interest. The third responded with, “Sure Jen, whatever you need.” I was surprised at how easy it was. Just a little encouragement and teachers were willing to accept the role. This may also be a result of the relationships that I had developed within the school district. A major component of my change theory is relationships, by taking the time to cultivate these relationships I was more likely to engender support for the Coalition.

The literature on teacher leadership demonstrates that the school principal has a major influence on the development of teacher leaders (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Anderson 2004; Goldstein, 2004; Ryan, 1999). In fact, Phelps (2008) states “Principals should invite teachers to lead by making them aware of where the greatest needs exist” (p. 120). Though I am not a principal, as a school leader all I had to do was express a need for their expertise, and they were willing to take that leadership role. The first step to promoting teacher leadership may be as easy as asking teachers to take on the role.

Teacher Leader Interviews

From the posting and my encouragement I had 16 interested candidates who represented all three schools in the district. Two were from the Franklin Avenue Preschool, six from the Madison Avenue School, and eight were from the Dorchester Drive School. In fact, this distribution of teachers was similar to the distribution of teachers at each school. Additionally, teachers were from varied grade levels from preschool to eighth grade and included both classroom and special area teachers. Six of the candidates were current teacher leaders and 10 were new applicants. I was pleased

that I had distribution across schools and 10 new teachers interested in participating. However, my joy was short lived when I realized that I did not have the funds to pay 16 teacher leaders. I dreaded not offering the opportunity to any of the interested candidates.

With this in mind, I moved forward and set up interviews with the prospective candidates. Interviews consisted of three questions that inquired about past leadership roles, the role of professional development in their practice, and collaboration with colleagues. I took field notes during the interviews to record my observations. "Field notes are data that may contain some conceptualization and analytic remarks" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 123). Using field notes allowed me to record teachers' comments as well as my own observations.

The first interview was conducted with two teacher leaders who wanted to work together on a project. They came to the interview with a clear idea for their project. I noted, "As they describe their project plan they are feeding off of each other - this will benefit their project." Then I wrote, "solution." I realized that if teachers were willing to pair up and split the stipend and responsibilities then I would be able to keep all 16 interested candidates.

Overall during the interviews, I noted that many of the candidates came to the interviews with ideas for their projects. Current teacher leaders came with ideas how they wanted to expand on or improve their current projects. One teacher leader came to the interview with a typed paper that listed her goals as a participant on the 2010-2011 Teacher Leadership Coalition. Even more impressive to me was that the new candidates came in with very well-defined ideas on which they wanted to work. The teacher leader

presentations obviously provided new candidates with models, and then they came up with their own unique ideas that were pertinent to them and their position in the district.

After the first interview I began asking candidates what they thought about working with another teacher and splitting the stipend. All of the candidates were open to the idea. Two current teacher leaders indicated that they would certainly be willing to partner up if it afforded them the opportunity to participate in the Coalition again. Based on this, I began thinking about how I could partner the teachers. I read through my notes from interviews and thought about the projects they had proposed and where the teachers worked. From this I came up with six pairings and four teachers working on their own projects. The four individual teachers were in subjects that were unique or already had project ideas that were not shared by other candidates.

I approached the prospective teacher leaders individually with my idea about with whom they might partner. All of the teachers were willing and most seemed excited. Only one current teacher leader expressed doubt about the success of the partnering but she still wanted to participate. Therefore, at the end of Cycle 2 in early June 2010, I had assembled a new Teacher Leadership Coalition for the 2010-2011 school year.

My next steps for the upcoming Cycle 3 included planning and carrying out the teacher leader training slated for the end of August 2010. Likewise, the data collected in Cycle 2 had me thinking about finding more ways to increase awareness of the Coalition. I decided that the new Coalition would present their projects earlier in the year. By presenting proposed projects, other teachers would have the opportunity to work with the teacher leaders or follow the teacher leaders' progress throughout the school year.

Finally, I reflected on the power of encouragement. I wondered how I could use encouragement to foster teacher participation and collaboration in the district.

Leadership Application

This cycle provided me the opportunity to utilize my servant leadership traits. As a servant leader, I am committed to the growth of my colleagues and through the Teacher Leadership Coalition teachers are empowered to work on projects that are meaningful to them and their work. “The servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues” (Spears, 2010, p. 29). Through the teacher leader presentations it was obvious that the teachers were invested in their action research projects and had grown as a result of participating in the Coalition.

Not only was I able to nurture the personal and professional growth of the teacher leaders, I was also able to build community, another aspect of my servant leadership. Servant leaders identify a common purpose that the community is working towards (Spears 2010). In this case, the members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition and I were working together to improve outcomes for students. Fullan (2008) demonstrates how working toward a common goal can be beneficial for both the individual and the organization when he states, “It is helping all employees find meaning, increased skill development, and personal satisfaction in making contributions that *simultaneously* fulfill their own goals and the goals of the organization” (p. 25). Sergiovanni (1992b) would call this purposing, the creation of a center of shared values. In the same manner, teacher leaders were empowered to work toward that shared value in diverse ways.

“Empowering derives its full strength from being linked to purposing: everyone is free to do what makes sense, as long as people’s decisions embody the values shared by the school community” (Sergiovanni, 1992b, p. 129).

After the presentations I felt a great sense of pride. I wrote in my journal, “It was so amazing to hear the teacher leaders talk about their projects. They were both passionate and knowledgeable.” I felt that we were already changing the culture of the district. Just creating a forum for the teacher leaders to talk about their work was a major change in the district. It demonstrated that the district valued conversations centered on instruction and student achievement. Only five years ago, the time set aside for that meeting would have been used to go over upcoming dates and deal with managerial issues.

This cycle also allowed me to cultivate new teacher leaders in the district. Deal and Peterson (1999b) assert that people are the central resources in any organization. By engendering participation of new teachers in the work of instructional leadership, I was able to effectively capitalize on the resources within the school district. “Putting time into building a culture that motivates and inspires people is the venture capital of schools” (Deal & Peterson, 1999b, p. 139).

In addition, as I reflected on the ease in which I garnered new membership to the Coalition, I realized that my success most likely came from the relationships I had developed with staff. The relationships that formed over the past few years enabled me to successfully encourage three teachers from the Madison Avenue School to apply for the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Relationships are an important component of my own change theory and Fullan (2001) states,

We have found that the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that *relationships* improve. If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups – especially with people different than themselves. (p. 5)

In this case the relationships of mutual respect benefited my change initiative. As my project progresses it will be important that I continue to improve relationships with new members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition.

Conclusion

Cycle 2 consisted of successfully implementing interventions to address awareness of and participation in the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Data collected during this cycle through surveys and fieldnotes informed actions in Cycle 3. At the conclusion of this cycle, I planned to develop the agenda for teacher leaders training in August, Cycle 3 of my study. Following the training, I planned to survey teacher leaders to assess the perceived effectiveness of training. Additionally, I decided that teacher leaders would present their projects to faculty and staff earlier in the school year. These presentations would take place in fall 2010 and were designed to increase awareness of teacher leaders' work.

Chapter 7

Cycle 3

Introduction

Cycle 3 took place from June to the end of August 2010. With the summer months came a more relaxed atmosphere at school, a welcomed respite from the hectic end of the school year. Though more relaxed, the summer was extremely eventful. The district was awarded the Talent 21 grant: a one-to-one computer initiative that would put a laptop into the hands of every sixth grade student in the district. This coupled with summer school, curriculum work, and No Child Left Behind (NLCB) grant writing made for an engaging summer. Additionally, the district was in a time of administrative transition. The superintendent retired and the former principal of the Dorchester Drive School was acting as the interim superintendent for a sixth month term while the Board prepared for a superintendent search.

My study continued amidst these changes. In June 2010, the Board approved funding the Teacher Leadership Coalition with Title I funds for the 2010-2011 school year. The interim superintendent supported the Teacher Leadership Coalition and provided me with the freedom to continue the program as I saw fit.

Data from Cycle 1 demonstrated the need to provide training for teacher leaders. I arranged for a former administrator and college professor to facilitate the teacher leader workshops in August 2010. The trainer and I worked together in the past and began planning the teacher leader workshops in June.

To plan the workshops, I began by revisiting the data collected in Cycle 1. During the teacher leader interviews conducted in Cycle 1, respondents suggested training on action research and being a good leader. I discussed this with the trainer and we decided to include training on action research. We planned to examine action research, provide a template for teacher planning, and time for teacher leaders to begin working on their action research projects. In addition, we intended to discuss adult learning and leading change. Finally, peer observation was added to the teacher leader job description based on the Standards Assessment Inventory data reviewed in Cycle 1. The trainer and I decided to include a session that would help the teacher leaders develop a short narrative describing their observation classroom.

Training took place at the Dorchester Drive School on August 10th and 11th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. In attendance were 13 of the 16 teacher leaders. Following the training the teacher leaders took part in a survey designed to assess the effectiveness of the training and to learn more about teacher leadership in the school district (see Appendix D).

During Cycle 3 I planned, acted, observed, and reflected. I gained valuable information from surveys and observations of organizational events during this time period. I reflected on these observations within my journal. The information gained during Cycle 3 helped to inform actions in Cycle 4. Specifically, I planned to create a website to highlight the work of teacher leaders during the school year. In addition, the teacher leaders would present their projects to the Board of Education in fall 2010.

Furthermore, during this cycle I also recognized the truly recursive nature of action research. Movement among the various phases of the research, in this case from

actions in Cycle 3 to further reflection on Cycle 1, is common within action research (Hinchey, 2008). My reflections on Cycle 1 helped me to develop another intervention for Cycle 4. I planned to create a newsletter to recognize best practices within the school district. The qualitative and quantitative data collected and analyzed coupled with my reflections enabled me to plan interventions for Cycle 4. The data also contributed to my developing grounded theory related to teacher leadership in the Ryan School District (Creswell, 2007). I was able to compare data collected in Cycle 3 to themes that emerged in previous cycles. This comparison allowed me to identify similarities and differences in the information collected (Creswell, 2007).

Cycle 3 Methodology and Data Analysis

Following the teacher leader training in August each participant was asked to take part in a 10-question online survey. I chose a survey because it would allow me to get input from all teachers that attended the training in a timely manner. The survey consisted of Likert-type items and open-ended questions. Likert-type items are used to measure attitudes and are easy for respondents to understand (Patten, 2001). The inclusion of open-ended items allowed for respondents to elaborate on their responses and address issues not covered in other items (Patten, 2001).

To improve the validity of the survey I had the teacher leaders review the questions. I provided the teachers a paper copy of the survey and asked them to write in the margins if the wording was confusing or ambiguous. I took their feedback and made a few changes to the survey. I then emailed the teacher leaders a link to the survey and each participant took the survey at the end of the second day of the training.

The Likert-type items were analyzed using SPSS software and descriptive statistics used to summarize data (Cronk, 2008). Open-ended questions were coded, recoded, and reduced according to theme. The reduction to themes characterizes the process of grounded research theory (Creswell, 2007).

The first set of Likert-type items was designed to assess the effectiveness of the teacher leaders training (see Table 7.1). The 13 teacher leaders in attendance completed the survey and all strongly agreed or agreed they gained a better understanding of teacher leadership and the role and responsibilities associated with teacher leadership. When asked about their understanding of change as a result of the training, 85% of participants strongly agreed or agreed they gained a better understanding of the complexity of change and learned new strategies to initiate change.

Ninety-two percent of respondents said they had a better understanding of action research. In fact, by the end of the training all the teacher leaders had developed a solid plan for their action research project to be implemented during the 2010-2011 school year. Participants were given time to work on their action research projects with the support of the trainer and myself.

In the area of professional development, 85% of teacher leaders said they gained the knowledge to work with adult learners. Ninety-two percent of respondents said that the training gave them the skills and knowledge to provide effective professional development for teachers, and 85% said they could serve as a coach for teachers. It is interesting that when all survey Likert-scale statements were reviewed, none of the responses fell into the category of disagree or strongly disagree (see Table 7.1). Some

participants chose neutral which might have been a consequence of learning these concepts in graduate school. In fact, in an open-ended response one teacher leader said:

I answered neutral to some of the questions regarding this training and its effect on my perspective of change because I have had extensive training in change theories. However, I think this training was an excellent, short, to the point way of explaining organizational change to teachers who will be trying to implement change within our district. It's extremely important for us all to be aware of obstacles we may face.

Table 7.1

Knowledge and Attitudes as a Result of Teacher Leader Training (n = 13)

Statement	In percentages		
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral
I have a better understanding of teacher leadership.	69	31	
I have a better understanding of the role and responsibilities of a teacher leader.	62	38	
I have learned new strategies for initiating change.	46	39	15
I have a better understanding of the complexity of change.	46	39	15
I have a better understanding of action research.	61	31	8
I have gained the knowledge and skills to work with adult learners.	62	23	15
I have better knowledge and skills needed to provide effective professional development for teachers.	46	46	8
I have gained the knowledge and skills needed to serve as a coach for teachers.	54	31	15

Next, participants were asked if they believed they could effectively facilitate a professional learning community. All teacher leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they could facilitate a professional learning community. Participants were also asked if they felt comfortable being an observation classroom during the 2010-2011 school year. Again, all respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were comfortable with serving as an observation classroom.

When teacher leaders responded to the statement, “I will positively influence other teachers’ professional growth,” 77% of respondents strongly agreed and 23% agreed that they would positively influence their colleagues. Following the training, teacher leaders demonstrated a positive attitude about their future contributions as part of the Teacher Leadership Coalition in the 2010-2011.

The survey consisted of six open-ended questions. The first question asked teacher leaders what influenced them to apply for the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Two respondents indicated that they were encouraged by someone to apply. During Cycle 2, I encouraged a few teachers to apply in hopes to make the Teacher Leadership Coalition more representative of the school district. Five respondents indicated that they applied to increase their influence or impact within the district. One respondent said:

I became a teacher because I feel I can make a difference in the lives of our children. By becoming a teacher leader I am able to make a difference in the lives of our children, our parents, as well as our teachers.

Two respondents were former members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition that wished to continue their work.

The teacher leaders were asked what they believed would be their greatest obstacle this year. Time was an obstacle cited by two respondents as a possible challenge

to their work in the coming school year. However, overwhelmingly the teacher leaders cited their greatest obstacle would come from their colleagues. Eight respondents thought that fellow teachers would offer the greatest challenge. One teacher leader said, “Negative, cynical colleagues, disaffected people who worry about losing their personal time.” Three teacher leaders identified that challenges would exist when trying to get colleagues to buy into change. A respondent said, “Getting people on board with new ideas and changes.” Another said, “Convincing others that change is worthwhile and necessary.” Finally one teacher leader said, “Getting teachers to join the bandwagon.”

Next, teacher leaders were asked how they believed the Teacher Leadership Coalition would help them to grow professionally. Eleven teacher leaders responded to the question and four of them said that working with peers would help them to grow professionally. One teacher leader wrote, “It will give me the opportunity to work with peers throughout the year(s) and have hands-on time to stimulate positive change in the district (both with peers and students).” Another teacher leader shared:

Being a teacher leader allows me to engage in professional dialogue about the academic goals of our students with my peers. This will hopefully help to maintain a positive school culture with a vision for academic success. It will allow me to get to know the professional development needs of our staff so that I can provide job-embedded professional development opportunities.

One participant said that not only would she benefit from working with peers, but she would also have the opportunity gain a greater voice. She commented, “The opportunity to collaborate with other professionals, share my knowledge with others, be given a chance for my voice to be heard, and serve as a positive role model for others.”

Three teacher leaders said they would gain new ideas they could implement in their classroom. Reflection was another theme that emerged. Three respondents said that

being part of the Teacher Leadership Coalition would help them be more reflective about their practices. One respondent said, “I believe as a teacher leader, I will have the opportunity to learn more about my strengths as a classroom teacher, an adult teacher, and a learner.”

