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Managing the tension: Balancing district requirements and local school context in school improvement planning

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COMPLEXITY AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Abstract

This Organization Improvement Plan (OIP) examines how a principal can implement school improvement planning processes that address both the requirements of a district and the needs of the individual school. The problem of practice identified that principals struggle with motivating teachers to engage in meaningful professional learning when implementing school improvement planning processes required by the district.

The complex nature of school environments is examined and the difficulties this poses for principals in leading change within schools is identified. Change is conceptualized as a non-linear, continuous process that is focused on the relationships between the teachers within a school and between teachers and the principal. Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) (Uhl-Bien, Marion, McKelvey, 2007) is used as a framework to examine how a principal can balance the often-competing needs of the district and teaching staff within their school. The CLT framework is composed of: adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership components.

The concept of Collaborative Professionalism (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018) in which teachers develop a professional accountability regarding student learning is also examined as a framework that complements CLT. The key role that the principal plays in nurturing conditions for ongoing, professional learning amongst teachers is identified.

Keywords: Complexity Leadership Theory, Adaptive leadership, Administrative leadership, Enabling leadership, Collaborative Professionalism

Executive Summary

The role of school principal has historically had to balance of the dual role of being a manager for the district and the leader of an individual school. These dual roles can sometimes lead to tension and conflict. This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is based on a problem of practice founded on the struggles that principals in a specific school district have articulated in balancing a prescriptive school improvement planning process required by the district and engaging teachers within individual schools. While principals throughout the district have identified similar concerns, this OIP will focus on the specific context of Maplelane Elementary school.

To understand the historical and policy context of the problem of practice a thorough literature review was completed. The influence of neoliberal policies on education at the provincial, district, and school level places a priority on measurable indicators of performance. This focus on measuring performance outcomes impacts the ability of school principals to implement school improvement planning processes that are meaningful to teachers.

A framework for understanding organizational change founded in complexity theories is utilized to conceptualize change as a non-linear, continuous process. Organizations are thought of as networks of highly interconnected individuals and leadership is focused on the relationships between individuals in these networks. Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) (Uhl-Bien, Marion, McKelvey, 2007) is the specific leadership framework identified for the analysis of the problem of practice and to frame the recommendations. CLT is composed of three separate leadership stances: adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership. Each of these leadership stances is used

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to structure both the examination of the problem of practice and the recommendations. Administrative leadership is a framework for meeting the required processes of the district, adaptive leadership is a framework for meeting the unique needs of the local school, and enabling leadership is focused on how the principal can harness the sometimes competing demands of the district and school for positive change. CLT emphasizes that organizations have to be structured in ways that promote the ability to adapt to new and every changing challenges.

Goal setting theory is examined and the differences between performance goals and learning goals are identified. As schools are complex environments with numerous interconnected factors, learning goals are identified as being more appropriate for driving improvement than performance goals.

In the context of schools, CLT provides a framework for principals to both implement the required procedures of the district and to empower teachers to engage in practices that meet the local needs of individual schools. The principal must pay particular attention to the relationships between teachers on staff and between the teacher and principal. It is through the relationships within a school that a principal can enact change.

It is important for the principal to pay particular attention to the professional learning structures that are in place within a school. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) can provide a formal learning structure suited to meeting the required district school improvement planning goals. Communities of Practices (COP) provide a learning structure that allows for teachers to participate in informal learning that is more responsive to the specific needs and interests of individual teachers. In balancing the

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needs of the district and the local school, the principal needs to incorporate both structures. The OIP examines how these two learning structures can be incorporated into Maplelane Elementary.

The emphasis of the OIP is the need to view change as a continuous process of ongoing learning. It is paying constant attention to the relationships within a school and the relationships between the different members of staff. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) introduce the concept of Collaborative Professionalism that captures many aspects of the recommendations in the change plan. Through Collaborative Professionalism, school improvement is not a process driven by top-down requirements from the district but a process driven by the constant professional learning of teachers. The key duty of the principal is to nurture the conditions for meaningful professional learning to take place. As Collaborative Professionalism becomes embedded in school practices, monitoring and evaluation come not through mandated performance targets but through the development of a culture of accountability between teachers to professional learning and student achievement.

This OIP provides a change plan for implementing, communicating, and monitoring the recommendations within the context of Maplelane Elementary but also provides an overview of recommendations that can be beneficial for all principals as the problem of practice is both a current and historical challenge identified by many principals (Pollock et al., 2017; Rousmaniere, 2007)).

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Acronyms

(CAS) Complex Adaptive Systems

(CLT) Complexity Leadership Theory

(COP) Communities of Practice

(DEF) District Effectiveness Framework

(EER) Educational Effectiveness Research

(EQAO) Education Quality and Accountability Office

(OLF) Ontario Leadership Framework

(OIP) Organizational Improvement Plan

(POP) Problem of Practice

(PLC) Professional Learning Community

(SE) School Effectiveness Research

Chapter 1- Introduction and Problem

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is centred on my work as the principal of Maplelane Elementary School. The OIP focuses on the school improvement planning process and the tension between meeting the mandated performance targets of the district and engaging teachers in meaningful professional learning within the school. This chapter will outline a Problem of Practice (POP) related to these challenges and will investigate the social, political, and historical contexts surrounding the lines of inquiry that develop from the POP. My personal leadership position will be examined and a framework for leading the organizational change will be articulated to guide the OIP recommendations in later chapters.

Organizational Context

My POP is situated within my current position as principal of Maplelane Elementary School. Maplelane Elementary is an elementary school of over 500 students located in a district that consists of approximately 100 schools and serves roughly 50 000 students between the grades of kindergarten to grade 12. The district consists of a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas. The school administrative team consists of a principal and vice-principal. To provide context for the OIP it is important to examine the provincial, district, and school influences related to the POP.

Provincial. In 1996, the Government of Ontario created the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) to oversee province-wide testing in grades 3, 6, 9, and 10. EQAO tests provide data for student performance in reading, writing, and math. Pinto (2016) summarizes the history of EQAO testing in Ontario and indicates that the use of

standardized test results as a performance measure for the educational system has been supported by all political parties. Eunhee Jang and Sinclair (2017) and Pinto (2016) review how standardized testing and EQAO results are used as accountability measures within the province. Despite some third-party organizations such as The Fraser Institute using the EQAO results to publish school rankings, Eunhee Jang and Sinclair (2017) and Pinto (2016) outline how official government policy regarding standardized testing is considered “low stakes” when compared to other jurisdictions, such as the United States, where districts and schools that do not meet performance benchmarks receive negative consequences. However, schools that consistently perform below provincial average experience increased provincial control under the auspices of additional support resources. Eunhee Jang and Sinclair (2017) and Pinto (2016) identify that teachers and principals in Ontario schools have internalized a professional pressure to increase student performance on these standardized tests and that the tests are the primary indicator of student and school achievement valued by the government and school districts. Though not a component of the formal Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) process school performance results can be incorporated into the Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA) process (Pinto, 2016; Winton & Pollock, 2016).

In addition to standardized testing, a number of legislative and policy requirements influence how school districts develop and implement school improvement planning processes. Bill 177 amended the *Education Act* (1990) to reference student achievement and well-being as goals of the education system; these terms are not defined in the legislation. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2014) outlines in the policy document, *Achieving Excellence* that reading, writing, and mathematics are foundational academic

skills that schools should focus on. The document specifies that district improvement efforts have quantitative targets regarding grade 3 and 6 EQAO scores, as well as high school graduation rates. The *Achieving Excellence* document also mentions a variety of strategies “to develop characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and imaginative thinking to overcome challenge” (p. 5) however, no specific targets or quantitative measures are mentioned for these learning goals.

In Ontario, the *District Effectiveness Framework* (DEF) is a provincial approach that school districts use to approach improvement planning at a system level. Leithwood and McCullough (2017) and Hargreaves, Shirley, Wangia, Bacon, and D’Angelo (2018) provide detailed accounts of how the DEF can be utilized by school boards in approaching improvement planning. As each school is an embedded part of a district, the framework shapes the approach that school boards take with structuring improvement planning for the individual schools within the district. This common framework across the province means that while the organizational analysis and recommendations of this report are specific to the author’s school and district there will be potential that recommendations will be applicable to other schools and districts within the province.

District. In 2009, Bill 177 *Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act* came into effect which for the first time formally declared that school boards were responsible for creating and monitoring district-wide improvement in student achievement and well-being. The bill also required boards to monitor these areas with quantitative measures including the use of standardized EQAO results.

Similar to all school districts in Ontario, the school district that is the focus of this report is governed by an elected Board of Trustees. This Board of Trustees is primarily

responsible for the policy governance of the district. The Board of Trustees employees a Director as the senior staff member responsible for managing the operations of the district. The Director leads a senior management team of superintendents. School principals report directly to a designated superintendent in regard to both school academic and operational issues. Superintendents review district required training material for upcoming staff meetings and professional development days with principals; these materials are common for all schools. Superintendents also meet with principals during school visits throughout the year; these visits focus primarily on reviewing the school annual improvement plan and monitoring student achievement in relation to district performance targets.

The district has quantitative improvement targets identified in reading, math, and graduation rates and has recently added a performance target related to student well-being. These targets are collated from data submitted by each individual school in the district. The performance targets are part of the district multi-year plan and the senior management team reports the progress being made towards these targets to the Board of Trustees throughout the year.

School. Similar to all elementary schools in the district, Maplelane Elementary has improvement targets in reading, math, and well-being. These quantitative targets are required to be identified in the school improvement plan. Maplelane Elementary must use the same measures for these improvement goals as every other school in the district. The exact wording of each goal is provided in a template to principals and each principal is responsible for entering the numbers specific to their school. In reading, the focus is on student progress at the end of Grade 1 and is measured by the results of final report card.

The district has specific rubrics for teachers to evaluate student reading ability and principals are required to monitor this progress formally on a six-week basis. Student math progress is measured by results on the grade six EQAO standardised test. School improvement plans also monitor student math progress in grades four and five using report card data. Well-being is measured through the use of a computerised survey given to every student between grades four and eight every other year. The district requires all schools to base their improvement goal on improving the student response to the same question within the survey. Uniform spreadsheets have been developed that principals complete and submit to superintendents on a regular basis. These targets form the basis of meetings between principals and superintendents during regular school visits. Principals are also required to make these targets public through communication with parent school councils.

Principals are responsible for the planning and implementation of the school improvement plan and the requisite teacher professional learning. Required staff meetings and professional development days are the primary time reserved for this learning. The district provides principals with uniform PowerPoint and other learning resources to allow for a consistent approach to professional learning in all schools. These uniform resources were originally offered as resources for Principals to modify and incorporate into individual school material, but principals have more recently been asked to maintain greater fidelity to the provided resources. Principals are also responsible for overseeing a budget of supply teacher days to allow staff to participate in professional learning. The amount of release time available varies based on individual school characteristics and performance. Maplelane Elementary is considered a high performing school within an

area of higher social economic status; as such, the amount of professional development resources available is smaller than other “high priority” schools. Principals must submit staff learning plans that outline how the release time for professional learning will be utilized to achieve the improvement targets in the school plan.

Each principal does have the control to organize how teachers are organized into professional learning teams within the school. In elementary schools, learning teams may be organized either by grouping teachers based on similar grades or by grouping teachers based on a focus to one of the specific areas of the district improvement targets (reading, math, or well-being). In implementing the common improvement planning process mandated by the District, principals have to account for differences in staff size, the fact that some elementary schools are K-5, K-6 , K-8, and 6-8 grade compositions, and differences in allotted professional learning release time. During monthly meetings regarding school improvement work principals are provided time to collaborate with each other regarding the implementation of school improvement planning; how principals structure learning teams is a common topic for discussion.

This organizational context of the province, district, and school provide the board framework within which I operate as school principal. However, it is also necessary to examine my personal leadership position and how it might interact with the broader contextual factors to impact my leadership decision making.

Leadership Position and Lens Statement

To best understand the recommendations in this OIP it is important to examine how I am personally situated within my organization and how my personal beliefs about leadership influence the recommendations made. This section will first examine my

beliefs regarding leadership, the influence of the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (OLF) on principal leadership practice in Ontario, and the leadership lens that will be utilized for this OIP.

School principals in Ontario use the OLF as a common leadership resource to guide their practice (Leithwood, 2012). The OLF states that “it provides a shared vision of leadership and a common language that enables coherence of leadership” (p. 3). The OLF is utilized as a tool to guide discussions of professional practice amongst principals and superintendents. Leithwood (2012) cautions against the OLF being considered a document that outlines the standards of expected practice for school and district leadership. It is integrated into the Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013) process and is also used in the promotion process for vice-principals and principals. The OLF states “leadership is ‘successful’ to the extent that it makes significant, positive, and ethically defensible contributions to progress in achieving the organization’s vision and goals” (Leithwood, 2012, p. 3). In examining theories for effective leadership, the OLF explicitly advocates for an *Integrated* approach that encourages principals to engage in leadership practices best suited to the specific school environment and to not be limited by a particular theoretical approach (Leithwood, 2012). The OLF resource is commonly used by both superintendents and principals in the district in discussing school improvement and is an important component of understanding the broader context of this OIP.

Fullan (2003) highlights the importance of the authentic leadership approach and life experience when he states that “the first lesson of the moral imperative is, don’t forget the why question. Don’t get lost in the how-to questions” (p. 61). Northouse

(2019) summarizes that “authentic leaders have a genuine desire to serve others, they know themselves, and they feel free to lead from their core values” (p. 231). Authentic leaders use their personal moral values and life experience to guide their leadership. Fox, Gong, and Attoh (2015) examine how principals who lead with an Authentic leadership approach make ethical decisions and emphasize building relationship trust with staff. This approach resonates with me as a practicing principal where my leadership approach has evolved as I continuously reflect on how my moral and ethical values interact with my career experiences. Using an Authentic leadership lens allows a leader to be keep morals and values as central to decision making.

Unlike other leadership approaches, there is no singular methodology for being an Authentic leader (Northouse 2019); an Authentic leader is a leader who understands their values and uses them to guide their leadership. Alavi and Gill (2017) position Authentic leadership, not as a separate leadership approach, but as a characteristic that underlies other leadership approaches. Authentic leadership is similar to the Integrated approach promoted in the OLF in that a pragmatic orientation gives principals flexibility in utilizing specific approaches that will achieve a goal in a specific context. I believe that using a variety of practical approaches, but maintain an underlying moral compass, allows principals to adapt leadership actions to the context of their school. Following the principles of authentic leadership, I strive to ground my decisions in my values but attempt different approaches to best suit the context of individual schools. I approach leadership from a pragmatic and flexible stance.

As principal of a K-8 elementary school I am primarily responsible for ensuring that the required district school improvement planning process is implemented within the

school. While I have professional freedom to build relationships and interact with staff in a leadership style of my choosing, the required district school improvement process provides a significant structure of templates, PowerPoints, and assessment tools that must be followed for staff meetings and professional development sessions. These required tools and structures restrict the degree of personal leadership style that one can bring to the principal role in regard to school improvement planning. Pollock and Winton (2016) examine case studies that highlight how principals view their leadership in the context of both their obligations to the district and to their individual school. How principal leadership is impacted by the requirement to enact district processes is examined in the upcoming sections.

I am also involved in several district-level committees where principals provide feedback on various aspects of the school improvement planning process. These committees provide an avenue for principals to give feedback on district processes but do not directly decide policy and procedures. My membership in these committees does provide me with the opportunity to have numerous discussions with other principals in the district about their experiences with the required school improvement planning processes. These discussions provide me with insight into how the required district processes are being implemented in schools other than my own. The OIP recommendations are made in the context of the school improvement planning process at Maplelane Elementary, however the recommendations will have direct value to any principal within the district.

