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Motivating Teachers to Lead in Low-performing Schools:
A Qualitative Study of School Leaders in Three Arkansas High Schools

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study addressed the problem of motivating teachers to take on leadership roles in “low-performing” schools. Coupled with the high demands of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) being placed on public school principals to ensure that all students achieve and successfully graduate high school, better ways to distribute leadership and share responsibilities among teachers were identified. The research question and purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the perceived leadership behaviors of high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” schools that support the motivation of teachers to take on leadership roles. Nine identified teacher leaders and three experienced high school principals with at least three years of administrative experience in once identified “low-performing” high schools participated in individual in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher using semi-structured questioning techniques. Interviews were transcribed and coded and triangulated with observations and document reviews to identify emergent themes. Data analysis determined what behaviors teachers perceived as motivating them to take on leadership roles within their schools. By incorporating the findings of this study into educational leadership programs at colleges and universities, masters-level students will benefit by participating in improved practical experiences needed to better prepare them for all types of high school settings. Moreover, veteran principals at the high school level will be able to incorporate the identified leadership behaviors, leadership strategies, and lived experiences into their current context to build more sustainable leadership practices within their schools.

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To the participants of each of my study schools: I am thankful and grateful for the opportunity I have had to conduct research with such a great group of teachers and administrators. Your commitment to building the capacity of others and to improving student learning is an inspiration and stands as an example of how schools can overcome the education label of “low-performing.”

Finally, I am eternally indebted to Dr. Mary B. Gunter for serving as my educational leadership “guru” and for reminding me that all my efforts as an educational leader must be focused on what is best for students.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Amy Fisher and our children Colin and Garrett Fisher, for their love, support, and patience throughout the entire doctorate program.

To my mother and father, Bobby and Sandra Fisher, for believing in me since childhood and for making the sacrifices necessary to ensure that my sister and I would be the first in our family to have the opportunity to attend college.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the topic and provides background and context information for the study. These are followed by a statement of the problem, purpose and research questions, research design overview, rationale and significance of the study, and conceptual design. The parameters of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of the terms are also noted. This chapter concludes with a summary and organization of the dissertation.

Background and Context

Educational leadership in the United States has undergone a far-reaching transformation over the past 20 years due to accountability and education reform efforts. Since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) in 1994 and again in 2015 with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the public has demanded that school systems raise their standards for improving the academic performance of *all* students; however, little direction has been provided to principals about how to work effectively to address these mandates. With a growing diversity of student populations – English language learners, under-resourced learners as well as learners with disabilities – combined with the implementation of educational initiatives such as *Common Core State Standards*, *Next Generation Science Standards*, and high-stakes assessments, teacher and principal evaluation systems, and the ESSA accountability system, principals in Arkansas and across the country are facing new challenges for ensuring that *all* students graduate on-time “college and career ready.”

According to Danielson (2007), principals report feeling overwhelmed, unable to accomplish operational duties and still make time to focus on improving student learning and

achievement. Portin (2004) examined leadership roles of school leaders before and after accountability legislation and found that principals are assuming responsibility for a wider range of leadership areas than ever before: instruction, school culture, management, human resources, strategic development, micro-politics, and external development. This rise in principal responsibilities coupled with the complexity of educational leadership is causing fewer teachers to want to take on additional leadership roles. Furthermore, creating effective leadership will require principals to take a more systemic approach to creating leadership opportunities for teachers within their schools (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

The world in which our children must learn and grow into adults is very different from the world experienced by any generation before them. Global connectivity, engagement, and interdependence are quickly redefining what it will take for new generations of Americans to compete and thrive economically, socially, and personally (Museus, Harper, & Nichols, 2010). In response, the public education system in Arkansas is being redefined to include more rigorous academic standards and more relevant learning experiences to help students prepare for and relate to the reality of the new world order. This movement towards a more globalized education system in Arkansas cannot occur without a systematic leadership structure and plan in place that includes both principals and teachers.

Several studies have linked the leadership effectiveness of schools not only to the leadership structures being employed, but also to the individual leadership ability of those in leadership roles (Gordon & Patterson, 2006; Zainal, 2008). A unified definition of effective leadership does not exist in the literature and distinguishing individuals' views of effective leadership, both teachers and principals' perceptions, must be considered within the context of

their own school setting. If a school's leadership structure is going to be evaluated, the perceptions of teachers must be compared to those of the principal.

Studies suggest that leadership effectiveness depends on both the leader's behavior and the match of the teacher's perception to that of the principal's (Burke, Feinberg, & Ostroff, 2005; Davis & DeValerio, 2006). The way teachers view principals' leadership practices may determine the nature of the relationship between teachers and principals. In fact, teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership behaviors can provide a valid source of feedback principals can use to improve their own leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership behaviors contribute directly to the process of selecting and recruiting teachers for leadership roles (Cranston, 2007). This study was designed to examine the specific behaviors of principals that teachers perceive as motivating them to take on leadership roles within their schools.

Statement of the Problem

Though principals have been regarded as the one person who has the most opportunity to exercise leadership influence in schools, teachers do not view themselves as potential leaders (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Teachers should not only be experts in curriculum and instruction, but also key leaders in programmatic changes, professional development, and school reform (Force, 1986). York-Barr and Duke (2004) assert, "Principals play a pivotal role in the success of teacher leadership by actively supporting the development of teachers, by maintaining open channels of communication, and by aligning structures and resources to support the leadership work of teachers" (p. 288). Lambert (1998) concurs stating, "Principals' leadership is crucial because they are uniquely situated to exercise some special skills of initiation, support, and visioning" (p. 24). Principals are now faced with the challenge of creating school conditions that will support teacher leadership if they are to systemically address these accountability mandates.

While there is widespread acceptance of the role that school leaders play in developing and sustaining schools as communities of learners (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999), educational leadership researchers continue to conceptualize new leadership models and methodology in order to better understand the relationship between leadership, teaching, and student achievement. Considerable debate has emerged over the most suitable model for educational leadership – total organizational leadership (Pounder, 2008), transformational leadership (Leithwood, Patton, & Jantzi, 2010), shared instructional leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003), leader efficacy (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008), and collective leadership (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008), among others.

Cultivation of strong teacher leadership requires principals to purposefully develop their own leadership skills that will support the development of leadership among individual teachers. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) reason that today's leaders must "crack the walls of privatism" (p. 11), replacing teaching in isolation with a collaborative spirit in order to distribute leadership and get the results they desire. Success for a principal now lies in the ability to assess teacher strengths in context, build on these strengths, and motivate teachers to exercise them publicly. Add to this list the ability to know when to step aside and let others lead and a principal is equipped to take an organization to new levels where teachers focus on instructional improvement and the principal keeps the vision, rallying staff to come together around a common goal of improving student learning.

Today's reform efforts are revolutionizing the way principals approach their work. While the body of research is growing and providing school leaders with a general direction on how to increase teacher leadership, the literature focuses very little on ways principals motivate teachers to move into leadership roles, especially at the high school level. Nowhere is the need more

important than in high schools, where student performance has traditionally lagged, organizational structures varied, and principal leadership been less than effective (Arkansas Department of Education, 2015).

Purpose and Research Questions

In the absence of literature that focuses specifically on teacher leadership at the high school level, this phenomenological study explored how high school principals develop sustainable teacher leadership. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine the leadership behaviors of three high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” schools that motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. The goals of this study were to determine which behaviors of these principals motivate teachers to take on leadership roles; to provide practitioners with a framework to guide high school principals in these schools; and to provide institutions of higher education with data to inform their educational leadership curriculum development.

This study was guided by the problem: How do perceived leadership behaviors of high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” schools support the motivation of teachers to take on leadership roles? Guiding the decision-making process within this study was four primary research questions:

- 1) How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?
- 2) Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?

- 3) Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?
- 4) How do high school principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?

Research Design Overview

A phenomenological qualitative approach was used to describe and interpret the impact on teachers and principals in high schools labeled as “low-performing” and the principal leadership behaviors that motivated teachers to take on leadership roles within these schools. A qualitative approach to this study was selected since the purpose of the research was to contribute to a better understanding of the complex nature of principal leadership practices and teacher motivation and leadership. Several characteristics of phenomenology identified by Creswell (2007) were applicable to this study:

- understanding the essence of an experience by studying several individuals that have shared that experience;
- interviews as a common means of data collection;
- strategies usually include analyzing the data for significant statements and meaning units, and
- the researcher engaging in a philosophical perspective to report the meaning individuals ascribe to an experience.

The primary data collection method of this phenomenological qualitative study included surveys of teachers and principals in high schools that were labeled as “low performing”, semi-structured “face to face” interviews with principals and selected school leaders, and on-site observations of classrooms, professional learning communities (PLCs), and faculty meetings.

Transcripts from the interviews, field notes from the observations, and artifacts collected during the study served as data sources. Interviews were transcribed upon their completion, and both interview and field-note data were analyzed using First and Second Cycle coding methods. Trustworthiness of the study was established through thick description, member checks, clarification of bias, and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2013).

Assumptions. Research indicates that when derogatory accountability labels such as “low-performing” are placed upon schools, teacher morale diminishes, additional stress is placed upon teachers and principals, and barriers to the formation of sustainable teacher leadership practices are created. Research further suggests that in order to create sustainable leadership within schools, principals must create opportunities and conditions that will support teachers taking on leadership roles (Danielson, 2007; Fullan, 2002; Lambert, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). Thus, the development of strong and sustainable teacher leadership within “low-performing” schools requires principals to cultivate motivation for leadership within individual teachers.

This study was dependent on participant perceptions and how they portray the realities of their own events. It was assumed that high school principals support teachers and the development of their leadership through shared experiences. It was also assumed that participants would openly and honestly discuss their leadership behaviors and experiences and by understanding these experiences help to explain the phenomenon of teacher motivation within high schools once labeled as “low-performing”.

The researcher. At the time of this study, the researcher was in his third year as a Superintendent of Schools in a rural Arkansas school district where he was responsible for the day-to-day operations of four campuses housing 990 students and 94 certified staff members.

Among his supervisory duties included the mentoring and evaluation of three building-level principals, each with less than five years of administrative experience.

Prior to becoming Superintendent of Schools, this researcher had taught secondary choral music, coached tennis, and drove a school bus route for six years in a small, rural district in Arkansas. He later served 12 years as building-level principal in a large, rural middle school in Northern Arkansas and a large suburban middle school in Central Arkansas. He eventually taught upper-level secondary education classes in a small, private Christian college in the Central Arkansas area. Having worked for an extended amount of time in a variety of educational roles caused him to develop a deeper understanding of the complex relationship that existed among teachers and principals, especially at the secondary level. Therefore, this researcher was uniquely positioned to care deeply about how principals motivated teachers to participate in leadership activities that would assist them to become future building and district-level leaders. Having been designated in 2009 as a National Distinguished Principal for Arkansas, this researcher was also aware of the potential for subjectivity and bias in terms of evaluating principals' leadership practices and took measures within the study to minimize the possibility of its occurrence.

Additionally, this researcher had four years of experience working in "low-performing" Arkansas high schools as a "Capacity Building Leader" with the Arkansas Leadership Academy (University of Arkansas – Fayetteville). Because of the extensive, first-hand experience with potential participants of this study, this researcher guarded carefully that the reality being captured through surveys, interviews, observations, and data analysis processes was that of the participants and not his own.

These challenges of researcher bias and trustworthiness were addressed in several ways including participant validation through member checking, prolonged engagement, triangulation of data, and discussion of the findings with colleagues. Employing these safeguards into the study helped to ensure that the academic integrity of the researcher and the University of Arkansas was preserved, and that the findings of this study would be viewed as a meaningful contribution to the literature.

Rationale and Significance

This study is significant in that the literature addressing principal leadership at the high school level is sparse. Teacher leadership has been adequately addressed throughout the literature, but teachers' perceptions of how principals motivate teachers to take on leadership roles in "low-performing" high schools has seldom, if ever, been examined. This study provides practitioners in "low-performing" high schools with suggestions for motivating teachers to take on leadership roles within their schools; however, since all schools are different, some of the conditions offered in the study may not be relevant to every high school context. It is assumed that readers of the study will therefore have to determine which principal behaviors and processes will best apply to their own high school context.

At the heart of this study was the desire to know how principals in three "low-performing" high schools where teacher morale is often non-existent motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. It was also intended to add to the body of knowledge about teacher leadership as cultivated and supported by principals who make deliberate decisions about how to create conditions for sustainable teacher leadership. It focused on teacher leadership within the context of a high school setting, an area previously not well studied, and an area with unique challenges that compound the problem of teacher apathy towards teacher leadership, and identified teacher-perceived principal behaviors that motivated teachers to take on leadership roles.

While previous studies have examined teacher perceptions about principal leadership behaviors (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; 1999), this study was designed to specifically capture the voice of high school teachers and how they perceive the effects of accountability labels being placed on their school. This focus was important to the study because it had received little attention from past researchers and could potentially provide high school principals with insights into how they may better support teacher leaders in “low-performing” schools over long periods of time. It was also important to investigate how principals could best leverage teacher leadership to help carry out their visions and keep the focus on continued improvement. Additionally, it was important to know whether or not teachers perceived principals were sustaining teacher leadership through specific strategies shared by other participants within the study.

“Leadership is about taking the risk of managing meaning” (Shaw, 2012, p. 39). Principals in high schools must be informed managers of meaning. The findings gained from this study’s questions will serve research participants as a reflective learning activity for their own leadership and inform other high school principals of effective strategies in motivating teachers to take on leadership roles within their schools. Other stakeholders such as the researcher, the dissertation committee, Arkansas college and university teacher preparation and educational leadership programs, Arkansas Department of Education new administrator and teacher mentoring programs, and other stakeholders who consume the information contained within this study will also benefit from a deeper understanding of the behaviors and processes used by high school principals to build sustainable teacher leadership.

Conceptual Design

The conceptual design was intended to provide a clear concise visual of the steps used in this qualitative study (see Figure 1.1). Prior to conducting the actual study, the researcher gained written approval from the district superintendents of the schools chosen to participate in the study. Three high schools in Arkansas served as study sites due to their success of being removed from the “low-performing” academic distress list by the Arkansas Department of Education and their availability to this researcher. In accordance with the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines, permission was obtained from the district superintendents, principals, and teachers selected from each high school studied.

The first step of this study was to survey all principals and teachers of the site schools to determine which teachers perceived themselves as “teacher leaders” and which teachers were perceived by the principal to be “teacher leaders.” The results of these surveys were considered when selecting the sample group of teachers to be interviewed.



Figure 1.1. Conceptual design of this study.

The second step of this study was to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews of the principals and teachers of the site schools for the purpose of gaining their perspective on what motivated teachers to take on leadership roles within their schools. The teachers selected for interviewing had served at least three years in a leadership role in their school and were considered “teacher leaders” by themselves and their principals. Their leadership responsibilities included, but were not limited to serving as a grade-level, or department chairperson; regularly leading Professional Learning Community (PLC) times; and/or facilitating on-going professional development activities with teachers.

The third step of this study was to conduct observations of leadership team meetings, PLC times, faculty meetings, and classroom instruction at each site school and record findings in a reflective journal. The purpose of these observations and journal entries was to see how the selected teacher leaders function within their natural school setting and witness first-hand their leadership characteristics and traits.

The final step of this study was to collect and review various planning documents developed and utilized by each school site for improving teacher instruction and student achievement. These documents included, but were not limited to agendas and minutes from school improvement meetings, PLC times, faculty meetings, student intervention meetings, and professional development activities.

Upon completion of this study, the researcher conducted a careful review of all collected data. A common mission among today’s building principals is to find ways to build sustainable leadership capacity among teachers. By identifying how teachers were motivated to take on leadership roles and how principals developed sustainable leadership practices in these schools once labeled as “low-performing,” the findings of this study will enhance the school leadership

literature and benefit principals in “low-performing” schools looking for ways to motivate teachers to take on leadership roles.

Parameters of the Study

The sites chosen for this study were three high schools in Arkansas that were once labeled “low-performing” high schools. These high schools served approximately 300-1,500 students in grades 9 through 12 and employed approximately 25-35 certified teachers and a principal. These school sites were selected due to the fact that each school had been removed from the state’s “low-performing” academic distress list due in part to the principals’ leadership efforts, and due to the proximity to the researcher.

Six teachers and three principals were selected to participate in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Each teacher and principal selected worked full-time in the site school and was responsible for leading and facilitating faculty meetings, PLC times, professional development activities, or any other teacher-centered activity requiring a leader. Participants were observed in the site schools while engaging in these leadership activities.

Limitations of the Study

This phenomenological qualitative study and any of the results were limited to only the perceptions of nine teachers and three principals chosen from three Arkansas high schools once labeled as “low-performing.” Additional data were gathered by observing participants engaging in leadership activities only on the days the researcher was conducting this study. Other school data were collected through a document review process, but only with the documents specifically requested by the researcher.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are provided for clarification and uniformity of understanding throughout the study:

Collaboration. Principals and teachers working together to achieve common goals that cannot be achieved alone.

Distributed leadership. Responsibilities for leadership held by both principals and teachers through formal and informal structures.

High school. Denotes a public school campus in Arkansas containing any combination of grades 9 through 12.

Low-performing school. A school in Arkansas labeled through the accountability system as a “focus” or “priority” school.

Shared leadership. The sharing of power (i.e., decision making, problem solving) skillfully among principals and teachers through collaboration where relationships can flourish and educators can sharpen their skills.

Stakeholders. Any person or group with an interest in or influence on the outcomes of a school.

Sustainable teacher leadership. The degree to which leadership activities and processes become ongoing habit of teachers.

Teacher leader. A teacher, with or without positional responsibilities, who positively influences change in other school staff.

Summary

As more accountability is being placed on school districts and school leaders to increase performance levels for all groups of students, principals must search for and implement ways to motivate teachers to take on more leadership responsibilities to distribute the workload of school improvement. Though school leaders of “low-performing” schools have spent much of their time, energy, and resources seeking ways to increase teacher motivation, it is still unclear how high school principals in “low-performing” schools motivate teachers to take on leadership

responsibilities. This study was designed to help this researcher and its readers understand the impact of principal leadership on teacher leaders.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation was organized into five chapters, a reference section, and appendices. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the topic and background information for this phenomenological qualitative study. The topics researched in Chapter 2, the literature review, include the characteristics of “high” and “low-performing” schools, trends in school leadership, the role of principals as leader, motivating teachers to lead, the role of teachers as leader, and sustaining teacher leadership. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology used for this study, including a description of the research design and sampling population, the data collection instruments and procedures, and the methods used to analyze the data collected. The data collected from the study is presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 and provides a summary of the research and the results of the study, including recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction and Overview

The previous chapter provides a general overview of this study and what was to be accomplished by it. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived leadership behaviors of three high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” schools that motivated teachers to take on leadership roles. While a significant literature base existed on principal and teacher leadership, there was a lack of firsthand studies on the topic of developing sustainable teacher leadership, particularly in “low-performing” schools.

Chapter 2 begins with an examination of leadership characteristics found within “high” and “low-performing” schools and includes the effects principal have on motivating teachers to become school leaders. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of the impact of principal leadership practices on the development of sustainable teacher leadership within schools. The themes and findings presented within this literature review serve as the theoretical framework for studying principals and teachers in once-labeled “low-performing” high schools.

Method and Search Strategy

Utilizing the University of Arkansas on-line research databases, key search terms were selected to gather research for background on the topic, to define research already conducted on the topic, as well as determine if any gaps existed in the current research. Broad searches of the literature on the concepts of educational leadership, school leaders, motivation of teachers, and high schools were conducted using several search strategies.

First, a search using ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global was conducted incorporating search terms *teacher leaders*; *principal leadership*; *teacher motivation to lead*; and *low-performing high schools*. 163, 214, 97, and 37 dissertations respectively were retrieved from 2010 to 2017 using these key terms. Many of the dissertations retrieved during this search

focused on a variety of topics including teacher leadership within specific subject areas and grade-levels; principal leadership within high-poverty, charter, and grade-level specific schools; effects of teacher motivation on student academic and assessment performance; teacher perceptions of principal leadership in specific regions of the United States; and strategies for turning around low-performing schools in selected areas of the country. Only five dissertations were written to date that included all of the search criteria needed for this study. This search confirms that a minimal number of studies have been conducted on perceptions of principal leadership by teachers and teacher motivation to lead in low-performing high schools in Arkansas.

