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AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN TEACHER  
LEADERSHIP IN A RURAL DISTRICT IN GEORGIA

by

DEBRA ELLEN LEVINE SMITH

(Under the Direction of Barbara Mallory)

ABSTRACT

Teacher leadership is an integral part of school improvement and an essential component of distributed leadership. The purpose of the study was to understand teacher leadership in a rural school district by analyzing teachers' behaviors mapped to the dimensions of Snell and Swanson's framework of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration. The study sought to discover if there was a difference in teachers' participation in teacher leadership in the three school levels of elementary, middle and high school. The study also examined demographic characteristics such as years of experience, educational degrees, and training in teacher preparation programs and their relationship to teacher leadership. Finally, the study examined the concept of courage as a component of teacher leadership. This study focused on a rural school district in Southeast Georgia.

The researcher used a quantitative design for the descriptive study of teacher leadership. The researcher-developed instrument was the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS) that utilized specific tasks and activities that directly related to the four dimensions of teacher leadership. The survey also included demographic questions that pertained to years of experience in education, highest degree obtained, and training in teacher leadership in teacher preparation programs.

The researcher found that teachers in small rural school districts are participating in teacher leadership, but elementary and middle school teachers were more likely to participate in teacher leadership and on a more consistent basis than high school teachers. The study also concluded that training in teacher leadership in teacher preparation programs had a significant impact on participation in teacher leadership. Finally, the component of courage was examined and found to be very consistent with the four dimensions of teacher leadership in relation to frequency of participation.

Recommendations for further research included differences between elementary, middle, and high school, importance of teacher preparation programs and continuing education programs, and the importance of courage in the construct of teacher leadership. The concept of teacher leadership is relatively new and continues to evolve, but examination of the practices of teacher leadership may provide vast insight into successful initiatives within the school improvement process.

**INDEX WORDS:** Teacher Leadership, Distributed Leadership, School Improvement, Teacher Empowerment, Teacher Expertise, Teacher Reflection, Teacher Collaboration, Courage

AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN TEACHER LEADERSHIP  
IN A RURAL DISTRICT IN GEORGIA

by

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

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2007

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by

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Electronic Version Approved:  
July, 2007

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Bernard Levine, who made education not only a priority in life, but a sweet reward as well. He never gave up on my ability to achieve the highest of goals and more importantly, he instilled in me a belief that all things are possible if you make everyday count.

To my “Duds” ....I love you.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	7
LIST OF TABLES .....	12
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	13
Background of the Study .....	14
Teacher Leadership .....	15
Snell and Swanson’s Teacher Leadership Framework.....	22
Courage as a Component of Teacher Leadership.....	25
Status of Teacher Leadership .....	25
Statement of the Problem .....	27
Research Questions .....	29
Significance .....	29
Research Procedures.....	31
Delimitations .....	32
Limitations.....	32
Summary .....	33
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	35
Focus on School Improvements .....	35
School Leadership for School Improvement.....	38
Teacher Leadership .....	48
Summary .....	85

		10
3	METHODOLOGY .....	89
	Introduction .....	89
	Research Questions .....	90
	Research Design.....	90
	Participants .....	92
	Instrumentation.....	92
	Teacher Leadership Participation Survey.....	95
	Data Collection.....	101
	Data Analysis .....	102
	Summary .....	103
4	RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	107
	Introduction .....	107
	Research Questions .....	107
	Research Design.....	108
	Respondents.....	109
	Summary of Participants .....	112
	Findings .....	112
	Data Analysis .....	114
	Summary .....	134
5	OVERVIEW, RESEARCH FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, DISSEMINATION, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS .....	137
	Overview of the Study.....	137

Research Questions .....	141
Research Findings .....	142
Summary of Findings .....	146
Discussion of Research Findings .....	147
Conclusions .....	160
Implications .....	161
Recommendations .....	162
Dissemination.....	164
Concluding Thoughts .....	166
REFERENCES .....	168
APPENDICES .....	183
A    IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT .....	184
B    TEACHER LEADERSHIP PARTICIPATION SURVEY (TLPS) .....	186
C    LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT .....	190

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Certified Teachers Surveyed (N=133).....	92
Table 3.2: Demographic Questions Mapped to Research.....	96
Table 3.3: Survey Questions Mapped to the Literature .....	98
Table 4.1: Teacher’s Level of Participation in Teacher Leadership Dimensions.....	115
Table 4.2: Teacher’s Level of Participation in the Dimension of Empowerment .....	116
Table 4.3: Teacher’s Level of Participation in the Dimension of Expertise.....	117
Table 4.4: Teacher’s Level of Participation in the Dimension of Reflection .....	118
Table 4.5: Teacher’s Level of Participation in the Dimension of Collaboration.....	119
Table 4.6: Frequency of Participation in Teacher Leadership at School Level.....	121
Table 4.7: Four Dimensions and School Levels .....	122
Table 4.8: Years of Experience, Highest Degree Obtained, and Teacher Leadership.....	126
Table 4.9: Teacher Leadership Training and Teacher Leadership Dimensions .....	128
Table 4.10: Teacher’s Level of Participation in the Component of Courage .....	129
Table 4.11: Frequency of Participation in the Component of Courage .....	130
Table 4.12: Component of Courage and School Level.....	130
Table 4.13: Years of Experience, Highest Degree Obtained, and Courage.....	131
Table 4.14: Component of Courage and Teacher Leadership Training.....	132
Table 4.15: Significance between Courage and Teacher Leadership Training .....	133

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“In a completely rational society the best of us would be teachers, the rest of us would have to settle for something else”

*Lee Iacocca, 1990*

The educational process creates an opportunity where teachers in the school develop not just a community of learners, but also a community of leaders (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Building leadership capacity encourages teachers in the processes and actions of leadership, forms a systemic framework for school improvement, and creates an environment in which teacher leadership is invited, supported, and appreciated (Lambert, 2003a; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Smylie, 1997; Wikeley, Stoll, & Lodge, 2002). The literature in the area of teacher leadership has only begun to emerge. The common conception of leadership in education still traditionally rests in the hands of school administrators and professionals with non-teaching responsibilities (Lambert; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Recent calls for highly qualified teachers and teacher leadership, however, suggest that teacher leadership is not only important for the profession, but also critical to educational reform efforts as well (Fullan, 2000; Lambert; Wasley, 1991; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1988). Connecting leadership to the creation of a learning organization, transforming followers into leaders, and creating organizational communities are not new concepts (Lambert, 2003b; Silins & Mulford, 2002). What has emerged over the last decade is the idea that teacher leadership is now

included as a component of active participation within the school community (Lambert, 2003a, Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

### Background of the Study

When *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983, educators, specifically school teachers, were charged with the demise of the public school system in the United States (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Wright, 2004). However, less than a decade later, teachers were being touted as the solution to the problem, rather than the source of the problem (Barker, 1996; Wright). Teacher leadership is a key element in school improvement initiatives, such as enhancing the profession of learning, increasing student achievement, and improving the learning environment (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1988). School reform, school restructuring, school effectiveness, and school improvement are all focused on the idea of change (Dimmock, 2002; Fullan, 2000). Teachers are instrumental in the school improvement changes, as they are closest to the learning process.

School improvement changes begin by focusing on leadership tasks and activities (Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2005; Yukl, 2002). Hopkins (2001) reveals that the concept of leadership drastically changed over the last twenty years. The idea that leadership is a one-person operation is no longer valid (Lashway, 2003; Neuman, 2000). In the past, administrators determined the priorities, but with responsibilities in the wake of school improvement initiatives, one person just cannot do it all (Lashway; Harris, 2002a).

Foster (2005) conducted a study of participative leadership in two urban high schools in Canada. Her overarching question concerned the role of leadership as it

pertains to the members of the school community. Her findings, in relation to the area of teacher leadership, indicate that there is a growing recognition that teacher leadership contributes to school success. Foster concluded that, although teacher leadership has a positive effect on school improvement, not enough is known about teachers' perceptions concerning the actual components of teacher leadership. This makes replication of successful teacher leadership initiatives difficult.

The change of focus for leadership in the schools naturally led to classroom teacher involvement, but many teachers were not adequately prepared to accept the new roles of leadership (Neuman, 2000). Many early teacher leadership initiatives failed because teachers were handed titles and duties that included teacher leadership without having a foundation, knowledge, or understanding for the tasks and activities involved (Reinoso, 2002). However, teacher leadership, an integral component of effective school practices, impacts school improvement by building strong relationships and making connections with students (Wright, 2004). Although great strides have been made in education and in leadership initiatives over the last two decades, the potential for teacher leadership has not been realized (Berry, 2005; Snell & Swanson, 2000).

#### Teacher Leadership

In a report by the U.S. Department of Education resulting from the National Teachers Forum, Paulu and Winters (1998) state that teachers are critical to education reform because they have first hand knowledge of classroom issues as well as understanding the overall culture and climate of the school organization. Student achievement is directly related to the climate and culture of the school and the classroom; therefore, success in these areas is directly connected to teachers (Berry, Johnson, and



Montgomery, 2005). Teachers are the experts in understanding the level of support needed in order for successful school improvement initiatives to take place (Paulu & Winter)

Teachers are considered leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) and Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000), teacher leadership includes contributing to the school improvement process, striving for excellence in teaching practices, and empowering the participants in the school community towards educational improvement goals. Crowther, Kaagen, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) expand on the values of teacher participation in the school by adding that teacher leadership transforms teaching and learning in a school and joins the school and the community together in the search for educational excellence.

Teacher leadership, according to Harris (2002b), involves participation in change, empowerment, mediation, and affiliation. Participating in the change process means teacher leaders take suggested changes or developments and implement them at the classroom level (Harris; Smylie, 1997). Participation in empowerment means that teacher leaders take an active ownership in the changes and developments taking place within the school and work with colleagues to shape school improvement efforts and guide colleagues towards a collective goal (Harris). Participation in mediation recognizes the teacher as an important source of expertise and information. The teacher leader's role in affiliation is a direct connection to the relationship with other teachers by participating in professional development (Harris).

Harris has been researching the phenomena of teacher leadership for over two decades. Harris (2002b; Frost & Harris, 2003) states that there are three important questions that need to be answered in the ongoing quest for teacher leadership implementation:

1. In your school, how far do teachers view themselves as leaders?
2. Are there opportunities for teachers to collaborate, discuss, and network?
3. Is there time set aside for teachers to reflect on their practice with colleagues?

Several researchers have conducted studies that address the issue of both formal and informal roles for teacher leaders (Anderson, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Silins & Mulford, 2002). The studies examine the nature of organizational communities and leadership practices and the effect that these variables have on teacher leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi). The researchers conclude that although formal or designated positions might promote teacher leadership in some cases, teacher leadership initiatives were more successful when all teachers were encouraged to assume informal leadership roles (Anderson; Leithwood & Jantzi; Silins & Mulford). The researchers noted that although there was an increase in the support for teacher involvement in shared decision making and leadership, very few schools in the United States had the same level of formal teacher leadership roles as the school systems in other countries. They also note that formal teacher leadership roles might actually exclude potential sources of teacher leadership (Anderson; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi; Silins & Mulford).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) describe teacher leadership as a “sleeping giant” (p.2) that may be the catalyst that propels school improvement initiatives in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century. Several researchers support that prediction by stating the future of public school education may depend on the majority of teachers assuming teacher leadership roles that extend their work as professionals outside the classroom to the entire school (Anderson, 2004; Barth, 1990; Frost & Harris, 2003; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Silins & Mulford, 2002).

Wasley (1991) refers to teacher leadership as the ability to encourage change among colleagues. Fullan (2000) describes teacher leadership as a process that utilizes teacher's capability as it pertains to teaching and learning, educational contexts, collegiality, and especially the change processes revolving around school improvement and school reform. "Teacher leadership has been shackled by archaic definitions of leadership and timeworn assumptions about who can lead" (Lambert, 2003a, p.421). Harris (2003; Frost & Harris, 2003) states, that even in current literature, the definitions of teacher leadership are not always clear or well-constructed. Harris also contends that the conceptual confusion makes the pursuit and legitimacy of teacher leadership initiatives difficult to attain.

Research data pertaining to teacher leadership and the optimum approach needed for school success is important to educators on all levels (Berry, Johnson, and Montgomery, 2005; Foster, 1990; Maeroff, 1989; Short, 1994). Teacher leadership is a process that involves tasks and activities (Berry, 2005; Frost & Harris, 2003; Harris, 2002a; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2005). Authors and researchers state that the overwhelming concentration should not be on the definition or the semantics of teacher leadership, but on actually building a mutual foundation of understanding of the components of teacher leadership among the faculty, the administration, and the school

community as a whole (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Briley, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harris; Lambert, 2003a; Sabatini, 2002; Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leadership programs must be grounded in a realistic foundation and teachers must be prepared to take on the assigned functions of teacher leadership (Berry, 2005; Hart, 1995; Wright, 2004).

Much of the research in teacher leadership is primarily from areas outside of the United States. The current research on teacher leadership in the United States focuses on larger school systems, especially those in urban areas. Anderson (2004), a Canadian researcher, notes that increasing demands to implement changes in educational practices have placed a burden on school systems. Urban schools and schools in larger school districts use teacher leadership initiatives as a means of coping with changes more efficiently, promoting school success, and encouraging professional growth and development (Anderson).

Teacher leadership is an evolutionary process that has developed in waves (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The first wave began with teachers serving in formal roles such as department heads, lead teachers, and union representatives. The position was predominantly managerial in order to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing administration (Wasley, 1991; York-Barr & Duke). In the second wave, according to Silva et al, teacher leadership was directed toward instructional improvement by utilizing teachers in the role of curriculum leaders, staff developers, and mentors. The teacher leaders had a significant influence on their colleagues and expressed a perceived impact on the school culture and the decision-making process (Silva et al). The third wave of teacher leadership recognizes teachers as

vital to effective school improvement (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Silva et al; York-Barr & Duke). The third wave embraces the emerging concepts of teacher leadership that reflect an increased understanding of organizational culture, support collaboration and empowerment, cultivate professional development, and recognize expertise (Darling-Hammond; Silva et al; York-Barr & Duke).

In a study conducted in 1999, Shen found a wide gap between the teachers and administrators' perceptions in teacher leadership in the last decade. The educational arena has been inundated with rhetoric concerning decentralization, site-based management, teacher empowerment, and distributed leadership (Berry, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Shen's research documents that 75% of the principals felt that teacher leadership innovations were already in place, as opposed to 32% of teachers that felt that teacher leadership opportunities had been adequately implemented. In order for teacher leadership to succeed and be an integral component of school reform, both teachers and administrators need to clarify what has been successfully initiated in the implementation of teacher leadership and what goals have yet to be achieved (Shen).

The need for a firm foundation based on a conceptual framework for teacher leadership is the beginning of the process needed in order to implement teacher leadership initiatives (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Briley, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Harris, 2002b; Lambert, 2003b; Sabatini, 2002, Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Several researchers developed frameworks for teacher leadership. Rogus (1988) targeted areas needed for teacher leadership development including demonstrating skills of effective instruction, demonstrating inquiry orientation to teaching, working with others, creating community, leading curricular review and improvement, articulating and

communicating vision, fostering ownership among peers for programs, empowering self and others, developing support for change, and demonstrating patience and persistence. Although Rogus created the framework from previous research and practical educational experience, he also noted that the framework lacked empirical evidence.

In a study conducted by Sherrill (1999) teacher leadership was defined as the demonstration of exemplary teaching and learning, the knowledge of theory and research relating to teaching and learning, and cultivation of collegiality through the use of reflection and inquiry orientation. Sherrill added that another important aspect of teacher leadership is directly related to the teacher's years of experience. Her contention was that teachers at different career stages have different abilities, interests, and expectations in relation to teacher leadership.

Teacher leadership, as a construct, is defined in a variety of ways, however; in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teacher leadership was defined as a concept of teacher behaviors within the functions of four dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Snell and Swanson's research encompassed some of the basic components proposed by other researchers in the field of teacher leadership (Briley, 2004; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Rogus, 1988; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stone, Horjes, & Lomas, 1997). However, Snell and Swanson were also looking for a framework that could be used to actually build teacher leadership programs. Their research, a case study of ten teacher leaders, narrowed the content domains for teacher leadership into a comprehensive framework of four basic dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration (Snell & Swanson; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Snell and Swanson, the four dimensions included the previous findings of research in the area of

teacher leadership, but created four prominent dimensions to help clarify the definition of teacher leadership. The researchers stated that if teacher leadership was clear, concise, and grounded in activities that invited participation, teacher leadership had a better chance of successful implementation (Snell & Swanson).

### Snell and Swanson's Teacher Leadership Framework

Snell and Swanson (2000) conducted an in-depth study of ten teachers who were identified as teacher leaders by both their colleagues and their administrators. All of the teachers were from urban middle schools. Using teacher feedback, Snell and Swanson developed a framework for teacher leadership that captures the knowledge, disposition, and skills of teacher leaders who demonstrate the ability to work effectively with students and peers in their classrooms and in the educational community (Snell & Swanson). Snell and Swanson's framework for teacher leadership contains the dimensions of empowerment, expertise, reflection, and collaboration. The dimension of empowerment is further divided into six sub-dimensions that include teacher impact, decision-making, efficacy, professional development, autonomy, and status (Briley, 2004; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Short, 1994; Sabatini, 2002). The inclusion of the six sub-dimensions of teacher empowerment can be used to help define the actual beliefs, tasks, and activities of teacher leadership (Briley, 2004; Short & Rinehart; 1992).

#### Empowerment

Teacher empowerment is one of the four building blocks needed to provide a foundation for the process of teacher leadership (Briley, 2004; Sabatini, 2002; Short & Rinehart; 1992; Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher empowerment is a process that appreciates the teachers' ability to recognize areas that are

problematic and create solutions that will benefit the school community (Short, 1994; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). The six sub-dimensions of teacher empowerment help clarify the activities and tasks of teacher leadership (Briley; Klecker & Loadman; Short & Rinehart, Stone, Horjes, & Lomas, 1997).

### Expertise

The second dimension in the teacher leadership framework is expertise. According to Snell & Swanson (2000) expertise refers to pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum content knowledge. Schools that seek highly qualified teachers and recognize expertise generate a deeper commitment to the learning organization (Berry, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; York-Barr & Duke; 2004). Expertise in the areas of teaching and learning, as well as specific content, is important as it influences the decision-making process and instructional improvement efforts (Barth, 1990). Expertise is a potent affirmation for teacher leadership and a basis for the strength of the professional learning community (Little, 1995). Expertise also supplies a resource for teachers in mediating institutional and collective controls on their teaching (Little). Instructional policies are directly related to the expertise of the people that are closest to the classroom (Archer, 2001). Teacher leaders must believe in the innate expertise of the staff because expertise allows teachers to be knowledgeable and supportive of the direction of the school community (Richards, 2003; Snell and Swanson).

### Reflection

Reflection, a process of inward thinking, is the ability to understand not only what is happening in the classroom, but what is happening in the culture and climate of the school organization (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Reflection is the very vehicle of change



and change is the necessary ingredient of school reform that leads to continued progress in school improvement (Dimmock, 2002; Fullan, 2000; Snell & Swanson). Korthagen & Vasalos (2005) use insights drawn from psychotherapy and research on human consciousness to support intensive reflection in teaching practices (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Korthagen & Vasalos). This approach invites teachers to think about specific events in their teaching and to engage in a process called core reflection. The idea behind reflection is that a teacher's personality, including their identity and mission, profoundly influences teaching practices. Reflection helps teachers become active participants in solving problems, resolving conflicts, and contributing to the culture and climate of the school community (Marshall, 2005).

### Collaboration

Collaboration, through communication and cooperation, contributes to effective performance in the education of children (Wiggins & Damore, 2006). Collaboration is a system of planned cooperative activities of shared roles and responsibilities for student learning (Wiggins & Damore). The growing demands on classroom teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population have made collaboration a compulsory technique among professional educators. There are certain elements of teacher leadership, such as positive attitude, team process, and professional development that makes collaboration productive and effective (Wiggins & Damore).

Collaboration and collegiality are vital elements in the development of professional learning communities, a part of school improvement initiatives (Harris, 2003; Rolff, 2003; Smylie, 1997). Veteran teachers and teachers with advanced degrees are the backbone of collaboration, but the learning communities are even more

productive when expertise is combined with the enthusiasm of the newer members in the educational environment (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Collaboration is characterized by a high degree of cooperation and involves the whole school community, but especially the principal and the teacher (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery). In this spirit of shared vision, principals and teachers focus on teaching and learning and the impact that the educational climate has on the entire school organization (Franey, 2002; Harris, 2002a).

#### Courage as a Component of Teacher Leadership

In the last several years, courage, another possible component of teacher leadership has begun to surface (Glickman, 2003; Staver, 2006). Lee and Elliot Lee (2006) refer to courage the backbone of teacher leadership. According to Intrator and Kunzman (2006), teachers need to be involved in decision-making processes and professional development opportunities. They also need to be able to gather with their colleagues and have the time to reflect on what is important for both the students as individuals and the school organization as a whole. However, Intrator and Kunzman go on to state that in order for teachers to be leaders, no matter what the characteristics are for teacher leadership, teachers must have the courage to take on the responsibilities of leadership itself. Courage is a necessary component of effective leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2002).

#### Status of Teacher Leadership

Berry states that the concept of teacher leadership continuously demands attention and reevaluation (personal communication, September 11, 2005). However, the actual implementation of teacher leadership in the educational arena is still inconsistent and may

even be counterproductive (Berry). Berry clarifies that if teacher leadership is not consistent, organized, and planned; it has a greater tendency towards failure. This failure reflects negatively on the teacher organization, although the failure may actually be a result of the leadership process itself (Berry). In addition to organizational problems of actually structuring and implementing teacher leadership, there is also a problem with the lack of inclusion of teacher leadership instruction in higher education (Berry, 2005; Lambert, 2003a). If teacher leadership is not a part of the coursework in teacher education programs, teachers may not know how to accept or accomplish teacher leadership responsibilities.

In Georgia, the Georgia Leadership Initiative for School Improvement (GLISI) encourages schools to implement distributed leadership. Distributed leadership, one of the solutions for dispersing the workload in school organizations, is a group of people working together in a way that builds on their expertise and distributes results that could not be achieved by any one person acting alone (Bennett, Wise, Woods & Harvey, 2003; Gronn, 2000). Distributed leadership is not merely giving away unpleasant or unwanted tasks to others (Gronn, 2000; Gronn, 2003; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2005). In many instances, this common misconception leads to the unsuccessful implementation of teacher leadership initiatives (Berry, 2005; Spillane et al).

In Coastal County School District (a pseudonym), a rural district of Southeast Georgia, teacher leadership, as a major component of distributed leadership and effective school practices, has been advocated by the Coastal County School District Superintendent. In his address to the faculty and staff of Coastal County, the superintendent established a foundation for a shared vision in all schools that recognizes

teachers as the backbone of the county-wide initiative related to school improvement.

The superintendent stated that in order for teacher leadership programs to be effective, a firm foundation based on teacher leadership beliefs, tasks, and activities is needed. It was important that teachers knew, understood, and implemented teacher leadership goals. One of the goals for the district was to establish viable teams in each school system that would be responsible for various aspects of the school organization.

The professional learning teams incorporated a component of teacher leadership as designated by the administration. The district has four schools, including two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. The student enrollment in the Coastal County School District is 1,834. The school system currently has four principals, one at each school. There were 133 teachers in the Coastal County School District. Rural schools in Georgia struggle with the mandates surrounding the changes in education that relate to school improvement. The problems facing Georgia's rural school systems mirror those that are found on the national level (Jacobson, 2003). Although a few studies conducted in Georgia include concerns that are related to teacher leadership dimensions, most focus on principal behaviors rather than on teacher behaviors (Inman & Marlow, 2004; McClure & Reeves, 2004)

#### Statement of the Problem

A review of the literature indicated that teacher leadership enhances school improvement. In Georgia, Georgia Leadership Initiative for School Improvement (GLISI) encourages distributed leadership as a reform effort that is dependent on participation among those within the school community. Across schools in Georgia, teams are being formed to provide leadership for school improvement initiatives. However, very little

research exists that examines the level of participation of teachers in teacher leadership activities. Snell and Swanson developed a framework of teacher leadership that clarifies the teacher leadership practices in four dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration. This framework provides a means by which researchers can gain insight into the phenomenon of teacher leadership.

