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Principal And Instructional Coach Partnerships For Instructional Leadership: A Case Study Of Interactions And Teacher Perceptions

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PRINCIPAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL COACH PARTNERSHIPS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF INTERACTIONS AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

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The College of Graduate and Professional Studies
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PRINCIPAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL COACH PARTNERSHIPS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL
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Abstract

This qualitative case study examined conversations and interactions between an intermediate school principal and a team of content specific instructional coaches to investigate the presence of shared instructional leadership and how the interactions and responses of the two actors might support teachers' professional growth and refinement of instructional practices. An initial interview with the campus principal was used to establish her goals for instructional leadership. Over a six-week period, these goals were tracked through observations and coding of weekly meetings between the principal and coaches and then traced through the coaches' work with teachers. Findings indicated that the principal was attempting to utilize shared leadership to augment her instructional leadership, but that the results were contingent upon the quality of the leadership team's internal dynamics as well as the strength of focus on the desired goals. Instructional coaches were utilized by both the principal and the teachers as intermediaries of instructional leadership. One coach maintained a strong goal focus, which teachers perceived as very supportive to their growth, resulting in gains of approximately 30 points for struggling students.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen.

Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins (2008, p. 28)

Contemporary school reform has been a continual focus of policy makers, educators, and the larger American community since publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. Responses to the demand for more effective education have included varied initiatives such as raising standards for teacher certification, raising expectations for student performance, increasing assessment of learning, increasing requirements for mathematics, science, and technology education, and almost endless other reforms directed at students, teachers, and administrators. The stress of these reforms and the changes they have necessitated have combined with efforts to respond to an increasingly diverse student population to keep education in a state of flux, but have yet to result in the improvements for which legislators, parents, and other stakeholders hoped (Mead, 2015; Hirsch, 2016).

Despite on-going legislative initiatives, community demands, and businesses eager to sell new programs, as far back as 1996, Schmoker had written that “school improvement is not a mystery” (p. 1). Research had shown—and continues to show—that teacher quality and the intentionality of choices made in planning classroom instruction has the greatest impact on student achievement; consequentially, the most significant way to improve classroom instruction is by supporting the professional growth of teachers and fostering conditions that allow a school-wide focus on classroom learning. Research done by the Wallace Foundation (2013) found that teacher quality was more significant to student outcomes than efforts focused on lowering dropout rates, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) initiatives, student testing, or

increased educational emphasis on college and career readiness. This same research also showed that the quality of principal leadership was the second most significant influence on student outcomes (Simkin, Charner, Saltares, & Suss, 2010 as cited in Wallace, 2013).

The practice of instructional leadership is defined as leadership that emphasizes fostering professional growth for educators with a focus on improving student learning, and making administrative and personnel decisions based on maximizing educational opportunities for all students (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Numerous and varied studies, performed by many researchers in different contexts and using differing methodologies, have consistently shown that a focus on instructional leadership practices produces significant changes in student outcomes (Wallace, 2013; DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Finkel, 2012, Fullan & Knight, 2011; Wanzare & Da Costa, 2001). This finding may be the closest evidence researchers have found about what creates effective education—and it is what Schmoker (1996) referred to when he asserted that there is no mystery to school improvement.

Noting that teacher effectiveness and principal leadership are the two strongest determinants of student outcomes leads to questions about how the impact of these actors might be aligned or leveraged to maximize their impact (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Jarvis, 2012). In this age of expansive campuses, large and specialized faculties, diverse student populations, and escalating demands on educators' time, how can principals increase their instructional leadership? What kinds of instructional support should teachers expect from leadership and how is that support best delivered? These questions suggest a line of inquiry that has the potential to lead to valuable and practical guidance for educational reform efforts at the campus level.

The existing body of research on instructional leadership focuses almost exclusively on the principal, with less attention paid to the combined impact of various actors who contribute in supporting the classroom work of teachers and in support of teachers' professional growth (Neumerski, 2012). To address this gap, this study considered how an intermediate school principal works with a particular type of teacher leader--instructional coaches--to enhance support for teachers' professional learning and classroom work. The intermediate school principal enjoys a holistic, campus-wide assessment of instructional needs while instructional coaches have time, access, and expertise to work with teachers during instructional planning, delivery, and reflection (Finkel, 2011; DuFour & Mattos; 2013; Killian & Roy, 2009; Fullan & Knight, 2011). Working together, these professionals provide multiple perspectives from which to understand teachers' learning needs and deliver support.

The case study utilized a shared leadership lens to examine how instructional leadership, guided by an intermediate school principal and supported at the classroom level by instructional coaches, offers support for teachers' adoption and refinement of effective teaching practices and movement towards campus improvement goals.

Statement of the Problem

Instructional leadership and instructional coaching both have roots in the educational reform movements of past decades that sought to improve outcomes for struggling students and for children from homes considered disadvantaged. Advocates for both roles recognized the importance of developing classroom teachers' knowledge and skills as a way of improving student outcomes (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Finkel, 2012; Wanzare & Da Costa, 2001; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Fullan & Knight, 2011). The primary difference between the two roles is not in desired outcomes, but rather in the operational level at which each actor's attention is focused.

Principals are responsible for guiding the instructional growth of the entire faculty, while instructional coaches work with one teacher or one team of teachers at a time to refine instructional practices (Fullan & Knight, 2011; Killion & Roy, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Despite their shared growth from educational reform movements, the two roles emerged from separate lines of thinking—principals' instructional leadership role emerged from research that later became known as the Effective Schools Movement; the instructional coaching role arose from an increased emphasis on developing teachers' instructional practices in the classroom setting (Neumerski 2012). The development of the two roles and research into the implementation and effectiveness of both roles remained largely separate. A continued emphasis on educational reform, coupled with renewed interest in finding ways to create continuous campus improvement, has led researchers to conclude that more research is needed to fill existing gaps in educational leadership research (Neumerski, 2012; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; 1998). Neumerski (2012) is more specific in asserting that a deficit of research examining how instructional leadership is shared between a principal and other campus actors has contributed a gap in educators' understanding of shared instructional leadership and the improvement it can generate.

The problem addressed in this study is the deficit of research regarding how principals interact with formal and informal campus leaders to support teacher development and the refinement of instructional practices. Increased understanding of the influences on various campus actors' interactions begins to address the gap identified in the scholarship of principal leadership and can potentially provide actionable suggestions for practitioners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine how an intermediate school principal and a specific type of teacher leader—instructional coaches—determined campus goals, communicated about those goals, and shared responsibility for supporting teacher’s development towards those goals.

Research Questions

The study was guided by a question not well-examined in the literature of instructional leadership or instructional coaching: How might the alignment of the instructional leadership of principals and the work of instructional coaches’ affect their influence on the classroom practices of teachers? A more complete understanding of these interactions was obtained through exploration of the following questions:

- How does an intermediate school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to intermediate school coaches?
- How do instructional coaches communicate the principal’s goals to teachers and support the building of new skills to reach those goals?
- How do teachers perceive the instructional expectations of the principal and the support of instructional coaches?

Conceptual Framework

Calls for principals to be the instructional leaders of their campuses date back to research done in the early 1970’s, while the prevalence of instructional coaching expanded as a result of mandates in No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001 (Hallinger, 2005; Killion & Harrison, 2006; L’Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Since then, both roles have co-existed on many secondary campuses with principals being encouraged to take a hands-on role in guiding the

development of teachers' instructional practices and implementation of the curriculum. Coaches were encouraged to enroll teachers in coaching cycles aimed at supporting teachers' growth towards goals of their own choosing.

Existing research has documented the difficulties experienced by secondary principals attempting to fulfill the role of instructional leader, including a lack of both the time required to give consistent feedback to teachers, as well as the subject expertise necessary to provide the specificity of feedback necessary to improve instructional practices (Hallinger, 2005; Townsend, Acker-Hocevar, Ballenger, & Place, 2013). Meanwhile, a separate strand of research documented ways in which instructional coaches successfully implemented their role in providing instructional support, building teachers' sense of self-efficacy and supporting implementation of specific instructional programs and strategies (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick 2010; Stoelinga & Mangin 2010; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Neumerski, 2012).

Significance

Leadership focused on improving classroom instruction helps teachers to maximize classroom outcomes by helping them better meet the needs of diverse learners (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Conducting this study was an enactment of transformative leadership by seeking to improve understanding of how shared leadership might be leveraged to create school improvement that reaches all learners, thereby addressing inequity and injustice in educational outcomes that most strongly affect students from minority and economically disadvantaged homes (Shields 2010; Putnam, 2015).

Instances in which instructional coaching is being credited with supporting the change initiatives of principals are currently being discussed within the instructional coaching

community but documentation and analysis of the methods and processes are generally lacking. The goal of this case study was to create what Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) referred to as an “evocative” examination of shared leadership (p. 4). The researcher sought to design a case study that would illuminate how the site principal and instructional coaches come to a shared understanding of campus improvement goals, how the coaches carried the message to teachers and supported implementation, and how teachers perceived this support. Capturing and examining one example of this type of shared leadership contributes to several bodies of existing research, including research regarding instructional leadership and instructional coaching. Practitioners, both principals and coaches, might be inspired to examine their own understandings and practices regarding instructional leadership and then begin to consider how more intentional alignment of the two roles might offer increased support for teachers’ learning.

Definition of Terms

Campus improvement goals. Campus improvement goals are areas of focus identified by campus leadership on the basis of observed needs in student learning performance (Killion & Roy, 2009).

Instructional coach. Instructional coaches are teacher leaders who provide job-embedded professional learning by working directly with teachers in their schools and classrooms to assist with the application of new knowledge and skills as necessary to improve the academic performance of all students (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is the act of creating a vision of effective instruction shared by all faculty members, maintaining a school environment focused on learning, developing the leadership potential of all staff members, and managing human and physical resources to maximize the conditions necessary for a safe and effective learning

environment. All these tasks are prioritized and accomplished with the foremost goal of improving the quality of effectiveness for all learners (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Instructional leadership team. The instructional leadership team is established by the principal and is composed of administrators, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders who are tasked by the principal with the work of instructional leadership. “Leadership team members are responsible for implementing schoolwide initiatives for instruction, and they also model cultural norms” (Fenton, n.d).

Shared leadership. Shared leadership is identified by the practices and actions—rather than by formal job titles or structures—of actors who work separately yet interdependently to achieve mutually held goals. Leadership is viewed as the product of on-going interactions between leaders and followers as they react and adjust to each other and to situational demands. Shared leadership as a research construct views leadership as “a collection of interacting components: leaders, followers, and situation. These interacting components must be understood together because the system is more than the sum of the components parts or practices” (Spillane, 2005, p. 150).

Assumptions and Limitations of the Proposed Study

This study assumed that certain conditions regarding instructional coaching and principalship were true. These assumptions were met by the site school.

In this study, an assumption was made that instructional coaches were site based and were placed on campus to provide job-embedded professional learning support for all teachers—in other words, that working with an instructional coach was not used as, or perceived to be, a punitive action or an indication that the teachers’ performance was considered to be below expectation. Additionally, it was assumed that the coaches were considered part of the

instructional leadership team and were included in conversations regarding campus academic performance and needed improvement. Finally, it was assumed that instructional coaches were given time to work directly with teachers during instructional planning and delivery as well as time for reflective conversations after teaching.

These assumptions fit within the model of instructional coaching advanced by Learning Forward: The Professional Learning Association (Killion & Roy, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006). In this model, the instructional leadership team, including administrators, instructional coaches, and select teacher leaders work together to identify student needs and barriers to learning. Together, this team defines the professional learning needed by adults in order to address identified student needs. Coaches then develop collaborative learning activities to support teacher growth and implementation. Thus, the instructional leadership team identifies the goals of professional learning; individual teacher voice is honored through choice of learning activities and ways of interacting with the coach and teacher teams.

Regarding principals, it was assumed that they were held responsible for the overall performance of their campus and were allowed site-based decision-making regarding instructional improvement priorities and methods. It was assumed that the goal of continuous campus improvement and instructional improvement was to strengthen educational outcomes for all students and to close achievement gaps between the most successful and the most struggling learners.

Choosing to focus this study on a single site and interactions between a single principal and a team of three instructional coaches limits the generalizability of the resulting findings. Additionally, the duration of this six-week study also imposed a limitation in both the amount of data that was collected and the amount of time campus actors had to interact and affect teaching

practices. The purpose of this study, however, was not to generate an exhaustive or definitive analysis but rather to create a richly detailed, “evocative” study (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 4) that inspires additional research questions. Because this inquiry was designed to offer an exploratory study of a not well-examined intersection of roles, a more in-depth look at a single case was determined to offer a greater likelihood of evocative material than a more cursory examination of varied cases.

This study addressed the identified gap in leadership research by considering how a principal who is responsible for all aspects of a large intermediate school campus interacts with a specific type of campus-based teacher leader. These teacher leaders, known as instructional coaches, collaborate with teachers to support refinement of teaching practices. Other campus leaders, such as department chairs, assistant principals, and team leaders may also contribute to instructional leadership, but examination of their contributions was not included within this study. In some school districts, instructional coaches are utilized differently than described here; for example, being used to implement corrective measures for teachers who perform below expectations, being given evaluative or directive power over teachers, or being used to assist in managerial administrative duties. This study did not examine how such roles might influence shared responsibility for teacher support.

Conclusion

To the extent that educators agree with Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkin’s (2008) comment that leadership is the necessary catalyst for successful endeavors, it is also necessary to believe that improving educational outcomes for all students depends on improving educational leadership. The myth of the sole principal, who runs a successful school by the sheer power of his or her strong will and unprecedented expertise, has run its course. Researchers are calling for

new ways of examining and explaining leadership that provide more explanatory power for observed results and that offer more realistic guidance for practitioners. Honoring Neumerski's (2012) call for consideration of how principals share instructional leadership with other campus actors and how this shared leadership impacts teaching practices was the inspiration for this study. By considering how instructional leadership, guided by an intermediate school principal and implemented at the classroom level by instructional coaches, supported teachers' adoption and refinement of effective teaching practices, this study attempted to build a more complete and realistic view of instructional leadership. This improved instructional leadership offers promise for driving campus improvement that leads to greater equity of educational outcomes for all children in our communities, addressing both inequality and injustice through the transformation of institutions of public education.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature included in this review addresses the roles and responsibilities of principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders, interactions among those actors, and the conditions that support improved practice.

The Modern Principalship: Responsibility for School Improvement

Research begun in the early 1970's that later became known as the Effective Schools Movement documented the success of principals who utilized "strong, directive leadership" in order to become the instructional leaders of their campuses. The impression that these successful, take-charge-of-it-all leaders single-handedly transformed a school placed a heavy burden on the shoulders of all principals to transform their schools by sheer power of personal vision and expertise (Hallinger, 2005, p. 224). Despite the daunting nature of the task, the belief in principals as heroic saviors of schools through instructional leadership quickly became part of the mythology and expectations of modern principalship, subsequently spawning countless volumes of research and shaping principal training programs (Mullican & Ainsworth, 1979).

Over twenty years later, Wanzare and Da Costa (2001) undertook an extensive review of literature on principals' leadership and found that the majority of principals did closely associate with the title of *instructional leader*. However, they also found "a great deal of confusion regarding the meaning of the phrase 'instructional leadership'" and noted that fellow researcher Ginsberg had labeled it "a psychological construct" which "is not something concrete and easily observable, but gets its meaning from certain factors that constitute it" (pp. 270-271). Despite identification of the role and belief in its importance, researchers consistently struggled to document specific and consistent behaviors responsible for successful instructional leadership.

From examinations of the role to the personalities of principals

In the absence of behavioral findings related to verifiable actions and their impact, researchers instead relied upon an emphasis on the leadership qualities of a single charismatic, heroic leader (Neumerski, 2012). Advocates of the role argued that such strong, wise, and compelling leadership would solve the problems of public schools and improve student outcomes. These calls influenced the hiring and promotion of several generations of educational administrators (Neumerski, 2012).

Field research and critiques

Considering the feasibility of responding to these demands for instructional leaders, Wanzare and Da Costa (2001) reviewed the existing literature and identified thirty-eight separate tasks that principals were expected to fulfill; instructional leadership concerns accounted for only a few of those. They found instructional leadership tasks described as “develop school curriculum and materials,” “develop, improve, monitor, and select the types, amounts, and uses of instructional materials” “demonstrate effective teaching techniques” and monitor the “instructional program to identify ‘invisible’ problems” (Wanzare & Da Costa, 2001, pp. 272-273). Despite this list, later researchers noted that failure to find the role’s enactment might stem from an on-going lack of details regarding exactly what instructional leadership looks like, what behaviors instructional leaders engage in, or exactly how instructional and administrative leadership differ (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Finkel’s (2012) research supported Horng and Loeb’s assertion that the lack of specificity and clarity hindered enactment, but Finkel also expressed concern that a growing body of research indicated that most principals, particularly secondary principals, had neither the time nor the subject expertise to fulfill the role of instructional leader as presented in the existing literature.

While researchers strived to document specific instructional behaviors of principals, they did consistently document that leadership's impact on student outcomes—when measured at the campus level—was second only to the classroom practices of teachers. Despite differences in how these variables were measured, a wealth of descriptive research consistently found that the actions and choices of teachers and those of principals were important determinants of student outcomes, but correlations found in research failed to produce agreement on exactly what behaviors principals should engage in to manifest effective instructional leadership. Vague refrains to work side-by-side with teachers and take a hands-on approach to curriculum and instruction did not help principals find a practical way to balance the managerial tasks of leadership with the time necessary to provide consistent instructional guidance to teachers (Hallinger, 2005).

A New, Federally Mandated Educational Professional for Instructional Leadership

Even as principals were being pushed into the role of instructional leaders, No Child Left Behind legislation passed by Congress in 2001 and signed into law the following year mandated increased support for literacy education in elementary grades and advanced the role of the literacy coach. The literacy coach was charged with providing professional learning to support teachers' adoption and refinement of effective teaching practices (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

While traditional professional learning typically took place in specially designed classes lasting from a few hours to several days, instructional coaches were tasked with providing job-embedded professional learning—to work to increase teachers' understanding and application of instructional strategies during the workday, in the course of the usual weekly activities of planning and delivering instruction. By collaborating with teachers throughout the lesson cycle, coaches could help teachers learn, practice, and evaluate new instructional methods. The role of

instructional coach and the model of job-embedded professional learning proved to be so effective that other contents and grade levels adopted it (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). Throughout the United States, instructional coaching programs were implemented to provide job-embedded, on-going professional support to core-subject area teachers with the intention of inspiring and supporting changes to improve instructional outcomes for students (Fullan & Knight, 2011).

Traditional coaching models stressed that coaching must be conducted with individual teachers in formally defined coaching cycles that included planning discussions, modeling or co-teaching of the target skills, and facilitating self-reflection by the client teacher. These formal models stressed that, in accordance with adult learning theory, adults must have broad freedom to choose their own goals for coaching cycles; the coach must refrain from offering solutions or advice, and the utmost confidentiality must be maintained throughout coaching cycles. In these models, coaches served primarily as a facilitator of individual thinking, reflecting back to the client only what he or she already knew but was not consciously appreciating or connecting to the emerging situation (Knight, 2007; Costa & Garmston, 2002).

In more recent models of instructional coaching, coaches function as part of a campus leadership team that works to identify student learning needs across many classrooms. Together with administrators and other teacher leaders, instructional coaches observe students within classrooms and critically analyze patterns in student learning data. The observations and data patterns serve to identify specific learning needs, barriers to student learning, and teacher behaviors which maximize learning for all students. Armed with this knowledge, administrators

define expectations for teacher learning and improved student outcomes; instructional coaches collaborate with teachers to support the learning necessary to meet administratively defined expectations (Killion & Harrison, 2006; Killion & Roy, 2009).

Instructional Leadership as a Shared Responsibility

The intersection of demands for principals to become instructional leaders and the growth of instructional coaching programs gives rise to the possibility of aligning these two roles to achieve a greater, mutual impact on teacher practices and student achievement (Killion & Roy, 2009). Principals with a more shared leadership style might be able to rely on instructional coaches to augment their effectiveness as instructional leaders. Content-specific coaches might be able to translate a principal's general vision for quality instruction and school improvement into more specific action steps for core subject teachers. Working in collegial relationships with teachers, coaches have the time to be actively engaged in instructional planning and delivery and to engage the teacher in reflection. This approach, therefore, may increase the likelihood that teachers use and refine best practices to reach the required rigor of the standards, thereby improving student achievement (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

A principal who strategically utilized instructional coaches as an extension of his or her role as instructional leader might overcome some of the obstacles identified in the literature and thereby enhance the impact of his or her personal instructional leadership to improve student outcomes. This study attempted to shed light on whether the documented barriers to principals' instructional leadership could be overcome by a secondary principal and team of instructional coaches working together. To undertake this study, it was necessary to move beyond the traditional static investigation of leadership as the responsibility of a single individual and

instead take an expanded view of leadership as a shared endeavor that results from interactions among actors.