Both the OLF and the concept of Authentic leadership guide my practice and allow me the flexibility to utilize a variety of different approaches in achieving school

and district goals. My leadership practice is guided by a strong moral and value-based foundation but allows for a pragmatic approach to utilizing a variety of practices and adapting different practices to best address the unique context of any particular situation. In the second chapter the specific leadership practices that will be utilized in leading change in the OIP will be identified and examined.

Leadership Problem of Practice

The POP that will be addressed in this OIP is the difficulty of balancing the requirements of district mandated performance targets and engaging the teaching staff at Maplelane Elementary in a meaningful school improvement planning process. The district school improvement planning process requires the use of mandated quantitative improvement targets. The quantitative measures are uniform across all schools in the District. Principals are required to monitor student progress in key achievement areas in six to eight-week learning cycles and also at the end of the school year. Principals have the responsibility to implement required District processes but have some autonomy in the manner in which school improvement planning processes are implemented within their school. The POP will focus on how district-mandated performance targets can be integrated into the school improvement process at Maplelane Elementary. However, the issues identified in the POP are shared by other principals in the district and I am a principal representative on two committees with some influence on the school improvement processes within the district. Through conversations and work in collaborative planning sessions, school principals have identified challenges in balancing the requirements of the District with the local context of individual schools. A number of principals share a common concern that many teachers appear to only complete the

required professional development for compliance and lack a deeper commitment to the process. An example of teacher compliance, rather than commitment, is that principals have scripted agendas for professional development days and that principals often discuss that teachers will complete the required templates during the sessions but do not exchange in learning work between formal sessions nor does the professional development lead to a change in instructional practice. A second specific example is that the required district performance targets only focus on specific grades and that principals report how it is hard to meaningfully engage teachers in other grades or subjects. How might principals maintain adherence to district-mandated school improvement processes while also engaging teachers in the improvement process in a meaningful way?

Framing the Problem of Practice

It is necessary to examine the historical, political, and theoretical factors that influence the broader context that the POP is situated within. This examination will focus on: how student achievement is defined, assessed, and measured; how the role of the school principal is conceptualized; and how teachers engage with the school improvement planning process. An overview of the impact of neoliberal political influences on public management in general, and education in particular, will be presented followed by an examination of how these factors influence definitions of student achievement, the role of the principal, and school improvement planning.

In addition to examining the contextual factors indicated above, the literature surrounding complexity theory, collaborative professionalism, and collective efficacy will be examined. Understanding each of these concepts will be important to the further

examination of the issues in the POP and the recommendations that follow in later chapters.

Quantification, Neoliberalism, and New Public Management. Scotland (2012) identifies how a scientific paradigm operationalizes a positivist ontology where primacy is given to measurement and data. Quantification is viewed as factual and objective. Mau (2019) describes how human society has a long history measurement and quantification but the more recent digitization of data has led to the quantification of almost all aspects of society. This process of quantification “reduces a complex and confusing world to the standardized language of numbers...numbers, in short, are associated with precision, one-to-one correspondence, simplification, verifiability and neutrality” (Mau, 2019, p. 13). This belief in quantification as an objective and factual process has been foundational in the demands that organizations, often public institutions, develop clear standards of accountable performance (Power, 1997).

Though Mau (2019) clarifies that quantification and neoliberal ideology are not one-and-the-same, he explains that the process of quantification and the resulting demands for efficiency and accountability in neoliberal policies are closely related. Often referred to as *New Public Management*, policies that focus on performance objectives, and accountability procedures have come to dominate the provision of public services throughout the world (Ball, 2007; Ball, 2008; Green, 2016). Power (1997) describes how this quantification discourse has shifted the political demands for increased accountability from a focus on process to a focus on outcome performance.

Hursh (2016) describes the neoliberal influence on public services with the implementation of “corporate managerialism” that emphasizes accountability through

quantifiable performance measures and improvement targets. Specifically, in an educational context, Jaafar and Anderson (2007) outline the rise of economic-bureaucratic accountability for principals and teachers which has replaced the framework of ethical-professional accountability. They state “governments mandate the production of school and district plans with performance-based goals, targets, timelines, monitoring procedures, and expectations for regular status reports on progress” (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007; p. 218). Ball (2008) argues that a consequence of the focus on accountability and performance measures privileges the knowledge of professional managers, accountants, and lawyers over service professionals such as teachers, physicians, and social workers. He outlines how this also reduces teacher professional autonomy and creativity. The increasing global influence of neoliberal political views over the past decades has led educational systems and individual schools to set, measure, and monitor quantifiable targets of improvement in relation to student achievement.

Defining Student Achievement. The influence of quantification and scientific epistemologies is particularly influential in the School Effectiveness (SE) Research/Educational Effectiveness Research (EER) movement that uses “methodologically sophisticated studies which began to show the scientific properties of school effects” (Reynolds et al. 2014, p. 3). The SE/EER research prioritizes conceptualizations of student achievement that can be easily quantified. Although some researchers have incorporated a greater range of qualitative approaches involving Mixed Methods Research and have attempted to broaden the conceptualization of what defines student achievement, research is still dominated by increasingly complex statistical procedures (Reynolds et al., 2014). Teddlie and Reynolds (2001) outline how the use of SE/EER

research has been mobilized to support both progressive and conservative political policies surrounding education. Researchers such as Datnow, Greene, and Gannon-Slater (2017) and Love, Stiles, Mundry, and Diranna (2008) promote the use of data as an ethical issue of equity in pursuit of closing the “achievement gap.” Jaafar and Anderson (2007), Sattler (2012), and Pinto (2016) outline that the requirement of defining student achievement through standardized tests and other quantifiable measures has become so deeply ingrained in modern political discourse that it has been supported by all major political parties in Ontario. Hargreaves et al. (2018) articulates how a focus on standards, performance measures, and targets defines an *Age of Achievement and Effort*. This era is defined by a narrow focus on literacy and numeracy standards using standardized test results and a focus on targeting specific interventions to students who do not meet these standards to reduce the achievement gap. Hargreaves et al. (2018) state that this approach has been credited with some specific improvements in literacy. This approach to defining student achievement through standardized measures and implementing close system monitoring is an accurate description of the district approach to school improvement planning described in this OIP.

However, student achievement defined by improvement in standardized test scores is not without controversy. Green (2016) and Korte (2017) identify that the favouring of quantitative data over more qualitative approaches has many shortcomings; including ineffective instructional strategies, a narrowing of curriculum, and the potential for unethical behaviour amongst educators. In Ontario, Jaafar and Anderson (2007) and Wang (2017) outline how the narrowing of the curriculum to focus on subjects measured by standardized tests results has resulted in the minimization of other subject areas. The

push to define student achievement only in curriculum areas that can be easily measured reduces the ability of schools to attend to other goals such as citizenship, technological education, and positive social skills (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007). One of the concerns mentioned by principals in implementing the district-mandated school improvement processes is how to engage staff members who teach grades and subject areas not directly accounted for in the required performance targets.

Sattler (2012) and Pinto (2016) identify that, unlike some other jurisdictions, Ontario has not engaged in high-stakes accountability mechanisms where individual schools, principals, and teachers are held to potential punitive consequences for not meeting performance targets. The targets set at the provincial, board, and school level are monitored, and additional supports may be provided. While designed to be supportive in nature, the policies are often interpreted as negative pressure by principals (Pollock & Winton, 2016; Winton & Pollock, 2016).

Aitken, Childs, Coupèrier, and Herbert (2014). highlight several case studies that outline the challenges that school boards, principals, and teachers encounter in relation to development, administration, data entry, and use of diagnostic assessments to monitor student learning. The case studies highlight how there is continued uncertainty regarding how to best track and monitor quantitative measures of student progress. The Aitken et al. (2014) article also identifies the different emphasis that provincial, district, school, and classroom perspectives bring to the value of different assessments. These different perspectives provide a challenge for principals in balancing the implementation of district required assessments. Specifically in the POP, principals are required to use measures of student achievement that are mandated by the district but must negotiate the tension

caused by these measures not being valued by teachers at the school-level (Atkins et al., 2014).

While the use of standardized measures of student achievement have been dominant in Ontario and provides the context for this OIP, Hargreaves et al. (2018) outline how recent focuses on equity and inclusion have influenced this context. Hargreaves et al. (2018) also identify a recent shift in some educational jurisdictions to an *Age of Learning, Well-Being, and Identity*. This new era recognizes that student achievement is complex and intricately connected to multiple factors encompassing a broad conceptualization of well-being, equity, and identity. This more complex understanding of student achievement allows more room for the use of different conceptualizations of student success than the narrow focus on more easily quantifiable standardized test measures. The inclusion of well-being and equity are harder to quantify and involve a much greater number of potential variables and complex interactions. This expansion of how student achievement should be conceptualized is an important consideration in examining the POP as it requires principals to include aspects of student achievement that are not contained within the performance target measures required in the district-mandated school improvement plans.

Role of the Principal. To further examine the POP it will be beneficial to examine how the role of the principal is conceived. The principal is responsible for the direct implementation of district-mandated plans. Examining how the role of the principal is defined and enacted is important for understanding how individual principals will balance implementing district required processes and also engaging teachers in the school improvement planning process in a meaningful way.

Rousmaniere's (2007) history of the principalship highlights how the principal role developed alongside the urbanization of North American cities and the creation of larger schools to provide universal public education. The creation of larger schools with a greater number of teachers required a position separate from the classroom teacher to manage and supervise staff. Brooks and Miles (2008) highlight that the effective supervision of employees was considered a critical component of the principal's job and that professional preparation programs were created with courses on budgeting, finance, and business administration. Language during this time often described the principal as an executive, foreman, and manager (Alliston, 2015; Brooks and Miles, 2008). While the position of principal was filled with individuals who had been experienced teachers, the role descriptions were primarily that of a manager and supervisor and were distinct from the teacher role in the classroom. Historical perspectives of the principal highlight a trend that the actual daily work of principals has never been clearly defined and that there has been an ongoing tension between the responsibilities of the principal to the district and the responsibilities to the school. Hallinger (1992) made clear in his overview that principals have always had to balance multiple roles and approaches. Principals must navigate an inherent power conflict for implementing policy that they often do not have a voice in creating; they are required to enforce mandates without the power to influence the decisions they were being asked to enforce. (Hallinger, 1992; Rousmaniere, 2007). These conflicting duties are also found in more current reports of principal work (Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2017). Fullan (2019) uses the term "nuance" to describe principals that can successfully implement district directions with the integration of local

school context. This tension between being responsible to both the school district and to an individual school is a key consideration in examining the POP.

The intersection between how the role of principal is enacted and how student success is defined is important in understanding how a principal will implement district-mandated improvement processes. Pollock, Wang, and Hauseman (2017) identifies that principals feel constrained by government policies preventing them from being effective in their roles. Crow, Day, and Møller (2017) outline how the pressure to focus on performance target accountability has implications in how principals construct their professional identity in the role and how these accountability pressures impact a principal's relationship with teachers.

In addition to being able to identify the impact of competing policies on their work, principals actively interpret how to best implement required policies within their school. Hallinger (2018) emphasizes that effective principals must be knowledgeable about their local school communities and need to carefully consider the context of a specific school before implementing any initiatives. Pollock and Winton (2016) provide case studies of how principals make decisions that “negotiated the tensions between these multiple competing accountability approaches” (p. 336). Balancing these competing accountability requirements is embedded in the nature of the principal role. Fullan (2019) expands on the increasingly competing requirements for principals in a society becoming ever more complex. At the heart of the POP is the tension that principals report between district-mandated requirements and the needs of their individual school, specifically in relation to school improvement planning.

School Improvement Plans. A key component of school improvement initiatives is the development of a school plan. In the POP, the goals in the Maplelane Elementary school plan are tightly defined by the district. Ohemeng and McCall-Thomas (2013) define the school plan as a central accountability component in New Public Management techniques that have been the outcome of neoliberal policies in Ontario education. Given the centrality that school improvement plans play in improvement efforts, surprisingly little research has specifically addressed the potential effectiveness of such plans. Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas, and Duque (2016) review the history of strategic planning in non-educational organizations and suggest that, while the results are not universal, strategic planning processes show some positive benefit. However their review of literature related to school improvement plans did not find a positive impact. Fernandez's (2011) review of the impact of school improvement plans reveals a small positive correlation between student achievement and school improvement plan quality. Though he cautions that it is unclear if quality school improvement plans are responsible for increased achievement or if effective principals are better at writing quality plans. Hargreaves et al. (2018) identify that more centralized improvement efforts in Ontario have been successful in raising measures of literacy as measured by standardized testing, though this is in reference to top-down reform efforts rather than required school improvement plans. However Fernandez (2011) cautions that the evidence is not clear that the school improvement plan is responsible for driving the improved performance; he also cautions that mandatory, imposed planning may increase undesirable practices.

Meyers and VanGronigen (2019) caution that the seemingly logical appeal of school improvement plans for politicians and senior administrators has not borne results

and increases the likelihood of principals and teachers feeling professionally constrained and engaging in inauthentic compliance behaviour. They identify that when school improvement plans are mandated principals and teachers often feel pressure to pick pre-established goals whether or not they are appropriate to the local school context.

Ohemeng and Mccall-Thomas (2013) describe this compliance as “satisficing” behaviour referencing rational choice theory developed by Herbert Simon. In relation to school improvement plans, this leads principals to prioritize externally driven compliance requirements over authentic, school-driven, improvement. Several studies support that principals in Ontario feel that external accountability measures contribute to workload through additional paperwork and also increase pressure to engage in compliance behaviour (Pinto, 2016; Pollock et al., 2017; Wang, 2017). In the POP, principals report that having performance targets mandated by the district drive school improvement planning creates a tension with teachers within the school and that it is difficult to have effective engagement with school-based staff when they have little involvement in setting the school improvement goals.

Key Organization Theories. The influence of the scientific paradigm and the push for quantification has already been explored earlier in the chapter (Scotland, 2012; Mau, 2019). These paradigms draw heavily from the physical sciences where measurement and data are seen as objective and neutral determinants of knowledge. Hyslop-Margison and Naseem (2007) explain how this application of the scientific method to education is founded on the false premise that all the factors involved in education can be identified and manipulated with the correct methods and procedures. They further identify that this paradigm approaches education from a mechanistic viewpoint where all influences can be

identified and verified. Wrigley (2019) reviews the history of this paradigm's approach to education and the social sciences and provides an extensive critique for why it is an inappropriate model to apply to education. Poli (2013) and Snyder (2013) refer to difficult problems where the variables can be isolated and identified as *complicated* problems. Complicated problems are problems that have many variables and numerous factors to consider, however the relationships between the variables are known and follow rule-based relationships. Solving a complicated problem can involve specific expertise and advanced data analysis.

In comparison, Poli (2013) and Snyder (2013) refer to difficult problems where the relationships between variables are poorly understood as *complex* problems. As the variables in a complex problem are often poorly understood and not rule bound, solving a complex problem is not a matter of increasing the technical capacity of the data analysis. Cohen-Vogel et al. (2015) and Tsoukas and Chia (2002) argue that traditional models of organization change, such as Lewin's freeze-unfreeze-freeze model, are influenced by quantitative scientific research which is centred on the precise identification and control of variables under study. They argue that it is impossible to define and control variables in complex, multivariate environments like health care and education. They also argue that traditional research approaches to organizational change have failed to deliver hoped for improvements in these fields.