Much of the research in teacher leadership is primarily from areas outside of the United States. Several researchers have conducted studies in teacher leadership that focus on larger school systems, especially those in urban areas. The researchers come to a variety of conclusions, but most of the studies recognize that teacher leadership programs are being implemented in the urban school setting. The literature does not expound upon the subject of teacher leadership in smaller rural areas. Since much of the research in teacher leadership is primarily from areas outside of the United States, further research should be conducted within school districts in the United States and specifically in areas that have been under-reported.

Teacher leadership in practice often leaves educators puzzled because teacher leadership is an ambiguous concept with shifting boundaries and unclear rules. Teacher leadership is context specific and it looks different at every school and in every district. Therefore, administrators and teachers must create their own foundation of teacher leadership for their school. Defining teacher leadership gives it more value, makes it more real, and accelerates progress toward developing a community of leaders. Since a current study in the area of teacher leadership, with specific regard to teacher's behaviors within the construct of teacher leadership, could not be found, this study will attempt to fill that void and to add to the body of literature concerning teacher leadership.

Therefore, the researcher examined behaviors of teachers regarding their level of participation in teacher leadership. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand teacher leadership in the rural district by analyzing teachers' behaviors mapped to the dimensions of Snell and Swanson's framework of teacher leadership.

### Research Questions

The overarching question for this study is what is the level of participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia?

1. What is the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, and a fifth component of courage?
2. To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?
3. To what extent do teachers' demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher's participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?

### Significance

Teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are expected to participate in school improvement initiatives within the school. While the primary responsibility of teachers is within the classroom, one of the conditions of school improvement is that the leadership in the school is shared. Leadership is dependent upon the level of participation and activity among those within the school community. Teacher leadership initiatives are more successful when all teachers are encouraged to assume informal leadership roles.

However, confusion surrounding the topic of teacher leadership seems to emanate from a gap between the rhetoric and definitions of teacher leadership and the participation in the tasks and activities of teacher leadership.

The primary goal of this study is to understand teachers' participation in various behaviors of teacher leadership. The researcher studied the level of participation to determine the extent of teacher participation in teacher leadership. Secondly, the researcher examined the level of participation within the four dimensions of Snell and Swanson's framework of teacher leadership to determine differences in school levels. Demographic data, such as years of experience, level of education, and teacher leadership training were examined to determine how these factors influenced the level of participation. Many rural school systems are involved in community outreach partnerships with institutions of higher learning in order to better facilitate professional development opportunities. Information concerning teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs could impact the continuing education recommendations for rural school districts and for post-secondary institutions.

Currently, an investigation of the literature on teacher leadership reveals that the majority of the studies that originate in the United States use data from large urban school districts and do not adequately address issues concerning teacher leadership in small rural school districts. Much of the research on teacher leadership addresses the construct of teacher leadership in an attempt to understand and clarify the concept. This study examined the level of implementation of teacher leadership in a state that is encouraging teacher leadership through initiatives sponsored at the state level for all schools. Due to the need for all schools to improve and understanding that teacher leadership is catalyst

for improvement efforts, the researcher purposely chose to study the implementation of teacher leadership within a rural district to gain insight into teacher leadership from the behaviors of all teachers within the district.

Many of the studies and articles that focus on teacher leadership state that more research is needed on the topic, especially from the perspective of the teaching community. The significance of the results of the study could impact the school system by allowing the school community an insight into the issue of teacher leadership. Specifically, findings of this study may impact the school system by providing the school community insight into the four dimensions of teacher leadership. These findings may influence individual schools in Georgia and in rural school districts by providing a foundation on which to build future policies and professional learning concerning teacher leadership initiatives. Since small rural school districts face the same concerns as larger urban school districts, the findings from one small rural school district may be applicable to other rural school districts. Finally, the researcher has a vested interest in a small school district in rural Georgia as a participant in the school system. The researcher was interested in identifying the level of participation in teacher leadership to provide the school district an extensive assessment of participative practices in teacher leadership.

#### Research Procedures

The researcher chose to study teacher leadership utilizing a quantitative design. One of the goals in quantitative research is to develop generalizations that contribute to theory that will enable the researcher to predict, explain, and understand some phenomenon (Benz & Newman, 1998). This study was designed to examine the phenomenon of teacher leadership in one rural school district in Georgia.



The researcher modified Short's (1994) School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) and added items from the Leadership Capacity Staff Survey (Lambert, 2003a) to develop the teacher leadership instrument used in this study to measure participation in teacher leadership. The survey was administered to 133 teachers in one school district in Georgia. Demographic information pertaining to years of experience, highest degree obtained, and teachers' participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, was included on the survey instrument. The survey data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, version 13.0 and the data was shown as a holistic view of the county. The individual items were mapped to the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration to allow the researcher to determine participation in each dimension of teacher leadership. One item focused on the component of courage. Data analysis allowed the researcher to respond to the three research questions of the study.

#### Delimitations

The scope of the study is within one rural district where teacher leadership is encouraged.

#### Limitations

Realizing that the participants in the study teach at different schools, opportunities for participation in teacher leadership may vary from school to school. The researcher depended on all teachers within the district to be forthright in identifying their perceptions of their participation in teacher leadership.

## Summary

The concept of teacher leadership is relatively new and continues to evolve; however, the definitions and designations for teacher leadership can be confusing and contradictory. There are four main dimensions of teacher leadership that emerge from the literature. The exact vocabulary may differ slightly, but the essence is the same. Teacher leadership in some way embodies empowerment, expertise, reflection, and collaboration.

State and national mandates regarding school improvement require an administrative performance design that promotes a shared vision for the entire school community. Administrators are charged with the task of creating a positive school culture and encouraging staff development, professional learning communities, and commitment to a shared vision are fundamental goals. Distributed leadership is one way in which administrators incorporate shared decision making and work to meld the right tasks with the right people in the school organization. As distributed leadership become more common and new teacher leadership roles evolve, the need for professional growth and development gain importance. Teacher leadership programs require commitment and education, as well as a firm foundational framework of tasks and activities. It is not enough to just create policies; teacher leadership programs must be grounded in reasonable expectations and should be a joint venture between the teachers and the rest of the school community.

Many of the teacher leadership studies have been conducted outside of the United States and use the term head teacher, department head, and teacher leader interchangeably. Teacher leadership roles in the United States are not as clearly defined. Very few of the studies focus on rural school districts in the United States. Small rural

school districts are under the same education mandates, but may not have the resources of a larger urban school district, such as widespread participation of teachers in the school improvement process.

The researcher focused on the teachers' behaviors regarding the level of participation in teacher leadership. A teacher leadership framework that incorporates the dimensions of empowerment, expertise, reflection, and collaboration was used. Data concerning teachers' behaviors was examined using a framework that included the teacher leadership dimensions of empowerment, expertise, reflection, and collaboration. Data pertaining to the inclusion of courage as a teacher leadership component was also examined. Data collection involved surveying teachers concerning their behaviors. Demographic information, such as years of experience, highest degree obtained, and teachers' participation in teacher leadership training in teacher education programs, was also explore to determine any relationship to the participation in teacher leadership. As a participant in the school organization, the researcher hopes to provide information to the rural school district in Georgia that will be beneficial in the school system's quest for development of teachers in the school improvement process.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A survey of the literature reveals two prominent themes vital to the success of redesigning a new role of teacher leader and designating teachers as leaders (Crowther, 1997; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). One of these ideas is that school change and improvement cannot successfully occur without teacher leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harris, 2002b; Lambert, 2003a; Smylie, 1997; Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke). The second idea is that teacher leadership is essential for raising the level of professionalism within the teaching profession itself (Berry, 2005, Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Lambert, 2003b). These two themes reveal a need for further investigation into the field of teacher leadership.

#### Focus on School Improvement

When *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983, educators, specifically school teachers, were charged with the demise of the public school system in the United States (Barker, 1996). However, less than a decade later, teachers were being touted as the solution to the problem rather than the source of the problem (Wright, 2004). Public law 221-1999, under the section Standards, Assessments, School Improvements, and Accountability, as set forth by the United States Department of Education, states that schools must address the issue of school improvement (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). School reform, school restructuring, school effectiveness, and school improvement are all focused on the idea of change (Dimmock, 2002; Fullan, 2003). Teacher leadership is a key element in school improvement changes, such as enhancing the profession of learning, increasing student achievement, and improving the learning environment

(Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1988).

Teachers are instrumental in the school improvement changes, as they are closest to the learning process.

The Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESSA) was passed by the US Congress in 1965. It included the Title I program, one of the most important components of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty (Mungazi, 1999). During President Clinton's administration, in the 1990s, the program was reauthorized by the Improving America's School Act (Morley & Rassool, 1999). In 2002, President Bush introduced the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The purpose of NCLB was to improve the performance of America's primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability (Achilles, Finn, & Pate-Bain, 2002). The central theme of all of these reforms is the idea that schools must increase, expand, develop, and enrich the education of all students (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). School improvement initiatives, both formal and informal, are globally encompassing issues (Dimmock, 2002). Concepts such as school reform, school restructuring, school effectiveness, and school improvement are all focused on the idea of change. The recommended changes have targeted everything from the specific to the broad, from the actions of the classroom teachers to the laws enacted by Congress (Dimmock). Foster (2005) defines school improvement as a continuing process that is used to insure that all students are achieving at high levels. All schools can create better environments so that more students are successful. Successful school improvement enhances student learning by focusing on the process of teaching and learning and targets those conditions (Hopkins, 2001). Researchers agree that continuous improvement of schools is essential to providing increased student

performance and quality results (Dimmock; Harris, 2002a; Lambert, 2003a). Different solutions are proposed and studies of both exemplary schools and schools at risk are scrutinized, but at least one factor remains constant, change is essential (Hopkins).

The central idea of school improvement is that it is an effort to make schools a better place for students to engage in the learning process (Hopkins, 2001). Hopkins explains that school improvement is not a 'quick fix,' as the process encompasses a very wide range of activities. In a 2002 study focused on school improvement in schools that were on probation, Mintrop and MacLellan reviewed school improvement plans from 46 schools in Maryland and conducted in-depth interviews with school personnel from four middle schools and three elementary schools. The researchers attempted to discover if there were any correlating factors among the seven schools. One of the findings of Mintrop and MacLellan's examination of the 46 schools was that only a few people in each school actually developed the school improvement plan (Mintrop & MacLellan). The researchers' analysis indicated that administrators and teachers who were a part of the improvement plan design thought that the plans were internally significant (Mintrop & MacLellan). However, the regular classroom teachers who had only a superficial knowledge of the school improvement plans expressed a general lack of ownership and complied only to the extent that was mandatory (Mintrop & MacLellan). The researchers also found that 76% of the school personnel in the study felt that the improvement plan was externally motivated. According to Mintrop and MacLellan, the phrase 'school improvement' had many different meanings. The researchers further stated that it is important to have a variety of directions in which to travel the educational reform route, but it is not a good idea to focus on just one direction.

Another study on school improvement was conducted by Wright in 2004. Wright discovered that leadership was the key component in the success of the school improvement effort. The study was conducted in a in a mid-size Midwestern city high school with a diverse population of 2100 students. The sample of participants was chosen from the faculty and staff and the final eight participants were designated as exemplary teachers (Wright). Wright based his study, in part, on the premise that schools are a community of like-minded people who bond together for a common purpose (Sergiovanni, 2001). Wright concludes that leadership was the highest ranked component of the school improvement process in terms of factors influencing success. The researcher also notes that further clarification of successful leadership was a constant blend of a shared vision of leadership tasks and responsibilities between the administration, faculty, students, and community (Wright).

School improvement success is also related to a strong leadership knowledge base in effective school practice and a participation in the school improvement efforts by the whole school community (Hopkins, 2001). This entails the implementation of tasks affecting the culture and climate of the school organization. Although there are many building blocks in the foundation of school improvement, effective leadership is a cornerstone in the successful school improvement process (Hopkins).

### School Leadership for School Improvement

#### Participative Leadership

School improvement changes begin by focusing on leadership tasks and activities (Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2005; Yukl, 2002). Hopkins (2001) reveals that the concept of leadership drastically changed over the last twenty years. The idea that

leadership is a one person operation is no longer valid (Lashway, 2003; Neuman, 2000). In the past, administrators determined the priorities, but with responsibilities in the wake of school improvement initiatives, one person just cannot do it all (Lashway; Frost & Haris, 2003; Harris, 2002a). This dilemma led to the advent of participative leadership and the utilization of the strengths and abilities of the whole school community (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996; Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). Participative leadership is sharing power and empowering others to share in the decision making process (Yukl, 2002). Group decision making, teacher leadership, and shared decision making are all elements of participative leadership (Yukl; Lunenberg & Ornstein, 2004).

Although there is a current of excitement and enthusiasm for leadership and leadership development in education, it is a complex issue that needs more research (Harris, 2004). There is evidence, according to Harris, that a relationship between effective leadership and school improvement exists, but there have not been enough empirical studies as to why or how that relationship occurs. Frost and Durrant (2003) clarify the concept of leadership by defining the components of effective leadership as value, vision, and strategy. The exercise of leadership rests on the clarification of values and the articulation of a vision supported by those values. The strategy is the vision resulting from imagining what could be and what ought to be (Frost & Durrant).

Franey (2002) conducted a case study using a narrative account of actual experiences relating to the challenges of leadership in urban schools. This qualitative study described the process of nurturing a democratic culture of leadership in a multicultural elementary school in England (Franey). Franey's study concentrated on the



shared vision of all of the staff members to initiate improvement. The researcher concluded that collective teaming or organizational learning was a positive component of a leadership environment (Franey).

The idea that one charismatic person can come in and save a school system, a popular concept only a few years ago, is no longer a practical concept (Lashway, 2003; Neuman, 2000). With the advent of more and more mandates connected to student achievement and the demands for school improvement that affects the whole community, school systems are searching for ways to disseminate the responsibilities of school reform (Lashway, 2003; Harris, 2004). According to Hopkins (2001), the prime purpose of leadership for genuine school improvement is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, a task that goes beyond one single person's solitary domain.

Elmore (2004) reinforces this idea by simplifying the definition of leadership to the basic principles of guidance and direction. He suggests that the first thing that must be done in the area of leadership is to get rid of any lingering romantic ideas about leadership itself (Elmore). Leadership is romanticized in America and 'hero-worship' is prevalent in the American culture, especially in the organization of schooling (Elmore; Lashway, 2003; Neuman, 2000). According to Elmore, people like to believe that success is attainable through personal characteristics rather than effort, skill and knowledge. Heroes always have qualities that others do not have. The concern with this theory, also known as the trait theory, is the difficulty in finding all of the character traits of a leader in one person (Neuman). Elmore adds that character traits are not easily influenced by education, training, or practice, which is the opposite of what educators are actually trying to achieve.

Effective leadership for school improvement involves leaders who are capable of building a community of the school in the broadest sense (Fullan, 2003). School leaders must be capable of developing the potential in other members of the school community and involving their staff in the pursuit of improvement (Marshall, 2005). School improvement practices that involve the whole school community sound reasonable, according to Neuman (2000); however, schools recount many failures in the process. Some school reform initiatives failed due to administrative inattention, but others failed due to the lack of a shared vision by the school community (Neuman).

Another definition of effective leaders includes enthusiasm for the job, passion for the potential of the organization, and a belief in personal judgment (Hopkins, 2001). Effective leaders have high expectations, think strategically, and take risks based on an intimate knowledge of their own community (Hopkins). In his book, *Leadership, What's in it for Schools?*, Sergiovanni (2001), notes that leaders should protect and enhance the values, beliefs, and purposes that hold the school community together and give significance to everyday activities.

Little (1995) discovered that teachers were more likely to define leadership in terms of influence achieved in successful educational endeavors rather than exercises of authority. In his qualitative study of leadership conducted in two moderately large high schools comprised of a diverse population of students and over a 100 members of the teaching faculty, fifty-three teachers participated through observations and open ended, semi-structured interviews. Twenty-one of the participants were designated as either present or former teacher leaders. The researcher utilized formal observations of the teachers at work, during planning and in-service activities as well as informal

observations (Little). Teacher lesson plans and other school documents, such as reports and work assignments, were reviewed. Little concluded that teachers perceived that “current definitions for leadership revolved around bureaucracy and hierarchy” (p. 61). According to the participants in the study, there is a definite difference in teachers’ perceptions of the definition of teacher leadership than that of the administration (Little).

### Distributed Leadership

The popularity of distributed leadership, another type of participative leadership, is indicative of an era in which leadership is no longer hierarchical (Gronn, 2003; Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2005). It is a shared concern among many different constituents through a variety of formal and informal networks. Spillane et al state that because of the scope and circumstances of educational organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most school systems already have a component of distributed leadership in place. It is their contention that schools need to take a closer look at how leadership is distributed and the extent to which it is distributed in order to make optimum use of the potential leadership capacity in each individual educational community (Spillane et al).

Yukl (2002) states that defining leadership as a shared process of enhancing the individual and the shared capacity of people to accomplish their work effectively is gaining popularity. Instead of a heroic leader who can perform all essential leadership functions, the functions are distributed among the members of the team or organization (Yukl). The dilemma of the one single leader generates the need for and the attraction of distributed leadership.

In a standards-oriented age, contemporary visions of leadership can be found in the professional standards established by policymakers, practitioners, and university

professors. Foremost among these are the guidelines developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which have gained rapid acceptance (Lashway, 2003). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders (ISLLCS) developed a set of standards that includes the following; “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community” (Green, 2000, p.242). The concept of a vision that is inclusive of the whole school community is an essential component of the effectiveness of the organization (Harris, 2003).

Motivated by the increasing prevalence of shared decision making and distributed leadership in restructured schools, six teams of secondary school teachers were studied in order to learn more about the nature of their collective team roles (Leithwood, Steinbach, & Ryan, 1997). Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected in this study of six teams in five secondary schools in Ontario, Canada. The members of each team were interviewed as a group regarding the team activities (Leithwood et al). Using variables from the conceptual framework a semi-structured interview process was developed and administered to each team. Following the team interview, members were asked individually to complete a survey based on the conceptual framework for this study (Leithwood et al). The interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and coded by the researchers. The results of the study helped refine the model for transformational leadership in order to further investigate team learning and team leadership. Leithwood, Steinbach, and Ryan concluded in the preliminary study that both in-school leadership

and outside conditions affect the team structure. The study provided preliminary information concerning the function of a team in secondary schools (Leithwood et al).

According to Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2005), although distributed leadership has roots in earlier concepts such as 'shared-decision making' and 'teacher empowerment', current definitions are more encompassing and address a conceptual framework that incorporates leadership, instructional improvement, and organizational change. The researchers contend that distributed leadership occurs in an organization setting and is contingent upon the level of interaction and activity of the group as participants. Distributed leadership is not merely giving away certain tasks to others (Spillane et al). They explained that in some circumstances leaders need to use data analysis as a tool for instructional improvement; however, this task is complex and requires technical knowledge of testing, understanding of academic goals, motivational skills, and the ability to produce results that apply to classroom instruction and practice. Even the best administrator is unlikely to have all of those qualifications, but an effective leader would be able to elicit leadership from the personnel in the education community who have the appropriate expertise (Spillane et al). In an ongoing study of 13 elementary schools in Chicago, the researchers also determined that effective leadership is not distributed by appointing or giving it away, but by interweaving the people, materials, and organizational structures towards a common goal (Lashway, 2003; Spillane et al).

Storey (2004), a researcher in the areas of school improvement and the professional development of teachers and performance managers in England, focused on responsibilities, tasks, and roles of the faculty involved in distributed leadership models. Although Storey studied several schools in the Midlands and the south of England, one

particular study focused on a high school in the south of England over an eighteen month period of time. A collection of documentary materials, one-on-one detailed interviews with a range of staff at all levels, and written questionnaires were reviewed (Storey). An element of action research was included in the study. Interviews with high school students were also conducted. The study concluded that although the majority of participants agreed on the need for distributed leadership, they did not all have the same understanding as to what aspects of leadership had been distributed (Storey). Further, the principals tended to resort to a power base if conflicts between the leaders arose, but the teacher leaders resorted to peer support and the power associated with reputation. The contribution of this study adds empirically driven insights into furthering the conceptual debate about the nature and possibilities for new forms of leadership and alternative leaders (Storey).

A pilot study of distributed leadership and leadership teaming was conducted in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 2001, by The Education Alliance (2002). The Education Alliance, a department of Brown University, promotes educational change to provide students equitable opportunities to succeed. Superintendent Dr. Salcedo was enthusiastic about school leadership teams and arranged for the principals to participate in several informational forums on leadership (The Education Alliance). The sessions focused specifically on efficacy of distributed leadership and helped each principal identify what needed to be done in each individual school and by whom. Dr. Salcedo stated that voluntary, rather than mandatory, participation allowed the participating schools a better chance of success (The Education Alliance). Twelve principals took the challenge of building a school leadership team which was supported financially by the Bridgeport

Public Education Fund. Paul Zarlengo, Director of Special projects for the Education Alliance and James Betz, Director of State and Federal Grants, Bridgeport Schools, supervised the project. Each team consisted of a principal, five teachers, and five parents and the teams were asked to develop school improvement plans based on school performance data (The Education Alliance). The preliminary report from the pilot study documented the results which were largely descriptive. Although the report characterized the distributed leadership teams as successful, the results were an assessment of the team process rather than an evaluation of any reform outcomes (Education Alliance Report).

Elmore (2004) contends that distributed leadership is not complicated. He states, “in any organized system, people typically specialize, or develop particular competencies, that are related to their predispositions, interests, aptitudes, prior knowledge, skills, and specialized roles” (p.14). In the world of education, as in the business world, competency in the same or similar roles can vary from person to person and from organization to organization (Elmore). Datnow (1998) found that a successful component of comprehensive school reform is a powerful leadership organization. Leadership organizations sharpen their own collaborative skills, support and encourage the growth of professional communities, instill confidence in the idea of a shared vision and participate in the development of teacher leadership (Datnow).

Foster (2005) conducted a study of leadership in two urban high schools in Canada using individual interviews and focus groups. The 31 participants in the study included principals, assistant principals, teachers, students and parents. The overarching question concerned the role of leadership as it pertained to the members of the school community. Foster’s findings, in relation to the area of leadership, indicated that there

was a growing recognition that leadership from sources other than administration contributed to effective school improvement. Foster also maintained that teacher leadership was perceived to be the most successful leadership alternative. However, Foster states that even though teacher leadership has a positive effect on school improvement, not enough was known about teachers' perceptions concerning the actual components of teacher leadership. This makes replication of successful teacher leadership initiatives difficult (Foster).

The change of focus for leadership in the schools naturally led to classroom teacher involvement, but many teachers were not adequately prepared to accept the new roles of leadership (Neuman). Many early teacher leadership initiatives failed because teachers were handed titles and duties that included teacher leadership without having a foundation, knowledge, or understanding for the tasks and activities involved (Reinoso, 2002). However, teacher leadership, an integral component of effective school practices, impacts school improvement by building strong relationships and making connections with students (Wright, 2004). Although great strides have been made in education and in leadership initiatives over the last two decades, many researchers state that the potential for teacher leadership has not been realized (Berry, 2005; Snell & Swanson, 2000). Teacher leadership cannot stand on merit alone but must be grounded in tasks and activities that form a stable foundation for a teacher leadership process to be implemented (Berry, Reinoso). Administrators need to be educated and trained in how best to distribute leadership tasks and activities. Teachers need to be educated and trained in how to accept and participate in teacher leadership in order for teacher leadership initiatives to be successfully implemented (Berry; Reinoso; Snell & Swanson; Wright).



