

STATE-WIDE SUPPORT FOR TEACHER LEADERSHIP: IMPLEMENTING  
STANDARDS TO EVALUATE TEACHER LEADER PRACTICES AND INFORM  
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH ACTIVITIES

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## ABSTRACT

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This project used the improvement-science structure of a 90-Day-Cycle to support the implementation of the NC Teacher Leadership Specialist (TLS) Standards in two County School Districts in North Carolina by providing professional development with facilitated reflection activities and by collecting data regarding the depth and appropriateness of the standards for guiding and evaluating district-specific teacher leadership roles and activities. The outcomes from this project offered NCDPI deeper state-level awareness of district-specific teacher leadership roles by identifying models of teacher leadership practice and existing support structures and assessing the level of alignment between the TLS standards and those practices. The outcomes of this project yielded recommendations to guide the development of statewide resources for supporting teacher leadership, in order to better align them with actual district-level teacher leader roles, as well as identify focus areas for the development of future professional development resources. The narrative concludes with recommendations moving forward in light of new legislative influences on teacher leadership in North Carolina.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has an obligation to provide guidance, support, and resources to the public schools of North Carolina. As the state education agency, NCDPI must work to continuously develop and improve the resources it offers to districts, schools, and teachers to ensure the resources align well with existing educational realities and needs. Scholarly theoretical research offers an important lens into the dynamic realities of public education, but the urgency of the moment sometimes prevents organizations from fully utilizing scholarly research to guide actions and decisions. Using research-based best practices has long been a priority in public education, and using educational research to inform and guide the development of resources is a priority for the NCDPI, but even with the best intentions and outcomes, it is not uncommon to hear teachers and administrators complain that resources and policy requirements set forth by NCDPI do not meet their needs. Knowing that this is the opinion of some educators, it is important to consider ways to honor and access the value of the knowledge and experience practitioners in the field can bring to state-level decisions that affect them. This is more than a hunch or strategy for winning over the opinions of teachers and administrators; improvement science research suggests that educators can offer insights that are equally as valid as scholarly theoretical knowledge for informing improvement efforts (Lewis, 2015).

### **Individual Effort for an Organizational Goal**

It is beneficial to acknowledge the value of educators' opinions and experience in shaping policy and resource development, but it can be a challenge for a large state



organization like NCDPI to do so. The time and resources necessary to deploy large scale efforts to collect the opinions and experiences of educators and organize the data into actionable information can slow the progress of outcomes and reinforce existing stereotypes of an educational bureaucracy that is neither nimble nor responsive in helping to solve the problems educators experience every day. As an individual agent of NCDPI working in the Educator Effectiveness Division, an important part of my work is to assist with the design of professional development and resources to support instructional improvement. In the summer of 2014, I began to consider priorities for new areas for resource development. I was looking for ways to guide and inform the development of resources to support school improvement and leadership. At the time I started this work, NCDPI offered very few resources for intentionally supporting teacher leadership, and I recognized this was an area where I could intervene and improve the support NCDPI provides for districts to guide teacher leadership work. As I considered the options for informing this project authentically to bring guidance from scholarly research together with the relevant opinions of practicing educators, I needed to find an appropriate method for practically engaging stakeholders in work that could lead to actionable solutions. I wanted a lens into the actual practices of district-level teacher leaders, and using an improvement science approach seemed like a logical way to get it.

### **Why Does Teacher Leadership Matter?**

It is widely accepted that strong leadership is critical to the success of schools, but growing demands placed on school administrators in North Carolina and changing conceptions of the nature of leadership create a need for expanding instructional leadership capacity through roles that allow teachers to carry out some of the leadership

functions in schools. By extending some of the responsibilities that typically fall on the principal to teacher leaders, instructional leadership becomes a shared responsibility with broader human input, but it is not something that can be done in a haphazard way.

Developing a shared leadership model requires not only a shift in the traditional hierarchical structures of schools (Brosky, 2011), but also the expansion of the knowledge and skills of teachers. While it takes consideration and planning, extending school and instructional leadership responsibilities beyond the role of the principal offers opportunities for teachers to become more deeply involved in the leadership activities within the school.

Studies exploring teacher leadership and the improvement of teacher practice through professional development and peer support utilize a variety of methods and approaches, ranging from quantitative studies exploring perceptions of teacher leadership to qualitative studies addressing the role of various activities in supporting teacher leadership capacity and instructional quality. As school districts in this state explore ways to support shared leadership models for improving site-based capacity, resources for doing so are needed. Formal professional development initiatives must be established. Tools and materials that help to extend the knowledge and skills of teacher leaders so they may become more deeply involved in the leadership activities within their schools need to be created. NCDPI has a responsibility to contribute appropriate resources toward this effort, and this responsibility frames and drives my opportunity to inform that resource development.