Researchers have proposed alternative lenses such as distributive and shared leadership theories that provide a tool for capturing a more comprehensive and realistic picture of effective leadership (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Spillane & Healy, 2010). In this study, use of a shared leadership lens afforded the researcher opportunity and methodology to consider the alignment and cohesion of instructional leadership provided by both a principal and campus instructional coaches in relation to each other and while responding to evolving situations. This study addressed Neumerski's (2012) extensive review of literature on principal leadership and the roles of instructional coaches and teacher leaders. The researcher noted a deficit of attention in the research for consideration of these actors in relation to one another or which attempted to describe their interactions.

Answering the Call to Investigate the Interactions of Instructional Coaches and Principals

The purpose of the study was to utilize a shared leadership lens to consider the processes and interactions that surrounded the instructional leadership interactions of principals and instructional coaches and their impact on the classroom practice of teachers. Using interviews and observations of conversations between an intermediate school principal and campus instructional coaches, interactions were analyzed and coded to explore how goals set forth by the principal were communicated to coaches, how coaches communicated those goals to teachers, and whether teachers perceived an alignment of support. Thus, the work of instructional coaches was considered as a mediating factor between the instructional leadership of principals and teachers. Did instructional coaches serve as the principal's instructional representative, not only

voicing the principal's goals, but also actively supporting teachers in refining and implementing those goals? If instructional coaches did so, then responsibility for providing instructional leadership was shared between a principal (with a holistic view of campus needs and resources) and instructional coaches (with deep and specific knowledge of content and pedagogy, as well as consistent access to teachers during instruction). In doing so, instructional coaches would be taking on some of the hands-on responsibilities previously considered essential to the instructional leadership of principals, but which many researchers argued were impractical for modern-day secondary principals (Hallinger, 2005; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012).

Literature Review Methodology

The research for this literature review draws upon two largely separate bodies of research. The first strand calls for principals to be the instructional leaders of their campuses and explores why the role may be so difficult to enact in the field; the second investigates the work of instructional coaches and explores how coaching affects teachers' instructional practices and the conditions that make coaching more or less effective. Research suggesting how these two roles might reinforce or supplement the work of the other was considered through use of both an existing model of the modern principalship and a conceptual framework for shared leadership. Studying the interactions of these two actors, specifically with attention to how their interactions support the development of teachers' professional growth and changes in instructional practices, addressed existing calls in the literature to better understand shared instructional leadership on the modern secondary campus.

Topics and scope of search

To examine the alignment of instructional coaching and principal leadership it was necessary to understand the evolving demands for instructional leadership and the resulting

research into how this role has been fulfilled on secondary campuses. The historical evolution of the concept of instructional leadership was investigated, using references cited in identified, relevant sources to facilitate tracking of the concept backwards through time, tracing its development as a research construct. The continued development and evolution of instructional leadership, as well as critiques of the construct and its implementation were identified, while also allowing examination of strands or threads of research that evolved from the major construct.

Following the evolution of instructional leadership led to the uncovering of constructs which took a broader view of leadership, including distributive leadership, shared leadership, and collective leadership. Keyword searches of these constructs led to examination of theoretical perspectives that focused on both formal and informal leadership and attempted to describe the processes through which leadership was shared and the variety of forms in which it presented. Other sources examined the difficulties of studying leadership from a shared perspective.

Literacy coaching initiatives expanded in response to mandates in No Child Left Behind Legislation and research into various aspects of its implementation and impact escalated shortly thereafter (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Search strategies were applied to uncover the range of work examining instructional coaching, as well as critiques of the existing scholarship. After noting that the role of instructional coach was relatively new, rose out of a vaguely defined national mandate, and manifested in a variety of titles in school districts across the nation, keyword searches for this strand of research were expanded to include functionally similar actors and practices such as content coaching, partnership coaching, teacher-leader, and content facilitator. Research that examined coaches' impact on teacher practices and the conditions necessary for effective implementation of coaching programs were deemed most relevant, while

texts examining the personal characteristics of effective coaches and the language of coaching were deemed to be only tangentially related.

Keyword searches were used to locate additional texts which were examined to critically explore how other concepts might be related to, or overlap, core aspects of instructional leadership and instructional coaching. These keyword searches of major educational databases included the following terms: teacher leadership; collaborative leadership; school leadership; effective schools. These research strands will be referenced and included when they inform or illustrate concepts relevant to instructional leadership and coaching.

Origin and Development of Key Concepts

The concepts of instructional leadership and instructional coaching have roots in the educational reform movements of past decades that sought to improve outcomes for struggling students and for children from homes labeled *disadvantaged*. Advocates for both roles recognized the importance of classroom teachers' knowledge and skills in determining student outcomes (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Finkel, 2012, Wanzare & Da Costa, 2001; Killion and Harrison, 2006; Fullan & Knight, 2011). Both roles were based upon the need for continued professional learning and growth to support teachers in meeting the needs of all learners. The primary difference between the roles is the level of focus at which each operates: principals at the campus level, coaches at the team or teacher level. This understanding of the existing literature explains why there has been scant examination of the processes of overlap or alignment of the two roles as instructional leaders to date (Neumerski, 2012).

Principals as instructional leaders

Calls for principals to lead school improvement efforts by becoming instructional leaders of their campuses date back to the early 1970's and the research of the Effective Schools

Movement. This research indicated that some schools were achieving high and equitable outcomes for children regardless of families' socioeconomic status or background. This finding seemed to contradict existing research and the dominant school of thought at the time (stemming from the Coleman Report of 1966). Examinations of the characteristics common to these schools collectively came to be known as the "correlates of effective schools" and they still inform much of the preparation and professional learning given to public school principals, particularly the finding that all of these effective schools had "strong instructional leadership" (Neumerski, 2012).

Critiques and attempts to reframe the research

Critics of the effective schools research pointed out that the studies were based upon correlations and did not prove that specific leadership actions caused higher levels of student performance, and consequently the various studies were unable to yield any specific guidance for principals regarding the actions that might lead to improved performance (Hallinger, 2005). Mullican and Ainsworth (1979) noted that, as far back as the 1970's, calls were being made to better define and differentiate the behaviors of instructional versus administrative leadership. "Instead, what resulted was a vague notion that successful school leaders are not just managers but are *instructional* leaders; in other words, their work is highly focused on...teaching and learning" (Neumerski, 2012; emphasis in original, pp. 317-318).

Attempting to provide practical advice to educational supervisors, Harris (1977) noted that the term *instructional leadership* was often associated with innovative programs and emphasized involvement with instructional change. He advised principals to be both a participant and facilitator in meaningful group processes, while striving to deepen the level of collaboration among group members. Principals were advised to perform this function throughout the

organization, while simultaneously maintaining perspective on the organization as a whole and understanding how the changes being considered in one area would affect other areas.

Researchers working on a project to improve Georgia's schools noted that principals would need extensive support to successfully evaluate and implement curriculum materials and instructional practices (Mullican & Ainsworth, 1979). They also noted that both training and implementation of this type of leadership would need to be a top priority if the goal was to create principals who truly influenced student achievement through instructional leadership. Offering a caveat to the increased role of leadership, Miller (1977, as cited in Mullican & Ainsworth, 1979, p. 35) reminded practitioners that "good leadership can enhance the implementation of bad programs as well as good ones."

With the lack of existing causal evidence, attempts to explain the correlation of strong leadership and effective schools focused on identifying the direct influence of effective principals on student outcomes. Researchers turned to theories of heroic leadership and the personality traits that strong principals brought to their work. These studies presented theories of successful leadership focused on the importance of a strong, directive personality rather than due to extensive knowledge of content, pedagogy, or leadership (Townsend, Acker-Hocevar, Ballenger, & Place, 2013). Research cited in Hallinger's (2005) review from the time of the initial findings regarding strong, directive instructional leaders and lasting through the early 2000's, made no reference to the roles or impact of teachers or other instructional staff, not even assistant principals.

Critics such as Hallinger (2005) and Townsend et al. (2013) argued that the effective schools' correlates were based upon "turn-around schools," those schools that had replaced a presiding principal with the expectation that the successor would create drastic changes in a short

period. Findings from such situations would not necessarily transfer to other situations and the personality traits that made such principals successful might not be applicable in other schools.

The turn of the century brought increased calls for improved schools, leading to a renewed interest in leadership studies with more explanatory and prescriptive power. A new wave of research eventually identified three dimensions of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission and goals; managing the instructional program, which included supervision and evaluation of curriculum and instruction and monitoring student progress; and promoting a positive school culture conducive to learning (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Despite the identification of what might be considered actionable guidance for the implementation of instructional leadership, researchers such as Leithwood et al. (2008), Townsend et al. (2013) and Hallinger (2005) criticized these findings, noting that these dimensions were actually mediating variables and did not have the direct effects on student learning for which researchers were searching.

In a 2013 study examining instructional leadership in secondary schools, Townsend and fellow researchers summarized existing work on instructional leadership and then labeled the resulting findings, “a rather slippery use of language” (Townsend et al., 2013, p. 21), noting that the body of work depicted leadership as more important than the findings actually justified. Townsend et al. asserted that general claims that instructional leadership was the most important determinate of student achievement were ignoring the impact of student factors while also lumping together the impact of both principals and teachers—of which teachers accounted for the vast majority of differences in outcomes. The failure to appreciate the impact of teachers' contributions to outcomes was particularly troubling in combination with Prestine and Nelson's (2005) research that found that schools revolved around two functional domains: teaching and

learning, and organization of the school environment. The two domains, they argued, had become increasingly decoupled, with the former being the sole domain of teachers while the latter was the domain of principals. This finding partially accounted for—and gave evidence to—Hallinger’s (2005) observation that early work on instructional leadership looked solely at the principal in isolation and never attempted to account for the role or impact of other individuals.

Attempting to move deeper into understanding the processes by which leadership might influence student outcomes, Hallinger (2005) re-examined observational and interview data collected in California elementary schools and concluded that, although answers from both teachers and principals indicated strong goal orientation, strong principal involvement with curriculum and instruction, and promotion of a school culture supportive to teaching and learning (the three dimensions of instructional leadership advocated for principals), fulfillment of the tasks seemed to be superficial. In his conclusions, Hallinger noted that continued interest in principal leadership and a steady flow of scholarly research “certainly cannot be taken as evidence of role enactment in practice” (p. 228).

Case studies and meta-analyses of principals in typical schools indicated that the role of a modern secondary principal was now “too large for a single person” (Townsend et al., 2013) and that secondary principals in particular were increasingly focusing on managing schools rather than engaging in the hands-on work of grappling with curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities in classrooms or providing the consistent feedback necessary to support teachers’ professional growth (Hallinger, 2005). Modern principals, unlike the image of the highly effective instructional leader, were increasingly becoming organizational managers and relying on managerial tools to influence instruction (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Writing about school improvement, DuFour and Mattos (2013) asserted that the managerial functions of instructional

oversight--such as observational rounds and teacher evaluations--had little impact on teacher quality or instructional improvement, despite increases in legislation calling for more intensive supervision of teaching.

Distributive, or shared, leadership: acknowledging the role of others

Both case studies and meta-analyses indicated that the idealized view of instructional leadership did not represent the reality of modern secondary principals, and yet some schools were still producing outstanding results for all learners, and in these cases leadership still seemed to be important. The continued findings that leadership was strongly associated with effective teaching and learning led researchers to examine the processes of leadership more closely and to devise new analytical tools to support the development of their theories.

Models with more explanatory and prescriptive power. As part of a large multi-phase study under the auspices of the Wallace Foundation, researchers Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) specifically examined the relative impact of the three identified dimensions of instructional leadership on student learning. Accepting that the three dimensions represented only mediating and not direct influences on student achievement, they created a path analysis model and statistically examined the relative impacts of the variables on student outcomes. An illustration of the model is shown in Figure 1.

Leithwood and his fellow researchers found that a principal's leadership had a statistically significant impact on working conditions within the school, the motivation, and commitment of staff, and on teachers' capacity and disposition to teach effectively. The most significant effect of leadership was on working conditions. He attributed this finding to the direct control principals have over most working conditions on their campuses. Still statistically significant, but the weakest of the three findings, was a principal's impact on teacher capacity,

which he defined as a teacher’s belief in his or her ability to implement specific, desired strategies. Leithwood noted that this capacity factor had the most significant impact on altered classroom practices, which lead to his conclusion that although “it is clearly important to develop teachers’ capacities, school leaders have less impact on teacher performance than on other factors” (p. 33). He went on to assert, “The position most often advanced is that leaders ought to make greater direct contributions to staff capacities and that this is a challenge to be addressed in the future” (p. 34).

Figure 1. *Leithwood et. al’s Path Analysis Model of Instructional Leadership (2008)*

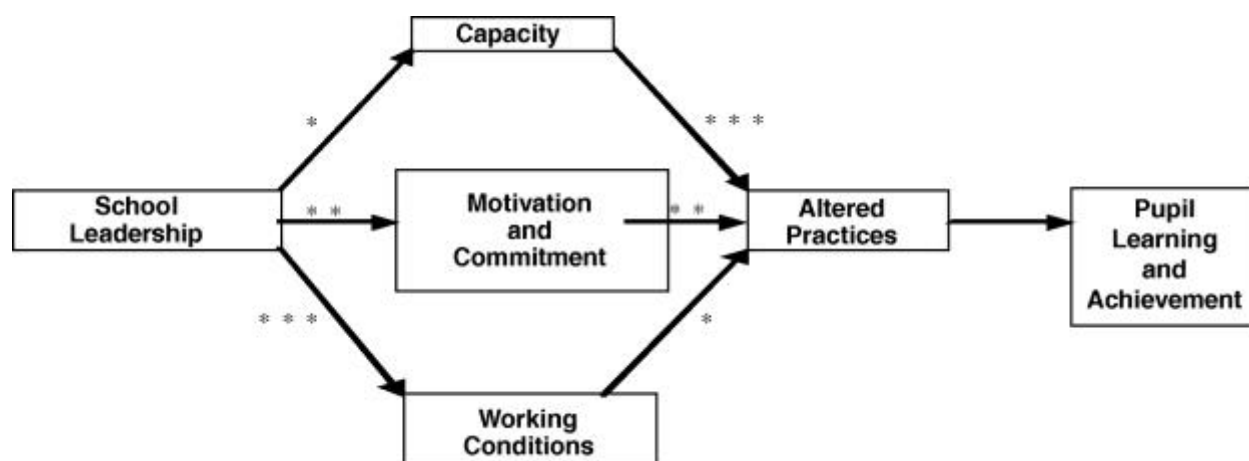


Figure 1. The effects of school leadership on teacher capacity, motivation, commitment, and beliefs about working conditions. Key: * weak influence; ** moderate influence; *** strong influence (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins, 2008).

Leithwood’s work showed evidence that leadership did have statistically significant and direct impact on the three dimensions of staff performance (his label for the three characteristics previously associated with instructional leadership) and that each of these three dimensions of staff performance had a strong and direct influence on student learning. Leithwood showed that his model using three dimensions of leadership could account for 27% of the variation in student achievement across schools.

A revised model that considered the impact of additional actors. In later phases of the study, Leithwood and Jarvis (2012) used the same model but took a broader view of leadership. They defined leadership as the exercise of influence over decision-making. This new definition acknowledged the contributions of both formal and informal leadership, including teacher leaders, district officials, parents, students, and assistant administrators, thus making leadership a collective or shared act. Leithwood's revised model is shown in Figure 2. Findings from the studies indicated that collective leadership presented more overall explanatory power for the impact of leadership on learning than did analysis of the impact of a single school principal. Leithwood and his team concluded that collective leadership was strongly linked to student achievement, primarily through its effects on teacher motivation and work settings and conditions.

Interestingly, although total leadership had a far more significant impact on teacher capacity in the collective leadership model, teacher capacity did not have a significant impact on student learning and achievement (effect size $-.38$). This finding might lead researchers to wonder about how these assorted influences interacted. The variety of leadership inputs, the measure of capacity used (a teacher's belief in his or her ability to implement specific, desired changes), and Leithwood's measure of student achievement may have produced conflicting patterns of influence, resulting in findings that deserve further investigation. Similar to Leithwood's previous calls for increased research into leadership's direct impact on teaching capacity, this finding would seem to illustrate the need for research into the nature of interactions among actors. A closer look at these interactions might shed light upon how their influences affect teacher capacity and ultimately affect student outcomes.

In accordance with predictions in theoretical work on distributed leadership (Spillane & Healy, 2010), leaders in Leithwood's and Jarvis' (2012) study did not lose influence by sharing it with others. While collective leadership offered strong explanatory power for the overall impact of leadership on student learning, these researchers did not offer insight into what actions principals could use to exert more influence over classroom practice—the very call Leithwood himself put forth in his 2008 research.

Figure 2. *Revised Path Analysis Model to Examine the Impact of Collective Leadership*

(Leithwood and Jarvis, 2012)

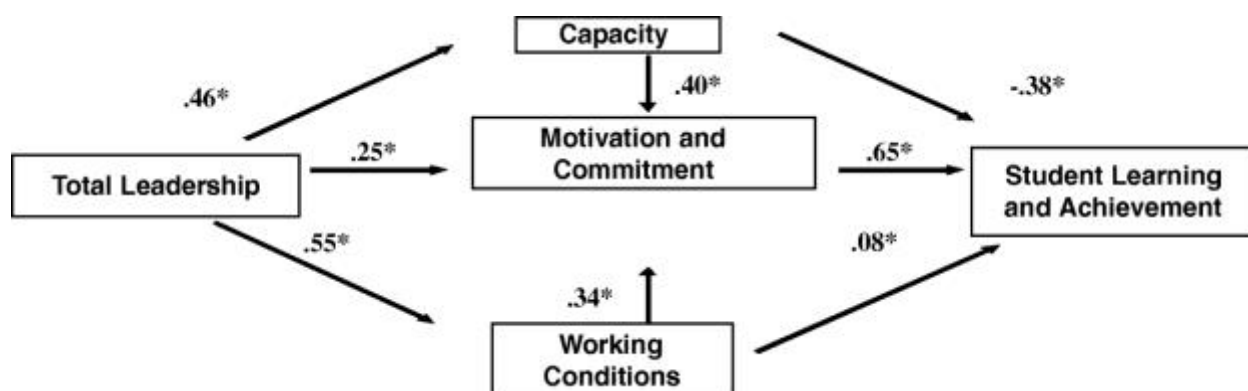


Figure 2. The impact of collective leadership on the three dimensions of staff performance. Effect sizes, drawn from Leithwood's work for the Wallace Foundation, are shown for each relationship (Leithwood & Jarvis, 2012).

Providing feedback to support teachers and build capacity

Setting aside the question of *who* might influence teacher capacity, other researchers began to investigate *how* principals or other actors might influence teacher capacity. Calik, Sezgin, Davgaci, & Kilinc (2012) found that positive feedback to teachers strengthened feelings of both self and collective efficacy and that feelings of collective efficacy on the part of teachers were strongly related to both teacher motivation and student outcomes. While no causal link was investigated, this research raised questions regarding who might have the content expertise to recognize high quality teaching and have the time to consistently provide positive feedback to

teachers. In 1996, Hoerr had already noted that schools were increasingly being forced to take on new tasks within areas of child development and specialized instruction and pedagogy, resulting in educational systems that were “Balkanized” and for which teachers developed highly specialized expertise and vocabularies (p. 380). Hoerr argued, “It is simply not realistic to expect an administrator to serve as an intellectual resource or catalyst for all of these efforts” (p. 380). While it might seem that effective pedagogy would be consistent and easily recognizable across all content areas, Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) researched instruction in secondary classrooms and found it to be highly complex and diverse, with little existing research to identify exactly which elements of school or teacher capacity made teaching in all classrooms more or less effective. Additionally, they noted that while a multitude of forms existed for supervision and evaluation purposes, little research and few protocols existed that would adequately support a principal’s identification and understanding of effective teaching in advanced secondary classrooms.

Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore (2009) specifically examined the effectiveness of providing support to school principals in efforts to assist them in facilitating instructional improvement. They found that even with consistent support, school principals were unable to provide sufficient support to grade level teams to create measurable improvements in student achievement. During the second year of the same study, studying the same schools, they found that providing the same type of support to members of the grade level teams *and* principals, utilizing a site-based delivery model, resulted in significant improvement in instructional outcomes, measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. They concluded that principal facilitation of meetings and instructional planning was not sufficient to affect student outcomes.

Intensive capacity building required work with all members of the instructional team to produce a measurable gain. This finding lent support to assertions from Calik, Sezgin, Davgaci, & Kilinc (2012), Hoerr (1996), and Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) that principals might not be the best-situated actors to provide the level of guidance and feedback necessary to affect the instructional practices of teachers.