## Teacher Leadership

Current literature supports the statement that teachers are critical to education reform because they have first hand knowledge of classroom issues as well as an understanding of the overall culture and climate of the school organization (Harris, 2002b; Lambert, 2003a; Paulu and Winters, 1998). Yet the literature in the area of teacher leadership has only begun to emerge (Berry, 2005; Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan, 2000). Researchers maintain that the common conception of leadership in education still traditionally rests in the hands of school administrators and professionals with non-teaching responsibilities (Silva et al). However, recent calls for teacher leadership suggest that teacher leadership is not only necessary for the profession but also critical to educational reform efforts (Fullan, 2003; Lambert; Wasley, 1991; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1998).

Edmonds (1979) introduced the phrase, "All children can learn" (p.18). Barth (2000) states that there is an equally revolutionary idea that, "All teachers can lead" (Barth, 2000, p.447). Berry (2005) further states that if schools are going to become places in which all children can learn, then all teachers must lead. All teachers harbor leadership capabilities, in some capacity, waiting to be unlocked and engaged for the good of the school (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Lambert, 2003a).

Improvement in education is connected to effective classrooms, student achievement, and the culture and climate of the school, according to Berry, Johnson, and Montgomery (2005) and these areas are directly connected to teachers.

Teachers are the experts in understanding the level of support needed in order for successful school improvement initiatives to take place (Paulu & Winter, 1998).

#### Historical Background

Teacher leadership is an evolutionary process that has developed in waves (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In the first wave, teachers were assigned formal roles that resembled managers rather than leaders (Silva et al). The formal designations included department heads, lead teachers, and union representatives. The ultimate purpose of the fledgling teacher leadership responsibilities were meant to maintain efficiency of school operations (Silva et al; York-Barr & Duke). Teachers were an extension of the administration and the goal was the preservation of the existing system (Wasley, 1991; York-Barr & Duke). The second wave, according to Silva et al, utilized teacher leaders as instructional coaches and included roles such as curriculum leaders, staff developers, and mentors (Silva et al). The purpose was to capitalize on instructional expertise. Even in these earliest developments of teacher leadership, influence on colleagues and an impact on the school culture and the decision-making process were noted (Silva et al).

The third wave of teacher leadership recognizes teachers as vital to effective school improvement (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Silva et al; York-Barr & Duke). The third wave currently embraces the emerging concepts of teacher leadership that reflect an increased understanding of organizational culture, support collaboration and empowerment, cultivate professional development, and recognize expertise (Darling-Hammond; Harris, 2002a; Silva et al; York-Barr & Duke). Teacher leadership is comfortably situated with four conceptions of leadership that are inclusive of formal and

informal leaders; participative leadership, leadership as an organizational quality, distributed leadership and parallel leadership (Olson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke). The emergence of teacher leadership would seem to be more likely when these forms of leadership are present in actual practice within a school setting (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; York-Barr & Duke).

#### Definition of Teacher Leadership

According to Troen and Boles (1994), teachers typically define their career in terms of their ability to be of service to others and make a difference in the lives of their students. Similarly, teacher leadership considerations are grounded in the desire to improve the quality of teaching and learning for all students. Teachers do not subscribe to traditional definitions of leadership as superior positions within the school organization (Troen & Boles). Teachers view leadership as a cooperative effort with other teachers to promote professional development and growth and the improvement of educational services (Troen & Boles).

Wasley (1991) defined teacher leadership as the ability to encourage colleagues to change and to accomplish things they would not ordinarily consider. According to Lord and Miller (2000), teacher leadership is a generic term that applies to a variety of roles. Three major areas of teacher leadership are teacher leaders who are out of the classroom full-time to assume some kind of leadership role at one designated school; teachers based in one or more school buildings or have responsibilities across a district and teacher leaders who remain in the classroom and assume, on top of their full-time teaching responsibilities, some role in promoting change (Lord & Miller).

Sherrill (1999) defined teacher leadership as the demonstration of exemplary teaching and learning, the knowledge of theory and research relating to teaching and learning, and cultivation of collegiality through the use of reflection and inquiry orientation. Sherrill studied emerging teacher leadership roles within the teacher education program at a major university. Sherrill states that not only is it important to prepare teacher for the leadership roles in teacher education programs, but continuing education in teacher leadership after teachers gain in years of experience are also extremely valuable. Sherrill maintains that teachers at different career stages have different abilities, interests, and expectations in relation to teacher leadership.

Lambert (2003a) was concerned that teacher leadership is too often defined by antiquated characterizations of leadership and timeworn assumptions about who has the capacity to lead. These definitions have positioned leadership in the hands of only a few recognized leaders. Lambert proposed a new definition of leadership that would expand opportunities for teachers to consider themselves as leaders. According to Lambert, “teacher leaders are reflective, inquisitive, focused on improving their craft, and action-oriented; they accept responsibility for student learning and have a strong sense of self.” (p. 33).

Harris (2003) states, that even in current literature, the definitions of teacher leadership are not always clear or well constructed. Harris also contends that the conceptual confusion makes the pursuit and legitimacy of teacher leadership difficult to attain. In an attempt to encompass all of the tasks, behaviors, and aspects of teacher leadership, some researchers have studied teacher leadership by constructing a framework of dimensions. Defining and measuring the dimensions of teacher leadership

was the center of a study by Klecker and Loadman (1998). The researchers conducted the study in 307 schools in Ohio. The state school system was in the process of initiating self-designed, state-funded restructuring. Eight planning elements were identified by the Ohio State Department of Education as being essential to continuous school improvement and one of the elements specified the new role of teacher leadership in planning and implementing change. The purpose of Klecker and Loadman's study was to identify and define the dimensions of teacher empowerment. The researchers surveyed 10,544 teachers in Ohio public schools using the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) (Short & Rinehart, 1992). The SPES is an instrument which measures teacher empowerment, a main component in teacher leadership (Klecker & Loadman, Short & Rhinehart, Snell & Swanson, 2000, York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The findings of the study indicated that the teachers in the sample were neutral about whether they had opportunities to participate in decision making, interact with colleagues, and make an impact beyond their classrooms. The teachers also reported limited control over the allocation of time in the schools (Klecker & Loadman, 1998). The researchers stated that the findings were not surprising as they were consistent with other studies in the area of teacher leadership. However, the researchers did convey disappointment that, even schools identified as exemplary, were still not adequately implementing teacher leadership in their organizational goals for improvement.

In reporting their findings, Klecker and Loadman (1998) indicated that the concept of teacher leadership was not well incorporated into the teacher's daily routine. The major finding from this study was that teachers had not been prepared to take on the roles and responsibilities of teacher leadership. Administrators were not prepared to

accommodate this level of teacher empowerment (Klecker & Loadman). Researchers recommend that the preparation of classroom teachers and administrators with regard to teacher leadership is a necessary component of professional development (Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Klecker & Loadman).

#### Formal and Informal Teacher Leadership

Teacher leader is a generic term that applies to individuals in a variety of roles (Lord & Miller, 2000). Several researchers have conducted studies that address the issue of both formal and informal roles for teacher leaders (Anderson, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Mulford & Silins, 2002). The studies examine the nature of organizational communities and leadership practices and the effect that these variables have on teacher leadership (Anderson; Leithwood & Jantzi, Mulford & Silins). Mulford and Silins conducted a qualitative study with the Leadership for Organizational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOSLO), over a four year period, from 1997 to 2001. LOSLO is a collaborative project supported by the Australian Research Council (Mulford & Silins). The purpose of the study was to examine the nature of organizational communities and leadership practices and the impact that these variables have on formal teacher leadership roles (Mulford & Silins). A questionnaire was sent to 2,503 secondary school teachers, 96 secondary school principals, and 3,500 sophomores. A total of 96 high schools, designated as having a heightened degree of organizational learning, were chosen to participate in the study (Mulford & Silins).

The analysis of the statistical results of the survey concluded that formal or designated positions could promote teacher leadership. However, schools were more successful when the schools encouraged all teachers to assume informal leadership roles

(Mulford & Silins). The LOSLO study concurs with Barth's (2000) statement that the future of public school education depended on the majority of teachers extending their work as professionals outside the classroom to the entire school. Barth (2000) believes that teachers who become leaders experience personal and professional satisfaction, less isolation from peers, a sense of purpose, and greater understanding, all of which is evident in their teaching. "As school-based reformers, these teachers become owners and investors in the school, rather than mere tenants. They become professionals." (Barth, 2000, p.448).

Anderson's study in 2002 examined the nature of teacher leadership roles and the antecedents and influences on teacher leadership in six schools in Canada. The study was unique in that it examined teacher leadership as it occurred outside of the traditional or formal teacher leadership roles, such as head teachers, department heads, and lead teachers (Anderson). Twenty-eight participants were selected and interviewed. The results of the study indicated that teacher leaders were influential in the school organization and that informal teacher leadership roles were actually more conducive to effective school improvement and a shared vision as a school community (Anderson). Researchers noted the scarcity of formal teacher leadership positions and included some concern that formal teacher leadership roles could actually exclude potential sources of teacher leadership (Anderson; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Mulford & Silins, 2002).

Although having teachers involved in school improvement through formal or informal roles can help build school capacity for continuous progress, teacher leadership roles have not been found to be related to higher student achievement. Leithwood and Jantzi conducted two studies, one in 1999 and another in 2000, which focused on the

question of the effect of formal teacher leadership roles in relation to student achievement. The researchers surveyed samples from large school districts of over 1,500 teachers and 6,000 or more students. The researchers found no statistically significant effect between formal teacher leadership roles and student achievement.

However, because schools are deeply engaged in the school improvement process, teacher leadership is encouraged. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) refer to teacher leadership as a “sleeping giant” (p.2) that may be the catalyst that propels school improvement initiatives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The awakening of teacher leadership is changing traditional educational practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller). States are recognizing and rewarding experienced teacher leaders who demonstrate effective practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller). Although recognition of teacher leadership is evident, there are still many challenges. The formal roles of teacher leadership are rapidly disappearing in favor of the more informal roles of teacher leadership that rely on educational communities with a strong shared vision (Katzenmeyer & Moller, Pellicer & Anderson, 1995). Other researchers state the future of public school education may depend on the majority of teachers assuming teacher leadership roles that extend their work as professionals outside the classroom to the entire school (Anderson, 2004; Barth, 1990; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Mulford & Silins, 2002).

#### Teacher Leadership Practice

The language of leadership is accompanied by assumptions about who can learn and who can lead, framing the foundation for a context for teacher leadership (Lambert, 2003a). Frost and Durrant (2003) contend that there are four valid arguments for continuing research and implementation of teacher leadership practice: the effectiveness



of the school; school improvement; teacher morale; and democratic values. The practice of teacher leadership is the actual implementation of teacher leadership goals within the school community (Frost & Durrant). The inclusion of practice of teacher leadership in a school setting acknowledges that teacher leadership is an effective means of change that will ultimately benefit the climate and culture of the school organization (Barth, 2000; Dimmock, 2002). The literature reveals two prominent themes vital to the practice of teacher leadership and to the success in redesigning the expectations for teacher leaders (Mayo, 2002). One of these ideas is that school change and improvement cannot successfully occur without teacher leaders. The second idea is that teacher leadership is essential for raising the level of professionalism within the teaching profession itself.

Mayo (2002) also suggests three factors that are associated with the successful practice of teacher leadership. These factors are goals, persistence, and ability to accept reality. Teachers who can identify and clearly set the limits of a goal and who care passionately about their students and can articulate what change they want to see in the school are likely to experience some success (Mayo, 2002). Teachers who define success as effecting an incremental change in the desirable direction, rather than as accomplishing everything they set out to accomplish, experience success and are likely to engage in subsequent initiatives (Barth, 2000).

One of the major concerns associated with the practice of teacher leadership is the establishment of common goals for the learning community. Shen (1999) states that documentation gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education indicates that there is a wide gap between teachers and administrators in relation to the gains in teacher leadership over the last decade. Even

though education has been inundated with rhetoric concerning decentralization, site-based management, teacher empowerment, and distributed leadership, Shen's research documents that 75% of the principals felt that new teacher leadership innovations were already in place, as opposed to 32% of teachers. Shen concluded that administrators felt that teacher leadership initiatives were in place when the initiatives were included in school improvement plans, whereas teachers did not consider them as actual practice until the initiatives were coupled with tasks and activities (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Harris, 2003; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2005). In order for teacher leadership to succeed and be an integral component of effective schools improvement plans, both teachers and administrators need to clarify what has been successfully initiated in the actual practice of teacher leadership and what goals have yet to be achieved (Shen).

Many teacher leaders assume several different levels of responsibility on a daily basis. One of the concerns associated with the practice of teacher leadership relates to how teachers can manage these responsibilities successfully (Conley & Muncey, 1999). Conley and Muncey conducted a study in 1999 that was concerned with teachers' perceptions about the actual practice of teacher leadership in connection to their roles as both leaders and as team members. The participants in the qualitative study were four teachers from elementary and high schools. The teachers held roles as teacher leaders and as members of the teaching faculty (Conley & Muncey). The results of the study indicated that different teachers identified with different aspects of the teacher leadership process. Preferences aligned with role emphasis in that teachers who preferred teaming emphasized tasks that involved collaboration and teachers with more managerial skills emphasized tasks that involved decision making (Conley & Muncey). The researchers

reiterate, in their conclusion, that one of the basic premises of teacher leadership as a part of participative and distributed leadership is the fact that in any organization, people tend to specialize according to their skills, abilities, and interests (Conley & Muncey; Elmore, 2004).

### Teacher Leadership as a Professional Movement

The teacher professionalism movement became prevalent as school organizations began to realize that even the most highly motivated teachers would have difficulty succeeding if the educational community did not respect their professional judgment (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988). Teachers who become leaders experience personal and professional satisfaction, a reduction in isolation, a sense of instrumentality, and heightened insight, all of which impact their teaching. In terms of effective educational practice, these teachers become owners and investors in the school, rather than mere tenants (Lieberman et al). Teacher leadership recognizes that even within a professional model, a hierarchy still exists within the school (Mayo, 2002).

Sabatini (2002) conducted a study to determine teacher's perspectives of emergent teacher leadership in an elementary school. The researcher used a grounded theory research design with in-depth interview. Several theoretical ideas emerged regarding teacher leadership (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996; Sabatini). First, teachers who are empowered seek out peers to improve their instruction. Second, when teacher leaders interact, the focus of the interaction is on instruction and school improvement. Third, teachers who are involved in the collaborative process, experience a sense of collective ownership. Fourth, as teachers collaborate and interact, leadership capacity increases. Finally, teachers who are empowered feel trusted, valued and validated. Teachers create a

community of leaders by taking an active role in their own development as teacher leaders and by encouraging their educational organization to take a serious look at the opportunities for teacher leadership initiatives (Moller & Katzenmeyer; Sabatini).

#### Need for New Teachers

According to Sherrill (1999), long term suitable improvements in the quality of learning depends on the action taken by teachers, whether the impetus for change arises from national reforms, school development priorities or a teacher's belief that something could be better. Improvements in teaching and learning involve so much more than the distribution of new materials or the implementation of innovative lesson plans (Frost & Harris, 2003). The development of practice entails questions about values, beliefs, and understanding (Fullan, 2000; Olson, 2000). The practice of teacher leadership requires teachers' full commitment and confidence. Without the commitment and confidence, schools are left with a mere introduction of the idea of teacher leadership rather than genuine development of tasks and activities (Harris, 2002b; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2005).

New teacher leadership roles are emerging as a result of educators and policymakers seeking to improve the three major phases of the teaching career continuum: teacher preparation; induction; and ongoing professional development (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005). Changes involving teacher leadership can occur and be sustained over time only if it is supported through education and professional development for everyone from the teacher to parent to school board to administrator (Zehr, 2001). The basic expectations for teacher leadership roles at the teacher preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development phases can be drawn from

existing research. By addressing these issues educators attempt to improve their profession and build a common foundation (Sherrill, 1999).

The need for clarification in the area of teacher leadership is of utmost importance, according to the findings from Snell & Swanson (2000) and York-Barr & Duke (2004). In order for a school organization to fully implement teacher leadership initiatives, the educational community as a whole needs a firm foundation for the tasks and activities of teacher leadership (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996; Stone, Horejs, & Lomas, 1997; Wright, 2004). The development of a framework for teacher leadership is a positive step towards building a strong teacher leadership program (Snell & Swanson). According to York-Barr and Duke, having a common framework then allows each individual system a means to assess participation. Participation is an essential component in the success of a teacher leadership initiative in order to take the concept of teacher leadership from a written proposal to actual practice (Snell & Swanson; York-Barr & Duke).

#### Teacher Leadership Framework

In 1994, Short, a researcher connected to the Empowering School Districts Project, compiled a major body of information in connection with teacher empowerment. Prior to 2000, empowerment was considered the main component in the development of teachers as leaders (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Empowerment includes enabling experiences that foster choice and responsibility and the ability to utilize individual competencies (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Nine school districts, two universities, and an educational foundation embarked on a three-year effort to empower school participants. These districts created school environments where professionals and staff

exercised the belief that they could impact life and learning in the school and were given the opportunities to act on those beliefs. A sample of 211 participants was chosen from the nine schools to quantitatively identify dimensions of empowerment within the school community setting.

The concept of empowerment that served as the cornerstone of The Empowered School District project had its history in early work on participative decision making and more recent work on self-managing teams (Short, 1994). While empowerment generally associated with site-based management and shared decision making, research from this study revealed the underlying dimensions of empowerment were varied and informative. Six dimensions ultimately emerged within the context of teacher empowerment: involvement in decision making; teacher impact; teacher status; autonomy; teacher self-efficacy; and opportunities for professional development (Short, 1994; Short & Johnson, 1994; Short & Rhinehart, 1992).

The six areas of empowerment help to establish the actual activities that are associated with teacher leadership (Sabatini, 2002; Short, 1994; Snell & Swanson, 2000). Teachers who are involved in the decision-making process at their school gain a greater sense of control over their working environment and develop an ownership in the school organization (Barth, 2000; Briley, 2004; Maeroff, 1988; Short & Rhinehart, 1992). Teacher impact refers to the ability to take action in influencing and engaging other faculty members in order to make changes in the school organization (Briley; Frost & Harris, 2003; Harris, 2002b; Maeroff; Wasley, 1991). Status is connected to the formal and informal designations for teacher leadership (Anderson, 2004; Barth; Leithwood & Janzi, 1999; Mulford & Silins, 2000). Autonomy is the idea that a teacher's viewpoint

and attitude have worth and value (Wilson, 1993). Teacher self-efficacy can be defined as a teacher's perception about their capacity to control the work environment (Briley). Self-efficacy is related to an individual's ability to assess a certain situation, consider solutions, and decide on actions and self-efficacy is usually task specific (Briley; Short & Rhinehart). Professional growth and development for teachers involves engaging in decision-making, reading professional literature, and participating in staff development (Briley; Maeroff; Short & Rhinehart; Wasley). Additionally, empowered teachers who are growing professionally begin to reflect on their expertise, their collaboration with their peers, and the initiatives of the school (Gonzales & Lambert, 2001; Frost & Harris, 2003; Harris, 2003; Olson, 2000).

#### Snell and Swanson's Framework for Teacher Leadership

Over the last two decades researchers and scholars have added to the body of knowledge in the area of teacher leadership (Snell and Swanson, 2000, York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The 1983 Nation at Risk report did not recognize the importance of teachers as leaders in the education profession or in school reform, but this oversight was almost immediately addressed after the report's publication (Crowther, 1997; Walling, 1994). The researchers designed a study to help construct a framework for teacher leadership with the idea that if there was foundation to build on, teacher leadership initiatives would have clarity and the tasks and activities of teacher leadership would be more realistic (Snell and Swanson). If the actual implementation were more realistic, then school organizations would have a better chance of creating teacher leadership initiatives that could actually be put into practice (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996; Snell and Swanson). Snell and Swanson began constructing their study by using Short's (1994) research on

teacher empowerment. Snell and Swanson stated that while the six dimensions of teacher empowerment were certainly valid, there were other components that seemed to be missing. The in-depth, qualitative study was conducted over a two year period of time with a sample of ten teachers. The teachers were designated as teacher leaders by their colleagues and administrators and all ten teachers were employed in the middle school. Over the two years, the participants came together twice for three day conferences to facilitate the contemplation of leadership qualities. Through the use of interviews, portfolio reviews, and journaling, early themes such as the importance of subject matter and the commitment of teachers to work collaboratively emerged (Snell & Swanson). Group discussions and collaborative teaming further designated the role of reflection in personal growth and the reemergence of teacher empowerment. Using teacher feedback, a framework for teacher leadership was established a designated the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration.

#### Empowerment and teacher leadership

Teacher empowerment, one of the four building blocks needed to provide a foundation for the process of teacher leadership (Briley, 2004; Sabatini, 2002; Short & Rinehart; 1992; Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) is a process that appreciates the teachers' ability to recognize areas that are problematic and create solutions that will benefit the school community (Short, 1994; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

Annis (1996) was concerned about the extent to which key stakeholders (elementary, middle and high school teachers, school administrators, central office administrators, and school board members in Georgia) understood and embraced the



concept of teacher empowerment. A comparison was made of stakeholders' perceptions of the need for and actual implementation of empowerment within their given district and school. The data were obtained from a random sample of teachers, school administrators, central office administrators and school board members from 51 districts in Georgia (Annis).

Significant differences were found between central office administrators and school board members compared to school administrators and teachers concerning the need for empowerment in Georgia (Annis, 1996). Significant differences were also reported on the actual implementation of empowerment among central office administrators and school administrators compared to teachers and school board members and elementary and middle school teachers were significantly more involved in empowerment than the high school teachers. Teachers typically perceived a lower sense of empowerment than all other stakeholders (Annis). The findings in this study suggest that further research is necessary to determine whether or not teacher empowerment is a condition to pursue within the state of Georgia. Additional research is needed to determine how to develop a foundation for teacher leadership that could be implemented by all stakeholders (Annis).

Sharp conducted a study in 1992 to explore elementary teachers' attitudes toward their empowerment. Specifically, the study investigated teachers' perceptions of the following: (a) their participation in decision making at and beyond the classroom level, (b) their interest in and willingness to participate in decision-making activities and to attain the knowledge and skills that promote effective decision making, and (c) the relationship between teachers' decision-making roles and their overall career

satisfaction/career commitment (Sharp). The population for this study included regular education elementary teachers in two Southern California suburban school districts. Teachers at half of the schools in each district comprised the sample population. A total of 201 elementary teachers completed a written questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with two teachers from each of the 11 schools, their principals, and an assistant superintendent from each district (Sharp).

Sharp (1992) revealed that teachers highly valued their autonomous classroom role and the school community supported this role. Teachers stated that they seldom participated in decision-making activities beyond the classroom level. Typically, they preferred to participate in decisions that threatened their autonomy or disrupted their instructional programs. Results from this study suggested that not all teachers were interested in nor willing to be empowered (Sharp). Empowered teachers are confident in their ability to make a difference in student learning, take risks and accept responsibilities, employ resourcefulness in solving problems. Empowered teachers are optimistic, determined, and self-actualized (Sabatini, 2002; Snell & Swanson, 2000)

#### Expertise and Teacher Leadership

According to Darling-Hammond (2000) and Berry (2005), one of the key components in the area of teacher leadership is expertise. With so much emphasis today on expertise as it pertains to the highly qualified teacher, knowledge in the content areas is in high demand (Berry, Darling-Hammond). Little (1995) conducted a study of two high schools involved in a school improvement process. The study focused on the comparison of the traditional head teacher roles as opposed to new restructured leadership roles that span subject boundaries. The case study was conducted over a two

year time period and included two moderately large high schools with populations of approximately 2,400 students and 100 teachers in each school. Little's research concluded that expertise was one of the main components necessary in building learning communities and expertise also helps establish a foundation of strength and confidence that is vital to the culture and climate of the educational setting.