## **Framing the Problem**

In 2014, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction offered very few resources for guiding and supporting teacher leadership in the state. Providing appropriate supports for educators to ensure continuous improvement of professional development and student achievement is an issue often handled at the individual school level. In larger districts where centralized services are in place, focused support may be provided at the district level for these efforts in the form of dedicated positions and programs. In many cases, the processes and structures involved require some type of teacher-level leadership. Structures to support these teacher leaders vary from district to district and school to school. As NCDPI takes an active role in supporting teacher leadership, the differences that exist across schools and districts create a challenge for strategically deploying teacher leadership efforts and measuring their impact statewide. To provide appropriate statewide resources for supporting effective teacher leadership functions in public schools, tools must be in place to guide and evaluate the practices of the educators carrying out those teacher leadership roles.

Typically, teacher leadership roles are established to harness the talents of highly effective teachers in order to support student achievement, improve adult learning and collaboration, and to contribute to school and system improvement (Curtis, 2013). Teacher leadership roles vary in scope and expectation. Some teacher leaders support their colleagues while still maintaining classroom responsibilities. Margolis and Huggins (2012) examined the application of a hybrid teacher leadership model where, in addition to leadership expectations, teachers still had responsibility for the direct instruction of students. Across the various sites and roles studied, they discovered that leadership tasks

were somewhat undefined. They concluded that teacher leadership expectations must be clearly established at the inception of the role in order to prevent disparate and conflicting models from emerging (Margolis & Huggins, 2012). Some teacher leadership roles are more broad-based. These roles remove teachers from classroom responsibilities so they can provide ongoing direct support to the teachers in the schools they serve. Instructional coaches and curriculum facilitators are examples of teacher leader roles where the teacher leader no longer has responsibility for the direct instruction of students. To avoid the potential conflict Margolis and Huggins identified, NCDPI teacher leadership resources will initially focus on a broad-based formal teacher leadership model, where the teacher leader no longer has responsibility for the direct instruction of students and focuses primarily on supporting adult learning and instructional improvement.

### **NCDPI Evaluation Resources**

Evaluating the efforts of all educators to monitor program quality and inform continuous improvement are critical human resource functions for local education agencies. The NC State Board of Education has identified the following purposes for evaluation:

- Serve as a measurement of performance for individual teachers;
- Serve as a guide for teachers as they reflect upon and improve their effectiveness;
- Serve as the basis for instructional improvement;
- Focus the goals and objectives of schools and districts as they support, monitor, and evaluate their teachers;
- Guide professional development programs for teachers;

- Serve as a tool in developing coaching and mentoring programs for teachers;
- Enhance the implementation of the approved curriculum; and
- Inform higher education institutions as they develop the content and requirements for teacher training programs. (NCDPI, 2008)

Teacher evaluation is an important mechanism for assessing the quality and effectiveness of instruction. NCDPI provides evaluation resources for a variety of instructional and leadership roles in North Carolina's public schools. The evaluation resources for these roles are guided by a unique set of standards specifically developed to assess the work and functions of each role. State-level resources to support the development and evaluation of teacher leadership must be aligned with both the vision of the state agency for teacher leaders, and actual practices of teacher leaders in schools.

**Teacher leadership standards needed.** Prior to 2014, there were no state-approved standards, and evaluation resources offered no State-Board-approved tools for evaluating the unique work of teacher leaders in North Carolina schools. The teacher evaluation rubric addresses leadership superficially, but it primarily assesses the practices of a generalist or a content area instructor working directly with students. The instructional support staff rubrics assess the practices of other unique teaching roles, such as Instructional Technology Facilitator, Library Media Coordinator, School Counselor, School Psychologist and School Social Worker. The Instructional Central Office rubric evaluates some teacher leadership functions, but these standards align more closely to administrator responsibilities than those of a teacher and are intended for administrative roles only. These existing standards and resources were ill suited for evaluating a school-

based teacher leader whose primary role is to help other teachers to improve their practice.

To perform well and continuously improve, many teacher leaders benefit from using standards by which to self-assess, evaluate, and improve their leadership efforts. Standards that address the unique aspects of teacher leadership work enables district leaders to advocate for and direct resources to teacher leadership activities and programs. Without a set of common standards for evaluating teacher leadership, it is difficult to provide state-level investments in or assessment of teacher leadership with any degree of focus or alignment, resulting in a gap in resources to provide direct support for teacher leadership in an intentional, focused manner.

In October of 2014, the State Board of Education approved a set of teacher leadership standards to measure a state-defined model of teacher leadership (see Appendix A). Yet, measurement alone is not sufficient to provide professional growth. Teacher leaders need access to resources targeted at knowledge and skill development. This is particularly important for leaders transitioning from facilitating student learning to facilitating adult learning. Charged with the responsibility to inform the development of such resources for districts and charter schools I began to view the new approved standards as an appropriate starting point for informing the professional development component of teacher leader improvement and effectiveness.