Research evidence continued to support the assertion that to impact teacher capacity, support given to teachers required adequate time, consistency, and specific expertise in content, and that expecting a solitary secondary principal to meet those criteria in multiple subject areas and with multiple teams of teachers was unrealistic. This growing body of work also suggested that instructional improvement would require the active involvement of teachers—an idea which seemed to be in opposition to traditional descriptions of principals' instructional leadership which implied that improvement efforts were done *by* the principal *to* the teachers.

Instructional Leadership from Within—Studies of Teacher Leadership and Collaboration

Studies of teacher collaboration and peer support have often used a distributive leadership perspective to frame the study of teachers' shared responsibility for instructional planning and development (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, and Grissom, 2015; Stoelinga & Mangin, 2010). These studies have consistently found that when teachers share collective responsibility for planning instruction and ensuring that all students learn at high levels, student outcomes exceeded those reported in schools with similar demographics but less collaboration. These findings document that teachers' collaboration and the perception of shared responsibility have exhibited a direct and impactful influence on classroom practices and resulting student outcomes.

The mechanisms of teacher leadership

Stoelinga and Mangin (2010) undertook an extensive case study analysis of the processes through which teacher leadership was enacted in selected elementary schools and the impact it created on teacher beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Although teacher leadership was loosely defined as both a research construct and a practice, they argued that modern implementations of formal teacher leadership were enacted in efforts to improve and develop human capital in schools. Using case studies firmly grounded in instructional and classroom practice, the researchers illustrated the level of interaction and specific knowledge necessary to support development of teachers' content knowledge, curriculum implementation, and classroom practices. The authors argued that increasing the effectiveness of classroom practice was best accomplished through situational problem solving in complex contexts and that such work depended upon consistent and timely collaborative inquiry and action taking place between teachers and teacher leaders.

Stoelinga and Mangin's study (2010) examined the actions and impact of a specific actor—teacher leaders--and thereby took a different approach to teacher capacity building than did Calik, Sezgin, Davgaci, and Kilinc (2012), Hoerr (1996), Sebastian and Allensworth (2012), and Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009) but their findings were consistent regarding the expertise, consistency, and level of contact necessary to affect teacher practices. Stoelinga and Mangin's (2010) research added an understanding of how this support was best delivered—as professional learning and support provided to teachers during the routine activities of planning and delivering instruction. These findings provided evidence to support Neumerski's (2012) assertion that teachers “have the greatest likelihood to change school wide instruction” (p. 321),

and provided a counterpoint for Horng and Loeb's (2010) blunt statement that "the quality of teaching in a school...can be affected only marginally by a principal's involvement in the classroom" (p. 66).

Instructional Coaching: Designated Providers of Professional Learning

Instructional coaches are a unique type of teacher leader whose work is defined specifically as creating instructional improvement. By supporting teachers in the adoption and refinement of effective teaching practices, these coaches work to build capacity in individual teachers and grade or subject level teams (Killion & Roy, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006). They are not assigned classroom teaching duties, which frees their time to collaborate with teachers through joint planning, observation of classroom instruction, co-teaching, classroom modeling, and reflecting over evidence of student learning. Instructional coaching is premised upon "the belief that teacher learning should occur within the context of everyday instructional practices" (Neumerski, 2012, p. 322). Neumerski's observation aligns with Stoelinga and Mangin's (2010) finding that promoting change in classroom practice requires situational problem solving in complex contexts.

In an examination of characteristics necessary for instructional coaches to be successful, L'Allier, Elish-Piper, and Bean (2010) identified successful classroom teaching experience and extensive content knowledge as key qualifications that effective coaches bring to their work. When given adequate time to work directly with teachers, planning, observing, modeling, co-teaching, and reflecting on lesson delivery, instructional coaches changed teacher practices to improve student achievement, as measured through both observation and teacher self-reports. Jim Knight (Fullan & Knight, 2011), a well-known researcher and advocate of instructional coaching, has consistently documented that instructional coaching has produced dramatic results

in student achievement, often as high as a 20% improvement by identified measures of student achievement. Matsumura, Garnier, and Resnick (2010) found that coaches could increase teacher implementation of new teaching initiatives if the school principal visibly supported the new initiative, encouraged its adoption by all teachers, and fostered a campus culture of open collaboration.

While researching the work of literacy coaches in high need urban schools, Blachowicz, Obrochta, and Fogelberg (2005) found that both teachers and administrators cited the coach's effect on instruction as one of the top influences for change, even within the first year of the coaching program. The process used by coaches in the studied schools focused on building a strong, shared knowledge base among teachers for both content and pedagogy by modeling and facilitating collaborative planning and teaching. In a separate study, Zuspan (2013) tracked the spread of knowledge across and between teachers and campuses using sociograms. She found that coaches directly spread information to a handful of teachers with whom they interacted closely; these teachers spread the knowledge to colleagues, broadening the web. Eventually waves of idea sharing and collaboration throughout schools would be observed, even moving outwards to other campuses, with the coach being the point of origin for each thread. Zuspan theorized that in subsequent years the patterns would be multi-directional and far more extensive, moving knowledge throughout the organization and resulting in individual knowledge becoming communal. These patterns were evidence that coaching not only spread substantive knowledge, but also resulted in shifts in the campus' instructional culture as conversations increasingly focused on instructional knowledge.

While Zuspan's work documented the diffusion of coaching's impact on a teacher-by-teacher basis, a newer model of coaching evolved to harness the work of coaches to advance

continuous campus improvement in teaching and learning. This model of coaching de-emphasized the required enrollment of individual teachers in formal coaching cycles and attempted to move coaches into a more open and inclusive role as a facilitator of continuous inquiry-based improvement (Killion & Harrison, 2006; Killion & Roy, 2009; Hirsh, Psencik, & Brown, 2014).

In this model, campus principals, teachers, and coaches worked together to analyze student data to understand how teacher and team choices and actions affected student outcomes. This model stressed “that the primary purpose of collaborative professional learning is student academic success” (Killion & Roy, 2009, p. 80). This focus on collaborative professional learning created an open and inclusive conversation about student needs and teacher response that included administrators, teachers, and coaches. When principals defined expected results in terms of student outcomes, coaches and teachers could collaborate to meet administrative expectations. Within the defined area of campus focus, teacher voice was honored by allowing teachers choice in how they wished to learn and improve towards the goal (Killion & Roy, 2009; Hirsh, Psencik, & Brown, 2014). This model of coaching emphasized the coach’s facilitation of team planning, data analysis, and reflection. The administrative expectation that all teachers participate in team meetings resulted in the inclusion of all teachers in work lead by the coach—even those teachers who would have been resistant to working individually with a coach. Coaches assisted teams in learning to engage in collaborative learning and to accept responsibility for shared processes and growth. Within this model, coaches were accountable for being catalysts for change, thereby facilitating school reform (Killion & Roy, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

It is this team-based, reform-oriented model of instructional coaching that truly lends itself to examination in partnership with a principal and through a lens of shared leadership. This model of instructional coaching situates the coach as part of the instructional leadership team that both assesses student learning needs and supports the building of teacher capacity to directly address those identified needs, potentially situating instructional coaches as an augmenting variable, or leverage point, between a campus principal and teachers' classroom behaviors. As Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins' (2008) model identified, principals' impact on teacher capacity was highly important to student outcomes, but lacked strong direct influence. Stoelinga and Mangin's (2010) study of teacher leadership found that increasing the effectiveness of classroom practice was best accomplished through situational problem solving in complex contexts and that such work depended upon consistent and timely collaborative inquiry and action taking place between teachers and teacher leaders. Stoelinga and Mangin's observed requirement for improvement of teacher practices describes both the process and outcome of the team based, reform-oriented model of instructional coaching.

Michael Fullan, a recognized authority on school reform and improvement, and Jim Knight teamed to consider the role of instructional coaches as system leaders, acknowledging coaches as instructional leaders with the potential to play a key role in instructional leadership and improvement. Fullan and Knight (2011) considered how coaches' work is situated between the campus and district levels, allowing direct access to teachers during planning and instruction while also allowing direct connections with district level leaders such as content coordinators who can support coaches' on-going and deepening understanding of content curriculum and best practices. Because of this unique placement, coaches both directly and indirectly link teachers with high quality instructional expertise during planning and teaching. This effect is, however,

contingent upon principals creating the necessary conditions for coaching to be effective such as a clear focus on instructional improvement, a collaborative culture, and structures that allow time for collaboration.

Creating conditions that enable the work of instructional coaches

A consistent finding in the research on instructional coaching has been the need for principals to create a culture that emphasizes instructional improvement by all teachers and supports both the structures and behaviors of collaborative inquiry and problem solving. Work by Matsumura et al. (2010), Fullan & Knight (2011), and Neumerski (2012) all indicated that principals' actions can undermine the work of instructional coaches, resulting in no noticeable impact from their efforts-or even worse, a dysfunctional faculty which itself works to impede the efforts of the coach and to ostracize those teachers who do partner with the coach.

Instructional Leadership Reconsidered: A Perspective of Shared Responsibility

Noting a deficit in the existing scholarly research on leadership, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) identified a need to better understand how leaders create the conditions and processes associated with innovative and effective teaching. They specifically noted that focusing attention on the principal "reinforced the assumption that school leadership is synonymous with the principal, resulting in researchers for the most part ignoring other sources of leadership in schools" (p. 4). New research, they argued, was needed to examine leadership as a series of interactions between school leaders and followers within the context of complex educational situations. Their 2004 paper created a conceptual framework for a distributed perspective on leadership designed to frame leadership in such a way as to "generate evocative cases" for analysis and offering researchers a "potentially powerful explanatory framework, providing insights into how school leaders act" (p. 4).

Fullan and Knight (2011) argued that educational reform had focused attention on the wrong factors—high stakes testing and accountability, teacher evaluation, technology, and other piece-meal and after-the-fact measures. Instead, they argued reform efforts should focus on building teachers' capacity to design and deliver effective instruction and on increasing collaboration for teaching and learning—strategies that coaches are quite successful at implementing. Writing in 2014, Fullan was even more direct in labeling these previously identified factors as “wrong drivers” of school improvement—including placing an emphasis on individual teacher quality (p. 25). He once again argued that emphasis should instead be placed on building system-wide capacity through collaborative work and improved pedagogy.

John Hattie (2015) recently called for principals to abandon transformational leadership with its focus on inspiring and working with teachers, and to once again embrace instructional leadership, which he defined as focusing on students and learning. These new instructional leaders set the stage for learning by empowering teachers to innovate in their classrooms and evaluate evidence to determine effective practices. They foster discussions about learning and effective strategies and shift the campus culture towards an instructional mindset. Much of his description sounded reminiscent of the previous vague idea of instructional leadership, with little concrete advice for how a principal might implement these practices. It is worth noting however, that although Hattie did not specifically mention the role coaches might play in this new style of instructional leadership, he listed many of the outcomes that past research had attributed to instructional coaching, and such leadership would produce a positive environment for coaches' work.

Horng and Loeb (2010) were more precise in their description of exactly what this new type of instructional leader might do. They examined school districts that demonstrated growth

in student achievement and found that they were more likely to have principals who viewed their primary responsibility as supporting instruction through effective management of staff and resources. Based upon this research, they called for principals' instructional leadership to focus on "management for instructional improvement," including the selective hiring and assignment of effective teachers who are inclined towards collaborative work and partnering with a coach. Instructional managers, they found, placed a high priority on ensuring that teachers had the support and resources they needed; additionally, they devoted time to the development of teacher leaders as a way of retaining effective staff. Notably, these leaders also took decisive action to remove ineffective teachers, thereby establishing both expectations for effective instruction and accountability for reaching those expectations. Focusing on the unique perspective enjoyed by those in top administrative roles, Mullican and Ainsworth (1979) noted that principals were the sole actor in a position to "interpret the goals shared by faculty, parents, and children" and to plan for the "orientation and continued growth of teachers" to reach these shared goals (p. 35). Notable here was the wording "orientation and continued growth" implying that the principal created an overall direction and plan from a campus-wide perspective. The ability to provide a unifying vision for the campus, as well as establishing both expectations and accountability for movement towards that vision, is a contribution unique to the role of principal, even when considered as part of the shared work of a leadership team.

Prestine and Nelson (2005) recommended that a new view of instructional leadership must take into consideration social and constructivist aspects of effective leadership and teaching, a perspective that would highlight the "administrators and teachers as arrayed in complex collegial networks that form and re-form around specific tasks or issues" (p. 51). With

this constructivist approach in mind, they suggested that a distributive leadership perspective would create an appropriate framework for examination of such complex and situational interactions.

Writing in 2011, Robinson reported the results of a “best evidence synthesis” (BES) of research examining principals’ impact on student outcomes which not only summarized findings of modern principal leadership research, but reinforced the emerging perception of school leadership as relational learning and problem solving in complex and collaborative environments. She found that these studies of principal leadership reported that the most significant principal action related to student achievement was an ability to generate a shared sense of urgency for instructional improvement and a principal’s willingness to take a visible role as learner. Fullan (2014) echoed and reinforced Robinson’s call for principals to participate and model on-going professional learning when he coined the term “learning leader” for principals.

As the importance of professional learning moves to the forefront of principal leadership, shared leadership becomes increasingly imperative—the full weight of assessing student learning needs, designing effective and on-going professional learning, and supporting implementation of the learning, cannot reasonably fall on the shoulders of a single actor with a myriad of other campus responsibilities. Additionally, if a principal is to be viewed as a learner, he or she cannot always be standing in front of the staff leading a workshop or collaboration (Killion & Roy, 2009; Robinson, 2011). This emphasis on the importance of professional learning brings the role of instructional coach to the forefront of campus improvement—assisting and supporting

principals to reach goals and articulate expectations by designing and delivering on-going professional learning experiences that are practiced and reinforced during the delivery of instruction (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

A New Conceptual Framework: Intentional Linkage of Direct and Indirect Effects of Instructional Leadership on Classroom Practices

Consistent in all strands of work on educational leadership were the findings that what happens in classrooms is the key determinate of student learning—but leadership impacts the conditions under which teachers practice and develop their craft, thus the interactions of leadership and classroom practice are intricately interwoven (Wallace, 2013; Fullan & Knight, 2011; Horng & Loeb, 2010; Killion & Roy, 2009). Hoerr (1996) argued that while principals bear the ultimate responsibility for the quality of education delivered on campus, it is both “necessary and appropriate” that instructional leadership be approached as a team responsibly through shared leadership (p. 380). Following an extensive literature review, Neumerski (2012) explicitly asserted that the time had come to stop examining the leadership of principals, teachers, and instructional coaches separately. She called for studies to examine the interactions of principals, coaches, and teachers to better understand the processes through which these actors make decisions that impact student learning—the how and why of instructional leadership as a shared endeavor.

When pieces of evidence from various studies are brought together, it is clear that when a principal’s leadership is intentionally focused on fostering instructional improvement, conditions are created that maximize the effectiveness of instructional coaches and potentially lead to improved outcomes of all students. Ideally, principals would use their influence to communicate expectations and goals for instructional improvement; create campus conditions that foster an on-

going focus on instructional improvement, and design structures that allow time for collaboration. This emphasis would address Robinson's (2011), Hattie's (2015), and Fullan's (2014) call for principals to engage in instructional leadership through campus-wide emphasis on professional learning and growth. The results of such efforts would positively influence the conditions identified by Fullan and Knight (2011) under which successful instructional coaching occurs, thereby allowing coaches to work closely and consistently with teachers in order to deepen their content and pedagogical knowledge as well as their collaborative behaviors for knowledge sharing (Matsumura et al, 2010, Fullan & Knight, 2011, Neumerski, 2012, and Zuspan, 2013).

Considered together, research shows that principals and instructional coaches have direct and indirect impacts on the identified variables that influence student learning. Heeding Neumerski's (2012) call for examination of the interactions and processes would lead to consideration of how these actors might coordinate their efforts, possibly augmenting and supporting instructional leadership's impact on teaching practices by leveraging the impact of each actor individually. Use of a distributive leadership perspective allows for each set of interactions to be examined, as well as allowing the cumulative impact to be considered (Spillane and Healy, 2010).

Through observation and interviews, this study analyzed conversations between an intermediate school principal and instructional coaches focused on campus instructional improvement goals, as well as conversations between instructional coaches and teachers. The goal of this study was to determine if a consistency of message was achieved between principals and coaches and if so, how that consistency might impact classroom practices. Positive findings might indicate distributive leadership between a principal and an instructional coach can

influence the relationships documented by Leithwood et. al (2012), perhaps increasing the collective impact of instructional leadership on student achievement. Such findings might suggest actionable behaviors that principals and coaches could engage in to support shared instructional leadership, which could then be tested through quasi-experimental investigations to analyze the external validity of the shared instructional leadership construct, possibly providing evidence of how instructional leaders can best support improvement in classroom practices that ultimately improves student achievement.

Conclusion

Since the early 1970's, principals have been charged with being the instructional leaders of their campuses. Almost fifty years later, the provision of instructional leadership is listed as Standard 1 in the Texas Principal Standards, the criteria by which all Texas principals are evaluated (TEA, 2016). While early calls for such leadership were directed solely at the campus principal, other actors have since emerged who also provide support for development of teachers' instructional practices.

Instructional coaching expanded as a result of mandates within No Child Left Behind legislation to improve the reading skills of elementary school children; however, adoption of the instructional coaching model quickly spread to other grade levels and subjects resulting in increased support for teachers (Gamse et al., 2008). Research has shown that when instructional coaches collaborate with teachers to plan, deliver, and assess the use of new or refined instructional practices, student achievement has improved and new programs are implemented faster and with greater fidelity (Fullin & Knight, 2011; Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010). It appears that instructional coaches are supporting teachers in many of the ways that were described by researchers writing about principals' instructional leadership.

Despite the apparent overlap between the two roles, based on the literature reviewed here, how principals and instructional coaches might jointly fulfill the role of instructional leader has not previously been widely investigated. Leithwood and Jarvis (2012) considered the impact of shared leadership on several variables that impact student learning, but failed to specifically identify the influence of the various actors who might be contributing to this leadership and how those influences were interacting. Neumerski (2012) specifically called for instructional leadership to be examined through the lens of shared leadership, even specifying the need to consider instructional coaches in relation to principals.

It is Neumerski's call that this study addressed by examining how a principal and a team of instructional coaches identified, shared, and provided instructional leadership for teachers. The study offered some initial insights into how multiple individuals might fulfill the necessary, but overwhelming, task of supporting teachers' efforts to develop and refine increasingly more effective classroom practices.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This qualitative case study utilized a shared leadership lens to examine how an intermediate school principal and campus based instructional coaches shared the responsibilities associated with provision of instructional leadership in support of teachers' development towards campus improvement goals. The study was based upon interviews and observations conducted at an intermediate school over the course of a six-week period during the spring of 2017.

Use of a single instrumental case study was chosen because it provided an opportunity to address Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2004) call to develop "sustained, narrowly-focused inquiry" to move beyond current research that examines "*what* school structures, programmes, roles, and processes are necessary for instructional change" and to begin consideration of "*how* these changes are undertaken or enacted by school leaders" by examining the "day to day practices of school leaders" (p. 4). A case study using shared leadership lens allowed for a dynamic examination of leadership as it was "stretched" across the interactions of multiple actors within the context of the situation and in response to specific tasks (p. 4). Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond expressed the belief that such case studies would provide the type of practical guidance which practitioners look for in leadership research. This case study, based upon action research, exemplified Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) observation that "action research is both a sequence of events and an approach to change and problem-solving" ("Chapter 1").

Additionally, a case study utilizing a shared leadership lens provides a framework for considering how actors react to each other and how they respond to evolving situations (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2004). Using a shared leadership lens to generate a picture of a principal and instructional coaches working interdependently to provide instructional leadership required

that multiple types of conversations and behaviors be considered. A full understanding of how leadership is shared requires knowledge of:

- how the principal interpreted the school's current situation with regard to instructional improvement needs
- how this interpretation may have been informed by observations and input from instructional coaches
- how the principal and coaches are building a shared understanding of goals and strategies to foster the needed instructional improvement
- how the needs, goals, and expectations are shared with teachers by both the principal and coaches
- how coaches and teachers work together to build new skills in pursuit of this goal
- how teachers perceive the support from multiple actors

Each of these steps represents an aspect of shared instructional leadership as interaction between actors in responses to situations and tasks—the sum of which constitutes shared instructional leadership. Together, these steps address the question guiding this study: how might the alignment of the instructional leadership of principals and instructional coaches affect their influence on the classroom practices of teachers? A more complete understanding of these interactions was obtained through examination of the following questions:

- How does an intermediate school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to intermediate school coaches?
- How do instructional coaches communicate the principal's goals to teachers and support the building of new skills to reach those goals?

- How do teachers perceive the instructional goals and expectations of the principal and support of the instructional coaches?

Setting

The intermediate school selected for this study was part of a midsized Texas school district which enjoyed a reputation as a high performing, innovative school district. It is a member of the Texas Consortium of High Performing Schools and was in year three of implementation of an ambitious strategic plan that included personalized learning and flexible schooling initiatives. Thus, the district held high expectations for both educators and students. At the time of the study, the district served over 42,000 students, employed a staff of over 5,000, and included over twenty elementary schools, ten intermediate schools, and five comprehensive high schools.