Teacher leaders were also asked how the training would enable them to enact change to a positively impact on the school district. The respondents’ answers centered on building motivation and being role models for peers. One respondent said, “To allow teachers to become motivated and encouraged with an, ‘I can do it’ attitude.” Another teacher leader wrote, “I believe excitement is contagious! If teachers are eager to learn and try new things, I believe most others will follow.”

Participants were also asked to identify areas in which they could use additional training. Two respondents said they would benefit by more training in action research. Another set of respondents said they would like more training concentrated on working with adult learners. Overall, when surveyed about the training, there was consensus from the former teacher leaders that the training would better prepare the teacher leaders for their work in the 2010-2011 school year.

Finally, teacher leaders were asked if there was anything else I should know. One teacher leader said, “I feel that action research has a great impact on teaching and learning, and it should be promoted, not only to teacher leaders but to the whole teaching community in the Ryan District.” Two respondents commented on the wonderful opportunity that the Teacher Leadership Coalition provided.

In summary, the survey confirmed the importance of providing training for teacher leaders. The respondents learned skills during training that would enable them to

be more successful in the coming year. Based on this, I planned to include training each summer for the future teacher leaders. Additionally, during our monthly meetings I planned to give teachers a forum to talk to each other about their action research projects and their work with colleagues. These discussions would provide teachers the chance to learn from their peers and provide them with the additional support they requested in the survey.

Leadership Application

This cycle took place during a time of transition within the school district. Many leadership positions, including the superintendency, were in the process of being filled. Though the decision-makers in the district were changing, the decision to fund the Teacher Leadership Coalition was maintained. I was relieved and optimistic because the interim superintendent and the Board of Education supported the Coalition. The greater the web of support, the more likely the Teacher Leadership Coalition would continue even if I moved on. If the Teacher Leadership Coalition endured, then so too would leadership for school improvement. Lambert (2006) found that schools with high leadership capacity were better able to sustain lasting improvement. Lambert (2006) asserts, “Sustainability is considered to be a process rather than a state and to hold promise for continued improvement of vital personnel changes” (p. 238).

The optimism I felt continued through the summer and culminated with two invigorating teacher leader training days. I enjoyed hearing the teacher leaders’ plans for their projects and observation classroom descriptions. Their excitement about the projects they were undertaking was contagious. Even the trainer commented that this is

what he missed now that he was a college professor and not a school administrator. I asked him to explain, and he said that this was the great part of being a school administrator, getting to see positive programs put into place. Later that night I reflected on it in my journal:

The Teacher Leadership Coalition has been the one program that I have implemented that has come without the resistance and challenges that I normally experience. Sure, I may not have the all staff on board but the members of this Coalition are completely committed to positive reform. By giving them a voice they can spread the positive change that we need.

Voice was a theme that emerged during Cycle 1 and I realized how important it was for me as a school administrator to give teachers, students, and parents voice in education.

The Teacher Leadership Coalition not only offered teachers a voice, it gave them an opportunity to act. Kouzes and Posner (2002) state:

A leader's ability to enable others to act is essential. Constituents neither perform at their best nor stick around for very long if their leader makes them feel weak, dependent, or alienated. But when a leader makes people feel strong and capable – as if they can do more than they ever thought possible – they'll give it their all and exceed their own expectations. (p. 68)

As a leader, the Teacher Leadership Coalition gave me a vehicle to allow teachers to act and utilize distributed leadership. The Teacher Leadership Coalition gave the actions that the teacher leaders were taking a greater legitimacy. Within the organization of the school district, I could see that the Teacher Leadership Coalition gave structure to the idea of allowing teachers to act. I could envision that once the organization evolves enough to where teacher voice and action are the norm, we might not need a formalized group. However, the Teacher Leadership Coalition was a great way to start the process.

During Cycle 3, the interim superintendent and Board of Education were interviewing for a new assistant principal. Over half the candidates were teachers in the

school district that were hoping to move into administration. After the final round of interviews the superintendent came to see me. He indicated that the final three candidates were all members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. During the interviews, the teacher leaders spoke about their projects and experiences as part of the Coalition. The superintendent said the Board members on the interview panel were extremely impressed by these teachers and their work on the Teacher Leadership Coalition. He believed that being a part of the Coalition helped to make these teachers successful in the interview process. There were other in-district candidates who were not members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, and they did not make it past the first round. I was so pleased that the Teacher Leadership Coalition was not only a vehicle for teachers to act, but that it also functioned as a vehicle to enable the teacher leaders to achieve their career goals.

The Teacher Leadership Coalition allowed teacher leaders to exercise their leadership and therefore build leadership capacity. Fullan (2007) found, “Capacity building at its heart is a system of guiding and directing people’s work, which is carried out in a highly interactive professional learning setting” (p. 262). The Teacher Leadership Coalition provided the setting that allowed teacher leaders the opportunity to work toward their potential. Wheatley (2006) writes about how organizations can help people reach their potential:

Organizations can keep searching for new ties that bind us to them – new incentives, rewards, punishments. But organizations could accomplish so much more if they relied on the passion evoked when we connect to others, purpose to purpose. So many of us want more. So many of us hunger to discover who we might become together. (p. 63)

The Teacher Leadership Coalition connected teachers and gave them a forum to discover who they were. I felt proud to be a part of that, and seeing the teacher leaders more fully reach their potential was gratifying and allowed me to discover more of who I want to become.

The superintendent said that the Board members wanted to hear more about the teacher leaders' work. The district was dealing with contentious contract negotiations with teachers, and the teacher leaders provided a positive common ground. The superintendent and I decided that during fall 2010 the teacher leaders would present their projects to the Board of Education. This would provide me another way to recognize and make public the work of the teacher leaders.

Meanwhile, I continued to reflect on data collected in this cycle as well as previous cycles. As I coded the interview data I was struck at how often recognition came up in teacher leaders' comments. I thought about how often I recognized teachers and staff for good work. Though I espoused the belief that as a leader you need to recognize best practices, I realized that in practice I did not do it often enough. It was one of those things that went to the bottom of my to-do list. However, I needed to make it more of a priority in the future.

I thought about how I could incorporate more recognition in my practice and remembered an idea I had previously, but never put into practice. I contemplated writing a curriculum newsletter that would highlight best practices in the district. My secretary had even created a template, but I never wrote an issue. Then I realized I did not need to do this alone. By asking teacher leaders to contribute best practices they witnessed in the

district, the newsletter would have plenty of content. I planned to start this newsletter in fall 2010 and ask teacher leaders to contribute to it each month.

During the training I thought of another way to recognize the work of the teacher leaders. While the teachers were working on their observation classroom descriptions someone asked, “How will teachers see these?” I told the teacher leaders that I could put the descriptions on the website. Then as we talked about it an even better idea formed. We could create a web page that would contain not only the observation classroom descriptions but also information about the action research projects. I planned to share this website with teachers in fall 2010.

The website would provide teacher leaders a forum to create coherence. Part of my change theory is centered on the idea of using the teacher leaders to help build a greater understanding of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Fullan (2001) indicates that we need to identify the change to build coherence when he states, “This is so because the only coherence that counts is not what is on paper nor what top management can articulate, but what is in the minds and hearts of members of the organization” (p. 114). Through the website teacher leaders could take the changing, often chaotic, world of professional learning and action research and simplify it into a statement of their work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, data gathered in this cycle through the survey and journal reflections would inform actions for Cycle 4. Based on the post training survey, the teacher leader training was a successful endeavor. Therefore, I planned to repeat the training every summer for each new cohort of teacher leaders. Additionally, I planned to

provide teacher leaders a forum at our monthly meetings to learn from each other on the topics of action research and working with adult learners. Based on feedback from the superintendent and Board of Education, the teacher leaders would present their projects in Cycle 4. Moreover, I planned to start a district newsletter to recognize best practices within the school district. Teacher leaders would contribute items each month that highlighted their own or their colleagues' exemplary work. Finally, I would create a website to highlight the work of the Teacher Leadership Coalition.

There would also be much data collection in Cycle 4, including administering the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI). SAI data can be used to evaluate a school's professional development programs and would be compared to data collected in Cycle 1. This comparison would yield information about any perceived improvement in professional learning in the district.

Additionally, I planned to survey the rest of the faculty following the teacher leaders' presentation to gain information about the faculty's perspective on the Teacher Leadership Coalition. I would combine this quantitative data with qualitative data from focus groups. I also planned to conduct a focus group with school administrators to learn their perspectives on teacher leadership. Finally, I planned to survey the past and present teacher leaders using the Leadership Practices Inventory to learn more about my leadership.

Chapter 8

Cycle 4

Introduction

Cycle 4 began in September 2010, the beginning of the school year, a time fraught with feelings of anticipation and angst. It is always exciting to start a new school year but with it comes much work for both faculty and administration. In a similar fashion, Cycle 4 presented me with feeling of anticipation at the nearing conclusion of my action research project and a feeling of angst regarding the actions and data collection that would be required. Data collection for Cycle 4 concluded in November 2010, but actions and interventions would continue past the term of this action research project because the data collected in Cycle 4 would inevitably lead to a new cycle of the process (Hinchey, 2008).

The first intervention carried out in this cycle was the creation of a district newsletter called *The Spotlight*. *The Spotlight* was designed to highlight best practices within the school district. Findings in previous cycles demonstrated a need for greater recognition of best practices within the school district. The Supervisor of Special Education and I worked to put the newsletter together and the teacher leaders were major contributors of content. Teacher leaders were eager to contribute to the newsletter, and it generated positive feedback from the staff. It was decided beginning in December that a

teacher leader would be interviewed in each issue with a focus on his or her action research project.

Second, the teacher leaders presented their proposed projects to the staff in October 2010. During the first year of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, teacher leaders presented their projects late in the school year. By presenting in October I hoped to increase awareness of their work and garner greater participation. In addition, I created a website that provided information on teacher leader projects, observation classrooms, and project updates. Finally, the teacher leaders presented their work to the Board of Education during the November 2010 Board meeting. All these interventions were aimed at increasing awareness of The Teacher Leadership Coalition within the school district.

Following the staff presentations, a survey was distributed to teachers in attendance to learn more about perceptions of the Teacher Leadership Coalition and teacher leadership in general. Additionally, teachers were asked to volunteer for a focus group on the same topic. By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data using the concurrent triangulation approach, I was able to compare the data to determine if there were similarities or differences in findings (Creswell, 2009). “This model generally uses separate quantitative and qualitative methods as a means to offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other (or conversely, the strength of one adds to the strength of the other)” (Creswell, 2009, p. 213). Four teachers volunteered for the focus group that took place in November 2010.

Another focus group was conducted with administrators during this cycle. Research shows that principals play a critical role in the development of teacher leadership, therefore I thought it was important to gain their perspective (Acker-Hocevar

& Touchton, 1999; Anderson, 2004; Goldstein, 2004; Ryan 1999). Due to availability of administrators it was necessary to conduct the focus group in November 2010. The previous cycles took place during a time of transition in administrative positions, and in summer months principals typically take vacation. Through this focus group, I learned more about teacher leadership through the eyes of Ryan School District principals and administrators. The data collected also led to interventions that were carried out in December 2010.

Data from the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI) were also collected in Cycle 4. The SAI is used to collect information about professional learning in the district and to improve the quality of professional learning and create overall school improvement (Roy, 2010). This inventory is given each fall and used as part of the district professional development planning. I compared data collected in fall 2009 with this newly collected data to determine if teachers reported data that demonstrated an improvement to professional learning within the district.

My data collection concluded with the administration of a survey centered on my leadership. After receiving permission from Kouzes Posner International, I surveyed current and former members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition using the Leadership Practices Inventory. The data from this survey is reported out in my final leadership chapter.

Building Awareness

The district newsletter. Planning for the district newsletter began in September 2010. Based on data collected in previous cycles, I realized that I needed to recognize

staff more often for their work. Years ago I had the idea for a curriculum newsletter that would feature best practices within the school district but I never had the time to put the idea into practice. However, my action research demonstrated that recognition was important to teachers, and I needed to act on it.

I shared newsletter responsibilities by asking the teacher leaders to contribute. Not only would it lighten my load, it would provide teacher leaders an avenue to recognize their colleagues. The more people looking for best practices, the more we were likely to find. Every month an email would remind teacher leaders to submit details about best practices they had implemented or seen a colleague implement.

During an administrative meeting early in September the newly hired supervisor of Special Education and I realized that separately we had both been planning to develop a district newsletter. I told her about my plan to enlist the help of the teacher leaders and we decided to team up. The other district administrators were encouraged to submit articles or best practices they came across. We also invited all staff members to submit best practices for the newsletter. We brainstormed the name for the newsletter and came up with *The Spotlight*. The supervisor of Special Education created a template for the newsletter, and I submitted a monthly article and the best practices that the teacher leaders shared and I witnessed myself.

The first issue of *The Spotlight* was released in early October. In the first issue I wrote an introduction for the newsletter that explained the purpose and invited all faculty and staff to contribute. In the introduction I wrote,

The Spotlight is our chance to recognize the work that you and your colleagues are doing to facilitate student learning. The Spotlight will be released monthly and we ARE naming names. Too often we are hesitant to provide recognition for fear we might forget someone or make others feel left out.

However, we believe it is important to honor teachers and staff who demonstrate effective practices and go above and beyond to ensure that students learn.

In addition, many members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition contributed blurbs on best practices from math instruction to technology integration. Feedback from the first issue was positive. I received emails from staff members who said that they really enjoyed reading the newsletter. Over the next few months not only were teacher leaders contributing, but other members of the staff were sharing their own innovative lessons and projects. The newsletter was opening classroom doors and recognizing effective instruction throughout the district.

The teachers in my study are not the only ones to acknowledge the importance of recognition. In fact, preliminary findings from the Measures of Effective Teacher Project launched by the Gates Foundation may help to explain why recognition is so important.

Everyday, effective teachers are being treated as if they were the same as ineffective teachers and ineffective teachers are automatically granted tenure after two or three years on the job. Given that we know there are large differences in teacher effects on children, we are effectively mis-categorizing everyone when we treat everyone the same. (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010, p. 30)

Barth (1999) sees the irony that teachers, administrators, and parents see the importance for student recognition but there is no comparable investment in recognizing teachers.

“Teachers will not for long go through the heroic efforts of leading schools, in addition to teaching classes, if the consequences of their work go unnoticed, unrecognized, or undervalued by others” (Barth, 1999, p. 448). Recognition is important to reinforce and promote both effective teaching practices and teacher leadership. The monthly newsletter was a method to make recognition a regular occurrence in the school district.

Teacher Leadership Coalition website. In addition to the newsletter, I also created a website for the Teacher Leadership Coalition. The website homepage consisted

of a general description of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Another page was devoted to a short description of each project, which highlighted the problem teacher leaders wished to solve and their goal for their action research. Also included on the site were explanations about what could be observed in each of the observation classrooms. This information would allow other teachers to decide which classroom they might want to visit. I demonstrated the website during the teacher leader faculty presentations.

After reading the data collected during the presentations and conducting the focus groups, I added an additional feature to the website. Teachers indicated that they would like more updates about the work the teacher leaders were doing. Therefore, I created a blog on the website so that each teacher leader could share the current status of their project. Teacher leaders were asked to update the blog monthly. Once the blogs were updated, I emailed the link to staff so they could keep apprised of the projects.

Faculty presentations. The website was not the only method to increase awareness. Teacher leader presentations to the staff and Board of Education offered alternate methods to increase awareness. I hoped these would result in increased participation from the rest of staff and a broader impact on the school district as a whole.