### **Current and Desired States**

Across North Carolina, there are 115 demographically diverse school districts. The rural and urban school districts across the state vary in size, structure, and student achievement level. These differences offer opportunity for a variety of teacher leadership

models to emerge. To address this and provide stronger state-level support for a consistent model of teacher leadership, NCDPI initiated a process to design, deploy, and support a comprehensive set of teacher leadership evaluation standards for use state-wide. Until October of 2014, NC State Board Approved standards and evaluation instruments were not structured for or aligned with school-based teacher leadership functions. Evaluation tools for instructional roles in North Carolina share a common set of five domains:

- Leadership
- Equity
- Content Knowledge
- Facilitating Instruction
- Reflective Practice

For the first time in history, NCDPI is involved in a comprehensive effort to provide direct support for teacher leadership functions across the state. Through this initiative NCDPI is implementing a set of standards, aligned to the five existing domains, with evaluation tools that have a specific focus on school-based teacher leadership functions. The standards are organized in a rubric that is intended to contribute to school and system improvement, indirectly addressing student achievement by improving adult learning and collaboration. Success depends on anchoring the project in research-based best practices that promote and sustain teacher leadership as a strategy for improving professional learning and student achievement. By using improvement science to deploy and refine some tools for supporting teacher leader reflection and assess the actions and expectations of practicing teacher leaders through this pilot, I could build a more credible

set of recommendations. The hands-on nature of the project, within the context of school districts with practicing teacher leaders, gave me access to more relevant, state-specific data than would be available to me via an expansive analysis of the literature, but the local context of the interventions alone was not sufficient. The plan still had to be guided by research in order to frame the concept of teacher leadership. As I proceeded to develop the intervention plan intended to improve the resources North Carolina offers to districts to support teacher leaders statewide, guidance and insights gleaned from literature were very important.



## CHAPTER TWO: CONSIDERING THE LITERATURE

### **History and Review of Problem**

As high-stakes testing and increasingly rigorous standards place greater demands on our nation's classrooms, the role of the principal as instructional leader is becoming ever more complex. In North Carolina, legislative requirements for teacher evaluation and other administrative functions that must be carried out by principals further reduce the time principals have available to devote to instructional leadership functions. In this high-stakes environment, collaborative structures to increase opportunities for and the quality of teacher leadership are especially critical. A growing body of research in the area of teacher leadership confirms, promotes, and supports successful teacher leadership models. NCDPI is committed to providing professional development and support aligned with strategically designed teacher leadership standards in order to inform local systems and structures for using these standards to improve the leadership skills and efficacy of teacher leaders. In order to do this strategically, I needed to deepen my understanding of the scope of the participating districts' teacher leadership roles and identify the degree of alignment of the TLS standards to local expectations and actual practice. A successful investigation of the impact of teacher leadership standards had to be rooted in the context of existing research on teacher leadership. An initial review of the literature offered important information about teacher leadership to guide this work.

### **Rationale for Teacher Leadership**

Balancing the demands of managing the day to day operations of a school with the leadership of instructional practice invites opportunities to distribute leadership practices over leaders, followers, and the situational context of the work (Spillane,

Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Distributed leadership requires partnerships and collaboration within a school. In these settings, the act of teaching is no longer a solitary practice. Teachers are increasingly collaborating in professional learning communities to collectively develop instruction and assessment practices to prepare students for college and career demands. Teacher leadership provides roles that recognize the talents of highly effective teachers who can support student learning, improve adult learning and collaboration, and contribute to school and system improvement (Curtis, 2013). Teacher leaders maintain a focus on student learning while continuing their own professional learning and growth. These opportunities to learn, grow, and lead are important for teacher leaders. Inclusive formal leadership on the part of the principal has a positive impact on both teacher morale and enthusiasm, as the leadership approach of the principal sets the stage for the collaborative engagement of others in the leadership of the school (Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010). Teacher leaders hold a varying array of leadership responsibilities, depending on their grade level, subject area, or position. These responsibilities may include instructional leadership, administrative responsibilities, and serving as committee/department chairs. While the scope of work in some teacher leadership roles might seem taxing, holding such roles actually improves short-run teacher retention (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010). Teacher leadership supports the mission and success of schools by leveraging the expertise of effective teachers to build capacity across the entire school. These leadership roles may serve to retain teacher leaders and contribute to collaborative school leadership culture that improves student achievement. Acknowledging the variety of teacher leadership models, the opportunity to improve instruction, and the potential for teacher leadership to increase

retention, it is important for NCDPI to provide well-aligned tools and resources to support formal teacher leadership roles, and the literature offers important information for guiding and framing the actions of the state education agency to provide focused support for teacher leadership.