Over the previous three years, uneven growth distribution across the district had been creating new challenges for some campuses. Many of the students new to these campuses were non-native English speakers, including recent immigrants. These students, and those from homes considered to be of low socio-economic status, often struggle in school because they lack not only proficiency in academic English, but also suffer from gaps in essential background knowledge (NEA, 2008).

The changing demographics of these campuses require that teachers learn new skills for reaching students who understand little to no English, who may not understand the culture and norms of American schools, who may lack the prerequisite knowledge to tackle state-mandated grade-level content, and who may even lack basic living essentials such as food, clothing, and school supplies. Meeting the needs of these students requires concerted and consistent effort from all district and campus staff. Supporting teachers in meeting the academic needs of these

students, while maintaining the district's focus on high achievement, requires a strong and intentional effort to provide instructional leadership.

To support teachers in learning to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations, intermediate school campuses were allowed to hire content-specific instructional coaches to support the work of math, science, and English language arts teachers. These coaches partner with core area teachers to plan and deliver initial instruction designed to meet the needs of diverse student populations. The coaching program has been active on intermediate school campuses for three years. As part of the district's commitment to instructional coaching, the district also created a full-time position tasked with maximizing the effectiveness of the instructional coaching program by providing professional learning for coaches and offering implementation guidance to both principals and coaches. The researcher of this study currently holds this position. Additionally, over the last two years the district has emphasized an understanding of instructional leadership when hiring new principals and when promoting from within existing ranks of administrators (TEA, 2016).

Study Site and Participant Selection

The intermediate school chosen for this study was dealing with the rapid growth previously described. The school received supplemental federal funding based upon the number of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches and substantial grant funding from private sources. Standardized test results from the state of Texas showed that the school was meeting established standards for most students, but significant gaps existed between the achievement of various sub-populations and that of white students from homes not considered economically disadvantaged or at-risk.

The site study school had been assigned a new principal for the year of the study. Although this was the principal's first year to assume the role, she had a total of 27 years of educational experience, including experience as an intermediate assistant principal, counselor, and teacher. She replaced a well-liked principal who was moved to another school within the district. This type of intra-district movement was not uncommon for this district, but teachers sometimes reported anxiety about understanding a new principal's priorities and meeting his or her expectations. Additionally, due to changes in the structural design of the coaching program, this campus also experienced a change in instructional coaches—coaches new to the campus filled all three coaching positions. The instructional coach for science previously served in the same role for one of the district's high schools. Both the math and the humanities coaches were new to the district and new to the role of instructional coach, although both had previously served as teachers in neighboring districts.

The model of instructional leadership advocated by the school district emphasized collaboration between the principal, instructional coaches, and other teacher leaders in identifying student learning needs and assessing barriers to the success of all learners. This instructional leadership team then collaboratively planned professional learning for campus adults to help them meet the identified student learning needs. This process was framed within a cycle of continuous learning and improvement and met the established standards as set forth in *The Standards for Professional Learning* (Learning Forward, 2011). Within this model, the campus principal is tasked with communicating expectations and goals for professional learning and student outcomes, while instructional coaches are tasked with designing and implementing job-embedded support for teachers in meeting these expectations and goals. Adult voice and

choice regarding professional learning were honored through teachers' decisions about how they wished to learn and improve towards the goal (Killion & Roy, 2009).

Transitioning a campus to new leadership offered a unique opportunity to examine how these actors interpreted the instructional situations they inherited, how they forged a shared understanding of campus strengths and challenges, and how they built relationships with teachers that both inspired and supported the difficult work of meeting the needs of all students. It would be expected that the work of the instructional leadership team this first year was focused upon inventorying the existing state of instruction, building relationships with teachers, forging a shared vision for growth, and establishing expectations for continuous improvement.

The challenges of this newness created a robust context for examination of the interactions of actors, their interpretation and response to developing situations, and the way in which this work was perceived, and received, by teachers. Additionally, this newness suggested that it was possible for communication among the actors to break down, for intentions to be misunderstood, and for situations to be misread. The newness of the situation offered a truly rich context for the study of how shared leadership was established within a team and how it was perceived by followers—offering the potential to generate the rich details necessary for the “evocative” case study which Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004, p. 4) indicated would be necessary to successfully study shared leadership. The details generated by this case study also meet Neumerski's (2012) call for research that includes two actors considered in relation to one another, principals and instructional coaches. Thus, a single instrumental case study of how instructional leadership was shared between a principal and campus coaches addressed a need within existing research through use of a methodology designed to forge a detailed picture of complex interactions among actors in response to evolving situations.

The Role of the Researcher, Bias, and Ethical Concerns

The functional role of the researcher within the school district was to assist the principal and the instructional coaches in building supportive relationships with each other and with the teachers, to help appraise the professional learning needs of the instructional coaches and campus teachers, and to assist in planning campus and coaching activities to meet those needs. In this role, the researcher met regularly with the principal and coaches individually and together, on a regular and as-needed basis. Because of the campus' unique situation with so many new individuals in leadership positions, this campus was a high priority for support efforts designed to ensure that the leadership team learned to work together in a supportive and cohesive manner and that they built strong, supportive relationships with the faculty. Thus, it was in the interest of the researcher to see that the transitions on this campus occurred smoothly and with maximum positive impact, both in regards to organizational responsibilities and in regards to the successful outcome of this action research project.

As Coghlan and Brannick (2014) point out, this dual role required that the researcher be cognizant of how the functional role influences interpretation of the research and how others might have perceived the dual roles. It was critical to remember that “action researchers have to deal with emergent processes not as distractions, but as central to the research process” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, Chapter 1). In other words, as both a researcher and a participant, it was critical to remember that the processes being studied were evolving even as they were studied, requiring an observant eye and a flexible approach. Indeed, appreciating this evolution was critical to the success of both the organizational process and the research inquiry; additionally, it typified the nature of a shared leadership lens to focus on evolving interactions and responses.

The functional role of the researcher is neither supervisory nor evaluative, but is to offer purely supportive guidance; thus, the researcher did not wield power to force changes in the actions of any actors, nor to use punitive measures in response to undesired actions or results of this work. Therefore, it was assumed that all actors were behaving according to their beliefs about the best interest of the school, the students, and their own values and careers. While the researcher's incentive to support the campus work of this action research necessitated awareness of the potential to overestimate results, the lack of evaluative control implied that no harm could come to participants as a result of their participation in this research, their behavior within it, or the outcomes that resulted. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time during the course of data collection or review.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected by the researcher only and all data collection occurred during a six-week period in the spring of 2017 on the grounds of the study site. Observations of conversations between the intermediate school principal and the three instructional coaches during their regularly scheduled weekly meetings were documented. These meetings occurred every Monday morning and were scheduled to last one hour. Teachers at the site school had daily planning periods during which all members of the teaching team (teachers who teach the same subject and grade level) were off at the same time and met once a week to plan upcoming instruction. Additionally, teachers were given a full planning day once per nine-week grading period with the expectation that the time be used to write student assessments and plan instruction together. During both the conference period planning and the planning days, the principal expected that the work would be facilitated by the instructional coach and was considered an opportunity for the coach to model thinking, answer questions, demonstrate new strategies, and otherwise

provide job-embedded professional learning to teachers. Observations of interactions between instructional coaches and teachers during these activities were collected. Transcriptions of the two types of meetings provided data of the interactions between actors as well as data regarding the actors' choice of methods for conveying instructional needs and priorities—for example the coaches' choice of coaching techniques and the principals' choice of setting and audience to discuss campus goals. Follow up questions for participants were designed to assist the researcher in understanding how themes and priorities were perceived by actors and how their choices resulted from their understandings. These questions were asked during private interviews and during participant review of the transcribed meetings. All observations and interviews were conducted in offices or classrooms at the study site, in locations chosen by the participants. No students were directly involved in this research.

Additionally, the principal was interviewed twice. The first interview was at the start of the study period to explore how she arrived at initial impressions regarding the work that needed to be done, how she expected coaches to respond to those impressions, and the results she expected to see from teachers. As appropriate to action research, this interview was collaborative in nature, allowing for more of a dialog and thereby avoiding the impression of the power asymmetry often associated with traditional interviews (Creswell, 2013). At the end of the study period, the principal was again interviewed to gather information about her perceptions of coaches' work with teachers and her observations of changes or progress towards goal enactment.

Toward the end of the study period, participating teachers were also interviewed. Open-ended questions designed to foster dialog explored how they felt about the efforts of their new principal and instructional coaches to support their work, whether they agreed with, or “bought

into” the principals’ goals for instructional improvement, and whether they felt the principal’s and instructional coaches’ support had a positive impact on their classroom performance. Interviews utilized open-ended questions designed to allow teachers to express opinions, both positive and negative, regarding their perceptions of support provided by coaches and the principal.

All participants were offered opportunities to review transcriptions of meetings and activities and provide written revisions to their contributions, as well as adding any additional information they felt contributed to understanding their words or behavior during the study period. Interviewees were given the opportunity to review and revise their interview responses. To protect the confidentiality of participants and the privacy of any staff members or situations discussed during closed-door meetings, original recordings of meetings were destroyed immediately after transcription was completed and participants had returned their revised copies. Original transcriptions were kept by the researcher and participant-revised copies became the data from which the findings were drawn.

The result of data collection were transcripts of 12 one hour meetings (six hours between principals and coaches and six hours between coaches and teachers) and eight 15 minute interviews (two interviews with the principal and six interviews with teachers). These were coded, beginning with the principal’s interview. The priorities and needs she discussed became the key categories used to code additional materials since the goal of this research was to trace how shared leadership was utilized to supplement and extend the instructional leadership of the principal into teachers’ classrooms. Additional categories were added as new topics arose as areas of concern. Recognizing actors’ change in the apparent direction of a conversational thread, but giving them the opportunity to explain the connection as they understood it, was

critical to use of shared leadership lens. This flexibility resulted from recognition that within shared leadership actors may need to respond to evolving situations, new information, or new concerns expressed by followers (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

Participants' Rights

Participation in this study was voluntary and each participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection or review by informing the researcher of his or her desire to withdraw. Participants signed a written consent agreement that included notification of rights and privacy protections. Original recordings of meetings were destroyed after transcription and participant review in order to protect the privacy of those in attendance and the confidentiality of individuals discussed during those meetings. Participants were assigned a pseudonym for use within all transcriptions and references to participants are by pseudonym or role only. Names of individuals mentioned once or only occasionally in passing were redacted from transcripts. A copy of the completed study was provided to participants at their request.

Unintended Negative Consequences of this Study or Participation in it

No unintended outcomes or negative consequences were anticipated or observed, either as a result of the study itself, or as a result of an individual's participation in this study.

Potential Limitations and Benefits to Stakeholders

When viewed by the criteria of positivist research, this case study had many limitations, including its focus on a single intermediate school campus and its short duration. It was a qualitative study and therefore lacked an objective measure of the significance of its findings. As a case study, it may lack generalizability and the abbreviated time span limits its capacity to offer evidence of deep impact on student outcomes. While these limitations exist, the purpose of this

study was to provide the researcher and the participants an opportunity to collaboratively engage in action research designed to improve instructional support for teachers in order to improve student outcomes. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), action research such as this case study is successful if it contributes to the existing scholarly literature and results in practical guidance for practitioners.

This case study of action research was designed to capture a six-week picture of shared leadership on a single intermediate school campus. As such, it was designed to generate questions and suggest inspiration for current and future practitioners and researchers. It was not designed to provide a comprehensive analysis or an exhaustive examination of shared leadership. “The action research paradigm requires its own quality criteria. Action research should be judged not by the criteria of positivist science, but rather within the criteria of its own terms... does sustainable change come out of the project?” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, Chapter 1).

This study may benefit stakeholders by offering insights into the type and depth of conversations necessary to create shared visions of instructional improvements and aligned efforts necessary to support teachers continued professional development. In public schools with increasingly diverse student bodies and ever higher expectations for public education, expanding the role of instructional leader beyond the responsibility of a sole, heroic principal requires development of an understanding of how leadership could be shared while still remaining cohesive and intentional. It was the intention of this study to continue this examination.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to address an existing deficit between leadership research and instructional coaching research by examining how instructional leadership, guided by an intermediate school principal and shared with campus based instructional coaches might support teachers' adoption and refinement of effective instructional practices and movement towards campus improvement goals. A single case study was utilized to allow a more focused look at the dynamics of shared leadership and response to evolving contextual situations. Development of a narrow, more focused study has the potential to create the type of richly detailed, "evocative" study Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2004, p. 4) suggested was needed for a study of shared leadership.

The research questions that guided this study were:

- How does an intermediate school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to intermediate school coaches?
- How do instructional coaches communicate the principal's goals to teachers and support the building of new skills to reach those goals?
- How do teachers perceive the instructional goals and expectations of the principal and support of the instructional coaches?

The search for answers to these questions required extended examination of the interactions of the instructional leadership team. Observations of the principal and instructional coaches were made during their regularly scheduled, weekly meetings over a six-week period in spring 2017. To examine how coaches represented and facilitated work towards these goals in their interactions with teachers, six observations were made of coaches meeting with teams of

teachers during which instruction was discussed, planned, or reviewed. To understand the goals for campus growth, the campus principal was interviewed at the beginning of the six-week period regarding her goals and expectations. A follow up interview was conducted at the conclusion of the data period to elicit her observations of professional growth and her perceptions of the work done by coaches and teachers. To inform the researcher's understanding of teachers' perceptions of campus goals and expectations and how the leadership team supported their work, six teachers were each interviewed (See Appendix E for interview questions). Findings from these observations and interviews are summarized and presented in this chapter, while implications and recommendations are presented in chapter 5.

Emergence of Themes for Campus Growth and Expectations

Transcripts of the observations and interviews were made by the primary researcher and coded to allow for the tracking of themes across and within conversations among the various actors. The basic themes for coding were established when goals or expectations were explicitly mentioned by the principal at the initial interview. A follow up question asked about how awareness of this concern developed and moved to the forefront of campus concerns.

Principal's goals and expectations

Some of the principal's goals directly addressed refinements in teachers' practices, development of new practices, or improved collaboration in pursuit of consistency across classrooms. Other goals involved ways in which the principal sought to foster and support shared leadership between herself and her instructional coaches. A final goal—to improve teachers' beliefs about students' capacity to succeed and teachers' role in that success—emerged via awareness fostered by the instructional coaches and given immediacy by a situation directly

witnessed by the principal at a campus wide assembly. Table 4.1 lists these goals / coding categories and their nexus as themes for campus growth.

Table 4.1

Principal's Goals for Campus Growth and Support for Instructional Coaches and the Nexus of Each Goal

Type of Goal	Principal's Stated Goal	Nexus of Goal as Related by Principal
Goals for Campus Growth and Teacher Development	Alignment and rigor of assessment and instruction to state standards	Principal's goal with input from instructional coaches
	Development of Workshop model in ELA classrooms	Principal's goal in response to district initiative
	Teachers meeting together weekly to plan collaboratively	Principal's goal with input from instructional coaches
	Consistency of instruction across classrooms (based on collaborative planning and alignment to standards)	Principal's goal derived from observation and data analysis
	Teacher beliefs about student learning and teachers' self-efficacy	Principal's on-going and situational observations and instructional coaches' observation
Goals for Supporting and Communicating with Instructional Coaches	Principal and coach will create an on-going and consistent feedback loop	Principal's goal for establishing effective leadership as a new principal and informed by district recommendation and policy
	Coaches will be present at, and facilitate, team planning meeting	Principal's goal derived with input from instructional coaches and in response to district recommendation and policy
	Principal and coaches will meet weekly to review campus progress	Principal's goal for effective leadership as a new principal and informed by district recommendation and policy
	Expecting coaches to be in classrooms supporting the development of consistent instructional delivery	Principal's goal for effective leadership as a new principal and in response to a district recommendations and policy

The sharing of instructional leadership

The goal of this research was to examine instructional leadership as a shared endeavor supported by actors working both independently and in mutually dependent ways and in response to an evolving context (Spillane, 2005). Findings regarding the principal's goals for

both teacher development and interactions with instructional coaches provided evidence that these goals were not formed by the principal working in isolation but rather resulted from interactions with the instructional coaches and took into account their assessments of the current and desired situations. Acknowledging the collaborative effort that led to the formation of these goals, the principal stated that

when we came into this campus at the start of the year we realized there were not common assessments and teachers weren't always planning with consistency or fidelity. They weren't using the assessment blueprint...I saw the data, but the coaches really built relationships and got to know what the teachers were doing on a day to day basis and in real time.

The principal later added, "As a first-time principal, even coming in with 27 years' experience, I could not have lead the school instructionally and I feel like that is the most important role for a principal. I don't have the content knowledge or expertise, especially in math or science." The specific content expertise provided by the instructional coach was well illustrated by the science coach's comment to the principal that

they [the team of science teachers] didn't really understand why I said we aren't supposed to be *calculating* acceleration because acceleration is what the students are supposed to do, but in the TEKS [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills—the state standards] they aren't supposed to use this particular equation to find acceleration. They're supposed to be using Newton's Laws of Motion. So, there has been a need to have deep conversations about day-to-day instruction and what that should look like.

The level of insight and guidance provided by the instructional coach obviously relied not only upon strong content knowledge, but also required a detailed understanding of the state

standards and the district curriculum; thus, it seemed to align with the findings of researchers who have argued that principals at the secondary level lack the specialized expertise necessary to guide improvements in classroom practice (Hoerr, 1996; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Recognition of this narrowly focused expertise seemed to speak to the essential need for a sharing of instructional leadership at the secondary level.

Indeed, as a first-year principal and new to the campus, the principal noted that the coaches helped her get and keep “a pulse on the campus and what was happening in classrooms.” She stated that she felt an obligation to meet with her coaches weekly because “they represent me in the classrooms and they are on the front lines in every classroom *for* me. We very much had a shared vision, a shared commitment, and a mutual understanding that coaching would drive outcomes.”

Notable in the principal’s remarks was the awareness of team interactions and mutual dependency. This was evident in remarks such as “we had a shared vision,” and the mention of “shared commitments” and “mutual understandings,” as well as her awareness of the coaches as an extension of her leadership. These comments, as well as her indications that some of her campus goals were informed by both her own and her coaches’ observations of instructional needs, suggested an awareness and acceptance of the need to enlist others to inform her own understanding of her new campus and to extend her influence into its numerous classrooms. This behavior was indicative of a sharing of instructional leadership responsibilities, either consciously or unconsciously, enacted by the campus principal.

Shared leadership in response to evolving situations

Yet another indicator of shared leadership was evidenced in development of the goal involving shifting teachers’ attitudes and feelings of self-efficacy. Recognition that many campus

teachers were feeling overwhelmed by the apparent obstacles their students were facing and that their frustrations were deeply affecting their own sense of self-efficacy was a theme frequently mentioned by the instructional coaches. During a weekly meeting, when asked to give an update on departmental work, the science coach stated that one of her teachers had emailed her about an assessment the team had recently written.

In planning, we agreed on a test and then I get an email from a teacher saying ‘I went in and changed this and bolded that. I added arrows here and I simplified the vocabulary.’ I asked if this was just for the special needs students and she said, ‘No, this is for all the regular kids too. They all need it or they won’t pass.’ So, I had to go back and think, ‘why do they think their students need hints, and why do the teachers think they need to boldface this and highlight that? Why do they not find value in a true assessment?’ And I think it’s just that they don’t believe in themselves and I’ve been trying to figure out how to approach that conversation.

The principal responded by adding, “And this was the same team that earlier this year I discovered were either omitting certain TEKS or going in and non-weighting assessment questions before the students even attempted to answer them because they didn’t think the students could do the work or understand the concept.”

Similar conversations occurred between the principal and instructional coaches for the other subjects, each time involving teachers expressing frustration that what was being asked of students was beyond their capabilities. The humanities coach revealed during a weekly meeting that some of the English language arts (ELA) and social studies teachers did not record grades for the required student assessments that occur at the end of each nine-week grading period. In

response to the principal's question, "why?" she stated, "the teachers said, 'we could count it in - -----[the automated grade book system used by the district] but only if we want them all to fail.'"

In each mention of the topic, the team members connected the teachers' feelings about students back to teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Despite the frequency of such conversations, each mention was discussed and allowed to pass without mention by the principal of specific actions to address it at either the team or campus level; the conversation merely moved on to a new topic. From a shared leadership perspective, this would suggest that, although the coaches were bringing attention to an issue of concern, focused action was dependent upon the overall leadership of the principal. This behavior suggests that the coaches' actions on these concerns were dependent—at least to some extent—upon the principal's sponsorship and that the coaches deferred to the principal's guidance. Conversely, the continued re-emergence of the topic evidenced both the coaches' level of concern and their mode of operation within an imperfect communication pattern.