Second, the following electronic databases were used to do a comprehensive search focusing on articles or reports published: ERIC, PsychINFO, Ebsco, ProQuest, LexisNexis, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and WorldCat Classic. These databases were searched for all publications containing at least one of several terms related to high schools, teachers, principals, leadership, motivation, and low-performance. Collectively, these searches produced more than 300,000 references. Examples of key words in the original search include:

- Teachers
- Classroom teachers
- High school teachers
- Teacher motivation
- High school teacher motivation
- Educational motivation
- History of leadership
- History of school leadership

- History of educational leadership
- Leadership styles
- Educational leadership styles
- Principal leadership styles
- Teacher leadership styles
- Teacher leadership
- High school teacher leadership
- Teacher leaders
- High school teacher leaders
- Teacher leader perceptions
- Principals
- Building principal
- High school principals
- Principal leadership
- High School Principal Leadership
- Principal leaders
- High school principal leaders
- High school
- High school education
- High school performance
- Low-performing schools
- Low-performing high schools
- High-performing schools

- High-performing high schools
- Phenomenological study

Indexes of institutions such as the U.S. Department of Education, American Educational Research Association, as well as Arkansas Department Education were searched for specific reports. The specific reports searched were related to national and state requirements for being labeled as low-performing schools, principal and teacher leader demographics in Arkansas, and state and federal initiatives designed to help teachers to access training to be building leaders.

The search was narrowed by tightening search terms and establishing criteria for what would be relevant to this study. Literature and research studies were relevant only if applicable to the research questions and context of the study. When reviewing the four key areas to build the background for this study, research studies from 2007 to date were included to provide a foundation for the most current principal behaviors used to motivate teachers to take on leadership roles in public schools today. Once establishing the material was relevant to the research topic, it was determined if the material was scholarly and empirical in nature. Peer-reviewed journals and organizations with well-established publications were selected for use. Further, books and book chapters were included that related to the selected topics and research questions.

Characteristics of High and Low-performing Schools

Effective school leadership is a component often attributed to “high-performing” schools (Clarke, 2010; Felton, 2010; Nesmith, 2010; Shannon & Bylsma, 2002). According to Lashway (2003), students' performance on standardized tests, attendance, and graduation rates are indicators used to judge principals charged with leading school improvement efforts. As a result of the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, increased emphasis has been placed on

these indicators as schools, school districts, and states are held accountable for ensuring all students are proficient in reading/language arts, mathematics and that students graduate from high school. In their review, Shannon and Bylsma (2002) found that “high-performing” schools have a clear and shared focus on student learning, set high standards and expectations, maintain a high level of communication among stakeholders, focus on professional development, maintain a high level of family involvement, and consistently focus on curriculum and teaching. Shannon and Bylsma noted that most of the “high-performing” schools in their research were identified as “high-performing” based on student performance on standardized tests, although many of the schools had a high percentage of students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. While there is not a magical formula that can ensure high levels of student performance, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) identified nine characteristics of “high-performing” schools that correlate to high student academic performance:

1. Having Clear and Shared Focus - Everybody knows where they are going and why. The focus is on achieving and sustaining a shared vision, and ensuring that all stakeholders understand their role in achieving the vision.
2. Holding High Standards and Expectations for all Students - Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some students must overcome significant barriers, those barriers are not seen as insurmountable.
3. Cultivating Effective School Leadership - Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes that positively impact the learning environment and that nurture the instructional program.

4. Maintaining High Levels of Collaboration and Communication - Everybody in the school is involved and connected to each other, including parents and members of the community, to identify problems and establish workable solutions.
5. Ensuring Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments are Aligned with Standards - The curriculum is aligned with essential academic learning requirement. Researched- based teaching strategies and materials are used. Staff members have a clear understanding of how classroom and state assessments are used to measure student work and to plan for changes based on assessment findings.
6. Frequently Monitoring Learning and Teaching - Teaching is consistently monitored and adjustments are made based on student progress and needs.
7. Providing Focused Professional Development - Professional development activities aligned with the vision and goals of the school and the school district are available to members of the staff.
8. Fostering a Supportive Learning Environment - The school has a safe, civil, healthy, and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students have a sense of empowerment and feel respected and connected with the staff. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.
9. Maintaining a High Level of Family and Community Involvement - There is a sense that all stakeholders in the learning process have a responsibility to educate students.

In contrast to “high-performing” schools, most “low-performing” schools are often characterized by high teacher turnover, serve a high percentage of students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, have less than a positive school culture, and have principals that are often described as “low-performing” principals (Kaplan, Owings & Nunnery, 2005). Most “low-

performing” schools often have limited resources, insufficient facilities and supplies, and are sometimes limited to hiring well-qualified teachers than most “high-performing” schools (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). Schools are customarily categorized as “low-performing” by virtue of persistently less than adequate scores on standardized tests, low graduation rates, and high dropout rates. Studies have shown that a large percentage of principals of “low-performing” schools are ineffective and often do not provide teachers the support and mentoring necessary to improve instruction (Riordan, 2006). Riordan also found that “low-performing” principals often fail to provide adequate resources for teacher learning and professional development. In contrast to “high-performing” schools, there is not much information in the existing literature describing the characteristics of “low-performing” schools. According to Kaplan et al. (2005), common conditions appear to be present in “low-performing” schools. These conditions often include a correlation between community poverty and stress on the organization of the school. Kaplan et al., (2005) emphasized that the stress is evidenced by low expectations for student achievement, high teacher absenteeism, high rates of teacher turnover, and a high level of student discipline problems.

Trends in School Leadership

For the past decade, educational leadership studies have shown an increased interest in school leaders because of the crucial role they hold, particularly in respect to educational accountability. The McKinsey Report, detailing major factors affecting successful educational systems around the world, highlights the importance of quality leadership at the helms of schools (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). As a factor affecting student achievement, the quality of school leadership was found to rank just below the quality of classroom instruction (Leithwood & Day, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2008).

There are a number of theories and themes recurring in the research literature on school leadership: (a) managers and administrators to instructional leaders; (b) singular to collaborative leadership; and (c) transformational and moral leadership in schools. During the past two decades, the literature regarding school leadership has described major conceptual changes reflecting vast transformations in the responsibilities, roles, and tasks of school leaders.

Perspectives on school leadership have evolved over time. School leaders were first seen as managers of their school buildings, responsible for numerous administrative tasks including running the day-to-day operations of the school and seeing that the facility met the educational needs teachers and students. Later, school leaders were recognized as leaders of “change” within their schools, responsible for implementing up-to-date instructional methods and guiding teachers to seek out ways to engage all students in the learning process. That perspective was further refined to view school leaders more specifically as instructional leaders who establish, develop, and promote the mission of the school, the instructional curriculum, and the school learning environment so that instruction can take place in the most appropriate environment and with the most appropriate goals and methods (Elmore, 2004; Firestone & Riehl, 2005; Robinson, 2006; Stronge et al., 2008).

Crum and Sherman (2008) state that school leaders, within a climate of increased demands for education reform aimed at improving student achievement, are finding that they are being held more accountable for student outcomes. This has been the case in the United States particularly since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 and most recently with the Every Child Can Succeed Act in 2017. Crum et al. (2009) stress that accountability has become an increasing focus in schools worldwide. Schools and school leaders all over the world are being held increasingly accountable for student performance and progress.

Firestone and Riehl (2005) state, “Leaders are increasingly being held accountable for the actual performance of those under their charge . . . given growing expectations that leaders can and should influence learning” (p. 2). Kelley and Peterson (2007) add that states that enacted increased accountability reforms have seen increased involvement of school leaders in qualitative changes such as: curriculum standards, an increased focus on higher-order thinking, high-stakes testing, and accountability for student learning (p. 358). Regardless of the numerous administrative tasks a principal must perform, the ultimate goal of a school is to educate all students. Stronge et al. (2008) emphasize that school leaders must always make this a top priority.

This major shift is demonstrated through an instructional leadership model. This paradigm emphasizes the mission of the school, the instructional curriculum, and the school learning environment as the primary factors on which educational leaders should focus (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger, 2003). Murphy (1990) suggests defining the main work of school leaders as managing the educational “manufacturing” and “production” of the school. Southworth (2002) explains that “instructional leadership . . . is strongly concerned with teaching and learning, including the professional learning of teachers, as well as student growth” (p. 79).

Detailing the practical applications of instructional leadership, Colvin (2010) states, “It’s up to the school leadership to establish a strong, achievement-oriented school culture and clear expectations, endorsing a specific ‘learning improvement agenda’ for the school” (p. 16).

Elmore (2000) and Bottoms and O’Neill (2001) claim that most school leaders build up their instructional leadership capabilities intuitively rather than through structured preparation and training. Portin (2009) suggests trying “to narrow the focus on most potent behaviors that can promote better learning outcomes” (p. 5).

Concurring with the sentiment of the need for the structured training of school leaders, Hopkins (2003) notes, “If we are serious about raising the levels of student achievement and learning in our schools, then we need to research and develop, more than ever before, styles of leadership that promote, celebrate, and enhance the importance of teaching and learning and staff development” (pp. 5–6). Mitgang (2008) claims, “There is a growing agreement that with the national imperative for having every child succeed, it is the school leader who is best positioned to ensure that teaching and learning are as good as they can be” (p. 1).

A major shift in the way school leaders are being viewed favors a distributive approach to educational leadership, acknowledging that it takes more than one individual to manage a school effectively (Portin, 2009; Masewicz, 2010). The distributive leadership model arose in response to the complicated, multifaceted, and ever-expanding workload facing school leaders. It replaces the traditional notion that a school should have one “great leader” who is solely responsible for leading the school (Elmore, 2000; Spillane, 2006). Hartley (2010) suggests that the reason for the popularity of distributed leadership is mainly “pragmatic: to ease the burden of over-worked head teachers” (p. 271). It “resonates also with a culture wherein the boundaries among categories are rendered more permeable than hitherto” (p. 271).

The collegial and distributive leadership models recognize that a school can have numerous strong leaders (Zenger & Folkman, 2009; Van Beck, 2011). The collegial model states that “organizations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus” (Bush, 2003, p. 64). Elmore (2000) points out that distributed leadership models offer the potential to treat instructional practice as a collective good—a common concern of the whole institution—while respecting, acknowledging, and capitalizing on differences in expertise (p. 24). Leithwood (2005) claims that it would be difficult for a single leader to

manage all the departments in a school effectively without the assistance of other members of his or her staff. Asking for information from staff members can minimize errors in decision-making. Stronge et al. (2008) agree that distributing leadership is necessary for a school and for school leaders to be successful (p. 6).

Bell et al. (2003) state that there tends to be more resistance from staff in schools characterized by top-down leadership than there is in schools that share leadership responsibilities and roles among staff members. They also contend that student outcomes are more likely to improve in schools characterized by distributive leadership than in those operating using the traditional model of a single leader running the school. Leithwood et al. (2008) seem to concur, stating “school leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed” (p. 34). Harris (2008) emphasizes that distributing leadership roles and responsibilities do not necessitate disrupting all of the traditional or existing management and leadership structures within schools.

Like collegial and distributed leadership models, the participative leadership model calls for the creation of professional learning communities in which power is divided democratically among members of the organization (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Fullan (2004) explains that educational leaders who wish to implement this participative model must be able to nurture numerous leaders within the school who will be able to continue in leadership roles should the current principal leave the school, or school system. Day et al. (2008) claim that current research clearly shows “the importance to the success of the school in broadening participation of staff, and consulting with them on a regular basis” (pp. 88–89).

Other models have been introduced to explain the core task of school leadership during the past two decades (Masewicz, 2010; Oplatka, 2007). The transformational leadership

paradigm in education developed by Leithwood (2005) emphasizes “emotions and values and . . . the fundamental aim of fostering capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals on the part of leaders’ colleagues” (p. 10). Using such models, Kirby, Paradise, and King (1992) investigated school leaders as transformational leaders and the ways they incorporate transformational and transactional behaviors in their interactions with the teachers in their schools. These models further develop the general leadership concept described by Bass (1985) and are highly relevant for schools that are dealing with major changes.

Transformation and a focus on values are further developed by an emphasis on moral leadership, supported by Sergiovanni (2005). Sergiovanni presents the school leader as a “moral leader” who is faced with making numerous value-defined decisions on a daily basis. School leaders acting in accord with this model must harmoniously combine their values, decisions, and actions in ways that demonstrate that they have a strong moral compass (Sergiovanni, 1992). Moral leadership in schools assumes that social justice and democratic values are at the foundation of educational leaders’ work because these leaders are responsible for the development and improvement of the entire society (Dantley, 2003).

The themes and trends identified in the literature on school leadership are important to this study because they provide information on the current roles held by school leaders, especially principals, and the expectations held concerning their performance in those roles. Rather than functioning mostly as building administrators, wielding top-down authority, principals are seen more and more in a wider variety of roles as instructional leaders. They have the ability to put their own stamp on schools as transformational leaders. These relatively recent perspectives on the work of school leaders indicate that it is important and useful to identify the

particular perspectives that successful principals bring to their work and the types of experiences that define and guide that work.

The Role of Principal as Leader

Achieving and sustaining a high quality organization within a complex environment demands that leaders possess a wide range of leadership competencies (Daresh, Gantner, Dunlap, & Hvizdak, 2000; Felton, 2010). Principals must respond to multiple demands from a variety of stakeholders while leading schools through a radically changing time in American education. Being an effective school manager was once sufficient enough for principals to be considered effective leaders. Principals merely served as building managers and student disciplinarians during the course of a normal school day. Superintendents and school boards were satisfied with principals who could build good class schedules, discipline students, manage school budgets, and communicate effectively with large groups of school stakeholders.

Today, an increased focus on the individual learner and the personalization of each student's education has put principals at the forefront of learning in schools and school districts. Principals must now work closely with teachers and support staff members to redesign instruction to meet the learning needs of all students. As a result of changing paradigm, school principals have had to adjust how they lead in their schools.

The restructuring of American education has called for a greater emphasis on problem-solving and student achievement, which requires principals to become "transformational leaders" (Hallinger, 1992). To address the professional needs of teachers and foster improved achievement among students, principals are assuming more "instructional leadership" responsibilities within their schools (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003) and are adopting more

of an “integrated leadership” approach to mobilizing the collective action of teachers in an effort to produce higher-quality teaching and learning.

Waters et al. (2003) conducted research on the effect of various leadership practices on student achievement and found that the behaviors of principals can have an effect on student achievement. Principals not only have the potential to have a positive impact on student achievement, but can also have a marginal, or negative impact on student achievement, as well. The two primary variables that determine the direction and impact on student achievement include the focus of change, and whether leaders understand the magnitude or “order” of change they are leading. It is essential that principals understand the effects of change on student achievement and by adjusting their leadership practices accordingly.

A recurring theme in the leadership literature is that when principals use their influence to develop more leaders among teaching staff, an increase in student achievement results. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) found that higher-achieving schools awarded leadership influence to all school stakeholders to a greater degree than lower-achieving schools. This influence and leadership must be awarded and nurtured by the building principal. Clearly, the role of the school principal can greatly affect student achievement.

Another aspect of study has been the influence of the principal’s values on student achievement. Parkes and Thomas (2007) studied the issue of whether there are values held in common by effective secondary school principals that underpin their work practices. After studying and interviewing secondary principals from 40 city and rural secondary schools in Australia, principals who were perceived as helpful, open, and honest were characterized by teachers as “highly effective” leaders. Their operational style included being competent and knowledgeable with an emphasis on personal development for teachers. Sergiovanni (1992)

states that truly effective schools are those with a shared vision among stakeholders clearly communicating the school's core values. This shared vision must be focused on well-defined goals for what effective teaching and learning should look like for all students.

The role of the principal has become dramatically more complex, overloaded, and unclear over the past decade (Fullan, 2014). The role of the principal as "instructional leader" may not be clearly defined, but the importance of the role is clear. As "instructional leader", the principal is the pivotal point within the school affecting the quality of individual teacher instruction, the level to which student's will achieve and the efficiency of the school functioning (Flath, 1989). The "instructional leader" has many responsibilities and must be able to identify talent, develop that talent, and provide a culture where others can thrive. Teachers need autonomy, respect and accountability to make the dramatic changes necessary to impact student achievement. The principal must create an environment where this can happen by continually developing the skills of the teachers and keeping the goals of the school front and center, leaving behind individual wants and needs (Heller, 2004).

Teachers who have a professional learning environment that include continual learning and support from their instructional leader are less likely to transfer, or leave the profession than their peers with less favorable conditions (Armstrong, 2012). Recently teacher satisfaction dropped dramatically in just two years. In 2009 59% of teachers were very satisfied with their jobs, and in 2011 that number dropped to 44% (MetLife, 2011). A study done by Harvard Graduate School cited working conditions as the number one predictor of teacher satisfaction and career plans making the role of the principal as "developer" that much more significant. Sustaining the culture necessary for effective teachers to thrive is also an important characteristic

of a principal that can't be overlooked. Principals who sustain others understand the power of teaming and are motivated by a set of deep personal values and beliefs.

Principals must also have a view of the future that is significantly different from how schools have been (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Schmoker, 2006; Nesmith, 2011). There is no amount of skill, enthusiasm, or determination in teacher leaders that could fundamentally change the structure of schooling or the culture of teaching (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Teacher leaders rely on the principal to create a culture that accepts peer collaboration and leadership. The principal is charged with the delivery of effective instruction, but often does not have the teaching staff to do it all. Identifying teachers to become leaders in coaching and mentoring roles provides the infrastructure necessary to develop a continuous loop of learning (Armstrong, 2012). The principal is the catalyst for change and improvement within a school and must ensure that the school has the teaching talent necessary to execute a rigorous instructional vision (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982; Kimball, 2011; Van Beck, 2011).

The principal as the leader of the organization controls the flow of power and whether the power has a negative, or positive charge. *Disequilibrium* is the term coined that describes the principal as someone looking over a balcony and purposefully disrupting the status quo to promote change. *Disequilibrium* can lead to growth by developing a relationship with the disorder. Prigogine's work on *disequilibrium* states that it is a necessary condition for a system's growth. Systems that are presented with increasing levels of disturbance have the ability to adapt by reorganizing into self-organizing systems. If an organization is compliant and not deliberately seeking new information, it can and will become stagnant. It is the principal's role and responsibility to create a "disturbance" or *disequilibrium* to start the organization moving and learning how to adapt and self-organize (Wheatley, 1999).

Today, a principal must be a good “talent manager” incorporating a skillful approach to recruiting, developing, and training highly effective teachers and teacher leaders. There is a distinct difference between principals who manage buildings and those who strategically manage human capital (Kimball, 2012). Marzano (2006) points to numerous studies demonstrating that two teachers working with the same socio-economic populations can achieve starkly different results on the same assessment. In one class 27% of students pass and in another class 72% of students pass (Schmoker, 2011, p. 9). An exploratory study conducted in 2003 with five districts, four of which were low-socio-economic districts, examined the conditions that led elementary principals to support the work of teacher leaders. The study found that there was strong evidence of a link between the principal’s knowledge of the role of the teacher leader, the interactions they had with the teacher leader, and their support for the teacher leader. This study also found that districts should build the principal’s knowledge base on teacher leadership (Mangin, 2007).