The teacher leaders presented their projects during October faculty meetings. Each teacher leader spoke about the project they were implementing during the school year. Showcasing the projects early in the school year provided teachers with a greater opportunity to participate in or learn from the projects. Following the presentations, I administered a short survey about teacher leadership and asked for volunteers for focus groups that would take place the following week.

Board presentations. The teacher leaders not only presented their projects to the staff but also to the Board of Education. During Cycle 3, interviews for an administrative position took place with the Board of Education personnel committee. Members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition interviewed for the position and during the interviews they spoke about their teacher leader projects. The Board of Education members were impressed with their work, and were eager to hear more. The superintendent suggested that members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition come to a board meeting and present their projects. I emailed teacher leaders and asked for volunteers who were willing to present. Six members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition volunteered and I began the presentations with a brief introduction. Then the teacher leaders spoke about their projects. The Board members were attentive and asked questions related to each project. The next section will detail the data resulting from surveys and focus groups collected during Cycle 4.

Methodology and Data Analysis

Post presentation survey. Following the faculty presentations, a short survey was administered to teachers (see Appendix F). The brevity of the survey allowed participants to answer the survey and turn it in before leaving the meeting thus insuring a greater return rate. The survey included Likert-type items to measure attitudes about the Teacher Leadership Coalition and open-ended items that allowed respondents to expand on their responses and provide more detailed information (Patten, 2001). Two teacher leaders who were not participating in the survey reviewed the survey. Based on their feedback I made revisions to the survey to improve the validity of the instrument. Using

SPSS software I was able to analyze Likert-type items with descriptive statistics that summarized the data (Cronk, 2008). The open-ended questions were coded, then recoded, and reduced according to themes, a process typical in grounded research theory (Creswell, 2007).

The first question was designed to learn about awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition prior to the presentations. Interventions in previous cycles were designed to improve awareness of the Coalition. Survey results demonstrated that awareness had improved. Seventy-six percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they knew what the Teacher Leadership Coalition was (see Table 8.1). This was a marked improvement over the 49% of teachers who knew about the Teacher Leadership Coalition prior to the Spring 2010 presentations. This data comparison demonstrates that there was increasing awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition in the school district.

Next, respondents were asked if the presentations helped them to understand the work that teacher leaders planned to conduct this year. The presentations were overwhelmingly successful in increasing understanding of the Teacher Leadership Coalition with 100% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement. In addition, 78% reported that they planned to participate in one or more of the teacher leaders' projects during the school year.

The last Likert-type item was created to assess the impact of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Participants were given the statement, "The Teacher Leadership Coalition has had an impact on the school district." In response, 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Coalition impacted the school district up from 88% recorded in a previous survey.

Table 8.1

Knowledge and Attitudes about Teacher Leadership Coalition Fall 2010

(*n* = 55)

Statement	In Percentages			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Before the presentation today, I knew what the Teacher Leadership Coalition was.	18	58	18	6
The teacher leaders' presentations helped me to better understand the work they will do this year.	33	67		
The Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the school district.	25	75		

The first open-ended response gave respondents an opportunity to comment on the nature of the Teacher Leadership Coalition impact by asking why or why not the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact. For those who agreed or strongly agreed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the district the majority of responses centered on themes of collaboration, impacting students, or overall benefit to the school district. Twenty-seven participants out of 53 who agreed or strongly agreed provided a response for the question why or why not. Nine of the 27 respondents (33%) believed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition impacted the school district through increased collaboration between teachers. For example, one participant wrote, “Good ideas that are being shared amongst all teachers in the district.” Another concurred, “I see a lot of positive feedback from teachers that share ideas and try out each other’s ideas.” One response identified the impact of collaboration,

The changes have an impact because they directly influence practices as they are done/piloted in classrooms. Then it becomes like a living curriculum catalog for other teachers to sign-up to learn more about.

Lambert (2003) reported similar effects of teacher leadership on collaboration, “When leadership becomes a broadly inclusive culture concept, it provokes a different response: I can see myself as participating in this learning work with my colleagues” (p. 424).

Along with collaboration, nine responses were centered around the belief that the Coalition had an impact on students in the district. One respondent wrote, “Teachers are able to work on new projects and help reach out to students in different ways.” Another teacher said, “Its generating ideas to make improvements in regular classrooms and special areas.” One respondent shared, “The Teacher Leadership Coalition is directly targeting areas of weakness where we can enhance student learning.”

Other teachers agreed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition was targeting issues relevant to the school district. One teacher said, “They are addressing many of our school’s issues and researching ways to improve them.” A study of school leadership teams found a similar impact on student achievement (Chrispeels & Martin, 2002). Chrispeels and Martin (2002) found that school leadership teams learned important ideas about how to improve student learning.

Seven responses were less specific about why the Teacher Leadership Coalition impacted the school district. Instead the responses indicated that the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact because overall it was a good program. For example, a teacher wrote, “The programs are strong overall.” Another said, “It seems through their presentations that they are seeing results with the programs they are implementing.”

One response touched on the theme of involvement, “It gives the teacher knowledge and background about what is going on and gives them a chance to get involved.” Another response was based on empowerment, “The Teacher Leadership Coalition is empowering for teachers. Teachers are more invested in what they’re doing.” These themes also emerged from teacher leaders themselves during interviews conducted in Cycle 1.

The second open-ended question asked participants how the Teacher Leadership Coalition could be improved. Most responses centered on the theme of awareness. Respondents wanted the Teacher Leadership Coalition to be more visible in the school district. Some ideas for increasing awareness were more meetings to hear about progress and a newsletter or email with updates from the Coalition. One teacher offered a perspective on the importance of awareness, “Share the positive results of the existing Coalition to motivate more teachers to get involved.” The Teacher Leadership Coalition website and the district newsletter were interventions launched in Cycle 4 designed to increase awareness of teacher leaders’ work.

In fact, increased involvement was another way teachers believed the Coalition could be improved. Respondents said that having more teachers participate and become involved would benefit the Teacher Leadership Coalition. One participant said that the Coalition needed to include more male faculty members. No male teachers applied for the Teacher Leadership Coalition, and in the future I may need to encourage them to apply to improve their representation.

Finally, participants said there was a need to make teacher leader projects and programs relevant to a broader population. Teachers said that we needed to consider all

grade levels and content areas. This could be achieved as we continue to broaden participation in the Coalition.

The next question asked teachers to identify the obstacles to teacher leadership. By identifying perceived obstacles to teacher leadership we may be able to increase effectiveness of the Coalition by addressing and removing the roadblocks. Time was cited by 23 of the 32 respondents as the greatest obstacle to teacher leadership. Time is commonly cited in literature as a barrier to teacher leadership (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Reid et al., 2004). In addition to time, survey respondents said that the attitudes of other teachers inhibit teacher leadership. One respondent said, “Some people don’t invest in professional learning.” Another wrote, “People who don’t like change.” Finally, one teacher recognized the role that fear plays, “People are afraid to try something new and have someone watch them while they’re trying it out.”

To encourage teachers to participate it is important to show them that time does not have to be a factor if the project or program is job-embedded. For example, most teacher leaders chose projects that could be implemented in their own classrooms. Pointing this out on the website or in the newsletter would be a way to dispel time as an obstacle. Furthermore, celebrating teachers who try new techniques and take risks can create a culture that supports teacher leaders and fosters positive attitudes regarding leadership.

The final survey question asked teachers to identify perceived benefits of teacher leadership. Collaboration was the most commonly recorded benefit of teacher leadership. One participant said that collaboration helped other teachers be better. Other teachers said that teacher leadership brings together the school community and helps other

teachers to incorporate new ideas. One respondent wrote, “The benefits are being able to use the expertise of colleagues to improve our practices.” Another said,

Community and making good ideas available. Also, adding a little bit of ‘competition’ by allowing others to see the effort some put in. For example, you may think, ‘Wow, look how she is presenting concepts to the students, I’m still doing it the same old way’.

This teacher hit on one of the intended outcomes of the district newsletter. I hoped that teachers who go above and beyond would be recognized, while encouraging other teachers to try new techniques in their classrooms.

Knowledge building was another benefit of teacher leadership that emerged in participants’ responses. One participant said it this way, “It gives teachers knowledge about other topics.” Another said, “There are tested and proven ideas available for instant use with onsite experts who have knowledge through experience of their particular topic.” This theme demonstrates the way in which teacher leadership is tied to professional learning (Eraut, 2007; Lambert, 2006; Leithwood & Strauss, 2009).

Overall, the post presentation survey demonstrated that awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition had increased, and teachers believed it had a positive impact on the school district. Specifically, the Teacher Leadership Coalition impacted the district by increasing collaboration, improving student instruction, and addressing issues relevant to the district. The survey data indicated that to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition it was necessary to continue to increase awareness of the teacher leaders’ work. In addition, finding methods to overcome time constraints and negative attitudes would improve the Coalition. Following the teacher leaders’ presentations, staff were asked if they would be interested in participating in a short focus group to discuss the Teacher Leadership Coalition in more depth. A sign up sheet was posted for teachers to express

their willingness to participate. The next section will discuss the findings from focus group.

Teacher focus group. Four teachers volunteered to take part in the focus group designed to help me discover more about the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Initially, I was disappointed in the lack of interest exhibited. However, I realized that not only were teachers working without a contract, which does not foster involvement, but it was the beginning of the school year, a particularly busy time of year for teachers. It was fortunate that those who did volunteer were from various grade levels and subject areas. This would provide perspectives from diverse backgrounds within the district.

Data were collected through a focus group because it allowed participants to express multiple perspectives in a timely manner (Glesne, 2006). I constructed a list of questions in advance (see Appendix G) but planned to use a semi-structured design. A semi-structured protocol provides participants an opportunity to explore other areas they think are relevant. Additionally, it allows me the freedom to explore areas that come up during the interview and add to my developing theories related to the Teacher Leadership Coalition (Hinchey, 2008).

Prior to the focus group, I piloted questions with three members of the current Coalition. Pilot testing gives the researcher the chance to refine questions, identify possible areas of bias, and frame questions (Creswell, 2007). I made a few revisions to the questions based on feedback gathered during the pilot.

I met with the focus group after school in a participant's classroom. I discussed the purpose and procedure of the focus group and had each teacher sign an informed consent form. I recorded the focus group and made notes of my observations throughout

the group interview. Later, I transcribed the group interview and used open coding to segment the data into categories (Creswell, 2007). Analyzing these categories, I condensed them into themes reported below.

I began the focus group by asking teachers if they were involved with any of the teacher leader projects. Teachers expressed interest in projects but had yet to join a project. Immediately, the awareness issue emerged as one teacher indicated that she had not participated because of lack of knowledge. She said,

I am not, only because, maybe it is the whole email thing, I feel that I don't have enough information to go to anything they might be doing. If I had more information, I might or I probably would go.

Another spoke about why she did not sign up to be a teacher leader, "I never signed up to be a teacher leader because I was intimidated by the application. When I first read that I was like 'oh my gosh' that looks like a lot of work." Teachers did indicate that they liked that the projects were presented earlier this year. A teacher said, "I like how you presented everything early on. Last year we saw it in the spring, and it was like 'oh that was a good idea but it is over'."

Next, participants were asked to share thoughts about professional learning and its role in their teaching. All respondents stated that it was important that professional development be relevant to their practice. One teacher added that teachers should be given more options to choose professional development that best meets their needs.

Then I asked the teachers in what ways, if any, they thought the Teacher Leadership Coalition had impacted the school district. One participant said, "I see that a lot more teachers are asked to be involved in things. I see it as a positive though some people might see it like we are being asked to devote more time." Two teachers thought

that more teachers were collaborating. One said, “It is bringing together people that don’t usually work together.” One participant thought that the Teacher Leadership Coalition was helping to recognize the teachers in the district. She said, “I think that it allows us to see each others’ strengths because there were a lot of people that went up there that I would never have known they were capable of that.”

It was clear the participants believed the Teacher Leadership Coalition impacted the school district, but I was interested in learning if the impact was powerful enough to change the culture. Fullan (2001), when writing about the complex nature of change, indicates that the real goal is reculturing. Fullan (2001) explains,

Leading in a culture of change means creating a culture (not just a structure) of change. It does not mean adopting innovations, one after another; it does mean producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices – all the time, inside the organization as well as outside it.
(p. 44)

The ultimate goal of the Teacher Leadership Coalition was to create a culture of learning in which teachers are systematically employing new teaching practices to improve student achievement. Although the Coalition had only been in place for just over a year, I was curious if teachers sensed a shift in the culture of the school district. So I asked teacher to consider the district two years ago, before the Coalition began. Then I asked participants to consider the culture now, and did they see any changes since the Teacher Leadership Coalition has been in place. Two participants responded and both their reactions revolved around the idea that the center of expertise has widened in the district. One teacher said, “You know more who to go to when you need help in an area. When I first came here it seemed like there was more distance and it wasn’t as unified.” Another teacher concurred, “We don’t always have to go to administration, now we know some

colleagues that we can talk to.” These responses suggested the Teacher Leadership Coalition was helping to distribute the expertise and leadership in the district.

The subsequent question asked participants to identify methods that would improve the Coalition. Again, awareness was a theme that immediately surfaced. Consistent with data collected in post presentation surveys, the members of the focus group unanimously saw a need to share more information about the Teacher Leadership Coalition. One teacher said that adding the teacher leaders’ photos and information related to their projects would improve the website. This feedback led me to ask teacher leaders to update the site monthly with information about how their project was progressing.

Participants in the focus group were then asked if they believed the district fostered teacher leadership in general and why or why not. This question opened up the most passionate reaction in the entire session. A new teacher in the district said that she did not feel that there were many opportunities to step-up. Another responded,

I see the same teachers going to do things; they are the same teachers that are going to participate in the Teacher Leadership Coalition, they are the same teachers that you see helping out. It is those same teachers that are going to participate, it is the other teachers that you want to be involved, but I don’t think there is anything you can do to get them involved.

After this statement another participant questioned her, “Are you saying the opportunities are there, and some people won’t step up?” She affirmed that statement saying that teachers made excuses like having a family. This caused a third teacher to speak up, “I think some teachers get overwhelmed and only do what is required and they see a project like this and they say, ‘oh my gosh, one more think on my plate’.” This theme regarding time and attitudes of other teachers surfaced in teacher leader interviews and survey data.

The teachers in this focus group believed that in addition to time, barriers to teacher leadership were concentrated within their own ranks instead of from the administration.

However, I wanted to know more about what they thought about administrative leadership within the district. I asked them if they thought the district was more top-down or more bottom-up. One teacher said, “There is a fear of the top. I saw that more at the Madison Avenue School.” Another teacher when referring to the Dorchester Drive School held, “Our administration trusts and empowers us, but with different administrators you can see it is different.” This was interesting to me and I noted in my observations that I did not get much participation from the Madison Avenue School when I first started the Teacher Leadership Coalition. In fact, it was only with encouragement that I was able to garner broader participation from teachers in the Madison Avenue School for the current Coalition. I had wondered in Cycle 3 about the lack of involvement. Sergiovanni (1992b) stated that lack of involvement could be learned. This fear of the top at the Madison Avenue School may have taught teachers there to try to remain unnoticed and not be involved.

This concluded my focus group with the teachers. I thanked the teachers for their participation and used their feedback to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition website. When I met with the teacher leaders for our monthly meeting in December I shared the feedback from the survey and focus groups. I told the teacher leaders that the faculty overwhelmingly expressed the belief that their work was having a positive impact on the school district. Moreover, the faculty wanted to know more about the work of teacher leaders. As a result, I created a page on the website in which teacher leaders

could update their project progress. Meanwhile, my data collection continued with a focus group with administrators in the school district.