This topic re-emerged at a school-wide assembly with a campus guest speaker during the fourth week of the data collection period. This assembly proved memorable for the principal and at the weekly meeting the following Monday, she stated,

What sticks out in my mind is when he said at the end, 'Now I need all of the teachers who believe their students will pass the STAAR test [the standardized state assessment] to come on up'—and no one moved. Then he said, 'I need every teacher who believes his or her students will pass the STAAR test to come on up' and again no one moved. So [the speaker said again] 'What I'm saying is I need all the teachers to come on up'...the kids are on the floor [at the front of the auditorium] and they're looking around for their

teachers and again no one moved. And I turned to the closest one and I literally went ‘get moving!’ And I thought ‘these children cannot see this’ and he felt it too because he just kept saying ‘I need every teacher to come on up here.’ ... That moment is seared in my brain. I think he inadvertently drilled down to a core issue. These teachers don’t believe in these kids and it is just heart-wrenching.

The math coach responded, “But if the teachers don’t believe in the kids, they really don’t believe in themselves” and the principal replied, “Yes! It’s really that the teachers don’t believe in themselves and that’s been rattling around in my brain all weekend. That’s the real underlying problem here and that’s what has to change.” It was at this point that the principal first acknowledged the need for the leadership team to take action to address this concern. While no specific steps were decided upon, the principal’s observation marked the point at which this concern moved from being a concern that resided primarily with the coaches and became a focus for team discussions.

With regard to research question one, exploring the principal’s communication of campus goals to coaches, it was notable that in the absence of the communication of action steps to address a goal, research questions two and three became null—without transmission of a clear goal and discussion of action steps, no action was taken by the coaches, and the teachers were apparently unaware of this concern on the part of their leadership team. Surprisingly, during the final interview, the principal failed to appreciate that teachers might not have been included in this work. When asked about teachers’ understanding and response to the campus goals, she replied, “I think what the teachers took away is that Ms.----- really believes in you and in these kids... They know that we value the work teachers do and that we are committed to their growth

and to students' growth and that we know they will be successful. That's where their trust in us comes from—that mutual respect and trust.”

Mutually dependent and independent action by those sharing leadership

During the final interview, the principal also noted that the coaches were a “direct representation of my leadership...they were the embodiment of it.” While discussing her observations about the impact of coaching, she stated “you have to respect them [teachers] as individuals, recognize what they need, give them the support they need, and give the nudges and pushes to those that need it.” This familiarity with the individuals who make up the faculty appeared to be a key piece of the leadership puzzle that the principal relied upon the coaches to provide. The principal explained that the coaches “were able to give teachers space in a respectful manner and then bring them around when they [the teachers] were ready and able.” She also expressed her feelings that the coaches were willing to act independently of direct supervision as well as in a manner that both utilized and respected her role as lead administrator. “They were willing to have those direct conversations with teachers. They didn't let it linger or fester, but if it needed me to intervene they were quick to alert me and let me take it and run.” These statements draw attention to several factors researchers expect to see when shared leadership is present—the expectation of independent action by actors in response to evolving situations, as well as actions taken in response to the efforts and needs of other actors within the system (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

It seemed apparent that among members of the leadership team, shared leadership was utilized by the principal and the instructional coaches and its intended effect was to extend the principal's influence into each of the core subject departments and into each teacher's classroom, and to ensure that the role and influence of coaches was reinforced by the principal's authority.

Since evidence of shared leadership was present, the data was coded and examined to determine the transmission of goal information, teachers' perceptions of goals and support, and the possible impact of goal work.

Tracking Themes through Six Weeks of Observation

To capture a complete picture of the interactions between various actors and how those interactions might support--or not support--the principals' leadership, the goals stated by the principal were treated as coding categories through which all subsequent observations were considered. Comments or discussions related to each theme were tabulated to create a picture of the role these goals played in principal / coach meetings as well as coach / teacher meetings (Appendix F catalogs the coding categories and the key words for coding decisions). This coding allowed for examination of the themes' consideration across time and across vertical levels of conversations. Table 4.2 tracks discussion of the themes across the six weeks of meetings between the principal and the instructional coaches. It is important to note that the meetings had no set agenda and anyone present could introduce a new topic, contribute to the discussion, or change the topic being discussed.

Campus goals were rarely discussed as isolated topics, but rather the conversation flowed from subject to subject. The times shown in Table 4.2 represent the amalgamation of these mentions and discussions. The meetings were scheduled to last one hour but the conversations were allowed to dictate adjournment rather than adhering to a set time frame. Participants sometimes took personal notes, but no recorder was designated to keep or share official minutes or notes and therefore, no record of the team's discussion or plans was compiled.

Table 4.2

Time Devoted to Campus Goals in Weekly Leadership Meetings

Meeting	Alignment/ rigor of instruction	Development of workshop model in ELA classrooms	Regular occurrence of teachers' planning meetings	Consistency of instructional delivery across classrooms	Teachers' beliefs about student capacity and teacher self- efficacy	Other topics (see note below)
Week 1	17 minutes	4 minutes	6 minutes	3 minutes	8 minutes	14 minutes
Week 2	10 minutes	0	0	0	9 minutes	47 minutes
Week 3	8 minutes	0	5 minutes	9 minutes	0 minutes	38 minutes
Week 4	8 minutes	0	4 minutes	7 minutes	18 minutes	24 minutes
Week 5	17 minutes	0	2 minutes	4 minutes	3 minutes	37 minutes
Week 6	22 minutes	0	0	0	8 minutes	32 minutes

Note: Other topics included: Planning for an upcoming PL day based upon ideas brought back from a technology conference; looking at PL topics from other campuses; logistics of interventions, tutorials, and remediation sessions during preparation for the state assessment; obtaining hotspot devices for students without home internet; sharing ideas learned off-campus from various books, activities, or conferences; arrangements for and results of outreach visits to apartments in the school's attendance zone; specific personnel issues (including teachers requesting transfers, grade distribution data, individual conversations regarding sub coverage, schedules, etc.)

Communication of principal's goals to coaches

The first research question was “how does an intermediate school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to intermediate school coaches?” Clearly, the weekly meetings provided an opportunity for the principal to share her goals and expectations with the instructional coaches, to gather information from their experiences and perspective, and to discuss the evolving team response. Apart from the goal to develop implementation of workshop model of instruction in English language arts (ELA) classrooms, all stated goals were discussed, to some extent, at most weekly meetings. These frequent and specific check-ins allowed for the development of the “shared vision, shared commitments, and mutual understandings” to which the principal referred.

To create a shared vision and goals among the upper echelon of an organization is one matter, but for these goals to become the lived reality they must be transmitted to every member

of the organization and must result in changes in behavior. For this transmission to occur, the messages must be carried to the teachers. It is primarily the instructional coaches who were tasked with this work. Exploring the second research question required an understanding of how instructional coaches communicated the principal's goals to teachers and how they supported the building of new skills to reach those goals.

One of the principal's goals for the campus was for teachers to meet weekly and to plan for instruction collaboratively. The principal stated that this activity would foster consistency of instruction and alignment to the standards across classrooms. The principal noted,

On most teams we only have two teachers per grade level per subject, so if one person is out doing something—a pet project—that's not fair to kids. That's half the students at that grade level who have missed out on what should have happened, what they should have learned. That's the importance of teacher consistency and alignment.

To this end, the principal informed teachers that their attendance at team planning sessions with an instructional coach was a campus-wide expectation. The bottom row of Table 4.3 documents the number of teachers on each team and the number present for the observed planning meeting.

Transmission of goals from coaches to teachers

In addition to attending weekly meetings with their principal, instructional coaches also met with teams of subject and grade specific teachers on a weekly basis to plan instruction and review student data. Six of the meetings that occurred during the data collection period were observed and coded for discussion of the identified campus goals. Mention of these goals might have been initiated by either the coach or by a teacher, but resulted in a team-wide discussion of the topic. Although some of these meetings had written agendas, participants were allowed to

introduce new topics through their questions or comments. Amalgamated discussion times, by topic, within coach / teacher meetings are shown in Table 4.3.

Together, tables 4.2 and 4.3 track the focus on identified themes across time and across teams of actors; the instructional coach is the common actor in both types of conversations. To understand how the coaches represented the principals' goals to the teachers and how they responded to the teachers' concerns, it is necessary to examine the specifics of language used by both coaches and teachers and the types of concerns generated by each theme in more detail.

Table 4.3

Time Devoted to Discussion of Campus Goals during Coach / Teacher Planning Meetings

Campus Goals	Team Meeting English / Language Arts	Team Meeting Social Studies	Team Meeting Math	Team Meeting Science	Team Meeting English Language Arts	Team Meeting Science
Alignment and rigor of assessment and instruction to state standards	0	7 minutes	0	37 minutes	0	32 minutes
Development of Workshop model in ELA classrooms	8 minutes	NA	NA	NA	9 minutes	NA
Consistency of instruction across classrooms	0	0	0	11 minutes	0	14 minutes
Other topics	37 minutes	33 minutes	39 minutes	0	31 minutes	3 Minutes
Teachers present at the meeting	6 of 6 teachers present	2 of 4 teachers present	2 of 2 teachers present	2 of 2 teachers present	1 of 2 teachers present	2 of 2 teachers present

Note: Each observed meeting was of a different team of teachers, from different grade levels. Each meeting took place separately and the instructional coach was present during the entire meeting.

Theme 1: Alignment and rigor of classroom instruction

The principal noted in the initial interview that improving the alignment between the state standards and daily instructional activities was a strong instructional priority. The three

instructional coaches each experienced unique challenges and varying levels of success with this goal.

The science coach and science teachers

Throughout the duration of the data collection period, the science instructional coach was working on an action research project of her own that began in late fall of 2016. The topic of her study was the impact of alignment of classroom activities to the state standards and the intentional use of all instructional activities to support student mastery of those standards. It is unclear from the data whether her project influenced the principals' choice of goal, or whether the coach chose a project goal in line with her existing work, but the principal clearly valued this topic as important work for all four core departments.

Within her project, the coach defined this alignment as winnowing out all instructional activities used by teachers that either did not directly teach or reinforce concepts specific to the grade level and / or instructional activities habitually done by teachers that failed to produce evidence of strong student understanding. In addition to talking to teachers about the importance of the alignment, she introduced the team to several new tools for use during planning. The use of these tools required teachers to reflect on student learning data from previous years, the activities previously used to support student learning, and then to make intentional decisions about the effectiveness of the activity before moving into planning for this year's instruction.

Table 4.3 documents evidence that, under her facilitation, science team planning included a strong emphasis on alignment and consistency. When asked about her work with the instructional coach, one of the science teachers stated,

the time we have taken with our coach lately, we sit down and really talk about the

TEKS—what does it say, what does it mean, and is what we're doing really aligned to it.

That's really been our thing...with a purpose to move students towards mastery. It has real meaning for us." When asked about the impact of this work, she stated, "we've had a lot of kids in regular education that were scoring [on unit tests] around 20's or 30's and now they're at 60's or 70's and that's *huge* progress.

This statement would seem to exemplify the type of impact the principal was hoping for when she and the coaches discussed the need to focus on alignment. Indeed, it might be difficult to envision a more direct connection between a goal and an outcome; however, the teacher's view of the work was very different. When asked about the campus goals for growth and improvement, the teacher answered,

I know we have campus goals, but could I articulate what they are? No. I think maybe it's a focus on the failure rate for 7th grade and getting that fixed or maybe technology and personalized learning, but I think these goals are so broad they don't translate for us. We're working on different goals; goals that are more tangible and immediate for our students.

Another science teacher echoed those sentiments. When asked about how the principal and coach supported her professional learning and growth, she replied, "well, principal and coach are two different things. For the goals that I think are relevant, my principal isn't really a part. It's the coach who has done a great job of helping us align everything, making everything purposeful."

While the principal might be somewhat disheartened that teachers did not connect their coach's work with their principal's leadership, from a shared leadership perspective the responses of these teachers illustrate one of the benefits of the decentralization of influence—more members of the organization can be reached in a more personal way and mid-level leaders

can translate larger goals into more specific action steps. As the principal herself noted, she would have been unable to facilitate this work herself since she lacked specific content expertise in science.

The humanities coach and ELA and social studies teachers

In the observed team meetings, the humanities coach (who met with both ELA and social studies teams) placed far less emphasis on working to explicitly explore each standard and vet each activity. The coach did create agendas for the ELA and social studies team meetings she facilitated and each agenda allotted a set amount of time for the “Curriculum Dig” during which time teachers were instructed by the coach to “read the curriculum documents” independently and silently. She advised teachers to “read them if you haven’t before; or, if you have, then look for something you didn’t notice before.” At all three of the observed meetings facilitated by this coach, teachers were silent for approximately three minutes and then began discussing reading selections and activities for students. There was no subsequent discussion of the standards or the alignment of the resources and activities being considered.

When asked about campus goals, the teachers working with this coach replied,

- It’s just to have the students be successful on STAAR [the state’s standardized assessment].
- The most recent thing is 2 by 2—to increase students’ scores by two questions and that’s not just the lower kids but all kids—that’s from Ms.---[the principal].
- Well, our last campus professional learning day was about technology so I guess we’re back on that again.

When asked about how the humanities coach supported their goals and their professional learning, these teachers replied,

- I feel she's been great because I have my differences with district and their curriculum and she's been very supportive of how we can make it all work together.
- I love that our coach is there and I can call her, but mostly she lets us do what we know is right for our kids.
- Well, she helps us when we ask, but the district is changing a lot of stuff around, telling us not to teach stuff that isn't in the TEKS, but we're the ones who really know what our kids need. There are things that I know are just good for my kids and so I'm doing it in my class. I'm glad our coach respects our knowledge of what our kids need.

What the data did not reveal was whether this lack of focus and impact resulted from a failure of the coach to inspire and lead learning or from a conscious decision by the coach to pace the teachers' exposure to the alignment goal in response to her assessment of the teachers' receptivity. Clearly, the teachers had become aware of a difference between the district's presentation of the standards within the curriculum and their own instructional decisions. The Concerns Based Adoption Model, which articulated a model of how individuals respond to new ideas and change, suggests that an awareness is a necessary first step in the change process (Holloway, 2003). Although the principal asked the coach for updates regarding this alignment work with both ELA and social studies teachers, the coach did not go into detail about how she was approaching this work or how teachers were responding to it.

The math coach and the math teachers

The math coach was also serving as the department chair (a situation discouraged by the school district's policy, but which the principal considered necessary in light of personnel concerns); therefore, her time with teachers was divided between the administrative responsibilities of the chair role and the role of coach as facilitator of professional learning. During the six-week data collection period, only one math team meeting was observed and logistical arrangements for student tutorials leading up to administration of the state assessment was the sole topic discussed.

The principal had previously stated that for the math team, some of the alignment work had started last year with the previous coach. This occurrence may have been partially responsible for a teacher's comment to the coach: "I feel we're ready this year [for the state assessment], especially compared to last year. They seem to grasp the concepts." While the teacher made no connection between the alignment work done last year and his current observations regarding student learning, the similarity to comments made by the science teacher about the impact of alignment work is striking.

The principal's perception of the work

It was unclear during the six-week data collection period whether the principal was aware of differences between coaches and teams in regard to the alignment goal. Exactly how each team was responding to the work, how coaches were addressing it, and the impact on student learning was never explicitly addressed except by the science coach. The other coaches spoke only in general, vague terms in response to principal inquiries. During the final interview with the principal, it seemed that the coaches' lack of specificity had potentially created a false

impression of the progress. When asked about the impact of the work, the principal stated there was

growth across the board in everyone and what's interesting is that it is even some of the reluctant folks...they are now on board and see the merit of the alignment work.

Everyone is being very mindful that what they are doing supports the standards and the curriculum.

The alignment goal and shared leadership

The apparent difference between the pacing of the coaches' work with the teachers and the principal's assessment of the work highlights an apparently critical, but tacit, assumption of shared leadership—that there is accurate and complete information being exchanged among actors. Indeed, one of the primary benefits of shared leadership is the combining of multiple perspectives, but if one or more of these contributions is somehow incomplete, biased, or otherwise skewed, then all actors within the leadership team will be working--in whole or in part—from a flawed assessment of the situation. But shared leadership was not only shaped by what was said or not said, it was also affected by the degree of receptivity to information offered by the various actors. When members of the shared leadership team—particularly those who lead the team—hear, but do not yet fully appreciate the meaning or weight of the information offered, the full benefits of shared leadership cannot be achieved.

This finding suggests that for shared leadership to fully benefit all actors, to successfully extend leadership throughout an organization, and to achieve a cohesive leadership message, certain conditions are essential: all actors must share information with sufficient detail and all actors must be receptive to the information and perspectives offered by others. And for leadership to have impact on the organization, team members need to move beyond discussion,

addressing formulation and agreement upon action steps, with each team member diligently undertaking the actions steps within her segment of the larger organization.

This finding addressed all three research questions and spoke to the interconnectedness of the various aspects of communication and impact explored by the questions. Weaknesses in communication among leadership team members likely resulted in a lack of alignment of purpose and lessened the impact of messages sent by all actors, both verbally and in action.

Theme 2: Development of the workshop model for ELA instruction

During the initial interview, the principal explicitly stated that one of her primary goals was “in English Language arts, we are really looking for the reading / writing workshop model. We need to ensure that it is happening and that it is aligned to the curriculum. We need to see it enacted at least 50% of the time.” The district’s secondary ELA curriculum was revised approximately three years ago and created new expectations for teachers—to move away from the use of whole class novels and discussions and into a readers’ workshop model of instruction utilizing student book choice and reader conferencing.

Teachers’ perceptions of the goal to implement workshop model in ELA classrooms

Resistance to this shift was both steadfast and emotional, and this tension was evident among the teachers at the study site as evidenced by comments about “my differences with district and their curriculum” and “the district is changing a lot of stuff around, telling us not to teach stuff that isn’t in the TEKS, but we’re the ones who really know what our kids need.”

Another teacher stated,

The district is saying ‘this is what the TEKS is saying and we don’t want you doing anything else’ ...but we know what’s best for kids. If I see something that’s not a part of the curriculum but it’s what I think I should do for my kids, I just do it.

When interviewed, one teacher went into great detail about what she perceived as the negligence of the district in taking some of her favorite novels away from students.

These kids really need a novel like *Freak the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1993). That one book teaches them so much. I can't even imagine not reading it to my students. The district is telling us to stick to the TEKS because they worry so much about STAAR scores, but I worry about kids learning to read.

These teachers' comments seem to evidence confusion or incomplete information regarding the origins of goals and expectations (district vs. campus), as well as the district's rationale for the shift in teaching models in ELA classrooms. Additionally, teachers' beliefs that some of the instructional decisions or expectations at the campus and district levels were motivated by a desire to raise student test scores on the state assessment did not appear to be supported by data gathered during observations of any meetings or from interviews with the principal or the coaches—indeed, test scores were *never* mentioned by the principal or by any of the instructional coaches.

Shared leadership and the goal for implementation of workshop model

These misunderstandings might partially explain teachers' resistance to adoption of the workshop model of ELA instruction and to the alignment work; however, within a shared leadership model, researchers would expect to see greater clarity as a result of the more immediate intervention of a leadership team member. Indeed, considering Fullan and Knight's (2011) emphasis on instructional coaches as a direct connection between teachers and district level leaders, including content coordinators--and considering their connection to the campus principal as a result of shared leadership—greater clarity about goals on the part of teachers would be expected. It would appear that in regard to research question two--exploring

communication of goals between leadership and teachers, and the impact of those goals—a lack of effective communication, particularly regarding rationale for goals, severely hindered teachers' acceptance of the goals and the building of new skills.

The data does indicate, however, that teachers recognized the value of the instructional coach's position as intermediary. During interviews with ELA and social studies teachers, when asked how their coach supported them, teachers said,

- When I have those differences [about curriculum] with the district, my coach has been very supportive of me. She recognizes that I'm a really good teacher.
- I don't need someone to teach me how to teach; I've been doing this a long time. I need someone to get the district to understand what my kids really need.
- Well, sometimes we ask our coach to go to the district and ask for us to do it differently. She always warns us that the answer might be 'no' but then we don't have to talk to district ourselves.

Although the principal stated that supporting development of the workshop model was an important goal, it wasn't a topic of sustained focus at any of the observed meetings between the principal and coach or between the coach and the teachers. At the final interview, when asked about her observations of the work and its impact, the principal neglected to mention the workshop model goal at all so it appears the goal either lost importance over the course of the six-week period, or that in the absence of reminders the leadership team inadvertently let it slip away unnoticed. In the absence of sustained effort and attention to professional growth, teachers seemed to cling to their resistance and develop the impression that the coach agreed with, and supported, their avoidance of development towards this goal.