How teachers relate to one another is highly important to ensure the quality of instruction as it relates to providing students with differentiated support. Without a strong trusting sense of community the hard conversations necessary for improvement will not occur (Tobia & Hord, 2012). Teacher leaders are most effective when colleagues trust the process and are willing to take risks and experiment for the purpose of improving. The following actions contribute to building a culture of trust: bringing teachers into decision making, keeping one’s word, showing respect for competence and intentions, addressing incompetence fairly, and demonstrating one’s own competence (Roy & Hord, 2007). Developing trusting and collaborative relationships is the primary means by which teacher leaders influence their colleagues. Principals play a pivotal role in the success of teacher leadership by actively supporting the development of teachers, by

maintaining open channels of communication, and by aligning structures and resources to support the leadership work of teachers (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Motivating Teachers to Lead

York-Barr and Duke (2004) suggested that effective schools motivate and reward teachers who are interested in becoming teacher leaders and possess exemplary qualifications and knowledge. They added that school boards must recognize teacher expertise and contributions by providing opportunities for qualified teachers to become teacher leaders. Teachers often express a desire to work in schools that support job advancement and provide opportunities for success. In a similar study, Hirsch (2006) showed that teachers who were empowered and given opportunities to become teacher leaders often remained in schools. Empowerment and leadership opportunities are critical predictors of a teacher's desire to remain at a school.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) claimed that teacher leaders are influenced by growth and learning opportunities as a result of teacher leadership. As teachers engage in and pursue leadership opportunities, many teachers reported feeling enriched and energized. In addition to these feelings, teachers gained knowledge and skills in teaching that led to increased self-esteem and confidence. Thus, teachers had a stronger commitment to teaching and a desire to remain in teaching. Professional growth opportunities allow teachers to collaborate with colleagues, help other teachers, work with principals and other administrators, and expose teachers to new ideas to enhance teaching skills.

Research studies shows that leadership and professional growth are interrelated (Barth, 2001; National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2007; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). A clear effect of teacher leadership is the growth and learning for the teachers themselves (York-

Barr & Duke, 2004). When teachers actively pursue leadership opportunities, their lives are enriched and energized, and their knowledge and skills in teaching increase dramatically, leading to increased confidence and a stronger commitment to teaching. Professional growth also occurs as the result of collaboration with peers, assisting other teachers, working with administrators, and being exposed to new ideas. York-Barr and Duke (2004) claimed that “teacher leaders grow in their understandings of instructional, professional, and organizational practice as they lead” (p. 8).

Barth (2001) expressed the concept of teacher leadership as providing the additional person power needed to manage general operations of the school, many of which are too difficult and cumbersome for principals to solely manage. Nevertheless, principals can use teacher leaders as reliable and dependable sources that provide professional assistance for principals. As teachers become leaders, they learn to expand their capacity for leading. Utilizing teacher leaders may assist principals in reducing the workload and responsibilities when principals delegate some responsibilities and relinquish and share some power with teachers. Not only do teacher leaders assume responsibilities, but they also become instructional leaders alongside principals.

In a study by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2007), teachers reported that principals often do not provide them with opportunities to provide input into decision-making aspects of the school. However, democracy becomes transformed as teacher leaders assume more school-wide duties and responsibilities, thus making them the center of involvement in decision making. As a result, students observe teachers who become teacher leaders, and hence students assume responsibility for and participate in student government concerns as related to teacher leaders. Students also benefit from teachers who are satisfied on

the job because they are involved in decision-making and thus feel that they are an important part of decisions made at the school level.

The Role of Teachers as Leader

As “instructional leaders”, principals serve many different roles at school (Doyle et al., 2007). Likewise, classroom teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge, but also team leaders, department chairs, grade level chairs, committee chairs, administrative council members, leadership team members, and many more roles. Doyle et al. (2007) found that the functioning of school leadership teams that included teacher leaders varied and was largely connected to the role of the school principal on the teams. When the principal attended the meetings regularly as an equal participant, the researchers observed greater shared decision-making and discourse than in teams where the principal either was in control of meetings or did not regularly attend.

Donaldson (2007) described teacher leadership as meaning different things to different people. Leaders of various teams, grade level chairs, and department chairs experience teacher leadership each day. Teacher leaders experience complexity of different roles that range from serving as administrators to being on a committee, but not in a leadership role. Such complex roles lead to lack of understanding regarding teacher leadership. According to Ackerman and Mackenzie (2006), administrators, school board members, citizens, and even teachers were not cognizant of leadership roles and what should be done in a given position. Others do not fully understand teacher leadership and where it fits in the stratum of leadership roles as administrators.

Danielson (2007) concluded that at the classroom level teacher leaders must actively engage in improving schools. Research indicated that on a school-wide level, teachers may assume more extended roles that include collaborating with colleagues and having input into

school-wide decision making (Barth, 2001; Elmore, 2002; Holloway, 2003). Whether principals provide the opportunities or teachers find their own opportunities, teachers are able to influence school improvement in classrooms, serve on department teams, assist with school-level decisions, and influence school improvement in the school district. Furthermore, teacher leaders may expand their leadership opportunities by serving as teacher leaders throughout their district, region, state, and nation.

According to a study conducted by Boyd-Dimock and McGree (1995), traditional teacher leadership roles included curriculum developers, grade-level chairs, team leaders, department chairs, and professional learning community leaders. School reform efforts should range from professional development to increased teacher leadership roles. As a result, teachers should be included in important decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. In addition, teachers are in the best position to make changes on a school-wide level on an ongoing basis. Moreover, increasing teacher leadership roles may help to attract and retain teachers in the teaching profession.

Donaldson (2007) reasoned that principals are responsible for the entire operation of the school and therefore may not be readily accessible to work with small groups of teachers or meet with individual teachers seeking their assistance, whereas teacher leaders are able to meet with others individually or in small groups. Working with small groups either formally or informally (i.e., grade-level teams or departments) is an event that happens naturally and spontaneously for some teachers. Rather than set formal meetings and appointments, teachers may occasionally stop by another teacher's room to discuss ideas, share materials, and plan instruction together. In these instances, virtually all teachers become teacher leaders with little distinction between roles.

Donaldson asserted that regardless of who initiates discussions, leadership does exist among energetic and concerned teachers who want to become leaders.

Spillane (2006) asserted that teacher culture based on relationships in schools may undermine administrative and policy making influence. Establishing strong relationships is a powerful asset for teacher leaders since relationships among teachers create bonding and as a result, bonding may influence teacher retention. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) claimed that while some administrators and policymakers might view strong relationships among teachers as a problem, teachers consider relationship building as one of the most powerful leadership assets.

Relationships create a diverse group of teacher leaders who are different as leaders. Donaldson (2007) suggested that administrators should search for diverse leaders among teachers since many roles must be fulfilled. Administrators promote visions and set goals to be accomplished by teachers and therefore exert power over teacher assignments, reappointments, observation and evaluation of teachers. Consequently, principals are often unable to develop positive relationships with teachers in the leadership and controlling roles. Principals in these roles can usurp working relationships with teachers; hinder management responsibilities, and separate teachers from teaching and learning. From this viewpoint, teachers' assets can complement principal leadership if principals are receptive to teacher leaders being empowered.

Sustaining Teacher Leadership

Finding ways to motivate teachers to take on leadership roles is not the only barriers to effective leadership practice faced by principals today. There is the issue of developing sustainable leadership in schools. Fullan (2005) identifies four questions organizations should ask pertaining to the development of sustainable leadership. First, how does an organization

increase its leadership capacity? Second, how can succession be made more systematic than the selection of a few trusted insiders for advancement? Third, how is it possible to maintain an organizations' energy level when it is committed to improvement over time? Finally, how can a school be properly contextualized within a school system? Studying teacher leadership in the context of sustainability may reveal ways to strengthen a school's leadership culture and make it more sustainable. The motivations of school leaders must be taken into account when considering sustainable leadership within schools. Knowing what drives school leaders, whether a moral commitment or commitment to certain personal goals, is important (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Many leadership researchers have written and researched extensively sustainable school leadership, often favoring the distributed and transformational leadership models (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Spillane, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009; Felton, 2010). These researchers advocate teacher leadership as a method for building leadership capacity and increasing the potential for sustainable leadership. Through their studies and action research on sustainable teacher leadership, it is evident that principals must develop strategies for engaging and empowering teachers to gain a leadership mindset.

Fullan (2005) offers a definition of "sustainability": it is the "capacity of a system" to have "continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose" surpassing "the tenure of one leader" (p. ix). "The main mark of an effective principal is not just his or her impact on the bottom line of student achievement, but also on how many leaders he or she leaves behind who can go even further" (p. 31). System thinkers want to develop others' leadership, as well, but very few systems-thinking leaders exist. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) categorize this as *planned* and *unplanned continuity* and *discontinuity*. If school leadership fails to establish a

consistent direction that endures over the tenure of several leaders, the leadership is not sustainable.

According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), there are seven principles of sustainable leadership: depth, length, breadth, justice, diversity, resourcefulness, and conservation. The principle of *depth* states that leadership must always have a sense of purpose, preferably a moral purpose, and that student learning must be at the center of a school's priorities.

The principles of *length* and *breadth* refer to planning for principal succession and easing the burden on principals, respectively. For leadership to be sustainable, it is important to plan for continuity in leadership either by identifying key teachers for possible succession, or by distributing teacher leaders throughout the organization through "pools of talent" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 76). It is unrealistic to expect principals to know and be able to do everything by themselves. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), utilizing distributed leadership as a tactic among teachers is considered "morally responsible" of a principal.

Justice refers to a sustainable leadership that both refers to and goes beyond one's own context. For sustainable leadership to be *just*, the principal must be good for everyone, not just one group of stakeholders or one program. Ways to mitigate this are to examine the impact of principal leadership across all systems within the school to ensure that every stakeholder is valued and supported. For sustainable leadership to be *diverse*, the principal must avoid trying to force everyone to fit the same exact standards and seek support from the entire network of school stakeholders.

Resourcefulness refers to attempts by the principal to make leadership sustainable by avoiding the waste of teacher talent and resources. *Conservation* encourages the principal to consider the past, as well as the future in seeking change and improvement within the school.

Attempting to use beneficial aspects of the past in combination with new ways is a method of honoring the past for teachers who may have seen many cycles of change.

Achieving leadership sustainability will require a deliberate effort by principals to set in place the procedures and mindsets to enact these principles. It will require constant monitoring, patience, transparency, and careful design. Principals must keep in mind that there are different domains of sustainability within schools and that all school stakeholders will benefit from sharing common goals, moving towards a desired future, and working together to get there.

Some may consider it unreasonable for principals to foster sustainable leadership within the confines of today's systems, structures, and policies. Based on Fullan's research, it takes about ten years for a principal to develop into a viable systems leader. Considering the short amount of time today's principals serve in one school, this is difficult to accomplish and fundamentally unrealistic.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 served to set the stage for this study, which explored the perceived leadership behaviors of high school principals in once labeled "low-performing" schools that motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. Research-based insights into the challenges of today's principals and the multi-faceted views of how "teacher leadership" is cultivated and sustained in "high" and "low-performing" schools clearly showed the need for closer study of these areas. In addition, the literature lacked a principals' voice in the conversation about defining teacher leadership. As principals arrive and depart from schools, it will be important to ensure the sustainability of leadership over time and over the course of many principals, not just one. This will require the creation of a school culture that will support the development of sustainable leadership practices across all systems within schools.

Chapter 3 introduces the methodology of this study. In this chapter, the introduction reviews the problem statement and research questions that appeared in Chapter 1. Next, the research site, sample, procedures, and data collection methods are discussed. The design of the study, a qualitative study utilizing surveys, observations, and interviews, are illustrated in detail. Lastly, data analysis methods and ethical considerations are discussed. The methodology of this study outlined in Chapter 3 ultimately provides articulation to the principal's voice in examining teacher leadership and its potential to contribute to sustainable school improvement.

Chapter 3 Methods

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how high school principals develop sustainable teacher leadership. More specifically, this study examined the leadership behaviors of high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” high schools that motivated teachers to take on leadership roles. Guiding the decision-making process within this study was the following research goals:

- 1) To determine which perceived behaviors of principals in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” motivate teachers to take on leadership roles.
- 2) To provide practitioners with a framework for guiding high school principals in these schools to effectively cultivate teacher leadership.
- 3) To provide institutions of higher education with data to inform the development of educational leadership curricula.

Four research questions served as a starting point for additional study design:

- 1) How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?
- 2) Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?
- 3) Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?
- 4) How do principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?

By studying three principals in Arkansas high schools that have been removed from the “low-performing” academic distress list, the researcher gained a deeper insight into what was working within these contexts to provide educational practitioners with a framework for engineering organizational conditions that allows for effective and sustainable teacher leadership practices within various contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative study was developed around the foundational theories of constructivism and interpretivism. It examined the experiences of principals and teachers in contexts where teachers were motivated by principals to become teacher leaders. These experiences were examined to construct an understanding of the phenomenon and how it related to the development of sustainable leadership practices. This study was dependent on the interpretation of data collected through the voices of participants as they described their perceptions of principal behaviors that helped to motivate teachers to lead in “low-performing” high schools.

Aligning with the interpretivist approach, this study focused on meaning, understanding, personal experiences, and participants’ perceptions. The researcher sought to interpret how teachers and principals viewed principal leadership behaviors that resulted in overcoming the challenges of working in a high school once labeled as “low-performing”. Shank (2006) observes, "...you and I might differ somewhat in our knowledge and understanding of key concepts and ideas, but at heart we can work together because our individual ‘takes’ on knowledge are ultimately grounded in similar social and cultural concepts and models" (p.96). Principals in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” share a common desire to motivate teachers to help lead with school improvement efforts and yet school leaders achieve this in very different manners within their school contexts. The ontological assumption is that “reality is

subjective and multiple as seen by participants in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 17). For this reason, emergent themes and quotes from the participants were employed to help frame the findings of the study.

Understanding the development of teacher motivation is only possible with a research method that respects the complexity of leadership issues and processes. A phenomenological data analysis revealed clusters of meaning and a structured description of the perceived principal leadership behaviors within “low-performing” high schools that motivated teachers to lead. Phenomenology provided a lens through which the researcher focused on participants “lived” experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Creswell (2007) offered the study four broad philosophical perspectives of phenomenology: 1) philosophy as the search for wisdom, 2) holding no presuppositions about what is real, 3) the intentionality of consciousness, and 4) that there is no subject-object dichotomy (pp. 58-59). Each of these four perspectives significantly influenced the study. Without the first perspective, a search for wisdom, there was no motivation for research. The second philosophical perspective, holding no pre-suppositions of reality, was critical for this study due to the epoche (or bracketing) that was necessary as the researcher sought to set aside his own personal experiences. As the last two perspectives merged, “The reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual” (Creswell, 2007, p. 59). The basis of this phenomenological study was the reality of the common experiences in divergent contexts as discovered and described through individual perceptions and meaning-making for each of the participants.

Research Sample

A critical part of this phenomenological research study was the careful selection of participants who provided key information to help successfully answer the established research questions. Creswell (2007) stressed the importance of this by noting, “an important step in the process is to find people or places to study and to gain access to and establish rapport with participants so that they will provide good data” (p.118). While there were a variety of ways in which the researcher could have looked at which subjects he would choose for study, careful attention was given to selecting individuals that would help strengthen the results of the study.

In a phenomenological study, according to Creswell (2007), participants must all have experienced the phenomenon that is being studied and be able to explain or articulate, in detail, their experiences. Therefore, it was important that a purposeful sample be selected so as to best inform the researcher about the problem being studied. Patton (2002) further clarifies this idea of purposeful sampling writing, “information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 230). Maxwell (2013) supports the use of purposeful sampling by describing it as a strategy in which particular individuals are selected deliberately to provide information that cannot be collected from other subjects.

For the purpose of this study, criterion sampling was employed using data collected from three Arkansas high schools having successfully had the label of “low-performing” removed. Each teacher and principal selected for study had been employed by the school being studied for at least four years and were still serving in the role of principal, or teacher leader.

Bloomberg & Volpe (2012) reminds researchers that, “unique features of qualitative research methodology present potential limitations in its usage” (p. 126). Given that the participant sample for this study resulted in subsequent interviews with both male and female

eligible participants, another area for future sampling may include studying a population of all male or all female principals and teacher leaders. This would provide additional data about whether or not males perceive taking on leadership roles in “low-performing” schools in different ways from females.

Overview of Information Needed

The data collection, analysis, and reporting of this qualitative study was designed to create a thick, rich description and interpretation of high school principals in schools once labeled as “low-performing”. In order to accomplish this, Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) identify four kinds of information needed to answer qualitative research questions: contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical. This qualitative study included all four types by incorporating information and data from semi-structured interviews, observations, document reviews, and reflective journal entries as illustrated in Table 3.1. These multiple methods of data collection were utilized to achieve triangulation and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

“Relevant demographic information is needed to help explain what may be underlying an individual’s perceptions, as well as the similarities and differences in perceptions among participants” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2013, p. 105). Basic demographic information was collected from the participants in order to better understand their own personal context within the whole group. Pseudonyms were created for each participant identifying their general school location in Arkansas, gender and ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Information regarding the participants’ career path and career goals that may have influenced their perceptions and responses was also collected.

Table 3.1

Overview of Information Needed

<i>Type of Information</i>	<i>What the Researcher Requires</i>	<i>Method</i>
<i>Contextual</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background and history of the school structures and performance • Site organization • School mission, vision, and values • Program/course offerings • Collaborative meeting structures 	Surveys Document reviews Personal observation
<i>Demographic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal background information (ethnicity, gender, how long in education, education level, and years of teaching and administrative experience) • Teachers' background information (ethnicity, gender, how long in education, education level, subject area, and leadership experiences) 	Surveys Semi-structured interviews
<i>Perceptual</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptions from the principals of how they lead • Descriptions from teacher leaders about how the principal leads • Description of collaborative meetings • Descriptions of leadership opportunities 	Surveys Interviews Field Notes Observations
<i>Theoretical</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership skills that build leadership capacity in teachers 	Literature review Data analysis Document reviews

Bloomberg & Volpe (2012) state that “perception information is the most critical of the kinds of information needed [for a qualitative study]” (p. 106). In order to answer the research questions of this study, participants reflected on semi-structured interview questions about the perceptions of their principal’s leadership behaviors and described how they affected the motivation for teachers to take on leadership roles. This perceptual information gained through the data collection process was essential for this researcher to tell the story of what the participants believed to be “true” in this phenomenological study.

Bloomberg & Volpe (2012) conclude that theoretical information “includes information researched and collected from the various literature sources to assess what is already known

regarding [the] topic of inquiry” (p. 106). A review of the literature contributed to an understanding of the theoretical foundation of teacher motivation including the theories of principal and teacher leadership, teacher motivation, and sustainable school leadership. Additionally, literature regarding “high” and “low-performing” schools and qualitative methodologies informed the conceptual framework, methodological approaches, analysis, interpretation, and findings of this study.

Research Design

Research design is a critical consideration that must be made prior to beginning a qualitative study. Qualitative researchers must consider several topics in the research design process before they proceed with the study. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain, “The research design section should demonstrate to the reader that the overall plan is sound and that the researcher is competent to undertake the research, capable of employing the chosen methods, and sufficiently self-aware and interested to sustain the effort necessary for the successful completion of the study” (p. 90). Figure 1.1 illustrates an overview of the research design showing the relationship between the steps in the research process. Appendix A further shows the interactive relationship between the research goals, questions, and conceptual frameworks defined for this study. Because of the emergent nature of qualitative research, the initial research design for each phase of the study cannot be tightly determined because of changes that may occur as the data is being collected (Cresswell, 2007).