### **Attitudes about Teacher Leadership**

In order for teacher leaders to be most effective in their roles, the attitudes of teachers and administrators must be aligned to support their opportunities to lead. The prevalence of misalignment of expectations has been identified in several studies (Angelle & Dehart, 2011; Kiranh, 2013). The attitudes of other teachers toward teacher leaders vary by grade level, subject area, or position, but administrators tend to hold higher expectations of teacher leaders than other teachers at the school (Kiranh, 2013), so it is important for the principal to play an active role by extending some power to teacher leaders (Angelle & DeHart, 2011). Principals who cultivate teacher leadership successfully help teachers re-conceptualize the teacher leadership role as more than “just” a teacher (Helterbran, 2010). Helterbran asserts that top-down leadership must change. Principals should exercise their power and authority to share leadership with potential leaders in their buildings. Creating opportunities for teacher-level leadership opens alternative leadership pathways for teachers. Traditionally, educational leadership is assumed to mean transitioning to a role of school administrator, but not all teachers have the desire to follow that traditional path. Hewett, Pijanowski, and Denny (2009) conducted a survey to better understand the motivations of teachers who have the observed/perceived capacity to be an outstanding administrator, but choose not to become one. They concluded the perceived demands of school administration may cause some

strong leaders to elect to lead from the classroom instructional level rather than become a principal. Considering these studies, state-level resources for teacher leadership need to offer clear boundaries between administrative and teacher leadership practices.

Additionally, expectations for supporting the practices of the educators that formal teacher leaders serve must be clearly defined so that teachers have a clear understanding of the support offered by teacher leaders.

### **Teacher Leadership in Practice**

It is important for teacher leaders to be experts in curriculum, pedagogy, and learning, because in many states, the day-to-day reality of a principals' work has shifted away from curriculum and pedagogy toward tasks of organizational management and administration (Neumann, Jones, & Webb, 2012). While principals are the formal school leaders, teachers may serve in a variety of roles which enable them to influence the development of leadership throughout the school (Ghamrawi, 2013; Wells, 2012). These roles include subject leaders, department leaders, mentors, or school improvement chairpersons. In the effort to define the scope of teacher leadership, the perspectives of Cindi Harrison and Joellen Killian were frequently cited. Through their research efforts, ten specific teacher leadership roles that contribute to school success have been identified:

1. Resource Provider: Sharing instructional resources, books, lesson plans, and assessment tools
2. Instructional Specialist: Supporting the implementation of effective teaching strategies

3. Curriculum Specialist: Modeling content standards to alignment of instruction and assessment
4. Classroom Supporter: Helping teachers implement new ideas by demonstrating and co-teaching lessons
5. Learning Facilitator: Collaborating with fellow educators to improve student learning through professional development
6. Mentor: Providing direct support to novice teachers
7. School Leader: Serving as chair of committees, grade levels, or departments
8. Data Coach: Guiding the analysis of data to inform instructional decisions
9. Catalyst for Change: Championing new ideas or innovative approaches
10. Learner: Demonstrating a commitment to ongoing professional learning  
(Harrison & Killion, 2007)

Recognizing this variety of roles and considering how and where each may contribute to the formal teacher leadership model NCDPI and the State Board of Education envision in this state will be an important area for consideration in the recommendations for resource development.

### **Essential Skills for Teacher Leadership**

Developing the requisite skills for school-based instructional leadership is important for teacher leaders. In their search for a framework for teacher leadership, Snell and Swanson (2000) determined that expertise, collaboration, reflection, and empowerment are essential elements of teacher leadership. These elements support the skills required for Harris and Killions's ten roles of teacher leadership. In addition to these elements, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction acknowledges the

importance of skills for navigating the formal and informal dimension of power as one of the specific standards of the state-adopted evaluation standards for principals (NCDPI, 2008). While micro-political skills are important for school administrators, these skills are also important for teacher leaders. In fact, schools in which leadership skill development involves the entire faculty are likely to be more micro politically successful than schools that do not use a model of shared decision making (Brosky, 2011).

### **Support Structures to Promote Successful Teacher Leadership**

Building school leadership capacity is a broad-based level of skillful participation in the work of learning and leadership (Lambert, 2003). Teacher leadership is accomplished in a variety of ways, but it requires a supportive environment where leadership can emerge within a community of educators. Thomas Sergiovanni asserts, “Teachers become more committed and self-managing when schools become true communities, freeing principals from the burden of trying to control people” (Sergiovanni, 1992). Such community building requires that teacher leaders have access to effective supports. Professional development is an important component of such support, not only to increase instructional skills, but as a means of developing leadership capacity and sustaining improvement efforts. Engaging teachers as leaders of high-quality professional development and leveraging the expertise of veteran teachers builds teacher leadership practices and may improve the sustainability of school reform efforts (Ghamrawi, 2013).

One structural method for involving teachers in sustaining school reform efforts is through the use of professional learning communities (PLCs), as they provide structures for teachers to take a shared leadership approach for improving student achievement

(DuFour, 2004). PLCs offer structures and processes for addressing student learning needs and provide opportunities for teacher leadership. The genuine reflection, use of data, and collaborative efforts to improve professional practice that are a part of PLC work may be most effective when led by a well-trained teacher leader (Kingsley, 2012). While the structures of PLCs support conditions for teacher leadership, formalizing teacher leader roles through job descriptions, standardized selection criteria, and additional compensation may open new possibilities (Kingsley, 2012).