While a paradigm based on the physical sciences has limitations translating to environments such as education, alternative paradigms that have developed in the life sciences do offer potential in analyzing these complex, interconnected, multivariate environments. Wrigley (2019) states "schools require a better understanding of open

systems and could even learn from the science of living things, in order to reference openness, scale, stratification, complexity, systemic pressures and human purpose” (p. 157). Complexity theories have their origins in the scientific research into the nonlinear, dynamic systems found in the natural world (Burnes, 2005; Lowell, 2016). Morrison (2010) states *complexity theories* conception and implementation break with stable, simple cause-and-effect models, linear predictability, and a reductionist, analytically atomistic approach to understanding phenomena and management” (p. 376). Burnes (2005) identifies that network theory, chaos theory, and open systems theory are all theories used to explain highly interconnected environments in the natural world. Complexity theories focuses on systems that are composed of numerous interconnected variables (Burnes, 2005; Mason, 2015; Lowell 2016; Schneider & Somers, 2006). Complexity theories are utilized in health education, higher education, and other broader public sector agencies to examine organizational change (Braithwaite, Churruca, Long, Ellis, & Herkes, 2018; Grobman, 2005; Murphy, Rhodes, Meek, & Denyer, 2017; Tsai, Y., Poquet, Gašević, Dawson, & Pardo, 2019). The large number of stakeholders and the multifaceted connections between stakeholders in education systems is why complexity theories is a good match for conceptualizing change in education (Mason, 2015; O’Day, 2002; White, & Levin, 2018).

To utilize complexity theories in understanding change management it is important to outline the essential tenets of the theories. The core components of complexity theories are: systems are complex networks of numerous interconnected variables and the interactions between the variables of are particular importance, systems are constantly evolving and are never constant, and that the constant interaction of the numerous

variables in a system can result in new and unexpected properties (Burnes, 2005; Mason, 2015; Lowell 2016; Schneider & Somers, 2006). These core components of complexity theories are encapsulated by the concepts of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) and emergence.

The concept of CASs views organizations as being composed of multiple networks of numerous interconnected variables and that these variables are constantly interacting with each other and the surrounding environment. Cawsey, Deszca, and Inglos (2016) outline Stacey's foundational work on complexity theories and describe CAS as webs of nonlinear feedback loops that connect individuals and organizations. Lowell (2016) states that the highly interconnected nature of the networks in a complex organization can make the study of individual components of a CAS impossible and that it is not always possible to predict the impact that a change to the organization will have. Denison, Hooijberg, and Quinn (1995) emphasizes the role of interconnected relationships in CAS, the connections within networks, and the connections between different networks. The continued interactions within these networks result in each component affecting the other so that no two interactions are ever the same; the system is continuously evolving. The concept of CAS emphasizes the ability of complex organizations to adapt, learn, and evolve. Complexity theories refer to this process of continual change as adaptation (Baltaci & Balci, 2017; Grobman, 2005; Lovell, 2016; Schneider & Somers, 2006). The importance of organizations continually adapting will be a key concept in examining how complexity theories is applied to leadership approaches in chapter two.

Mason (2015) argues that educational systems can best be thought of as CASs where so many interconnected variables exist that determining specific effect impacts of

any one variable is practically impossible. This focus on initiating change without a firm knowledge of the potential impact is incorporating the property of emergence into the change process. Grobman (2005) identifies emergence as the properties that develop in CAS's through the interaction of the individual variables and not through planned, top-down interventions. It is through the self-organizing interactions of the individual components of the system that new, and often unexpected, outcomes develop (Grobman, 2005; Lovell, 2016; Schneider & Somers, 2006). Mason (2015) argues that since the precise impact of a particular variable is hard to determine in educational organizations that many issues must be addressed from a variety of levels and perspectives simultaneously. As the POP identifies the difficulty principals have in balancing the sometimes-competing needs of the district and the local school, complexity theories provides a framework that principals can use to examine competing demands and recognizes that uncertainty and unpredictability are a natural part of complex organizations.

This section has examined key properties of CASs and emergence within complexity theories and reasons why complexity theories are a useful framework for examining the issues identified in the POP. In the next chapter the leadership implications for how using complexity theories to approach organizational change will be explored.

Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice

To investigate the POP it is important to outline a series of questions to guide inquiry into fully understanding the issues involved before developing possible recommendations. These questions will provide a guide for investigating issues surrounding the POP and lead to a deeper understanding of the problem.

How is student achievement defined? To better understand the POP it is essential to investigate how underlying conceptualizations of how student achievement is defined and how this definition of student achievement influences the school improvement planning process. The definition of student achievement is solely evaluated through quantitative measures and in the school improvement planning process there is no ability of the principal to work with teachers in determining measures that may be used to define student achievement relevant to a particular school context. There is no ability to examine alternate conceptualizations of student achievement that rely on qualitative measures. In the POP, principals are required to utilize indicators of student achievement that are mandated by the district. To better understand that challenges that principals face in enacting school improvement planning it is important to examine the underlying assumptions of how student achievement is conceptualized.

How do principals balance the dual role of being both a manager for the school district and a leader of an individual school? A thorough examination of the POP requires a review of how the role of the school principal is defined. Principals play a unique role in the education system bridging the worlds between the district and the school; being a manager, leader, and teacher. A key concern of principals identified in the POP is the tension that exists between principals being responsible for both implementing the required district practices and at the same time being responsive to the local needs of their individual school. How this role is defined and the role that principals play in implementing school improvement planning processes needs to be examined in the context of the POP.

How does the process of developing school improvement plans impact principal and teacher behaviour in regards to examining instructional practices? The POP centers around how principals can navigate the tension between implementing the district-mandated processes for school improvement planning and ensuring that school improvement processes are tailored to the unique needs of their local school. Principals have identified that many teachers do not appear to be deeply engaged with these required processes but instead complete them for compliance. Investigating how principals and teachers respond to, and are engaged with, different facets of school improvement planning is critical to developing recommendations that will have a greater chance of implementation success.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

The POP is focused on how principals lead school improvement planning while recognizing the tension that exists between the required district process and the needs of the school. While the POP is being examined in the specific context of Maplelane Elementary, the analysis will provide all principals in the district recommendations on how to integrate district requirements with individual school needs. Specifically, the district requires prescriptive performance targets using quantitative measures of student achievement. Principals frequently express that these performance targets are restrictive and may not accurately reflect student achievement at an individual school. This can cause a disconnect that can make it difficult for principals to motivate teachers in committing to the school improvement process. The district performance targets are focused on reading in grade 1, math in grade 6, and a well-being target measured by a student survey focused on grades 4 through 8. One difficulty identified by principals is

how to include staff with teaching assignments that do not have a direct role in these grades or subjects. The change process will be driven by a focus on changing the focus of improvement planning at the school level to promote an accountability system focused on the relationships and professional responsibilities of the principal and teachers in the school. The school improvement process will recognize the requirement to meet the district performance targets but the main driver of the school improvement process will focus on the engagement of teachers in continuous professional learning.

By grounding their approach in complexity theories of organizational change, principals will recognize that school environments can be envisioned as a CAS where competing demands and priorities can exist simultaneously. Instead of viewing competing demands as a problem, principals recognize that they are an inherent component of organizations and that the tension between competing demands can be harnessed to drive organizational improvement. By embracing the complexity of educational systems, principals can be open and transparent with stakeholders regarding demands and initiatives that may appear paradoxical. Aalvi and Gill (2017) identify that being open, transparent, and involving stakeholders is an important component of Authentic leadership. By embracing complexity, principals can address seemingly paradoxical demands simultaneously. A complexity theories perspective on organizational change focuses the leader's role in creating standards for the organization while empowering employees to plan and enact initiatives within these frameworks. With the overall analysis utilizes a complexity theories framework, the complexity leadership theory (CLT) identified by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) will highlight a specific leadership approach that allows principals to balance mandated district requirements and at the same

time maintain a focus on the professional learning of school staff, principals nurture an adaptive school organization that can continuously adapt to the multiple variables present in complex school environments. As an Authentic leader can draw from a variety of approaches it is consistent with a CLT approach in that leader must focus on the relationships with stakeholders. A fuller examination of CLT will take place in the next chapter.

This vision of a school that is constantly learning and adapting is encapsulated in the concept of *Collaborative Professionalism*. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) define collaborative professionalism as:

... how teachers and other educators transform teaching and learning together to work with all students to develop fulfilling lives of meaning, purpose and success. It is evidence-informed, but not data-driven, and involves deep and sometimes demanding dialogue, candid but constructive feedback, and continuous collaborative inquiry. Finally, collaborative inquiry is embedded in the culture and life of the school, where educators actively care for and have solidarity with each other as fellow-professionals as they pursue their challenging work together in response to the cultures of their students, the society and themselves (p. 3).

This approach allows for principals and teachers to work together to ensure that a school is constantly learning to adapt to new challenges.

Though the concept of collaborative professionalism addresses an approach for engaging teachers in the school improvement planning process, principals must be concurrently aware of the district-mandated requirements. Individual school principals do not have the agency to alter district mandates, but principals have a long history of

balancing school and district roles (Hallinger, 1992; Rousmaniere, 2007). Winton and Pollock (2016) describe specific case studies of principals in Ontario and how their leadership is informed by both standardized assessments and richer, more contextualized factor of student progress.

Collaborative professionalism is focused on developing a culture within the school staff that prioritizes a sense of professional accountability towards student learning. *Culture-Based Accountability* (Fullan, 2019; Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015) specifies that performance targets “are useful as guideposts but are not sufficient to cause improvement” (p. 12). They argue that effective collaboration processes that focus on teacher learning leads to the creation of an internal, horizontal professional accountability between teachers. Fullan (2019) identifies that culture-based accountability requires principals to be involved in the learning but not directive of the learning. The principal must develop trust with teachers and value their autonomy. Accountability comes not from verification and performance evaluation but from principal interaction and feedback with the learning process. A school where a principal nurtures a sense of collaborative professionalism will create a culture-based accountability that exists between school staff and is not dependent on the external control of district mandated performance targets.

Guided by the overall principles of Authentic leadership and utilizing a complexity theories approach to organizational change, the CLT framework will be utilized to examine the POP. The concept of Collaborative Professionalism aligns with the CLT approach when applied to the school setting and will be also be incorporated into the analysis.

Organizational Change Readiness

The OIP addresses a need identified by principals but is not addressing an official district priority. The OIP is focused on recommendations for my individual school in implementing a school improvement planning process that balances the demands of the school district and my specific school context. Within my school, individual teachers express an interest in participating in ongoing professional development. However these teachers often state a desire to pursue learning that is not aligned with the District focus areas. As other principals share concerns about balancing these competing needs the recommendations of the OIP will be applicable to other principals within the district.

In utilizing the Cawsey et al. (2016) Change Path model for assessing the readiness of an organization for change, this OIP is hard to classify since the change being considered is not being driven by the senior management or the formal district plan; it is being driven by difficulties that principals, as middle managers, are experiencing in implementing the approved policies. Cawsey et al.'s (2016) model would argue that there is an individual readiness for change amongst principals but that there is currently little broader organizational readiness for change at the broader district level.

As described in earlier sections, the district has a requirement that each school commit to quantitative improvement targets identified in reading (elementary), math, graduation (secondary) and well-being. Originally, schools were given some freedom to identify a school specific goal as long as it aligned with the area of focus. To allow for the district-level collating of data across schools, in the past two years, every school must use common measures for each improvement area and every school must use identical wording for each goal. Principals fill in numbers specific to the school within a set goal

statement; the process is very prescribed. Recent training for principals has focused on the strategies of Results-Based Accountability (Friedman, 2015) and the 4 Disciplines of Execution (McChesney, Covey & Huling, 2012) where goals are quantitative and specific. These strategies focus on having managers “keep a compelling scoreboard” of progress towards organizational goals. The current organizational state is becoming increasingly centralized and prescriptive, allowing principals a reduced amount of professional autonomy (Ball, 2003; Pinto 2016).

With the required district mandates regarding school improvement planning becoming more prescriptive, conversations amongst principals indicate that the need for strategies to assist in navigating effective implementation at the school level is increasing. In the context of the OIP, principals can only operate within the district framework provided; eliminating or modifying the district requirements is beyond the scope of the OIP. The challenge that principals state within my district has also been documented within the principal role across jurisdictions. Ryan (2017) describes how principals are embedded within their organizations and cannot easily engage in behaviour that challenges policies or practices of that organization. Ball (2003) identifies that principals have little agency to deviate from performance standards that they are not a part of determining. Pinto (2016) description of how all government [and organizational] policies undergo a process of enactment as individuals translate policy into actions within their local environment. She distinguishes between the implementation and enactment of a policy; with implementation being a more impartial, technical approach and enactment recognizes the numerous complex interaction personal and social factors. The OIP must recognize that principals are often unable to directly influence government or district

requirements but are also responsible for the implementation within their individual school.

Though the focus of the district school board is on quantitative performance targets, there is a developing policy direction that indicates that some recent changes in policy direction provide a potential avenue for addressing the challenges identified in the POP. Introduced during the earlier examination of the literature around the conceptualization of student achievement Hargreaves et al. (2018) articulate a change in Ontario education policy from an Age of Achievement to an Age of Equity and Well-Being. The Age of Achievement was defined by a focus on closing the student achievement gap, primarily in literacy and numeracy, as measured by results of standardized testing. In this phase, school districts drive change in top-down initiatives controlled by central large-scale reforms, very much in line with the current mandated performance targets within the district. In describing this phase, the work by Hargreaves et al. (2018) highlights that a use of EQAO results was seen as a positive source of accountability by senior district officials while school-based staff felt that standardized test results led to broader negative impacts. However, the report also indicates that school-based staff were positive about an overall focus on improving instruction. Hargreaves et al. (2018) argue that successful systems must place an increased focus on teacher-led professional learning. This is the concept of Collaborative Professionalism mentioned earlier.

In the following chapters, the framework of complexity theories will be utilized to examine the leadership approaches required to implement change within the OIP.

Chapter 2 – Planning and Development

My Authentic leadership lens and the Integrated leadership approach of the OLF require a principal to examine leadership approaches that prompt flexibility and adaptability. Introduced in the first chapter, complexity theories of organizational change provide a useful framework for approaching change leadership. This section will outline the foundations of complexity leadership theory (CLT), connect CLT to the POP, recommend possible solutions, and review ethical considerations.

Leadership Approaches to Change

As outlined in the first chapter, Authentic leadership allows a leader to use a variety of frameworks to meet the needs of individual stakeholders and context. Consistent with Authentic leadership, CLT focuses on the relationships of stakeholders and formal leaders within an organization and how a leader is taking the context of the specific situation into account (Aalvi & Gill, 2017). This section will outline the components of CLT which consist of adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership. These leadership components of CLT will be connected to the POP.

Lichtenstein et al. (2006) and Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) argue that traditional theories of leadership were developed from research on organizations in the Industrial era and do not translate well to the modern knowledge-based era. They apply the principles underlying complexity theories to the process of leadership and outline a specific leadership approach referred to as complexity leadership theory (CLT). Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) argue that unlike traditional leadership theories that are predicated on linear organization systems, CLT allows leaders to more effectively lead organizations that are composed of numerous networks of interconnected stakeholders. complexity theories of

organizational change are utilized in health education, higher education, and other broader public sector agencies (Braithwaite, Churruca, Long, Ellis, & Herkes, 2018; Grobman, 2005; Murphy, Rhodes, Meek, & Denyer, 2017; Tsai, Y., Poquet, Gašević, Dawson, & Pardo, 2019). Fullan (2001, 2019) connects the challenges of modern society to the importance of effective leadership at the school level. He also argues for leadership approaches that recognize the complexities of a modern knowledge-based society (Fullan, 2019). O'Day (2002) also argues that complexity theories are specifically useful for examining schools and performance accountability frameworks in relation to school improvement planning. She argues that traditional accountability frameworks place too much emphasis on the impact of any one individual and do not adequately account for the nonlinear and multivariable factors that influence student performance. These tensions are found in the POP in the matching of a small number of prescribed performance targets while at the same time accounting for numerous factors that define local school contexts. The CLT framework advocated by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) provides a leadership approach that principals can utilize in addressing the challenges identified in the POP and mentioned by Fullan (2001, 2010) and O'Day (2002) in wider school environments.