Administrator focus group. The administrative team meets biweekly to discuss issues relevant to the school district. The interim superintendent permitted me to use some of that time to conduct a focus group on the topic of teacher leadership (see Appendix H). All district administrators were present for the focus group including the principal of the Madison Avenue School, the assistant principal and principal of the Dorchester Drive School, the supervisor of special education, and the interim superintendent.

I began with an introduction to briefly describe my action research project and explained that interviews would be recorded, but that names would not be disclosed and transcripts would be kept confidential in a locked file. The participants consented and the focus group began by asking participants what they believed was the administrator's role in the school district. Administrators stated they had the following duties: instructional leader, parent and community liaison, and supervisor in all areas including safety and facilities. Two administrators noted the wide range of responsibilities. One said, "You wear many hats. You oversee everything; you really do."

Next, I asked what they believe constituted a teacher's role in the school. Administrators agreed that teachers had to meet a diverse set of emotional, social, and academic needs. One said,

Any more not only is there the component of instruction and best practices, the day that you think you know everything is the day that you should retire. But also there is that social, nurturing, behavior modification, structural modification, differentiated instruction, emotional support, knowing, and making that connection with the student and his or her home life as well.

All the administrators agreed that effective teachers had to meet many demands.

The following question inquired about the type of relationship administrators attempt to foster with teachers. The responses were quite varied and demonstrated that administrators did not share a similar philosophy. Though there was agreement about the role of the administrator and the role of the teacher, when asked about the interaction between the two it was obvious that there were differences. For example one administrator said,

I always see myself as a guide on the side; they are the guide for the kids and I am the guide for them. If they are having a problem with a parent or a textbook they can come to me so I can alleviate that burden from them so they can just teach, and I can take care of all the other stuff.

This administrator saw herself as a resource for teachers, someone teachers could go to as needed. On the other hand, another administrator expressed frustration at the danger of teacher autonomy. She said,

Honestly, I think the danger is that teaching is very isolating and teachers generally do what they want and close the door. And I think that is challenging for administration trying to be everywhere and be involved in everything. There is no way I can micromanage the school; I mean I am here and I have stuff going on. I mean I am in one class and not in another. I think that is where we come into problems; teachers become very territorial and want to do their own thing and then they become very resistant when we come say 'nope that is not the way I want it done'. That is the real danger of the profession.

Through this question the role of the teacher in each school emerged. In the school of the first administrator she was there for support when called upon, as sort of the manager. In the second school, the administrator was there in more of a supervisory capacity. Neither response touched on empowerment, shared learning, or developing leaders.

However, when asked if they believed our school district fostered teacher leadership, all administrators agreed that it did and cited the Teacher Leadership

Coalition as evidence. One said, “I do, through the Teacher Leadership Coalition and everything that we have put in place over the last two or three years.” When asked about the impact of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, all administrators believed it had impacted the district.

The impact was described in terms of the various projects that influenced the work done in schools including the Parent Connection Committee, peer observations, and professional development on co-teaching. One administrator said,

I think it is empowering for the teachers and it’s helped the morale. I know it is a negotiation year but once that’s over I do think its helping them feel good about themselves that they are part of the school community, not just being told what to do but can actually give advice to use if they see something.

Another administrator said that the Coalition benefits those who are not involved because they have an opportunity to see their colleagues work, and it gives them motivation to try new things. However, this administrator did note that usually three to five years are needed to see the impact of change.

Next, I asked the administrative team how we could improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Again the theme of awareness emerged from all of the administrators. One administrator asked, “I think the Teacher Leadership Coalition needs to be more visible, now how do you do that?” In answer, one said that maybe we could get an article about them in the local newspaper. From this the administrators came up with the idea to feature one teacher leader in each issue of *The Spotlight*. They also thought they could feature them on a bulletin board in each school. These interventions were planned for implementation within the next month.

Finally, administrators were asked if they perceived any changes to the culture of the school district. One administrator responded, “Yes, I do. I see more people

interested in professional reading with book clubs. Never ever did we have that. Just people talking about instruction.”

Overall, the administrative focus group demonstrated that teacher leadership has become situated in the Teacher Leadership Coalition. In general, teacher leadership did not emerge as a theme in any of the administrators’ responses in the first three questions. Fundamentally, the administrators have not changed their ideas concerning a teacher’s role. However, they did speak about the impact of The Teacher Leadership Coalition and came up with some good ideas for increasing awareness. Administrators may need more information and professional development on why it is important to capitalize on teacher leadership and how they can foster it within their schools.

Standards Assessment Inventory. The Standard Assessment Inventory (SAI) was created by the National Staff Development Council to enable school leaders to guide professional development programs. The district began administering the SAI annually in the fall of each school year as part of data collection for a professional development plan. I used the data from the fall 2009 administration as baseline data in Cycle 1 prior to the start of Teacher Leadership Coalition. This allowed me to compare data from fall 2009 to fall 2010 to determine what changes have taken place to professional development in the school district.

The online survey was distributed to all teachers via email. The email contained the purpose and directions for the survey. Reports generated from the survey show an average score for each standard from Never (0), Seldom (1), Sometimes (2), Frequently (3), and Always (4). I compared the averages for each school from 2009 and 2010 and

found the difference for each (see Tables 8.2 & 8.3). A positive difference demonstrates an improvement for that standard, while a negative difference shows a regression.

Table 8.2

Franklin Avenue & Dorchester Drive SAI Averages Comparison by Year

Standard	2009 <i>n</i> =34	2010 <i>n</i> =33	Difference -/+
Learning Communities	2.4	2.2	-0.2
Leadership	3.1	3.0	-0.1
Resources	2.9	2.7	+0.2
Data Driven	2.9	2.7	+0.2
Evaluation	2.6	2.4	+0.2
Research-Based	3.1	2.8	+0.3
Design	3.0	2.7	-0.3
Learning	2.9	2.6	-0.3
Collaboration	2.9	2.6	-0.3
Equity	3.4	3.1	-0.3
Quality Teaching	3.0	2.7	-0.3
Family Involvement	2.6	2.4	-0.2

Table 8.3

Madison Avenue SAI Averages Comparison by Year

Standard	2009 n=18	2010 n=25	Difference -/+
Learning Communities	2.2	2.2	0.0
Leadership	3.2	2.8	-0.4
Resources	2.4	2.5	+0.1
Data Driven	2.6	2.6	0.0
Evaluation	2.3	2.3	0.0
Research-Based	2.8	2.6	-0.2
Design	2.7	2.5	-0.2
Learning	2.6	2.3	-0.3
Collaboration	2.6	2.5	-0.1
Equity	3.2	3.2	0.0
Quality Teaching	2.7	2.5	-0.2
Family Involvement	2.4	2.4	0.0

Data show that some standards improved while others did not. Furthermore, the change in average in any area is not more than 0.4 so that no area experienced any substantial change. However, the Franklin Avenue and Dorchester Drive Schools had four standards improve, while the Madison Avenue School only had one standard improve. The Madison Avenue School only had one representative on the Teacher Leadership Coalition and I wondered if this could be attributed to the lack of improvement.

Unfortunately, to make a real determination about the impact on the professional development on the school district more data are needed. At least three data points are needed to see trending data. By the fall of 2011, I will have three data points and I will be able to see if any conclusions can be drawn.

Leadership Survey. During Cycle 4 I received permission from Kouzes Posner International to administer the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). The LPI is designed to provide information about one's leadership behavior. I took the LPI first as a self-assessment, then asked all current and former teacher leaders to take the survey. These data will be reported in Chapter 10, which is centered on my leadership.

Leadership Application

This cycle provided much data and action to reflect on in my leadership journal. The context of my research project had undergone some major changes in leadership. Newly hired staff held four out of six administrative positions. Though these administrators were not new to the district, they were new to the positions and brought with them leadership styles that were unique. In addition, the faculty was unable to come to an agreement with the Board of Education regarding the contract. Therefore, the teachers were working without a contract and going through some terse contract negotiations. Moreover, the governor had frequent clashes with the teachers union (Zengerle, 2010). "He has accused teachers of "ripping off" the state and treating their pupils like "drug mules" after some were sent home tasked with asking their parents how they would vote on the school budget" (Zengerle, 2010, p. 4).

These events within the district and state heightened the political frame and the power dynamics that come with it (Bolman & Deal, 2003). “From a political perspective, goals, structure, and policies emerge from an ongoing process of bargaining and negotiation among major interest groups” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 201). I reflected on and wondered about the impact this power struggle would have on my study. I sought to empower teachers to take a leadership role, but how willing would they be to lead in such a tenuous environment? I also wondered how my relationships with the teacher leaders might be affected when negotiations seemed to pit teachers against administration. I wrote about it in my journal,

It is funny; I have no real impact on contract negotiations. I would love to get more time in the contract and fairly compensate the teachers for that time. Time is what I believe we need to provide better services to students. Though administrators in the district have little impact on the negotiating process it always becomes a ‘them versus us situation’.

No doubt the political climate in the state and district would impact my work, so I was not surprised when I encountered the first bit of resistance with the Teacher Leadership Coalition.

My work often seems steeped in resistance. With every new program and initiative comes change and with that change opposition. However, the Teacher Leadership Coalition was one initiative that did not bring resistance that one might expect. That changed in fall 2010 just before the teacher leaders presented to staff. Two teacher leaders were complaining about the fact that they had to attend two meetings and present. They did not know that I was working right around the corner, so I walked over and addressed them. I apologized for taking their time and explained how it was

important that the rest of the staff be aware of the work they were doing. They agreed and said they were just feeling overwhelmed.

After the encounter I felt annoyed and I wrote about it in my journal. I wondered how these teacher leaders could complain when they were getting a stipend for the position. Then I remembered my change theory and that these resisters could actually help me. Fullan (2001) states, “We are more likely to learn something from people who disagree with us than we are from people who agree” (p. 41). These teacher leaders had a message for me that maybe other teacher leaders felt but did not say. I needed to find a way to minimize teacher leaders’ feelings of being overwhelmed by too much work. As a result, I canceled our normal teacher leader meeting that month because they had to present at two faculty meetings. I wanted to be respectful of the demands that teacher leaders were feeling. By doing so, teacher leaders might be more likely to communicate the positive aspects of the Coalition and engender more support.

Not only did I realize how resisters could actually improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition during this cycle, I also realized how large a role knowledge building played throughout my action research project. As I began to further reflect on Cycle 4 data I noticed that again awareness surfaced as a major theme. I realized that essentially awareness was knowledge building. It was part of my job to build tacit knowledge regarding teacher leadership. Tacit knowledge is the understandings that are deeply rooted in an individual’s actions and values (Fullan, 2001). Tacit knowledge is more than what we say, it is what we live.

To successfully reculture the district in a way that fosters, values, and capitalizes on teacher leadership, teacher leadership needs to become part of our collective tacit

knowledge. This is no easy task; Fullan (2001) writes, “First, tacit knowledge is by definition hard to get at. Second, the process must sort out and yield quality ideas; not all knowledge is useful. Third, quality ideas must be retained, shared, and used throughout the organization” (p. 81). Building awareness is one way to share the idea of teacher leadership. In addition, collecting data about teacher leadership has allowed me to get at some of the tacit knowledge. Awareness must be linked to internal commitment in order to sustain teacher leadership.

Conclusion

Interventions like teacher leaders’ presentations, the web site, and the newsletter implemented in Cycle 4 were designed to increase awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. These interventions also provided an opportunity to recognize teachers for innovation and best practices. Themes of awareness and recognition emerged in prior cycles and actions in Cycle 4 were designed to address them.

These themes also emerged in data collected through surveys and focus groups within this final cycle. Both the post presentation survey for teachers and focus groups with administrators and teachers again emphasized the need to continually build awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Data also suggested that the Teacher Leadership Coalition was having a positive impact on the school district. However, data collected from the SAI survey did not demonstrate any major changes to professional learning within the school district.

Data collected in each cycle are reexamined as part of the Final Analysis Chapter. I use collected data to answer my research questions in the subsequent chapter. By

combining data collected both qualitatively and quantitatively from unique sources I
draw conclusions for each research question.

Chapter 9

Final Analysis and Implications

Introduction

This mixed method action research project was designed to assess and improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition, a cadre of teachers working to bring and sustain positive change in the Ryan School District. Planning for the study began in fall 2009, the study was implemented Spring 2010, and it concluded in December 2010. During this time period, I worked with two cohorts of teacher leaders. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Teacher Leadership Coalition and develop interventions to increase teacher leadership within the school district. While conducting the action research project, I sought to learn about the influence of teacher leadership on professional learning and organizational culture. In addition, this study provided the opportunity to learn about and develop my own leadership capacity. Through this study I collected and analyzed data to answer the following research questions:

1. What conditions influence teacher leadership?
2. What are the obstacles to teacher leadership?
3. How can the organization better foster teacher leadership?
4. In what ways can teacher leadership positively influence teachers' professional growth?
5. In what ways can teacher leadership positively influence the organizational culture?

6. How did this action research study impact and develop my leadership?

The final analysis of the first five research questions is reported in this chapter. The last question pertaining to my leadership will be addressed in Chapter 10. In Chapter 9, I will report the combined data from all four cycles of action research to add to the existing research on teacher leadership. This chapter begins with a brief overview of each cycle, then data are reported to answer each research question.

Overview of Cycles

Action research allows researchers to systematically investigate an area they believe is important within the community where they work (Hinchey, 2008). Through my action research project, I was able to focus my efforts on teacher leadership, a resource often not capitalized on (Danielson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1984; Trachtman, 1993), but one that has been shown to foster professional learning and sustain change within organizations (Collinson, 2004; Copland, 2003; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). The Teacher Leadership Coalition was formed in spring 2009 with the intent of empowering teachers, increasing teachers' professional learning, and improving the culture of the school district. My study began with an evaluation of the existing Teacher Leadership Coalition, an important component of program design (Brown, 2003).

To evaluate the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I began in Cycle 1, February to March 2010, to collect baseline data about the 2009-2010 Teacher Leadership Coalition. Baseline data were collected through interviews of current teacher leaders and an examination of historical survey data about professional learning in the district. The data from this cycle informed planning for actions to take place in future cycles. From Cycle

1, I learned that we needed to increase awareness and broaden participation in the Teacher Leadership Coalition. The need for greater recognition also emerged as a theme during this cycle. Additionally, teacher leaders highlighted the need for training to better prepare them for their work. Six out of eight teacher leaders reported that they believed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition positively impacted the school district. Finally, historical data demonstrated that teachers desired more opportunities to learn from one another. The findings in this cycle led to actions in Cycle 2.

Cycle 2 took place from April to June 2010 during which I implemented actions to improve and strengthen the Teacher Leadership Coalition after reflecting on the emerging themes from Cycle 1. For example, teacher leaders presented their projects to staff during Cycle 2, an intervention designed to increase awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. In addition, to broaden participation I personally reached out to teachers and successfully encouraged them to apply for the 2010-2011 Coalition. Lastly, I revised the teacher leader job description to include willingness to serve as an observation classroom to provide more opportunities for teachers to learn from each other.

During Cycle 2, data were collected through a survey that was distributed to teachers following teacher leader presentations. From the data, the theme of awareness surfaced again as respondents reported the need to increase awareness of teacher leaders' work. Moreover, teachers concurred with the teacher leaders interviewed in Cycle 1 that participation needed to be broadened to include teachers from the Madison Avenue School. Eighty-eight percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Teacher

Leadership Coalition impacted the school district. At the end of this cycle I began planning for training that would take place in the next cycle.