In another study on teacher leadership and teacher retention, Richards (2003) used a mixed methodological study to determine principal behaviors that encouraged teachers to stay in the profession and strive for excellence. Richards stated that previous research showed that teachers who were involved in the teacher leadership process were more likely to remain in the profession. The participants in the study were elementary and middle school teachers and principals in California. Twenty teachers were selected for the interview process to determine important behaviors and attitudes that were conducive to teacher leadership. The information from the interviews was translated into 22 behaviors that encouraged teachers to become teacher leaders. The behaviors included support for teacher suggestions for student achievement; increased time allotted for reflection that related to school improvement, encouragement in professional development activities; encouragement in continuing education; involvement in decision making, involvement in school improvement plans, and an attitude of genuine interest in areas of collegial conflict. The researcher compiled the list of behaviors into a survey and gave the survey to 100 elementary and middle school teachers and 100 elementary and middle school principals. One of the conclusions of Richard's research was that the expertise of the staff was a direct catalyst in the formation of an effective learning

environment and provided not only confidence and stability to teachers new to the field of teaching, but also gave teachers a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Palmer, Stough, Burdinski, and Gonzales (2005) conducted a study that focused on the criteria of the term “expertise”. Their study concluded that recent research has many inconsistencies in defining the term expertise in education. Their research looked at other educational research that used teacher expertise as criteria and they concluded that teachers should have at least three to five years of experience in a specific teaching content area and with a particular population of students. They also stated that teachers should have knowledge confirmed by relevant certification and degrees that correspond to the field in which a teacher is currently teaching.

Researchers at Stanford University conducted a case study of four teachers in an effort to shed light on teacher influences on policy making issues in California (Hatch, White, & Faigenbaum, 2005). The participants in the study were two elementary teachers and two high school teachers who had ten to thirty years of experience. Although the researchers stated that it was dangerous to derive substantial generalizations from such a small sampling, several important issues were evident in the in-depth interviews (Hatch et al). Many efforts to foster teacher leadership focus on the power, authority, and control that come with formal teacher leadership positions (Hatch, et al). The participants in the study by Hatch et al agreed that expertise and credibility were components that teachers respond to in the search and recognition of teacher leadership ability and were much more likely to influence policy. This participants in this study also suggested that more time was needed for reflective practices and collaboration in the pursuit of teacher leadership (Hatch et al).

Teacher expertise is characterized by a passion for pedagogical content knowledge. Teacher expertise also includes a keen understanding of the cognitive and developmental capacities of the students and the skill to create a rich and varied curriculum that motivates and challenges the students. Expert teachers seek out on-going opportunities to enhance and refine their teaching skills and are usually sought out by their peers as not only having knowledge in their areas, but also willing to share and discuss with others (Snell & Swanson, 2000).

#### Reflection and Teacher Leadership

Reflection, a process of inward thinking, is the ability to understand not only what is happening in the classroom, but what is happening in the culture and climate of the school organization (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Reflection drives the process of change and change is a major component of school reform that leads to effective school practices (Dimmock, 2002; Fullan, 2000; Snell & Swanson). John Dewey (1993), whose ideas are the basis for so much of the current thought on educational practices, describes reflection as “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or practice” (p.19). Using Dewey’s ideas as a basis for the actions of reflection, Canning (1991) conducted a study at the University of Waterloo in Canada. The researchers used surveys, journals, observations, and interviews with teachers who were involved in the teacher education program. The researcher concluded that in order for reflection to be added as a practice in school communities, certain alterations in the form of attitudes and beliefs would have to be added to the school routine as well (Canning).

Korthagen & Vasalos (2005) use insights drawn from psychotherapy and research on human consciousness to support intensive reflection in teaching practices. This

approach invites teachers to think about specific events in their teaching and to engage in a process called core reflection. In an in depth case study of ten teachers in Amsterdam, researchers Korthagen and Vasalos, acknowledged that reflective practice is currently a key concept in education and especially in teacher development (Korthagen & Vasalos). The researchers concluded that teachers believed the most valuable aspect of reflective practices was not just in the daily reflection of the educational routine, but in being able to connect new theoretical insights about teaching and learning to their own pedagogical knowledge (Karthagen & Vasalos). The participants in the study commented that being able to take a step back and reflect on choices, decisions, and daily practice gave them a modicum of control over their own environment and invited collaboration and collegiality. However, participants also stated that as helpful and successful as these practices were, there was very little time allotted for reflective thinking in the daily educational setting (Korthagen & Vasalos).

Intrator and Kunzman (2006) take the concept of reflection into the realm of professional development. It is their belief that that the focus on content materials, teaching strategies, and learning outcomes are promoted ahead of teachers' deeper needs, especially the ability to reflect on their own teaching methods, opportunities for improvement, collegiality, and self-efficacy. Teachers themselves are almost always taken out of the effective school practices in favor of methods, tools, and techniques (Intrator & Kunzman). If a teacher does not have ownership in the daily routine of teaching, then the human element has taken a back seat in the educational process (Intrator & Kunzman). Reflection helps teachers become active participants in solving

problems, resolving conflicts, and contributing to the culture and climate of the school community (Intrator & Kunzman; Marshal, 2005).

Reflective practitioners are able to distinguish what is happening in the classroom and in the climate and culture of the school organization. Reflective teachers adapt their efforts by taking time to understand the perspectives of others, but do not lose sight of their own thoughts and values. Reflective teachers consistently question what they can do differently and how they generate changes and improvements (Snell & Swanson, 2000).

#### Collaboration and Teacher Leadership

Collaboration and collegiality are essential elements in the foundation of effective leadership practices for teachers and a key component in the success of professional learning communities (Harris, 2003; Rolff, 2003; Wiggins & Damore, 2006). Although expertise is extremely important in the teacher leadership process, if it is not combined with collaboration, the expertise factor loses the thrust of its effectiveness (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Collaboration is characterized by cooperation and camaraderie and exemplifies a successful and effective educational culture and climate ((Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery).

A study conducted by Caron and McLaughlin (2002), was designed to identify indicators in schools considered to be successful in improving the culture and climate of the learning environment. The participants in the study included six schools in three districts in Maryland, four were elementary schools and two were middle schools. A total of 12 special education teachers and 17 general education teachers participated in the investigation. Data collection included document reviews, site visitation, interviews, focus groups, and semi-structured classroom observations. Collaboration emerged as the

major theme in both the interviews and the focus groups. Despite variations across the schools in certain collaborative practices, five of the six schools evidenced some dimension of collaborative culture that included a climate of trust and a sense of professional community based on shared responsibility and cohesive expectations. The researchers concluded that within the climate of collaboration was the fact that teachers looked to each other for support and affirmation, regardless of the level of support offered by the school system or the administration. Teachers described their success as a direct factor of the climate of interdependence (Caron & McLaughlin).

Fifty three teachers in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade participated in a study on collaboration and professional learning communities in an urban area of Eastern Canada (Leonard & Leonard, 1999). The purpose of the study was to investigate the nature of sources of school leadership. Using a survey questionnaire, teachers were asked to identify leadership sources for implementing effective teaching practices. Leonard and Leonard concluded that teachers considered informal teacher collaboration to be the most effective source of leadership (Leonard & Leonard). Collaboration in its purest form should be spontaneous, voluntary, and founded in a shared commitment to the vision of the learning environment. Although scheduled meetings and specified groupings are desirable and necessary for school functioning, they are not the only means of collaboration (Leonard & Leonard). The researchers suggest that in the enthusiasm to proceed with reinventing how schools progress, it would be advantageous to leave ample room and opportunity for teachers to demonstrate professionalism and commitment as they perceive it and not necessarily as it is perceived by those further removed from the classroom or the school. A more comprehensive understanding of all of the facets of



teacher collaborative practice can only lead to the enhancement of educational goals (Leonard & Leonard).

An investigation of professional growth relating to collaborative activities was conducted by Beatty in 1999. In this mixed methodological study, eight teachers from eight different high schools in Ontario participated in interviews, questionnaires, journal writings, and observation notes by the researcher. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which collaboration could create changes in secondary teachers' perceptions of their work and stimulate professional growth (Beatty). The researcher concluded that all participants reported changes in their self-perceptions and their work as a result of collaborative intervention. The teachers also reported feeling more satisfied, and motivated and reported a renewed sense of confidence in their own ability to lead others in the educational process (Beatty).

Collaborative teachers are characterized by a high degree of collegiality and cooperation. Collaborative teachers place value on consensus and compromise rather than competition. Collaboration among teachers is exhibited in strong communication skills such as inquiry and active listening and maintains accessibility to students and peers as essential (Snell & Swanson, 2000)

Snell and Swanson (2000) concluded that as teachers developed high levels of skill in each of the four domains of teacher leadership, empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration; they emerged as leaders. Snell and Swanson suggested that empowerment seemed to form the base of the foundation for teacher leadership and might need to be in place before the other three dimensions could be perfected, but that particular supposition would need further research. The researchers stated that it was very

important to keep in mind that each individual school system was an entity of its own and teacher leadership initiatives needed to be geared to the individual school system.

Included in their recommendations was the suggestion that each school system interested in teacher leadership initiatives conduct some type of discovery process to determine the teachers' perceptions in regard to teacher leadership in their system.

### Courage and Teacher Leadership

Courage, according to Staver (2006), is the willingness and the ability to confront all challenges and complete all tasks so that leaders are confident that their values are being support. Although this idea has been a part of business principles for a long time and even a part of administrative leadership in schools, it is only recently that the focus of courage and the attributes of teacher leadership have evolved (Reilly, 2005; Riddle-Bendau, 1998; Pryor, 1998). Leadership is about influencing others to achieve results, but determining what really matters and setting priorities and executing them on a consistent basis also takes courage (Reilly, Staver). Leadership is also directly connected to exposure to higher levels of education in a specific area and accordingly, teachers who have sought continuing education are more likely to have attained the confidence to exercise courage (Lee and Elliot-Lee, 2006). Courage is the “backbone of leadership” (p. 19). Pryor states that courage is not only one of the most important assets of teacher leadership, but that courage can be encouraged and embedded in teacher leadership ideals. Pryor, as a veteran principal, states that when the characteristics of teacher leadership are combined with courage teachers become facilitators rather than spectators. Retaining teachers is her highest priority and when teachers have a vested interest in the culture and climate of the school, they stay (Pryor; Riddle-Bendau).

Bolman and Deal (2002) in collaboration with The National Center for Educational Leadership conducted a study to help unravel the mystery surrounding school leadership. Their main impetus was on the cognition of school leaders, both administration and teachers, as to the qualities or characteristics necessary for leadership initiatives and leadership success (Bolman & Deal). Although the researchers went into the study expecting that leaders had a solid understanding of what they were confronting, Bolman and Deal were surprised at the level of frustration and burnout they encountered. Although the pessimism was not universal, it was prevalent. Bolman and Deal conducted one of several studies with this focus at Lawndale School District just south of Los Angeles, CA. Ninety-one percent of the school district's students were 5,800 students were minorities and 84 percent receive free lunch. To complicate matters, 91 percent of the district's staff is white (Bolman & Deal). Bolman and Deal conducted face to face interviews over the course of several weeks and also arranged for large and small group discussion in several schools. The researchers collected data and analyzed it by dividing the information into themes and categories (Bolman & Deal). The researchers concluded that four main characteristics emerged from both teachers and principals: focus, passion, integrity, and courage. The component of courage surfaced more often if the school was having difficulties achieving school improvement progress. Courage was also more likely to be present if the school was struggling with change. According to Bolman and Deal, the idea of courage was a somewhat new concept in relation to leadership and seemed to be a necessary ingredient needed to make any of the other characteristics successful. Leadership is about influencing others to achieve results, but determining what really

matters and setting priorities and executing them on a consistent basis takes courage and perseverance (Staver, 2006).

#### Influence of Years of Experience on Teacher Leadership

The question has been raised concerning the relationship between teachers' years of experience and either teacher leadership or the qualities found in teacher leadership frameworks (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Neapolitan, 2000; Suranna & Moss, 2002). Bolman and Deal (1994) in their book, *Becoming a Teacher Leader; from Isolation to Collaboration*, the authors stated the leadership needs and capacities were very different in beginning teachers as opposed veteran teachers. The authors discussed different stages and levels of leadership found at both the beginning level and the experienced levels of teaching capacity in relation to leadership. The leadership capacities, divided into four frames of reference, were the human resource frame, the political frame, the structural frame, and the symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal). The four frames created a foundation for establishing a method of understanding real situations involving leadership tasks and activities and allowed for differences between teachers' capability in handling leadership responsibilities depending on the different levels of experience.

The purpose of a study conducted by Neapolitan (2000) was to investigate the effects of action research as a mechanism of change among potential teacher leaders. The participants in the study were 21 experienced teachers in elementary, middle, high school, and post-secondary school across Florida. All of the teachers were currently enrolled in a teacher leadership program. The participants ranged from 28 years to 53 years of age and had anywhere from three to thirty years of experience. Descriptive analysis was obtained through a 20 item survey that focused on action research,

education, and teacher leadership (Neapolitan). The researcher concluded that teacher leadership and action research could affect educational change, but the more experienced teachers were more likely to perceive positive changes. The study also revealed that experienced teachers considered action research as consistent with teacher leadership in regard to current emphasis on reflective practice, professional development, and collaborative learning. Neapolitan also noted that barriers to the implementation of action research and teacher leadership were lack of understanding about how teacher leadership related to action research and a lack of time allotted for initiating, implementing, and maintaining both action research and teacher leadership standards.

Suranna and Moss (2002) conducted a study on the concepts and practices of teacher leadership at the beginning teacher level. The participants in the study were 9 pre-service teachers and 3 beginning teachers in their first year of teaching. All of the participants were attending a five year, Bachelors/ Masters, teacher preparation program at the University of Connecticut. The researchers used a semi-structured interview process and twenty, day long, observation sessions to gather data for the study. Suranna and Moss concluded that both pre-service and beginning teachers perceived the success of teacher leadership responsibilities as directly relating to the availability of collaborative activities with the learning community and the administration. Support for empowerment in the form of decision-making and professional development was also highly ranked.

#### Influence of Education Degree on Teacher Leadership

A study conducted by Wynne (2001) examined the relationship between teacher leadership and school culture at the secondary level and explored other areas of interest

that included how teacher leadership was affected by such variables as teacher's level of education, gender, and teaching experience. This was a quantitative study that used a purposeful sample of 146 of the 212 high school teachers from the Eastern School District on Prince Edward Island.

The leadership behaviors and characteristics of each teacher were determined through self-assessment ratings. This survey evaluated fifteen leadership measures which included the overall leadership potential of the teacher and four leadership scales: transformational leadership behaviors; transformational leadership characteristics; total transformational leadership; and transactional leadership. The significance of this study pertained to the discovery of a greater understanding of how teacher leadership can affect the culture and climate of a school (Wynne, 2001). The focus of the study was from the perspective of the teacher whereas previous studies had used the principals' point of view (Wynne).

The results of this study revealed that a significant statistical relationship existed between the overall leadership scores and the school culture. Although there were no significant differences in the overall leadership scores between male and female teachers, significant differences were reported for teacher's levels of education and years of experience in relation to leadership capacity and school culture.

#### Influence of School Level on Teacher Leadership

The learning environment has gradually developed into an important research paradigm among educational researchers and while student perceptions are used to measure classroom learning environment, teachers' perceptions are very important in measuring the school level environment (Huang, 2000). This measurement is even more

important as current education practices are undergoing vast changes (Huang). One of the areas of change that is being emphasized is teacher leadership (Huang). Huang conducted a study that sought to discover teachers' perceptions with regard to the relationship between the school environment, collegial leadership, and teacher influence (Huang). Huang focused on the attitudes of teachers in high schools and also looked at their responses according to gender. Participants in the study were teachers from eight high schools in the Southern United States. All of the participants completed the Teacher's School Environment Survey. Data analysis indicated positive responses to the school environment with a high ranking of importance regarding collegiality and collaboration. Teacher autonomy also ranked high.

The study identified gender as a variable differentiating teacher's perceptions of the overall climate of the school. Female teachers perceived their environment as positive and had a more favorable opinion of the work environment than did the male participants. Female teachers also responded more positively to their relationship with their peers and to the importance of collaboration in a leadership capacity. Female teachers perceived themselves to have a higher degree of influence than their male counterparts (Huang).

Stone, Horejs, and Lomas conducted a study in 1997 comparing the three school levels, elementary, middle, and high school regarding teacher leadership characteristics. The purpose of their study was to determine if there were similarities and differences in the areas of teacher leadership motivation, roles, support, and barriers between the three school levels. The researchers also investigated the effects of teacher leadership on the leadership practices and school improvement in the three schools. Eighteen teacher

leaders were selected, six each from an elementary, middle, and a high school. Surveys were given at the site to the designated teacher leaders (Stone et al).

The researchers concluded that teacher leaders were more experienced, participated in leadership activities for both personal and professional reasons, and assisted in school improvement efforts at all three school levels. Also similar in the three school levels were efforts of collaborating with their peers, participating in decision making, and empowering others. A concern among all three school levels was a lack of support for the allotted time needed for professional development which was considered essential. Other barriers to teacher leadership that were significant at all three schools were politics and power struggles (Stone, Horejs, & Lomas, 1997).

The differences between the three school levels were mainly issues of the formal and informal roles of teacher leaders and centered on the expectations of tasks and responsibilities. Elementary teachers were more focused on the actual accomplishments in their classrooms rather than the school wide improvement plan. Middle school teachers were also focused on the classroom success but saw it as a connection with the goals of the school. High school teacher leaders had a broader view of the concept of teacher leader and focused on effective school practices and school wide improvement plans first and classroom accomplishments as secondary. High school teachers were also more likely to see effective successful teacher leadership as a consequence of a shared vision (Stone, Horejs, & Lomas, 1997).

#### Teacher Leadership in Teacher Education Programs

One of the keys to the implementation of successful teacher leadership programs in schools is the addition of teacher leadership curriculum in the teacher education



programs in post-secondary schools (Berry, 2005; Lambert, 2003b). Joseph, Mikel, and Windchitl presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in 2002. The paper highlighted a study of eight experienced teachers regarding the restructuring of teacher leadership programs in higher education institutions (Joseph et al). The study focused on the lived experiences of veteran teachers and the relationship between teacher education, teacher collaboration, and school change. Data was gathered using in-depth interviews and four common themes were discovered. All of the participants spoke of struggles for goals and vision, struggles for engagement and action, and lack of common ground between teachers and administrators regarding perceptions of teacher leadership tasks and activities (Joseph et al). The participants noted that current education practices were not working, but there was little in the way of teacher leadership preparation in the teacher education curriculum. The researchers concluded that higher education programs need to restructure in order to include an understanding of leadership tasks and activities and the practical application of collaboration and reflection (Joseph et al).

Another paper presented to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in 2002 focused on experienced teachers acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to take on the challenges in new teacher leadership roles (Lieberman). The study also examined the teachers' perceptions concerning their ability to evoke change in the leadership process. The paper details the efforts of one urban-based university's efforts to redesign their curriculum and establish courses for teacher education that meets the national standards while addressing the current needs of teacher leaders (Lieberman).

Program evaluations included tracking participant selection, retention, graduation rates, maintaining records on the curriculum being taught, and summarizing school level change initiatives, reporting the number of teacher completing teacher leadership certifications, and rating participants as potential mentors (Lieberman). Lieberman concluded that the teacher education program was directly responsible for a higher degree of confidence among its graduates in the area of teacher leadership.

In a report to the National Board of Professional Teachers Association, Muchmore, Cooley, Marx, and Crowell (2004) explained a new program of study at Western Michigan University geared towards teacher leadership. The new program had been developed in partnership with Oak Grove School District in Oak Park Michigan, but what made this program different was that the school district requested the university to add the program in order to prepare teachers for leadership responsibilities (Muchmore et al). Oak park School district consisted of four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Participants in the program 210 were teachers from all three school levels. Oak Park School District consistently ranked among Michigan's lowest performing districts. District administrators concluded that in order to improve student performance consistently over the long term, future initiatives must provide educators with meaningful professional development that would increase content knowledge and improve leadership skills (Muchmore et al).

Many institutions of higher learning are involved in community outreach programs that directly connect to the professional development initiatives of surrounding school districts. According to the researchers, the partnership between post-secondary universities and rural school systems is even more critical (Muchmore, Cooley, Marx, &

Crowell, 2004). Teachers reported lasting effects and long-term goals that were more consistent with the newest information in effective school reform and that their ability to handle teacher leadership responsibilities was enhanced as well (Muchmore et al). The theme most often encountered in the interviews with the graduates of the Western Michigan University's teacher education program was that the education gained was 'real' (Muchmore et al).

### Barriers to Teacher Leadership

Barriers to educational change exist at every level of the educational process (Fullan, 2000; Dimmock, 2002). There is a relative absence of research that documents ways in which school organizations construct the concepts of teacher leadership (Harris, 2002). There is not enough documentation regarding the relationship between teacher leadership and school improvement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Within the field of educational research, ambiguity and confusion surrounding the notion of leadership have prompted scholars to challenge the pervasive view that equates school leadership with administration (Gronn, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, 2003a). Teacher leadership is vague, lacks documentation relating to tasks and activities, and is viewed as a threat to power and politics (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Teacher leadership is lost in the rhetoric and is used as a convenient addition to school improvement plans in written form, but is seldom seen in the actual responsibilities of the participants in the learning community (Berry, 2005; York-Barr & Duke; Snell & Swanson, 2000).

Few actual frameworks have been researched in the area of teacher leadership which leaves school systems with a vague idea about what teacher leadership is but no way to create a firm foundation on which to build a teacher leadership initiative (Snell &

Swanson, 2000). Schools that have tried to actually implement a teacher leadership plan have often failed because teachers, principals, or both were not ready to take on or disseminate teacher leadership responsibilities (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Storey, 2004). When teacher leadership initiatives do not immediately result in increased student achievement, teacher leadership is considered a failure and discarded (Klecker & Loadman; Shen, 1999). According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), there are no cookie cutter solutions in education and there are no perfect plans for initiating teacher leadership programs. Every school system and possibly every school needs to examine their own school organization from the aspect of abilities, both the strengths and the weaknesses and begin to build teacher leadership programs that fit their own learning community (Katzenmeyer & Moller; Cortez-Ford, 2006).

Another barrier to teacher leadership, according to Carlson (2004) is that the 'babyboomers', people born between 1946 and 1964 are being replaced by generation x, people born after 1964. Carlson states that in general, generation x educators have not been raised to commit their lives to education and are more likely to view teaching as a job rather than a life. That makes it less likely that new teachers to the profession will be willing to sacrifice their time for teacher leadership tasks. The lack of allotted time is one of the most important factors in teacher's dissatisfaction with the dimensions of teacher leadership (Carlson)

Several researchers have also concluded that the designation of formal, as opposed to informal teacher leadership roles, may be a barrier to teacher leadership initiatives (Lethwood & Janzi, 1999, Mulford & Silins, 2002). Several researchers have conducted studies that address the issue of both formal and informal teacher leadership

roles (Anderson, 2004; Leithwood & Janzi; Mulford & Silins). The studies examined the nature of organizational communities and leadership practices and the impact that these variables have on teacher leadership. The researchers' analysis of the statistical results of the survey concluded that although formal or designated positions might promote teacher leadership, schools were more successful when the schools' encouraged all teachers to assume informal leadership roles (Anderson; Leithwood & Jantzi; Mulford & Silins). The researchers reported support for teacher involvement in shared decision making and leadership in the school improvement process although very few schools actually had formal teacher leadership roles (Anderson, 2004; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi; Mulford & Silins). Leithwood and Janzi reported that formal teacher leadership roles might actually exclude potential sources of teacher leadership.

#### Teacher Leadership in Georgia

In Georgia, the Georgia Leadership Initiative for School Improvement (GLISI) encourages schools to implement distributed leadership. GLISI (2004) encourages the development of leadership models in order to improve the culture and climate of school systems as they initiate change. GLISI is an advocate of the new role of leadership and includes eight designations for possible leadership tasks and activities. Their recommendations for leadership participation include the following: data analysis, curriculum, assessment; and instruction, performance, operations, relationship, process improvement, change, and learning and development. GLISI advocates the position that the administrators need to develop leadership teams within the school to build capacity for school improvement.