In regard to this goal, shared leadership does not appear to have fostered successful change. Rather it may have been that the teachers perceived a disconnect between the district and campus goals and the efforts of their coach, and were attempting to exploit this disconnect to avoid unwelcome pressure to change. Alternatively, it could be possible that the teachers sought to use the coach's influence to plead their case, to provide feedback regarding a change they perceived to be inappropriate or unwise. Without more observations of detailed discussions between the coach and teachers, as well as the coach and principal, it is impossible to determine which motives best account for the teachers' comments and perceptions. From the perspective of shared leadership, it is important to note that in the absence of ongoing discussion, there was little to no information being considered or acted upon, and therefore an absence of leadership at multiple levels was observed.

This finding highlighted the importance of all three of the research questions considered in combination: highly effective communication, both verbal and receptive, appeared to be essential to the transmission of goals, their movement to other organizational members; and followers' perception of the work that was expected of them. Additionally, it also pointed to an aspect not considered in the research questions—that communication must not only travel from the leadership team to the followers, but also must move back through a feedback loop to the intermediaries.

Theme 3: Teachers meeting together to plan collaboratively

One of the earliest discoveries of the new principal was that, even though teachers of the same subject and grade level had a common conference period and could meet together, this was not occurring for all teams. Her goal was for teachers to “meet regularly, plan instruction, and review student work.” To facilitate these team meetings and ensure they were productive, the

principal added an additional goal that instructional coaches would be present to facilitate these team meetings.

Shared leadership's response to teachers' resistance

Time in the weekly leadership meetings was frequently spent discussing how teams were responding to this goal. In response to the principal's inquiries, one coach noted that her teachers were "refusing to meet to plan during their conference. They don't want to collaborate. They do totally different things." In response to this comment, the principal noted that she had seen evidence of this. "I saw that last Friday. I went to Ms.----'s classroom and saw a lesson; then I went to Ms.----'s classroom and saw a completely different lesson—like a completely different unit. But we are still going to hold them to the expectation they plan together and teach the same elements." Although the expectation was reiterated, no further action on the part of the principal was discussed, nor was there discussion about how the coaches might influence teachers to fulfill the stated expectation.

The math coach noted that teachers were reluctant to meet and that, when they did meet, most of the time was taken up with logistical matters relating to tutorials. In response, the principal asked, 'do they need to meet twice a week? We could get them started meeting twice a week.' The coach stated again "they don't want to meet at all. I know my teachers wouldn't be open to that." The principal then noted that one of the teachers from that department had already asserted to her that state law required all teachers have a 30-minute duty free conference period and she would not meet with other teachers during that conference time. Another teacher had explained that she was frequently meeting with parents during her conference period and told the principal she would be unable to meet with her coach because of these meetings. The principal stated to the leadership team, "We're going to fix this."

This exchange was echoed several times over the course of the study period. Each time, teachers' responses to common planning meetings were noted to be a challenge experienced by one or more parties, but after each mention the subject was allowed to drop. What was notable in these exchanges was a lack of discussion regarding deeper root causes of the behavior, action steps for addressing the situation, and commitment to follow-through. In analyzing the verbal discourse of coaching conversations, Heineke (2013) noted the importance of what she labeled "progressiveness," the potential of a verbal exchange or cue to extend the conversation (p. 415). Heineke found that progressive conversational moves were essential to move the conversation forward and to transition from exploration of a topic and towards action. Observations of the study team, particularly conversations related to this theme, noted a lack of progressiveness—no such cues were given by either the coaches or the principal and thus the subject was allowed to drop without planning for action, or even further research.

This failure to respond to an identified challenge may have resulted from the team's relative newness and lack of familiarity with each other. Productive conflict that pushes members of a group to think more deeply, make mutual commitments, and hold each other accountable for results, stems from deep levels of trust (Lencioni, 2002). Perhaps the lack of such exchanges resulted from a lack of trust, which simply hadn't yet developed for this team. To the extent that lack of trust might explain the observed behavior, it would imply that for shared leadership to be maximally effective, the leadership team must be a highly effective and developed team—exhibiting trust, productive conflict, commitment to team decisions, internal accountability, and assuming shared responsibility for outcomes (Lencioni, 2002). The research lens of shared leadership directs attention to how team members interact with each other and how they respond to evolving situations, but in practice, the effectiveness of shared leadership may be contingent

upon the dynamics and maturity of the leadership team itself. This finding would partially address research question number one by noting the possibility of a prerequisite to effective communication among the leadership team.

Teachers' views on common planning time

Teachers were not specifically asked when interviewed about team planning and none of them indicated an awareness of a campus goal to increase conference period collaborative meetings; however, several teachers mentioned the importance or benefit of team planning days, during which substitute teachers worked in the teachers' classrooms, allowing them to meet together for a full day of planning with their coach. A teacher commented, "I love that our principal allows us to have a day every nine weeks to plan together and lets us have the time to work with our coach to plan and to talk— 'what do we think kids can achieve?' and 'how fast can we get there?'" Although, when discussing how her principal and coach supported her professional learning, this same teacher replied, "Honestly, I don't think our coach focuses on us because we aren't a STAAR-tested subject, but I still feel that what I teach is really important. I worry that our planning days might go away since our subject isn't tested on STAAR. Those days might go to another team."

Another teacher noted, "The full planning days are when we really get work done. No one can really get into a deep discussion in a forty-minute meeting, especially when there are always interruptions." Interestingly, only once did the leadership team's conversation touch upon how allotted planning time might be used. When discussing the proposed option of having teams meet twice a week, the principal stated that teams could meet "in the first meeting in a PLC [professional learning community] format, first to discuss the plan, the big picture of what we'll do next week and then bring in the proposed activities and go through them together during

the second meeting of the week.” Two of the coaches responded by noting again that their teachers did not want to meet at all.

An apparent breakdown in communication among leaders and followers

The obvious question is whether a better understanding about both the leadership team’s purpose for the planning expectation and the teachers’ feelings about effective use of time might have led to shared understandings and improved outcomes. It appeared that an understanding shared by the leadership team was not effectively communicated to teachers, nor were teachers’ perceptions of effectiveness communicated back to the principal. This seemed to imply a breakdown in the communication which hinged on the role and understanding of the intermediaries—the instructional coaches—and directly addressed research questions two and three regarding the communication of goals from the principal to the teachers as well as the teachers’ perceptions of the support received, implying that breakdowns in the role of intermediary might result in a lack of progress and potentially to feelings to frustration on the part of all actors.

Theme 4: Development of consistency across classrooms

As reflected in the principal’s observation that teachers who were not planning together were also teaching very different lessons, the themes of team planning and consistency of instruction were often interwoven. Although consistency of instruction appeared to be considered, by both the principal and coaches, to be dependent on collaborative planning, such planning did not, in and of itself, seem to necessarily result in consistency: a team could plan together and still end up delivering very different lessons. In the second weekly leadership meeting, one of the coaches stated, “I know one of my teams, they don’t collaborate in terms of day to day instruction even when they meet. They do totally different things; they don’t want to

talk about it in PLC.” The principal noted that she had observed this in her classroom visits. “I’ve seen this! They were doing totally different things. And I pulled the teacher aside and said, ‘hey, tell me about this because I was next door and I saw something different going on. Where does this fit in?’” The principal did not indicate the teacher’s response, nor if she followed up on the conversation. Nor did any of the coaches ask.

The humanities coach noted, “we already have our tests written, so we can spend more time talking about the day to day instruction, but we still have the same issue—where some teachers are doing it—boom, boom, boom—by exactly what we planned, but other teachers are doing a journal entry for 45 minutes.” The suggestion of following up with teachers during classroom instruction was offered by another coach, but the humanities coach replied that “it just feels really, really overwhelming because I have so much planning to do.”

From a shared leadership perspective, researchers would have expected to see deeper conversational movement into the subjects of consistency of instruction and how coaches might support that movement; specifically, conversations that utilized the multiple perspectives of various team members to address the stated frustrations and leading to development of a cohesive plan of action for addressing the issue. Such a conversation was not observed during the six-week period, leading the researcher to determine shared leadership did not achieve its full potential to support the building of new skills in teachers (research question number two).

Principal’s Goals for Supporting and Communicating with Coaches

The school district of the study site had spent the previous three years working to develop consistency of implementation across the K-12 instructional coaching program. Part of this development had been focused on fostering principals’ views of instructional coaches as an important instructional and leadership resource and in supporting deepening collaboration

between the two roles. District principals had been encouraged to meet regularly with their instructional coaches and to consider them as both a resource for themselves (providing supplemental content expertise) and a resource for teachers (providing all teachers with job embedded professional learning to support improved instruction). During the initial interview, the principal discussed four goals or themes for her work with coaches: meeting weekly with the coaches to help support creation of a consistent feedback loop; having the coaches facilitate team planning for teachers, and expecting coaches to be in classrooms supporting the development of consistent instructional practices.

Themes 1 and 3: Principal's goals for weekly meetings and creation of a feedback loop

In accordance with her goals to optimize the partnership, the principal stated her desire to “meet weekly and that we have an open line of communication—what are you seeing? and what am I seeing...that we are creating a continuous live loop of what is happening in real time.”

With regards to meeting weekly, this goal was fulfilled. The meetings occurred every Monday morning during the observation period, with single exception of a school holiday. The principal was present at all meetings, although coaches were occasionally absent due either to personal absences or attendance at an out-of-town conference.

The open line of communication and the feedback loop were partially evidenced—topics were discussed and information was exchanged, although as noted previously the effectiveness of the process sometimes appeared to be a less than optimal exchange of information. This apparent failure to achieve complete understanding was furthered evidenced by the principal's comments in the final interview. In reviewing progress towards the goals, she stated,

- We have—and this is across the board—clear evidence of alignment of what they are teaching and what they are assessing, clear evidence of common planning that supports

student mastery of the TEKS. It's not just compliance just because the coach is telling them to—it's genuine understanding of the work.

- I think all teachers understand that we are going to create connected and aligned lessons and activities that support the standards and that we do this through common planning with a deep understanding of the TEKS. They see the value of this work.
- We really see the value of it and I really think the teachers see the value of it—they understand the work we are asking them to do. We are committed to it and now that the teachers are on board; we are all deeply committed to it.
- All of our communication was so fluid. We really keep each other informed and really understand each other. They help me to really know my campus.

Themes 2 and 4: Teacher participation in team planning facilitated by their coach and coaches working in classrooms

As previously noted, the goal for teachers to meet in collaborative planning sessions with their instructional coaches was a consistent topic of conversation among the leadership team, although these discussions did not appear to have led to positive or corrective action being undertaken. The stated goal of having coaches support the delivery of instruction as planned during team meetings was mentioned only once—the suggestion that the humanities coach might bring consistency to instruction by being in the classrooms. This suggestion was made by another instructional coach and the humanities coach responded with frustration about time constraints. No further mention of classroom support by coaches was addressed at this or any other meeting. It appears, therefore, that this goal was either forgotten or was crowded out by other concerns—perhaps, as suggested by the humanities coach's frustration, the goal of being in

classrooms presented a practical challenge when combined with the goal to facilitate team planning.

With regards to the research questions and their exploration of shared leadership, it appeared that the process of shared leadership was clearly being attempted—the principal was attempting to utilize the coaches as an extension of both her leadership and her presence to extend her influence more deeply across her new campus and to expedite progress. It appears that the principal did attempt to communicate her goals to the instructional coaches; it also appears that, to some extent, the coaches did attempt to communicate those goals to the teachers and to support their professional learning in pursuit of those goals; and finally, it appears that teachers' perceptions of the stated goals and their responses to them depended upon the thoroughness, effectiveness, and consistency of the coaches' focus.

Teachers' perceptions of the instructional support provided by their principal and coach

One of the interview questions asked teachers about their perceptions of support from their principal and their instructional coach. The question was posed to allow respondents to comment on the relative importance of the two actors regarding their own work and to gain an understanding of how respondents assessed the alignment or cohesion of the leadership team. From a shared leadership perspective, this question was designed to assess followers' perceptions of sharing and cohesion among the leadership team. With regard to the practice of instructional leadership, this question was included to shed light on what teachers took from, or needed from, each of the two actors. Past research in shared leadership had found that a sharing of leadership did not minimize the influence of the primary leader, but rather extended and reinforced it (Spillane & Halverson, 2010; Leithwood & Jarvis, 2012).

Teachers' perceptions of their principal's support

In response to this question, most teachers asked if they needed to talk about principals and coaches together or if they could separate them. When told they could answer either way, teachers stated,

- I don't see a lot of the principal aspect. I feel like her work is more behind the scenes talking with my coach. She [the principal] has been in my class twice this year, but once was a test day. Her role is very behind the scenes.
- Principal-wise—she comes in but I haven't had any feedback from her about what's happening instructionally; so, I don't know what that relationship is supposed to look like. I don't know if it's supposed to encourage me to do better or to critique me. I don't know the intention of that relationship.
- She comes in and I see her write, but she doesn't say anything about it or share it with me. I don't know what's happening there.
- I don't know if the principal is supposed to coach us too, but I don't get that. She's more of an authority figure. I don't feel that my coach is an authority figure. I can be where I need to be with my coach and I have room to make mistakes and grow.
- For what's most relevant for me, my principal isn't a part of that work, but my coach is. My principal sets up PL (professional learning activities) for us on development days, but they aren't anything that is relevant to my teaching. So, then we get in professional learning that doesn't apply to us and we're like 'oh, this is a wasted day because I have other, real problems that are more tangible and immediate to students.' My coach understands that better.

- The professional learning Ms.----- arranges for us is great! At the last day, we had a choice of sessions to go to from all these people who went to a technology conference. I didn't really learn anything that I could use in my classroom, but I love that we have choice. That's the best way to do PL.

Teacher's perceptions of the support provided by their coach

Specifically regarding the role of the coach, teachers noted,

- What I think would be even more helpful than the planning meetings would be if she had a toolbelt for me. Maybe not saying 'this is what you're not doing well,' but maybe saying 'this would be a better way to present this to your kids.' I would love for her to show me a better solution. I'd like to see that.
- I just need a sounding board, someone to say 'Hey, have you thought of this?'
- Sometimes in the past, I would go to our previous principal with a problem and he would say, 'Have you talked to your coach?' but he [the previous coach] couldn't help with that. He didn't know how. The problem was deeper than he could solve, so he wasn't the answer. I feel that our current coach is more respectful of our experience. She doesn't try to tell us what to do; she just listens while we figure it out.
- The work that we do with our coach is aligned to what I do every day. Is that considered PL?

Teachers' perceptions of the sharing of instructional leadership

What seemed clear from the overall tone of the teacher's comments is that they recognized a hierarchy of leadership between the principal and the coaches and that the principal was viewed as more of authority figure; and as such, was considered somewhat less "safe" than

the coaches, as well as more removed from the teachers. Perhaps one teacher best captured this sentiment with her statement about the principal.

I think she does care a lot, but right now it's her first year and she's so busy, so she hasn't been so hands on, but I understand that from her. I think her goal is the same as the district's—she is supporting us, but not in a hands-on kind of way. She's still learning about being a principal and about this campus. It's the coaches' job to work directly with us and her job to run the school.

Interestingly, the principal was making an effort to be visible to the faculty as an instructional leader. She noted in the initial interview that she had revised her schedule during the spring semester:

to spend 40% of my time each week in classrooms. That's a great presence in classrooms and so I think being out there and being in real time with the teachers, validating what they are doing will make a real difference for them and for the coaches. I can give the teachers real, quality feedback about their teaching.

And at the final interview, she stated,

I did do the 40% in classrooms. That means I visited every classroom on this campus once every two weeks. That's an amazing presence in classrooms and I think it was really felt. I did a lot of one-on-one conversations with teachers either live in the classroom or after the class through my direct feedback, being very careful to script out the classroom activities and dynamics, not just doing check boxes, but giving really specific feedback.

There is no doubt that spending 40% of her time for classroom visits and observations represented a major commitment on the part of the principal to her instructional leadership. It necessitated re-arranging her entire schedule to fit all other duties into the remaining time and to

be very diligent about her focus on classroom instruction. And yet, to the teachers she appeared to be only in the background. This difference in perception may highlight one of the greatest successes of shared instructional leadership during this study—although teachers were far less aware of their principal’s presence, they seemed to be keenly aware of their coach’s presence and influence. Therefore, to the extent that the principal’s goals were carried to teachers via their work with coaches, her influence was extended in a subtle, but pervasive way. There was no apparent evidence that the coaches detracted from her influence or otherwise interfered in her leadership or connection with teachers. These two findings seemed to illustrate Leithwood and Jarvis’ (2012) findings regarding the effects of shared leadership, specifically that the forces of the combined actors can serve to strengthen the impact of leadership while not costing the primary leader any influence.

Observations in this case study also supported findings suggesting that instructional coaches may be better positioned than principals to provide the consistent and timely feedback, informed by content expertise and capable of influencing the classroom practice of teachers (Hoerr, 1996; Saunders et al., 2009; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Matsumura et al., 2010; Stroelinga & Mangin, 2010).

Summary of Research Questions and Findings

The research questions which guided this study were:

- How does an intermediate school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to intermediate school coaches?
- How do instructional coaches communicate the principal’s goals to teachers and support the building of new skills to reach those goals?

- How do teachers perceive the instructional goals and expectations of the principal and support of the instructional coaches?

Regarding the first question, it appeared critically important that topics be revisited often so as not to be forgotten and to create a shared vision of the progress and the work to be done. Topics such as the development of the ELA workshop model and the presence of coaches in classrooms to support consistent delivery of lessons were not regularly discussed during the weekly leadership meetings and were subsequently not addressed by coaches in their work with teachers. Consequently, teachers did not mention these goals as influencing their work.

Even when topics were discussed, the quality of communication, both in presentation and in reception, influenced the movement from exploration to action. To the extent that information was incomplete, the principal was operating with a flawed picture of the full situation. An example was documented in the extent of the coaches' work to align classroom activities to the state standards and the principal's perception that the impact of the work was "broad" and "across all subjects" when in fact, only the science team commented positively on the impact of this work and believed it to be a relevant goal for them and their students.

A final observation regarding communication of goals from principal to coach highlighted the necessity of moving from discussion to action. Within the leadership team observed, there was an apparent restraint that prohibited productive conflict and created a sense of deferment or reliance on the principal to initiate discussion of action steps. The result was that issues such as the realization that teachers were struggling with expectations for students' success and that teachers' resistance to conference period meetings was on-going, were not addressed with teachers.

Regarding the second question exploring how coaches communicated goals to teachers, the study findings pointed to the need for coaches to regularly and explicitly address the goal while meeting with teachers. Only those teams whose coach focused on a campus goal, and little else, appeared to have successfully facilitated teachers' adoption of the goal and changes in practice as a result. The science coach's work on alignment best illustrated the success of this alignment and focus. Her teachers claimed this alignment as their own goal, immediately relevant to their student outcomes and noted that it had, indeed, resulted in increased mastery for their most struggling learners. The other teachers' perceptions of campus goals and expectations appeared to be more haphazard or informed by sources other than campus leadership.

All teachers voiced positive feelings about their current coaches' respect for their expertise, their teaching styles, and their concerns. The teachers seemed to view the work of their coaches as beneficial to their own work and felt that their coaches were positive contributors to the team efforts. Although campus goals called for the coaches to spend time in both planning and in classrooms working with teachers, the coaches focused their support on attendance and facilitation of team planning meetings. The humanities coach indicated that this was due to time constraints. It is unknown whether a greater impact may have been observed if both goals had been addressed through action, or how allocation of time might have influenced implementation of these goals.

It was observed that communication of the campus goals occurred through the coach's choices regarding facilitation of the team's meeting time and guidance of team discussions. Notably, the science team's successful movement towards increased alignment of instructional materials was facilitated by the most experienced of the three coaches—although new to the campus, she had two previous years coaching experience at the high school level.

Examination of the teachers' perceptions of campus goals and expectations and the role of the leadership team members in supporting their growth was examined through a series of interviews with teachers. Findings indicated that teachers had little awareness of campus goals and identified coaches as their primary support for professional growth, while perceiving the principal as a more distant, authority figure.

Viewed holistically, these findings indicate an apparent desire on the part of the principal to utilize shared instructional leadership, but its implementation was not fully achieved and its impact was not maximized. Successes were evident, as were short-falls. Implications of these findings for both researchers and practitioners will be discussed in the next chapter. Recommendations for future research and for leadership teams working to maximize their combined leadership will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of a successful action research project, according to Coghlan and Brannick (2014), is to contribute to the existing body of scholarly research and suggest actionable guidance for practitioners. To fulfil this mandate, this chapter will first examine the implications and recommendations resulting from this study which might prove useful to instructional coaches and / or principals attempting to deepen the impact of their instructional leadership. Next, the chapter will review research implications and recommendations for the fields of instructional leadership, principalship, and instructional coaching scholars.

Implications and Recommendations for Campus Principals and Coaches

This case study used a shared leadership lens to investigate the relationship between a campus principal and a team of instructional coaches. The lens of shared leadership interprets leadership as resulting from the interactions of several actors who act in both mutually dependent and independent ways, in response to each other and to an evolving situation (Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007). This lens focused on how changes were made, rather than what changed (Spillane et al., 2004).