The major actions in Cycle 3, June to August 2010, were informed by data collected in previous cycles. Teacher leaders reported that training would be helpful for members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Consequently, training was carried out in August 2010 for the 2010-2011 teacher leaders. Training topics included action research, adult learning, leading change, and peer observation. Following the training, teacher leaders took a survey designed to assess the effectiveness of the training and learn more about teacher leadership within the school district. The data collected confirmed the importance of including training to support the development of teacher leaders. Additionally, training resulted in the conception of a teacher leader website to be launched in Cycle 4. Further reflection on Cycle 1 data underscored the importance of recognition and led me to work with a colleague to plan a newsletter that would provide a forum to recognize best practices within the district.

With Cycle 3 came major administrative changes within the district that included an administrative opening for which a few teacher leaders applied. Through the interview process, members of the Board of Education learned more about the contributions of the teacher leaders and they were impressed. Subsequently, a presentation by the Teacher Leadership Coalition was planned for Cycle 4.

Cycle 4 started in September and concluded December 2010 and was packed with actions and data collection. The district newsletter, *The Spotlight*, was launched along with the Teacher Leadership Coalition website, and teacher leaders presented their projects to the staff and Board of Education. These interventions were designed to

increase awareness of teacher leadership and recognition of best practices within the school district. Data were collected from a post presentation survey, teacher focus group, administrator focus group, and the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI). In addition, teacher leaders completed a survey to assess my leadership; findings are reported in Chapter 10.

The remainder of the chapter will encapsulate conclusions of this action research project for each research question. Through the triangulation of data collected in Cycles 1 through 4, I found similarities and differences in the data that allowed me to draw conclusions for each research question. Using grounded theory I was able to identify the emergence of the themes in the data. Grounded theory is a research design that allows the researcher to generate a theory based on the views of a large number of participants (Creswell, 2007). Through the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data the following themes surfaced: awareness, recognition, encouragement, obstacles including time and peers' negative attitudes, professional learning, collaboration, and empowerment. Following the data summary for each research question is a discussion of future implications and topics for future study.

Conditions that Influence and Build Capacity for Teacher Leadership

When conceptualizing this action research project, I hoped to discover the conditions that influence teacher leadership and how the organization could foster teacher leadership. Findings in this section relate to research questions number 1, What conditions influence teacher leadership? and number 3, How can the organization better foster teacher leadership? During final data analysis it became evident that the answers

to these questions were mutually reinforcing. Conditions that influenced teacher leadership also fostered teacher leadership within the district. Similarly, organizational interventions to the Teacher Leadership Coalition, designed to build capacity for teacher leadership, influenced teacher leadership. Because of this, I will answer both research questions within the same subheading.

Awareness surfaced repeatedly as necessary for building capacity for teacher leadership in the Ryan School District. In both qualitative and quantitative data, respondents emphasized the importance of building awareness of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Prior to the presentations in the Spring 2010, only 50% of surveyed staff had an understanding of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. By the second presentation in fall 2010, 100% of survey respondents were aware of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, but they wanted more information. The Cycle 4 surveys and focus groups emphasized the need to provide ongoing information about the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Respondents requested more methods to receive updates about teacher leaders' work. Consequently, the district newsletter and the Teacher Leadership Coalition website were designed to provide ongoing information about the Coalition.

The need to build awareness is not unique to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Building awareness is a common component in any change initiative. Fullan (2001) cites the importance of leadership that can create and share knowledge in any successful change initiative. Within the sea of educational change in the Ryan School District, it was my job to help sort out the message and motivate teacher leaders to share information about their work. Fullan (2001) states:

The logic of what we are talking about should be clear: (1) complex, turbulent environments constantly generate messiness and reams of ideas; (2) interacting

individuals are the key to accessing and sorting out these ideas; (3) individuals will not engage in sharing unless they find it motivating to do so (whether because they feel valued and are valued, because they are getting something in return, or because they want to contribute to a bigger vision). (p. 86)

The frequency with which awareness emerged in the data collected over 10 months demonstrated the need to continually take part in the process of building awareness. In fact, Kotter (1996) stresses the need for redundancy:

The most carefully crafted messages rarely sink deeply into the recipient's consciousness after only one pronouncement. Our minds are too cluttered, and any communication has to fight hundreds of other ideas for attention. In addition, a single airing won't address all the questions we have. As a result, effective information transfer almost always relies on repetition. (p. 94)

As a school leader seeking to reculture the district in such a way that teacher leadership would be a valued and utilized resource, it was my job to continually get the message out. Deal and Peterson (1999b) assert that leaders are responsible for shaping the culture through communicating and repeating "the story," which reinforces values and beliefs in the organization. Deal and Peterson (1999b) explain that a well-chosen story can address complicated questions in concrete terms while conveying values that connect ideas with emotions and events. Bolman and Deal (2003) place the crafting of stories in the symbolic frame of an organization. When considering the context of the organization at the onset of the study, the symbolic frame did not emerge as distinct frame. Leading change in the Ryan School District will require strengthening the symbolic frame through telling stories that give greater meaning to organizational activities (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Stories are powerful because they allow the communicator to package information in a manner that gives the message stickiness (Gladwell, 2002). Stickiness gives the message an irresistible quality and makes it so memorable that it can create change or

spur someone into action (Gladwell, 2002). One study participant suggested that the Coalition could be improved by “sharing the positive results of the existing Coalition to motivate more teachers to get involved” which illustrates this point. Giving teacher leaders a forum to share stories of their action research was suggested in the data collected in Cycle 4.

Recognition may be another way to frame the story of teacher leadership. The theme of recognition emerged through interview data collected in Cycle 1. Teacher leaders believed that greater recognition of their work would increase awareness and broaden participation in the Coalition. Furthermore, by recognizing best teachers who employ best practices, organizational leaders are building the symbolic frame by creating role models for people to admire and emulate (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Teacher recognition by administrators and supervisors is shown to have a link to job satisfaction (Chapman & Lowther, 1982). Moreover, four of the eight teacher leaders said they applied for the teacher Leadership Coalition in part for the recognition they believed it would bring. The Ryan School District can foster teacher leadership by strengthening the symbolic frame within the school district by creating rituals and ceremonies surrounding teacher recognition. The culture of the Ryan School District did not have formal symbolic ways to recognize best practice or teacher leaders. *The Spotlight* newsletter was a ritual implemented to make recognition part of the culture of the school district. By creating rituals, ceremonies, and stories that recognize the work of teachers, school districts are more likely to foster teacher leadership.

Along with recognition, encouragement emerged as an important factor in building capacity and influencing teacher leadership. Data collected showed that

encouragement was an effective technique to influence teachers to step up and take leadership roles in the school district. For example, one teacher leader said that the Teacher Leadership Coalition would have greater participation if administrators made teachers feel as though they were specially selected for the Coalition. Research demonstrates that encouragement from school leaders is essential in building learning communities (Hargreaves, 2000; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Fullan (2007) points to how encouragement leads to teacher leadership when he states, “In so doing principals also spread and develop leaders across the school, thereby creating a critical mass of distributed leadership as a resource for the present and the future” (p. 162). The method of developing leaders and sharing leadership, also known as inclusive leadership, has been found to have positive impact on teacher morale and enthusiasm according to Sheppard, Hurley, and Dibbon (2010). In this action research study, encouragement was successful in persuading teachers to take on leadership roles and participate in the Teacher Leadership Coalition, a community of learners.

Obstacles to Teacher Leadership

Not only did data highlight elements that build capacity for teacher leadership, they also uncovered obstacles to teacher leadership, which was research question number 2. Time emerged as a major barrier to teacher leadership through multiple data sources. Teachers expressed the feeling of being “spread too thin.” This finding is well documented in the research (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Reid et al., 2004) and often prevents teachers from taking on leadership roles.

To reduce this barrier, administrators must clearly define the scope of teacher leaders' work. In addition, much of their work should be job-embedded so that it is within the context of what they already do as a teacher. "Job-embedded refers to making conversation relevant to what teaching and learning requires" (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 88). When the work of teacher leaders is designed around teaching, learning, and collaborating it contributes to their work in the classroom. This relationship makes the time invested in leadership worthwhile.

Time was not the only obstacle to teacher leadership; both teacher leaders and faculty members discussed the negative impact peers can have on a teacher's leadership capacity. Poor attitudes of staff members were frequently cited in surveys, interviews, and the teacher focus group as an impediment to teacher leadership. Likewise, in a study of teacher leadership at the high school level, the Institute for Educational Leadership (2008) demonstrated that colleagues can have a detrimental effect on teacher leadership. The report divulges,

Teachers reported that traditional education systems in high schools act as barriers to teacher leadership. An unspoken code of conduct discourages professional initiative among teachers; and those who go against this code can be seen as a threat by some colleagues. This issue is particularly acute for high schools, institutions generally characterized by deeply entrenched, hierarchical systems. (p. 9)

This phenomenon is not specific to high schools; in fact, it promotes the tradition of autonomy so often found in education (Johnson & Donaldson 2007; Little, 2003). The autonomous culture in education comes from unspoken norms. Johnson and Donaldson (2007) describe the norms in this way:

The traditional norms of teaching— autonomy, egalitarianism, and seniority— exert a powerful and persistent influence on the work of teachers. They reinforce the privacy of the individual's classroom, limit the exchange of good ideas among

colleagues, and suppress efforts to recognize expert teaching. Ultimately, they cap a school's instructional quality far below its potential. (p. 13)

As mentioned in a previous chapter, these norms are described by an analogy by York-Barr and Duke (2004) who compare teachers to crabs in a bucket; when one crab begins to reach the top, the others grab it and pull it back.

This obstacle can be tackled head-on by providing teachers leaders training that prepares them to work with peers. Acknowledging that challenges exist and providing teacher leaders with tools to work with adult learners will prepare them to deal with the negative attitudes (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). “Teacher leaders need professional development that prepares them to respond to colleagues' resistance respectfully while helping these teachers improve their practice” (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007, p. 13).

The school principal is a valuable tool in helping teacher leaders deal with peer resistance (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Therefore, getting broad administrative support and buy-in for teacher leadership is important to foster and sustain it. Though teachers did not cite administrative support as an impediment to teacher leadership, research demonstrates the importance of principal support (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2008; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). The mindsets of administrators have the potential to foster or limit the sustainability of teacher leadership in the district.

Teacher Leadership and Professional Growth

The literature suggests how closely professional learning and teacher leadership are linked, (Collinson, 2004; Copland 2003) and my findings contribute to the body of knowledge in this area. Specifically, research question number 4 focused on the influence of teacher leadership on professional growth. Teacher leaders in my study were

committed to learning before taking on the position of teacher leader. They all earned their Masters degree and put great value on learning. Teacher leaders believed that to be a good teacher they must constantly update their learning to improve their practice.

As leaders, teachers asserted that it was part of their role to share knowledge. One teacher said that she knew she had taken on a leadership role within the school when other teachers began to seek her out for information. Other teacher leaders said they became part of the Coalition because it would give them the opportunity to share learning. When surveyed, the members of the Coalition felt they would positively influence other teachers. Hargreaves and Shirley (2008) affirm that teacher leadership promotes professional learning when they state, “Such strong professional learning communities depend on inspirational and more widely distributed leadership, rather than fleeting and heroic turnarounds that rely on single individuals” (p. 142).

Overall, through multiple data sources Teacher Leadership Coalition participants and nonparticipants believed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition impacted the school district by increasing collaboration in the district. Fullan (2007) points out that collaboration is a vehicle to covert tacit knowledge into shared knowledge. Through knowledge sharing, teachers grow professionally. Teachers stated that the Teacher Leadership Coalition brought people together who did not typically work together. Characteristically, it is through collaboration that teacher leaders can make an impact within the school district (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Roby, 2009; Ryan, 1999). The results of two surveys in this action research project indicated that teachers pointed to the Teacher Leadership Coalition as a catalyst for improved professional learning as a result of collaboration. Lambert (2003) suggests that high leadership capacity schools and

learning communities are parallel constructs. Therefore, by fostering teacher leadership one is also fostering the development of a professional learning community.

This relationship between collaboration and professional learning signifies that schools wishing to use teacher leadership as a vehicle for increased professional learning must be thoughtful about the role developed for teacher leaders. The work of teacher leaders must be structured in such a way that it leads to collaboration with peers. For example encouraging teacher leaders to open their classrooms to peer observations, providing opportunities for them to share their research, and encouraging them to lead team meetings or committees puts them in the position to collaborate with peers.

Teacher Leadership and Organizational Culture

The fifth research question and the last addressed in this chapter is centered on the impact of the Teacher Leadership Coalition on the culture of the school district. While learning about the relationship between the Teacher Leadership Coalition and professional growth it became evident that the impact on professional growth also impacted the culture of the school district. The Teacher Leadership Coalition was an impetus for collaboration in the school district. With greater collaboration came both increased professional learning and a change in the culture.

Collaboration created what one respondent called “unity among teachers.” Teachers said they had greater opportunity to see each other’s strengths. Teacher leader presentations, the website, and the newsletter were forums to share teachers’ work. Once teachers began to see the talents of their peers, the circle of expertise widened. No longer did expertise exist in formal leadership roles; teachers realized that they could go to

colleagues with questions. In effect, the Teacher Leadership Coalition changed the informational hierarchy in the school district. To get information, a teacher did not have to go to the top. Instead, answers could be found within teachers' ranks, which turned the hierarchy on its side. Instead of situating information at the top of the organization, a typical structure in education (Anderson, 2009; Callahan, 1962; Tyack, 1974), the Teacher Leadership Coalition effectively spread leadership capacity throughout the organization. As reported earlier when discussing the context of the organization, the structural frame dominated. The organization employed vertical coordination in which higher levels coordinated the work of subordinates (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Teacher leadership shifted coordination to a more flexible lateral form that makes an organization better able to deal with the complexity of change (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Respondents also indicated that the Teacher Leadership Coalition empowered and gave voice to participants. In this action research study, teacher leaders emphasized the importance of having a voice in decision-making. A teacher leader in the study described the importance of voice in this way,

I think it has made me feel like I have more of an input more of a say, that it is not top down. As a team we can look at things and feel open to say this worked or this didn't or this was too much or I think that teachers will be more receptive to this, less receptive to that.

The Coalition gave teacher leaders a forum to take part in shared-decision making. After studying 25 years of teacher surveys, Berry (2009) predicted that as teachers see the impact of teacher leadership and voice, more will step up.

Teacher Leadership and Improved Student Achievement

Through my action research project I did not seek to determine if there was a connection between teacher leadership and improved student achievement. However, the

relationship between teacher leadership and the impact on student learning emerged in the qualitative data. In open-ended responses and interviews, teachers perceived that the Teacher Leadership Coalition teacher leaders improved student achievement. For example, one participant said, “The Teacher Leadership Coalition is directly targeting areas of weakness where we can enhance student learning.” This unexpected finding is especially exciting for school districts, like the Ryan School District, who are struggling with student achievement. The connection between teacher leadership and student achievement that surfaced in this study could become a powerful tool for schools working to improve student achievement.

Teacher leaders directly impacted student learning through their action research projects carried out within their own classrooms. The action research projects developed by teacher leaders were created to address areas of need with research-based interventions. For example, three teacher leaders recognized the impact technology can have on student achievement, therefore their interventions were based on increasing technology integration in their classrooms. Another teacher leader identified the need to build metacognitive thinking in students through journaling. These interventions carried out within classrooms correlated directly with student needs.

Moreover, these projects were targeted to the specific needs of the school district. Respondents reported that the teacher leader projects addressed needs that were specific to the Ryan School District. As teachers and leaders in the school district, members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition had first-hand experience and knowledge of challenges faced in attempts to improve student achievement. Teacher leaders were able to develop interventions and share information in a way that no outsider could.

Finally, teacher leaders increased the amount of collaboration and professional learning in the school district. This indirectly impacts student learning because professional learning is linked to student achievement (Carroll, Fulton, & Doerr, 2010). Leithwood and Strauss (2009) found schools making gains in student achievement had teachers that worked together to improve their teaching practices.