Lichtenstein et al. (2006) and Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) outline three core leadership foci within CLT: adaptive, administrative, and enabling. Though in more recent work the names of these leadership components have changed to: entrepreneurial, organizational, and adaptive space (Arena & Uhl-Bien; 2016). I have continued to use the original, more prevalent terminology as adaptive and administrative leadership terminology is also utilized in other educational resources and more familiar to educators (Katz, Dack, &

Malloy, 2018). Adaptive leadership refers to the new learning and innovation that occurs in response to tensions within a CAS. This leadership is not defined by formal positions or titles rather it develops from the interactions between the different individuals within the system. Adaptive leadership is a function of an organization to adjust and evolve to emergent issues. Administrative leadership refers to the actions of those who hold a formal managerial position within an organization and is a function of the bureaucratic structures within a hierarchical organization. Setting goals and strategies, designing and implementing organizational structures, and managing the distribution of resources are all examples of administrative leadership. Enabling leadership is the behaviours that occur to harness the tension between administrative and adaptive conditions within an organization. Enabling leadership is the ability of a leader to create conditions within an organization to positively harness the tensions of entanglement to innovate and move an organization forward. Enabling leadership is not defined by formal position and can occur at all levels of an organization.

Northouse (2018) identifies CLT as a leadership approach that does not focus on the characteristics of the person in a position of leadership but instead emphasizes the work of the followers. Unlike many leadership theories that focus on the behaviour of the leader, CLT is focused on the social relationships between those within an organization (Murphy et al., 2017). Mendes, Gomes, Marques-Quinteiro, Lind, and Curral (2016) identify that focusing solely on leaders as individuals within an organization limits the understanding of any analysis of initiatives within that organization. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) focus on leaders developing an understanding of the processes existing within an organization, and the relationships between stakeholders, and not the attributes of the leaders themselves.

Schneider and Somers (2006) describe CLT as acting as an “indirect catalyst” and not leadership as formal, top-down positional decision-making. They indicate that leaders must be capable of responding to emergent situations in an organization that were not predicted.

CLT has been chosen as the leadership approach to address the challenges in the OIP as it is an approach that can help principals directly address the sometimes competing needs of the district and the local school. As the POP identifies, implementing prescribed school improvement targets required by the district and simultaneously leading school improvement planning in a manner that engages teachers is often seen as contradictory by principals. Denison et al. (1995) emphasize that effective leaders must be able to perform contradictory behaviour in a manner that still maintains credibility. CLT provides a leadership approach where the competing demands of the principal create a tension necessary for positive change to occur. Utilizing the components of CLT outlined by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) the formal positional leadership of the principal position is encapsulated within the administrative leadership component of CLT; principals are responsible for the management and resourcing of their school. The adaptive component of CLT would include both the formal and informal structures for professional learning that exist within a school. CLT views the tension between district mandates and local school context identified in the POP, not as an inherent problem, but as a natural tension that is bound to exist between variables in any large organization. The tension between bureaucratic district mandates and the adaptive components of local school context allow principals to utilize enabling leadership to harness and catalyze school change. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) identify two primary roles for enabling leaders to successfully manage this tension. First, enabling leaders must create organizational

conditions to promote flexible thinking and innovation; this requires adaptive leadership skills. Second, enabling leaders must create structures that allow for knowledge and innovations that develop in adaptive contexts to be formally incorporated into the administrative structures of an organization. Enabling leadership successfully connects adaptive and administrative components of an organization. The following sections will further examine how the CLT framework of adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership will drive change recommendations to address the POP.

Framework for leading the Change Process (How to Change?)

How to Conceptualize Change? In examining how to lead a change process within an organization it is important to first examine how change is conceptualized. Despite common comments such as “the only constant is change,” the traditional view of organizations is that there is a static regular state and change is an intermittent process that alters the regular static state (Cohen-Vogel et al. 2015; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). The following section will outline that complexity theories offer an alternative framework for viewing organization change and that CLT provides a leadership approach for leading the change required in the POP.

To address the limitations of viewing change as an episodic process Tsoukas and Chia (2002) believe that change should be thought of as the natural, continuous state of an organization; change is the norm and not the exception. This view considers change as a constantly evolving process and not singular defined occurrences that can be easily planned and managed. Building on this understanding of change Weick and Quinn (1999) use a model that compares change processes as either continuous or episodic. They categorize popular models of organizational change such as Lewin’s freeze-unfreeze-

freeze model or Kotter's eight stage model as episodic change where change is "infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional" (p. 365). However, these episodic models of change do not consider processes of feedback and adaptation that both leaders and other stakeholders are constantly engaged in (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Lichtenstein et al. (2006) and Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) argue that these linear models of organizational change are not suitable for analyzing change in modern, knowledge intensive organizations. Complexity theories views organizations as networks of nonlinear feedback loops that learn and adapt from each other in a series of ongoing processes that address the needs of leaders to view change as an ongoing process of continuous improvement (Mendes et al., 2016; Tsai et al., 2019; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Cawsey et al. (2016) state that "change leaders need to comprehend the complexity and interrelatedness of organizational components" (p. 101). They reference complexity theories as a model to highlight the interactive and dynamic nature of organizations and their continued evolution over time. Cawsey et al. (2016) highlight the importance that complexity theories place on small initial actions have on large later changes and that leaders should focus on smaller immediate changes rather than long term planned strategic visions. Cohen-Vogel et al. (2015) outline why approaches that treat change as an ongoing process where continuous improvement is the goal is a more useful approach to take. Mason (2015) outlines how complexity theories can be a better description of schools than more linear organizational models. He describes how schools are dynamic decentralised networks that constantly respond and adapt to the unpredictable and every changing communities and societies in which they exist. The ability of complexity theories to provide a framework that allows individual schools to continuously adapt and

evolve to an ever-changing environment makes it a useful framework to utilize in this OIP.

CLT views change more from the relationships between all participants in an organization than about overemphasizing the actions of formal leaders. These changes occur in the dynamic of relationships between individuals within an organization and are difficult for formal leaders to control (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Kershner (2018) articulates how the focus on the relationships within a school culture is captured in using a leadership approach based on complexity theories. The importance of focusing on other school members for leadership and not just the principal is also mentioned in other leadership approaches such as shared, collaborative, and distributive leadership (Hartley, 2010; Heck & Hallinger, 2010). Littlecott et al. (2019) describe how the focus on relationship networks in educational settings can be a valuable framework for understanding change. In the POP, the understanding of school culture and the involvement of teachers is a key part of principals being able to adapt school improvement planning to local school context. While other leadership approaches also focus on the capabilities of teachers in a school, and not just the role of the principal, CLT provides an overall framework of how the power of relationships can be utilized in a situation where top-down district requirements must be met at the same time as engaging teachers in the individual school.

In viewing change as both a continuous process that is always present in an organization and that change leadership exists in the relationships between stakeholders in an organization, leaders will be able to use the three types of leadership that comprise CLT (administrative, adaptive, and enabling) to analyse change readiness.

Adaptive Leadership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) indicate that adaptive leadership is not tied to formal positions in an organization like administrative leadership; adaptive leadership is an emergent property of the complex social dynamics within an organization. Adaptive leadership focuses on creating the conditions for innovation and creativity; how can individuals in an organization find new ways of operating. When utilizing this leadership approach, leaders focus on creating the conditions for new information and different viewpoints to come together (Murphy et al., 2017).

In the context of the POP, principals use this leadership approach to create the conditions for individual teachers and school teams to identify and analyse student needs in the local school and to innovate new approaches to tackle these identified needs. Arena and Uhl-Bien (2016) indicate that adaptive leadership should focus on processes that are asset-based, focus on problem-solving, and community-driven. The focus of the principal in this approach is to provide teachers with a structure for collaboration and ensure a sense of trust in safely putting forward new ideas.

Administrative Leadership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) describe administrative leadership as the hierarchical and bureaucratic functions within an organization where a leader is focused on vision building, strategic planning, and resource allocation. Though managerial and bureaucratic leadership functions are too often downplayed, Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) emphasize that this leadership function creates the structures for adaptive leadership to occur. Administrative leadership plays a key role in incorporating innovations and creativity into institutional knowledge and processes. Morrison (2010) brings forward concerns that CLT is sometimes thought of as a leadership approach with little to no structure where individuals are left to self-organize. He counters this stating

“self-organization is not the same as laissez-faire” (p. 383), in CLT administrative leadership plays an important role in setting the overall vision and developing procedural structures within an organization but managers must distribute leadership and responsibility without micromanaging duties allotted to stakeholders.

In the context of the POP, administrative leadership is primarily focused on the principal’s role in incorporating the district requirements into the local school processes. Hallinger (1992) and Pollock et al. (2017) outline how incorporating the policy requirements of district and government has been a necessary but challenging component of the principal role. The first chapter outlined how neoliberal policy influences have led to a trend towards more centralized and controlled processes where site-based managers have less individual control and decision-making authority (Ball, 2008; Hursh, 2016)

Enabling Leadership. Arena and Uhl-Bien (2016) mention that the role of leadership is often thought of as managing and reducing conflict within an organization. However, they stress that conflict created “by the dynamic tension between the two systems [administrative and adaptive] is actually the key to innovation” (p.24) in organizations. Mendes et al. (2016) describes enabling leadership when a leader “integrates the adaptive/administrative interface” (p.303). Lewis (2019) would refer to enabling leadership as assisting with the diffusion of change within an organization; how to take innovations and incorporate them into the processes of the wider organization. Murphy et al. (2017) describe how an enabling leader connects different groups both within and outside an organization, works to provide meaning to new information and current events, creates and encourages productive tension, and formalises innovations to give them legitimacy.

In the context of the POP the enabling leadership approach provides principals with a framework in which to balance local school priorities with required district mandates. Katz, Dack, and Malloy (2018) emphasize that principals should approach opposing demands from an “either-or” approach to one of “and.” Enabling leadership is an approach that principals can utilize to not only recognize the tensions between district and school needs but to view the tension as a constructive force to promote innovation and continuous improvement. Principals can examine how the structure of teacher learning teams can be aligned with district priorities but still given professional latitude to investigate these priorities in a manner that best fits the local school context.

This section has outlined the three components of CLT: adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership. Though each component of CLT is describe separately, the work of principals is to use the framework to analyse the local context of their school and to examine the interaction and balance between the different leadership components.

Critical Organizational Analysis (What to change?)

The POP focuses on how the principal enacts school improvement processes within their school while simultaneously balancing district requirements and empowering teachers. Chapter 1 investigated how definitions of student achievement, the role of the principal, and school improvement planning processes influence the understanding of the POP. CLT will be used to frame how these needed changes align with adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership approaches. In the POP, principals can overemphasize administrative leadership in attempting to meet the district requirements. To truly drive school improvement principals must increase the attention payed to the adaptive and enabling leadership components of CLT.

Oversimplification. Albert Einstein is often quoted as saying “make things as simple as possible, but not simpler.” While the goal of simplicity is often sought after in leadership and management (Rego, 2010), less attention is paid to the dangers of oversimplification. Baltaci and Balcı (2017) outline the danger of organizations trying to simplify complex situations; they warn that simplifying solutions to complex problems do not result in improved organizational outcomes. O’Day (2002) warns that simplification of school improvement can negatively limit the range of instructional practices within a school. She cautions that oversimplification of the factors impacting student achievement can result in schools reverting to a small number of instructional strategies that have been successful in past experience but may not be appropriate for the current challenge. Fullan (2014) and Rego (2010) discuss the concept of “simplexity” to describe the process of recognizing a complex issue and then identifying the smallest number of key factors that will make a difference. They emphasize that this ability to identify a key number of factors is extremely important in leading change. However in later writing, Fullan (2019) cautions that failing to identify and address the complexity of school settings leads to “surface leadership” that is ineffective in bringing about improvements in student achievement.

One of the management approaches promoted by the district senior leadership is the *4 Disciplines of Execution* (McChesney, Covey & Huling, 2012) which encourages managers to identify and stick to a small number of “wildly important goals.” This approach requires a team to set only one or two specific and quantitative goals. As described in the Organizational Readiness section in the first chapter, principals within the district have increasingly expressed frustration with centralized control of the school

improvement process. The district requires all schools to use the exact same metrics to measure school performance. Approaches such as the *4 Disciplines of Execution* are examples of Performance Management (PM) (Ohemeng & Mccall-Thomas, 2013). Ball (2003) and Pinto (2016) describe PM approaches and the loss in professional autonomy of teachers and principals when government policy, in this case district improvement targets, are overly prescribed.

Latham and Locke (2006) and Ordonez et al. (2009) also caution that organizations often expect improvement goals to be reached within short timelines. Their research emphasizes that it is unrealistic to expect goals in complex organizations to show significant improvement within short timeframes. Ordonez et al. (2009) also caution that the pressure to meet improvement goals in unrealistically short timeframes can have negative consequences to employee motivation and increase the chances for unethical behaviour within the organization.

Schools themselves are complex environments with a variety of stakeholders and numerous variables impacting performance. The relationships between stakeholders and variables means that schools are in a state of continual change. Using the concept of double-loop learning, even when a relationship is identified and examined, the feedback from the present situation impacts the future status of that factor (Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012; Fullan, 2019).

Using the CLT framework, oversimplification can be considered an over emphasis of the administrative leadership domain and a lack of consideration for adaptive leadership. There is also a fundamental failure to recognize the multiple variables and interconnectivity of complex organizations like school districts. Fullan (1997) states that

there is no “silver bullet” (p. 7) in addressing school improvement. He recognizes that it is not always possible to identify specific cause and effect relationships among key components in organizational change management. Mason (2015) argues that educational systems have so many interconnected variables that determining specific effect impacts of any one variable is practically impossible

In the context of the POP, while principals do not have the agency to change the requirement to report on the required district goals, principals do have the ability to include additional factors in school improvement planning. Recognizing that the district mandated performance targets are too narrow to lead effective school improvement, principals must keep in mind the simplicity principle and identify the smallest number of factors needed to make a difference (Fullan, 2014) but at the same time capture the richness of the complex relationships within a school.

Overly Focused on Performance Goals. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2012) summarizes research for school leaders that promotes the use of goal setting with performance targets to improve student achievement. The senior leadership of the school district actively promotes the use of performance management through Results-Based Accountability (Friedman, 2015) and the 4 Disciplines of Execution (McChesney et al, 2012) where goals are quantitative and specific. Using specific quantitative goals to improve performance is support by Lantham and Locke (2002) who outline the history of goal setting theory and their own influential work in establishing goal setting as a key change driver in organizations. They demonstrate numerous studies have shown that have specific, challenging goals can increase performance and motivation for tasks.

However, research highlighting goal setting behaviour is starting to question the effectiveness of goals in different situations. Though specific improvement targets help performance in many situations, the more complex the ultimate goal, the less impactful performance goals become (Latham & Locke, 2006). In fact, Ordonez et al. (2009) identify that when trying to accomplish complex goals a focus on performance targets can be detrimental. They draw specific connections between complex situations and the fact that performance goals detrimentally narrow the attention of group members. Ordonez et al. (2009) are clear that performance goals lead to an oversimplification of complex factors and are not beneficial for leading improvement in these environments. Lathan and Locke (2006) identify that *nongoa performance dimensions* can also suffer when an organization emphasis performance goals. This means that the negative influence of performance goals impacts the wider organization and not just the area of goal focus. Donohoo and Katz (2019) state that school improvement driven by performance goals can have negative effects including withdrawal of effort and lack of interest. Jaafar and Anderson (2007) connect this to Ontario education by summarizing how the focus on quantitative targets in relation to standardized test results leads to an increased focus on the narrow academic standards that are measured on the tests and that other areas of the curriculum are minimized.