## Summary

Schools must address the issue of school improvement and focus on the idea of change in order to create an atmosphere in which every student has the opportunity for educational success. Teacher leadership is one of the key elements in school improvement initiatives because teachers are already a major component in the learning process. The concept of school improvement is very vague and has as many different meanings as there are schools undergoing improvement plans. The most important success factor in school improvement initiatives is that the whole school community is involved in the shared vision and has ownership of the tasks and activities that will lead to improvement in the educational process.

School leadership has changed drastically in the last few decades and with the increased pressure to create effective learning communities, school systems began to look at incorporating shared responsibilities with the idea of a shared vision also. Participative and distributed leadership found a fairly comfortable niche within the effective school organization. However, there is still a concern as to how the responsibilities of leadership are disseminated so that the potential leadership capacity in each school community reaches an optimal level. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders (ISLLC) developed a set of standards that stated that educational leaders should promote the of all students by support the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by the school community. Change in education also brought about a change of focus for leadership in the schools. These changes led to an increase in support for the involvement of the

classroom teacher in leadership capacities, but many teachers were not adequately prepared to accept the new roles of leadership.

Teacher leadership developed in waves with the first wave being mainly managerial. Formal designations, such as department head and lead teacher, were widely accepted. These leadership tasks revolved around the efficiency of the organization. The second wave utilized teacher leaders as instructional coaches, however, the impact and influence on colleagues was evident. The third wave of teacher leadership recognized that teachers were vital to the school improvement process. The third wave embraced the teacher leadership concepts that reflect the understanding of organizational culture. Support for collaboration and collegiality, the cultivation of professional development, and the recognition of expertise were important concepts in the third wave of teacher leadership.

Although there are many definitions for teacher leadership, the main theme is the capacity for all teachers to be leaders in an informal or formal role is critical to school improvement. There was also some controversy over the formal roles versus the informal roles of teacher leadership. The confusion over the roles, responsibilities, and even the semantics surrounding teacher leadership actually thwarted some teacher leadership programs and led researchers to try to establish a framework for teacher leadership initiatives.

Short (1994) laid the foundation for teacher leadership several decades ago with her research on empowerment. She sub-divided the dimension of empowerment into six categories to help designate tasks and activities for teacher leadership. Short believed, as did many other researchers at the time, that if they were viable tasks and activities that

supported teacher leadership initiatives, then teacher leadership would not be left as just words on a school improvement plan. Snell and Swanson continued the research almost a decade later by including three more dimensions to that of empowerment in the framework of teacher leadership. Snell and Swanson agreed with Short that empowerment was a major component, but they added the dimensions of expertise, reflection, and collaboration to create a firm foundation on which to build future teacher leadership programs. Empowerment, as a dimension of teacher leadership, means participating in the tasks and activities that include decision-making, impact, status, autonomy, self-efficacy, professional development. Expertise is having, involving, or displaying skills or knowledge derived from training or experience. Reflection is the consideration of some subject matter, idea, or purpose as it relates to the educational process. Collaboration includes the ability to work together with others especially in an intellectual endeavor. Learning communities that encompasses the dimensions of empowerment, expertise, reflection, and collaboration, may provide a firm foundation on which to build teacher leadership inclusion into the school improvement process. Teacher leadership is a construct that includes the four domains: empowerment; expertise; reflection, and collaboration. Teachers who are empowered recognize problems and create solutions. Teachers with expertise have an in-depth knowledge of both content and pedagogy. Reflection incorporates inward thinking about the classroom and the school and is the vehicle of change. Collaborative teachers are able to communicate and cooperate. The four dimensions of teacher leadership help to build teacher involvement into the tasks and activities that enhance school improvement.



Teacher leadership increases student performance and supports a cooperative environment which leads to a positive culture and climate for the school community.

Courage has long been a concept associated with leadership in business and also in administration. Many researchers and educators agree that although many attributes can be connected to leadership and teacher leadership, courage is needed in the implementation of leadership constructs.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Teachers involved in the educational process have the opportunity to become a community of leaders (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Building leadership capacity encourages teachers in the processes and actions of leadership, forms a systemic framework for school improvement, and creates an environment in which teacher leadership is invited, supported, and appreciated (Lambert, 2003a; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Wikeley, Stoll, & Lodge, 2002). Leading researchers and educators suggest that teacher leadership is not only important for the profession but also critical to educational reform efforts as well (Fullan, 2000; Lambert, 2003; Wasley, 1991; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1988). Teacher leadership is connected to the creation of a learning organization, the transformation of followers into leaders, and creation of organizational communities (Lambert, 2003b; Silins & Mulford, 2002). Emerging over the last decade is the idea that teacher leadership is now included as a component of active participation within the school community (Lambert, Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The primary purpose of this study was to examine teachers' participation in teacher leadership in one rural school district in southeast Georgia. Coastal County School District has been charged with encouraging teacher leadership in all schools. The study was based on current literature on teacher leadership and Snell and Swanson's (2000) framework of teacher leadership. The framework includes the four dimensions of expertise, empowerment, reflection, and collaboration (Snell & Swanson). Teachers'

participation was examined to determine the levels of participation in each of the four dimensions of teacher leadership and the differences in the levels of participation in each dimension. Demographic data such as years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, will be examined to determine differences in the participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership. A description of the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection methods, data analysis and reporting of the data is included in this chapter.

### Research Questions

The overarching question for this study is what is the level of participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia?

1. What is the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, and a fifth component of courage?
2. To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?
3. To what extent do teachers' demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation program, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?

### Research Design

The researcher conducted a descriptive study to determine the teacher's levels of participation in teacher leadership activities and to ascertain if the participation in the

four dimensions of teacher leadership differed and varied by school level. A descriptive study seeks to characterize a population in terms of certain attributes and to describe the performance and behaviors of the people using the system and the product (Anastas, 1999). The researcher also sought to determine if other factors such as years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teachers' participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, had any influence on the level of participation in teacher leadership activities. The research design of this study is quantitative as the data was collected utilizing a researcher-developed instrument, which was a modification of Short's School Participant Empowerment Scale and Lambert's Leadership Capacity Staff Survey. The data was analyzed to answer the research questions. According to Mauch, Park, and Dekker (2003) quantitative research is the systematic scientific investigation of properties and phenomena and their relationships. Quantitative research is widely used in both the natural and social sciences, including education (Mauch et al; Sybouts, 1992). The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories, and hypotheses pertaining to natural phenomena. The process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships (Mauch et al). The most popular quantitative technique is the survey, often based on a large number of cases, where a broad overview is required. A survey includes a broad or general intent that can be broken down into more focused survey items and eventually into specific items for respondents to answer (Sybouts). The quantitative design and a survey instrument were determined to be the most appropriate method for this study.

## Participants

The participants for this study were the 133 certified teachers on staff in Coastal County School District during the 2006-2007 academic year. There were two elementary schools, one middle school (6-8) and one high school (9-12). There were 64 teachers employed at the elementary school level, 33 teachers employed at the middle school level, and 35 teachers employed at the high school level. Participants surveyed by school level (elementary, middle and high school) are represented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Certified Teachers Surveyed (N=133)

Elementary	Middle School	High School
64	33	35

## Instrumentation

The researcher developed a Likert-scale survey instrument, the Teacher Leadership Participation Scale, TLPS, to examine the level of participation of teachers in teacher leadership. The researcher developed the survey items by modifying Short's School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) and Lambert's Leadership Capacity Staff Survey. Items were also based on current research in the field of teacher leadership and mapped to Snell and Swanson's four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration.

The survey instrument included demographic data that determined if other factors have any influence on the level of participation. The first section of the survey focused on

the personal and professional information about the teachers who responded to the survey, such as years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teachers' participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs.

The researcher included items for the second section of the survey that the literature identifies as items related to four dimensions of teacher leadership; empowerment, expertise, reflection, and collaboration (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Teacher empowerment is a process that appreciates the teachers' ability to recognize areas that are problematic and create solutions that will benefit the school community (Short, 1994; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). The six sub-dimensions of teacher empowerment help clarify the activities and tasks of teacher leadership (Briley, 2004; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Stone, Horjes, & Lomas, 1997). Expertise refers to pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum content knowledge and also relates to the way that content knowledge is disseminated (Kelehear, 2006). Reflection, a process of inward thinking, is the ability to understand not only what is happening in the classroom, but what is happening in the culture and climate of the school organization (Snell & Swanson, 2001). Reflection is the very vehicle of change and change is the necessary ingredient of school reform that leads to continued progress in school improvement (Dimmock, 2002; Fullan, 2000; Snell & Swanson). Collaboration, through communication and cooperation, contributes to effective performance in the education of children and is a system of planned cooperative activities of shared roles and responsibilities for student learning (Snell & Swanson; Wiggins & Damore, 2006).

Content validity was established by including literature-based items on the instrument that measured the desired objective, teacher participation in teacher

leadership. The researcher studied the literature to identify the items for the survey. The framework of Snell and Swanson (2000) was used as a framework in establishing the four dimensions of teacher leadership and other leading researchers and authors in the field of teacher leadership (Barth, 2000; Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Briley, 2004; Cortez-Ford, 2006; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Harris, 2002a; Sabatini, 2004; Short & Rhinehart, 1992; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) were reviewed to correlate current information in that field. The wording from the literature and specifically from the interviews conducted in Snell and Swanson's study were used to provide consistency with current views on teacher leadership.

The researcher submitted the survey instrument to several researchers in the field of teacher leadership to establish the concept of validity. The initial review request was sent to Dr. Barnett Berry, founder and President of the Center for Teaching Quality, Inc, and author of many articles on teacher leadership, Dr. Zach Kehealer, professor of leadership at the University of South Carolina and the author of the 2006 book, *The Art of Leadership: A Choreography of Human Understanding*, and Evelyn Cortez-Ford, founder of School Leadership Coaching, a company committed to helping teachers, principals, and district administrators develop their full leadership potential and create successful schools. Their comments and suggestions were used to revise and refine the survey instrument. The designations of NP = no participation, IP= infrequent participation, FP = frequent participation, and CP = consistent participation, was also reviewed by the experts to establish a consistent time frame for each designation. Two of the experts agreed that a fifth dimension of courage might be worth including in the

survey questions. Since the researcher could not find an empirical study on courage and teacher leadership, it was agreed that the dimension of courage would be presented on the survey as an exploratory item that could lead to further examination at a later time. After the survey was modified based on the expert opinion, it was submitted to the Coastal County School District Teachers of the Year for input and suggestions. These four teacher leaders were asked for suggestions and improvements for the survey instrument and changes were made accordingly.

A panel of four teacher leaders, connected to the University of South Carolina, was asked to field test the survey in order to further obtain data to test for reliability. They completed a draft of the instrument by reviewing the items and providing feedback for modification. Pre-testing is an important element in survey construction reliability. It is also important in generating information concerning survey deficiencies and may be helpful in creating ideas for enrichment. Data collected from the pilot study was used to test for internal reliability.

### Teacher Leadership Participation Survey

#### Demographic Section

The first section of the TLPS (see Appendix B) contained demographic questions that include years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teachers' participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs. The demographic questions have been mapped to current research in the field of education and teacher leadership (see Table 3.2).



Table 3.2

## Demographic Questions Mapped to Research

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Research</b>	<b>Research Question</b>
Years of teaching experience	Bolman & Deal, 2002; Carlson, 2004; Neapolitan, 2000; Suranna & Moss, 2002	3
Highest degree obtained	Joseph, Mikel, & Windschitl, 2002; Lieberman, 2002; Muchmore, Cooley, Marx, & Crowell, 2004	3
Teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs	Joseph, Mikel, & Windchitl, 2002; Lieberman, 2002; Muchmore, Cooley, Marx, and Crowell, 2004	3

The second section of the TLPS (see Appendix B) contains twenty-five items that ask for frequency within a four point Likert scale. A Likert scale is a type of psychometric response scale often used in questionnaires, and is the most widely used scale in survey research. When responding to a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement (Anderson & Bourke, 2000). A Likert scale consists of a series of statements to which respondents are asked to agree or disagree using a set of response categories provided. The most common number of response categories used with Likert scaling is five, the middle category being neutral. However, an even number of categories, without a neutral category, tends to provide

better scale reliability (Anderson & Bourke). Reading time can be reduced and consistency of understanding increased by using a common stem for all items on a scale (Anderson & Bourke). All of the statements on the TLPS have a stem that relates to the teacher's known activity level. The statements are in first person so that the responder has direct connection to each statement.

The Leadership Capacity Staff Survey, created by Lambert (2003a) was used to establish an assessment of the dispositions, knowledge, and skills needed to build leadership capacity in schools and organizations. The survey items used in Lambert's survey were used in developing the survey items in the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey. According to Lambert, the response options which range from NP = no participation, IP=infrequent participation, FP = frequent participation, to CP = consistent participation, were used as they actually measure activities associated with teacher leadership. The same response options were used for the TLPS in order to more accurately measure participation in teacher leadership activities. As suggested by Evelyn Cortez-Ford, NP = no participation means "never"; IP= infrequent participation corresponds to from one to five times in a school year; FP = frequent participation would be at least once a week and CP = twice a week or daily (personal communication, November2, 2006). These scales were included in the initial survey exploration sent to Evelyn Cortez-Ford, Barnett Berry, and Zach Kelehear. The experts agreed that the time frames for these scales were valid. (see Table 3.3 ).

Table 3.3 Survey Questions Mapped to the Literature

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Research</b>	<b>Research Question</b>
1. Teachers actively take risks, make decisions, and solve problems.	Empowerment	Barth, 2000; Gonzalez & Lambert, 2003; Short & Rhinehart, 1994	1,2
2. Teachers are able to see situations from a variety of viewpoints towards the success of the school	Reflection	Canning, 1991; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Marshal, 20005; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
3. Teachers need professional self-esteem.	Empowerment	(Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Sherrill, 1999; Short & Johnson, 1994)	1,2
4. Teachers are skilled at creating varied and rich curriculum to motivate and challenge their students	Expertise	Archer, 2001; Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
5. Teachers make themselves highly accessible to their peers and their students	Collaboration	Beatty, 1999; Caron & McLaughlin, 2002; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Wiggins & Damore, 2006	1,2
6. Teachers have deep pedagogical knowledge.	Expertise	Berry, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Olson, 2000; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
7. Teachers affect the environment in which they work.	Empowerment	Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Short & Rhinehart, 1992	1,2
8. Teachers demonstrate strong communication skills such as inquiry and active listening	Collaboration	Beatty, 1999;; Caron & McLaughlin, 2002; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2

9. Teachers are willing to ask themselves how they can change in order to improve a situation.	Reflection	Beatty, 1999; Canning, 1991; Evans, 1997; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
10. Teachers are able to analyze where the students are now and where they need to go.	Expertise	Archer, 2001; Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
11. Teachers are marked by a commitment to rigor and high expectations for themselves and their students.	Expertise	Archer, 2001; Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
12. Teachers are willing to be flexible upon reflection of others	Reflection	Beatty, 1999; Canning, 1991; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Marshal, 20005; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
13. Teachers use the collective experiences of others to help create lesson plans	Collaboration	Caron & McLaughlin, 2002; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
14. Teachers are able to adapt their efforts by understanding the perspectives of others, while at the same time, being conscious of their values, thoughts, and biases.	Reflection	Beatty, 1999; Canning, 1991; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Marshal, 20005; Snell & Swanson, 2000;	1,2
15. I have a sense of control over my classroom environment	Empowerment	Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2

16. Teachers need to opportunities to grow professionally.	Empowerment	Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Harris, 2004; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Short & Johnson, 1994; Wasley, 1991	1,2
17. Teachers are committed to participating in reflective dialogue with their colleagues as a regular component of their professional lives	Reflection	Canning, 1991; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Marshal, 20005; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
18. Teachers value collaboration with respect to consensus and compromise instead of competition	Collaboration	Beatty, 1999; Caron & McLaughlin, 2002; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Wiggins & Damore, 2006	1,2
19. Teachers engage in a high degree of collegiality and cooperation for school effectiveness	Collaboration	Beatty, 1999; Caron & McLaughlin, 2002; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Wiggins & Damore, 2006	1,2
20. Teachers need to feel as if they make a difference in the lives of their students and in the school organization	Empowerment	Barth, 2000; Gonzalez & Lambert, 2003; Short & Rhinehart, 1992	1,2
21. Teachers can break their teaching down into manageable and well-sequenced mini-lessons to scaffold student learning towards meeting learning goals.	Expertise	Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hatch, White, & Faigenbaum, 2003; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2

22. Teachers ask themselves what they can do differently which requires a high degree of personal responsibility	Reflection	Beatty, 1999; Canning, 1991; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Marshal, 2005; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
23. Teachers have a keen understanding of their student's cognitive and developmental capacities.	Expertise	Archer, 2001; Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Snell & Swanson, 2000	1,2
24. Teachers recognize that collective expertise offers the possibility of offering optimal solutions to the complex problems of teaching and learning	Collaboration	Beatty, 1999; Campo, 1999; Caron & McLaughlin, 2002; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Wiggins & Damore, 2006	1,2
25. Teachers have the courage to be leaders in issues that affect the school	Courage	Bolman & Deal, 2002; Glickman, 2003; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Lee & Elliot-Lee, 2006; Reilly, 2005; Riddle-Bendau, 1998; Servais & Sanders, 2005; Staver, 2006	1,2

### Data Collection

This study is a descriptive study that employs a quantitative method to collect and analyze data. The researcher obtained approval to conduct this study by submitting an application along with all supporting documentation to the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB). A copy of the approval letter to conduct this study is found in Appendix A as verification of approval from the IRB regarding procedures, protocol and methodology for this study. A letter of permission to conduct the survey was

obtained from the superintendent of schools in Coastal County School District and a copy of that letter is found in Appendix C. Finally, the principal at all four schools were contacted in person to discuss the distribution and collection of the survey instrument. The principals were asked to designate an appropriate time for the brief explanation and distribution of the survey.

Upon approval by the IRB and the school superintendent, the researcher administered the researcher-developed survey at each of the four participating schools. The researcher arranged to meet with each faculty at the four schools by contacting the principal at each school. After a brief introduction by the superintendent, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, distributed the informed consent forms, and gave instructions for completing the survey including an explanation of the Likert-scale used by the survey instrument. The researcher clearly stated, verbally and on the informed consent form, that participation in the study was voluntary. The researcher reinforced the condition of anonymity as the surveys were not coded by any identifying information beyond the demographic information.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative methods were used to analyze the data obtained on the twenty-eight item survey instrument administered for this research. Mauch, Park, and Dekker (2003) stated that quantitative research is used to generalize the concepts and hypotheses tested and provide fundamental connections between observation and mathematical expression. Quantitative methods create a connective link to real situations. The data from the 28 item survey was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software-program version 13.0 Research question one, "What is the level of teachers'

participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?” was analyzed using central tendency measures to find the mean and the standard deviation.

Research question two, “To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?” utilized a Oneway ANOVA to determine the differences in responses by school level.

Research question three, “To what extent do teachers’ demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teachers’ participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?”, used the Pearson’s  $r$  to determine differences related to years of teaching experience, Spearman’s  $\rho$  to determine differences related to educational degrees, and a Oneway ANOVA to determine differences pertaining to teacher leadership training in teacher preparatory programs. The item on the survey pertaining to courage was also analyzed employing the same methods.

### Summary

The purpose of this study focused on teachers’ participation in teacher leadership. Specifically the researcher’s intention was to determine the teachers’ level of participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Southeast Georgia. The study sought to determine teachers’ levels of participation in teacher leadership activities. The framework for teacher leadership in this study was based on the research of Snell and Swanson (2000). Snell and Swanson determined that teacher leadership includes four major dimensions; empowerment, expertise, reflection, and collaboration. Leading researchers in the field of teacher leadership corroborate their findings (Barth, 2000;



Berry, 2005; Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Briley, 2004; Cortez-Ford, 2006; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Harris, 2002b; Sabatini, 2002; Short & Rhinehart, 1992; Short & Rhinehart, 1993; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The overarching question for this research study is what is the level of participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia? The study is descriptive and uses the quantitative method to obtain data from 133 teachers in Coastal County School District, using a survey instrument.

There are four schools in Coastal County School District, two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. The participants in this study are all of the certified teachers at all four schools employed during the 2006 – 2007 school year. Data was collected using the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS) which includes survey items pertaining to the teachers' participation in teacher leadership activities as specified by Snell and Swanson's four teacher leadership dimensions. Upon pilot testing the survey instrument, a final question was added to obtain information relating courage and teacher leadership participation. The survey instrument also contained items pertaining to demographics such as years of experience; highest degree obtained, and teachers' participation in teacher leadership training in education preparation programs. The TLPS is a four point Likert-scale instrument with a set of responses that range from NP = no participation, IP=infrequent participation, FP = frequent participation, to CP = consistent participation.

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the Georgia Southern Institutional Review Board. The researcher also obtained permission from the Coastal

County School District superintendent. Upon approval, the survey was distributed and collected by the researcher at scheduled faculty meetings. The data from the twenty-eight item survey was analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software.

Research question one “What is the level of teachers’ participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?” was analyzed using central tendency measures to find the mean and the standard deviation. Research question two, “To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?” Research question two, “To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?” utilized a Oneway ANOVA to determine the differences in responses by school level. Research question three, “To what extent do teachers’ demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teachers’ participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?, used the Pearson’s  $r$  to determine differences related to years of teaching experience, Spearman’s  $\rho$  to determine differences related to educational degrees, and a Oneway ANOVA to determine differences pertaining to teacher leadership training in teacher preparatory programs. The question pertaining to courage used the same method of analysis for each demographic profile as was used to obtain data for the four teacher leadership dimensions.

The researcher explained the report of data and data analysis in Chapter IV. Chapter IV is devoted to the in-depth description of the findings obtained from the responses from the TLPS and an explanation of the quantitative, descriptive study will be reported.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand teacher participation within the four dimensions of the teacher leadership framework found in one school district encouraged to implement teacher leadership. The population for the study was all Coastal County School District PreK through 12 teachers, with at least a Bachelor's degree. Participants were asked to complete the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS) and a demographic survey. The data were analyzed by dimension: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, and a fifth possible component of courage was also explored. The data was analyzed by: school level; elementary, middle, and high school; dimension; and teacher demographic characteristics; including years of teaching experience, educational degrees, and teacher leadership training. This chapter presents descriptive data on the questions this study sought to answer.

#### Research Questions

The overarching question for this study was: What is the level of participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia?

1. What is the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, and a fifth component of courage?
2. To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?

3. To what extent do teachers' demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher's participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?

### Research Design

The research design of this study was quantitative as the data was collected utilizing a researcher-developed instrument that was modified from Short's School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) and Lambert's Leadership Capacity Staff Survey. The data was analyzed to answer the research questions. The quantitative design with a survey instrument was determined to be the most appropriate method for this study. A survey instrument was developed to measure participation in teacher leadership based on Snell and Swanson's (2000) four dimensions of teacher leadership. Three leading researchers in the field of teacher leadership, Evelyn Cortez-Ford, Barnett Berry, and Zach Kelehear, pilot tested the survey instrument. Two of the researchers agreed that a fifth component of courage might be worth including in the survey questions. Since the researcher could not find an empirical study on courage and teacher leadership, it was agreed that the component of courage would be presented on the survey as an exploratory item that could lead to further examination. The survey instrument was then administered to four teachers who were previous Teacher of the Year recipients in each of the four schools in Coastal County School District. The four teachers responded favorably to the survey with minor suggestions in semantics. A panel of four teacher leaders, collaborators with the University of South Carolina, was also asked to field test the

survey in order to further obtain data to test for reliability. They completed a draft of the instrument by reviewing the questions and providing feedback for modification.