### **Implications for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction**

The growing use of shared leadership practices that depend on formal teacher leaders increases the urgency for NCDPI to provide appropriate resources for supporting these teacher leadership efforts. In this context, new standards for defining and aligning teacher leadership practices and expectations were developed. To address an existing lack of state-level resources for providing aligned support to teacher leaders in an intentional, focused manner, considering various aspects of the literature on teacher leadership revealed important insights to inform the development of resources for supporting formal teacher leadership roles. With these priorities in mind, NCDPI entered uncharted terrain as it established a strategic effort to promote and support teacher leadership statewide by creating a set of teacher leadership standards to guide the work of teacher leaders and offer a scope of expectations principals and district leaders could use as a guide for assessing the actions of teacher leaders. These events offered a unique invitation for me to work directly with teacher leaders, using facilitated reflection to develop their understanding of the teacher leadership standards and improve my understanding of their work, to guide future resource development.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **Intervention Design**

With the recent adoption of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards, it was important to identify ways to support the implementation of these standards and improve the resources provided to districts and charter schools for supervising and evaluating the work of local teacher leadership roles. To accomplish this, I looked to improvement science to organizing my efforts, and identify the best strategies for approaching this project. Improvement science offers a Model for Improvement (Langley et al, 2009) that involves a sequential process to develop and test a change over time so that improvements may scaled up. This process is about working with information, people, and well-designed processes to identify and test incremental change in order to establish actions for improvement that may be spread or expanded.

The literature suggested that professional learning communities can improve reflection, use of data, and collaboration, so I wanted to prioritize face-to-face collaborative interaction with participants. In order to use these face-to-face sessions to provide stronger statewide support for teacher leadership and guide the development of the resources, I needed to use methods that would support important practices and essential skills as well as identify information about the actual teacher leadership practices in the districts with which I was working. Using an improvement science model as a basis for this project would allow me to implement and test changes as I worked directly with the teacher leaders. The most productive way to accomplish this was through an inquiry-based problem solving model with origins in the healthcare industry, now championed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As an



improvement science strategy, the 90-Day-Cycle is “a disciplined and structured form of inquiry designed to produce and test knowledge synthesis” (Park & Takahashi, 2013, p. 5). This improvement-science approach guided the final design of the activities and interventions I used to pilot the Teacher Leadership Specialist (TLS) Standards in two North Carolina school districts.

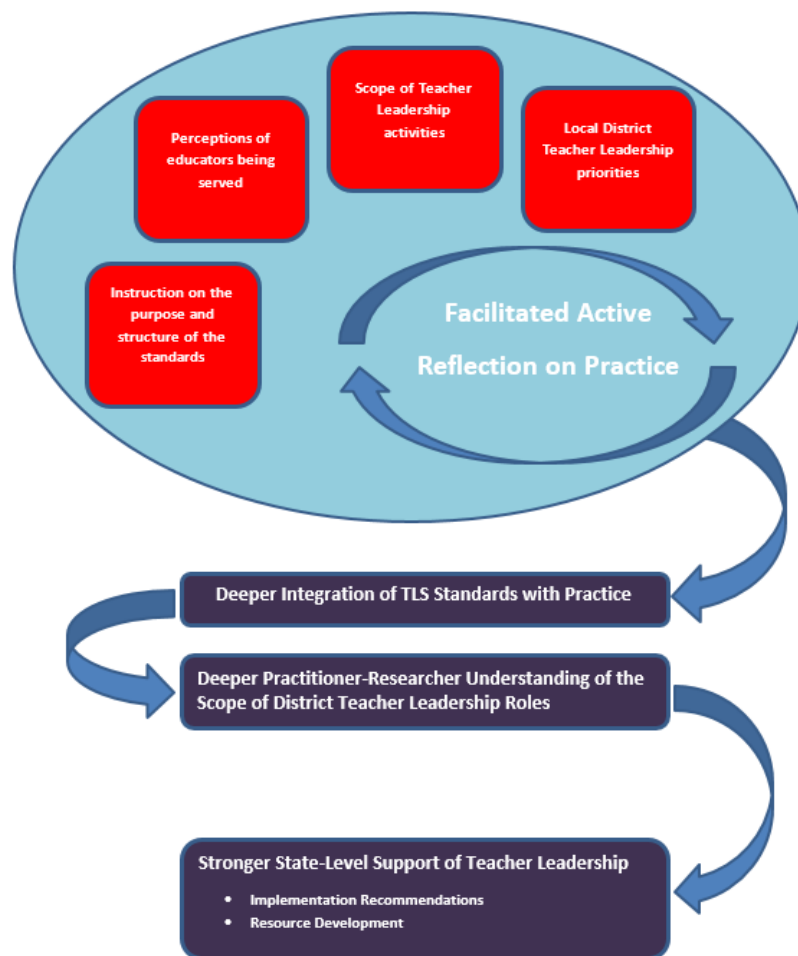
The project design, employing the improvement-science methods of the 90-day-cycle, offered a systematic process for implementing these standards and collecting data in authentic contexts, bounded by the district-specific teacher leadership roles to which the standards were being applied. Through the activities of this pilot, I developed and implemented strategies for engaging teacher leaders in reflective practices in order to guide their work, identify needs, and set priorities for future action. As I was conducting the pilot, I collected information from a variety of sources to deepen my understanding of the scope of the participating districts’ teacher leadership roles, so I could identify the degree of alignment of the TLS standards to local expectations and actual practice. The information obtained from the activities of the pilot informs the recommendations for resources the state should make available to all districts in order to provide stronger state-level support for teacher leadership. To acquire the information needed for this project, I facilitated monthly face-to-face sessions in the two pilot districts as a means to:

- Introduce the standards to participating teacher leaders to develop their understanding of those standards
- Determine educators’ perceptions of teacher leadership actions to gain teachers’ perspectives on teacher leadership

- Identify the scope of existing teacher leadership activities to determine alignment to practice
- Ascertain district priorities for teacher leadership roles to identify each district's expectations for teacher leaders
- Engage teacher leaders in facilitated reflection to use writing as a tool for thinking, and gather their perspectives on resources needed

Figure 1 offers a conceptual model of the individual components and targeted outcomes of this project.

### ***Improving Teacher Leadership Practices and Resources***



*Figure 1.* Conceptual Model of Pilot Design.

In order to assess the practical utility of the standards and collect specific information regarding potential improvement of the standards or implementation processes, the setting was intentionally kept small by limiting the pilot to two districts. This scale allowed me to interact directly with the participants throughout the project. The conclusion of this improvement-science effort yielded information regarding the strength of the standards and offered insights into potential areas for future improvements to strategies and resources for supporting teacher leadership state wide, which will be further elaborated in Chapter 5 of this disquisition.

### **Setting**

This project was positioned in ongoing efforts to provide appropriate instruments for evaluating an array of educational roles in North Carolina Public Schools. Until recently, there were no consistent tools for measuring a state-defined model of teacher leadership to assess the work of teachers whose primary role is to improve instruction by helping other teachers to improve their practice. Until the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards were developed, districts had no consistent resources for assessing the work of teacher leaders. This project was set in two school districts working to implement the standards with locally defined teacher leadership roles. Davidson County Schools is comprised of 34 schools, including eighteen elementary schools, seven middle schools, six high schools, one STEM based career academy, one extended day school, and an ungraded special school. This district was implementing the TLS standards with eight newly-created teacher leader roles called, Instructional Program Specialists. Instructional Program Specialists or IPS provided teacher leadership across the K-12 grade span. The 2014-15 school year was the inaugural year of the IPS position. Henderson County

Schools is comprised of 23 schools, including, thirteen elementary schools, four middle schools, and six high schools. This district was implementing the TLS standards with twelve teacher leaders called Instructional Coaches. The role of Instructional Coach has been in place for more than ten years in Henderson County, and these coaches provide teacher leadership within an individual grade span, serving specifically at the elementary, middle, or high school level.

### **A Team Approach**

Piloting the TLS standards in these districts, including collecting data to determine the quality and usefulness of the standards in order to inform implementation support and resource development, involved a variety of stakeholders and team members. The actions, perspectives and input of these individuals was essential for fully informing this work. Including a variety of voices helped to ensure that appropriate resources were available to support the project, aligning actions and decisions along the way, and supporting any recommendations or changes in practice brought about through this project. While some, like myself were members of multiple teams, the individuals involved in this project made up three distinct teams.

**The standards design team.** The standards design team established the structure for the standards and the processes required for implementing them. This work was completed prior to the beginning of this project, and it was essential to have these standards in place because they form the grounding context through which the activities of this pilot were delivered. This team represented the widest range of stakeholders, including community and external perspectives that were not a part of other aspects of this project. Perspectives represented on the standards design team included:

## NCDPI

- Professional Development Coordinator (Myself)
- Regional Professional Development Leaders (16)
- Consultant for Teacher Leadership
- Director: Educator Effectiveness Division, NCDPI
- Director: Curriculum and Instruction, NCDPI

## District

- Principal, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools
- Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Watauga County Schools
- Classroom Teacher, Currituck County Schools
- Curriculum and Instruction Specialist, McDowell County Schools
- Principal, Richmond County Schools
- Principal, Henderson County Schools
- Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Cabarrus County Schools
- Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Pitt County Schools
- Human Resources Director, Lee County Schools
- Principal, Rockingham County Schools
- Classroom Teacher, Burke County Schools
- Classroom Teacher, Durham Public Schools

## Community

- Professional Development Specialist, Friday Institute for Educational Innovation

## External

- Director, Research, and Evaluation Associates
- Consultant, Research, and Evaluation Associates

**Project implementation team.** The implementation team established the structure for deploying the standards in the district and evaluating the quality of the standards. It was important to have insights from both the state and district levels on this team, so that state priorities and local needs could be appropriately integrated into the project design. Perspectives represented on the implementation design team included:

## NCDPI

- Professional Development Coordinator (Myself)
- Consultant for Teacher Leadership
- Director: Educator Effectiveness Division, NCDPI