Implications for Ryan and other School Districts

Important conclusions from this action research study are applicable to the Ryan School District and other school districts in general. The Ryan School District, like many others, faces great challenges as a result of an accountability culture coupled with a growing at-risk population. The implications from this study should be considered carefully by any district struggling to meet student needs. Furthermore, the implications detailed below apply not only to the continuation of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, but to change initiatives in general. In this section I will summarize the benefits of teacher leadership and methods to develop and sustain teacher leadership in the Ryan School District.

Benefits of teacher leadership. This study substantiated findings that teacher leadership can have positive effects on a school district (Cooper, 1993; LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Roby 2009; Thibodeau, 2008). The Teacher Leadership Coalition resulted in a more collaborative school culture in the Ryan School District. As a result, there was a greater emphasis on professional learning. Teachers began to see each other as resources from whom they could learn. The isolation inherent to education diminished through teacher leadership. In addition, participants in this action research project

believed teacher leadership had a positive impact on student learning. These benefits, noted after the Teacher Leadership Coalition was in effect for only a year and a half, most likely will expand once the Teacher Leadership Coalition becomes a fixture in the district. Additionally, as teachers and administrators develop new ideas about the locus of leadership within the school district, students will reap the benefits. The Teacher Leadership Coalition enables teacher leaders to directly impact students through their action research projects targeted to the needs of Ryan students.

It is important that the Teacher Leadership Coalition in the Ryan School District be sustained and evolves to meet the needs of teachers as well as students. Findings from this study demonstrate that teachers value recognition and collaboration. Teachers also desire and appreciate having a greater voice in the Ryan School District. Teacher leaders can positively impact the Ryan School District through empowerment and collaboration (LeBlanc& Shelton, 1997; Roby 2009; Ryan, 1999).

These implications can also be generalized beyond the Ryan School District. Acknowledging and employing teacher leadership should be a recommendation for all schools struggling with student achievement. Collaboration is linked to school improvement in the literature with the work of DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2004) who explain, “People who engage in collaborative team learning are able to learn from one another and thus create momentum to fuel continued improvement. It is difficult to overstate the importance of collaborative teams in the improvement process” (p. 3). As evidenced by this study and others, fostering teacher leadership can result in increased collaboration in a school district (Roby, 2009; Ryan, 1999; Thibodeau, 2008).

Furthermore, the work of the teacher leaders can be targeted to identified needs of students in the district and therefore directly impacts student achievement.

Sustaining teacher leadership. To sustain teacher leadership and ensure it is not another school initiative that is started and then discarded, one must consider awareness, recognition, principal support, and training. First, creating awareness or knowledge building is an essential task in sustaining change (Fullan, 2001). Knowledge building must continue throughout the implementation of any initiative including teacher leadership. In terms of teacher leadership, it is important to continue to draw attention to the work of teacher leaders. In the Ryan District, we must continue to find unique ways to highlight teacher leaders' projects. When other teachers have knowledge of teacher leaders' work they are more likely to learn from them, thus promoting a collaborative learning culture. By developing stories as part of the symbolic frame, we can communicate the meaning behind the Teacher Leadership Coalition and develop values that provide clarity surrounding the initiative (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Prior to this action research study, the stories told in the district were not about instruction and best practice. The culture of the school district has shifted to one that values stories of successful teachers and teaching practices.

Another way to bolster the symbolic frame and sustain teacher leadership is achieved through recognition (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Recognition works to build awareness while reinforcing and encouraging teacher leadership. Through recognition, leaders bring attention to those in the organization who exemplify best practice (Bolman & Deal, 2003). By recognizing teacher leader practices within the district it demonstrates that administrators understand the importance of teacher leaders' work. Teacher leaders

will be more likely to continue their work and other teachers more likely to step up if they believe their contributions are valued.

Administrators must not only recognize teacher leaders, they need to change their own constructs of leadership to truly provide the support needed to sustain teacher leadership. Principals need to view their roles as more than managers or supervisors, they must become empowering forces within the school (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Anderson, 2004; Copland, 2003; Goldstein, 2004; Smylie, 1992a). Principals should seek out those with expertise and encourage them to take leadership roles. One way to garner teachers' participation is to make them aware of the areas of greatest need. (Lambert, 2006; Phelps, 2008). The administration should develop roles that enable the teacher to perform leadership functions within the school. Creating formal roles for teacher leaders, gives legitimacy to teacher leadership.

Once teacher leadership is established, the principal must buffer the obstacles that often inhibit teacher leadership. For example, time surfaced as a challenge for teacher leaders in this study as it has in other research (LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Reid et al., 2004). The principal can strategize how to carve out time for teacher leaders to perform leadership and share learning tasks.

In this action research study, the attitude of colleagues was another challenge teacher leaders faced. The principal can help teacher leaders develop relationships that will reduce the resistance teacher leaders are likely to encounter (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). With the support of the school principal, teacher leaders are less likely to deal with negative attitudes from colleagues.

The final suggestion to sustain teacher leadership is to provide on-going training to support the development of leadership capacity. Teacher leaders should be given training in action research, adult learning theories, and the change process. This learning will enable them to more successfully navigate their roles as teacher leaders.

Limitations

Identifying limitations in one's study increases the trustworthiness of data therefore (Glense, 2006). My belief in the need for teacher leadership to increase professional learning and sustain change could have created a halo effect. The halo effect occurs when an observer allows their impressions to influence their observations (McMillian, 2000). In addition, as an administrator in the school district who evaluates teachers, I was aware that participants may have felt pressured to respond in a certain manner.

Topics for Future Study

A few topics surfaced through this study that would provide a sound basis for future study. The following topics would broaden the understanding of teacher leadership and enable the Ryan School District to maximize benefits. These topics could also be studied in other school districts with their own models of teacher leadership to contribute to the literature.

1. As mentioned, this study was not designed to study the impact of teacher leadership on student achievement. However, it may benefit the body of knowledge if future studies could investigate the link between teacher

leadership and student achievement. A research base that demonstrates that teacher leadership has positive effects on student achievement would likely increase the number of school districts that empower teachers.

2. This study reflects the critical role that the school principal plays in sustaining teacher leadership. Future studies designed to learn the specific skill set of principals who successfully foster teacher leadership would provide a blueprint for principal training. Once the skill set has been identified it could be included in administrator preparation programs.
3. An examination of the reasons for negative peer attitudes about teacher leadership would provide interesting insight into one of the greatest obstacles to teacher leadership. Information gained from such a study could lead to interventions to create a culture more conducive to teacher leadership.

Conclusion

In summary, data collected through this action research project answered the research questions posed at the onset of the study. By identifying the emerging themes in each cycle, I was able to create and implement interventions to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition in the Ryan School District. Additionally, study findings contribute to data surrounding teacher leadership. The Teacher Leadership Coalition is a valuable program for teachers, students, and the organizational culture in the Ryan School District and therefore should be continued. Findings indicate that other districts seeking an improved culture through teacher leadership should consider creating formal roles for

teacher leaders. The final chapter will address the last research question in this study:

How did this action research study impact and develop my leadership?

Chapter 10

Reflections on Leadership and Growth

Introduction

From teacher retention and school climate, to student achievement and school improvement efforts, leadership plays a significant role in education (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzer, 2009; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). Therefore, as a school leader it is my responsibility to continually assess and improve my leadership practices and this study provided a forum to do so. At the onset of my study I described my espoused theory of leadership in Chapter 2. Espoused theories are one's guiding principles and beliefs (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). However, they may not always manifest in one's actual practice, hence our words and actions may not always be aligned (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). In this Chapter, I will describe my leadership actions throughout the study, or my theory-in-use (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Osterman and Kottkamp state, "We are unaware of discrepancies (a) between our beliefs (espoused theory) and actions (theory-in-use) or (b) between our actions and our intended outcomes" (p. 12).

Through an analysis of similarities and discrepancies between my espoused theory compared to my theory-in-use, I will answer my final research question: How did the study impact or develop my leadership? By comparing my espoused leadership theory to my actions during my research study I am able to identify emerging themes to

provide evidence of my development as a leader. In Chapter 2, I asserted that I am a situational leader who draws from other theories, as the situation demands. I expressed the need to be a situational leader in order to deal with the various demands of my work. However, I realize now that I am not a true situational leader because my leadership does not vary based only on the needs of stakeholders. Instead, I am a leader that pulls from unique leadership theories as the situation dictates. As an educational leader, I am responsible for implementing changes to improve student achievement. With each change initiative comes unique challenges and needs. Throughout my action research project the collected data required me to exercise unique aspects of my leadership theory-in-use. My action research demonstrated that I substantiate much of the leadership theory that I espouse. My espoused theory of leadership is founded in the tenets of servant, transformational, and distributive leadership theories, therefore I will organize themes that emerged throughout the study about my leadership under those broad categories. I did find that it was essential for me to strengthen certain leadership skills. I have organized these leadership characteristics under each leadership theory with which I associate them. Conclusions will be supported by data collected through journaling, research cycle events, my own reflections, and results of the Leadership Practices Inventory, a survey completed by teacher leaders in Cycle 4 regarding my leadership. In the conclusion of the chapter, I will reveal what I discovered about myself through this action research project and my aspirations for the future.

Servant Leadership

As part of my espoused theory of leadership I asserted that I often drew on servant leadership. Sergiovanni (1992a) explains that servant leadership brings stewardship responsibilities to the administrator's role. When this happens the school administrator embraces the entire school community and works alongside the community to share responsibility for students (Sergiovanni, 1992a). Through my action research I found that aspects of my servant leadership served me well as I initiated changes within the school district. I also found that in carrying out my action research project it was necessary that I build upon my servant leadership skills. Below I will detail the ways in which servant leadership emerged in my study through building relationships, encouraging growth, embracing resistance, and valuing reflection.

Building relationships. This action research project bore out the importance of relationships in the work of a change leader. In my espoused theory of leadership, I wrote of the importance of caring and trust in my work. I still believe these to be vital, but I believe they must be considered within the context of building relationships. Meaning, in Chapter 2, I had trust and caring as headings, now I would place them as subheadings under relationships. It is the foundation of good relationships that supports the practice of, and makes more meaningful, all other leadership traits.

The relationships I built as a school leader in the Ryan School District gave me the power to effectively implement change. For example, when it was reported that I needed to expand the participation of the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I was able to approach teachers and effectively garner their involvement. By cultivating relationships

with these teachers over the last four years through trust building, caring, and employing other effective leadership traits, I easily engendered their support.

Not only did relationships help me to improve the Teacher Leadership Coalition, they also were major contributors to the creation and continuation of the Coalition. The relationship I developed with the school superintendent gave me the confidence to conceive of the Coalition and implement it in the school district. This relationship also allowed the superintendent to trust that the Teacher Leadership Coalition would be a worthy endeavor. Tschannen-Moran (2004) describes trust as a process when she states, “Trust is a choice. Trust is a judgment based on evidence, but it outstrips the evidence that would rationally justify it. The trusting party makes this leap of faith out of care for the relationship” (p. 16). Likewise, when there was a leadership transition in the district, the interim superintendent (former principal) and the Board of Education supported the continuation of the Teacher Leadership Coalition into its second year. I believe that again, the relationships I developed made that a reality.

By cultivating servant leadership and relationship building, leaders gain influence within the organization. In fact, Bolman and Deal (2003) assert that individual satisfaction and organizational effectiveness are dependent on the interpersonal relationships developed within the organization. I believe that all other leadership functions detailed in this chapter were influenced by the relationships I developed. As Rost (1991) affirms, “To summarize the first essential element of leadership, it is a relationship based on influence, which is defined as using persuasion to have an impact on other people in a relationship” (p. 107). Therefore, relationship building is paramount to my work as a school leader and a major component of my change theory. Because of

this, I must continue to realize the influence relationships have in my profession and work to foster their development. As Wheatley (2006) states, “If power is the capacity generated by our relationships, then we need to be attending to the quality of those relationships” (p. 40).

Encouraging growth. Through the relationship building detailed above, I was able to practice another trait connected with servant leadership, stewardship (Senge, 1990b; Sergiovanni, 1992b; Spears, 2010). Spears (2010) avows that servant leaders recognize their responsibility to nurture the personal and professional growth of their colleagues. As a servant leader, I hope to serve those I lead by connecting them to what they wish to become and, if possible, give them the tools and opportunities to achieve those goals. The Teacher Leadership Coalition provides me a mechanism to do so. By creating the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I created formal leadership roles for teachers. The legitimacy of these roles allowed for a greater distribution of power in the district, and through sharing power one encourages personal growth.

When conceptualizing the work of the teacher leaders it was very important to me that their interests and needs would dictate their action research projects. In this way, I was able to allow them to learn and grow professionally in an area important to them. Through action research and sharing their learning with others, teacher leaders gained valuable experiences that led to professional growth. This professional growth was highlighted when all of the finalists for an administrative opening were members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. The superintendent and the Board of Education were so impressed with the work of the teacher leaders, that they outshone candidates who had formal administrative experience. Therefore, for the successful candidate, his/her

participation on the Teacher Leadership Coalition was a factor in him/her achieving career goals.

Embracing resistance. As a leader who employs traits such as relationship building and stewardship, I must also embrace resistance. In serving the needs of one's constituents one must be willing to hear their concerns and be open to opposition. Rost (1991) supports the importance of resistance to leadership relationships,

Leadership as an influence relationship had two characteristics: (1) it is multidirectional, in that influence flows in all directions and not just from the top down; and (2) it is noncoercive, meaning that it is not based on authority, power or dictatorial actions but is based on persuasive behaviors, thus allowing anyone in the relationship to freely agree or disagree and ultimately to drop into or out of the relationship. (p. 107)

By allowing information, positive or negative, to flow in both directions a leader is more centered in the reality of what is occurring within the organization. Fullan (2001) asserts that we need resisters because they may have ideas we have missed and they are crucial to the politics of implementation.

Although I espoused the need to embrace resistance in my change theory, it was an area in which I was uncomfortable. When I encountered resistance in the past I had internally harbored feelings of failure. The feeling was similar to teachers who felt that changes to their instruction implied condemnation of past practices. While I assured teachers who were asked to implement new, research-based practices that they were not wrong for past practices, I failed to take my own advice. When teachers questioned or challenged a program, I felt like they were challenging me. Prior to this leadership project, I afforded teachers the opportunity to share opposing views, but did not learn from their resistance in any meaningful way.

During this action research project, I had the opportunity to personally grow in this area. When encountering resistance late in the project I took the time to think about what I had espoused about resistance in my change theory. After reflection, I realized that I had something important to learn from resisters. From this, I began to think about resistance in a new light. Resistance is an opportunity to learn something new within the context of my work. By looking at resistance as a learning opportunity, I have been able to minimize the negative feelings that I associated with it. Now when resistance comes my way, I look at it not as a judgment on my leadership but instead as a valuable possibility for learning. This not only fundamentally changed my approach to working with resistance, but it allows me to feel more centered and able to deal with challenges that come my way.

Reveling in reflection. Finally, as a servant leader, reflection is a major part of my practice. Spears (2010) identifies foresight as one of the 10 traits of servant leaders. Spears explains how foresight is akin to reflection when he writes, “Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future” (p. 28). By taking part in reflective practice we are able to link our governing theories to our practice (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). It is through reflection that we can truly learn from and improve on our own behaviors. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) explain how reflection spurs change in behavior this way, “Through the process of observation and reflection, individuals become more sensitive to and more aware of their habitual patterns of behavior, the assumptions that shape their behavior and the impact of their actions” (p. 16). Reflection provides the leader a chance to differentiate reality from the

philosophy. Senge (1990b) maintains that one commonality in truly effective leaders is their ability to hold a vision while simultaneously and honestly examining the current reality. Reflection was emphasized in my espoused leadership theory and was practiced throughout my action research project.