Implications. Findings in this study indicated that use of a shared leadership lens may provide a beneficial perspective when acting within the principal / coach relationship. It might encourage a deeper understanding of the actions necessary for the two roles to build and reinforce the influence of each other, as well as creating insights regarding how the two roles can provide cohesive support for teachers' professional growth. Conscious consideration of how principals and coaches are interacting to form instructional goals, to consider progress towards

those goals, and to plan for supporting the work of teachers, might serve to best utilize the inherent strength of each role, while utilizing the sharing of influence to compensate for weaknesses inherent in each role.

Leithwood and Jarvis (2012) found that viewing leadership as a function shared among several actors had a more significant impact on conditions which contributed to student outcomes than did consideration of the primary leader only. To intentionally align the roles of principal and coach with the intention of maximizing the impact of both appears, in some situations, to lead to notable improvements in student outcomes, as was noted with the science team's work with alignment of instructional activities to state standards. This work resulted in student gains observed by a teacher of 30 to 40 points improvement on assessments of concept mastery among struggling learners.

Based on these findings, it seems that the effectiveness of the principal / coach relationship might be enhanced if all participating parties considered not only their own actions, but their actions in relation to those of other members. Indeed, it appears that the benefits of considering the principal / coach relationship as shared leadership is achieved only when all aspects of goal creation, transmission, implementation support, and feedback are considered in relation to each other and to all actors—principals, coaches, and teachers.

Recommendations. To maximize the effectiveness of the principal / coach relationship using an intentional sharing of leadership, it is advisable to have clear and explicit understandings of the roles of each actor, as well as the conditions under which mutual and independent decisions will be made. In the literature of instructional coaching, recommendations are made for crafting a principal / coach agreements which covers matters such as protecting the confidentiality of coaches' relationships with teachers, focusing the work of coaches in specific

areas, and outlining the coaching roles that coaches are expected to attend to (Killion and Harrison, 2006). To fully utilize shared leadership, it would be advisable to use a shared leadership lens to shape the language of the agreement, making explicit how each party will contribute to shared understandings, the creation of goals, communicating goals to teachers, and supporting their professional growth towards identified goals. Additionally, the agreement should be expanded to include specifics regarding provision of feedback for all parties, progress assessments for goal work, and how potential teacher resistance or non-compliance will be handled—and by whom.

Creating a principal / coach agreement with the intention of supporting shared leadership changes the nature of the agreement from a primary focus on the principal's support for coaches' work with teachers towards a document of mutual commitment and accountability between the principal and the coaches.

Extension and augmentation of the principal's instructional leadership

For some time now, principals have been expected to provide instructional leadership for their campuses, but researchers were generally unable to provide reliable, practical guidance for how such leadership might be enacted, especially on secondary campuses (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Neumeski, 2012). Indeed, some researchers doubted that principals could possibly meet the demand, considering the size and complexity of modern secondary campuses (Hallinger, 2005; Finkel, 2012).

Implications. Findings in this case study suggest that under the right conditions, instructional coaches can address some of the constraints facing principals—particularly providing a way for the principal's goals and concerns to directly reach teachers through personal contact with their instructional coach. Interviewed teachers in this study understood that

their first-year principal was busy learning her new role and about her new campus, but while several of the teachers indicated a lack of relationship with their principal, they all had positive feelings about their relationships with their coaches. Teachers expressed feelings that their work with instructional coaches was highly relevant to their immediate concerns, that coaches understood their needs, and that they felt safe making mistakes and asking for help from a coach. In at least one instance, the work that a teacher felt was most relevant and which she described as her own personal goal was, in fact, a goal derived from the leadership team's assessment of campus needs.

It appears that coaches might present campus goal work in ways that teachers deem to be more relevant, perhaps because coaches speak in content-specific ways, rather in more abstract or theoretical ways regarding changes in instructional practices. The frequency of contact and the specificity of the language shared by content-specific instructional coaches with teachers might serve to deepen a principal's instructional leadership and to extend its perceived reach to more teachers.

Recommendations. To fully benefit from the time and relationship that coaches have with teachers, principals must ensure that coaches have a full and complete understanding of their instructional goals and expectations. In the absence of this understanding, a coach might fail to focus coaching conversations and activities with teachers towards meaningful professional growth designed to impact and contribute to student learning and campus improvement, instead getting caught up in the activities of coaching without clearly identified action steps or an identifiable measure of progress. Engaging in work that shows little to no benefit to students

might leave a coach feeling overwhelmed or frustrated by a lack of time or impact. Within this study, the humanities coach's expression of frustration regarding progress towards the alignment goal and time to deepen support for this goal illustrated this danger.

To fully benefit from coaches' direct knowledge of teachers' instructional behaviors, strengths, interests, and concerns, a principal must create and maintain timely and honest channels of communication with the instructional coaches, including understandings regarding what can and cannot be spoken of without violating the confidentiality of the coaching relationship between coaches and teachers. Coaches must feel comfortable and confident sharing information regarding teachers' feelings about campus initiatives, the relevance of campus goals, and professional growth and achievements. Perhaps most importantly, they must feel comfortable sharing how and why teachers are feeling resistant, uncomfortable, or challenged by the campus goals. In the absence of such an environment, the principal might have incomplete information regarding progress towards goals and might base his or her own responses on a misreading of conditions, as was evidenced in this study when coaches failed to fully communicate teachers' concerns and resistance back to the principal, especially regarding how and when common planning best occurred.

In addition to each party feeling confident in voicing concerns, every party must be fully willing to listen actively and receptively. To fully function as an extension of the principal's leadership and to maintain a shared understanding of the work, coaches feedback and concerns must be heard and valued by the principal, with an acknowledgement that they are speaking on behalf of the teachers they are supporting—their voices are the teachers' voice. Thus, it is only

with a conscious acknowledgment of the role of the coach as intermediary that the benefits of shared leadership truly extend the principal's leadership rather than simply creating a path for the flow of information.

Dynamics of the leadership team and the quality of shared leadership

Considering the importance of honest and full communication among leadership team members, it is essential to also consider the internal dynamics of the leadership team. Although the team's function is to provide instructional leadership for the campus, attention must also be paid to how the team functions within itself to ensure that communication is honest and thorough and that concerns voiced by one or more parties are not overlooked or dismissed by others.

Lencioni (2002) reminds his readers that teams move through stages of development and that teams can become dysfunctional at any stage. He notes five primary dysfunctions of teams:

- a lack of trust inhibits genuine communication and sharing of concerns and productive conflict
- a lack of productive conflict results in poor decision making as team members “go along” rather than problem solving collaboratively
- a lack of team commitment to decisions results in a lack of unified action
- a lack of internal accountability occurs when members have not fully committed to team decisions and don't feel obligated to follow through on them
- a lack of accountability results in a lack of ownership of results

Implications. For the shared leadership team to achieve effectiveness, it would seem imperative that none of these dysfunctions be in evidence; that is, that behind closed doors, the team engages in productive conflict to arrive at agreement on action steps, that all members of

the team present a unified and cohesive message for teachers in accordance with their role, and that all members of the group accept responsibility for campus outcomes in accordance with their roles.

This case study observed a leadership team that seemed to be struggling with one of the dysfunctions identified by Lencioni—a lack of productive conflict, as evidence by the frequency with which challenging situations were repeatedly mentioned, or even discussed, but were allowed to drop without any plan for action being discussed, resulting in a lack of action. Also evidenced was the coaches' willingness to defer to principal's interpretation of events and outcomes.

Recommendations. The team observed at the study site was newly formed at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year. None of the members of this team had previously worked together and all were new to the campus. Trust among team members takes time to develop as members get to know each other. To the extent that the building of relationships among teams can be expedited, for example through team building retreats and activities, interactions may deepen more quickly, leading to improved problem solving and results. The use of other strategies that facilitate meaningful team work, such as the creation of team norms (especially in the extended form of a partnership agreement) and the use of discussion protocols could also be used to expedite the development of a mature, effective team.

The use of meeting time

In addition to the need for leadership teams to engage with honest communication and productive conflict, there is also a need for the team to ensure that focus on identified goals is not obscured by passing situational topics and the need for a timely response to them. Shared leadership emphasizes the interaction of actors with each other and in response to evolving

contextual situations, so the lens is a useful tool for consideration of the quickly evolving secondary school context; however, for shared leadership to be useful as an extension of the principal's leadership, the principal's goals must stay central to the focus of the team's work.

Implications. In this case study, the principal identified a goal for ELA teachers to implement workshop at least 50% of the time, but the goal wasn't regularly discussed with the humanities coach during leadership team meetings and by the final interview, six weeks later, the goal was no longer mentioned. Another campus goal was to align instructional activities with the state standards; this goal was discussed at every leadership meeting, but only one coach focused on it in her meetings with teachers (Table 4.3), resulting in teachers' observations of student improvement. Sustained focus on the goal appeared to be a contributing factor to the observed results; however, the very nature of leadership requires attention be split between work towards long term goals and minding of immediate concerns and opportunities. Balancing these needs requires intentional planning to create unity of purpose, intentionality of effort, and maximization of organizational development.

Recommendations. The simplest way for a leadership team to maintain focus on identified long term goals would be through the use of structured agendas for all meetings. Agendas for leadership team meetings could allot time for discussion of each goal—reports on progress within each department, related needs or concerns, as well as discussion of next steps. A separate section of the agenda could allot time for discussion of more immediate needs, concerns, or opportunities not related to the identified campus goals. Use of such agendas for weekly leadership meetings would ensure that all parties are updated and moving forward with goal work. Agendas developed by instructional coaches for use during meetings with teachers would ensure not only that campus goals were discussed, but that job-embedded professional

learning for teachers was occurring regularly. Consciously thinking of the principal / coach partnership as shared instructional leadership brings intentionality to the ways in which the actors transmit and advance the goals from the primary leader throughout the organization.

Implementation of shared leadership as a practice on secondary campuses

Research has consistently shown that the decisions made by classroom teachers while planning and delivering instruction have the greatest impact on student outcomes (Wallace Foundation, 2013); therefore, practical considerations that support teachers' professional growth will improve educational outcomes for learners. While principals are the instructional leaders of their campuses, practical concerns make it difficult for them to fulfil this role in ways that consistently impact student learning. Instructional coaches have both the time and the content expertise to support the development of teachers' professional growth but are dependent upon conditions created by the principal to allow access to teachers, time for collaboration, and expectations for the continued growth of all educators. By working in consciously aligned fashion, it is possible for instructional coaches and principals to support each other's work and the work of teachers, amplifying the impact of both roles.

Effective sharing of instructional leadership might be well-served by the creation of a principal / coach partnership agreement that explicitly outlines processes and goals of shared leadership, as well as ensuring that the coaches' work with teachers has a clear focus and has the resources--including time and access to teachers--necessary for success. These conditions allow coaches to move the influence of principal into their work with teacher teams and individuals.

Within the leadership team itself, attention must be directed towards developing a team that engages in productive conflict in pursuit of collaborative problem-solving through open and honest dialog about goals and progress. The deepening of team interaction might be accelerated

through use of team building activities, protocols, and agendas. There is little doubt that shared instructional leadership can support teachers' professional learning; however, the practical concern is with ensuring that the leadership team truly benefits from the shared perceptions of the each team member, that team members re-enforce the decisions and actions taken by other members; and that the action of each team member in response to evolving situations considers the consequences of both action and non-action on all members of the team and the teachers they serve. Under these conditions, shared leadership can enhance the work of the principal and the instructional coaches, to the benefit of teachers and students.

Implications and Recommendations for Ongoing Research

This qualitative case study addressed an existing deficit in leadership research, specifically that involving implementation of instructional leadership. After an extensive examination of scholarship involving principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders, Neumerski (2012) called for additional leadership research using an expanded conceptual lens that would include instructional coaches as well as principals. In response, this case study utilized a shared leadership perspective to investigate how an intermediate school principal and team of instructional coaches communicated about campus goals, incorporated those goals into efforts to support teachers' professional growth, and how teachers perceived both the goals and the support efforts.

The research goal of this project was to collect observations of the leadership team's interactions involving both identified goals and responses to evolving contextual factors. The choice of single, qualitative case study conducted over a six-week period allowed the researcher to code and track the discussion of goals from the leadership team to the coaches' discussions

with teachers and finally to interviews with teachers. This research design was chosen to create an exploratory study of a previously under examined intersection of roles that would suggest next steps for research.

Implications and recommendations regarding the use of a shared leadership lens

This study benefitted from the use of a shared leadership lens by framing the work of instructional leadership as residing with both the principal and coach, viewing both actors as responsible for supporting the professional growth of teachers with the goal of improved instructional decision-making. Without the lens of shared leadership, these actors are typically regarded as working in isolation, although the purpose of both the principal's role as instructional leader and the coach's role is to develop teachers' capacity to support the learning of all students. Use of a shared leadership lens allows for the possibility that these actors could be either reinforcing the influence of each other or undermining it. It is the interaction of the two actors, and the teachers' perceptions of connection or disconnection, that emerges from this conceptual framework.

The more complete and encompassing understanding of leadership created by a shared leadership lens seems to confirm what Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee suggested in 1982, early in the research of principal as instructional leader, that the "perception of strong leadership results from the process of becoming an effective school" (p. 36). To continue developing this understanding of shared instructional leadership, future research will need to expand to include case studies that differ in ways relevant to factors that might be important variants of shared leadership; for example, investigating

- the interactions of teams that have substantial history together, possibly having had more time to develop the trust and productive conflict necessary to fully engage in

collaborative discussions and the taking of interdependent and mutually dependent actions;

- the possible role that other actors, such as assistant principals and other teacher leaders, might play in shared instructional leadership;
- the presence or absence of shared leadership among high school and elementary school leadership teams;
- the presence or absence of shared leadership on campuses or in districts in which a different model of instructional coaching is utilized; for example, when coaches are not content-specific or when they are district, rather than campus, based.

Investigation of shared leadership in a variety of situations might allow discernment of conditions critical to its effective enactment, or possibly shed light on when it is, and is not, conducive to supporting teachers' professional growth

Implications and recommendations regarding internal leadership team dynamics

The leadership team members observed during this study were new to the campus and none of them had existing relationships with each other or with any campus teachers. This site was chosen because the team was at the inception of its work in forging relational patterns among themselves and with teachers, thus all communications were either explicit or interpreted based on current situations. No previous understandings or experiences with each other influenced the actors' behavior.

During this study, there was evidence that instructional coaches often deferred to the conversational cues and decisions of the campus principal without further comment. The coaches' perception of the principal's authority overshadowed or prohibited an internal team dynamic that might have allowed productive conflict leading to collaborative problem-solving to

emerge within the team. This situation gives rise to questions about the internal dynamics present in other leadership teams and how those internal team dynamics might impact the effectiveness of the leadership team on the organization. Specifically, how does the quality or depth of interactions among the leadership team affect the transmission of goals and support provided by team members to followers within the organization?

Implications and recommendations regarding study of shared leadership as a process

While the current study adopted an exploratory view of the overall process of shared leadership, a more in-depth look at each step in the communication of goals and actions taken in support of goals would provide crucial information towards better understanding the possibility of using shared instructional leadership to support campus improvement.

The role of the coach. An effective principal is considered essential to creation of a successful campus, but this case study highlighted the importance of the instructional coach as an intermediary between principals and teachers, including

- serving as extension of the principal's influence without appearing to be an authority figure;
- providing a source of feedback for the principal regarding campus progress;
- being a voice for teachers' concerns;
- creating a critical link between levels of the organization, including district to campus and leadership to teacher.

More research is needed to explore how coaches currently serve in each of these roles, how effective their methods are, and how coaches might best be supported in developing these skills. Improving the link between principals and the development of teachers' capacity to plan and deliver effective instruction is critical to understanding how to create campus improvement

that addresses the needs of all teachers and students. Better understanding how coaches navigate the role of intermediary might allow coaches to become more effective, eventually contributing to improved student outcomes. The value of such a strong connection between a principal's goal and the work of the coaches was evidenced in this case study by the reported student gains made by the science department—student gains of 30 to 40 points on assessments of concept mastery would be welcome results at many campuses.

In addition to studying the role that coaches play as intermediaries, there is also a need to focus on the specifics of the language and coaching techniques that instructional coaches choose when working with teachers, especially when translating a campus-wide goal into content-specific goal for teachers, or how coaches honor teachers as adult learners and active participants in framing and developing the work. To be effective in working with adult learners, coaches must be given latitude to personalize their work with individual teachers and teams of teachers in terms of the coaching stance they adopt and the coaching strategies they employ (Killion & Harrison, 2006); therefore, the choices made by coaches working independently may have a significant impact on the success or failure of campus initiatives and should be further investigated.

The role of the teacher. Little is known regarding the precise benefits that teachers experience from working with coaches. Researchers investigating campus improvement or the impact of coaching tend to focus on student outcomes, assuming that positive changes in teacher behavior will result in improved student outcomes, which is the stated purpose for implementation of instructional coaching (Killion & Harrison, 2006, Killion & Roy, 2009, Knight, 2007); however, teacher-leaders are part of shared leadership and understanding why a

teacher would, or would not, partner with a coach would potentially provide insight into conditions essential for the implementation of a principal's instructional agenda.

Research by Calik et al. (2012) noted that positive feedback strengthened teachers' feelings of efficacy and their motivation to teach more effectively and studies of teacher collaboration and peer support have found that a collective sharing of responsibility and accountability for student learning contributed to teachers' motivation and willingness to be more innovative in their instruction (Ronfeldt et al., 2015). Extending studies such as these that seek to understand conditions that support teachers' sense of empowerment and confidence might provide insight into how principals and coaches could better support teacher, creating a more learning and innovation-centered culture.

The role of the principal. As the head of the instructional leadership team and the campus, the principal is responsible for providing both managerial and instructional leadership. The intersection of these two roles the work of building structures that support a focus on the school as a place of learning for every adult and student (Pristine & Nelson, 2005; Horng & Loeb, 2010; Hattie, 2015). To best implement and utilize a shared leadership team, a principal would need to be comfortable serving visibly as the "learning leader" (Fullan, 2014, p. 6) working alongside team members, and allowing actors to take independent action when necessary.

Unlike past research that examined the role of principal as instructional leaders, studies utilizing a shared leadership lens would pay particular attention to the ways in which the principal interacted with leadership team members and empowered them to fulfill the potential of their role within the leadership team and throughout the campus. Such a study would examine

the principals' work within the leadership team and the whole campus, seeking to understand how these two levels might reinforce each other or create challenges for various actors.

Summary

This qualitative case study of an intermediate school principal and a team of content-specific instructional coaches utilized a shared leadership lens to examine the following research questions:

- How does an intermediate school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to intermediate school coaches?
- How do instructional coaches communicate the principal's goals to teachers and support the building of new skills to reach those goals?
- How do teachers perceive the instructional expectations of the principal and the support of instructional coaches?

Shared leadership was found to be a useful framework for examining how a principal and instructional coaches partnered to support teachers' professional growth. It allowed for examination of the both verbal and behavioral actions to implement campus goals and provide support for teachers' work towards those goals. In addition to allowing a broad focus on the process of campus improvement, it also allowed for observation to encompass many actors, including the principal, instructional coaches, and teachers, honoring the concept of leadership as being manifest through the act of leading an organization. This study began with a quote from Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008, p. 28) that "Leadership acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen," but also acknowledged that providing instructional leadership on a modern secondary campus is a difficult, if not impossible, task for a leader acting unilaterally (Hallinger, 2005; Mullican & Ainsworth, 1979; Townsend et al, 2013).

Exploring how a principal's impact on teachers' instructional capacity might be extended and augmented by the work of instructional coaches, this study found that it was possible for the principal to create a goal for campus improvement and to share that goal with an instructional coach through a series of regularly occurring, weekly meetings during which the principal and coach discussed the goal. Subsequent to these meetings, the coach met separately with a team of teachers, facilitating the teachers' recognition of the need for improvement and creating processes and tools to assist the teachers in modifying their instructional practices. At the end of the data collection period, teachers reported feeling that this work was relevant and beneficial for themselves and for their students, citing documented student gains of 30 to 40 points on assessments of mastery of concepts.

It was also observed, however, that the process of transmission of goals from leadership to teachers and the resulting team work often failed to be embraced by teachers and resistance to the goals and the expected changes were observed. Thus, an intentionally-designed sharing of instructional leadership between a principal and instructional coaches shows promise for practitioners as a potential mechanism for advancing campus improvement goals and improving student outcomes, but more must be understood about why it was observed to be successful with one team, but not with others.

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Appendix A
Permission to Conduct Research at the Study Site

From: Helmke, Sharron
Sent: Thursday, November 17, 2016 12:50 PM
To: [Principal]
Subject: permission to conduct research on your campus

Good afternoon,

Previously we discussed my interest in doing my dissertation on your campus and you expressed your belief that this would be acceptable and potentially beneficial to your campus. In following district procedure, I have submitted the attached request to do this research to the Department of Assessment and Accountability asked that I obtain your written approval for the research to be conducted on your campus.