## District

- Teacher Leadership Project Coordinator in Davidson County Schools
- Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in Davidson County Schools
- Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in Henderson County Schools
- Senior Director of Human Resources in Henderson County Schools

**Deployment team.** The deployment team provided direct support to me as I implemented the standards with the teacher leaders involved in this project and collected data regarding the experiences of the teacher leaders. It was important to maintain dialogue with individuals from both the state and district levels to keep the project

aligned with expectations and needs. In addition to myself, at the NCDPI level, the Director of Educator Effectiveness was an important voice. As a senior leader at the state education agency, she helped to ensure that the project priorities aligned with the state's vision for teacher leadership, and needed to be aware of the project activities so she could support future communications about the project to the State Board and advocate for any necessary future policy change related to the project or its outcomes. District-level leaders helped me to keep the project aligned with local priorities, and offered insights throughout the project that informed my planning between sessions. Perspectives represented on the deployment team include:

#### NCDPI

- Professional Development Coordinator (Myself)
- Consultant for Teacher Leadership
- Director: Educator Effectiveness Division, NCDPI

#### District

- Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in Henderson County Schools
- Senior Director of Human Resources in Henderson County Schools
- Instructional Coaches in Henderson County Schools
- Teacher Leadership Project Coordinator in Davidson County Schools
- Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in Davidson County Schools
- Instructional Program Specialists in Davidson County Schools

## **Implementation Plan**

This project provided a unique opportunity to deploy the TLS standards in two very different contexts. In Davidson County, the teacher leadership role is called an Instructional Program Specialist. This newly established role was in the first year of implementation during this project. This context allowed for the evaluation of the standards as they inform the development and support of a new leadership role. By contrast, in Henderson County the teacher leadership role known as an Instructional Coach was an existing role, which has been in place for over a decade. Working where the teacher leadership role had been in place for a long period of time offered a lens into the impact of new evaluation standards on existing district-level systems and structures. In both districts, there were established structures for bringing teacher leaders together regularly for formative support and professional development, so I was able to access these sessions to meet monthly with each group to provide professional development. Using writing as a tool for thinking, during each session I provided prompts to engage the teacher leaders in reflective activities to process the information from the session, identify their needs, and set priorities for future work.

### **Structured Phases of Improvement**

Using the improvement science approach of the 90-Day-Cycle offered a structure to organize the implementation. The activities of this project were carried out over the second semester, between February and June of 2015. Each distinct phase provided a framework for moving sequentially through the activities and processes required to complete this inquiry process. In both districts, the implementation plan used parallel structures that included the following:



- Refining the use of teacher-leader written reflection and improve writing as a tool for thinking.
- Use document analysis and coded survey responses to identify the scope of expectations and actual practices of teacher leaders in the participating districts to assess alignment to the TLS standards.
- Providing professional development to orient teacher leaders to the structural underpinnings of the new standards and define the required process aspects of implementation.

### **Assessing Change and Analyzing Progress toward Improvement**

Supporting the implementation of the TLS standards in these districts and assessing the progress of the improvement efforts required well-structured data collection activities. The following activities were an important part of the assessment of this improvement project:

- Monitoring the depth and specificity of responses to written reflection prompts.
- Surveying teacher leaders to determine their level of understanding of the TLS standards.
- Surveying teacher leaders, and select teachers to collect data about the teacher leader's role in supporting teacher improvement and growth.
- Providing professional development, support, and resources to scaffold participants understanding.

- Comparing the scope of the TLS standards to the actions and expectations of teacher leaders in Davidson and Henderson County School systems to assess appropriateness and alignment.

### **Data Collection**

Throughout this project, data was collected in a variety of ways. Written reflection documents and surveys were used to assess participant understanding as well as to explore insights and ideas about the work they were doing and what they might do better to support the teachers they served. Information sessions and professional development concluded with reflective prompts to determine the success of the event and guide the development of future sessions, so they better aligned with the needs of participants. Data regarding the scope of the teacher leadership roles and the implementation of the TLS standards was collected via surveys, notes, and group discussions. This project utilized qualitative data collected throughout the 90-Day-Cycle to deepen my understanding of the scope of the participating districts' teacher leadership roles, and identify the degree of alignment of the TLS standards to local expectations and actual practice, to inform the recommendations and resources the state planned to make available to all districts for supporting Teacher Leadership.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data was collected throughout the semester to determine the value of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards for guiding and supporting district-specific teacher leadership roles in the participating districts was qualitative. Data were analyzed to inform four distinct improvement efforts

**Improvement effort 1: Refining facilitated reflection.** These activities were designed to improve the written reflections of teacher leaders. This improvement effort used written prompts to explore insights and ideas of teacher leaders about the work they have done and what they may need to do differently to better support the teachers they serve. Achieving this involved a basic analysis of the following:

- The depth and volume of written responses to monthly prompts
- The appropriate sequence of reflective tasks