### Respondents

The subjects surveyed in this study were teachers with Bachelors degrees or higher from all four schools in Coastal County (N=132). There were 132 surveys personally distributed by the researcher at a faculty meeting at each school at the request of the school principal. The researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study and the participants completed the surveys and returned them to the researcher at that time. Surveys were left for the teachers who were not in attendance at the meeting by placing them in the teacher's boxes. The teachers were instructed to return the completed surveys to the school secretary who forwarded them to the researcher. There were 110 surveys returned to the researcher at the time the surveys were presented and 18 surveys were sent to the researcher through inter-school mail. A total of 128 responses in Coastal County School District were completed and returned which results in a 97% response rate. Sixty-two (48.0%) respondents in this study were from elementary schools, thirty-one (24.05) were from middle school, and thirty-five (27.0%) were from the high school. Coastal County School District demographic data was presented as follows: elementary school, middle school, and high school.

### Elementary School Demographic Profile of Respondents

In the elementary schools, there were 64 surveys distributed and 62 teachers responded. The response rate for the elementary schools was 97%. Years of teaching experience ranged from one year to thirty-six years. Thirty (48%) teachers responded that they had taught ten years or less and 32 (52%) respondents had eleven or more years of

teaching experience. Respondents noted degrees of Bachelor's level to the Educational Specialist level with 34 (54.8%) teachers having a Bachelor degree, 26 (41.9) teachers with a Masters degree, and 2 (3.2%) teachers with an Educational Specialist degree. There were 28 (22%) teachers who stated that they had not had any teacher leadership training during their teacher preparation program. Twenty-two (17.2%) teachers had taken a teacher leadership course during their teacher preparation program and another twelve (9.4%) teachers had some form of teacher leadership training embedded in another educational course.

#### Middle School Demographic Profile of Respondents

In the middle school, 33 surveys were distributed and 31 teachers responded. The response rate for the middle school was 94%. Years of teaching experience ranged from one year to thirty-four years. Nineteen (61%) teachers responded that they had taught ten years or less and 12 (39%) respondents had eleven or more years of teaching experience. Respondents noted degrees of either Bachelor's level or Master's level degrees with 16 (52.0%) teachers having a Bachelor's degree and 15 (48.4 %) teachers with a Master's degree. There were 11 (35.5%) teachers who stated that they had not had any teacher leadership training during their teacher preparation program. Sixteen (52.0%) teachers had taken a teacher leadership course during their teacher preparation program and another four (13.0%) teachers had some form of teacher leadership training embedded in another educational course.

#### High School Demographic Profile of Respondents

In the high school, 35 surveys were distributed and 35 teachers responded. The response rate for the high school was 100%. Years of teaching experience ranged from

one year to thirty years. Twenty-three (60%) teachers responded that they had taught ten years or less and 15 (39%) respondents had eleven or more years of teaching experience. Respondents noted educational levels from a Bachelor's degree to a Doctoral degree with 23 (60.5%) teachers having a Bachelor's degree, 11 (28.90 %) teachers with a Master's degree, 3 (7.9%) teachers with an Educational Specialist degree, and 1 (2.6%) teacher who had a Doctoral degree. There were 27 (71.1%) teachers who stated that they had not had any teacher leadership training during their teacher preparation program. Four (10.5%) teachers had taken a teacher leadership course during their teacher preparation program and another seven (18.4%) teachers had some form of teacher leadership training embedded in another educational course.

#### District Demographic Profile of Respondents

One hundred and twenty-eight teachers out of the county population of one hundred and thirty-three responded to the TLPS survey and demographic questions. There were 62 respondents from the elementary school, 31 respondents from the middle school and 35 respondents from the high school. Years of teaching experience ranged from one to thirty-six years. Sixty-nine (54%) teachers have one to ten years in education. Thirty-three (26.0%) teachers reported between eleven and twenty years of teaching experience and twenty-six (20.0%) teachers had over twenty years of experience. Respondents noted educational levels from a Bachelor's degree to a Doctoral degree with 71 (55.5%) teachers having a Bachelor's degree, 51 (39.8 %) teachers with a Master's degree, 5 (3.9%) teachers with an Educational Specialist degree, and 1 (.80%) teacher who had a Doctoral degree. There were 66 (51.6%) teachers who stated that they had not had any teacher leadership training during their teacher preparation program. Forty-two



(32.8%) teachers had taken a teacher leadership course during their teacher preparation program and another twenty (15.6%) teachers had some form of teacher leadership training embedded in another educational course.

#### Summary of Participants

The majority of participants in this study were elementary school level teachers. Seventy-one (55.5%) of the respondents reported having a Bachelor's degree. Over half of the teachers responding to the survey had taught for ten years or less and over half of the respondents had never had a teacher leadership course in their teacher preparation programs. Eighty-eight percent of the teaching population in Coastal County School District is white, and ten percent are male; therefore, there were not enough demographic differences to include an analysis of teacher leadership by gender and race.

#### Findings

Participants completed the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS) as designed by the researcher, to assess teacher's level of participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia. The TLPS is a 25 item survey which aligns with Snell and Swanson's (2000) four specified dimensions of teacher leadership that includes: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, and a fifth component of courage. Responses to the survey questions on the TLPS were in the form of a 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 = NP / no participation, 2 = IP/ infrequent participation, 3 = FP/ frequent participation, and 4 = CP/ consistent participation. Further designations were established by adding a timeline guide to the four Likert scales, with "no participation" (NP) meaning "never," "infrequent participation" (IP) meaning "two to

three times a month,” “frequent participation” (FP) meaning “twice a week”, and “consistent participation” (CP) meaning “daily”.

When looking at the dimensions by line-item questions within the dimensions, participants would select one (1) to represent the least participation and four (4) would denote the greatest participation. However since there are six items for each dimension, when looking at the responses by dimension the least amount of participation would be six (6) and the greatest amount of participation would be twenty-four (24) for each dimension. Therefore, a score of up to six represents no participation; a score of seven to twelve represents infrequent participation; a score of thirteen to eighteen represents frequent participation; and a score of nineteen to twenty four represents consistent participation. One final question was added to the TLPS after the pilot study and the field testing as several teacher leaders and teacher leadership experts believed that courage may correlate with teacher leadership dimensions. The score for this question is represented by the following: one is no participation; two is infrequent participation; three is frequent participation and four represents consistent participation. This question for courage was added as an exploratory question that could warrant further investigation by other researchers. Finally, four demographic questions were included on the survey instrument that addressed years of teaching experience, professional degree, the level of school in which the respondent was currently teaching, and teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs.

## Data Analysis

### Research Question 1

*What is the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration?*

The frequency of the four dimensions of teacher leadership has a possible rating of one to four when analyzing the dimensions by survey questions. The lowest possible rating is a 'one' denoting no participation (NP) or never and the highest possible rating of "four" denoting consistent participation (CP) or daily or more than twice a week.

However, since each dimension has six survey questions and each survey question is rated on a one to four scale, the data are computed as follows: the lowest possible rating for each dimension is six and the highest possible rating is twenty-four (see Table 4.1).

Coastal County teachers responded that they participate in the dimension of empowerment on a frequent or twice weekly basis (16.40); in the dimension of expertise on a consistent or daily basis (19.23), in the dimension of reflection on a frequent of twice weekly basis (18.18), and in the dimension of collaboration on a frequent of twice weekly basis (16.74). Coastal County teachers had the most participation in the dimensions of expertise and reflection and the least participation in empowerment and collaboration.

Table 4.1

## Teacher's Level of Participation in Teacher Leadership Dimensions

Dimension	M	SD
Empowerment	16.40	6.95
Expertise	19.23	2.57
Reflection	18.18	2.74
Collaboration	16.74	4.54

never (6), infrequent(7 -12), frequent (13-18), and consistent (19-24)

## Dimension 1: Empowerment

Six TLPS survey questions measured teacher's participation in the dimension of empowerment: 1; 3; 7; 15; 16; and 20 (see table 4.2). Empowerment is divided into six sub-sections that include: decision-making; status; impact; autonomy; self-efficacy; and professional development. Decision-making was rated the lowest in the level of participation (2.50) and the greatest level of participation was found in self-efficacy (2.94). All six sub-sets of the dimension of empowerment were rated at a participation level of frequent or twice weekly. The overall participation rating for the dimension of empowerment was  $M = 16.40$  and  $SD = 6.95$ .

Table 4.2

## Teacher's Level of Participation in the Dimension of Empowerment

Survey Question – Empowerment	M	SD
1. Decision Making implementation of programs	2.50	1.40
3. Status opinion relevant to the educational process	2.57	1.33
7. Impact influence the educational reform process	2.66	1.30
15. Autonomy choices about classroom issues	2.86	1.30
16. Self-Efficacy make a difference in students' lives.	2.94	1.23
20. Professional Development opportunities for professional growth.	2.84	1.22

never (1), infrequent (>1), frequent (>2), and consistent (>3)

## Dimension 2: Expertise

Six TLPS survey questions measured teacher's participation in the dimension of expertise: 4; 6; 10; 11; 21; and 23 (see Table 4.3). Within the dimension of expertise, as a component of teacher leadership, having high expectations for students was rated as the lowest participation (2.48). The greatest amount of participation was in varying instructional approaches (3.55) and developing curriculum geared towards content area standards (3.59). Five of the six questions in the dimension of expertise were rated as consistent participation; however, the item teachers high expectations for students was rated as frequent or twice a week. The overall participation rating for the dimension of expertise was consistent or daily participation (M= 19.23 and a SD = 2.60).

Table 4.3

## Teacher's Level of Participation in the Dimension of Expertise

Survey Question – Expertise	M	SD
4. a variety of instructional approaches	3.55	.662
6. lesson plans with regard to standards	3.59	.705
10. lessons geared towards individual student needs	3.20	.767
11. high expectations for students	2.48	.988
21. readjusting direction from different perspectives	3.15	.733
23. use of differentiated instruction	3.27	.748

never (1), infrequent(>1), frequent (>2), and consistent (>3)

## Dimension 3: Reflection

Six TLPS questions measured the dimension of reflection: 2; 9; 12; 14; 17; and 22 (see Table 4.4). Teachers stated that they participated on a consistent level on 5 of the 6 survey questions (3.01, 3.15, 3.06, 3.09, and 3.27). Teachers responded that they were least likely to be perceived by their peers, as thinking about changes in the school culture and climate, at frequent rate of only twice a week (2.63). Teacher' participation, in the dimension of reflection, was highest when conversing with colleagues about past successes and failures (3.27). The overall participation rating for the dimension of reflection was frequent or twice weekly (M=18.20 and a SD = 2.74).

Table 4.4

## Teacher's Level of Participation in the Dimension of Reflection

Survey Question – Reflection	M	SD
2. considering the perspectives of others	3.01	.710
9. reflecting on changes towards improvement	3.15	.795
12. considering the importance of colleagues in regard to schedule	3.06	.801
14. using values and biases to evaluate teaching methods	3.09	.736
17. conversing with colleagues concerning success and failures in the past	3.27	.721
22. I am perceived by my colleagues as one who thinks about changes in the culture and climate of the school	2.63	.822

never (1), infrequent(>1), frequent (>2), and consistent (>3)

## Dimension 4: Collaboration

Six TLPS questions measured the dimension of collaboration: 5; 8; 13; 18; 19; and 24 (see Table 4.5). Five of the six questions were rated as having participation at the frequent or twice a week level (2.88, 2.77, 2.86, 2.63, and 2.61) and question 24, concerning the use of the collective experience of peers, had a response of consistent or daily participation (3.05). The overall participation rating for the dimension of collaboration was frequent or twice weekly (16.75 and a SD = 4.54).

Table 4. 5

## Teacher's Level of Participation in the Dimension of Collaboration

Survey Question – Collaboration	M	SD
5. using the expertise of peers for student motivation	2.88	.902
8. using collaborative activities such as active listing and inquiry	2.77	1.00
13. using collaboration to create lesson plans	2.86	1.02
18. seeking out peer cooperation	2.63	.980
19. working with others to establish ownership of the school	2.61	1.05
24. using collective experience of peers to help solve problems	3.05	.931

never (1), infrequent(>1), frequent (>2), and consistent (>3)

## Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

The responses on TLPS indicated that expertise, as a dimension of teacher leadership, had the greatest participation by teachers in Coastal County School District. Teachers participated consistently or daily, in activities that included: using a variety of instructional approaches; planning lessons with regard to content standards; gearing instruction towards individual student needs; and readjusting direction towards student success. Teachers infrequently hear from their students that they expect to much.

Teachers frequently reflect with the highest participation in activities considering their peers perspectives, reflecting on changes for improvement, reflecting on the need for changes in scheduling, using values and biases in instruction, and talking to colleagues about past successes and failures. However, teachers do not believe they are



perceived as educators who reflected on changes in the culture and climate of the school lower than the other areas within the dimension of reflection.

Teachers reported frequent or twice weekly participation in the dimension of collaboration in areas such as using peers to help motivate students, using active listening and inquiry skills, using collaborative lesson planning, cooperation, and working with peers to establish ownership of the school. Teacher reported consistent participation when using collective experiences to solve problems.

Teachers participated in the dimension of empowerment the least of all four dimensions of teacher leadership. Teachers reported participating twice a week, or frequently, in empowerment tasks and activities. Activities that involved decision-making, impact, and status had less participation than activities involving teacher self-efficacy, autonomy, and professional development.

Teachers in Coastal County School District participated frequently in teacher leadership activities. As a school district, teachers had the highest participation in the dimension of expertise and the lowest participation in the dimension of empowerment.

#### Research Question 2

*To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?*

The frequency of the three school levels pertaining to the participation in each of the four dimensions of teacher leadership was analyzed (see Table 4.6). The elementary school participated in teacher leadership on a frequent basis or twice weekly in the dimensions of empowerment (18.80), reflection (18.50), and collaboration 18.90). The elementary school participated in the dimension of expertise on a consistent or daily basis

(19.82). The middle school participated in the dimensions of expertise (18.90), reflection (18.93), collaboration (18.50), and empowerment (18.10) on a frequent or twice weekly basis. The high school participated on a frequent or twice weekly basis in the dimensions of expertise (18.51) and reflection (17.00), but participated infrequently or only twice a month in the dimensions of empowerment (10.60) and collaboration (11.42).

Table 4.6

## Frequency of Participation in Teacher Leadership at School Level

Dimension		Elementary	Middle	High school
	N	62	31	35
Empowerment				
	M	18.80	18.10	10.60
	SD	5.35	6.37	6.73
Expertise				
	M	19.82	18.90	18.51
	SD	2.26	2.88	2.63
Reflection				
	M	18.50	18.93	17.00
	SD	2.35	2.83	2.99
Collaboration				
	M	18.90	18.50	11.42
	SD	3.26	2.99	3.11

never (6), infrequent(7 -12), frequent (13-18), and consistent (19-24)

A one-way ANOVA was used to answer the research question which included a descriptive analysis, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, and a between group analysis to test for significant differences at  $p < .05$  level. The data was analyzed to determine if any significant differences existed between elementary, middle, and high

school by teacher leadership dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration.

An ANOVA (see Table 4.7) was used to determine if there were any significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) by dimension: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration; and by the three school levels: elementary; middle; and high school. Significant differences were found for all four dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration between all three school levels: elementary; middle; and high school.

Table 4.7

Four Dimensions and School Levels

Dimension		Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Empowerment	Between Groups	1632.44	2	816.22	22.60	.000*
	Within Groups	4513.55				
	Total	6146.00				
Expertise	Between Groups	43.69	2	21.84	3.41	.036*
	Within Groups	799.27				
	Total	842.96				
Reflection	Between Groups	75.158	2	37.57	5.31	.006*
	Within Groups	884.34				
	Total	959.50				
Collaboration	Between Groups	1371.75	2	685.88	68.49	.000*
	Within Groups	1251.73				
	Total	2623.49				

\* $p < .05$

The data were then analyzed using the post-hoc Tukey HSD tests to determine specific differences at the  $p < .05$  levels of the four dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration between the elementary, middle, and the high school levels. Significant differences were found between the elementary school and the high school in all four dimensions of teacher leadership. Significant differences were also found

between the middle school and the high school in three of the four dimensions: empowerment; reflection; and collaboration. Within the four dimensions, the rate of participation was represented by a scale of six representing no participation (never), seven to twelve representing infrequent participation (two to three times a month), thirteen to eighteen representing frequent participation (twice weekly), and nineteen to twenty-four representing consistent participation (daily).

#### Differences between the Elementary and high School within the Four Dimensions of Teacher Leadership

Elementary teachers differed significantly from high school teachers in all four of the dimensions of teacher leadership. The elementary mean score for empowerment was 18.80 or frequent participation whereas the high school participation rate was 10.60 which is infrequent participation. The elementary teachers' participation in expertise was 19.82 or consistent, daily participation, but the participation rate of high school teachers in expertise was below the elementary teachers with a participation rate of 18.51 or frequent participation of twice weekly. Elementary teachers reported participating in the dimension of reflection on a frequent basis of 18.50 and high school teachers also reported a frequent participation, but with a score of 16.80, still significantly less than the participation rate of elementary school teachers. The mean score for elementary teachers' participation in collaboration was frequent participation (18.90) whereas the high school participation rate was infrequent participation (11.42) of two to three times a month. This also represents a very significant difference between elementary schools and the high school within the dimension of collaboration.

## Differences between the Middle and High School within the Dimensions of Teacher Leadership

Middle school teachers differed from high school teachers as to the rate of participation in three of the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; reflection; and collaboration. There was no significant difference between the middle school and the high school within the dimension of expertise. Middle school teachers reported a frequent (18.10) or twice weekly rate of participation in empowerment whereas the high school teachers participated in the dimension of empowerment on an infrequent basis (10.60) or only twice a month. Middle school teachers reported that within the dimension of reflection, they had a rate of frequent participation (18.93). The high school teachers also rated their participation as frequent (17.00). Although this was not considered significantly different at the  $p < .05$  level, it was still well below the rate of participation of the middle school teachers. There was a substantial difference in the rate of participation between the middle school and the high school within the dimension of collaboration. High school teachers reported infrequent participation (11.42), in collaboration, of only two to three times a month whereas the middle school teachers reported a rate of frequent or twice weekly participation (18.48).

### Summary Based on Findings for Research Question 2

Elementary teachers had the highest rates of participation within the teacher leadership dimensions, but were closely followed, in participation, by middle school teachers. There were no significant differences between elementary teacher's rates of participation and middle school teacher's rates of participation within the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration.

There were no significant differences in participation within the four dimensions of teacher leadership between the elementary and the middle school. Elementary teachers participated in the four dimensions at a much higher rate than the high school teachers in all four dimensions of teacher leadership. Middle school teachers also participated at a higher rate within the four dimensions of teacher leadership than the high school teachers.

### Research Question 3

*To what extent do teachers' demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher's participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?*

The researcher ran a Pearson  $r$ , a correlation bivariate analysis, to determine to what extent the demographic characteristic of years of teaching experience had on the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration (see Table 4.8). The Pearson  $r$  showed no significant differences between years of teaching experience and the four dimensions. The researcher ran a Spearman's  $\rho$ , a correlation bivariate analysis, to determine if there was any significance between the four dimensions of teacher leadership and the demographic of educational degree (see Table 4.11). The test showed no significant differences between Bachelor's, Master's, and Educational Specialist's degrees and the four dimensions of teacher leadership. The one Doctoral degree participant was removed from the data, as noted.

Table 4.8

## Years of Experience, Highest Degree Obtained, and Teacher Leadership

Dimension		Years Teaching Experience *	Highest Degree **
Empowerment	Correlation	.134	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.131	.432
	N	128	127
Expertise	Correlation	.034	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.707	.637
	N	128	127
Reflection	Correlation	.020	.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.819	.296
	N	128	127
Collaboration	Correlation	-.055	.035
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.536	.696
	N	128	127

\* Pearson's r

\*\* Spearman's rho

## Teacher Leadership Training in Teacher Preparation Programs

The researcher used a Oneway ANOVA to determine if the demographic characteristic of teacher leadership training had any significant difference within the four dimensions of teacher leadership (see Table 4.12). Teachers responded to three possible teacher leadership designations: no teacher leadership in their teacher preparation programs; an actual course on teacher leadership; or teacher leadership embedded in another course. Fifty-two percent of the participants responded that they had no teacher leadership training, thirty-three percent had a teacher leadership course, and sixteen percent had teacher leadership training embedded in another course. The type of training and the level of participation in teacher leadership were significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) in two of the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment and collaboration. There

were no significance differences connected to teacher leadership training and the dimensions of expertise or reflection (see Table 4.9)

Teachers who noted that they had a course in teacher leadership in their teacher preparation programs rated participation in the dimension of empowerment as consistent (23.30) or daily participation. Teachers who had some type of teacher leadership training embedded in another course responded that they also participated in empowerment consistently (19.75) or daily. However, teachers who had no teacher leadership training noted that they participated in empowerment activities infrequently (10.92) or twice monthly. The teachers who had a teacher leadership course engaged in activities of collaboration frequently (18.50) and teachers who had teacher leadership training embedded in another course also rated their participation as frequent (18.25). Teachers with no teacher leadership training at all rated their participation in the dimension of collaboration as frequent (15.80) however; their participation level was still significantly below that of the other two groups of teachers who had some type of teacher leadership training. The dimensions of expertise and reflection were not significantly different in relation to the three levels of training, although the teachers with some type of training still rated their participation at levels higher than the teachers with no teacher leadership training at all



Table 4.9

## Teacher Leadership Training and Teacher Leadership Dimensions

Dimension		No training	Teacher Leadership course	Teacher leadership embedded
	N	66	42	20
Empowerment				
	M	10.92	23.30	19.75
	SD	4.11	2.69	5.25
Expertise				
	M	19.30	19.16	19.15
	SD	2.52	2.89	2.10
Reflection				
	M	17.95	18.50	18.35
	SD	2.90	2.60	2.56
Collaboration				
	M	15.80	17.60	18.25
	SD	4.91	4.02	3.62

never (6), infrequent(7 -12), frequent (13-18), and consistent (19-24)

## Summary Based on Findings from Research Question 3

There were no significant differences between teacher leadership and years of educational experience. There were also no significant differences between the four dimensions of teacher leadership and educational degrees. Teacher leadership training was the only demographic characteristic that was significantly related to the four dimensions of teacher leadership. Significant differences were found between all three training levels and the dimension of empowerment. Teachers, who had some type of leadership training, had a higher level of participation in the dimensions of expertise, reflection, and collaboration.

### Additional Analysis

One question on the TLPS survey addressed the issue of courage as a component of teacher leadership (see Table 4.10). Although courage is not a dimension of the Snell and Swanson framework, the researcher desired to determine the relationship of courage as identified by participants' one response to one item on the survey and teacher leadership. An analysis provided the following findings. Participation was rated as frequent or twice weekly (2.90).

Table 4. 10

#### Teacher's Level of Participation in the Component of Courage

Survey Question – Courage	M	SD
25. having the courage to be a leader	2.90	1.32

never (1), infrequent(>1), frequent (>2), and consistent (>3)

Differences between elementary, middle, and high school within the component of courage

As there was only one question pertaining to courage, the least participation was a rate of one and the most participation was four. There was a significant difference between the high school teachers' rate of participation which was frequent (2.74) or twice a week and the elementary and middle school teachers' rate of participation (1.80, 1.90) which was infrequent or two to three times a month (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11

## Frequency of Participation in the Component of Courage

Courage	N	Mean	SD
Elementary	62	1.80	1.22
Middle	31	1.90	1.27
High school	35	2.74	1.35

never (1), infrequent(>1), frequent (>2), and consistent (>3)

There were significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level between elementary, middle, and high school teacher's response rates on the one question pertaining to the inclusion of courage in teacher leadership activities courage (see Table 4.12). The high school differed significantly from the elementary and the middle school; however, there was no significant difference between the elementary schools and the middle school.

Table 4.12

## Component of Courage and School Level

Survey question		Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Courage	Between Groups	20.98	2	10.49	6.45	.002*
	Within Groups	203.07		1.62		
	Total	224.055				

\*  $p < .05$

Within the component of courage, high school teachers reported a significantly higher participation rate than either the elementary teachers or the middle school teachers.