Utilizing the framework of CLT, a reliance of performance goals to drive improvement in complex organizations such as schools, is an overreliance on administrative leadership and a failure to adequately consider adaptive leadership approaches.

Specifically in the OIP, principals cannot change the fact that a performance goal is required by the district but they do control how much this performance goal is emphasized with staff in school improvement planning.

Lack of Participatory Decision Making. Fullan (2019) “The more complex the problem, the more that people with the problem must be part and parcel of the solution.” (p. 9). CLT has a fundamental belief that leadership and organizational change need to be examined through a focus on the relationships between the different components of a system. CLT envisions the role of the formal leader as one who enables the conditions for others in the organization to work together (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). Tsai et al. (2019) state that adaptive and emergent leadership are bottom-up processes that are effective precisely because they are non-hierarchical. Mendes et al. (2016) emphasize that a key component of CLT is that decision making is occurring when members of an organization work together to solve challenging problems. These teams respond to challenges as they arise in their specific organizational environment and do not require a leader to explicitly direct the team.

Ordonez et al. (2009) identify that a focus on performance goals can harm cooperation within teams. Latham and Locke (2006) caution that performance goals can reduce both cooperation and risk taking within a team. Locke and Latham (2002) state that while assigned goals can be effective in motivating a team if team members have a clear understanding of the purpose, task performance is better overall for goals where team members are active participants in formulating the goals. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) emphasize that traditional top-down leadership approaches are not conducive to modern knowledge-based society and that the balance of adaptive, administrative, and emergent

leadership is required to ensure that teams are given the freedom to innovate and not be limited by top-down constraints.

The required district improvement planning process dictates both the required focus of improvement and the specific measure. Neither principals or teachers at individual schools have direct input into this process. Leithwood (2012) in research surrounding the *Ontario Leadership Framework* identifies that having the principal share leadership with other school stakeholders increases student achievement and facilitates school improvement planning processes.

Failure to Account for School Context. The final component of addressing what needs to change in the organizational analysis is that the current district requirements for school improvement planning requires all schools to focus on the same performance targets regardless of individual school context. A study presented by the district research department has found that school principals identify different areas of school focus depending on the social economic status of the neighbourhood their school is located in (citation withheld for anonymization). However, all schools are required to have performance targets in the same instructional areas using the same measures. During conversations regarding school planning, principals voice difficulties in aligning district requirements with the specific needs of their school.

Armenakis and Harris (2009) stress that it is important to examine if schools within a district are struggling with the same concerns, are the root causes of the struggles the same, and are the interventions for the struggle the same between schools. In an example from health education, Braithwaite et al. (2018) identify that too often successful initiatives in one setting are assumed to be effective in other settings when initiatives

actually show tremendous variation between different sites. Hallinger (2018) reviews the importance of principals considering the context of individual schools when focusing on school improvement. Leithwood (2012) cautions about applying the *Ontario Leadership Framework* in the same manner across all schools. Clearly context matters, Fullan (2019) refers to how effective leaders use “nuance” to adjust their practice to specific contexts. Katz, Dack, and Malloy (2018) refer to the “literal principal” when referring to when principals do not adjust district requirements to local school needs.

The failure to address the context of individual schools is a culmination of the limitations of oversimplification, a narrow focus on performance goals, and a lack of participation in decision-making. These organizational limitations overly focus on administrative leadership and fail to appropriately balance the adaptive and enabling leadership components of CLT.

Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice (What to do?)

Throughout this OIP, change has been conceptualized as a continuous, ongoing process that is constantly occurring in organizations (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Ongoing change is the regular state of an organization and is not an episodic timeframe to specifically plan and manage (Weick & Quinn, 1990). CLT has been examined as a framework in which to address the needed changes within the organization since complexity theories also views organizations in a constant state of change. The recommendations to the POP focus on making sure that the three leadership components of CLT, administrative, adaptive, and enabling leadership are all incorporated (Arena & Uhl-Bien, 2016; Baltaci & Balci, 201).

It is also important to remember that the recommendations being made are specific to the role of the leadership of a principal within the school. Recommendations that would require changes to the overall school planning process were not address as they would be beyond the agency of an individual principal. The principal is required to follow the requirements of the district and does not have the agency to omit these requirements, however the principal does have the ability to address how these requirements are implemented. It is the leadership approach taken during this implementation that Fullan (2019) states separates effective and ineffective principals.

Morrison (2010) recognizes that CLT is sometimes criticized for its lack of predictive power as it is based on the belief that the non-linear, interconnected nature of CAS leads to emergent conditions that a leader cannot always predict or control. This focus on emergent properties and multiple interconnected variables makes monitoring difficult. The district school improvement targets are monitored in a cyclical review process that has its foundation in Denning's *Continuous Improvement Model* (Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012). The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model, often referred to as learning cycles in Ontario school boards, is so integrated into professional resources provided to principals and teachers that the underlying theoretical connections are not cited in provincial resources, the model is the primary method in which educators in Ontario envision organization improvement. There are district required templates for monitoring the school annual plan and for recording the work of school learning teams. Principals in the District are also required to complete the template found in Katz et al. (2019) to record learning in regard to the school annual plan. The recommendations in this OIP can be incorporated into these documents and it would be an unproductive

increase in workload to generate a new monitoring mechanism. The recommendations for this OIP must fit into an existing reporting or monitoring mechanism. Recommendations that would require new reporting or monitoring mechanism were not included.

To address the POP, three recommendations will be put forward: adopt learning goals over performance goals, focus on teacher collective efficacy, and the utilization of a broader conceptualization of student achievement in school improvement planning.

Focus on Learning Goals, not Performance Goals. The first recommendation is that principals prioritize learning goals for staff over performance goals.

Latham and Locke (2006) review two different types of goals: learning (or mastery) goals and performance goals. As the name suggests, learning goals are focused on the process of learning and knowledge generation to complete a new task. A learning goal is primarily a cognitive process that involves planning, monitoring, and evaluating progress towards learning a new skill. A performance goal is a target set to identify the desired performance of a task or skill that is already learned. Dweck and Leggett (1988) identify that learning goals are more effective for promoting learning in students. Their study found that students motivated by learning goals demonstrate more effective problem-solving strategies and showed greater motivation for dealing with difficult problems. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) identify that leaders in formal management positions exercise the administrative leadership component of CLT when formulating goals and allocating resources for goal achievement. While CLT does not differentiate between performance or learning goals, Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) indicate that within an organization a leader should always be considering the balance between administrative and adaptive leadership. They caution that a focus that is overly administrative and does not consider

adaptive needs will reduce an organization's ability to engage in new learning. Lowell (2016) identifies that a leader utilizing CLT must "closely monitor but loosely manage" employee work.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, performance goals have potential negative consequences when applied to complex, knowledge-based environments such as schools (Ordonez et al., 2009; Welsh et al., 2019). The quantitative targets required by the district focus solely on meeting performance goals. Fullan (2001) states that using data to make leadership decisions is not about creating ever more complex databases, it is focused on how individuals within an organization understand and use the information, especially in relationships with others within the organization. The negative consequences of performance goals indicated by Welsh et al. (2019) are similar to the negative consequences of standardized testing in schools as outlined by Koretz (2017) where there is an overemphasis of the final result and little focus on the methods used to reach the goal. Latham and Locke (2006) caution that a reliance on performance goals can reduce attention to components of practice that are not measured. In the POP, many principals express difficulty in motivating teachers with the required district goals when they target specific grades (grade 1 for reading and grade 6 for math). While principals do not have the authority to abandon the required performance goals, they should primarily focus on learning goals in leading the school improvement process. This observation is supported by research from Ciani, Summers, and Easter (2008) who found that schools that place a greater emphasis on performance goals have teachers report a decreased level of community with their colleagues and a decreased self-efficacy in their instructional effectiveness.

Donohoo and Katz (2019) identify a focus on goal direct behaviour as a key component of effective school leadership but caution that the goal emphasis should be on learning (mastery) goals. They state that performance goals have little impact on increasing the intrinsic motivation of a team to meet a goal and that pressure to reach these targets can result in teacher stress and burnout. Both Donohoo and Katz (2019) and Latham and Locke (2006) emphasize that having clear goals for teams to achieve is crucial to effective performance but that environments such as schools require the goals to be focused on learning. Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, and Hargreaves (2015) specifies that performance targets “are useful as guideposts, but are not sufficient to cause improvement” (p. 12).

Specifically in the POP, the principal must emphasize learning goals in their direct interaction with staff. This does not necessarily require a change in school learning team structure, just a change in the goals emphasized. The accountability requirements of the principal role still require the tracking and reporting on the district targets, but these targets should be seen as an eventual outcome of the learning goal and not overly emphasized in short-term performance. Donohoo and Katz (2019) emphasize that if there is quality implementation of intentional learning goals then performance measures of student achievement should rise as a result. Principals must place a priority on teachers maintaining an adaptive stance to their work. A principal must use administrative leadership to address the required district performance targets but keep teachers in the school focused on adaptive learning; it is through the CLT concept of enabling leadership that a principal can address this. Enabling leadership is the conditions that a principal utilizes to bring together teams of teachers to promote adaptive thinking. A key

component of CLT and the enabling leadership component is the ability of a leader to take advantage of tension within a system generate creative new thinking (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). A principal using CLT will recognize tension and use it to promote discussion and problem-solving. Though teacher learning teams have a defined learning goal, the principal can inject discussion about the district performance targets to generate discussion and potential new ideas.

Collective Efficacy. The second recommendation is that principals focus school improved around teacher-led learning teams.

Only the administrative leadership component of CLT is defined by a formal managerial position, adaptive and emergent leadership exists within the relationships between the members of an organization and can exist at all levels of an organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Schneider and Somers (2006) emphasize the social nature of the adaptive leadership component of CLT and that formal leaders can facilitate these relationships within organizations. Fullan (2014) discusses that one of the most impactful leadership practices that a principal can engage in is setting up collaborative structures that develop teacher professional capital. He quotes DuFour and Marzano (2009) stating “time devoted to building the capacity of teachers to work in teams is far better spent than time devoted to observing individual teachers” (p. 67)

Locke and Latham (2002) outline that the social-cognitive theory of self-efficacy is a major factor in an individual being successful in achieving goals. This finding of goal-setting theory can be extended beyond individual beliefs to the beliefs of groups or teams is a concept referred to as collective efficacy (Donohoo and Katz, 2019). Donohoo, Hattie, and Ellis (2018) identify a high concept of collective efficacy amongst a school

staff as one of the highest effective size measures on student achievement. They identify that teaching staffs with high collective efficacy demonstrate a focus on student learning, hold strong beliefs that students can learn and achieve, and place a strong value on collaboration as colleagues.

The specific recommendations in regard to the POP is that the principal must focus on the structure and function of how teachers are working in learning teams. This is centred around the adaptive and enabling leadership components of CLT. Lichtenstein et al. (2006) states that promoting adaptive leadership is a form of distributive leadership that is not focused on formal leadership position. They state that formal leaders can influence social dynamics within a team by paying attention to the relationships that formulate the group identity. Mendes et al. (2016) identify that the key focus of enabling leadership is the paying attention to how team members are working together and that it is through the interactions formed by working together that new organizational learning occurs. The focus for the principal is how teachers are placed in teams, the boundaries for the teams to work in, when teams are provided time to work together, and the relationships between the members of the team.

Hargreaves and Connor (2018) suggest the use of structure protocols to “separate criticism from the critic” and to keep conversations focused on topic. The existing Ministry of Education (2010) resource on *Teacher Collaborative Inquiry* is a useful resource for principals for structuring collaborative learning processes. Donohoo (2013) includes a number of templates that can be used for teacher-centred collaborative inquiry. Principals can use the records of these templates to provide evidence of learning team

work and accomplishments throughout the year. This would provide for a collection of evidence towards school improvement that is not solely quantitatively focused.

Katz et al. (2018) caution that collaboration by itself is not enough to drive improvement. Donohoo and Katz (2019) identify that to ensure the quality implementation of school improvement planning a principal must focus on teachers working together with a focus on attaining learning goals. They emphasize that having teacher teams having success in meeting immediate smaller learning goals is key to building collective efficacy. Hargreaves (2019) also stresses that collaborative teacher teams have mixed success in large scale implementation. He distinguishes between collaborative structures that are implemented in a top-down manner as part of required district professional development and those collaborative teams that are more directly lead by the teachers involved. Hargreaves (2019) is clear that top-down structures do not lead to successful collaboration; successful teacher teams authentically involve teachers in team decision-making and focus on goals directed by the individual teachers and local schools. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) caution that there is not a single structure of teacher collaboration that can be implemented top-down and be effective in all situations; effective collaborative structures must develop within the context of the specific school and teacher team. This aligns with adaptive and enabling leadership approaches that focus on the interactions throughout an organization and are not focused on a formal leadership position (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

Broaden the Conceptualization of School Success. The third recommendation is that principals expand the focus of the school improvement process beyond the specific areas required by the district performance targets and the limitations of solely quantitative

measure of performance. As mentioned in the first chapter, Hargreaves et al. (2018) articulate a shift in Ontario education away from solely defining student achievement by test scores to a broader Age of Equity and Well-Being. This focus on equity and inclusion must be formally incorporated into the school plan. In incorporating this focus into the school plan principals must build off of the first two recommendations above. Principals must promote teacher collective efficacy by having teacher directed inquiry within the broader focus on equity and inclusion. The monitoring of this work must also be with the development of learning goals and not imposed performance targets.

Ordonez (2009) and Welsh et al.(2019) highlight that an overreliance on performance goals (targets) can increase the likelihood of undesirable behaviour in an organization. Koretz (2017) outlines that these undesirable behaviours in schools can include teaching to the test and a narrowing of the curriculum. O'Day (2002) examines the impact of school improvement planning when it is driven by a focus on performance targets and found that instruction methods in a school become narrowed to only a few accepted practices that have proven effective in the past. Ryan (2006) discusses the limitations of approaches that focus principal and teacher attention on the narrow improvement of efficiency; he argues that principals must lead from a moral purpose.

A core tenet in utilizing complexity theories to frame the POP is the recognition that schools are complex organizations with numerous interconnected stakeholder and variables. Mason (2015) recognizes that when a system has so many interconnected variables it can be impossible to identify a single variable to target change. Instead of trying to identify the perfect starting point, his recommendation is to approach change initiatives from multiple levels simultaneously. Schneider and Somers (2006) emphasize

that CLT recognizes that variables within a complex organization are non-linear. Specifically, within the context of the POP, principals must be careful to not have the required district performance goals overly narrow the focus of the instructional program within the school. The previous recommendation that principals focus on learning goals and not performance goals helps reduce some of the potential consequences. However, principals must also recognize that the required district targets only cover a small portion of what constitutes student achievement. Principals can reduce these limitations by expanding the range of evidence that is looked for in the school improvement planning process.

CLT is a useful framework for approaching the integration of equity and well-being into school improvement planning. Hargreaves et al. (2018) emphasizes that school improvement planning must focus on the collaborative structures within a school and district and also a focus on increasing student involvement as partners in the learning process. This aligns with Quinn's (1995) emphasis that a leader's role in a CLT framework is to pay attention to the relationship between stakeholders in the system. Using the adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership framework of CLT (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) a school improvement focus that prioritizes a narrow focus on performance targets overemphasizes the administrative component of CLT. Moving towards a wider, more diverse school improvement focus would increase the emphasis on the adaptive and emergent leadership components which emphasize the participation of stakeholders more than formal managerial leadership position. Adaptive leadership would have principals facilitate teacher learning teams to engage in collaborative inquires and empower those teams to develop their own learning goals and focus areas. A principal engaging in the

enabling component of leadership can promote a broader understanding of student success, equity, and well-being by injecting an *adaptive tension* (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) into learning teams and challenging teachers to examine the benefits and limitations of traditional school improvement goals.