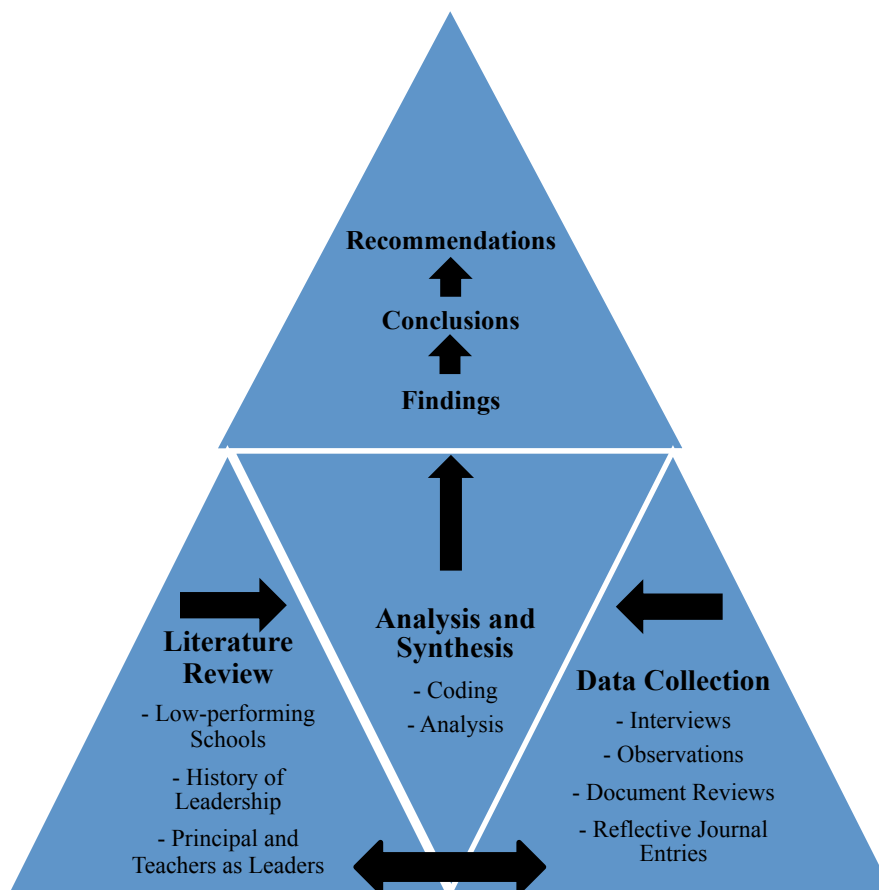


Figure 3.1. Research design overview of this study.

Data Collection Methods

Surveys. Surveys can be used to collect data about characteristics, experiences, and opinions in relation to participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Two multi-item surveys - one for school principals and one for teachers - were administered at the three high school sites to gain insight into the teacher leadership phenomena at each school. During an initial faculty meeting, the researcher explained the research study and reviewed the informed consent forms. It was emphasized that participation in the study was voluntary and that there would be no repercussions if an individual choose not to participate. Since all teachers were invited to the faculty meeting in each school, this provided a cross-selection of teachers for sampling.

Surveys were distributed to and completed by all of the teachers and principals in each high school. Each participant answered the same semi-structured questions in the survey. After each item, space was provided to allow participants to offer specific examples. Those teachers perceiving themselves as “teacher leaders” and being perceived by the principal as “teacher leaders” were considered for final sampling selection and administered in-depth semi-structured interview questions.

Interviews. In-depth semi-structured interview questions are used to elicit authentic accounts of participant experiences and emotions (Schwandt, 2007). Open-ended questions are used in qualitative research to allow the participants to voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspective of the researcher or past research findings (Creswell, 2013). Yet, in-depth interviewing has its challenges. First, the interviewee may be unwilling or uncomfortable sharing information (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Second, the interviewer’s lack of experience may result in inefficient probing. Third, due to the volumes of data that may be collected, analysis may be time-consuming. Finally, the quality of the data needs to reflect the participant’s, not the researcher’s subjective reality (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

To begin the interview process, the researcher utilized an interview protocol that informed participants of the interview process instructions, as well as the specific questions to be used during the interview (Creswell, 2013). The interview data collection involved two phases and was conducted at each of the high school campuses.

During Phase One, the researcher conducted initial interviews with the principal and teachers that had been self-identified and identified by principals as teacher leaders. This interview served to introduce and explain the purpose of the study, answer and clarify questions, establish trust, and attain information on their experiences leading to their present leadership

position, beliefs, and professional background. Phase One interviews were conducted at the school during times convenient for the participants. Interviews last from 25-45 minutes and were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis.

The researcher transcribed Phase One interviews as they were completed. Participants received their own Phase One interview transcription prior to the Phase Two interview sessions. This allowed each participant to read the transcription before the verification process. Verification of Phase One interview transcriptions were conducted after each individual Phase Two interview and ranged from 5-10 minutes in length.

During Phase Two, the researcher again conducted interviews with the principal and teachers that had been self-identified and identified by principals as teacher leaders in order to attain specific data on the perception of leadership behaviors and practices at the research site. Interviews lasted 30-45 minutes each and were also audiotaped and transcribed for analysis.

After the interview sessions, each participant had the opportunity to discuss the transcription of their Phase One interview and request any necessary changes. Once each Phase Two interview transcription had been completed, the researcher visited with the individual participant so that the transcript could be reviewed. The time period for checking Phase Two interview transcriptions ranged from 5-10 minutes for participants who requested changes.

Observations. Observations can be used to generate data of everyday social interactions of participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The researcher initially commences the observation process with diverged areas of interest and without a pre-determined checklist (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). However once patterns of behavior are identified, observation checklists used at later stages of the study can assist in the analysis of themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

For this study, the researcher collected data through observations of principals and teachers in their natural settings -- during leadership team meetings, Professional Learning Communities, faculty meetings, and classroom visits. Protocols were developed to accurately describe processes witnessed during each of these observations. These observations of the interactions between participants and non-participants in the study provided insight into the leaders' practices, motivations, and emotions. Observation data served to inform the study of the most significant behaviors exhibited by the principals and teacher leaders.

Document reviews. The review of documents is a process that is unobtrusive, but can copiously portray participant values and beliefs (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). However at the same time, caution should be exercised in making inferences from document content analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Because documents such as the Arkansas School Report Cards and School Improvement Plans are easily accessible, the researcher used these to corroborate perceptive data collected through interviews and/or observations. The researcher also examined these documents as a means to obtain an accurate picture of how these schools were performing at the time of the study.

Reflective journal entries. Additionally, the researcher kept a reflective journal throughout the data collection process. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) suggest that the quality and credibility of the dissertation rests on the researcher's capacity for insightful reflection. Therefore, the researcher maintained written records of his thinking processes, questions and assumptions based on observations made during school meetings and classroom visits, as well as any thoughts arising during interview analysis and transcriptions.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Transcripts from three principal and nine teacher interviews were the major sources of data analyzed in this phenomenological. The computer software program NVivo 11 was used to

organize and analyze data collected from the interviews into a more manageable format (QSR, 2013). This program allowed the data to be classified, sorted, and retrieved more efficiently and created additional time for the researcher to effectively examine the emerging themes and categories that informed the interpretations and conclusions of this study. NVivo 11 also assisted in storing the codebook of identified codes for this study, their definitions, examples of each, and the guidelines for their usage.

The enormous amount of data anticipated and the vast array of words, sentences, and paragraphs expected to be generated from these interviews needed to be reduced to what is of most importance and interest and then transformed to draw out themes and patterns (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). To manage this analytic process, Bloomberg & Volpe's (2012) First and Second Cycle coding methods were employed to provide deeper understanding and meaning to the data being collected.

Structural Coding served as the primary First Cycle coding method for this study. Open coding permitted the researcher to acquire an initial sense of the data compared with the research questions and conceptual framework developed for this study. By initially examining and labeling the interview data into "meaningful units," the essence of the interconnections and interrelationships of the data was organized for deeper understanding and explanation (Saldaña, 2013).

Focused Coding served as the primary Second Cycle method used to analyze the interview data. Focused Coding permitted the researcher to reorganize and reanalyze First Cycle coding to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and theoretical organization from the First Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2013). Combining the analysis from First and Second Cycle coding, along with the analysis of principal and teacher documents (i.e., journals, evaluations, school

support weekly reports, etc.) and observation memos, enabled this study to move beyond concrete events and descriptions to theoretical insights and possibilities (Charmaz, 2006).

In the final data analysis step, a rich, textual description of “what” teachers and principals experienced accompanied by a description of “how” their experiences occurred was woven together by the researcher to create the evidence, logic, and explanation needed to clarify to the reader “why” the data were interpreted in this specific manner (Charmaz, 2006). By employing these clear and logical procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data within this study, the research community will be provided with a transparent model for use in other phenomenological studies.

Ethical Considerations

Education researchers must strive to maintain high levels of competence in their work and recognize the limitations of their expertise (American Educational Research Association, 2011). This researcher adhered to these professional standards by establishing safeguards in all phases of the research process (see Appendix B) in an effort to contribute scientific knowledge to the public good (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Due to the evolving and flexible design of qualitative research, a number of ethical issues had to be considered during this study.

Ethical Research Design

An interactive research design (see Appendix A) was employed to organize this phenomenological study and maintain a continuous connection between the researcher, participants, and components of the study (Maxwell, 2013). This flexible design took into account the reflexive nature of phenomenological research allowing for design components to be modified at any point and time an ethical issue or concern arose.

Ethical Issues Review (Institutional Review Board)

A proposed study was submitted to the University of Arkansas's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for its approval (Appendix C). The IRB assured that appropriate steps were taken to protect the rights and welfare of those participating in the study and would assess the ethics of the selected research process and its methods.

Ethical Researcher-Participant Relationship

This study was conducted in a manner that minimized any potential harm to participants and allowed them the autonomy to judge what risks were worth taking for the purpose of scientific knowledge (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The rights of all participants in this study were protected by a consent agreement provided by the University of Arkansas IRB. Included in the IRB was an option to refuse to participate at any time during the study, as well as a statement ensuring that the participants' job, pay, and status with the school would not be affected in any way if they refused to participate.

Ethical Data Collection Process

This study employed multiple methods of data collection – surveys, interviews, observations, document reviews, and field notes -- and triangulation as a means for obtaining in-depth information about the participants and their contexts. This data collection process added rigor, breadth, and depth to the study and provides corroborative evidence of the data obtained (Cresswell, 2007).

All data collected was stored in a secure manner on a secured external hard drive under lock and key with only the researcher's ability to access the information. Transcripts were kept in a locked filing cabinet housed in the researcher's office located in the Atkins School District.

Ethical Data Analysis and Interpretation

During the data analysis process, this researcher interpreted the data by reducing its volume through coding; identifying significant patterns and themes in the transcripts; and constructing a framework for interpreting and sharing research findings that could be replicated by other researchers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). To safeguard against this researcher's biases, all journals, memos, field notes, interview transcripts, and other documents utilized within this study were made available for peer review.

Ethical Dissemination of Findings

Participants' rights and interests were protected and information kept confidential when this study was disseminated and reported to the public. Descriptions of the participants and their contexts were accurately used in the narrative of this study to provide the research literature with credible, dependable, and transferable findings (Maxwell, 2013).

All information was kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law. The American Educational Research Association *Codes of Ethics* (February, 2011) were strictly adhered to during this study. A specialized lettering code was created for each interview to protect the identity of the participant.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, validity (trustworthiness) refers to the attempt to find accuracy in the findings as well as credibility, dependability, reliability, and authenticity in the study (Creswell, 2007). Because this study was qualitative, the data collected was checked for consistent patterns of themes and accuracy (Creswell, 2007). First, the data collected through interviews was member-checked by participants to ensure their accuracy. Additionally, participants were asked to share their views on the credibility of the researcher's findings and interpretations.

Secondly, a peer review by an outside individual who reviewed and questioned the study was employed. The peer debriefing sessions assisted the researcher in answering hard questions about the methods, meanings, and interpretations of the study (Creswell, 2007).

Lastly, rich, thick descriptions of the setting and participants were used so that the reader could better understand the research experience. Because this was a phenomenological study requiring a detailed summary of the experiences of high school principals and teachers, thick and rich descriptions will allow the reader to make decisions concerning transferability (Creswell, 2007).

Limitation and Delimitations

A challenge for qualitative researchers is identifying potential weaknesses and limiting conditions unique to the scope of their study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) state in their criterion for credibility that it is imperative for the researcher to clarify the bias brought to the research as well as the reflective and decision-making processes (p.77). One of the key limitations of this study was the issue of subjectivity and potential bias since the researcher had shared the experience of working for four years with some participants in the Arkansas Leadership Academy *School Support Program*. The researcher was careful to balance known experiences with unknown experiences in describing findings and forming conclusions within this study to ensure that personal experiences were separated from researched experiences.

This study was delimited to the examination of the perceptions of principals and teachers working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing,” but this researcher recognized that there were other sources of data and analysis that could be used in future research. By varying the participants’ school location, size, grade configurations, and collaboration structures,

additional data was able to be collected and analyzed to determine what principal behaviors build leadership capacity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a detailed description of this study's research methodology. Qualitative phenomenology was employed to illustrate how perceived behaviors of high school principals in once labeled "low-performing" schools motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. The participant sample was made up of 12 purposefully selected individuals based on selection criteria. Four data collection methods were employed, including surveying, individual interviews, observation, and reflective journal entries. The data were reviewed against literature, as well as emergent themes. Trustworthiness was accounted for through various strategies, including source and method triangulation. The intent of this study was to make a contribution to the understanding of principal leadership, current and future, and provide a framework for future studies.

Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This phenomenological study explored how high school principals develop sustainable teacher leadership. More specifically, this study examined the leadership behaviors of high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” high schools that motivated teachers to take on leadership roles. This study was conducted in three Arkansas high schools that were once labeled as “low-performing,” but since that time have successfully been removed from the state’s “focus” and “priority” school listings. By studying these three Arkansas high schools, the researcher aimed to gain insight into what worked so these practices could be replicated in other schools. While the body of research on principal leadership and teacher motivation is growing, it remains scarce, especially at the high school level.

This chapter presents findings that emerged from the investigation of the following four research questions:

- 1) How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?
- 2) Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?
- 3) Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?
- 4) How do principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?

Answers to these questions are gleaned from survey data and interviews with principals and teacher leaders. The chapter begins with a description of the phenomenological study to provide

the reader with the context of the organizations being studied. A summary of the methodology including a description of the participants is also provided. Next, the findings from the study are shared. Findings result from the review and analysis of surveys and personal interviews. The data revealed through interviews will be presented thematically. Findings associated with each of the four research questions are also provided. The chapter concludes with a summary and brief introduction to Chapter 5.

Description of the Phenomenological Study

Three high school principals and nine teachers participated in surveys and personal interviews in an effort to capture their perceptions about teacher leadership and the principal's role in motivating teachers in "low-performing" schools to take on leadership roles. The study took place in three high schools: an urban high school in central Arkansas, a suburban high school in north-central Arkansas, and a rural high school in southwest Arkansas. These schools were selected for study based on their size, geographical location, and leadership demographics. The researcher had unique access to some participants in the study because he had previously worked with two of the three schools as a School Improvement Specialist while the school was labeled as "low-performing." Although the information provided within this study is specific to the context of the three selected high schools, the findings may offer valuable insight to other administrators interested in motivating teachers to take on leadership roles in their schools.

Description of Schools

School A. School A is one of six public high schools located in an urban school district in central Arkansas. It is funded annually on a per pupil basis through local, state, and federal tax dollars and is situated within close proximity to three privately funded high schools. In order

for School A to generate an optimal level of revenue for operation, it must maintain, or increase its student enrollment each year.

In 2010, School A was labeled a “focus” school and placed under state control by the Arkansas Department of Education. Following three years of intensive principal and teacher leader training and through weekly monitoring of classroom instruction and student performance data by school improvement specialists, School A met its adequate yearly progress goals in 2013 and was removed from the “focus” school list. As a result, the principal and teachers of School A have developed and maintained a strategic vision for ensuring high levels of teacher and student performance in both academics and athletics.

Over the past five years, School A has significantly updated its campus through the construction of new academic and athletic facilities. Student enrollment has subsequently increased from 481 in 2013 to 513 in 2017.

School B. School B is a high school located in a suburban school district in central Arkansas. It is funded annually on a per pupil basis through local, state, and federal tax dollars and is situated within a few miles of Arkansas’ only military base. School B was labeled as a “focus” school in 2010 and placed under state control by the Arkansas Department of Education. During this time, School B averaged 50 requests for school choice student transfers to two high schools in neighboring districts. After four years of intensive principal and teacher training and through weekly monitoring of classroom instruction and student performance data by school improvement specialists, School B was able to meet its adequate yearly progress goals in 2014 and be removed from the “focus” school list. As a result, the principal and teachers of School B maintain a vision for a safe school culture with high-quality teaching and engaged, rigorous student learning.

Since 2014, the average number of student transfer requests to neighboring districts has decreased to 12 and the total number of students enrolled has increased from 591 to 863 in 2017. Due to this increase, School B built a state-of-the-art ninth-grade academic building in 2016 and added 13 new teachers and support staff.

School C. School C is a rural high school located in a small town in southwest Arkansas. It is also publicly funded on a per pupil basis and is situated within two miles of a private college and a publically funded state university. For decades, School C has maintained an excellent relationship with these neighboring institutions, but has failed to adequately prepare its graduates for the rigor of post-secondary learning. In 2010, School C was labeled as a “focus” school and placed under state control by the Arkansas Department of Education. After five years of intensive principal and teacher training and through weekly monitoring of classroom instruction and student performance data by school improvement specialists, School C met its adequate yearly progress goals in 2015 and was removed from the “focus” school list. Since that time, School C has created a vision that all students will be “college and career ready” upon graduation and has partnered with community leaders to create an academic support program for its “under-performing” ninth-grade students.

Total enrollment for School B in 2017 is 1,471 with approximately 150 ninth-grade students enrolled in a weekend, college-prep program. Although School C has not increased its enrollment or significantly improved its academic performance since being removed from Arkansas Department of Education oversight, it continues to increase the number of students that are “college eligible” upon their high school graduation.

Summary of the Methodology

A summary of this study's methodology is provided below. However, a more comprehensive description can be found in Chapter 3. The reader will find a review of the research design, study participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures below.

Research Design

This phenomenological study examined the principal's role in promoting teacher leadership. It identified specific principal behaviors that motivate teachers to take on greater leadership roles, and examined the principal's role in creating a culture for sustainable teacher leadership. This study also looked at ways in which the NCLB and ESSA accountability labels may constrain efforts by principals to motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. Three Arkansas high schools once labeled as "low-performing" and subsequently removed from the state's "focus" and "priority" listings served as the contexts for this study.

Data Sources and Collection

Participants. The population of this study consisted of participants chosen from among 13 high schools in Arkansas that had once been labeled as "low-performing" and had successfully remained off of the state's "focus" and "priority" listing since that time. Superintendents in the districts represented by these high schools were initially surveyed (Appendix D) to determine if the current principal had also served as principal prior to having the accountability label removed. As a result, three high schools met the criteria and were selected for study.

Teachers in each selected school were asked via a survey (Appendix E) to identify important characteristics of teacher leaders and determine if they viewed themselves as teacher

leaders and why. Principals in each school were also asked via a survey (Appendix F) to identify important characteristics of teacher leaders and determine which teachers they considered as leaders and why. Only those teachers viewed as leaders by themselves and their principals that had been teaching in the school at the time it was labeled as “low-performing” were considered as potential participants for study. Since more potential participants were identified in each school than needed for study, the researcher selected nine participants based on the criteria that would help him achieve the research goals of the study.

Data Collection Procedures. Data used in this study were collected from teacher leaders and principals primarily via personal interviews. Identical interview questions were used with each of the nine teacher leaders (Appendix G) being studied. Likewise, each of the three principals were administered identical interview questions (Appendix H). Prior to conducting the individual interviews, the researcher met with each participant to explain the purpose of the study, answer and clarify questions, establish trust, and obtain demographic background information for the study. All participants consented to having their interviews audio-taped for future transcription and analysis. Additional data collected from on-site observations along with document reviews and reflective journaling were utilized to achieve triangulation and form an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Data Analysis and Findings

The researcher analyzed data according to themes that emerged from participant responses and observations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The results were then used to answer the research questions. The data analysis procedure included several steps. First, immediately following the interview, the researcher listened to the audio-taped recording. Next, transcriptions of the interview sessions were created. The researcher then read each transcript

multiple times and attempted to use the NVivo 11 software to code them for patterns and themes. Unable to obtain the data needed for analysis, the researcher resorted to manually coding each interview. Samples of the data were shared and discussed with a fellow researcher for peer examination (Cresswell 2013) in order to strengthen the validity of the coding. Finally, journal entries from on-site observations were reviewed to help the researcher better understand the interview responses within the context of the school. This process resulted in the merging of some themes ultimately leading to a more credible study.