### Years of Experience and Courage

The researcher ran a Pearson *r*, a correlation bivariate analysis, to determine to what extent the demographic characteristic of years of teaching experience had on the component of courage (see Table 4.13). Teachers experience had significant correlation at the  $p < .01$  level in the area of courage (.334).

### Highest Degree Obtained and Courage

The researcher ran a Spearman rho, a correlation bivariate analysis, to determine if there was any significance between the teacher's highest degree of education and courage (see Table 4.13). There was only one Doctoral level response and the researcher chose to remove it from the analysis. The Spearman's rho showed a significant difference between the Bachelor's, Master's, and Educational Specialist's degrees and the component of courage at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 4.13

### Years of Experience, Highest Degree Obtained, and Courage

Courage	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Level of Degree
Correlation	.334*	.190**
Sig. ( 2-tailed)	.000	.033
N	128	127

\* $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .01$

### Teacher Leadership Training and Courage

Frequency was used to determine the rate of participation between the three types of teacher leadership training and the component of courage (see Table 4.14). Forty-eight percent of the teachers in Coastal County had some type of leadership training in their teacher preparation programs. Teachers who had teacher leadership as a course participated in the component of courage on a frequent or twice weekly basis (2.60) and teachers who had teacher leadership embedded in another course also participated in the component of courage on a frequent basis (2.45). Teachers who had no teacher leadership training in their teacher preparation programs participated in the component of courage infrequently or two to three times a month (1.38).

Table 4.14

#### Component of Courage and Teacher Leadership Training

component		No training	Teacher leadership course	Teacher leadership embedded
courage	N	66	42	20
	M	1.65	2.60	2.45
	SD	1.18	1.38	1.23

A Oneway ANOVA was used to analyze the importance of teacher leadership training and the component of courage (see Table 4.15) The analysis showed a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between groups at the .000 level.

Table 4.15

## Significance between Courage and Teacher Leadership Training

component		Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
courage	Between Groups	26.00	2	13.00	8.20	.000*
	Within Groups	198.05		1.58		
	Total	224.05				

\*p&lt;.05

The data were analyzed using the post-hoc Tukey HSD tests to determine specific differences at the  $p < .05$  levels of the component of courage and the three levels of teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs: no teacher leadership training; teacher leadership course; or teacher leadership embedded in another course. According to the findings in this analysis there was a significant difference between teachers with either teacher leadership as a course or teacher leadership embedded in a course and the teachers with no teacher leadership training at all. Forty-eight percent of the teachers in Coastal County had some type of leadership training in their teacher preparation programs and rated participation in the component of courage in their teacher leadership activities as frequent or twice a week. Teachers who had no teacher leadership training at all rated their participation in courage as infrequent or twice a month.

## Summary of Findings Related to Courage

Teachers participated in the component of courage frequently or twice weekly. This was consistent with the participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership. High school teachers were more likely to participate in activities that utilized courage than either elementary or middle school teachers. There was a significant correlation between courage and years of experience. There was also a significant correlation

between courage and educational degree. Teachers who had some type of teacher leadership training, as a course or embedded in another course, participated in the component of courage on a frequent basis, or twice a week.

### Summary

The researcher conducted a quantitative, descriptive study to understand teacher's participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership found in one rural school district that encouraged and embraced teacher leadership. In addition, the researcher sought to understand the levels of participation in teacher leadership, as they related to the three school levels in that district: elementary; middle; and high school. The researcher determined the differences in participation of the four dimensions of teacher leadership as it related to three demographic characteristics: years of experience; highest degree; and teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs. Finally, the researcher examined the component of courage as it related to teacher's participation, the three levels of schools, years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher leadership training. The data were gathered using the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS). The survey instrument was created by the researcher and pilot tested using three experts in the field of educational leadership. Corrections were made and the instrument was then field tested with four Teachers of the Year from Coastal County School district and then four designated teacher leaders at the University of South Carolina. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 13.0.

Research question one, the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, in Coastal

County School District used an analysis of frequency. The researcher discovered that according to the responses on the TLPS, expertise, a dimension of teacher leadership, had the greatest participation, at the consistent level of daily participation. Within the dimension of expertise, teachers participated least in activities that required high expectation for their students. Teachers reported that participation in reflection was also consistent or daily, although teachers only frequently believed that their colleagues viewed them as someone who reflected on changes in the culture and climate of the school. Teacher reported frequent participation or twice weekly participation in activities that required collaboration. Coastal County teachers reported the lowest participation in the dimension of empowerment.

As a school district, teachers participated in the four dimensions of teacher leadership consistently or daily in expertise and reflection and frequently or twice a week in the dimensions of collaboration and empowerment.

Elementary teachers had a higher a rate of participation in the four teacher leadership dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, but were closely followed by middle school teachers. Elementary teachers participated in the four dimensions at a much higher rate than the high school teachers in all four dimensions of teacher leadership. Middle school teachers also participated at a higher rate in teacher leadership than the high school teachers in the four dimensions. High school teachers reported a significantly higher participation rate in the area of courage than either the elementary teachers or the middle school teachers.

Teacher leadership training was the only demographic characteristic that was significantly related to the four dimensions of teacher leadership. Significant differences



were found between all three training levels and the dimensions of empowerment and collaboration. Expertise and reflection, and collaboration were rated higher by teachers who had some type of leadership training but there was not a significant difference between teacher leadership training, expertise, and reflection.

The researcher added one question to the survey instrument that addressed the possibility of courage as a component of teacher leadership. The researcher submitted the issue of courage to the three experts in teacher leadership who agreed to pilot test the survey instrument. Upon a positive response from two of the experts, the researcher included the question concerning courage as it related to teacher leadership participation on the survey. The component of courage was not weighted the same as the four dimensions and was not discussed as a dimension, but as a possible issue to be addressed at a later time. Findings revealed that teachers participated in activities utilizing courage, within teacher leadership, on a frequent or twice a week basis. High school teachers were significantly more likely to participate in courage than either elementary teachers or middle school teachers. There were also significant correlations between courage and years of experience and educational degree. Finally, courage was significantly related to training in teacher leadership and teachers with some type of teacher leadership training in their teacher preparation programs participated in the component of courage on a frequent or twice weekly basis.

## CHAPTER 5

### OVERVIEW, RESEARCH FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, DISSEMINATION, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this chapter, the researcher presented an overview of the study, including research questions, discussion of findings, conclusions, implications, recommendations, disseminations, and concluding thoughts. This chapter was organized by the researcher to include a discussion of how the research findings related to the review of the literature. Finally, the researcher concludes the chapter with recommendations for additional study and concluding thoughts.

#### Overview of the Study

The researcher's purpose of this study was to examine teachers' participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia. Specifically, the researcher's objective was to determine the level of teachers' participation within the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, in one school district being encouraged to implement teacher leadership initiatives. In addition, the researcher determined differences in participation within the four dimensions among elementary, middle and high school levels, as well as differences in teacher leadership participation related to demographic characteristics such as years of teaching experience, highest educational degree, and participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs.

Although experts in the field of teacher leadership agree that the activities of teacher leadership are more important than definitions (Harris, 2002a), for the purpose of

this study teacher leadership was defined as a way building teacher involvement in tasks and activities in order to enhance school improvement efforts and student performance. Teacher leadership supports cooperation for the enhancement of the culture and the organization of the school (Harris; Smylie, 1997). Teacher leadership as a construct includes four dimensions: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Another component of teacher leadership that is a fairly recent addition, according to the literature, is courage (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Glickman, 2003; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Reilly, 2005; Staver, 2006).

Ten years after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, teachers were being proposed as the solution to the problem, rather than the source of the problem (Barker, 1996; Wright, 2004). Teacher leadership became a key element in school improvement initiatives, such as enhancing the profession of learning, increasing student achievement, and improving the learning environment (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1988). School reform, school restructuring, school effectiveness, and school improvement are all focused on the idea of change (Dimmock, 2002; Fullan, 2000). Teachers are instrumental in the school improvement changes, as they are closest to the learning process. The importance of teachers in the leadership arena was studied by researchers and experts in the field of educational change (Berry, 2005; Harris, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Short, 1994; Wasley, 1991). The consensus was that teachers should be included in leadership tasks and activities; however, defining the characteristics of teacher leaders and designating teacher leadership activities was not easily clarified (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Frost & Harris, 2003; Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2003a; Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

A blurred vision of teacher leadership led to misunderstanding and mistrust between administrators and their faculty and in many cases the teacher leadership initiatives were reduced to ill defined rhetoric found only in school improvement documents (Berry, 2005; York-Barr, 2004) .

In 1994, Short, a researcher connected to the Empowering School Districts Project, compiled a major body of information in connection with teacher leadership and focusing on empowerment. While empowerment was generally associated with site-based management and shared decision making, research from this study revealed the underlying dimensions of empowerment were varied and informative. Six dimensions ultimately emerged within the context of teacher empowerment: involvement in decision making; teacher impact; teacher status; autonomy; teacher self-efficacy; and opportunities for professional development (Short, 1994; Short & Rhinehart, 1992; Short & Rhinehart, 1993). The six areas of empowerment help to establish the actual activities that are associated with teacher leadership (Sabatini, 2004; Short, 1994; Snell & Swanson, 2000).

Over the last two decades researchers and scholars have added to the body of knowledge in the area of teacher leadership (Snell and Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Snell and Swanson designed a study to help construct a framework for teacher leadership. According to the researchers, a strong foundation for building teacher leadership initiatives would create clarity and the tasks and activities of teacher leadership would be more realistic (Snell and Swanson). If the implementation was realistic, then school organizations would have a better chance of creating teacher leadership initiatives that could actually be put into practice (Snell and Swanson). Snell

and Swanson began constructing their study by using Short's (1994) research on teacher empowerment. Snell and Swanson stated that while the six dimensions of teacher empowerment were certainly valid, there were other components that seemed to be missing. An in-depth, qualitative study was conducted over a two year period of time with a sample of ten teachers. Using teacher feedback, a framework for teacher leadership was established with four designated dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration.

Recently, another component of leadership has filtered into the discussions on teacher leadership – courage (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Staver, 2006; Reilly, 2005). Courage, according to Staver (2006), is the willingness and the ability to confront all challenges and complete all tasks so that leaders are confident that their values are being supported. Leadership is about influencing others to achieve results, but determining what really matters and setting priorities and executing them on a consistent basis also takes courage (Reilly, 2005; Staver). Pryor (1998) states that courage is not only one of the most important assets of teacher leadership, but that courage can be encouraged and embedded in teacher leadership ideals. Pryor, a veteran principal, states that when the characteristics of teacher leadership are combined with courage, teachers assume ownership of the culture and climate of the school community.

The researcher developed the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS), a modification of Short's School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) and Lambert's Leadership Capacity Staff Survey. The TLPS contained 25 items pertaining to teacher leadership as evidenced by the review of the literature and modified by the two instruments, Short's School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) and Lambert's

Leadership Capacity Staff Survey. The survey instrument also contained several demographic questions. The survey was personally administered to all four schools in Coastal County School district. The survey was given to 133 teachers with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree and 128 teachers, or 96%, returned the completed surveys. The superintendent of Coastal County School District, a strong advocate of teacher leadership, is encouraging the four schools to engage in and support teacher leadership tasks and activities.

Quantitative descriptive analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS) version 13.0. For research question one, the data were reported as means and standard deviations for all six items within each of the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration. Inferences were drawn from the items themselves as well as the dimension as a whole. Means and standard deviation was also calculated for the component of courage represented by one question on the survey instrument. Research question two was analyzed using a Oneway ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) between all three school levels and reported by dimensions. The same was done for the component of courage. Research question three utilized the Pearson's  $r$ , the Spearman's  $\rho$ , and a Oneway ANOVA to determine the relationship between demographic characteristics and the four dimensions of teacher leadership and the component of courage.

### Research Questions

The overarching question for this study is what is the level of participation in teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia? The sub-questions that guided the study were:

1. What is the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration, and a fifth component of courage?
2. To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?
3. To what extent do teachers' demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher's participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?

#### Research Findings

The researcher sought to answer the overarching question by reviewing the three sub questions and analyzing the data from the responses to the survey instrument. The findings for each sub-question from Chapter IV are presented with a discussion of the findings related to the literature.

Research Question 1: What is the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration?

The responses on TLPS indicated that teachers were frequently participating in teacher leadership. Teachers participate in leadership activities related to their expertise on a frequent or consistent level. Teachers use a variety of instructional approaches, plan lessons with regard to content standards, gear instruction towards individual student needs, and readjust directions towards student success. Even though teachers possess expertise, they are not told by their students that they expect too much.

Teachers are reflective, as reflection occurred on average, twice weekly and teachers reported higher participation when considering their peers' perspectives, reflecting on changes for improvement, reflecting on the need for changes in scheduling, using values and biases in instruction, and talking to colleagues about past successes and failures. However, teachers reported the least participation in reflection when considering their peers' opinions as to the culture and climate of the school.

Within the dimension of collaboration, teachers reported frequent participation in areas such as using peers to help motivate students, using active listening and inquiry skills, using collaborative lesson planning, cooperation, and working with peers to establish ownership of the school. However, teachers reported that they utilized their colleagues' experience, when it came to solving problems, only two to three times a month.

Coastal County teachers reported frequent participation levels in the dimension of empowerment. The participation rate for autonomy, self-efficacy, and professional development were frequent or twice weekly. Although the sub-dimensions of decision-making, status, and impact, also had a participation rate of twice a week, the responses were lower than the other three sub-dimensions.

Teachers in Coastal County School District participated in the four dimensions of teacher leadership. District wide teachers consistently participated in the dimension of expertise and frequently participated in the dimensions of empowerment, reflection, and collaboration. Teachers also expressed the courage to be teacher leaders.

Research Question 2: To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?



Elementary and middle school teachers had a significantly higher rate of participation, in all four teacher leadership dimensions, than high school teachers. Elementary teachers were involved in teacher leadership activities within the dimensions of empowerment, reflection and collaboration frequently and participated in the dimension of expertise consistently. Middle school teachers frequently participated in all four dimensions of teacher leadership. High school teachers rated their participation in expertise and reflection on an average of twice a week, but participated in the dimensions of empowerment and collaboration infrequently, or only two to three times a month. Elementary teachers participated in empowerment, expertise and collaboration slightly more than their middle school peers; however, middle school teachers noted a slightly higher rate of participation in the dimension of reflection.

Interestingly, high school teachers have more courage to be teacher leaders, even though teacher leadership was more prevalent in elementary and middle schools. Courage was exactly the opposite of the findings for the four dimensions of teacher leadership in that high school teachers reported significantly higher participation (2.74) in the area of courage than the elementary school (1.80) or the middle school (1.90).

Research Question 3: To what extent do teachers' demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher's participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?

There were no significance relationships between years of teaching experience and teacher leadership and Bachelor's, Master's, and Educational Specialist's degrees and the four dimensions of teacher leadership. As there was only one participant in the

study who had a degree on the Doctoral level, that respondent was removed from the statistical analysis.

Teacher leadership training as a component of the teacher preparation program revealed a significant difference in teacher leadership. Teacher who had some type of teacher leadership training rated their participation in teacher leadership as frequent to consistent whereas teachers with no teacher leadership training rated their participation as only infrequent to frequent. Teachers responded to the question of participation in teacher leadership training by choosing one of the following designations: no training at all; teacher leadership as a course; or teacher leadership embedded in another course. Teacher leadership training was significant in two of the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment and collaboration.

Teachers who noted that they had a course in teacher leadership in their teacher preparation programs rated participation in the dimension of empowerment as consistent participation or daily participation. Teachers who had some type of teacher leadership training embedded in another course also responded that they participated in empowerment consistently or daily. However, teachers who had no teacher leadership training noted that they participated in empowerment activities infrequently or only two to three times a month. There was also a difference, although it was not significant at the  $p < .05$  level, between the three levels of training and the dimension of collaboration. The teachers who had a teacher leadership course or teacher leadership training embedded in another course were more likely to engage in activities of collaboration than teachers who had no teacher leadership training.

Within the analysis of the component of courage there was also a significant difference between the three levels of teacher leadership training. Teachers who had a teacher leadership course or had teacher leadership embedded in another course were more likely to have the courage to participate in leadership activities. Teachers with no teacher leadership training in their teacher preparation programs responded that they were not frequently courageous whereas teachers with some type of teacher leadership training were frequently courageous. The analysis of teachers' years of experience and the component of courage showed a significant difference at the  $p < .01$  level, but the relationship was very weak. The difference between a Bachelors, Masters, or Educational Specialists degree was significant at the  $p < .05$  levels, but the relationship was also relatively weak.

#### Summary of Findings

1. Teachers participated in the four dimensions of teacher leadership as follows:  
consistent participation in the dimensions of expertise and reflection and frequent participation in the dimensions of empowerment and collaboration.
2. Elementary school and middle school teachers had a higher rate of participation in teacher leadership than high school teachers.
3. Years of experience and educational degrees were not significantly correlated to the four dimensions of teacher leadership.
4. Teachers who had a teacher leadership course or who had teacher leadership embedded in another course teacher in their teacher preparation programs had a higher rate of participation in teacher leadership activities.

## Discussion of Research Findings

Teacher leadership is one of the main components being emphasized by GLISI, Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (2004). The researcher found only a few studies on teacher leadership and Georgia or on teacher leadership and rural school districts. The majority of the recent studies on teacher leadership are from other countries such as Great Britain, Canada, and Australia (Anderson, 2002). Short (1994, Short & Rhinehart, 1992) developed a survey that focused on teacher empowerment as the main component of teacher leadership. Almost a decade later, Snell and Swanson (2000) agreed that empowerment was the foundation for teacher leadership activities, but added the dimensions of expertise, reflection, and collaboration. Other researchers in the field of teacher leadership (Berry, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harris, 2002a; and York-Barr & Duke, 2004) concurred with Snell and Swanson, although there were slight variations in semantics as to the characteristics or dimensions that make the foundation for teacher leadership. Finally, the component of courage has recently emerged as a fifth possible component in the success of teacher leadership activities. As yet, there are few empirical studies that produce scientific conclusions about the component of courage, but noted experts in the field of both leadership and teacher leadership agree that courage is a part of effective leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Staver, 2006; Reilly, 2005).

The survey results of 128 teachers in four schools in Coastal County School District, were analyzed to ascertain their level of participation within the four dimensions of teacher leadership. The component of courage was also minimally explored. The data was gathered using the responses to the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS), a researcher created instrument. The analysis of this data provided information and

awareness in teachers' participation in the dimensions and components of teacher leadership in a rural school district in Georgia.

#### Discussion of Findings from Research Question 1

*What is the level of teachers' participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration?*

Coastal County School District teachers, as a whole, participated in the four dimensions of teacher leadership. Teacher leadership, as an essential component of school improvement process and school change (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harris, 2002a; Lambert, 2003a; Smylie, 1997; Snell & Swanson, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) was evidenced in the tasks and activities of teachers in Coastal County. On the average, teachers participated in the four dimensions of teacher leadership tasks and activities twice a week. The concept of teacher leadership is often connected with teachers in formal or designated roles of leadership, but the findings of this study reveal that teachers who demonstrate expertise in their field also demonstrate other dimensions of teacher leadership.

The researcher found that teachers participated to the greatest extent in the dimension of expertise. Within the dimension of expertise, teachers showed the strongest participation in the variety of their instructional approaches and coordinating lesson plans with content standards. According to the literature, teacher leadership incorporates instructional improvement and instructional expertise (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2005) and a passion for content knowledge (Snell & Swanson, 2000). The use of differentiated instruction, the flexibility of instruction, and gearing lessons to students' individual needs, are important characteristics of teacher leaders

(Snell & Swanson, 2000). Teachers responded that they participated in the activities that link instruction and the individual student's needs on a consistent or daily basis. High expectations, according to Hopkins (2001) and Segiovanni (2000) are very important aspects of effective leadership.

Teacher leaders also reflect on their practice. Teachers in Coastal County School District responded that they frequently participated in this dimension. Reflection, as a dimension of teacher leadership, is the consideration of some subject matter, idea, or purpose as it relates to the educational process and includes beliefs that are associated with past success and failure (Sherrill, 1999). Coastal County teachers frequently stop to think about changes that are necessary for improvement, especially in relation to other teachers needs in the school community or individual changes within the classroom. Reflective teachers took time to understand the perspectives of others, but did not lose sight of their own thoughts and values (Snell & Swanson, 2000). According to the survey, teachers frequently considered their own thoughts and values in order to evaluate their teaching methods. Teacher also took time to discuss successes and failures with their colleagues in order to facilitate change. Reflection pertaining to the culture and climate of the school community and the necessity for change are integral factors in the school improvement process (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1988). However, the survey responses showed that teachers were less sure of their colleagues' perceptions when it came to the teacher's own consideration of changes in the culture and climate of the school. The culture and climate of the school organization is very broad, and teacher leadership across the school is not as evident as teacher leadership in classroom level reflection. Although teachers reported the lowest

participation in this area of reflection, there may be other reasons for the lower participation response. The dimension of reflection, although extremely important in teacher leadership, is directly connected with individuals having time to reflect. Studies showed that teachers consistently reported not enough time to actually do the things that are required (Harris, 2002b; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Lambert, 2003a; Richards, 2003); therefore, if teachers have time for reflection on classroom level activities, they may not have time to be concerned with culture and climate of the school. That could account for teachers' perception that others may not think that they are looking out for the school, as a whole, often enough. Teachers who can accept reality, clearly identify goals, and at least consider the changes that are essential, are also leaders who are likely to experience success (Barth, 2000; Mayo, 2002). Except for the way that other colleagues may perceive their participation in reflective activities, teachers in Coastal County School District reported participating in reflection frequently or twice a week.

The responses to the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS) indicated that the dimension of empowerment had the least participation of all four of the teacher leadership dimensions. Data analysis showed that teachers infrequently participated in empowerment tasks and activities. The dimension of empowerment is subdivided into six categories: decision-making, status, impact, autonomy, self-efficacy, and professional development (Short, 1994; Short & Rhinehart, 1992) and questions on the TLPS addressed each one of the six sub-dimensions. Each of the sub-dimensions is directly connected to the tasks and activities that create the dimension of empowerment (Short).

At one time, teacher empowerment was synonymous with teacher leadership (Short, 1994; Short & Johnson, 1994; Short & Rhinehart, 1992). Although other

dimensions were later added to the successful framework of teacher leadership, empowerment was still considered the foundation (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Several studies showed that if the dimension of empowerment was strong, teacher leadership could become an effective initiative (Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2005; Shen, 1999; Snell & Swanson).

Although Coastal County teachers indicated that they were frequently empowered to make decisions, hold status, or make an impact, they did indicate a higher level of participation in autonomy, self-efficacy, and professional development. The empowerment that they hold relates to their expertise, as they indicated a great capacity to control the work environment and their ability to assess certain situations, consider solutions, and decide on courses of action (Briley, 2004; Short & Rhinehart, 1992). According to several experts in the field of teacher leadership, anytime a concept can be connected to an actual task or activity, there is a better chance that the concept will be successful in its implementation (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2005). The tasks that teacher leaders control may relate more to the classroom level where their autonomy is greater.

One of the problems with teacher leadership, as a construct, was that in the beginning it was all words with little connection to actual teacher's tasks and activities (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Joseph, Mikel, & Windchitl, 2002). Teacher's self-efficacy is almost always task specific (Briley, 2004; Short & Rhinehart, 1992) which may be the reason for teacher's identification of self-efficacy as the highest level of empowerment activities. Teacher leaders may not feel empowered to make significant school-wide



decisions, as their status as teachers has not significantly recognized leadership beyond the classroom.

Teacher autonomy means that a teacher is capable of existing independently. A teacher's attitude that their views have worth and value is also a part of autonomous characteristics (Wilson, 1993). Sharp (1992) revealed that teachers highly valued their autonomous classroom role and the school community supported this role.