If everything on the application looks acceptable to you, please email your consent. If you have any questions, please email or call.

Thanks!

Sharron Helmke

Coordinator of Instructional Coaching

[district]

From: [Principal]
Sent: Thursday, November 17, 2016 4:48 PM
To: Helmke, Sharron
Subject: CONFIRMED: Permission to conduct research
Attachments: [district] research-application-form-updated February 2016 -- signed.pdf

Looks great, Sharron! [district] Intermediate Instructional Coaches and I are all in agreement with the research proposal and are willing to participate.

Thanks!

[Principal]

Application and Approval from Site District

[District Letterhead]

November 28, 2016

Re: Application for Research #20161110012

Sharron Helmke
402 Clear Cove Ct.
Dickinson, TX 77539

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the single study at [Campus] Intermediate School. As stated in your research proposal, the goal is to determine "how the alignment of the instructional leadership of principals and instructional coaches affect their influence on the classroom practices of teachers."

All data should remain entirely anonymous and should be reported or referenced only as a district and/or campus in Texas. You are responsible for all costs related to this research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Executive Director of Assessment & Evaluation

[district]

JM/lg

[Campus] *Intermediate School*

APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH OR EVALUATION

Please type directly into the form and complete all sections of the application.

I. General Information:

Submitted By:	Sharron Helmke
Date Submitted:	November 10, 2016
Proposed Project Starting Date:	January 2, 2017
Proposed Project Ending Date:	February 13, 2017
Overall Project Purpose: (e.g., thesis, journal publication)	doctoral dissertation
Are you proposing implementation of a program? (Click to select either box).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, what type of program? (Click to select the appropriate box).	<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum or Instructional Methods Program (e.g., reading or science instruction using new methods or materials) <input type="checkbox"/> Student Services Program (e.g., pregnancy prevention or student mentoring) <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/> Other program Type:

<p>If your project will implement a program, please briefly describe it here, and attach a copy of your proposed curriculum and or other program materials.</p>	
<p>For [District] Only</p>	
<p><i>Application Number:</i> (Assigned by [District])</p>	
<p><i>Date Received:</i> (Completed by [District])</p>	
<p><i>District program approval signatures [District] only</i></p> <p><i>Based on the information/process described above, the following recommendations are made:</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Approval</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Revision and Resubmission (attach explanation)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Denial (attach explanation)</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> <p><i>Signature</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> <p><i>Date</i></p>

II. Main Project Contact Person/Student (if class project, thesis, or dissertation)

Name:	Sharron Helmke
Address:	402 Clear Cove Ct.
Phone:	281-889-1818 cell 281-284-0136 office
Email Address:	sharronhelmke@gmail.com shelmke@ [District]

III. Project Director/Supervising Professor (if class project, thesis, or dissertation)

Name:	Dr. Ella Benson, University of New England, Lead Advisor
-------	--

Address:	University of New England Department of Educational Leadership
Phone:	Dr. Benson's cell 1-757-450-3628
Email Address:	ebenson2@une.edu

IV. Project Overview:

<i>SAMPLE</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Description (Grades, Schools, Other Characteristics)</i>
Students	0	
Staff/Others	1 principal; 3 coaches	2 brief interviews with 1 middle school principal observations of principal / coach meetings Monday meetings
Parents/Guardians	0	

<i>PARTICIPATION</i>	<i>Time Required</i>	<i>Data Required (New & from School/Central Records)</i>
Students	0	none
Staff/Others	30 minutes of principal time; 15 minutes of	two 15 minute interviews with one middle school principal; observations of 6 principal / coach meetings as they normally occur; observations of 6
Parents/Guardians	0	none

COMMENTS (Please attach additional pages, if necessary.)

The observations will occur during the meetings that are already scheduled to occur between the principal and the coaches and previously scheduled PL or planning sessions between teachers and coaches. No additional time or commitment is required for this portion of the research. The principal will be asked to do a 15 minute interview prior to the observations and a 15 minute interview after the observation period. Teacher volunteers will be asked to do a 15 minute observation after the observation period.

V. What hypothesis(es) or research/evaluation question(s) is being investigated?

The overall question this proposed case study addresses is: How might alignment of the instructional leadership of principals and instructional coaches affect their influence on the classroom practices of teachers?

The specific research questions to be addressed are:

How does a middle school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to instructional coaching?

~~How do the instructional coaches communicate the principal's goals to teachers and support the~~

VI. How will you obtain parental/guardian consent for participating students? What consents will be obtained from other participants?

No parental / guardian consent is required since no students are involved.

All participants:

will be notified of their rights in written form

will be notified that their participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time during the study

will be notified of their right to review and revise transcriptions of all interviews and observations they are involved in

~~will be notified of their right to receive a final copy of the data analysis~~

VII. Is this a single study or one of a series planned or contemplated?

Single Study

One of a series (planned or contemplated)

VIII. Provide a brief summary of your research or evaluation design, including statistical analysis procedures. If [District] bases will be used, please detail your variable and sampling needs.

This is a single site qualitative case study. The initial interview with the principal will be used to establish coding categories. The six weekly observations of principal/coach meetings and coach/teacher PL will be coded using the categories established from the principals' interview. Additional categories will be established as they emerge from the data. This coding will be used to determine if and how the principal's goals and expectations are being understood by the coaches, adapted to specific team situations, and communicated to teachers. The final interviews with teacher ~~volunteers will gather information about the teachers' understanding of campus goals and principal~~

IX. Use at least three of the most prominent studies, articles, or books from the knowledge base this project addresses to answer the following questions: (Please attach additional pages if necessary.)

- How will this project contribute to [District] Independent School District?
- How does this project relate [District] current research and evaluation priorities?
- How will this project contribute to the field of education or the area it addresses?

How will this project contribute to [District] Independent School District?

This doctoral research is an action research project designed to investigate ways to improve the effectiveness of [District] instructional coaching program, as well as to investigate a gap in existing research that considers the instructional leadership of principals. [District] Strategic Plan (2014) includes instructional coaching "to facilitate the building of teacher capacity (Strategy VII, tactic 7). By addressing alignment of instructional leadership shared between the principal and instructional coaches, this study directly investigates how the two roles are working together to support the building of teacher capacity through the lens of shared leadership as advanced by Snillane, Halverson, and

X. Source of project funds:

As doctoral research, no funding sources are being used.

XI. List equipment and names of instruments to be used (attach descriptions of commonly available instruments or copies of researcher-developed or adapted instruments):

Meetings and interviews will be recorded on researcher's tablet and transcribed by the researcher. Pseudonyms will replace names of participants during transcription of observations and interviews. The interview questions are attached.

XII. Does any of the equipment or any procedure to be used constitute a potential emotional or physical hazard to subjects?

No

Yes

If Yes, provide a detailed explanation

NA

XIII. District facilities needed:

Access to [Campus] Intermediate School. This access is part of the routine duties of my job assignment as is attendance at all of the meetings I will be observing.

XIV. Will research/evaluation assistants collect data? If so, please provide names, job titles and institutional affiliations.

No, only the primary researcher will be involved in this project.

XV. Assurances:

A. I understand that I am requesting assistance in a research and evaluation project and I am not requesting information pursuant to the Texas Open Records Act. If my request to conduct research and evaluation assistance is granted, I agree to abide by all policies, rules, and regulations of the district including securing written parental permission prior to implementation of my project, and maintaining the confidential nature of records and the privacy and rights of the individual and school.

Signed: Sharron Helmke

Main Project Contact Person/Student

B. I have read the Procedures for Research and Evaluation in the Clear Creek Independent School District by Outside Agencies or Individuals and understand that supervision of this project and responsibility for a report on its outcome rests with me. I also understand that the privilege of conducting future studies in the Clear Creek Independent School District is conditioned upon the fulfillment of such obligations.

Signed: Ella Benson, Ed.D.

Project Director/Supervising Professor

Return the completed application (with all supporting documentation) to:

[District] **Independent School District**
Office of Assessment and Evaluation

[District Address]

Or via fax or email

[District phone numbers]

Please allow up to 15 business days for processing.

Appendix C
Invitation to Participate for Potential Participants

January 2017

Dear Potential Study Participant,

I am a doctoral student at the University of New England and I would like to invite you to participate in a study examining the alignment and perceived effect of shared instructional leadership between an intermediate school principal and campus-based instructional coaches. The study seeks to understand how principals and instructional coaches communicate about instructional goals for campus improvement, how coaches support teachers' understanding and implementation of these goals, and how teachers perceive this support. As an active and important part of this process on your campus, your experience and perceptions of this process will inform this study and its conclusions.

Research Questions: The proposed study will be guided by a question not previously asked in the literature of instructional leadership or instructional coaching: How might the alignment of the instructional leadership of principals and instructional coaches' affect their influence on the classroom practices of teachers? A more complete understanding of these interactions will be obtained through examination of the following questions:

- How does an intermediate school principal communicate campus goals for the improvement of teaching to intermediate school coaches?
- How do instructional coaches communicate the principal's goals to teachers and support the building of new skills to reach those goals?
- How do teachers perceive the instructional expectations of principals and the support of instructional coaches?

Study's Purpose: The purpose of the proposed case study is to address the existing gap in research by examining how an intermediate school principal and a specific type of teacher leader—content specific instructional coaches—determine campus goals, communicate about those goals, and share responsibility for supporting teacher's development towards those goals.

Procedures: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. The study will include an initial interview with the campus principal (approximately 15 minutes); observations of principal and coach regularly scheduled meetings for six weeks (approximately six hours total); observations of instructional coach and teacher meetings for the same six week period (approximately six hours total); a final interview with the campus principal (approximately 15 minutes); and final interviews with teachers (approximately 15 minutes each). Upon your request, I will provide you a copy of the transcribed event in which you participated. You have the right to edit your comments and / or add information that you deem relevant to comments contained in the transcription. You also have the right to a copy of the completed dissertation. I do not foresee the study presenting any hardships pursuant to your participation, other than the time for interviews, which will be conducted within the timeframe of the study, at the study site and at a time convenient for you. There is no monetary compensation for your participation,

however it is anticipated that you will benefit from the action research nature of this project and both the research and practical findings that result.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be protected throughout this study and thereafter. Only I, the sole researcher for this study, will have access to the recordings and original data. Following review of the transcriptions, original recordings of the meetings and interviews will be destroyed and the transcripts, with real names replaced by pseudonyms, will become the data used in this study.

Compensation: No monetary or non-monetary compensation will be provided for your input or time.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, your participation, or this consent form, you may contact me, the principal researcher, via e-mail at sharronhelmke@gmail.com or via phone at 281-889-1818. You may also contact my lead advisor at the University of New England, Dr. Ella Benson at Ebenson2@une.edu.

Your signature on the attached consent form indicates your agreement to participate in this subject, in accordance with the terms of this invitation and the consent form itself. Thank you for considering this opportunity. Please know that your insights, experience, and participation in this research study are valued and appreciated. Your contribution not only supports my educational progress, contributes to a district culture of dedication to life-long learning, but also contributes to our shared understanding of how to most effectively and respectfully support the professional growth of teacher expertise.

Thank you,

Sharron Helmke
Doctoral Student
University of New England's Transformative Educational Leadership Program

Appendix D
Letter of Informed Consent

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

Project Title: Principal and Instructional Coach Partnerships for Instructional Leadership: A Case Study of Interactions and Impact on Teacher Practices

Principal Investigator(s): Sharron Helmke, Graduate Student, University of New England; shelmke@gmail.com; 281-889-1818

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ella Benson; ebenson@une.edu; 757-450-3628

Introduction:

General requirement language:

- Please read this form, you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of the proposed study is to consider how an intermediate school principal and instructional coaches communicate regarding campus goals for instructional improvement and share responsibility for supporting teacher's development towards those goals.

Completion of a research study is a requirement for completion of the principal investigator's doctoral program with the University of New England. The investigator is not being paid for the research or its findings and is receiving no outside funding in support of this work.

Who will be in this study?

Your campus has been identified as the study site for this research because the campus hosts three full time instructional coaches, all of whom are new to the campus. The principal, the instructional coaches, and selected teams of core content teachers who work with the coaches have been identified as potential subjects for this study. You are being invited to participate. The study will analyze themes or topics discussed by principals and coaches; and then by coaches and teachers. Your interactions and your perceptions of campus goals will be the focus of the research gathered through observations and interviews.

What will I be asked to do?

Research will begin with a brief, approximately 15 minute, interview with the principal. Over the following six weeks, the researcher will observe regularly scheduled principal / coach team meetings; meetings between teacher participants and coaches during which planning, reflection, and / or data analysis may occur. During the sixth week, teachers will participate in a brief, 15 minute, interview to discuss their perception of campus goals and administrative and coaching support for reaching those goals. All of these observations and interviews will be collected on audio recordings and will be transcribed by the principal researcher with pseudonyms replacing actual identities of participants.

You will be given the opportunity to review these transcriptions and edit your words as you deem appropriate. During the review process, you may also provide any additional information that you deem relevant.

You will not receive monetary reimbursement for your time, but only regularly occurring and prescheduled meetings will be observed. Interviews will be done on your campus, at a mutually convenient time.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

Participants in this study may benefit by gaining a better understanding of how they interact with colleagues and administrators; how they respond to the expectations of others; how they perceive the demands for continued growth and improvement; and how they collaborate with other stakeholders.

An improved understanding of how whole-campus and team efforts support school improvement may be beneficial to all educational professionals.

What will it cost me?

No costs to participants are expected.

How will my privacy be protected?

Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants and only the primary researcher will know the corresponding participant and pseudonym assignments. The study site will only be referred to as “an intermediate school in Texas.”

All data collection done in observations and interviews will take place at the study site. Interviews will occur in pre-arranged private conference rooms at the study site.

Transcriptions of the audio recordings will be available for review only by participants whose comments are included in the transcriptions (in other words, those present during the original meeting).

Original recordings will only be collected, accessed, and transcribed by the primary researcher. Original recordings will be destroyed after reviewed transcriptions are returned by participants.

Results of this study will be reported as part of the investigators doctoral dissertation. Participants will be offered a review of the final work, as accepted by the doctoral committee, via email.

How will my data be kept confidential?

All data will be collected via audio recordings on the principal researcher's district issued device. The device is used only by the principal researcher and is always in the possession of the researcher. To protect the confidentiality of participants and the privacy of any staff members or situations discussed during closed-door meetings, original recordings of meetings will be destroyed immediately after transcription is completed and participants have returned their revised copies. Original transcriptions will be kept by the researcher and participant revised copies will become the data upon which this study is based. The resulting transcriptions will be coded beginning with the principal's interview. No comments or data that could be used to identify a specific participant or the study site location will be used in the final research document. Only the primary researcher will have access to the original data and the transcriptions. Only the primary researcher will know the correspondence between pseudonyms and actual participant names.

It is not anticipated that any part of the data will be specific enough to identify a particular campus or participant. Demographic and personal information about the participants will not be collected.

Please note that the University of New England's Institutional Review Board may choose to review these research records as a matter of oversight.

General requirement language:

A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least 3 years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only members of the research team will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.

What are my rights as a research participant?

General requirement language:

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the researcher. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your relationships with the campus principal, instructional coaches, or the school district.

General requirement language:

You may skip or refuse to answer any interview question without offering a reason or explanation.

General requirement language:

If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

What other options do I have?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Should you choose not to participate in this study your relationships with the campus principal, other teachers, and instructional coaches will not be affected. Your presence at interviews and meetings during which data will be collected for this study will not be requested. All other activities will continue without alteration.

Whom may I contact with questions?

The researchers conducting this study is Sharron Helmke. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at sharronhelmke@gmail.com or 281-889-1818, or faculty advisor Ella Benson at 757-450-3628.

General requirement language:

If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact sharronhelmke@gmail.com or 281-889-1818, or faculty advisor Ella Benson at 757-450-3628.

General requirement language:

- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

You will be given a copy of this consent form.

[Participant's Statement](#)

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant's signature

Date

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Researcher's signature

Date

Printed name

Appendix E Interview Questions

Interview Questions—Week 1 of Data Collection

Interview with intermediate school principal

- Please describe the instructional needs you have identified as a focus for your campus this semester.
- What observations or concerns helped to shape or determine your goals?
- What, if any, information or input from your instructional coaches helped you develop these goals?
- Based on these needs, what goals or expectations do you have for campus improvement this semester?
- Please describe your plans for using these goals and expectations to frame or structure this work with your coaches.
- Please describe your plans for sharing these goals and expectations with your faculty.
- Please describe how you expect to see the coaches guiding or facilitating this work with teachers.
- Regarding these goals and expectations, what indicators of progress will you be looking for?
- How quickly will you expect to see these indicators manifest?
- What would you consider success? Six weeks from now, what do you hope to see?
- What would you consider failure or a lack of success?
- What do you think might present the greatest obstacle to this work?

Interview Questions—Week 6 of Data Collection
Interviews with teacher participants

- What are the campus instructional goals and expectations for this semester? How do you know this?
- How relevant do you feel these goals and expectations are to your success as a teacher and to the success of your students?
- How, if at all, did your principal and coach support your efforts to reach these goals and meet these expectations?
- How has your instructional coach talked with you, or otherwise supported you, individually or in your planning team, with regard to these goals?
- Please explain if, and how, these goals have affected how you thought about, planned, and / or delivered instruction over the last six weeks.
- What, if any, effects have these goals or expectations had on student learning or outcomes in your classroom.
- In your experience over the last six weeks, how have the principal and coach supported your professional learning?
- Please explain how you perceived alignment or differences in the expectations and / or goals of your principal and coach.

Interview Questions—Week 6 of Data Collection
Final interview with principal

- What evidence of growth in line with your goals or expectations have you observed over the last six weeks?
- What coaching behaviors were you aware of that supported teachers' growth towards these goals and expectations?
- In your experience over the last six weeks, how did teachers understand and respond to the campus goals and expectations?
- On what basis did you form these impressions—for example--information from coaches, personal observations, direct teacher input, or some other means?
- Please explain your feelings and observations regarding the instructional coaches' communication and / or support for your goals and expectations.
- In your experience, how easy or difficult was it to assist coaches in understanding your goals and expectations for campus growth?
- In your perception, how accurately did coaches represent your goals and expectations when speaking with teachers?
- Please explain whether you feel that the coaches provided you with useful and / or actionable feedback regarding teachers' response to, and progress towards, these goals and expectations.

Appendix F
Coding Themes and Conversational Triggers for Coding Placement
of All Observational and Interview Records

Alignment/ Rigor of Instruction	<p>In principal / coach meetings—specific questions or statements regarding use of the curriculum documents or use of state standards, references to specific standards and how they were addressed during instruction; references to teachers’ lesson suggestions or designs that did or did not align with curriculum or standards</p> <p>In coaches’ meetings with teachers—coaches’ questions to teachers about standards such as “which standard would that address?” or “how would that support …(a specific standard); references to standards when designing assessments items; specific discussions of what a particular standards says or how student mastery would present itself</p>
ELA Model Development	<p>In principal / coach meetings—specific mention of the workshop model or any of the components of workshop contained within the district curriculum</p> <p>In coaches’ meetings with teachers—mention of workshop or its components when planning lessons or choosing resources</p>
Regular occurrence of teachers’ planning meetings	<p>In principal / coach meetings—specific questions or comments about when teachers meet, coaches involvement in teachers’ meetings or planning sessions; discussions of scheduling planning meetings or planning days; questions or recapping of planning sessions which previously occurred</p> <p>In coaches’ meetings with teachers—coaches’ questions to teachers about planning that occurred when they were not present; coach and teacher planning for future meetings</p>
Consistency of Instructional Delivery across classrooms	<p>In principal / coach meetings—specific questions or comments about the presence or absence of consistency in lesson planning or delivery, the use of common assessments, or analysis of data from a common assessment</p> <p>In coaches’ meetings with teachers—specific references or words indicating commitment to a shared or jointly created lesson plan; conversations indicating agreement about how to teach a specific standard or indicators of student mastery; collaborative planning of a lesson with indications that all involved parties would be basing instruction on the product of the collaboration</p>
Teachers’ beliefs about students’ ability and teacher self- efficacy	<p>In principal / coach meetings—questions, conversations or expressed concerns regarding teachers’ low expectations for student achievement; questions, discussions or comments about teachers’ concerns regarding assessment items being too difficult for students to understand or complete; discussions or comments about teachers’ attitudes towards changes in student demographics, inclusion students, or English language learners; principal or coach comments about teachers’ understanding or use of differentiation during classroom instruction; specific mentions of teacher’s self-efficacy or low morale regarding expectations for student achievement</p> <p>In coaches’ meetings with teachers—teachers’ expressions of concerns regarding students’ abilities to meet achievement expectations or perform well on curriculum aligned tasks or assessments; teachers’ expressions of frustrations regarding student performance that place blame on students (for example—“I taught it but these students just can’t seem to learn it.”</p>