Demographic Findings

This section outlines the demographic data resulting from the surveys and interviews. Each principal and teacher leader who agreed to participate in the study completed a pre-interview survey (Appendix E and Appendix F). The demographic results from the surveys and subsequent interviews are provided in Table 4.1 and elicited data about the sample including their current role within the school, years taught in their current role, total years in education, gender, ethnicity, and level of education.

Collectively, participating principals and teachers have 318 years of teaching and administration experience. The average years of experience for the teacher leaders is 27 years and 25 years for the principals. Nine of twelve participants have a master's degree, or higher. Five participants are male and seven are females with no minority population represented in the sample. The teacher leaders include three English teachers, two science teachers, two business teachers, one resource teacher, and one math teacher. The average number of years for teachers to serve in their current role is nearly 21.6 years. For principals, the average number of years as a building leader is nearly 6.6 years. All three principal participants were promoted to building

principal after serving as an Assistant Principal in the schools for which they are currently serving.

Table 4.1

Principal and Teacher Leader Demographics

current role	years in current role	total years in education	gender	ethnicity	level of education
English	38	48	F	White	master's degree
English	32	36	M	White	master's degree
science	31	35	F	White	master's degree
English	20	32	F	White	master's degree
principal	7	26	F	White	master's degree
principal	6	25	M	White	specialist's degree
principal	6	24	M	White	master's degree
business	19	23	F	White	bachelor's degree
resource	15	22	F	White	bachelor's degree
science	15	18	M	White	master's degree
math	12	17	F	White	master's degree
business	12	12	M	White	bachelor's degree

Findings from the Surveys and Interviews

This section presents qualitative data obtained via surveys and personal interviews with nine teacher leaders and three principals. The resulting data represents contributions from 12 individuals. The section begins with a teacher leader profile constructed from responses to survey and interview questions by teachers and principals. This profile provides the researcher with a lens for examining and evaluating the interview data and gives the reader a personal

perspective from the role of teacher leader. Next, the data are reported by theme. The section concludes with comprehensive responses to each research question based on the thematic data.

Teacher leader profile. The teacher leaders described in this study have been classified by the researcher into two groups – formal teacher leaders and informal teacher leaders. Formal teacher leaders are generally described as teachers holding a formal leadership title and receiving compensation for that role (Birky, Shelton & Headley, 2006). Survey and interview data from this study reveal teacher participants serving in formal teacher leadership roles that include department or grade-level chairs, site-based leadership team chairs, Professional Learning Community (PLC) leaders, and peer mentors. In contrast, informal teacher leaders are those teachers who are respected as leaders and looked to as role models or content area experts, but do not receive any additional compensation for their leadership (Birky, Shelton & Headley, 2006). Informal teacher leaders are teachers who lead because they view it as a professional responsibility. By these definitions, eight of the nine teacher leaders participating in this study can be classified as formal teacher leaders in their schools.

One notable outcome of this research was the creation of a teacher leader profile (see Table 4.2). This profile contains teacher leadership traits provided by teachers and principals who participated in the surveys. As the researcher reviewed this data, it was evident that both principals and teacher leaders repeatedly used certain descriptors to characterize teacher leader traits. It was also apparent throughout the development of this profile that many of the traits identified could describe both formal and informal teacher leaders. For this reason, formal and informal teacher leaders will be referred to as teacher leaders in this study. In the next section, research findings are presented by theme.

Table 4.2

Teacher Leader Profile

1. Student-centered
2. Tries new things
3. Team player
4. Willing to take risks
5. Wants to improve and grow
6. Accepts feedback from others
7. Self-motivated
8. Embraces change
9. Willingness to question things
10. Visibly leads others
11. Sees the “big picture” in situations
12. Servant leader
13. Focused on results
14. Passionate
15. Knows content area
16. Works hard
17. Willing to work extra hours
18. Organized
19. Has integrity
20. Good listener
21. Relies on the strengths of other colleagues

Thematic findings. In addition to evidence that led to the development of a teacher leader profile, data were analyzed and categorized by themes. The researcher organized the findings thematically in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of principal leadership as it related to motivating teachers in “low-performing” schools to take on leadership roles. Initial structural coding methods resulted in the identification of 35 themes. This high number of themes was a result of the researcher deliberately avoiding the use of pre-identified themes or categories in an effort to create a more organic approach to collecting the data. After carefully examining the data through focused coding methods, the number of themes was narrowed to seven. Table 4.3 lists the themes that ultimately surfaced from the data. Each of these themes is discussed in detail throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Table 4.3

Emergent Themes

List of Themes
Clear expectations
Culture of continuous improvement
On-going collaboration
Support of teachers
Organizational structures
Empowering teachers
Challenges

Clear expectations. All three of the principals and seven of the nine teacher leaders being studied stated the importance of principals having clear expectations and holding their teachers accountable to them. Teachers expect principals to hire quality people to work with them in their schools. A male teacher leader in School C shared his perspective about this leadership behavior:

Principals have to recruit teachers who care about kids and what happens to them. When teachers care about kids, they want to do more for the school and for their kids. I don't need to be told by my principal to do something, I just know it needs to be done and I do it. I want to make my school better so I try to think of what my principal would expect me to do...I think it really begins with the people you hire...their commitment to kids and their commitment to the whole student—not just getting someone good in their subject area. I go to my students' football and basketball games because my principal encourages us to go. I notice when it is my students' birthday and when they get haircuts because my principal notices these things with his teachers...His expectations start from

the moment we walk in the building.

The principal of School C had similar thinking as evidenced by these comments:

You don't want somebody among your ranks who isn't helping your school to get better. As soon as you have a concern, show them a plan, or show them the door if they cannot get it together. Get rid of them, if you need to. You can believe there is good in all people and that it's all going to work out. But you know what, if you have a teacher that refuses to get better, let them go work it out in someone else's school. Don't take the risk of waiting until matters get worse. It certainly won't increase your popularity as a principal. Your other teachers want the best people around them...so do your kids and your parents. I think too many principals fall back on worrying about teacher due process and are not willing to get in the middle of shaking up those teachers that are not willing to do whatever it takes.

Another clear expectation of principals voiced by teacher leaders and principals was that teachers were expected to regularly collaborate about their students and classroom instruction. Each high school in this study has developed a culture that supports and expects collaboration among all teachers. Each school has built grade-level and department PLC time into the daily and weekly schedules as a way to support teacher collaboration, although the amount of time varies from school to school. The level of satisfaction with how PLC times are used also varies from person to person and school to school. The principal of School A provides background on weekly team time at her school:

When we first started our PLCs, there was a sense among teachers that Monday morning PLC time was supposed to be teacher-directed time and a place for catching up with personal issues from the weekend. There was a feeling of "don't tell us what we need to do if you are going to make us meet," but that approach really doesn't work in schools that want to improve themselves. There had to be some structure, expectations, and accountability built into it our PLC time and then teachers were given the options of how to carry out the PLC work. This has been a long process of having conversations in PLCs about our responsibilities, as well as the privilege of teaching and how we can balance that and be accountable for our work.

School B's principal added his thoughts:

We are going to be collaborative here at my school. We are going to involve teachers and invite them into the conversation and work, whether they like it or not. It is what we have to do...Communication among teachers must be open and respectful. Open

communication is an essential component to building a positive school culture. It is OK for teachers to disagree with one another, or with the principal, but teachers must also be professional. It is important for all voices to be heard and that is what I expect in my school. One person should not dominate the conversation, or the decision-making.

Through observation, it was noted that some teachers had difficulty voicing their concerns and opinions during PLC time. At School B, a teacher leader was so frustrated with a PLC team member who had verbally attacked her during a weekly meeting that she began to “call out” other team members on the inappropriateness of their behavior. School B’s principal addressed this issue:

In some respects, by me allowing a certain amount of “jawing” to occur among teachers during PLC time has helped our teacher leaders gain a little bit of leadership perspective. They don’t realize that until they experience other teachers totally bad-mouthing them, undermining everything they do or say, or resisting everything they have worked hard for because they can just stand up and say their piece and then walk away. It is different when they have to deal with it.

A veteran teacher leader in School B indicated the need for respectful communication among principals and teachers. “If I have a problem with my principal, I have no problem just going in and telling him. But, I tell him respectfully...and that’s the kind of relationship we need to see more of.”

A final expectation indicated by principals and teacher leaders is the need for teachers to work hard in support of all students. “The responsibility for educating children is too great to leave to chance. Schools don’t have a minute to waste.” School C’s principal further explains his approach to making sure teachers understand this expectation:

You’ve got to keep somewhat of an edge. You’ve got to keep it on your s. You’ve got to be pushing on them to make sure all of their kids are learning. You’ve got to hold them accountable. And at the same time you’ve got to love them, you’ve got to praise them, you’ve got to give them what they need to do their job, and you’ve got to talk to them about their personal stuff. You have to value who they are and the work they do. It’s hard work to make schools go and everybody has to do their part.

Culture of continuous improvement. The interview data clearly indicated that each of the three school principals participating in the study promoted a strong culture of continuous improvement. A teacher leader in School B conveyed her principal's expectation; "He drives us to go from 'good to great.' He really realizes that we are doing our jobs well, but he wants us to just keep getting better." Another teacher leader serving as a department chair in School A added, "Our principal says we are getting there, but we can always improve. She doesn't want us to get too comfortable so we don't ever think we need to improve because we are already good."

A majority of participants expressed a commitment to placing students' needs first. This was seen as an essential part of their ability to continuously improve. Several teacher leaders in the schools studied described their school culture as being "student-centered." And as leaders, they felt comfortable challenging other teachers with the mantra "Is it best for our students?" They appreciated that decisions were made based on this criteria. Reflecting on personal experience, a teacher leader in School C captured the spirit of what was a common feeling for other teacher leaders participating in the study:

I frequently ask myself these questions, "What if we do this just a little bit differently...will it still get the same outcome? Will it still meet our goal?" This year it was implementing a "one-to-one" technology program. What if we did a virtual class with college professors? What if we used Google Classroom? What if we...whatever it may be? So, I guess I just try to look at all the angles at which we can do things?

A veteran female teacher leader at School C explained her commitment to the idea of continuous improvement:

I want it to be...that is when my time comes to hang it up and retire...that I've had over 40 years of experience one year at a time. I don't want to have one year of experience 40 different times. Because I know I can do better and it's important to keep trying to do that. Our students are becoming more diverse here, and the students, our clients, are always changing. It's really important that our school keeps up with the trends in our community.

Each of the three principals interviewed provided concrete examples of challenges faced throughout the school year and steps taken to collectively address these issues. For example, lagging performance in math and science continues to be areas of focus at each of the high schools being studied. The principal of School B recalls assuming the principal role at his school and what he discovered about African-American math and science learners there:

When I got here, our black kids all hung out in the same place all the time...outside of the gym in the back of the school. I was glad they felt comfortable with sports, but there was a sense of prejudice that all they could do is play sports. That feeling is not completely gone. That bothers me. I think we have shattered that idea by doing more “hands on” projects with all of our students and mixing up the different cultures into small work groups. I think our black kids feel pretty comfortable in all parts of the building now and with most all of our teachers. And that’s a win for us. That’s a good thing. “Has it affected our test scores yet?” A little bit...but not enough.

School A’s principal explained that improving the performance of African-American learners at his school had been a six-year effort. In that time, she has witnessed a shift in teachers’ attitudes from an “us and them” approach to taking collective ownership of the success of all groups of students.

On-going collaboration. Allowing time for teachers to collaborate is a major theme that teacher leaders in all three schools identified as a strong principal leadership behavior.

Collaboration takes on many faces within each of these school contexts. As an example, teacher leaders say their principal allows teachers to share “best practices” freely during PLC times and regularly during faculty meetings. It is commonplace for teachers in each school to attend professional development outside of the school and bring back new learning to share with other teachers in their schools. The principal of School A commented on this practice:

We make sure our teachers get up in the next PLC meeting, or faculty meeting and share some of their experiences, because they are the best commercial for doing things differently. When they hear about it from their colleagues...the people who go on these are the ones who are hungry for learning and the people they tend to have a lot of respect for. When they hear those teachers say, “I learned this and I really recommend for you to

do it,” they will listen much better than when I say it.

School B’s principal deliberately chooses to spend professional development funds on researching best practices rather than spending them on one-time trainings, or temporary teacher resources. He explains his approach:

I try to analyze how change really happens with my teachers in their classrooms. I’m pretty sure it’s related to the collaborative work they do with each other. We moved a couple of our strongest Advanced Placement teachers into different teaching assignments this year and in different classrooms closer to our weaker teachers. We wanted them to collaborate together more about the regular U.S. history classes and regular World History classes they were both teaching so that the veterans could have an influence on the other teachers.

The principal of School C emphasizes the benefits of “peer to peer” observation in terms of building collaboration. He reflects on a time that a team of teachers at his school piloted a program in which they had observed other teachers both inside and outside of their content areas:

I knew that if we could really get our “peer to peer” observations going across the school like it should be...where you are seeing another teacher four, or five times a year and someone is seeing you teach and providing strong feedback...I knew we would see a lot more of the different strategies being shared and used and a lot more focus on teachers improving their teaching.

These are just a few examples of ways in which teacher leaders and principals perceive collaboration in their school.

A number of other examples were revealed during personal interviews with teacher leaders and principals. A teacher leader from School C shared her experience of educating the entire high school teaching staff on the concept of differentiated instruction:

It just so happens that I had gone to the Arkansas Supervision and Curriculum Development Conference and learned a lot about differentiated instruction. I thought I had a pretty good handle on it. Let me show a few people and maybe they would catch on. So I started working with teachers in my hallway a little bit at a time. And then I had an opportunity at the beginning of the next year, when it seemed that differentiation was going to be one of the things that our school focused on, to do a “back-to-school” presentation that went fairly well.

Another teacher leader from School B explained her motivation for collaborating:

I was encouraged by my principal to make my teaching a little more exciting and real. So I have been working with other teachers through the 12 years I have been here to do that. Whether it is, “I tried this instructional strategy,” or “I did this yesterday with my students and you should try it in your class,” the conversation about teaching and learning never ends. It is the way we communicate in our school.

A veteran female teacher in School C recalled the benefits of collaborating with a colleague early in her career:

I worked with a close friend of mine and we would watch each other teach and say, “Hey, you need to do this and this.” I trusted him and he trusted me; that kind of stuff was very impactful...Also, when you’re working with colleagues and...you’re questioning, “What about this lesson?” How did you present this lesson? How did you get this across go students? Why is this...oh, that is a good idea.” Actually watching them in action is amazing. Worth a million bucks!

While collaboration is practiced inside the walls of all three schools, it is not an isolated, internal activity. For example, a teacher leader from School A appreciated the benefits of working with teachers from another school in her district on a committee designed to support a district-wide literacy initiative. She indicated that it was helpful for her to learn about the student performance expectations at other schools, the challenges they faced, and the plans they had made to address their issues and concerns. She felt it was affirming to know that her colleagues struggled with similar issues and that she was teaching alone.

Support of teachers. Teacher leaders in this study were very clear about the supports they found to be most useful on the job. Data analysis yielded two distinct categories of supports for teachers – instructional supports and provision of resources. Teachers were appreciative of the efforts their principals made to support their instructional programs. A veteran English teacher leader in School C explained how the principal supported her and the other English teachers as they wrote a grant to begin a summer writing camp. The writing camp was designed to prepare students for taking the ACT exam and would allow them to practice writing and

editing each other's work. She further explains:

So my principal was willing to listen to some ideas that we had. I know that he spoke to the superintendent about our ideas. He was able to make sure that we had money from federal funds to pay teachers to develop a curriculum and a timeline, and to determine what population this program would serve.

The same teacher leader also shared another experience of when the English Department teachers were considering developing a language lab in their school. She revealed the significance of the support they received from their principal:

My principal was great! He would give us time out of our classrooms to plan and set a course for what we wanted to accomplish. He would give us subs and allow us to go visit a school that had a language lab that we wanted to go look at. He would call the book reps and bring them into our department meetings so that we could all sit and talk about our vision. He was "doing" the support instead of just saying "I support you."

Another teacher at School C was grateful for the level of support she characteristically receives from her principal. "If I said I needed an on differentiated instruction...I need all this research done to help me understand it better. I truly believe he would go home and research it."

A younger male teacher leader from School A validated the need of newer teachers to feel supported by their principals:

She supports me by leaving me alone, allowing me the freedom to what I need to do to teach, and comes through to see if I need anything. I am not one of those people who asks for a lot of help; but when I need it, I really need it. And when I need it, I need it now.

When he goes to the principal with an issue, it is usually addressed within the same day. A teacher at School B expressed that she feels supported when her principal tries "to make sure that things are rolling smoothly around the school and with parents so we can be the best for our students." Finally, a teacher at School C commented, "I love being where I am now because I feel supported and people do appreciate the work that I do and value the conversations I bring to the table." It is also evident from the interviews that most teacher leaders in this study appreciate

when their principal recognizes the contributions they make to improving teaching and learning in their school.

Principals also support teacher leaders by providing them the resources they need, both for their classrooms and for professional growth. Seven of the nine teacher leaders interviewed were able to provide concrete examples of resources provided by their principals. These resources include providing release time to support other teachers and observe instruction; allowing teachers to attend conferences and trainings; providing common preparation periods for teachers to collaborate; and employing flexible scheduling for teachers and students. Despite the efforts of principals in these schools, the demand by teachers for additional time to plan is still high. A teacher in School C provided her opinion concerning needing additional planning time:

I think if teacher leaders were given more responsibility and if they were given an extra prep period during the day then they could be more effective and more supportive of the school and they could play a bigger part in helping to develop curriculum and implement instruction...that sort of thing.

Another teacher leader at School C voiced similar thoughts:

I want an extra planning time during the day. There are things that I would like to help my department to accomplish. I want to be able to sub for them so they can get out and see other teachers. We need to see and be a part of that, especially if we are going to “ramp up” our curriculum. I think giving teacher leaders time to be leaders....would be so beneficial because you have the time out of your schedule to help facilitate learning, which is what you want to do in terms of professional growth and development....Having a prep period to do that and to move people and talk to people, especially your new teachers and your old teachers. I am 36 years in, but I need new strategies and would benefit from seeing new strategies, too.

All three principals indicated they worked hard to support their teachers in a variety of ways.

Their leadership can be described as “strategic.” Strategic leadership is used here to mean that the principals support the “day-to-day” operations by looking for ways to leverage support for their teachers. For example, School B’s principal explained:

We try to show our teachers that we are here to support making teaching easier. So, what

we want to do is whatever it takes to connect kids to learning. That is what we want to do. Whether it is taking care of a kid, or getting teachers paper, we can help everyone. And I don't ask people to do anything I wouldn't do. It is about, for us, a kid needs to be picked up from class and the resource officers are busy and I hear it on the radio, I will go down and pick the kid up. It is not a big deal. It is about giving teachers the tools to be successful.

This strategic leadership runs deep in the culture of the schools studied and has long-term implications around how these schools are structured. It has to do with ensuring that teachers are in the right spot – a place where they can have the greatest impact on the school and on students. The principal of School A elaborated on her experience in supporting teachers to grow as teacher leaders:

Some of our best teacher leaders here are very “behind-the-scenes” kind of people and they assume that everyone does what they do and at the level they do it. I have learned that the first step in supporting teacher leaders is helping them to recognize their own gifts. As I meet with teachers individually, I usually ask them about their passions and point out things that I consider specific strengths, such as “makes good use of technology,” or “has a heart for struggling students,” or “is a great communicator with parents.” Once my teachers realize they have something to offer, the conversations move to “how can you share this with the others?”

Her counterpart in at School C explained his approach for engaging teachers as leaders:

Since I became principal here, I have tried to invest in people who I think have potential with small leadership roles and small projects and hope that they grab on to them and are willing to participate. So you might ask them to lead a PLC group, or ask them to chair a school improvement planning committee, or help report out at the faculty meeting on an issue they're passionate about.