Professional development refers to the opportunities for continuing education regarding the command of the subject matter, essential skills in pedagogy, and training in leadership (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000, Wynne, 2001). In a report to the National Board of Professional Teachers Association, researchers stated that in order to improve student performance consistently over the long term, future initiatives must provide educators with meaningful professional development that would increase content knowledge and improve leadership skills (Muchmore, Cooley, Marx, and Crowell, 2004).

The TLPS data indicates that participation in the activities of decision making, impact, and status occurred less often than the participation in activities involving professional development, self-efficacy, and autonomy. Teacher impact refers to the ability to take action in influencing and engaging other faculty members in order to make changes in the school organization (Briley, 2004; Harris, 2002; Maeroff, 1988; Wasley, 1991). Status, also connected to the school organization, refers to the formal and informal designations, titles, and job descriptions inherent in teacher leadership roles and responsibilities (Anderson, 2004; Barth, 2000; Leithwood & Janzi, 1999; Mulford & Silins, 2002). Several experts in the field of teacher leadership warn about role

designation devoid of specific tasks and activities (Berry, 2005; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2005) therefore it is possible that teachers in Coastal County are participating less in the activities involving status and impact because those areas are more associated with words rather than actions.

Teachers who are involved in the decision-making process at their school gain a greater sense of control over their working environment and develop an ownership in the school organization (Barth, 2000; Briley, 2004; Maeroff, 1988; Short & Rhinehart, 1992). Therefore, since Coastal County teachers had the lowest participation rate in decision-making activities, they may also have had less of a sense of ownership in the school organization. According to Sharp (1992), it was not uncommon for teachers to state that they seldom participated in decision-making activities beyond the classroom level. Decision making, an extremely important component of empowerment, is the most uncomfortable area of the empowerment dimension for both teachers and administrators. Several researchers stated that not only are administrators hesitant to hand over or delegate decision-making responsibilities, teachers, as a whole, are not prepared to take on those responsibilities (Berry, Johnson & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Klecker & Loadman, 1998). Klecker and Loadman discovered that decision-making was often eliminated from teacher leadership responsibilities even when status and impact were included. Status and impact could be embedded in rhetoric, but the lack of decision-making activities was discernable in the absence of administrative support. Sharp (1992) stated that not all teachers were interested in nor willing to be empowered, but empowered teachers begin to reflect on their expertise, their collaboration with their peers, and the ultimate initiatives of education (Gonzales & Lambert, 2001; Harris,

2002a). According to Short (1994) and Snell and Swanson (2000), the dimension of empowerment is the foundation on which to build teacher leadership. Therefore, since Coastal County teachers participate in the dimension of empowerment the least of all four dimensions, teachers may have an unstable base for their participation in teacher leadership.

Participation in the added component of courage was frequent or two times a week. Coastal County teachers participated in activities involving the component of courage more than their participation in empowerment and collaboration and less than their participation in reflection and expertise. Although the component of courage was only minimally explored, participation in activities requiring courage were consistent with the other dimensions of teacher leadership in Coastal County School District.

#### Discussion of Findings from Research Question 2

*To what extent do elementary, middle, and high school teachers differ in their participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?*

Elementary and high school teachers differed significantly in their participation within all four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration. Elementary teachers participated at a much higher rate in all four dimensions of teacher leadership. Middle school and high school teachers differed significantly in the dimensions of empowerment, reflection, and collaboration. The middle school teachers' responses reflected a much higher participation in those three dimensions than the high school teachers. Elementary and middle school teachers did not significantly differ in any of the four dimensions of teacher leadership.

Within the dimension of empowerment, elementary and middle school teachers engaged in the activities of empowerment twice a week whereas high school teachers engaged in the tasks and activities of empowerment only two to three times a month. The amount of participation for elementary and middle school teachers was almost double the rate of the high school teachers. Since the dimension of empowerment is considered to be the foundation for the framework of teacher leadership (Short, 1994; Snell & Swanson, 2000), the low rate of participation in empowerment by the high school teachers may establish a reason for the lower rate of participation in the other three dimensions of teacher leadership

Empowerment includes enabling experiences that foster choice and responsibility and the ability to utilize individual competencies (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Creating an environment where professionals and staff exercise the belief that they can impact life and learning in their school is important (Short, 1994; Snell & Swanson, 2000). Teachers who are given the opportunity to act on those beliefs become a part of a successful teacher leadership initiative (Zimmerman & Rappaport). The elementary and middle school teachers participated in empowerment opportunities frequently. Although the optimum for teacher leadership participation would be consistent or daily participation, on a school wide basis, frequent participation creates a positive direction. These findings are consistent with Annis (1996) who also discovered a gap between the participation of elementary and middle school teachers with that of the high school teachers in regard to the dimension of empowerment in school in Georgia. Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (1997) found more of a consistency between the three school levels in a study

conducted in California, but also noted that elementary and middle school teachers were more focused on tasks and activities of teacher leadership than their high school peers.

Within the dimension of expertise, the significant differences were only found between the high school and the elementary school teachers. The elementary teachers' participation in expertise was rated as significantly higher than the high school teachers' rate of participation. However, all three schools participated at their highest level, of the four teacher leadership dimensions, in the dimension of expertise. Highly qualified teachers, teachers with expertise in their field, are a focus in today's education (Berry, 2005) therefore the higher rate of participation in the area of expertise was not surprising. Expertise is a main component necessary in building learning communities and also helps establish a foundation of strength and confidence that is vital to the culture and climate of the educational setting (Little, 1995). The higher rate of participation in the dimension of expertise establishes one more building block in the framework for teacher leadership, at least at the elementary and middle school levels.

The participation of elementary and middle school teachers in the dimension of reflection was at a significantly higher rate than that of high school teachers. Both elementary and middle school teachers responded that they participated in the process of inward thinking and trying to understand what is happening in the classroom and in the culture and climate of the school organization at a higher rate than the high school teachers. Reflection is directly connected to teachers active participation in solving problems, resolving conflicts, and impacting the culture and climate of the school community (Marshall, 2005), therefore, since high school teachers participated only two to three times a month in activities such as decision-making and impact, within the

dimension of empowerment, their participation in reflective thinking may also have been affected.

Collaboration, the dimension of teacher leadership that involved cooperation and camaraderie, was also significantly different between the elementary and middle school teachers and the high school teachers. The high school reported a participation rate of only two to three times a month, whereas the elementary and middle schools reported participating in activities of collaboration an average of two times a week. However, by design, high school teachers are more isolated than elementary or middle school teachers. According to some experts, even expertise, which was highly rated by all three schools, cannot impact the learning environment in the absence of high participation in collaboration (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Informal collaboration, discovered to be the best source of collegiality leading towards school improvement (Leonard & Leonard, 1999) was more often found at the elementary level than any other level, but was also found more at the middle school level than at the high school level. This was consistent with the results of the TLPS in the dimension of collaboration.

Participation in the component of courage was also significantly different between the elementary, middle, and high school teachers in Coastal County. However, unlike the results in the four dimensions of teacher leadership, the participation in courage was much higher at the high school level than at the elementary or middle school level. High school teachers reported participating in activities that included courage on a twice weekly basis. The elementary and middle school teachers reported participation as infrequent or two to three times a month in the component of courage. According to

Pryor (1998) the component of courage allows teachers to become facilitators rather than spectators, but Bolman and Deal (2006) concluded that the component of courage surfaced most often if a school system lacked support in other areas of leadership. The TLPS results clearly showed a lack of participation, in the four dimensions of teacher leadership, for Coastal County high school teachers. This was construed as a lack of supported teacher leadership ideals; therefore the component of courage forcefully emerged.

#### Discussion of Findings from Research Question 3

*To what extent do teachers' demographic characteristics, including years of teaching experience, highest degree obtained, and teacher's participation in teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs, vary in relation to participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership?*

The researcher found that years of experience did not have any significant correlation to the four dimensions of teacher leadership. Although Bolman and Deal (2002) and Neoplolitan (2000) both found that experienced teachers were more likely to participate in teacher leadership activities, Suranna and Moss (2002) discovered just the opposite, that beginning teachers were more likely to be enthused over teacher leadership tasks. However, the researcher found that the correlation of years of experience and the component of courage were highly significant. Reilly (2005) and Staver (2006) both attribute a higher participation in the component of courage to teachers with experience due to the necessity for determining priorities within the field of education. Consistent with the literature, Coastal County teachers' years of experience was significantly different in relation to teachers' participation in the component of courage.

The researcher found that the educational degrees of Bachelor, Master, and Educational Specialist, did not have any significance to the four dimensions of teacher leadership. The degree of Doctor was not evaluated as there was only one respondent in that category. The findings were inconsistent with Wynne (2001) who found that there was a significant difference between teachers' educational degree and their participation in teacher leadership activities. In this district being studied, the Superintendent encouraged teacher leadership, which may account for teacher leadership across educational levels and age categories. However, the level of educational degree did have a significant difference within the component of courage. Coastal County teachers with an Educational Specialist degree were participating in activities that involved courage almost twice as often as teachers with only a Master's or a Bachelor's degree. This is consistent with the findings of Lee and Elliot-Lee (2006) who state that teachers who have sought continuing education are more likely to have attained the confidence to exercise courage.

Another finding by the researcher was that teachers who had some training in teacher leadership in their teacher preparation program, either as a course itself or embedded in another course, were much more likely to participate in the dimensions of empowerment and collaboration, than teachers who had no training in teacher leadership in their teacher preparation programs. There was a possibility that the question itself, on teacher leadership training could have been misconstrued to mean teacher leadership training as ongoing continuing education workshops provided by the school system. This is not the same as an established course in a teacher preparation program. Empowerment is considered the foundation of teacher leadership (Short, 1994; Snell & Swanson, 2000)



and the dimension of collaboration is an essential component in the success of school improvement initiatives (Harris, 2003; Rolff, 2003; Wiggins & Damore, 2006).

Participation in these two dimensions would be extremely important in the pursuit of teacher leadership initiatives. The findings for the component of courage also supported the literature concerning the need for teacher leadership training. Teachers who had a teacher leadership course or teacher leadership embedded in another course in their teacher preparation programs reported a frequent participation in the component of courage as opposed to teachers with no teacher leadership training reporting participation in courage infrequently or only twice a month. Specifically, one of the keys to the implementation of successful teacher leadership programs in schools is the addition of teacher leadership training in the teacher education programs in post-secondary schools (Berry, 2005; Joseph, Mikel, and Windchitl, 2002).

### Conclusions

The researcher analyzed the findings from the study to conclude:

1. As a construct, teacher leadership is evident when teachers are empowered, demonstrate expertise, reflect on their work, and collaborate with others in the school. Teacher leadership is not necessarily tied to formal roles, but to teacher engagement in these four areas.
2. Teachers in rural schools in Georgia are teacher leaders with confidence in their expertise.
3. Elementary and middle school teachers are more likely to be engaged in teacher leadership than high school teachers.

4. Schools that have teachers who are empowered are more likely to have teachers who have higher participation in teacher leadership tasks and activities in all four dimensions.
5. Teacher leadership is not related to years of experience and educational level, but is related to training in leadership.
6. Teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs promotes teacher leadership practices.

### Implications

This study indicated that teachers, in rural schools in Georgia, participated in the four dimensions of teacher leadership: empowerment; expertise; reflection; and collaboration. There was a lower level of participation in the dimensions of empowerment and collaboration than in the dimensions of expertise and reflection. The literature stated that empowerment is the foundation for teacher leadership; therefore a weak foundation will decrease the chances of successful teacher leadership initiatives. Teachers indicated that within the dimension of empowerment, the sub-dimensions of decision-making, impact, and status were participated in the least. This would imply that as empowerment is the first building block, initiatives in the areas of decision-making, impact and status need to be strengthened. Reflection and collaboration, both connected to allotment of time, need to be incorporated into the teacher leadership initiatives in such a way as to provide ample opportunity to engage in the reflective and collaborative process. High school teachers had a much lower participation rate in all of the four dimensions in comparison to the elementary and middle school teachers. Rural school systems need to investigate underlying reasons for the discrepancy and provide training

and continuing education to bridge the gap between the school levels. The level of courage is higher if there is less support in other areas of leadership qualifications; therefore the fact that high school teachers participated the most in the component of courage, would also indicate a further need to address the lack of participation, and the absence of support of teacher leadership. Although the analysis did not indicate any differences between the years of experience and teacher leadership, closer inspection of the data did show that the majority of teachers in the high school had less than ten years of experience and specifically, one third of the high school teachers had five years or less teaching experience. The elementary and the middle schools had a much higher percentage of teachers with ten years or more teaching experience. Since the elementary and middle schools both had a higher participation rate in the four dimensions of teacher leadership and a higher percentage of experienced teachers, this indicates a need for more experienced teachers at the high school level. Results from the study indicated that teacher leadership training had an important impact on the four dimensions of teacher leadership and especially in the two dimensions of empowerment and collaboration. This indicates that rural school districts need to include teacher leadership as a requirement in continuing education policies. Because rural school systems are often involved in the community outreach programs of local institutions of higher learning, it is important for universities to include a strong teacher leadership component within their teacher preparation curriculum.

### Recommendations

The use of the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS), as a preliminary indicator for the participation in teacher leadership, allows a school district or an

individual school to determine the level of participation in the four dimensions of teacher leadership and especially in the dimension of empowerment, as the foundation for teacher leadership. If there is less than frequent participation in the dimension of empowerment then that would be the first area for the school or the school district to address. Being able to establish priorities and sequences for building a strong teacher leadership initiative is important. Being able to specify tasks and activities that support teacher leadership initiatives is essential.

Future studies in teacher leadership need to investigate the impact of gender and race in connection to teacher leadership. Those demographics were not included in this study due to the lack of male and non-white participants. Larger samples would also help define the need for higher education as Coastal County teachers are predominantly teachers with a Bachelor's degree.

Results from the study indicated a need for teacher leadership within the teacher preparation programs. Post-secondary institutions could benefit by examining their teacher education programs to discern if teacher leadership is being implemented in the curriculum and whether or not it directly connects to the tasks and activities that create teacher leadership opportunities. Teacher leadership is a joint effort between the administration and the faculty, but too much emphasis has been placed on the rhetoric surrounding teacher leadership rather than the actions that support teacher leadership; therefore school systems need to concentrate on specific tasks and activities that support and promote teacher leadership practices. Although teachers need to be taught how to accept teacher leadership responsibilities, administrators need to understand how to disseminate responsibilities that generate a successful environment that nurtures teacher

leadership and subsequently school improvement goals. In order to fully comprehend the whole picture of teacher leadership, the researcher recommends that the administration's participation in the support and nurturing of teacher leadership also needs to be examined.

The literature supports a connection between teacher leadership and teacher retention. Teacher retention is a priority in current educational issues, especially in rural areas, therefore it is the researcher's recommendation that further studies be conducted to ascertain the relationship between teacher leadership and teacher retention and specifically, the tasks and activities that support teacher leadership and increase teacher retention.

Finally, a more thorough investigation into the component of courage is needed. The researcher recommends, in the current absence of large empirical studies, that qualitative and case studies be conducted to provide impetus for a more in-depth investigation into the component of courage as it related to teacher leadership. Studies need to be conducted to determine whether or not courage might actually be considered as a fifth dimension of teacher leadership. Further research is also needed to determine specific tasks and activities that utilize the component of courage and how the component of courage can be explored within the teacher preparation programs.

#### Dissemination

The findings from this study were brought to the attention of the Superintendent of Coastal County School District. After reviewing the data, the Superintendent noted that further investigation was needed in connection to the inconsistencies between the three school levels. The suggestion was made to return to the high school and survey the

teachers using the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) which specifically measures empowerment, the dimension of teacher leadership which rated the least participation. The study shows that there was participation in teacher leadership in Coastal County School District, therefore further investigation into the specific tasks and activities of teacher leadership could be ascertained using Lambert's Leadership Capacity Staff Survey. Encouraging teachers to continue their education could have a positive effect on the teacher leadership participation which would ultimately have positive consequences for school improvement plans. According to the Superintendent, the study indicated that the search for highly qualified teachers and therefore teachers with a high participation in the dimension of expertise showed success. The Superintendent reiterated his commitment to implement and encourage teacher leadership initiatives in Coastal County School District. He also stated that information that designates specific tasks and activities would be helpful in trying to establish levels of participation in teacher leadership for each school level and for the school district as a whole. The superintendent made the suggestion to present the findings of this study to the school district administration during pre-planning for the 2007-2008 school year.

Although retention rates were not a part of the Teacher Leadership Participation Survey (TLPS) and were only briefly mentioned in the literature review, the Superintendent saw a connection. He shared his concern for the low retention rates at the high school and was interested in the correlation between teacher leadership and retention rates. To this end, the researcher will discuss the findings from the study with the School District Personnel Director and the four principals from each school.

A brief compilation of the data will be sent in an email to all staff in Coastal County upon review by the Superintendent. The researcher also plans to resurvey the Coastal County School District at the beginning and end of the 2007-2008 school year to assess any changes that may have occurred, specifically in connection to teacher leadership workshops and the implementation of teacher leadership tasks and activities. It is the researcher's hope that the workshops and the tasks and activities will target the dimensions of teacher leadership with lower participation rates and therefore higher needs.

### Concluding Thoughts

Teacher leadership is not a new idea, but one that is so beneficial to the positive direction of school improvement, that it warrants continuous investigation, reevaluation, and commitment. Teacher leadership is an integral component of distributed leadership and with the increase in the duties and responsibilities of the school administration provides a perfect avenue for cultivating ownership in the culture and climate of the school organization. Although the superintendent for Coastal County School District emphasizes his commitment to teacher leadership, implementing tasks and activities that support teacher leadership is the key to successful teacher leadership initiatives. Schools cannot implement changes in where they want to go if they have no idea where they actually are. Being able to establish that the school district is participating in teacher leadership and at what level the schools are participating is the beginning measure needed to grow and progress within the teacher leadership process.

The researcher understands where the Coastal County School District's strengths and weaknesses are and where each school needs to concentrate their efforts in the future.

The researcher hopes to be able to discuss the results of the survey with the new high school principal, in hopes of restoring a positive sense of staff ownership in the climate and culture of the high school. The researcher, a veteran teacher of twenty eight years in Coastal County School District, has a vested interest in and a deep affection for Coastal County School District. Although the researcher currently teaches at the high school level, she previously taught at both the middle school and the elementary school. The researcher has made a commitment to this school system and is personally involved with the success of all students in this county.

Riddle-Bendau (1998) wrote;

“I teach for that moment when a student believes in himself. I teach for the faculty meeting when we discover how much we have in common. I teach for the chance to speak honestly and to listen openly while others do the same. I teach to become vulnerable, to question and to be questioned. I teach to feel the weight of responsibility that comes with molding futures. I teach because teaching is the job that demands the most courage. I have the courage to teach. I have the courage to lead.” (p.96)

The idea that courage can play a huge part in establishing a successful teacher leadership program is very exciting to this researcher. As an experienced teacher, the researcher understands what it means to stand up for appropriate beliefs. It takes courage and wisdom to be a leader and to know when a battle is a necessary vehicle towards the improvement of education. The advancement of education is the ultimate goal of the school improvement process. Teacher leadership is no longer an option, but an essential element in the advancement process. Teacher leadership inspires and enhances the culture and climate of the school, promotes collegiality and pride, and creates a shared vision and upholds values. Above all, teacher leadership fuels the passion that is the heart and soul of the teaching profession.



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## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs	
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>	
Phone: 912-681-5465	Administrative Annex P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

**To:** Debra L. Smith  
116 Mackay Dr.  
Brunswick, GA-31525

**CC:** Dr. Barbara Mallory  
P.O. Box-8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** January 31, 2007

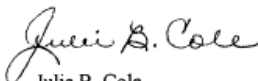
**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H07113**, and titled "**An Examination of Teachers' Participation in Teacher Leadership in a Rural School District in Georgia**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX B  
TEACHER LEADERSHIP PARTICIPATION SURVEY  
(TLPS)

## TEACHER LEADERSHIP PARTICIPATION SURVEY

### Section One – Demographic Please respond to each question.

1. How many years have you taught ? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your highest degree obtained? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you currently teaching in an elementary, middle, or a high school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What teacher leadership training did you receive in your  
teacher preparation program?

\_\_\_\_\_ None    \_\_\_\_\_Teacher Leadership course    \_\_\_\_\_Embedded in another education course

---

### Section Two – Teacher Leadership Participation

Please circle one of the following scales in response to each of the statements

NP = No Participation (never)

IP = Infrequent Participation (2-3 times a month)

FP = Frequent Participation (twice a week)

CP = Consistent Participation (daily or more than twice a week)

Circle One

1. I make decisions about the implementation of programs in the school.	NP	IP	FP	CP
2. I consider the perspectives of others within the school.	NP	IP	FP	CP
3. I am asked my opinion in areas relevant to the educational process	NP	IP	FP	CP
4. I use a variety of instructional approaches and strategies in my teaching activities.	NP	IP	FP	CP
5. I use the expertise of my peers to help motivate my students.	NP	IP	FP	CP
6. I develop lesson plans with the standards for my content area as a foundation.	NP	IP	FP	CP
7. I influence the educational reform process within my school.	NP	IP	FP	CP

Please circle one of the following scales in response to each of the statements

NP = No Participation (never)

IP = Infrequent Participation (2-3 times a month)

FP = Frequent Participation (twice a week)

CP = Consistent Participation (daily or more than twice a week)

8. I participate in collaborative activities using skills such as inquiry and active listening.	NP	IP	FP	CP
9. I reflect on how I can affect change in order to improve situations that occur during instructional activities.	NP	IP	FP	CP
10. I plan my lessons after analyzing where individual students are and where each student needs to go.	NP	IP	FP	CP
11. I am told by my students that I expect too much.	NP	IP	FP	CP
12. I consider the importance of my colleagues when changes in the schedule are necessary.	NP	IP	FP	CP
13. I plan lessons by collaborating with my peers.	NP	IP	FP	CP
14. I utilize both my values and biases to evaluate my teaching.	NP	IP	FP	CP
15. I am free to make choices about classroom issues.	NP	IP	FP	CP
16. I participate in opportunities that stimulate professional growth.	NP	IP	FP	CP
17. I participate in conversations with colleagues concerning past successes and failures encountered in educational activities.	NP	IP	FP	CP
18. I seek out activities that involve peer cooperation.	NP	IP	FP	CP
19. I feel that working with others gives me a sense of ownership in the school environment	NP	IP	FP	CP
20. I hear my students say that I make a difference in their lives.	NP	IP	FP	CP

Please circle one of the following scales in response to each of the statements

NP = No Participation (never)

IP = Infrequent Participation (2-3 times a month)

FP = Frequent Participation (twice a week)

CP = Consistent Participation (daily or more than twice a week)

21. I can readjust my direction when asked to do something from a different perspective.	NP	IP	FP	CP
22. I am perceived by my colleagues as one who thinks about changing in the culture and climate of the school.	NP	IP	FP	CP
23. I use differentiated instruction to impact student learning.	NP	IP	FP	CP
24. I draw on the collective experience of my peers to help solve problems encountered in the educational environment.	NP	IP	FP	CP
25. I have the courage to be a leader in issues that affect my school	NP	IP	FP	CP

APPENDIX C  
LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



## McIntosh County Schools

Dr. William A. Hunter  
Superintendent

December 4, 2006

Georgia Southern University IRB  
P O Box 8005  
Statesboro, GA 30460

Dear *Faculty,*

Please accept this letter as of approval and support of the proposed project and study in which Debbie Smith has selected for her dissertation topic to complete her doctoral program at Georgia Southern University. The study of teachers' participation in teacher leadership would be very beneficial in reinforcing effective leadership strategies in any school system.

The McIntosh County School System supports Mrs. Smith's study. We are appreciative of the fact that Mrs. Smith is willing to share her completed work with our administrative staff and look forward to reviewing the findings of her study. Please let us know if I can be of further assistance to you or Mrs. Smith.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. A. Hunter".

William A. Hunter