Each of these three recommendations are interconnected and build on one another, by balancing the adaptive, administrative, and enabling components of CLT, principals can broaden the focus of school improvement planning to move beyond narrow academic performance targets to a deeper understanding of student equity and well-being. The enhanced school improvement process is driven by teachers' collective efficacy and is enhanced by a use of learning goals.

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

In the position statement on personal leadership in the first chapter, I stated that I follow an Authentic leadership stance where values and moral purpose are foundations for making decisions but that the methods for achieving a goal are flexible and pragmatic. CLT was chosen as the framework in which to conceptualize and manage the leadership and change process to address the POP. Though some ethical and moral considerations have been mentioned throughout the previous analysis and recommendations this section will explicitly examine these issues.

De Angelis, Griffiths, Reva, Portelli, and Ryan (2007). discusses how narrow definitions of accountability through standardized tests do not create systems of genuine responsibility in an ethical sense. To act ethically, principals have a requirement to consider the role of privilege and marginalization in student achievement. Pollock and Winton (2016) identify multiple accountability frameworks that impact principal work

including: bureaucratic, legal, professional, moral, market, and performance-based accountability. District mandated performance targets promote performance-based accountability and reduce professional decision-making (Pinto, 2016; Wang, 2017; Winton & Pollock, 2016).

CLT promotes a distributed approach to leadership that de-emphasizes the role of the formal leadership positions in setting a formal organization direction (Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Northouse (2018) states that leaders have an ethical responsibility to respond to followers' interests and concerns; similar to CLT, ethical approaches to leadership are focused on the stakeholders. Formal leaders influence complex organizations through paying close attention to the relationships between the different stakeholders (Mendes et al., 2016). Walumbwa, Morrison, and Christensen (2012) discuss how a formal leader modeling ethical behaviour can positively influence the ethical behaviour of organizational groups. Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green (2016) found that when stakeholders view a formal leader as acting ethically it increases the ethical behaviour of the stakeholders within the organization. The alignment of CLT and ethical leadership is also strengthened by a common focus of leaders spending significant time on mentoring and developing stakeholders within an organization (Bedi et al., 2016; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Their research demonstrates the impact of a formal leader modelling ethical behaviour and the impact that this has on individual employee behaviour. This impact on ethical behaviour in an organization aligns with the enabling leadership component of CLT where small actions of a leader can have larger, emergent influences throughout an organization (Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey, 2007). The OIP has several specific concepts that should be reviewed through an ethics

perspective: the administrative/bureaucratic responsibilities of the principal, the role that performance goals have in promoting unethical behaviour, and a need to shift to a framework of professional accountability.

Administrative leadership is one of the three components of CLT and directly relates to the responsibilities of a principal in meeting the district-mandated requirements in regard to school improvement planning. Jaafar and Anderson (2008) outline how accountability mechanisms for schools have been heavily influenced by neoliberal policies that focus on standardized test scores. They refer to these monitoring mechanisms as bureaucratic accountability. This type of accountability is enforced in a top-down manner on schools, representing vertical accountability. Ohemeng and McCall-Thomas (2013) highlight that while principals are required to follow these requirements it can lead to “satisficing” behaviour to ensure compliance. In the POP, principals are required to follow the district-mandated school improvement planning process. This pressure to engage in bureaucratic accountability measures is found in several studies of Ontario principals where they report additional paperwork and increased pressure to engage in compliance behaviour (Pinto, 2016; Pollock et al., 2017; Wang, 2017). A principal should follow the recommendation to broaden the conceptualization of student achievement when enacting the school improvement planning process. By incorporating a deeper representation of student achievement, a principal reduces the risk of an over reliance on standard assessments.

Another potential pitfall to goal setting is that evaluation of performance against performance goals can lead to unethical behaviour (Ordonez et al. 2009; Welsh et al. 2019). Welsh et al. (2019) specifically caution that using performance targets to drive

improvement initiatives can create a culture where “the end justifies the means” and organizational culture can both promote and reward unethical behaviour. In the context of education, Koretz (2017) identifies the while outright illegal manipulation of test results is rare, ethical concerns such as the narrowing of curriculum, focusing solely on students just below the performance standard, and teaching to the test are common and have long-term systemic consequences for the education system. An example of this type of behaviour that is discussed by principals is the focus on providing students just below the performance standard extensive intervention and the implicit pressure to divert interventions from students who need more intensive assistance but have less chance of meeting standard. Ordonez et al. (2009) state that a focus on learning goals can reduce the potential negative impact compared to performance goals. Though a principal is required to ultimately report on the district required performance targets, a principal must be cognizant of the potential downsides of goal setting theory. In moving the focus towards learning goals, and away from performance goals/ targets, principals can reduce the potential for unethical behaviour within their school.

The recommendations in this OIP encourage a principal to take actions that build teacher collective efficacy. Following a CLT framework that focuses on adaptive leadership, to build collective efficacy principals must move towards what Fullan (2019) refers to a culture of accountability. Jaafar and Anderson (2007) examine how *Ethical-Professional* accountability models emphasize accountability through teachers working collaboratively together with a common moral purpose. This type of accountability is focused on the relationships between teachers and operates horizontally in an organization and is not dictated in a top-down manner. In the first chapter, the concept of

collaborative professionalism was introduced (Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018.) Hargreaves et al. (2018) discuss how collaborative professionalism is focused on purposeful teacher and principal collaboration with the goal of improving both student learning and well-being. Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, and Hargreaves (2015) discuss a related concept of professional capital where productive teacher collaboration creates an internal accountability system focus on classroom tasks and student work. Using the CLT framework, collaborative professionalism brings into balance components of administrative, adaptive, and enabling leadership approaches. In particular a collaborative professionalism framework requires a principal to pay particular attention to how enabling leadership creates the conditions for innovative professional practice to be both developed and diffused as new knowledge amongst a team of teachers.

Principals must be conscious of the influence their behaviour has on the ethical behaviour of their school teaching staff. The behaviour a principal demonstrates in balancing both district and local school demands demonstrates to staff a model to follow in terms of ethical behaviour. As documented in this chapter, an overreliance on standardized testing as a measure of student achievement has been documented as leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and instructional approaches. A principal needs to be aware of the potential negative impact on ethical behaviour that can occur with performance goal-orientated accountability. Shifting the school improvement focus to a learning/ mastery goal focus can mediate this potential negative impact. Principals can further reduce the negative impact of performance targets by considering a model of collaborative professionalism where teachers work collaboratively, with a shared moral purpose, to improve a broad conception of student achievement and well-being.

Chapter 3- Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

This chapter will utilize the adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership components of CLT providing a framework to create a specific change plan for how the recommendations from chapter two can be implemented at Maplelane Elementary. The areas of needed change identified in the last chapter include: the need to focus on learning goals rather than performance goals, the balancing of both formal and informal professional learning, and a focus on the idea concept of collaborative professionalism.

Change Implementation Plan

Cawsey et al. (2016) emphasize that the principles of complexity theories requires leaders to focus less on long-term, strategic change plans and more on identifying smaller immediate changes that can be acted upon quickly. Complexity theories identify that small changes have the potential to create large long-term impacts. Mason (2015) also identifies that complexity theories can be applied to challenges in schools where issues are composed of so many variables it is impossible to isolate the impact of any single factor. He posits that leaders can never fully identify a perfect change plan but should target issues from multiple perspectives simultaneously. Schmoker (2006) refers to the failure of centralized strategic planning in achieving change in schools as “the mirage of school improvement planning” (p. 34).

The change implementation plan outlined in this section will follow the guidance of Cawsey et al. (2016), Mason (2015), and Schmoker (2006) and is composed of a series of recommendations that can address the challenges identified in the POP but is not a linear change plan. The goal of the recommendations is to promote a culture that values

professional learning and adaptability. Each recommendation is designed to target the POP but the potential impact for any one change is difficult to predict.

This section will examine how the importance of social networks found in complexity theories has principals focusing on understanding and facilitating the personal relationships within the school to drive change. The implementation plan will then compare the learning structures of professional learning communities (PLC) with communities of practice (COP) and how they may be utilized by a principal in meeting the professional learning needs of both the district and school staff. The section will then review the resources required for implementing these learning team structures, and identify the limitations of potential recommendations.

It is important to emphasize that the concept of leadership in CLT is not centered on the role of formal leadership but exists in the social relationships and interactions between members of an organizational network (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2015; Lichtenstein et al, 2006). Hazy and Uhl-Bien (2015) emphasize that CLT does not discount formal leadership actions but the leadership focus should be more on organizing relationships both within and between groups, in the organization. A leader utilizing CLT as a framework draws attention to what is important and provides meaning to unfolding events. The CLT framework requires that a leader pay particular attention to the relationship networks that exist between stakeholders in an organization. As each organization has a unique network of social relationships it is difficult to transfer specific leadership actions between different contexts. In education, this focus on the relationships within an organization requires a principal to pay greater attention to the nature of the relationship between teachers in their local school. The importance of the principal

understanding the context and relationships within the specific school community is the primary factor in effective school leadership (Hallinger, 2018). This emphasis on the relationships within an individual school is important in understanding the focus of the recommendations in this section as the recommendations must be flexible enough to adjust to ongoing changes in the relationship networks.

The previous chapter described how the three components of CLT apply to the POP. Administrative leadership is the focus the principal uses in recognizing the district mandated school improvement processes and incorporating these requirements into the individual school plan. Adaptive leadership is the focus the principal has on the structures teachers in the school have for examining student learning needs within the school and implementing conditions that nurture professional learning. Enabling leadership is the approach the principal takes in balancing the competing demands of administrative and adaptive requirements (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Each of these leadership approaches will be used to layout the specific change plan for the proposed recommendations.

Administrative leadership requires a principal to examine how formal organizational structures, policies, and procedures impact the school. In the POP, it is a requirement that the district performance targets are included in the Maplelane Elementary school improvement plan. All principals in the district also have to follow requirements in terms of agendas and structures for staff meetings and professional activity days. As there is a requirement to incorporate the performance targets and formal learning structures into the school improvement planning process, the OIP cannot alter these requirements. There are two specific OIP recommendations guided by the

administrative leadership framework. The first is that the required performance targets should not be used as the public measure of success for Maplelane Elementary with either teaching staff or the broader school community. The second recommendation is that the goal areas covered by the district performance targets (reading, math, well-being) form the basis of professional learning structures at Maplelane Elementary. Each of these recommendations will be examined in more detail.

The first recommendation is based on the examination of performance goals versus learning goals identified in the last chapter. Currently the school improvement plan is based on the required performance targets necessitated by the district. All formal professional learning has to have a connection to either early reading, math, or well-being. Donhoo and Katz (2019) stress the importance of having clearly defined goals to direct professional learning but highlight that learning goals should be the primary driver and not performance targets. While the district performance targets are required in the school improvement plan the addition of learning goals should be identified and included within the plan as well. The learning goal should be the goal that is used as the primary driver of change within the school; the performance target is acknowledged but is not the focus. The specific process for how learning goals are set will be discussed later in recommendations regarding the structure of learning teams. This recommendation does not require any cost or physical resources to implement. The timeline for implementation requires some initial professional development with staff to examine the change in goal structure. This can occur at the last staff meeting and the final Professional Activity (PA) day of the year. Both meetings focus on transitioning to the following school year. The use of learning goals as part of the school plan can commence at the start of the following

school year. The required district targets should be only used in meeting formal reporting requirements and discussed in superintendent visits. The monitoring of the mandated targets is an administrative leadership responsibility of the principal and not the wider school staff.

The second recommendation recognizes that district mandates do create responsibilities for principals to implement within their school. CLT recognizes this requirement through the administrative leadership component and that formal structures and organizations are required (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). While the first recommendation requires a principal to downplay a district requirement, the second recommendation provides a process for the principal to incorporate district requirements into the professional learning of the school in a manner that still allows local school needs to be accommodated. As further details of professional learning are examined in upcoming recommendations, the administrative leadership component requires the principal to create a certain degree of structure to maintain fidelity to district requirement. The district focus areas are well-being, early reading, and math; these areas should guide the structure of school improvement planning and professional learning. At Maplelane Elementary all staff members are part of one of these formal learning teams regardless of teaching assignment. It is difficult to have staff in specialized teaching areas such as Physical Education, French, and Instrumental Music make meaningful connections to the district focus areas. To successfully implement this recommendation it is important to recognize that the formal learning teams align to the district focus areas are required to exist but that the teachers involved in the formal learning teams should be the ones in teaching assignments directly related to the performance target areas. The upcoming

recommendations regarding the adaptive leadership framework will address how to make professional learning more responsive to the needs of teachers.

Adaptive leadership is the second component of CLT and is focused on the ability of an organization to learn, adapt, and evolve (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). It should be highlighted that in complexity theories, change is not thought of as an episodic, linear process that a leader implements (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Ongoing change is the normal state of an organization and that change impacts are non-linear, networked, and that it is hard to predict outcomes. The adaptive leadership component of CLT has the leader focus on the conditions that are in place to promote conditions for teachers to develop innovative practices and engage in ongoing professional learning. To examine recommendations regarding adaptive leadership it is important to compare two common models of professional learning structures: professional learning communities (PLC) and communities of practice (COP).

The PLC structure is the dominant form of professional learning in the Ontario education system and is supported by Ministry resource documents (Riveros, Newton, & Burgess, 2012). The Ontario Principal's Council (2009) describes PLCs as groups "where teachers work collaboratively in purposefully designed groups to improve student achievement within a structure of support provides by the school administrator" (p. 6). Blankenship and Ruona (2007) highlight that while there are several models of PLC, teacher collaboration occurs within structures created by the principal and are focused on the goals set by the school, district, or government. The current district approach to school improvement planning uses the PLC approach as a foundation for professional learning. Principals are encouraged to create and identify defined professional learning

opportunities within their school that have explicit connections to the school improvement plan and district performance targets. Principals must connect all budgets for supply teachers to support teacher professional learning time to these defined goals. While principals are encouraged to promote teacher collaboration, it is done so within a framework that is structured around district performance measures. At Maplelane Elementary this highly prescribed learning team structure is evidenced by the existing three formal learning teams aligned to early reading, math, and well-being. While teachers complete the required work, teachers do not engage with the learning beyond the required sessions. To provide opportunities for all teachers to be engaged in professional learning a more flexible model of learning teams must be examined.

The COP model has some similarities to the PLC approach as both are focused on teacher professional learning but there are some significant differences between the two models. A key difference is that the COP model is defined by teacher interest and the PLC model is directed by the principal and district. Blankenship and Ruona (2007) highlight that the COP model places a focus on both the formal and informal learning networks within an organization. Blankenship and Ruona (2007) highlight that the COP model encourages informal collaboration that is not dependent on the formal leadership of an organization. A COP based model aligns with the CLT focus on the individual relationships within organizational networks and less reliance on formal organizational networks. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) define a COP as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). They go on to state that COPs allow for the sharing of both explicit and implicit knowledge of

“complex, interdependent systems that enables dynamic responses to context-specific problems” (P. 9). The CLT focus on the actions of leaders is on nurturing conditions that promote ongoing learning in a manner consistent with the COP model. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) emphasize that collaborative cultures must be spontaneous and informal. They state that these informal networks are the ones that administrators should most hope to grow. Riveros, Newton, and Burgess (2012) stress that formal leaders can play an important role in developing the conditions for successful professional collaboration and note that whenever the organizational support for collaboration is low that peer-driven professional learning makes no difference.