Teacher leaders provided evidence that these principals were on the right track. A teacher leader in School B viewed as quiet and reserved confided, “I think I do most of my talking in small groups. My principal told me I needed to be more vocal and get over being so passive and that my opinions are valued.” Another teacher leader in School A shared her thoughts that principals “need to identify the hard-working teachers, the young and creative ones, and try to give them a chance to do things and quit relying on the old teachers. We are tired!”

Organizational Structures. During the course of the interviews conducted for this study, participants identified a variety of organizational structures they perceived as supporting the work of schools. While the structures differ from school to school, the one structure common to all three was a school leadership team. These leadership teams, also referred to as a “core team” in one school, generally consist of the principal, a counselor, and teacher leaders appointed, or elected by other teachers within their departments and grade levels. Leadership teams in all three schools meet weekly either before, or after school with team members receiving a small stipend for serving in this school leadership role.

The depth of work that occurs within these leadership team meetings varies between managerial and visionary. The level of teacher and principal satisfaction with the work of this team also varies among the schools being studied. Consider the following comments from teacher leaders in all three schools:

Being a department chair, I have heard from many teachers, isn't what it used to be. People in our department who were chairs long ago said they didn't do much...go to meetings; build master schedules, and order textbooks and supplies. That was a long time ago and now there are more instructional leadership duties...testing planning, and so many more issues. It has become a job that people don't want to do. (School A)

We have a leadership team, which is the principal and the heads of each department, and we talk about things and then we send out the minutes. But, I don't think the average teacher has much to do with that, which is interesting. How do you create and collect honest feedback from teachers when no one really seems to care about what needs to be done? (School B)

They rotate the leaders...you do your two-year tour...and there are some people who shouldn't be in leadership because they are not really into it so they will not take an active interest what needs to be done. There are certain departments where it is a fight, and there is one department now where no one will step up to do it, so the person who took it by default is the only one doing the work. (School C)

A few years ago I was the department chair; I did it for two years. We would sit in there and we were secretaries for what...all the decisions had already been made. Decisions had been made and I would go back to my department and say this is what's happening. That has changed over the past four years with our principal. We have intelligent,

professional acting people who come together, who discuss, who work through situations....It is not a top-down situation; it is true decision-making with teacher voices in the room. (School A)

My principal has created a culture where he is not going to dictate everything to us; he would like to hear our input....I have to admire him for that. Suggestions we make, even though he may disagree with them, he will still listen to them. The leadership team structure is still important to us. (School B)

The comments of School C's principal included below, mirror the feelings of several teachers interviewed in this study:

I don't know that our teacher leadership team does all that it can do all the time. To me, we sometimes have catsup and toilet paper meetings, and not necessarily visionary experiences. And I think some of the people in that meeting probably are more default department chairs than they are teacher leaders. We have a lot of teacher leaders in the background that we can't get to become department chairs for whatever reason. Either they don't want to take on a formal role, or they feel like they can work better from the fourth or fifth row of the bus instead of being up front. Sometimes that is a little bit frustrating in that we call it leadership. I want it to be a leadership team where we discuss our direction and our vision. I would say in more than half of our meetings we end up discussing the copy machine and those kinds of things that are more trivial. They are essential, but they are not going to push our thinking or move our operations forward on behalf of kids.

While the leadership team, or department chair structure is present at all three of the schools participating in this study, some structures are unique to a specific school and deserve mention here. For example, in an effort to build a culture of professional learning, School B has implemented "learning cadres." These cadres, which take place once a month after school, are coordinated by the leadership team with topics selected from recommendations made by teachers and the principal. Teachers respond to the request for recommendations and then leadership team members contact various teachers in the school who are considered "experts" and request them to facilitate the cadre. Topics of discussion have included differentiated instruction, formative assessments, and student academic interventions. Cadres provide a forum for teachers to share strategies and best practices, and also help to cultivate professional relationships that

extend beyond the daily classroom routines.

A “learning walk” is another less formal structure implemented at School B. Learning walks, having been in place for five years, arose from the School B’s self-study required for school improvement planning. During this self-study, the principal required teachers to select a teacher colleague to observe. During the observation, teacher observers were to focus on students and learning, not on the teacher. This helped teachers to get a better feel for what was going on around them, and ensured the feedback was meaningful, based on current practice, and not just words on a piece of paper. This feedback from teachers was so favorable that “learning walks” have become a part of the school culture. The principal of School B describes the “learning walk” process:

Teams of teachers meet in the PLC room and decide what they are going to look at -- student engagement, classroom management...it depends on who is doing it, but they pick some specific things. It might be different strategies that teachers are using. They just go out and walk around for about 20-30 minutes and get into classrooms for two or three minutes and watch different teachers teach. We advertise to everybody that it is a learning walk day and that someone may walk into your room, so no one is caught off guard. After the walks are done, the teachers go back to the office and debrief what they saw. The goal is not to criticize the teacher, but to look at strategies and have professional conversations about teaching and learning. It is fascinating for teachers to see how different it is in other classrooms. They always come back and say, wow, I have so much respect for Mrs. So-and-So...I had no idea that they were that good!

School A is also attempting to get peer observations off the ground by trying to implement a different structure. While it is similar to “learning walks,” it is unique in that observers actually gather data using a research-based instrument developed by Robert Marzano, and then debrief. According to School A’s principal, non-evaluative peer observation “is a powerful way to start to change practice because they pick up great strategies and are more apt to teach more powerfully knowing colleagues are going to be in and out of their classroom.”

“Lunch and learn,” found in School A, is another unique structure that supports teacher

leadership. In order to maintain a culture of professional learning, the principal allows teams of teachers to gather at lunch and work on specific activities designed to deepen their knowledge and improve student learning. As an incentive for attending, the principal buys lunch and ensures that a warm meal, not sandwiches, is waiting for teachers. A teacher leader in School A shared her team's experience grading common assessments during a "lunch and learn" session:

When I was teaching Algebra I, all the math teachers got together with our common assessments and graded them together. You know, I would grade my own tests hand it over to another teacher and they would grade it and we would discuss the scores to see if we were on the same page, or not.

"Lunch and learns" take place in a classroom that has evolved into a PLC student data room. It is set up like a lounge, with comfortable seating, small round tables, magazine racks, and an extensive professional library that supports teachers who are working on master's degrees, or who are simply looking for strategies to improve their teaching practices in the classroom.

Irrespective of the site, the three principals in this study create plenty of opportunities for their teachers to be leaders. In addition to the organizational structures mentioned above, there are other opportunities for teachers to lead within, across, and outside of their content areas. A teacher leader from School B describes the impact of teacher leadership in her school:

The school already has many groups of teachers who get together and work on different things like the master schedule and the school discipline policies. I think that these groups exist because teachers volunteer their time to work on those things. Just like in high school when you have a school that a lot of student clubs, it just becomes part of the culture that you are going to be involved in. I think that it's knowing that most of your colleagues all take on extra loads and it is just something that we all do for the benefit of our students and the school. It helps encourage everyone to be more willing to step up into leadership roles.

Empowering of teachers. Teacher leaders from each school being studied mentioned "empowerment" as a behavior that their principal regularly uses to help motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. Within this theme are some aspects of both relational and a situational

empowerment. Relational empowerment takes the form of explicit praise such as “You are our school expert on that subject,” “You did a great job on that lesson,” or “I appreciate your help in that matter.” The principal of School C shares an experience from his teaching days.

An AP (Assistant Principal) came up to me one time and said, “Are you going to apply for the social studies department chair opening?” I told her, “Well, no. I’m not ready to do that.” And she said, “Yeah, but everybody is expecting you to throw your name in the hat.” I think administrators do not do a good enough job of sitting teachers down and telling them what they think of them and asking them about their future plans – where they see themselves going in education. I think the more time that principals can spend with teachers doing things like that, the more time they can realize that we believe in them.

Six of nine teacher leaders interviewed indicated that encouragement from their administrators is a motivator for them. They like being told that what they are doing is helpful. A teacher leader in School B describes, “I work at a school where I am taken seriously and appreciated and where I feel I have a contribution to make and it is very positive.” Another teacher leader in School A shares “My principal lets me know that what I am doing is helpful and beneficial.” A third teacher leader from School C explains:

I think my principal appreciates anything that I can do and has said things like if I need a day out of the classroom to meet individually with my English kids, who are struggling, go ahead and do it. But then I also have issues as far as being an AP teacher and feeling like I’m in a time crunch to get everything taught, so being pulled out of class isn’t always the best option for me. But I think my principal is just realistic in his expectations of how much I can get done, and I think he just wants to support me.

The situational aspect of empowerment involves principals creating opportunities for teachers to lead and be successful. Teacher leaders and principals alike emphasized the importance of having the freedom to try different strategies and take on new responsibilities both inside and outside of the classroom. Eight of nine teacher leaders interviewed reported their principal gave them the autonomy to experiment with new ideas in their classrooms. A teacher leader from School B indicated the only thing holding her back was her own lack of motivation.

“Maybe I should have taken more initiative to do some things, but in terms of my principal standing in my way, he hasn’t done that...I can’t think of a time when I, or teachers I have worked with, ran into much of a wall with an idea or when my principal has said I couldn’t do it.” Her principal provided further evidence of teacher empowerment present in the school.

I think teachers have to feel empowered to do something or they won’t take any risks. If you can’t trust the teachers you hire to do something and you can’t give them the message that it’s okay to do it, then you’ve got a big problem. At the same time, you’ve got to be prepared to go to that teacher and hold them accountable for their actions...and say, you know what, I know I told you to do this, but you’ve gone too far. Let’s dial it back a bit...but don’t stop trying.

When interviewed, each principal alluded to the importance of finding ways to discover teachers’ strengths by asking them to take on new responsibilities, or assume new leadership roles. According to the principal of School A, “If you want to keep teachers in your school and keep your school moving forward, they have to know what they can do and what you want them to do.” This principal also shared that she is selective about who she invites to take on new leadership roles ensuring that their strengths are aligned to what she is asking them to do. She adds that by doing this, she can better ensure the likelihood that her teachers will be successful. She believes that “once people taste leadership a little bit, they either like it or they don’t.” Another principal from School C spoke of a time when he asked a less experienced teacher to organize the student seating for their high school graduation ceremony.

I didn’t even know she had it in her. She had maps, charts, and even the directions that traffic would flow in the arena. She was not getting paid extra for that, but she is the type that didn’t want to be paid. She felt very proud of herself. She knows she is respected by me and the other teachers and highly regarded. She got a lot of praise from everyone afterwards. She feels really, really good about herself. With teachers who are your leaders, you have to put them in places where their passions and strengths are.

While this example does not occur in the school setting, it illustrates the results that come from teachers being provided the opportunity to “run” with their own ideas.

Challenges. The act of cultivating teacher leadership for principals is clearly not an easy task. Neither teacher leaders nor principals were at a loss for words when asked to identify challenges they face in creating a culture of sustainable leadership. From a principal and teacher leader perspective, one of the greatest struggles is overcoming the federal accountability labeling system set forth by the United States Department of Education in both the NCLB and ESSA plan requirements. Both principals and teacher leaders alike identify strong concerns with the measurements used to identify and place schools into the various categories of school improvement. A teacher leader from School A shares her frustration with the process:

When we saw our school's name on the "focus" list, I will have to tell you we were "pissed off" at the ADE. Our school had always tested our kids, looked at their results, and tried to find ways to work with the kids that were at the bottom of the list. But, because a small group of "special ed" students weren't getting good test scores....they are "special ed" for Christ's sake....they have a learning disability....our entire school had to be labeled as a "bad" school. We have three private schools around us that have no "special ed" kids and can kick their problem kids out. We can't compete with that.

Each of the three principals interviewed in this study resonated with sentiments expressed by a teacher from School A:

It is already hard enough to find and keep good teachers when you have districts around us paying more money than we do. Now, a few Washington politicians who are not educators decide that schools must be ranked so that they can be shamed into being better...it is simply not a good plan. It just makes us hate our government and hate our profession.

In every participant interview for this study, the accountability labeling system was identified as "demoralizing" not only to principals and teachers, but also to students, parents, and school community members. Eight of the nine teacher leaders and two of the three principals studied reported they had considered leaving the education profession at least once during their educational career due to the federal government's "far-reaching control" over public education.

Another challenge voiced by teacher leaders is the resistance they receive from other teachers in their school when attempting to lead a change initiative. A teacher leader facilitating a department PLC time in School B explained her dilemma:

If teachers in the school feel like change is a good thing...then it's easy to be the one who says, let's try it or let's do it. But in a situation where teachers think what they are doing is just fine, then it becomes harder to be the person who says that we need to learn a new way because they don't see themselves as needing to change.

Other teacher leaders shared that they had challenges in their leadership stemming from trying to hold other teachers accountable for following through with what they had agreed to do in department meetings. For example, a commitment had been reached during a science PLC time, but when it came to actually following through, a teacher leader felt powerless because she didn't have the authority to make teachers do what they had agreed to do. The best she could do was to say, "This is what we agreed we would do. Why aren't we doing it? When are we going to do it? This is our agreement."

The informal teacher leader identified in this study expressed similar frustration while working with a formal teacher leader from her school:

I was starting to discover that she wasn't doing what we had planned on doing and wasn't doing what we had agreed would be the best thing to do in our economics unit. So, finally I thought at this point this is not the battle that I want to fight. I would rather teach the unit like we had agreed and make it work so that next year when I have tweaked it and done it once I can say here's what worked and here's what didn't work.

The same teacher leader shared another story of how teachers during PLC time had attempted to prevent him from expressing his concerns over a group of students whose needs were not being met.

We had a PLC meeting a couple of months ago and my colleagues got mad at me for making comments that needed to be said. It was pointing out that we do a good job teaching our rich, white kids and a poor job of teaching our poor, black kids. It happens and it is wrong. If you look at the testing data, our white kids are doing fine. It is the black kids who spend most of their time out of the classroom and in trouble and we need

to figure out why. I know these kids and some of them can do the work if they were just able to stay in the classroom and if their teachers were willing to change how they are teaching them.

To help resist this type of negative teacher behavior that eventually becomes an obstacle to meaningful change, the teacher stated he implemented a suggestion box in the office where ideas could be placed anonymously and then read aloud and discussed during faculty meetings. He hopes that this box will allow more teachers' voices to be heard and protect the teachers with opinions that differ from those who are resistant to change.

It is important to note that these types of challenges are not unique to large, urban high schools. The rural high school in this study, School C, has a smaller number of teachers, yet a teacher leader from this school reported similar struggles:

It is a difficult road to travel because as a teacher leader, your responsibility is not to discipline other teachers, but to try and step in before it becomes a personnel issue. If folks are not following the path, or not committing to the things they said they were going to do, I have to step in. So, as a teacher leader, that is where I see the difficulty. What is my role and what is my principal's role in these situations? Then working with her to try to and figure out what is going to be most effective fix to the problem.

The principal of School C reports his greatest challenge as "getting the right people on the bus and making sure they understand the responsibility that comes along with the leadership stipend. Some people end up serving as department chairs because they don't mind spending the extra time each month, but when it comes to actually leading through the challenging times or dealing with conflict, they shy away." School B's principals from a larger, suburban school considers this obstacle, as well:

When I am dealing with something that is very difficult, teachers will come with me until time to make the hard decision. And if it's not something that is real popular to everybody they say, well you're the principal you decide. I have been calling teachers out on that and I still deal with it a lot. If you want to be involved, we put you at the table for hiring, we put you at the table for building the vision, we run all our professional development by you, but this is a real touchy issue and now your saying well you go ahead and decide...after all, you are the principal you get paid the big bucks.

School A's principal from an urban school shares, "I hate it when a department chair says, well I don't have any power over the teachers. Oh my gosh, you have positional power!" She further explains that teacher leaders are not held to the same policies and procedures to which principals are held. They lead by insisting that good teachers be hired. They lead by sharing their content area expertise with other teachers. They lead by making demands of their principal that will help create the environment needed to better support student learning. They lead by example. Despite all this, if "you let them know that you need their leadership, teachers will immediately respond with well...I'm not a leader." School A's principal will correct them. "You guys are leaders. Teachers have terrific influence over their colleagues. When they stand up at a faculty meeting, everyone stops and listens to what they have to say." However, this can have both a positive and a negative result. A teacher leader from School C highlights an experience at his high school.

From time to time...we will have teachers that will want to say something significant in a faculty meeting, but be backed down by teachers who are louder. They may be less informed, or the teacher who is speaking up may have a great point. I think that sometimes limits teacher leadership in that they don't want to step up in front of their colleagues because they know they have certain colleagues that are going to jump down their throat regardless of their message because that is the way some people like to operate in big faculty meeting settings.

The current conditions of today's educational climate may also be viewed as barriers to teacher leadership. The principal of School B articulates how times in education have changed for teachers:

Over the past ten years with higher accountability in public education, people just feel like they're too darn busy to do extra things as they might see it. And I think I would agree with them. They have so much more on their plates today than we did in those days. We didn't do standardized testing, let alone worry about standards. We didn't do any of the technology stuff that they have to do today. Now, granted much of that helps you have more achievement with kids, but there are more and more lawsuits and rulings, and such and such."

Perhaps the greatest challenge to these high schools is that their students are now performing higher on standardized assessments than they have in previous years. School C's principal describes this issue:

I worked in this high school when we were in school improvement and I could stand up in front of everyone and say, the state is nipping at our heels and wants to know what we are going to do. That is a better motivation for teachers to lead than saying we are off the school improvement list and do not have to worry about test scores any longer. Change moves real slowly, especially if you are going to try and get input from teachers because there is not any student data motivating us to change what we are currently doing.

Findings by Research Question

This section summarizes the data collected via interviews as it relates to the research questions that guided this study. Table 4.4 depicts the relationships between the themes and

Table 4.4

Relationship between Themes and Research Questions.

How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?	Culture of continuous improvement, organizational structures, and challenges
Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?	Clear expectations, culture of continuous improvement, support of teachers, organizational structures, and empowering teachers
Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?	Clear expectations, culture of continuous improvement, on-going collaboration, support of teachers, organizational structures, and empowering teachers
How do principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?	Clear expectations, culture of continuous improvement, on-going collaboration, support of teachers, organizational structures, empowering teachers, and challenges

research questions. Some of the themes overlapped the interview questions. This is reflective of the degree to which these themes were interconnected and prevalent in all of the schools studied.

Question 1. How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?

NCLB required all states in the nation to set standards for grade-level achievement and to develop a system to measure the progress of all students and subgroups of students in meeting those state-determined grade-level standards. In each of the three schools participating in this study, principals and teacher leaders overwhelmingly expressed their displeasure with the requirements placed on schools in Arkansas by NCLB. They perceived NCLB as ineffective based on the premise that published test scores and accountability labels such as “focus” and “priority” would increase teacher motivation and subsequently improve student achievement. A veteran teacher leader in School A voiced her disapproval with how the accountability labeling system was developed and the negative impact that publishing test scores had on teachers and principals in her school:

It caused us to be rebellious because the most rebellious teachers are the ones that have the most invested in their kids and their school. I think the label handicapped us in a way...we felt we could no longer do anything that would help us get better. So for the state to say that we were a “low-performing” school...How was that going to help us do better? You’ve been given a label that is not positive and your kids and their parents believe that you are not a good school, or good teachers. After all, our school got into school improvement based on three different groups of kids...not the same kids each year and not the same subject areas each year. If anything, what I’d like to see in the newspaper are the schools being successful and moving forward so we can get away from all of the negative ideas about public education.

The principal of School B echoed his thoughts about how his teachers felt when they first learned their school had been labeled as “low-performing:”

It was awful. It was a very bad feeling because no one wanted to be a part of anything that was not looked upon in a positive way. Not the faculty...not the children. When I would talk to other principals in schools that did not receive the label, I would tell them that it was just the children. They were not doing what they needed to do. They needed to try harder. But deep inside, I knew for a fact that there was something I needed to do, too. And it made me question myself. But I know that I love children. I know that I'm concerned about their future. And I know that I want them to succeed. Was I the principal that would help teachers and student get to that point? It made me question myself when the test scores aren't where they should be.