Prior to the action research project, my reflection took place internally whenever I had a quiet moment, whether it was in the car, washing dishes, or folding laundry. I effectively multitasked so that every mundane task became a chance to ruminate on the day's events and my role in them. I also reflected through conversations with trusted colleagues. By running scenarios and ideas by someone else, I afforded myself the opportunity to verbalize and then think about past, present, and future actions. During the action research project I added another tool for reflection, journaling. By thinking, talking, and now writing about the action research project I was able to effectively compare theory to practice and change my behaviors to facilitate changes to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. For example, through reflection I became better at dealing with resistance, providing recognition, and building knowledge, each of which is detailed in corresponding sections.

Not only did I practice reflection within the context of my action research project, but data from the Leadership Practices Inventory provided increased opportunity for my reflective practice. I surveyed the teacher leaders about my leadership using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2003). Kouzes and Posner (2001) developed the LPI after gathering data through thousands of leadership surveys. From these findings, Kouzes and Posner (2001) uncovered that effective leaders practice five traits:

1. Challenging the process
2. Inspiring a shared vision
3. Enabling others to act
4. Modeling the way
5. Encouraging the heart.

Permission to use the Leadership Practices Inventory was granted after I filled out an online application describing my study. Once permission was granted, I purchased the LPI. I began by taking the inventory myself as a self-assessment of my leadership practices. Then I asked the current 14 teacher leaders who worked closely with me on this action research project to complete the LPI using an online survey service. I was interested in finding out how closely my espoused leadership theory was aligned to teacher leaders' perceptions.

For each statement on the inventory the rater determined how frequently the leader engages in the behaviors described with, 10 representing Almost Always and 1 representing Almost Never. Before administering the LPI to teacher leaders, I completed the inventory about my own leadership. Then, I compared my self-rating to the average rating from the teacher leaders (see Table 10.1). Of the 30 statements, 28 self-rated statements differed from the average teacher leader rating by less than +/- 1.5. This strong agreement between the self-rating and average teacher rating exhibits that I have a good sense of my practice. A large difference between the self-rating and teacher leader rating would indicate that I needed to gain a better perspective on my leadership practices. I believe that the realistic self-rating is an indication that I am a leader who engages in reflective practice to ensure that my espoused beliefs and my actions are

aligned. In the next section, I will examine the leadership theories that are associated with my transformational leadership.

Table 10.1

Comparison of Self-rating to Teacher Leader Ratings for LPI statements (n=14)

Statement	Self-rating	Average teacher leader rating	Difference +/-
Paints the “big picture” of what we aspire to accomplish	7	8.1	+1.8
Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work	7	8.7	+1.7
Searches outside the formal boundaries of her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do	7	8.6	+1.6
Sets a personal example of what is expected	9	8.2	-0.8
Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like	7	8.3	+1.3
Actively listens to diverse points of view	6	7.2	+1.2
Follows through on promises and commitments she makes	7	8.2	+1.2
Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future	7	8.2	+1.2
Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves	7	8.2	+1.2
Spends time and energy making certain that the people she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on	8	9	+1.0

Table 10.1 (Continued)

Statement	Self-rating	Average teacher leader rating	Difference +/-
Asks, "What can we learn?" when things don't go as expected	7	7.9	+0.9
Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on	7	8.1	+0.9
Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments	6	6.9	+0.9
Supports the decisions that people make on their own	8	7.1	-0.9
Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared values	7	7.8	+0.8
Build consensus around a common set of values for running our organization	7	7.8	+0.8
Sets a personal example of what is expected	9	8.2	-0.8
Praises people for a job well done	7	7.7	+0.7
Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work	9	8.3	-0.7
Talks about the future trends that will influence how our work gets done	8	8.6	+0.6
Makes it a point to let people know about her confidence in their abilities	7	7.6	+0.6
Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people's performance	7	7.6	+0.6

Table 10.1 (Continued)

Statement	Self-rating	Average teacher leader rating	Difference +/-
Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting a common vision	7	7.6	+0.6
Treats others with dignity and respect	8	7.4	-0.6
Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects	8	7.5	-0.5
Seeks out challenging opportunities that test her own skills and abilities	9	8.5	-0.5
Gives members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions	7	7.4	+0.4
Develops cooperative relationships among the people she works with	8	7.7	-0.3
Gives people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work	7	6.7	-0.3
Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure	8	7.8	+0.2

Transformational Leadership

Along with servant leadership, I believe that I employ transformational leadership traits. “All transformational approaches to leadership emphasize emotions and values and share in common the fundamental aim of fostering capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals on the part of leaders’ colleagues” (Leithwood, 2007, p. 191). Like servant leadership, transformational leadership does not situate influence in formal positions, instead whoever inspires commitment to collective

aspirations has access to the power (Leithwood, 2007). However, instead of the leader as servant, the transformational leader inspires members of the organization to achieve (Bass, 1985). The practices that I employ in theory and practice attributed to transformational leadership are knowledge building, recognition, inspiration, and modeling. The remainder of this section will describe each practice and its relation to my espoused theory and my theory-in-use.

Making time for recognition. Recognition is a component of transformational leadership that was included in my espoused theory of leadership. Typical of a transformational leader, I believe that recognizing staff for their efforts is an important part of my work (Leithwood, 2007). Interview data collected from the teacher leaders corroborated findings that recognition is important to staff (Bass, 1985; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Leithwood, 2007). However, I found through data and reflection that I was not recognizing and celebrating best practice enough. Therefore, as part of this study I incorporated interventions designed to increase the recognition of teachers' work including the Teacher Leadership Coalition website, Board of Education presentation, and *The Spotlight*.

One of the traits measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory is encouraging the heart. Kouzes and Posner (2001) describe the trait in this way, "To keep hope and determination alive, leaders *recognize contributions* that individuals make. In every winning team, the members need to share in the rewards of their efforts, so leaders *celebrate accomplishments*" (p. 4). When comparing the average score for each trait, 1 being Almost Never and 10 Almost Always, it was not surprising that encouraging the heart was the lowest scoring (see Table 10.2). Though an average score of 7

represents that I engage in the process fairly often, it does suggest an area with room for improvement.

Table 10.2

Average Scores for the Five Leadership Traits Measured by the LPI (n=14)

Trait	Average score
Challenging the process	8.3
Inspiring a shared vision	8.2
Enabling others to act	7.5
Modeling the way	7.9
Encouraging the heart	7.4

As a district administrator with shared responsibility for schools failing to meet benchmarks for adequate yearly progress, I have been responsible for implementing many changes. With these changes comes the discomfort and resistance characteristic of the process (Fullan, 2001). Kouzes and Posner (2002) found that when trying to make change it is essential that leaders make sure people see the benefit of behavior that is aligned with the change values. Kouzes and Posner (2002) describe the need to recognize success along the way when they state that leaders can build a sense of community, through celebrations and rituals. By better utilizing the power of recognition I can foster a change process that is more successful.

Knowledge building for a collective vision. Along with recognition, the need to increase awareness emerged in my action research study. Toward the end of my research I realized that increasing awareness was actually knowledge building, a component of my

change theory. As a change leader, it is essential that I build knowledge around the change initiative. “Effective leaders understand the value and role of knowledge creation, they make it a priority and set about establishing and reinforcing habits of knowledge exchange among organizational members” (Fullan, 2001, p. 87). At each turn of my action research project it was essential that I communicate the work and purpose of the Teacher Leadership Coalition.

Further reflection on knowledge building and my leadership theory yielded an interesting realization. As I worked throughout this project to build knowledge, I was essentially working to build a common vision around the concept of teacher leadership. By building knowledge about the teacher leaders’ work, I also hoped to build a common vision that valued teacher leadership. While employing characteristics of a transformational leader, I worked to communicate an appealing vision and emphasize practices consistent with that vision (Leithwood, 2007). Murphy (1968) asserts that visioning is often a group task that can get messy and needs time to emerge. Members of the Teacher Leadership Coalition were key players in the attempt to communicate the opportunities that were possible if the district invested in teacher leadership. Together, the teacher leaders and I worked to build a vision for teacher leadership that would institutionalize it in the school district (Senge, 1990b).

Inspiring a shared vision is another trait measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory. My average score from the teacher leaders for the trait was 8.2, which corresponds to a rating of usually engaging in the behavior. The Leadership Practices Inventory demonstrates that inspiring a shared vision is one of my leadership strengths.

However, it is essential that vision matches practice (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993), and by modeling actions aligned to the vision one ensures consistency.

Modeling the way. A transformational leader practices behaviors that arouse emotion, encourage identification, and lead to intellectual stimulation (Leithwood, 2007). As I model the way, I attempt to set an example for others to follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2001). On the Leadership Practices Inventory, the teacher leaders scored me at 7.9 for modeling the way, which falls between (7) Fairly Often and (8) Usually. As a leader, I consciously model the behaviors that I wish to see in staff. For example, throughout the action research project I shared my reflections and learning with the teacher leaders. I wanted them to see how I reflected on and learned from the collected data. This transparency of my learning coupled with the clear vision I had for the Teacher Leadership Coalition helped to instill confidence in those around me. In Senge's (1990b) experience, the characteristics of a great leader do not necessarily include a forceful personality. Senge (1990b) states this about outstanding leaders, "What distinguishes them is the clarity and persuasiveness of their ideas, the depth of their commitment, and the extent of their openness to continually learning more" (p. 339).

In addition, I sought ways to challenge the process and make my actions transparent to those around me. Kouzes and Posner (2001) posit the way in which leaders challenge the process is through searching for opportunities to challenge the status quo. During my research study, one participant spoke about the risk I had taken to establish the Teacher Leadership Coalition. By taking risks and learning along the way I became a model to the teacher leaders who were taking risks while implementing their

own action research projects. The teacher leaders rated me with my highest rating of an 8.3 in the area of challenging the process.

By modeling my expectations and willingness to take a risk, I developed reliability with the teacher leaders. “Reliability implies a sense of confidence that you can “rest assured” that you can count on a person doing what is expected on a regular, consistent basis” (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 29). By building trust with teacher leaders by consistently modeling the behaviors I valued and expected, I cultivated an atmosphere that allowed for risk-taking. Teacher leaders were willing to try new strategies in their classrooms, but even more challenging, they shared their learning with other teachers. In a recent in-service, seven teacher leaders agreed to develop and deliver a workshop for their peers. Though they voiced apprehension about having to present to peers, feedback forms from participants indicated that the workshops were a worthwhile learning experience. By walking the walk and talking the talk (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), I worked to inspire the trust that is essential to making meaningful changes in the culture (Fullan, 2007).

As a transformational leader, this research study enabled me to practice skills related to knowledge building, recognition, inspiration, and modeling. Data collected through the Leadership Practices Inventory demonstrated that the teacher leaders believed that I frequently engaged in behaviors associated with transformational leadership. The next section will discuss the leadership qualities I associate with distributive leadership.

Distributive Leadership

“The main mark of a school principal at the end of his or her tenure is not just the individual’s impact on student achievement but rather how many leaders are left behind

who can go even further” (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2009, p. 14). As this quote suggests, an effective school leader shares the leadership duties within the organization as a method to effectively make and sustain improvements (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Spillane, 2005). In my leadership platform, I espoused a strong belief in distributed leadership practices. In fact, my action research study centered on teacher leadership, is a method to distribute leadership within a school district. Through my study, I learned that I did practice distributed leadership, but that I was not as comfortable as I may have implied. Below I will discuss the characteristics of distributed leadership that emerged during my action research project including giving voice and empowerment.

Giving voice. Findings from my action research project demonstrated that teacher leaders valued having a voice in the organization. Many participants in the study believed that the Teacher Leadership Coalition changed the culture of the district by giving teachers a greater voice. I espoused the notion that dialogue was a required element in community-building (Furman, 2002; Senge 1990a). By encouraging dialogue, participants share, reflect, and revise ideas. Allen (2004) describes the type of voice teachers have through dialogue; he asserts that with dialogical voice comes high levels of collegial interaction, deep commitment, and the ability to take risks.

Upon reflection, I realized that though teachers had gained a greater voice, we were not yet at the level of dialogue. Teachers in the Coalition expressed a delegated voice, which Allen (2004) explained in this way, “Participation in this type of democratic process usually requires teachers to attend regularly scheduled meetings with their chosen representatives, to risk sharing their thoughts publicly, and to accept some responsibility for the final decisions” (p. 320). Allen (2004) asserts that this type of involvement can

have a strong positive impact on the climate of the school, and I believe this surfaced through my study. However, what I have learned about my leadership is that though I value dialogue and seek to give teachers voice in that forum, I have yet to achieve it. It is likely that dialogue will occur when I learn to better handle resistance. My leadership work will continue in this area so that I can foster true dialogue and the kind of participation that has transformative power (Allen, 2004).

Empowerment. Along with giving teachers a voice, I espouse the importance of empowering them to take action within the organization. Through the Teacher Leadership Coalition, I was able to carve out a role that allowed teacher leaders to share learning. As far as we may have come in education, it is still a profession steeped in isolation (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). The Teacher Leadership Coalition led to a shift in school culture by empowering teachers and increasing their impact outside their classroom. The teacher leaders and I shared a common purpose that was more encompassing than action research or shared learning, it was centered on recognizing the importance of empowering teachers and capitalizing on the expertise they offer.

Rost (1991) clearly distinguishes between having a common goal and a common purpose. Rost (1991) states, “Purposes are more overarching and holistic than goals, and they are less oriented to quantification. Purposes allow for the development of more mutuality; goals tend to be more fixed and rigid” (p. 123). Where goals direct the person with a more exacting task, common purposing allows people to work in multiple ways toward the same end. Rost (1991) explains the empowering nature of common purpose,

Mutual purposes are common purposes, not only because they are forged from the influence relationship, which is inherently noncoercive, not only because they develop over time from multidirectional nature of the relationship, *but because the followers and the leaders together do leadership.* (p. 122)

My action research project was built upon the notion of distributing and sharing leadership within the school district. As we confront challenges in education today, administrators who take advantage of the leadership around them have a greater chance of achieving success. As Fullan (2001) says, “Leadership, then, is not mobilizing others to solve problems we already know how to solve, but to help them confront problems that have never yet been successfully addressed” (Fullan, 2001, p. 3).

Because I believe that both my espoused theory and my actions during this action research project demonstrate a true belief in empowering others, I was surprised that enabling others to act was rated by teacher leaders as the second lowest of all my leadership traits at a 7.5 with (7) Fairly Often and (8) Usually. I first postulated that this was because many of the programs I had put in place were research-based best practices and did not provide complete freedom. For example, guided reading consisted of particular tenants that were identified as best practice. I wondered if the survey reflected some of the frustration at having to change practice.

Then I began to think deeper, that although my initial thought may have merit, it may not be the entire story. I realized that because I have a strong vision and moral purpose I sometimes fear losing control. For example, one teacher leader adopted peer observation as her action research project. The need for peer observation surfaced in data collected in Cycle 1 of this study and I incorporated it into the job description for teacher leaders. I was excited about the prospect and because it came out of this study, I had some ideas about the direction the program should take. As a result, I was hesitant to completely let go of the project. I eventually did and found that the teacher leader could adeptly organize and implement the program. My challenge as a leader is to learn how to

trust that others will be stewards of a shared vision. I also have to recognize that the vision may change as the initiative is implemented. By being flexible to the needs and context of the change initiative, we learn to mold it so that it is more likely to be sustained, a model of double-loop learning (Argyris, 1990). Therefore, as the program is implemented, change agents learn from the context and change the program to better meet the needs of the organization. As I gain experience as a school leader and have successful experiences in relinquishing control, I will be better able to release control, a leadership behavior that I am committed to carrying out.