However, these networks are also those that administrators have less direct control over (Lockton, 2019). While the PLC model of professional learning is predominant in Ontario education, the COP model can be utilized to better address issues identified in the POP. As the CLT model promotes the simultaneous focus on adaptive and administrative leadership approaches, the more structured PLC model is still the professional learning model best suited to leading the learning in the specific subject areas encompassed by the district performance targets. However, the more informal COP model can help address the concern of Koretz (2017) mentioned in the second chapter that a focus on standardized testing as a measure of student achievement can narrow the curriculum covered in schools only to those subjects that are part of the testing. The COP approach allows teachers to engage in ongoing professional learning in curriculum area of personal interest and passion and not necessarily directed by performance targets or standardized tests. This approach will create a culture of greater teacher commitment to

ongoing professional learning which Donhoo and Katz (2020) link to improved student performance.

The second formal recommendation is that Maplelane Elementary shift from a PLC to COP model of professional learning. As the district performance targets only encompass teachers within grade one for reading and grade six for math, a large portion of teachers are left out of the required school improvement goals. As principal, I have to actively nurture the growth of informal learning communities so that the professional learning structures of the school can better adapt to the various teacher networks within the school. The more flexible structure can also accommodate the varied learning needs of individual teachers that are not reflected in the district required performance targets. At Maplelane Elementary, teachers in subject areas such as French, Health and Physical Education, and grades not accounted for in the quantitative performance targets can focus on professional learning interests that connect directly to the subject areas that they teach. As the COP model emphasizes informal learning teams that promote ongoing professional learning, the timeline for implementation can be phased in throughout the next school year. Examples of specific teacher teams that may benefit from the COP model are the grade 7 and 8 teachers who have expressed an interest in working with teachers from the local secondary school to help successfully transition students from elementary to secondary school; another possible team is the kindergarten teachers and math instruction. Neither team is encompassed by the district performance targets but teachers in these areas have already discussed with me a professional passion for pursuing professional learning in these areas. An introduction to the COP concept should occur at the final staff meeting and PA Day of the current school year and the concept

should be reinforced as the next school year starts. However the informal, ongoing nature of the COP model means that as principal it is important to foster the conditions for COP learning teams on a continuous basis.

A challenge in implementing the COP model is that there are district requirements to direct professional development resources towards the prescribed focus areas. The district provided budget to provide supply teachers to support professional development is conditional on its use in delivering professional learning in a more principal-directed, formal structure similar to the PLC model. To develop a greater focus on informal COP model professional learning, principals will have to allocate existing school budget and resources. One action to promote more informal learning amongst teachers of the same grade is to examine teacher timetables to ensure common planning time for teachers in the same grade. While not always possible to achieve every year due to staffing constraints, it is a cost-free consideration that can be examined each year. At Maplelane Elementary the goal in developing future timetables is to have all teachers in each grade team to have one common planning period per weekly schedule. Even though teacher collective agreements would not require teachers to work together during common planning times, the staff at Maplelane Elementary have a history of working together and collaborative planning when time is provided. This time would need to be for more teacher directed professional learning utilizing the COP model with less principal direction as professional learning focused on a District priority area would require the use of supply teachers to cover classes. School budgets do not have significant resources to spend money on releasing teachers for professional learning, principals must look to actions that can promote informal COP. Instead of purchasing books for a teacher book

study, principals can email electronic resources aimed to stimulate dialogue on professional issues; blog posts, TED talks, and Twitter chats are examples of professional learning literature that is often free. Starting immediately, the email weekly update for staff at Maplelane Elementary will have a dedicated article related to a topic of professional learning. Even offering to purchase food to support a “lunch and learn” COP is less expensive than the cost of a supply teacher. The promotion of informal learning opportunities is an ongoing process that a principal must consistently pay attention to and is not a single action or resource.

Enabling leadership is the third component of CLT and is focused on a leader actively engaging with the tension between adaptive and administrative leadership actions and looking at organizational conditions that catalyze the learning ability of an organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This section identifies that an administrative leadership stance requires the principal to maintain the district focus areas for school improvement planning and maintain a formal PLC style professional learning structure while the adaptive leadership stance recommends that the principal shift towards a more informal COP model of professional learning. While there is a tension between these recommendations, CLT indicates that this is not problematic. Lockton (2019) identifies that school leaders struggle to foster a culture of joint work and collaboration amongst teachers without forcing contrived compliance from some groups and inhibiting other vibrant teams. The concern of contrived compliance matches the difficulty identified in the POP that principals face in engaging teachers in meaningful professional learning within an environment where school improvement is focused on district mandated focus areas and not teacher identified areas. Lockton (2019) highlights that principals can

promote productive collaboration among reluctant teachers by purposefully exposing them to the work of structured, effective teams within the school. This identifies a way in which a principal can balance the requirement to structure formal professional learning aligned with district priorities and simultaneously promote informal learning opportunities. Having formal, structured learning groups focused on the district priority areas allows a principal to model protocols for collaboration that teachers can then apply to more informal COP opportunities. By utilizing the formal learning structures as opportunities to teach and model collaborative learning approaches the principal can indirectly influence the ability of teachers to engage in informal learning opportunities.

Use of structured protocols to direct practice and separate “criticism from the critic” (Hargreaves and O’Connor, 2018; p. 15) is important to make collaboration productive. The use of protocols can be explicitly incorporated into staff development as part of the change plan to increase staff capacity to engage in authentic and beneficial professional collaboration. Donhoo (2013) provides specific protocols that principals can utilize in both formal PLC teams and more informal COP teams. The *Adaptive Schools* program developed by Garmston and Wellman (2013) is a program with which principals and district teacher consultants are familiar with. This program has collaborative norms and facilitation strategies that would benefit all classroom teachers in working together. At Maplelane Elementary some of this language will be familiar to staff as it has been informally incorporated and is still utilized from past district initiatives. Recognizing that formal time for structured professional development is limited, it is recommended that a protocol, collaboration norm, or facilitation strategy from one of the above resources be modelled at each formal staff meeting or formal professional development session.

Through modelling these strategies to teachers in formal professional development sessions, teachers will increase their learning on mechanisms for more effective collaboration that can be transferred to informal COP learning sessions.

A major challenge of implementation will be the ability of the principal to allocate time to both lead the required, structured PLC professional learning and spend time promoting additional informal learning through nurturing COP opportunities. Pollock et al. (2017) identify that principals in Ontario struggle to balance the time requirements of operational and managerial aspects of the role and have limited time to lead instructional learning within their schools. While teachers may eventually welcome more professional latitude, the less formal structure and continued adaptation involved in the COP model may create some uncertainty of expectations among teachers. While these recommendations hope to improve the structures that support professional learning, this OIP has little agency regarding allocation of resources to address the time constraints identified by both teachers and principals.

Morrison (2012) identifies that a criticism of CLT is that the model does not have predictive ability regarding plans for change. It is recognized that both recommendations in this section are focused on changes that influence the ongoing professional learning environment of a school and do not focus on a specific, identifiable moment of change implementation. Specifically, the recommendation to implement a more informal COP model of professional learning is actually recommending less control and influence for the principal. The recommendation is made to create conditions for a long-term improved culture of ongoing learning than professional development targeted towards specific instructional practices. This limitation does present some concerns regarding principal

responsibility for results and accountability. The following section will examine how to monitor and evaluate the change plan.

Change Monitoring and Evaluation

Recognizing that schools are complex social environments of numerous interconnected factors, CLT approaches monitoring and evaluation differently than linear change models. Recognizing the complex social structures of schools, Sergis, Crick, Barr, Green, and Pedder (2017) identify that too often school performance is measured by what is easily quantifiable and that CLT requires an approach that incorporates broader information. Snyder (2013) and Poli (2013) identify that complex problems, like school environments, cannot be solved by increasing the processing power of the data-analysis. They draw on the distinction between complicated and complex problems reviewed in Chapter 1. They argue that it is not possible to find a defined solution for complex problems, rather a leader must learn to accept the unpredictability. Complex issues require a focus on the relationships between the stakeholders within the system.

Sampson (2016) argues that school leaders require a more holistic approach to data use to support leadership decision making. He utilizes CLT as a framework for school leaders to manage information and relationships within a school to ensure networks of continuous feedback. The goal of the leader is to constantly monitor multiple sources of information from a variety of sources and through relationships with the various stakeholders manage the communication of this information throughout the system. Uhl-Bein and Arena (2018) outline that CLT recognizes emergence and unpredictability within organizations; the performance of a system is not the combination of a small number of defined measures. O'Day (2010) argues that the ability of CLT to

adapt to the context of individual schools makes it a more useful framework for monitoring school success than traditional models focused solely on isolated quantitative measures of achievement.

The CLT framework of adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership will continue to be used to structure the recommendations in this section. The adaptive leadership framework promotes adaptation and innovation within an organization; in this framework traditional monitoring and evaluation processes are minimized. The administrative leadership framework focuses on how to meet the district required performance targets and utilizes the formal monitoring and evaluation processes required by the district. The enabling leadership framework will outline how the competing demands of teacher autonomy and district requirements can be integrated into the model of collaborative professionalism introduced in the previous chapters; this model promotes monitoring and evaluation through professional accountability amongst teachers within the school.

As introduced in Chapter 2, the adaptive leadership component of CLT emphasizes the ability of an organization to continuously adapt and evolve to meet ever changing demands (Uhl-Bein & Arena, 2018). Fullan (2019) and Le Fevre et al. (2020) highlight that this ability of educational systems to continuously adapt to changing environments is essential for success in modern society. O'Day (2010) emphasizes the importance of an adaptive leadership approach in creating successful conditions for school improvement where principals and teachers shift from a focus on improvement to a focus on professional learning promoted by the shift to a COP model. She states that a focus on professional learning may, but does not necessarily, lead to improvement;

however, it does increase creativity and innovative thinking. The ongoing professional learning of teachers is identified as a cornerstone of improving educational achievement (Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). The shift to promoting a more informal model of professional learning focused on the COP framework (Blankenship & Ruona, 2007) promotes conditions that nurture ongoing learning among teachers in the school. However, the informal nature of the COP model makes monitoring and evaluation by the principal more difficult compared to more structured, formal professional learning models.

As the adaptive leadership approach requires principals to be comfortable with less control over the COP model of professional learning, Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, (2002) stress that much of the value of the COP is intangible and some of the greatest value in this model is a result of an increase in professional confidence and a proliferation in relationships between members of an organization. Sergis and Sampson (2016) mention that CLT requires leaders to accept that even advanced analytics cannot predict outcomes in complex organizations such as schools. Specifically, in relation to the change plan recommendation to adopt the COP learning model, the principal is committing to an ongoing, continuous process of monitoring the professional networks that are occurring within the school. One monitoring mechanism that can be utilized is the teacher's *Annual Learning Plan (ALP)* that is part of the *Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA)* process (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). The teacher directed nature of the ALP aligns with the participant directed focus of the COP model. However, the process does require that each teacher consult with the principal in the development of the ALP; this gives the principal a formal check-in with each teacher in the early part

of the school year. A principal should connect the ALP meeting to how each teacher is developing their own professional learning through connecting with other teachers. At Maplelane Elementary, the ALP process is an existing, but underutilized, process for a principal to connect with teachers regarding professional learning interests that might be more fully nurtured through the COP model than the current formal school improvement planning process. The ALP is a teacher directed document that requires principal input. Teachers are encouraged to align improvement goals with the school and district annual plans but there is not a requirement to do so (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). The fact that teachers ultimately retain control of the ALP process aligns with the COP model where individual interest and passion drive learning and not necessarily organizational goals (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The ALP process allows a principal to better understand the learning interests of individual teachers. While the current process involves a formal review once a year, it is recommended that the ALP be used as a reference point to check-in with staff regarding ongoing, informal professional learning on an ongoing basis.

The administrative leadership framework of CLT addresses the requirement of the principal to address the formal performance targets of the district. The district school improvement targets are monitored in a cyclical review process that has its foundation in Denning's *Continuous Improvement Model* (Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012). The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model, often referred to as professional learning cycles in Ontario school boards, the model is the primary method in which educators in Ontario envision organization improvement (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020). Principals are required to monitor school improvement within learning cycles of roughly six weeks.

This monitoring and evaluation is recorded in the school improvement plan and reviewed by the principal with the superintendent on regular visits that correspond to the PDSA cycle. The PDSA monitoring framework is aligned to the more formal PLC model of professional learning where professional learning is aligned with school and district priorities and monitored on a regular basis with data and evidence gathering (OPC, 2009). Ordonez et al. (2009) highlight the potential negative effects of monitoring complex change in short-term cycles. Hargreaves et al. (2018) comment on the short-term nature of learning cycles in Ontario and caution that the timeframe may not allow for meaningful reflection. Maplelane Elementary monitors the school improvement plan using the PDSA learning cycles required by the district. As principal, I am required to report on the school progress towards the improvement targets both through the submission of a school improvement plan template and in scheduled visits with the superintendent.

The recommendations outlined under administrative leadership in the change plan suggest that principals organize professional learning teams in each of the focus areas (early reading, math, well-being) of the district annual plan but shift the focus of these teams from performance targets to learning goals. To meet monitoring and evaluation requirements the performance target data is still recorded. However, in shifting the emphasis from performance goals to learning goals it is important to develop a monitoring and evaluation system that also represents this shift in focus. Hallinger and Heck (2010) identify that the monitoring of collaboration within teacher teams can lead to an improvement of student achievement scores demonstrating that administrative leadership can help a principal meet the district required performance targets. Donohoo

and Katz (2019) demonstrate how a principal can monitor the work of learning teams focused on learning goals, which they refer to as mastery goals. They recommend that principals help teachers develop explicit success criteria for desired improvements and use this success criteria for ongoing monitoring and reflection. Specifically, the principal must lead each formal learning team in developing the success criteria for the relevant area of focus, whether early reading, math, or well-being. While performance targets are already incorporated into the district school improvement template, the principal will have to edit the document to include the addition of the success criteria. Principals are allowed to add additional information to the school improvement template, but they are not allowed to alter the required performance target information. Performance targets are required to be reported on in the school plan according to professional learning cycles of roughly six weeks. As the addition of learning goals to the annual plan would be optional for principals, the learning cycle timeline can be extended and adjusted by the principal as required to meet the needs of each learning team. Having explicitly stated success criteria developed early in the learning cycle process provides a reference point for principals to monitor the progress of the learning team in relation to teacher learning that is separate from the quantitative performance targets. In implementing this recommendation at Maplelane Elementary the incorporation of learning goals can occur in the upcoming school year. As the inclusion of learning goals is an addition to the required school improvement plan, it is recommended that the tracking process be reviewed after one year to make any needed adjusts to ensure that it is perceived as beneficial by the staff.

The enabling leadership framework in CLT allows principals to balance the administrative/bureaucratic requirements of school improvement planning with the simultaneous promotion of professional accountability systems (O'Day, 2010). Mendes et al. (2016) describes that enabling leadership is when a leader “integrates the adaptive/administrative interface” (p.303). Fullan (2019) talks about leadership nuance where leaders understand the relationships and context of their school and can shape district required administrative functions into local school processes. Enabling leadership requires that principals shift monitoring and evaluation frameworks from a focus on external accountability and performance targets to a focus where accountability is incorporated into the culture of the professional learning structures within the school. Crick et al. (2017) conclude that even with sophisticated data analytics measuring student outcomes, principals should focus on the learning processes that teachers and students engage in to ultimately drive improvement. O'Day (2010) positions CLT as a model for principals to shift the overall school culture to a focus on learning while recognizing that external-based accountability mechanism still exist and must be addressed. Fullan et al. (2014) identify that the development of internal accountability for continuous professional learning and student achievement is more effective in ensuring long-term success in school improvement than accountability frameworks that are imposed top-down in a system through standardized performance measures. Fullan (2019) describes the goal of the principal to develop “accountability as culture” and not have accountability as an imposed force by the district or principal; the accountability is horizontal within the organization and not enforced top-down. The focus on embedding a

sense of professional accountability into the school culture is aligned with the ongoing, continuous improvement promoted by the CLT framework.