In contrast, some participants expressed indifference towards the NCLB accountability system labels. In School C, a veteran English Teacher of 48 years shared a different viewpoint about her school being labeled as "low-performing" and the sanctions that her school would face:

It was just a matter of time. I figured every school in the state would have been on one list, or another. But you want to know something? I have been in this business long enough to know that our Department of Education did not have the personnel or the political power to take over every school that didn't do well on the test. I knew that this would pass and that they would be on to something else. In the meantime, I was going to keep teaching my students what they needed to know to pass my class.

Principals and teacher leaders in this study believed NCLB had a negative impact on instructional and curricular practices, including the higher levels of stress related to improving student performance. They believed that the push for increased test scores, with little regard for how those improvements were to be attained, created an accountability system that cultivated inappropriate and sometimes unethical behaviors on the part of teachers and principals. Teacher leaders even reported that they had applied for other teaching positions in higher-performing schools without their principals' knowledge of it.

Question 2. Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?

The three principals participating in this study stated they use a variety of leadership strategies in an effort to motivate teachers to take on leadership roles in their school. The one thing they all have in common is that they try to identify and utilize teacher strengths. When

principals have a need for a teacher leader, they consider their teachers' interest and expertise and align them with the leadership task. They also try to determine what motivates their teachers to make contributions beyond the classroom and use it as an incentive to take on new leadership roles. The principal of School C describes this experience:

You find the right people and you figure out what they have a passion for. What will they "jump off of a roof" for. Every teacher has some sort of capability in our school. Teachers have things they are really passionate for and if you put a teacher who has a passion and a skill for something in a position where they can learn more about it, they get so excited...you might as well get out of the way. They are going to do it no matter what.

Creating leadership capacity is also important to the principals being studied. They report using their best teachers as exemplars for how to lead. School B's principal explained how he took his best AP (Advanced Placement) English teacher and reassigned her to teach "regular" English classes. Not only did this provide more students with access to stronger instruction, but through collaboration connected some less effective teachers with a model teacher leader. The conversations that took place and the interactions that occurred among these teachers had the potential to improve instruction and leadership practices across the building. All three principals also reported using peer observations in a similar fashion.

Regardless of the approach, having good models as leaders is essential to the motivation of teachers to becoming school leaders. School A is using collaboration as a tool for helping to create more leadership models for teachers. The principal describes the approach.

We are trying to run collaboration all the way through the school. We have guidance counselors and administrators in teams. The assistant principals and counselors attend teacher and grade-level meetings together. We ask them to be responsible for a whole grade level of kids for their four years of high school. In doing so, we try to model what we are asking teachers to do. We are asking teachers to collaborate and build common assessments, create SMART goals for their academic departments, and follow through with it all. We are trying to model collaboration and show teachers that we all own a piece of the responsibility beyond our classrooms.

In another effort to motivate teachers, School C decided to dedicate a portion its activity funds to researching best practices in the areas of student interventions. Several teachers visited other schools outside the district to find out what was working for them. They went to professional development training with the specific objective of bringing back something that had the potential to impact student learning in a big way. They tried many new strategies throughout the year. They had teachers working on special projects and gave them release time to design a program that would enhance the instructional curriculum. This endeavor involved the entire faculty, so every teacher had a part in making it successful. At the end of the school year, the effectiveness of the new practices was evaluated using several pre-determined criteria. Only those practices that seen as “effective” and “useful” were allowed to be carried into the next year.

In reviewing the principal interview transcripts, it is apparent that principal and teacher relationships are at the foundation of motivating teachers to take on leadership roles in their school. Principals must clearly articulate their expectations to teachers and hold them accountable for finding ways to ensure that they are carried out. But, this can be extremely challenging work. School C’s principal expresses the importance of and complexity involved in maintaining a culture of teacher leadership in his building:

Having a good school isn’t about me standing up and giving a pep talk to teachers. If you’re not leading them by your own work ethic and example, then your teacher leaders won’t lead with good work ethic. Principals have to keep an edge about them. They have to keep on their teachers and keep pushing them. You’ve got to hold them accountable, but also praise them and interact with them. You have to value the work they do.

Question 3. Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?

Teacher leaders in this study cited various leadership behaviors as motivating them to take on leadership roles in their schools. Overwhelmingly, teacher leaders expressed the importance of having a principal who allows them the autonomy to “problem solve” and try new ways of doing things. It is vital that principals trust their teachers’ judgment and expertise enough to allow them to take risks and be creative in their approaches to teaching and problem solving. Teachers like to be acknowledged for their contributions because this is a sign that the principal has confidence in the work they are doing and in their decision-making. As teachers feel more supported, they will take more risks and subsequently be motivated to participate in more leadership opportunities in their school.

Another overwhelming response from teacher leaders was that they are motivated more to lead within their schools when principals align teachers’ personal strengths with opportunities to use those strengths in leadership contexts. In other words, when principals develop a strong, interpersonal relationship with their teachers, they can better locate leadership opportunities for them in places where they will be successful.

Finally, principals must be accessible to teachers. Teacher leaders appreciate working with principals who are approachable and willing to provide feedback so they can continue to improve their classroom instruction and leadership skills. Through continuous feedback mechanisms and school structures designed to support teacher leaders, principals are able to sustain teacher leadership in their schools even through challenging times such as a change in school leadership, or a change in the way schools are held accountable for student performance.

Question 4. How do principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?

One of the organizational conditions that teacher leaders perceive as creating sustainable teacher leadership is having a culture of continuous improvement. Each of the high schools studied has teachers who are expected to continuously improve. Access to professional development opportunities is also important in these schools. Whether it is “peer-to-peer” observations, PLC time, or professional development opportunities, teachers feel they should be provided with the tools necessary to extend their own learning.

Collaboration is another condition that motivates teachers to develop their own leadership capacity. Teachers enjoy sharing best practices not only with their teaching colleagues, but also with other practitioners from their district and across the state.

According to teacher leaders, clear expectations are useful in motivating teachers to take on leadership roles. Not only do teacher leaders want to know what is expected of them, they believe it is essential for their principals to hold all teachers in their building to the same accountability level. Teacher leaders view this as a “professional responsibility” of all teachers and without it, their schools would not be able to sustain the level of instruction needed to ensure that all students are successful.

Finally, it is important to note that teacher leaders believe that none of these leadership-building measures can occur without strong relationships – teacher-to-principal and teacher-to-teacher relationships. Within these relationships respect develops, ideas are shared, feedback is given, and professional growth experienced.

Teacher leaders add that a constraint to building teacher leadership capacity is the absence of the leadership behaviors and conditions mentioned above. However, when asked

specifically what principals could do to help improve their teacher leadership, nearly all of the teacher leaders responded, “Provide me with more time to lead.” Teacher leaders express having difficulty accomplishing all they would like to do as a teacher within their classroom on any given school day and serve as a teacher leader in the school.

The teacher leaders who serve as department chairs say they would not be able to do the work they do now without an extra planning period during the day. Several of the teacher leaders also expressed difficulty in leading other teachers without the positional power needed. They believe if they truly had the ability to hold their colleagues accountable, they could have a much greater impact on their school and student achievement.

Summary

Qualitative analysis of twelve in-depth interviews was conducted to identify thematic units that describe the complex nature of principal leadership practices and teacher motivation for leadership. These thematic units included: clear expectations, culture of continuous improvement, on-going collaboration, support of teachers, organizational structures, empowering teachers, and challenges.

This chapter presented the findings that emerged from a phenomenological qualitative study focusing on the behaviors of leaders in once “low-performing” high school that motivated teachers to take on leadership roles. Demographics describing each school and participant were presented. Survey and interview data obtained from nine teacher leaders and three high school principals were used to create a teacher leader profile outlining basic characteristics of teacher leaders participating in this study. The findings were presented both thematically and by research question. In Chapter 5, the results of this study are summarized and implications discussed. Recommendations for future research are also identified.

Chapter 5 **Discussions, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of the study including an overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, and methodology. The study findings are then analyzed against the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to discussing the findings and identifying their potential implications on educational leadership. The chapter closes with recommendations for practice and further research, a conclusion, and contributions to the field of educational leadership.

Summary of the Study

Over the past 20 years, public schools in the United States have experienced many rounds of educational reform focused on holding teachers and administrators more accountable for student performance. In an attempt to systemically address the state and federal accountability mandates of NCLB and ESSA more at the local level, principals have spent more time and effort creating school conditions to enhance the development of teacher leadership. Principals have been assessing teacher leadership strengths, building on these strengths, and motivating teachers to share more of the leadership responsibilities in their schools. However, not all teachers have the skill, or willingness to serve in leadership roles within their schools (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). This has created a barrier for principals, especially in “low-performing” schools, to building and sustaining enough teacher leadership capacity to successfully lead their schools into the future.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how high school principals develop sustainable teacher leadership; of particular importance was the perceived leadership behaviors of high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” high schools that

motivated teachers to take on leadership roles. The goals of this study were to determine which perceived behaviors of principals in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” motivate teachers to take on leadership roles; to provide practitioners with a framework for guiding high school principals in these schools to effectively cultivate teacher leadership; and to provide institutions of higher education with data to inform the development of educational leadership curricula. The following questions guided this study:

- 1) How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?
- 2) Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?
- 3) Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?
- 4) How do high school principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?

Review of the Methodology

The researcher used qualitative phenomenology to illustrate how perceived behaviors of high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” schools motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. Teachers in three Arkansas high schools were surveyed and asked to identify traits of teacher leaders and whether or not they considered themselves to be teacher leaders. Principals were also surveyed and asked to identify teacher leader traits and determine which teachers in their schools they considered to be teacher leaders. Only those teacher leaders identified in both the teacher and principal surveys were considered for study.

Nine teacher leaders and three principals from three schools in Arkansas were selected for study. Four data collection methods were employed, including surveying, individual interviews, observation, and reflective journal entries. The data were reviewed against literature, as well as emergent themes. Trustworthiness was accounted for through various strategies, including source and method triangulation. The intent of this study was to make a contribution to the understanding of principal leadership and teacher motivation in “low-performing” schools, as well as provide a framework for future leadership studies.

Summary of Findings

This study’s four research questions guided the researcher to several key findings. A summary of the findings from surveys and interviews with principals and teacher leaders being studied is provided below.

1. Principals play a vital role in creating a school culture supportive of teacher leadership. Principals are perceived to empower their teachers to lead in a variety of ways. They promote and encourage risk-taking and give their teachers opportunities to innovate and try new things. They also provide verbal praise and direct feedback. Principals and teacher leaders consistently agree that having a culture of continuous improvement is important to the success of their students. All three schools embrace a “good to great” philosophy and try to place student needs at the center of all decisions. Principals and teachers seem to be moving towards collective ownership of all students, although this remains an on-going challenge in all three schools.

Collaboration appears to be valued at all three schools as evidenced by weekly and monthly times built into the school calendar for faculty and leadership team meetings, PLC time, and job-embedded professional development activities. Emphasis

during these collaborative times is primarily placed on the assessment of student progress, development of common assessments, and improvement of classroom instruction.

There appears to be a high degree of satisfaction among teacher leaders when it comes to having direct access to their principals. Teacher leaders make personal contact with their principals, especially during times when they need feedback or professional advice. Principals are careful to guide teacher leaders by facilitating their thinking rather than providing them with directives. Principals regularly employ their interpersonal skills with teacher leaders to help keep them focused on improving their own interpersonal skills. The principal-teacher relationship is vitally important to developing and maintaining teacher leadership capacity and is evidenced in these three high schools studied.

Principals develop certain expectations, or “non-negotiables” to strengthen their school cultures. They make hiring exceptionally talented teachers a priority when filling their teaching vacancies. They expect all teachers to collaborate and communicate in an open and respectful manner. Teacher leaders agree that dissent is welcome and viewed as healthy as long as it is considerate.

The final expectation of principals is that teachers work hard in support of all students. On-going professional development coupled with principal observations and feedback are key components of developing a positive school culture in these schools. Teachers have many opportunities to grow professionally with other teachers inside and outside their schools. Principals support the development of leadership capacity in their schools by allowing teachers to participate in leadership-focused professional

development, lead PLC time, and attend state leadership conferences. However, each school incorporates unique structures to support on-going teacher leadership development such as “lunch and learns” and “peer-to-peer” observations. Some teachers also choose to extend their teaching expertise by pursuing National Board Certification, or advanced education degrees.

2. Not all of the actions principals take to support teacher leadership are perceived as helpful by teacher leaders in their schools. For example, principals frequently offer teachers release time to work on teaching units, attend professional conferences, or visit other teachers’ classrooms. Teacher leaders report that this is ineffective because it requires them to prepare more detailed lesson plans for a substitute teacher. Furthermore, many teacher leaders find they return to class with even more work to do because they must reteach the content covered while they were out of the classroom.
3. Although they are identified as “leaders” by their principals, teacher leaders sometimes experience difficulty leading other teachers in their schools. Whether supporting a school change initiative or attempting to get colleagues to “buy into” an idea, teacher leaders are often met with resistance from other teachers, especially veteran teachers. Many teacher leaders express feeling powerless because they lack the positional power to hold other teachers accountable.
4. Teacher leaders are well informed about current issues facing their schools and are able to articulate their thoughts and concerns about them with their principals. They report having a voice in the decision-making process and their principals regularly seek their input on a variety of school issues. Principals ensure the voices of all teachers are heard and valued.

5. Principals and teacher leaders share many of the same leadership characteristics within their schools. When surveyed, principals and teachers collectively identified 21 teacher leader traits, most of which characterize the principals participating in this study. Further analysis reveals that both principals and teacher leaders keep student learning as a high priority. They value collegial relationships and are open to learning new things. They are good listeners with strong follow through skills. They are supportive of others. Finally, they constantly challenge the “status quo” of public education.

Findings Related to the Literature

Major findings of the study were summarized in the previous section. This section is dedicated to analyzing how these findings relate to the existing literature on principal leadership and teacher motivation in “low-performing” schools. Although the four research questions served as a structure for the literature review, additional findings unrelated to the research questions emerged during the study. These findings will also be compared to the literature.

Research suggests that principals are essential forces in creating schools in which teacher leadership is the norm (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In this study, a majority of the teacher leaders reported being supported by their principals. This support revealed itself in many different ways; but possibly the most important was the creation of a school culture in which teacher leadership is encouraged and valued. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) stress the importance of recognition, indicating that when teacher leaders are respected and recognized for the contributions, they are more likely to continue to contribute. This is consistent with Barth (2001) who suggests that principals who build strong cultures of teacher leadership encourage teachers to seek solutions to their own challenges and give them credit when they succeed. Additionally, principals are

critical of the process, not the person when teacher leadership efforts fall short or fail (Felton, 2010).

Knowing it is important for principals to honor the efforts of and praise teachers for their successes, the researcher sought to determine how principals motivate teachers to lead in the first place. The findings from this study revealed that teacher leaders have differing opinions on what motivates them to lead beyond the walls of their classrooms. For example, some teacher leaders reported being empowered when their principal stepped out of the way and allowed them the flexibility to share new thoughts and implement fresh and innovative ideas. In fact, Clarke (2006) cites “knowing when to back away from leadership” as one of seven challenges facing principals as they develop teacher leadership in their schools. This study concludes that many potential teacher leaders are unassuming and unaware of their own leadership strengths. By honoring teachers’ strengths and allowing them the autonomy to test their own abilities, principals support the recognition and development of important leadership skills within their teachers. Barth (2001) further suggests that principals should expect all of their teachers to lead, and should show their support for teachers by relinquishing authority and giving them autonomy to lead themselves.

Teacher leaders in this study reported appreciating principals who were easily accessible and who asked questions about their work. Garner (2005) found that principals who ask teachers hypothetical questions about their work actually stimulate them to reflect more independently about their own practice. This often results in further exploration and action by the teacher. Whether a teacher appreciates the liberty to take risks and work independently, or prefers the security of having a principal close by to provide more guidance and feedback, strong principal-

teacher relationships are crucial to motivating teachers to take on leadership roles (Donaldson, 2007).

Collaboration among teachers is also supported by earlier research (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 1998). Teacher leaders expressed the need for opportunities to openly and respectfully discuss their teaching practice in order to help them continue to grow. Actions of the principals in this study support this idea as evidenced by the organizational structures in place encouraging collaboration among teachers. Collaboration time built into the school day and week, cadres, and peer-to-peer observations are a few examples of the structures in place at the three schools being studied. Teachers also access external means of professional development through district-sponsored trainings, professional conference attendance, membership in professional organizations, and the pursuance of advanced degrees in education. This desire by teachers to work together and grow professionally is driven by a commitment for continuous improvement. All teacher leaders and principals interviewed in this study expressed that while their schools have successfully remained off of the “focus” and “priority” lists, there is always room for improvement. It is through this desire for continuous improvement in pursuit of excellence that principals are able to motivate teachers to take on leadership roles in their schools.

While most teacher leaders consider the principal behaviors and organizational conditions described previously as a means of motivation, not all actions principals take are viewed in a positive manner. To illustrate, Donaldson (2006) cites lack of time as one of the greatest barriers for teachers. Consequently, principals frequently provide teachers with release time to research and develop lesson units, go on site visits to other schools, or to work on special projects. However, several of the teacher leaders participating in this study stated that a principal’s “gift of

time” is not always necessarily a welcomed gift. While principals believe these actions are supportive and helpful, teachers report their workload is often increased because they must prepare substitute lesson plans prior to being absent and deal with any classroom issues that may have occurred upon their return.

This study clearly indicates that the principals at all three schools studied are currently working to establish sustainable teacher leadership. However, teacher leaders have mixed opinions on the degree to which teacher leadership is expected of all teachers by their principals. Nevertheless, research continues to encourage principals to create conditions in their schools for all teachers to be able to practice their own leadership skills. Research also suggests that as the idea of “teachers as leaders” becomes more embedded and accepted among teachers, the more likely teachers will be receptive to the change efforts in their schools (Harris, 2004).

Each principal expressed the difficulty associated with leading in a school labeled as “low-performing” and the pressure of needing to continuously improve. While each identified several issues that needed to be addressed, they expressed that it was impossible for them to tackle all of the challenges at one time. Therefore, the principals had to make challenging decisions about where to begin focusing their work and efforts. They worked collaboratively with teacher leaders to set school-wide goals and revisited them frequently to gauge their progress. The results of this study support principals involving teacher leaders in this process, as they are able to better articulate the school’s goals with their colleagues.

Through increased visibility and accessibility in their schools, principals stated that they were better able to identify what motivated their teachers to be leaders and create other leadership opportunities that would help the school meet its goals. This was accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, teacher leader were asked to share recent educational research

information at a faculty meeting, or during PLC time. Others were asked to lead a cadre on a specific topic of interest or to share a teaching strategy with another teacher who may be struggling.

Finally, the principals in these schools believed that all students can learn and expected their teachers to work hard in pursuit of excellence. They expected their teachers to seek out new ways of teaching “challenging topics to challenging students.” Teachers were encouraged by their principals to continue to believe in students even if the students had already given up on themselves. These expectations are consistent with teacher leadership and motivation literature (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Additional Findings Related to the Literature

As principals and teachers responded to survey questions, a variety of traits emerged to describe teacher leaders. Simple adjectives were used to describe their character such as respected, hard working, passionate, and organized. Brief phrases were also used to describe leadership behaviors such as “sees the bigger picture” or “accepts feedback from others.” Many of the same adjectives used to describe teacher leaders were also attributed to the principals being studied. Perhaps this is a result of principals modeling desired behaviors they wish to see in their schools. For example, principals put students’ needs first and expect their teachers to do the same. Principals are open to new learning and support teachers’ efforts to grow professionally. Principals are respectful and expect teachers to treat each other in the same manner. Principals challenge the “status quo” so teachers will be willing to look for ways to improve themselves and their schools.