Conclusion: Developing My Gifts

Throughout this action research process it often felt as though the real work revolved around the changes implemented to the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Yet upon reflection, I now grasp the notion that the real work of this action research was centered on developing my leadership gifts (Senge, 1990b). As Senge (1990b) states, to be charismatic means to develop one's gifts and in doing so, "In short, we develop as true charismatic leaders to the extent we become ourselves" (p. 339). While I believe that teacher leadership has the potential to fundamentally change the Ryan School District for the better, I cannot be certain what the future holds. The district is not recultured in a way that ensures teacher leadership will persist without strong advocates. However, what I can say for certain is that I became a more authentic leader through this study as I developed and uncovered my own gifts.

I both espouse and practice elements of servant, transformational, and distributive leadership, but I do so along a continuum. In my espoused theory of leadership I said

that occasionally I had to resort to transactional leadership. I was not actually practicing a different leadership, only acting on the opposite side of the continuum. Through reflective practice, I better understand that leading along a continuum enables me to more effectively lead. (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) explain how understanding benefits one's leadership practice when they state,

By helping people to develop skills of critical analysis that they can apply to their own practice, it changes professional practice from an impersonal process that takes place during a restricted period of time in a classroom to an ongoing process that becomes integrated into one's professional life. It does not claim to eliminate problems of practice but to establish a process for examining and responding to those problems in new and more varied ways. (p. 138)

Though problems are not eliminated, we are better able to work on them when we are aware of them.

As a result of my analysis, I created Figure 1 to represent my leadership as I see it now. The figure depicts my three overlapping theories of leadership. The theories overlap because they are often practiced in conjunction with one another. Depending upon the situation, the leadership traits are practiced in varying degrees along the continuum, which is represented by arrows. Moreover, my entire leadership theory is resting on the continuum of change, portraying the diverse and shifting nature of change.

I plan to continue to work on understanding my leadership along this continuum because although I believe enabling and recognition are important aspects of leadership, it does not mean they are always appropriate. For example, when teachers are not employing effective practices they should not be recognized. Moreover, new teachers may not be ready to juggle the responsibility that comes with enabling. When I am more comfortable operating along the continuum, I will know better when it is fitting to enable more or less depending on the situation.

Through this action research study I was able to affirm much of my espoused leadership theory while developing my leadership gifts. My hope for the Ryan School District is the continuation of the Teacher Leadership Coalition. Additionally, I wish continued leadership growth for both the teacher leaders and myself in the future.

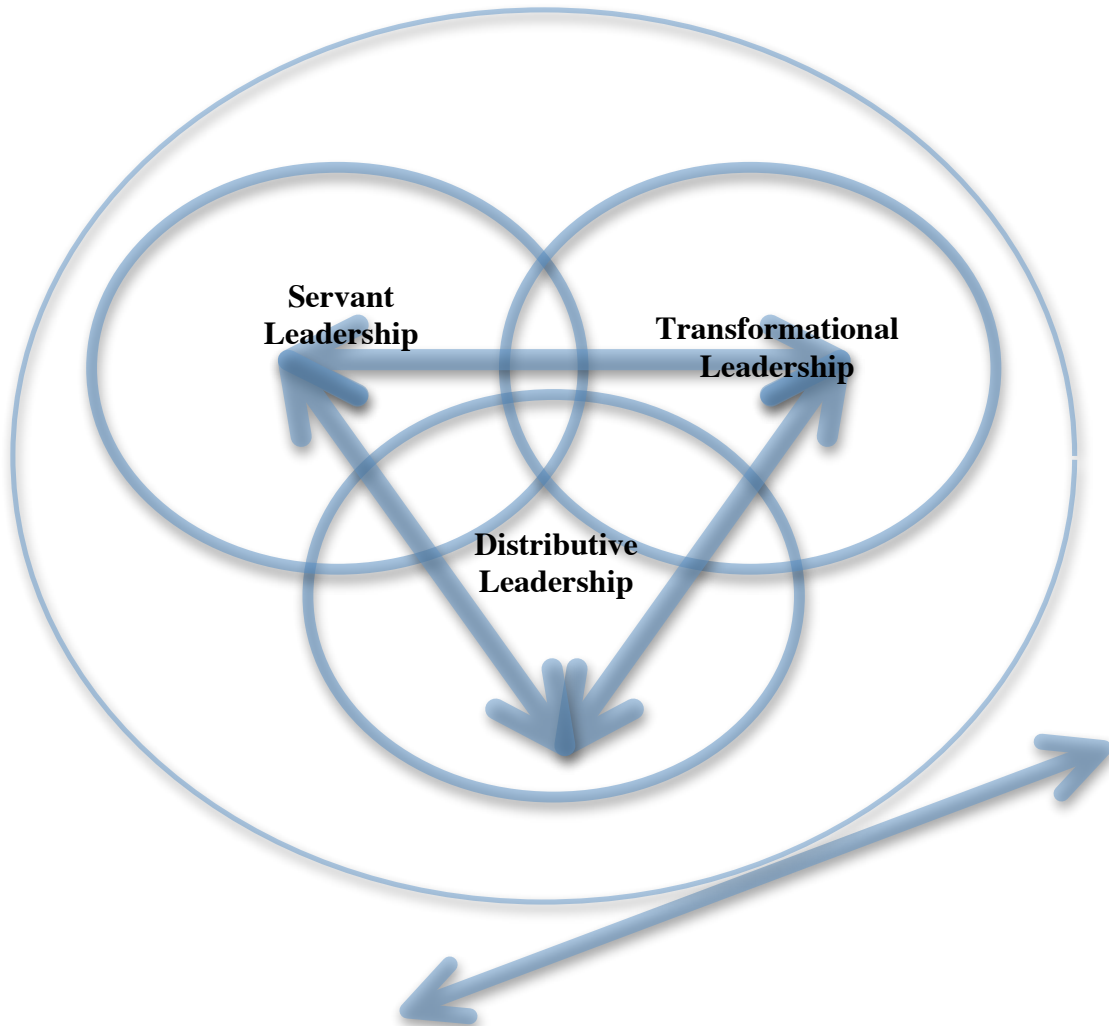


Figure 1. Leadership Theory in Use. Leading change while employing servant, transformational, and distributed leadership approaches along a continuum.

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Appendix A

2009 School Culture Survey from Dufour and Eaker (1998)

Statement	Average rating
Schools are not organized to respond to the needs and interests of students. They are bureaucratic monopolies that rely on a captive audience for their customers. There are a few incentives – and fewer rewards – to improve.	3.6
The issue is not that individual teachers and schools do not innovate and change all the time. They do. The problem is that the change is unproductive, focusing on the margins of practice rather than on the core teaching and learning.	4.3
From the perspective of teachers, much of school life is an endless cycle of first implementing and then abandoning new initiatives. Teachers are left with the impression that no one in the system really understands why change is occurring.	5.8
For teachers, the concept of change becomes a matter of coping with management's tendency to introduce and then abandon educational fads.	5.9
Teachers believe that it is their job to teach and the student's job to learn. Thus, they are responsible for teaching but not for student learning.	2.8
Typical classroom instruction is dominated by "teacher talk". Teachers work very hard, and students sit passively and watch them work.	2.8
Teachers work in isolation. There is little opportunity for serious professional interaction in which teachers share ideas, observe each other teaching, or assist each other in professional development activities.	5.4
The typical school curriculum is overloaded with trivia. Schools cannot do what they should be doing as long as they continue to do what they are doing.	4.0
There is typically no uniform school curriculum. Students studying the same subject with different teachers in the same school often learn vastly different content and have vastly different experiences.	3.1
Subjects are taught in isolation. Teachers make little effort to connect content from different subjects into meaningful conceptual framework.	3.0
Schools typically have no meaningful curricular goals. They focus on means (materials, programs, instructional arrangements, ect.) rather on ends – student outcomes.	3.0
Because they are unclear on the outcomes they are trying to achieve, schools are typically unable to offer valid evidence that they are accomplishing their intended purpose (ie., student learning)	3.2
Teachers have not worked collectively to identify the criteria by which they will assess student work.	3.7
The inability to establish a results orientation mean that the procedures for continuous improvement do not exist in schools.	3.3

Schools have no structure. They are simply convenient locations for a bunch of individual teachers, like independent contractors, to come together to teach discrete groups of students.	2.2
Schools have no infrastructures to support teacher collaboration in addressing schoolwide problems. Teachers, like their students, carry on side by side in similar, but essentially separate, activities.	3.8
Schools are structured as top-down bureaucratic hierarchies that rely heavily on rules for teachers, who can ignore much of the top-down direction when they are behind their own classroom doors.	3.5

n = 51

Note. A scale of one to ten was used with one representing “we are not at all like this” and ten representing “we are very much like this”.

Appendix B

Teacher Leader Interview Questions

Thank you for participating in my study. This interview is part of data collection for my dissertation. Through my action research dissertation I hope to learn more about teacher leadership and how we can foster it in the Ryan School District. I am going to record your responses and all responses will remain confidential.

- Tell me a little about your background? (years teaching, education)
- What contributed to you becoming a teacher leader?
- What caused you to apply for the Teacher Leadership position?
- How would you define professional learning? What does it mean to you?
- How does professional learning relate to your practice as a teacher and a leader?
- What kinds of work have you done as a teacher leader?
- Do you think the Teacher Leadership coalition has had an impact on the Ryan School district? Why or Why not?
- In what ways has your work as a teacher leader impacted the work of other teachers?
- In what ways has becoming a member of the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on you?
- What effects if any have you seen effects of teacher leadership in other contexts?
- How could the school district better foster teacher leadership?
- What are the challenges to teacher leadership?
- Is there anything else I should know about teacher leadership?

Appendix C

Post Presentation Survey

Before the presentations today, I knew what the teacher leadership coalition was.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

The teacher leaders presentations helped me to better understand the work they did this year.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I participated in one or more of the teacher leaders activities.

Yes No

The teacher leadership coalition had an impact on the school district.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Why or why not?

How can we improve the teacher leadership coalition? Please continue response on the back.

Appendix D

Teacher Leader Post Training Survey

1. What caused you to apply for the teacher leader position?

2. As a result of the training please rate the responses below.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have a better understanding of teacher leadership.					
I have a better understanding of the role and responsibilities of a teacher leader.					
I have learned new strategies for initiating change.					
I have a better understanding of the complexity of change.					
I have a better understanding of action research.					
I have gained the knowledge and skill to work with adult learners.					
I have better knowledge and skill needed to provide effective professional development for teachers.					
I have gained the knowledge and skills to serve as a coach for teachers.					
I believe I can effectively facilitate a Professional Learning Community.					
I feel comfortable being an observation classroom during the 2010-2011 school year.					

3. What to you believe will be your greatest obstacles this year as a teacher leader?

4. What opportunities do you believe the Teacher Leadership Coalition will provide you to grow professionally?

5. I will positively influence other teachers' professional growth.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Agree

6. In what ways will this training enable you to enact change that has a positive impact on school culture?
7. What aspects of teacher leadership do you believe you could use additional training?
8. If you are a former teacher leader please answer the following. Do you believe this training will better prepare the teacher leaders for the 2010-2011 school year?

Appendix E

Teacher Leader Job Description

Ryan School District is in need of the following positions for the 2010/2011 school year:

Pending Approval of Title I Funding

Teacher Leadership Coalition

Goal: To create a cadre of teacher leaders to bring and sustain positive change in the district to improve student achievement with a focus on at-risk students. Through the implementation and modeling of research-based instructional practices, effective technology integration, and a commitment to lifelong learning this group will enhance the culture of the district.

Teacher Leader Job Description:

- Attend summer training August 10th & 11th 9:00am – 1:00pm.
- Attend two to three afterschool meetings and/or training sessions per month
- Pilot new initiatives, instructional practices, and technology tools. Then gather data, and report out findings after pilot.
- Attend professional development opportunities and bring concepts learned into practice.
- Turn-key training and pilots through model lessons, one-on-one coaching, small group training, and/or larger workshops.
- Lead book study groups within the district.
- Take leadership role in at least one district committee.
- Read books and articles provided and be able to discuss the implications and implement practices.
- Participate in and facilitate online learning.
- Open up your classroom as a model classroom in the area(s) of your choice to allow peer observation and reflection on teaching and learning strategies.

Appendix F

Teacher Leader Post Presentation Survey 2

Good afternoon. I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, part of my dissertation study. Through my action research dissertation I hope to learn more about teacher leadership and how we can foster it in the Somers Point School District. This should take approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Please know that your comments will be confidential and no record is being kept of your identities.

Before the presentations today, I knew what the teacher leadership coalition was.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

The teacher leaders presentations helped me to better understand the work they will do this year.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

I plan to participate in one or more of the teacher leaders activities.

Yes **No**

The teacher leadership coalition has had an impact on the school district.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

Why or why not?

What do you believe are the benefits of teacher leadership?

How can we improve the teacher leadership coalition?

What do you believe are obstacles to teacher leadership?

Appendix G

Faculty Focus Group Questions

Fostering Teacher Leadership: Transforming Learning and Leading to Enhance School Culture

Good afternoon. I would like to thank you for taking the time to join me to discuss teacher leadership. This focus group is part of data collection for my dissertation. Through my action research dissertation I hope to learn more about teacher leadership and how we can foster it in the Ryan School District. This should take approximately 20 minutes and I invite you to speak openly and freely. As we proceed with this discussion, I will serve as the moderator and will record your comments both in writing and electronically. Please know that your comments will be confidential and no record is being kept of your identities.

The purpose of this focus group is to get honest feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the Teacher Leadership Coalition and how it might be improved. I am also looking to learn about your beliefs regarding teacher leadership and professional learning in general. Before we begin, are there any questions? OK, let's begin.

1. Have you been, or are you currently involved in any of the Teacher Leader projects? Please describe and tell why or why not?
2. Please share your thoughts about professional learning and its role in the practice of teaching?
3. In what ways, if any has the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the school district?
4. Think about the culture of the school district two years ago before the Teacher Leadership Coalition began. Do you see any changes to the culture of the district since the Coalition has been in place?
5. How could the Teacher Leadership Coalition be improved in the future?
6. Do you believe that in general the school district fosters teacher leadership? Why or why not?
7. How could the district better foster teacher leadership in the district?
8. Is there anything else you would like to discuss or share related to teacher leadership?

Appendix H

Administrator Focus Group Questions

Fostering Teacher Leadership: Transforming Learning and Leading to Enhance School Culture

Good afternoon. I would like to thank you for taking the time to join me to discuss teacher leadership. This focus group is part of data collection for my dissertation. Through my action research dissertation I hope to learn more about teacher leadership and how we can foster it in the Ryan School District. This should take approximately 20 minutes and I invite you to speak openly and freely. As we proceed with this discussion, I will serve as the moderator and will record your comments both in writing and electronically. Please know that your comments will be confidential and no record is being kept of your identities.

The purpose of this focus group is to get honest feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the Teacher Leadership Coalition and how it might be improved. I am also looking to learn about your beliefs regarding teacher leadership and professional learning in general. Before we begin, are there any questions? OK, let's begin.

1. What do you believe constitutes a principal or administrators role in the school?
2. What do you believe to be a teacher's role in the school?
3. What kind of relationships do you try to foster between yourself and teachers?
4. In what way do you try to empower teachers?
5. Are there some areas that you are more likely to relinquish control? Which areas?
6. Do you believe that in general the school district fosters teacher leadership? Why or why not?
7. In what ways, if any has the Teacher Leadership Coalition had an impact on the school district?
8. How could the Teacher Leadership Coalition be improved in the future?
9. How could the district better foster teacher leadership in the district?
10. Think about the culture of the school district two years ago before the Teacher Leadership Coalition began. Do you see any changes to the culture of the district since the Coalition has been in place?
11. Is there anything else you would like to discuss or share related