In all three components of CLT an important consideration is the timeframe that a principal uses for evaluation and monitoring of the change program. Latham and Locke (2006) and Ordonez et al. (2009) both caution that organizations can harm employee commitment and lead to undesirable behaviour when they demand short-term performance on change goals that are complex and multifaceted. Hargreaves et al. (2018) identify in a study that educators have expressed concern that the six-week learning cycles commonly used in Ontario schools do not leave enough time for meaningful reflection. Korteiz (2017) and O'Day (2010) discuss the limitations of monitoring school achievement by the use of annual goals based on standardized testing. Though principals are required to report on required performance targets in an annual school plan, to successfully implement the recommendations in this OIP and shift school improvement planning to place a greater value on ongoing professional learning then principals must shift monitoring and evaluation to processes that value ongoing, continuous professional learning and growth.

This section identified that principals can balance monitoring and evaluation between adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership demands including the use of the existing teacher ALP process, incorporating learning goals into the required annual school improvement plan, and promoting a culture of professional accountability.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

The literature on organizational change is in general agreement in that communication is an important component of any change initiative (Lewis, 1999). This

section will outline potential considerations regarding communication in relation to the recommendations in the change plan. The importance of recognizing that the complexity theories framework used in this OIP does not view change as a linear, episodic process; as such, the communication considerations in this section reflect the fact that change is regarded as an ongoing, natural part of an organization and that communication must be ongoing in an organization and not specifically tied to a single change action. The strategic communication strategies outlined by Lewis (2019) are based on system theory and align with many aspects of CLT and is a useful approach to developing a communication plan regarding the recommendations in the change plan. A key similarity to CLT in Lewis's (2019) strategic communication strategies is a view of organizations as a network of relationships between stakeholders. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) state that leaders utilize CLT lead by interacting with members of the organization. Another similarity is that the strategic communication strategies focus on both formal and informal communication contexts. Aligning with the change plan and the process for monitoring and evaluation, communication strategies will be discussed utilizing the three leadership frames of CLT: adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership.

As mentioned throughout this OIP, according to CLT the adaptive leadership frame requires trust and cognitive safety to inspire risk-taking and innovation (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Adaptive leadership is also focused on the relationships and Lewis (2019) highlights the importance of focusing on the interactions that occur between different stakeholders during a change process. As communication strategies focus more on understanding relationships within the school, it is difficult to identify specific key initiatives or timeframes for communicating change in relation to adaptive leadership.

Moreover, it is important for principals to recognize that change is an ongoing process, that a principal must have a strong knowledge of the specific staff and existing relationships within a school, and that fostering a climate of emotional safety and trust is essential for maintaining a climate focused on continuous professional learning and innovation.

The change plan recommends that as principal, I look at nurturing more informal learning opportunities throughout Maplelane Elementary. Lockton (2019) states that school teams that have been identified as effective have often been together for several years; the trust and safety of working together for a significant period of time can help develop effective collaboration structure. The majority of teaching staff at Maplelane Elementary have been at the school for over five years and there is little staff turnover on a yearly basis. In looking to develop greater informal opportunities, it is important to understand the existing network of social relationships amongst staff. In helping communicate the COP model of professional learning it is important to identify teachers that Lewis (2019) would identify as “connectors.” These are teachers that can spread information about the COP model and bring together teachers from different social networks within the school. At Maplelane Elementary, possible key “connectors” could be the teacher union representatives, a couple of teachers who are former district consultants, and a few teachers who already act as informal leaders within their grade division. By paying specific attention to making sure these staff understand the reasoning behind the COP model the chance of implementation with other staff increases. A principal must constantly be paying attention the social networks and relationships among staff in order to successfully maintain the COP professional learning model.

Creating the trust necessary for continuous, meaningful communication is highly dependent on the personalities of teachers and the principal. No one recommendation or set of actions will capture the nuances of this process. Despite these challenges, principals can put structures in place to create conditions to increase communication between themselves and teachers. Maplelane Elementary is a large elementary school, it is both easy and difficult to interact with staff regularly. With an open-door policy and being physically accessible to staff, one can constantly be in discussions with individual teachers. Conversely it is also easy for teachers to stay in individual rooms and avoid interactions. A simple, yet important, strategy that can be implemented for promoting informal communication is for me to keep a chart of all staff and make a record of interactions with staff throughout the day. At a scheduled review point each week, I can identify which staff I have interacted with and which staff I have not. This chart can also record if the conversation was professional or social. The principal can try and ensure that every staff member has a minimum of one professional and one social interaction each week. For professional interactions it will also be valuable to indicate the topic of interaction (e.g. early reading, math, well-being, another topic). This information can be tracked on a simple spreadsheet and can be examined to look at both patterns of interactions with specific staff and the types of professional interactions occurring. Though many principals place an importance of interacting with staff on a regular basis, it is difficult to ensure that all staff are a part of this informal communication with monitoring.

A second specific communication strategy following the adaptive leadership recommendations relates to the use of the teacher ALP process. The ALP process for

teachers was mentioned earlier in the chapter as a possible strategy for monitoring staff interest and participation in professional learning. A challenge in implementing this recommendation is related to communication and the difficulty finding time to discuss professional learning with each staff member. Current practice related to communication of the ALP is focused on making sure teachers are aware of the need to complete the ALP for compliance. To effectively turn the ALP into a process that promotes ongoing professional learning it is important that the principal change the focus of communication from completion and compliance to a focus on identifying and committing to professional learning goals. The second strategy for increasing ongoing discussions regarding the ALP and professional learning is to formally include time for the ALP in staff meeting and PA Day agendas. While the agenda for staff meetings and PA Days are heavily directed by district mandated activities there is some room for school directed initiatives. As principal, I can emphasize the importance of the ALP process by providing formal time during structured staff meetings and PA Days. In doing this, the principal both demonstrates the importance being placed on the process and also provides a structure in which the principal can promote the ALP process with all teachers. To make staff aware of common areas of interest relating to professional learning the topics identified in ALPs should be collated and shared with all staff. Through sharing the identified areas of professional learning with all teachers it can promote awareness of mutual interest and promote the development of potential COP opportunities.

The administrative leadership frame refers to the need to be clear and transparent regarding district requirements and performance targets. Lewis (2019) states that an important component of communication during change is providing information support

to stakeholders during the change process. She identifies that a key concern identified by stakeholders in change initiatives is a lack of accurate and timely information. The change plan recommendation regarding the administrative leadership framework is to structure formal learning teams in each of the district-mandated achievement areas of early reading, math, and well-being. As these learning teams are based on district mandated achievement areas it is important that the principal provide clear communication to staff regarding what the district mandated achievement areas are, how learning teams will address these required areas, and what role both the principal and teachers will be expected to play in implementing these structures. Much of the communication resources regarding the district goals are provided directly to principals to share with staff. PowerPoints are created by the district for use during staff meetings and PA Days to inform staff of district goals. These presentations showcase the achievement data in relation to the district and individual school meeting performance targets. Principals are given some leeway in modifying the presentation slides to better reflect school context but must maintain the overall topic focus. Unfortunately, as mentioned in the POP, many teachers seem to participate in these sessions for compliance and do not seem to demonstrate a deeper engagement with the information regarding the performance goals. In communication regarding the district performance targets it is important to recognize that they are measures that the school must report on but emphasize that the focus for teacher professional learning is on developing learning goals.

To successfully implement the switch in emphasis from performance targets to learning goals it is not enough to just outline the shift in focus, communication of the

shift must contain professional development for teachers on the distinction between learning goal and performance targets. As the development of learning goals for the learning teams at Maplelane Elementary will take place at the beginning of the new school year, the professional development regarding learning goals must take place in the remaining months of the current school year. Formal time for adequate professional development is limited as there is no budget for additional supply teacher release and remaining staff meetings and PA Day agendas have most of the time dedicated to district required topics. To help provide information to staff regarding what learning goals are and why they are important the school weekly memo will contain excerpts from the book *Quality Implementation* by Donohoo and Katz (2019). The current weekly memo format has an existing section that highlights issues related to professional learning but does not currently have a long term focus. From daily interactions with staff, while not every staff member reads the memo every week, there is a general awareness of the topics mentioned in the memo from a significant portion of staff. *Quality Implementation* refers to learning goals as mastery goals and has sections both explaining their importance and how teachers can implement them within learning teams. In addition to promoting learning goals this book was chosen as it is currently being used as a book study for the professional development of system teacher consultants and other frameworks by both authors are popular in the district so there is some existing integration. Through the use of professional reading in the weekly memo communication regarding learning goals and their importance will be communicated to staff.

In addition to incorporating literature about learning goals into regular communications it is also important to incorporate time for teachers required to identify

and focus on learning goals during learning team meetings. At the start of the new school year it will be important to incorporate a focus on learning goals into the initial staff meetings and PA Day agendas that are identified for professional learning related to the district performance targets. While principals are provided consistent slides to review the school improvement process with staff, each principal is also given some flexibility in adjusting these slides to better represent the needs of individual schools. At each staff meeting and PA Day where district required school improvement planning is reviewed it is important that the district provided information is modified to shift the focus to learning goals. The district required performance targets should still be included in the communication but the focus needs to emphasize the value of learning goals.

The recommendations regarding the enabling leadership framework focus on the development of an environment of collaborative professionalism where teachers are nurtured and actively engaged in ongoing professional learning. Collaborative professionalism requires structured communication protocols to avoid what Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) refer to as the trap of “contrived collaboration” where teachers engage in collaborative learning teams solely to satisfy the requirement of working together directed by the principal or district. To promote effective group collaboration, the recommendation earlier in this chapter suggested that principals use protocols to help provide structure and guidance to learning team sessions. Utilizing the enabling leadership framework to promote the development of an effective collaborative environment requires that principals engage in what Lewis (2019) refers to as “full voice communication” where meaningful communication is exchanged between all stakeholders in an organization. Lewis (2019) identifies that stakeholders feel more

satisfied with change initiatives when they have greater involvement in the process. Meaningful teacher input into the professional learning direction within the school requires the principal to give up a degree of control over the school improvement process. Riveros et al. (2012) state that too often the input of teachers is only considered in professional learning when it is in alignment with district goals. The COP model emphasizes that teachers must be actively engaged in picking topics that they identify as a need or interest for further professional learning, whether these align with the district goals or not.

In relation to specific communication strategies related to the change plan recommendations, a systematic check-in process with members of each teacher learning team must be developed. This check-in process can involve a mix of verbal and electronic communication. The communication strategies should include both formal PLC learning teams focused on district mandated improvement areas and informal COP learning teams. The tracking of staff member interactions mentioned earlier can be used to monitor interactions with staff members regarding professional learning discussions. It is important that the principal maintain a cadence of regular communication regarding the formal PLC learning teams; tracking these communications ensures that they happen. Regular face-to-face opportunities for communication between the principal and teachers is an important component of building trusting relationships and creating an environment for two-way communication to occur. Electronic communication can also be used on a regular basis to seek input from staff and can be utilized to both provide information and collect information from staff. Electronic surveys that allow teacher input into the school planning process are only helpful if teachers feel safe and supported to share authentic

feedback that teachers feel will be seriously considered. Exit surveys should be provided to all teachers at the end of formal staff meetings and PA Days to collect input to help direct the planning of the next formal sessions. While the regularity of feedback collection should be more tightly controlled for the PLC learning teams in the district required improvement areas, providing regular communication with informal COP is important as well. Similar to the communication strategies for adaptive leadership mentioned above, communication from the enabling leadership framework is not focus on specific change moments but rather on nurturing conditions for professional learning on an ongoing basis.

Communication is an important part of the change process. This section highlighted specific communication strategies that use the CLT framework of adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership. While certain communication strategies are specific actions related directly to recommendations in the change plan, the importance of creating an overall climate of trust and open communication needs to be emphasized. The CLT framework used throughout this OIP places importance on the leader creating nurturing conditions for ongoing learning and improvement. Nurturing these conditions requires a leader to focus on the ongoing relationships with and between stakeholders.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

This OIP has outlined how the role of principal has historically had a tension between the duties of a manager with responsibilities to the district and being a leader within an individual school. Pollock et al. (2017) identify that this historical challenge is prominent in the current Ontario education system. They also indicate that the role of principals has become so structured and focused on compliance that professional

judgement and autonomy are limited. The POP identified a specific example of this tension at Maplelane Elementary where, as principal, I have recognized struggles in implementing a prescribed process for school improvement planning and simultaneously engaging teachers with school improvement planning focused on the needs of individual schools.

I use the CLT framework of adaptive, administrative, and enabling leadership to identify specific recommendations to address the POP. Utilizing complexity theories Mason (2015) states that predicting the impact of any particular change processes in schools over the long term is difficult. He suggests that leaders focus on short term actions that nurture the ability of the school to adapt and evolve over time. A next step to address the negative impacts of a short-term monitoring focus would be to advocate, through the feedback committees that I am a part of, to adjust the evaluation cycle of school improvement planning away from yearly performance targets to a more holistic monitoring of school progress over longer time frames.

Unlike a traditional, linear change plan, the recommendations in this OIP promote an ongoing focus on relationships within the school that requires the principal to pay attention to the constantly changing dynamics among staff. As the principal and teachers interact with each other new dynamics are created and the principal must now take these factors into account. Each year, the inevitable changes in staff will have unpredictable impacts on the relationship networks. The recommendations in this OIP emphasize that the work of a principal should be focused on nurturing an environment of ongoing professional learning and not a series of specific actions but rather a continuous approach to build trust and foster an environment where teachers feel professionally supported. At

Maplelane Elementary this would require a review and adjustment of the professional learning structures after each staffing change. It is hard to predict the exact consequences of each change but it is important to review and reflect on how staffing changes impact the learning structures within the school.

As both formal and informal professional learning structures become engrained within Maplelane Elementary a next step in learning structures would be to look at creating connections to learning networks at other schools around the district. Lewis (2019) refers to having staff be boundary spanners to connect between different organizational networks. Arena and Uhl-Bien (2016) also stress the importance of connections between different networks in adaptive and enabling leadership. As each school in the district has the same required school improvement areas, staff involved in professional learning related to the focus areas will have common focus areas to connect between schools.

The recommendations in this OIP also promote the concept of collaborative professionalism put forward by Hargreaves et al. (2018). In discussing the implementation of a school culture formulated on collaborative professionalism, Hargreaves et al. (2018) recommend that school systems shift from a narrow focus of student achievement defined by standardised testing in literacy and numeracy to a broader conceptualization of student achievement that is driven by equity, inclusion, and well-being. As the recommendations in the change plan are implemented and collaborative professionalism becomes engrained in the school culture, a next step would be to examine how this broader conceptualization of student success can be implemented. The District has a formal plan to implement goals around equity and inclusion but it is

currently not reflected in the required school improvement planning process. A specific next step would be for principals to connect these goals around equity and inclusion into the professional learning structures for teaching staff. Though individual principals have limited agency to directly change the required school improvement planning process, this next step could involve principals looking for avenues to incorporate a greater emphasis on equity, inclusion, and well-being into the school improvement planning process at their individual schools.

CLT provides school principals with a leadership framework that can assist a principal in meeting required administrative demands and at the same time promote a culture of professional learning that can evolve and adapt to ongoing challenges.

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