The most interesting finding of this study was that “trust” was scarcely mentioned during the teacher leader and principal interviews. Covey (2006) cites trust as being “the one thing that

changes everything,” meaning it has a significant impact on success and failure of a school. However, after conducting nearly twenty-four hours of interviews and site observations with 12 educators, yielding more than 250 pages of transcribed text, the issue of trust was barely mentioned. All three principals mentioned it briefly, but only two of nine teachers cited principal trust as motivating them to take on leadership roles.

This finding prompted the researcher to seek an explanation. Perhaps participants failed to recognize it as a factor in their principals’ leadership because it is presumed to exist already within their school. Additional exploration led the researcher to consider the idea of organizational mindfulness (Hoy, 2003). When applied to schools, organizational mindfulness is called school mindfulness. This habit of mind is defined as a “collective capability to anticipate surprise by focusing on failure, avoiding simplification, and remaining sensitive to day to day operations. But when the unexpected happens...mindful schools are committed to resilience; they rebound with confidence and expertise” (Hoy, 2003, p. 242). Hoy’s study reasoned that teacher trust promotes school mindfulness and mindfulness reinforces trust. It is evident that the participating schools possess some degree of school mindfulness. It is possible this school mindfulness caused participants to overlook the issue of trust. However, additional research is required to support this notion.

Conclusions

Reflections made by teacher leaders participating in this study clearly indicate that principal leadership influences the manner in which they experience their own leadership. In each of the high schools studied, principals create cultural and organizational conditions that motivate teachers to take on leadership roles. They build sustainable teacher leadership capacity by aligning teacher strengths with opportunities to successfully use them. They allow teachers to

have a voice in the decision making process and encourage them to take risks and solve problems. They provide teachers with necessary and useful feedback needed to help them improve their leadership skills. Collaboration is “non-negotiable” for these principals, who expect teachers to do whatever it takes to ensure that all students are successful in their school. Most importantly, these principals model what they expect from teachers. They provide positive examples for teachers seeking to build their own leadership skills.

Although the small sample size of this study prevents the researcher from making generalizations about principal leadership and teacher motivation, it does provide the reader with insights into what teachers and principals in three once labeled “low-performing” high schools believe motivated teachers to take on leadership roles in their schools. The results of the study point to several practical implications that may inform teachers and administrators seeking to better understand teacher leadership and behaviors of principals that motivate teachers to lead.

Implications of the Study for Practice

In Chapter 1, the researcher set out to determine which leadership behaviors of three high school principals in once labeled “low-performing” schools motivated teachers to take on leadership roles. There was a strong desire to know what actions principals take when creating a culture supportive of teacher leadership. Ultimately, the researcher desired to capture the voices of teacher leaders who were willing to share personal perceptions of their principals’ leadership behaviors. This is important because schools are complex organizations and school accountability expectations cannot be met through principal leadership alone. In order for high schools to ensure that all students successfully graduate “college and career ready,” high school principals must motivate teachers to share the leadership responsibilities within their schools.

The following are important ideas gleaned from conducting this study. These implications attempt to provide principals with insights about how they might best motivate teachers to become leaders and how to use this power to develop sustainable teacher leadership capacity within their schools.

Principal leadership. Results from the surveys and interviews conducted in this study supported what existing research suggested – principal play a pivotal role in shaping school culture. The three high schools utilized in this study exhibit a strong culture of teacher leadership. One important implication of this study is the identification of what teachers perceive their principals doing to motivate them to take on leadership roles in their schools. A strong working relationship between principals and teachers is an essential part of teacher motivation. Teachers must feel respected and supported by their principal. They need to have access to their principal and feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. They need to trust their principal and be given honest feedback so they can continue to improve their leadership skills.

Teacher leaders participating in this study expressed having the freedom to try out new strategies in the classroom and take on new roles outside the classroom. They felt their principal encourages and supports them in these efforts. They further expressed that their principals' expectation of continuous improvement motivates them to work harder. Teacher leaders also expressed appreciation for principals hiring quality teachers who put students first. By requiring collaboration in their schools, principals ensure that knowledge is shared among all teachers. Principals who seek to develop sustainable teacher leadership in their schools create leadership opportunities for teachers to work together and learn together.

Shared leadership. The need for principals to share or distribute leadership opportunities with their teachers is another implication. Based on this study, it appears that principals who do this well articulate a clear vision for their teachers; hold high expectations for student success; publicly acknowledge and model desired leadership behaviors; and hold teachers accountable for helping their school meet its goals. When these goals are achieved, principals reward and celebrate success and then move on to establish new goals. This creates a “good to great” culture motivating teachers to continuously improve themselves and their schools.

Remarkably, these principals do not follow a pattern for selecting which teachers will lead and when they will lead. They just connect teachers to areas in need of a leader. Once teachers assume responsibility for a leadership role, their principals allow them to make their own decisions. However, principals remain accessible in case their teacher leaders need them. As teachers experience success in their leadership roles, they are motivated to take risks and continue to seek improvement of themselves and their schools. This in turn helps schools to develop sustainable teacher leadership capacity.

Teacher strengths. Another implication of this study is that principals seeking to build sustainable teacher leadership should continually strive to hire the best teachers and build upon their strengths. Rather than trying to remediate teacher weaknesses, principals identify individual strengths within their teachers and provide them with opportunities to use them to benefit the school. It is not necessary for teachers to be good at everything. According to these principals, it is necessary to have teachers with strengths in a variety of areas in the school serving as models for other teachers. This also helps to develop sustainable teacher leadership throughout all areas of the school.

Organizational learning. A final implication of this study is the need to promote organizational learning. The three high schools participating in this study can be characterized as organizations where principals and teachers continually seek to learn, grow, and improve. Professional development is valued at each school and teachers are called upon regularly to lead the learning with other teachers. Much of this learning takes place within PLC time, an organizational structure present in all three schools. While the structures at each school may vary, principal and teacher leader responses indicate much of this time PLC time is spent sharing best teaching practices to improve student performance. From this researcher's observation, problem-based instruction, formative assessments, and student interventions serve as the major topics of PLC time, which provide schools with an organizational structure to manage collective student and teacher learning.

Implications of the Study for Policy

Another implication of this study is found within its methodology. Districts interested in gaining insight into their teacher leaders' perceptions may consider a two-step approach. First, they can seek input from principals and teacher leaders on who is perceived as leaders in their school. Then, they can work with these teacher leaders to gain the information they need, or desire.

Empowering teachers and principals to identify teacher leaders in their school has benefits for the entire school district. First, it provides decision makers with access to the people who are respected as leaders among principals and teachers. This is far more valuable than just taking a random sample from the teacher population. Secondly, the results of a study using this sampling group are more likely to be accepted by teachers and principals because they had input

into the process. Therefore, the findings and recommendations are likely to have a greater degree of interest from teachers and principals.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on the concepts of principal leadership and teacher motivation will likely confirm many of the findings revealed in this study and deepen the education community's understanding of these topics. Conducting this study in a "low-performing" elementary school or middle school context would be useful, especially for K-8 educators looking to improve their schools. Additional studies examining teacher perceptions of principal leadership behaviors, especially in "low-performing" high schools during specific change initiatives such as teaching with "one-to-one" technology or "problem-based" learning, would be beneficial for educators in "low-performing high schools. Furthermore, exploration of how principals choose teachers to lead in "low-performing" schools with a larger minority student and teacher population would yield invaluable data for struggling inner-city schools. It is also important to identify the impact that serving as a teacher leader (both formally and informally) has on teacher and student performance. Similarly, future research needs to examine how building sustainable teacher leadership capacity affects the length of principal and teacher tenure.

Teacher motivation in "high-performing" schools is also in need of further study. Understanding how principal leadership behaviors in "high-performing" schools differ from those in "low-performing" schools would provide principal leadership programs in higher education institutions valuable insight into adequately preparing principals for their leadership role. As always, the body of literature would greatly benefit from additional longitudinal studies on teacher motivation and sustainable teacher leadership capacity in all school settings.

Contribution to the Field of Education

The information contained in this study should be useful to the field of educational leadership for both teacher and administrator preparation programs. Nine teacher leaders and three principals gave the field of educational leadership a look into their personal lives and thinking. It provides insight and perspective for current practitioners into what principals and teacher leaders experience while working together in “low-performing” schools. Educators must take the information gleaned from this study and put it into use within their own educational contexts.

Data collected from interviews revealed that new principals must be properly prepared for working in “low-performing” schools. Principal preparation programs should consider developing specific coursework and benchmarks that would provide future principals with opportunities to observe teachers and collaborate with principals in “low-performing” schools. Similarly, future teachers should be allowed to have similar experiences in their teacher preparation programs.

All nine of the teacher leaders in this study indicated that they expected their principal to model the desired leadership behaviors required of them as leaders in their schools. As a result, superintendents should be required to observe all potential principal candidates interacting with teachers prior to recommending them for hire by the district’s Board of Directors. If principal and teacher preparation programs, along with districts with “low-performing” schools, would review and respond to the findings and recommendations set forth in this study, more school leaders would be equipped to work in every “low-performing” school in the Arkansas; equipped to help students and teachers meet the federal and state accountability expectations of the future.

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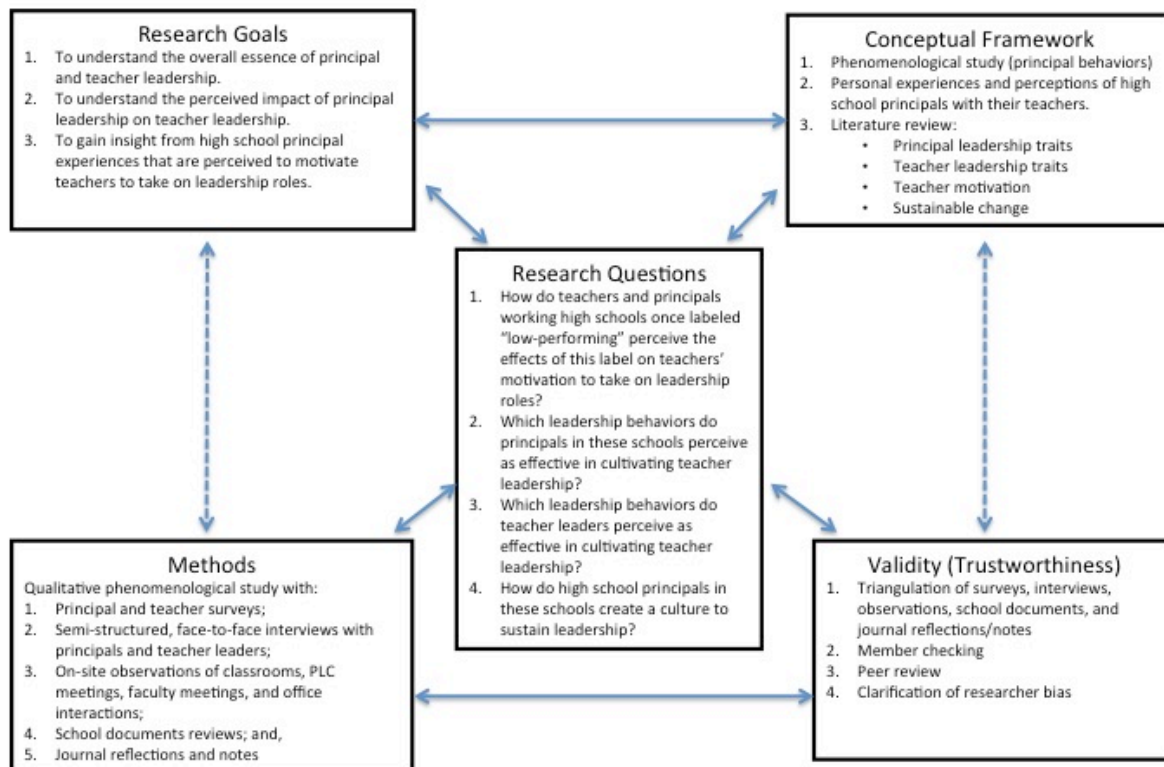
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Appendix A

Research Design of the Study



Based on Maxwell, J.A., 2013

Appendix B

Phases of Ethical Research Behavior



Based on Bloomberg & Volpe,
2012.

Appendix C

April 17, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Joseph Dale Fisher
Carleton Holt

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 17-03-586

Protocol Title: *Motivating Teachers to Lead in Low-Performing Schools: A Qualitative Study of School Leaders in Three Arkansas High Schools*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 04/17/2017 Expiration Date: 04/09/2018

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 12 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

Appendix D**Demographic Survey for High School Selection**

School Name: _____ District Name: _____

Superintendent: Please answer the following questions concerning your high school principal.

1. Name of Principal: _____

2. Gender: _____

3. Ethnicity and Race: (Please select one)

Caucasian

Black

American Indian

Alaskan Native Hispanic

Asian

Pacific Islander

Other

5. Years of Teaching Experience: _____ Years of Administration Experience: _____

6. Level of education completed:

Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in _____

Masters of Arts/Masters of Science in _____

Specialist in _____

Doctorate in _____

Please answer the following questions concerning your high school's demographics.

7. Percentage of students with free and reduced lunch status _____%

8. Average student enrollment: (circle one)

less than 500 students

500—999 students

1,000—1,499 students

1,500—1,999 students

9. Has your high school ever been labeled by the Arkansas Department of Education as a “state-directed,” “focus,” or “priority school? _____ If so, which label? _____

What years? _____

11. Has your high school since had this label removed? When? _____

12. Is the current principal of the high school the same principal that was there when it was labeled as “low-performing?” _____

13. How many teachers are still teaching in the high school today that were there when the label was removed? _____

Appendix E

On-site Survey for High School Teachers

Teachers: Please answer the following questions concerning you and your high school.

1. School Name: _____ District Name: _____

2. Name of Teacher: _____

3. Gender: _____

4. Ethnicity and Race: (Please select one)

Caucasian

Black

American Indian

Alaskan Native Hispanic

Asian

Pacific Islander

Other

5. Years of Teaching Experience: _____ Subject Area(s) _____

6. Were you a teacher at the high school during the time it was labeled a “state-directed,” “focus,” or “priority” school? _____ **If “yes,” go to question 4. If “no,” stop here.**

7. Were you a teacher at the time the “state-directed,” “focus,” or “priority” label was removed?

If “yes,” go to questions 8 and 9. If “no,” stop here.

8. What are important characteristics of “teacher leaders” in your high school?

9. Would you describe yourself as a “teacher leader” in your high school? Why?

Appendix F

On-site Survey for High School Principals

Principals: Please answer the following questions concerning you and your high school.

School Name: _____ District Name: _____

1. Name of Principal: _____
2. What are important characteristics of “teacher leaders” in your high school?
4. Which teachers in your high school would you consider “teacher leaders” and why?
5. Out of those chosen, please indicate any teacher that was teaching during the time your high school was removed from the “state-directed,” “focus,” or “priority” lists.

Appendix G

On-site Interview Protocol for Teachers

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Preliminary Script: “This is Joe Fisher. Today is [day and date]. It is [time], and I am in [location] with [interviewee], the [title] of [institution]. We will be discussing principal behaviors and teacher motivation in high schools once labeled as ‘low-performing.’”

Introduction:

1. Tell me about your experience in education.
 - a. Positions held and total years of experience
 - b. Current position and number of years
 - c. Degrees and certifications
 - d. Additional duties and/or responsibilities

Research Question 1: How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?

1. During the time your school was labeled as a “low-performing” school:
 - What it was like to be a teacher?
 - How would you characterize the school’s overall culture and climate?
 - How would you describe the principal leadership?
 - How would you describe teachers’ attitudes towards the principal’s leadership?
 - How would you characterize teacher leadership?
 - How would describe teachers’ attitudes towards teacher leaders?
 - How did teachers become leaders?
 - Describe the teachers that chose to serve as leaders?
 - What roles and responsibilities did teacher leaders assume?
2. Describe a time when you had an opportunity to serve as a teacher leader and why you chose to lead, or not to lead.
3. Describe how principals and teachers felt about themselves when the school was removed from the school improvement list. How did they feel about the school?
4. Is there anything else that you believe would help me better understand what you experienced as a teacher in a school labeled as “low-performing?”

Research Question 2: Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?

N/A

Research Question 3: Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?

1. Describe what effective “teacher leadership” looks like, sounds like, and feels like in your school.
2. How important are teacher leaders to the success of students in your school?
3. What have you experienced in your career that has caused you to feel this way?
4. Describe opportunities in your school where the principal has encouraged teachers to serve as leaders. Why did teachers choose to take on these leadership roles?
5. What leadership role(s) are you currently serving in at your school? What did your principal say, or do to influence your decision to lead?
6. Describe the principal leadership behaviors and practices that motivate teachers to take on leadership roles?
7. Describe principal leadership behaviors and practices that discourage teachers from taking on leadership roles within schools?
8. Is there anything else that you believe would help me better understand which principal leadership behaviors cultivate teacher leadership?

Research Question 4: How do high school principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?

1. Describe any structure(s) and/or processes in place within your school that support the development of teacher leadership.
2. Describe times when teacher leaders have left their leadership roles.
3. Describe the process used to replace them?
4. To what degree does a culture for sustainable teacher leadership exist within your school?
5. When your principal leaves this school, what will teachers say about his/her ability to create and sustain teacher leadership?
6. What current leadership practices are in place to ensure that teacher leadership will exist after the principal leaves?
7. Is there anything else that you believe would help me better understand how the principal creates a culture for sustainable teacher leadership?

Appendix H

On-site Interview Protocol for Principals

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Preliminary Script: “This is Joe Fisher. Today is [day and date]. It is [time], and I am in [location] with [interviewee], the [title] of [institution]. We will be discussing principal behaviors and teacher motivation in schools once labeled as ‘low-performing.’”

Introduction:

1. Tell me about your experience in education.
 - a. Positions held and total years of experience
 - b. Current position and number of years
 - c. Degrees and certifications
 - d. Additional duties and/or responsibilities

Research Question 1: How do teachers and principals working in high schools once labeled as “low-performing” perceive the effects of this label on teachers’ motivation to take on leadership roles?

1. During the time your school was labeled as a “low-performing” school:
 - Describe what it was like as the principal?
 - How would you characterize the school’s overall culture and climate?
 - How would you describe your principal leadership?
 - How would you describe teachers’ attitudes towards your leadership?
 - How would you characterize teacher leadership?
 - How would describe your attitude towards teacher leaders?
 - How would describe other teachers’ attitudes towards teacher leaders?
 - How did teachers become leaders?
 - Describe the teachers that chose to serve as leaders?
 - What roles and responsibilities did teacher leaders assume?
2. Describe a time when you had an opportunity to select a teacher leader and why you chose them. Why did they choose to lead, or not lead?
3. Describe how principals and teachers felt about themselves when the school was removed from the school improvement list. How did they feel about the school?
4. Is there anything else that you believe would help me better understand what you experienced as a principal of a school labeled as “low-performing?”

Research Question 2: Which leadership behaviors do principals in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?

1. Describe what effective “teacher leadership” looks like, sounds like, and feels like in your school.
2. How important are teacher leaders to the success of your school?
3. What have you experienced in your career that has caused you to feel this way?

4. Describe opportunities in your school where teachers have served as teacher leaders.
5. Why do teachers choose to take on these leadership roles?
6. Describe the principal leadership behaviors and practices that motivate teachers to take on leadership roles?
7. Describe principal leadership behaviors and practices that discourage teachers from taking on leadership roles within schools?
8. Is there anything else that you believe would help me better understand which principal leadership behaviors cultivate teacher leadership?

Research Question 3: Which leadership behaviors do teacher leaders in these schools perceive as effective in cultivating teacher leadership?

N/A

Research Question 4: How do high school principals in these schools create a culture to sustain teacher leadership?

1. Describe any structure(s) and/or processes in place within your school that support the development of teacher leadership.
2. Describe times when teacher leaders have left their leadership roles.
3. Describe the process used to replace them?
4. To what degree does a culture for sustainable teacher leadership exist within your school?
5. When you leave this school, what will teachers say about your ability to create and sustain teacher leadership?
6. What current leadership practices are in place to ensure that teacher leadership will exist after you leave?
 7. Is there anything else that you believe would help me better understand how you create a culture for sustainable teacher leadership?