**Improvement effort 2: Determining local expectations.** Actions within this improvement effort gathered information about local teacher leadership roles in order to improve state-level understanding of district-specific teacher leadership functions. The activities in this area used local documents to determine the scope of the expectations for teacher leadership role functions in the target districts. Achieving this involved analyzing two sources of data:

- Document analysis of job descriptions and other relevant material to yield a synthesis of existing categories or domains of leadership these roles call for in each district
- Descriptive coding of survey responses from teacher leaders and classroom teachers regarding operational scope of the teacher leadership role in each district

**Improvement effort 3: Determining alignment to practice.** This improvement effort served to inform state-level understanding of local practice by assessing the alignment of expectations of the TLS standards to those practices. The activities in this area used data collected through work logs and surveys to determine the scope of existing

teacher leadership activities in order to assess the alignment of the TLS rubric with the local teacher leader actions. Two types of records of teacher leadership actions and practice were used to inform this effort:

- Teacher leader reflection survey, identifying which standards were most represented in the previous week's work activities for Davidson County teacher leaders
- Monthly logs of teacher leader actions in Henderson County

**Improvement effort 4: Increasing participant understanding.** The fourth improvement effort was designed to increase participant understanding of the TLS standards. A key component of this effort was face- to-face professional development on the scope of expectations within the standards. The impact of this effort on improving the teacher leaders' understanding of the standards was measured by comparing the outcomes of a survey administered at two strategic points in the project:

- Prior to professional development addressing the purpose and scope of the standards
- Following the professional development addressing the purpose and scope of the standards

### **Conclusion**

Supporting teacher development to improve instructional practices in an effort to maximize student learning is a strategy many districts are addressing through teacher leadership roles. As the State Education Agency and policy-setting body of public schools, it is important for NCDPI to take an active role in defining and aligning teacher leadership expectations and provide appropriate standards and resources for evaluating

teacher leadership functions. Outcomes of this project were expected to help NCDPI be adequately informed of the depth and scope of some existing teacher leadership models and the alignment of the current TLS standards to meet their needs. The artifacts, reflections, and recommendations collected and synthesized over the course of the project offered insights and guidance for development of resources to support the implementation of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards statewide. The outcomes will inform future professional development activities that address teacher-leadership models and functions, with the ultimate goal of improving teacher leadership in North Carolina so that all districts and charter schools are well supported with appropriate tools and resources to improve student learning through high quality teacher leadership actions.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### **Outcomes**

The final structural design of this project utilized an inquiry-based problem solving model to identify ways the State Education Agency could offer appropriate standards, resources, and support for districts to use to supervise and evaluate the work of educators serving in teacher leadership roles. The 90-Day Cycle model provided a useful frame within which to develop progressively successful strategies for implementing the newly-adopted NC Teacher Leadership Specialist standards with the two pilot districts in order to authentically inform resource development. The context of the inquiry involved working directly with the teacher leaders in Davidson and Henderson Counties in face-to-face sessions throughout the spring semester to help develop their understanding of the standards, while giving me a lens into their thinking and work and ultimately informing the development of appropriate statewide resources for supporting teacher leadership. The project engaged multiple stakeholders and was accomplished in three phases. Pre-Cycle activities helped to create the context for the work by establishing direct and indirect team members, identifying appropriate target districts, and developing parameters for the scope of the project. The 90-Day Cycle processes were implemented in three phases to scan, focus, and summarize the activities and outcomes, so that findings could be used to develop web-based teacher leadership resources as a set of post-cycle products.

## **Pre-Cycle Activities**

In 2013, the Educator Effectiveness Division at NCDPI started the process of developing standards for teacher leadership. Agency staff, district educators, and other stakeholders convened regularly over a period of 10 months to draft a set of standards to guide teacher leadership actions. Beginning with national standards, two different groups compared the national standards to the five domains of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, aligning the two models. A third design group used the alignment work to develop a scope of behaviors for teacher leaders that would assist North Carolina teacher leaders to help other teachers to improve their instructional practices. The design group organized the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards into a structure parallel to all other evaluation tools for licensed teachers in North Carolina. This structure included elements and descriptors of teacher leadership practices organized in a rubric matrix to be used for evaluating the actions of teacher leaders. The NC State Board of Education approved the Teacher Leadership Standards in October of 2015.

The formal adoption of the TLS standards led the Educator Effectiveness Division to establish a Teacher Leadership Team to identify next steps for developing and providing robust state-level resources and support for district level teacher leadership efforts. Providing appropriate resources to support district teacher leadership practices presented a significant challenge in need of new thinking to fully address an existing gap, setting the purpose for this improvement project. The overarching frame of this 90-Day Cycle was set forth in a charter planning document (see Appendix B). That charter captures the essential elements and timeline of the project, which started with a scan.

### **The Scan Phase**

Once the 90-Day Cycle was initiated and approved by the Director of Educator Effectiveness, the Scan phase began. Since this project engaged school-level teacher leaders in reflective activities to explore their insights and ideas about the work they do to support the teachers they serve and the initial literature review focused directly on teacher leadership, additional guidance and insight from literature was needed. The scan of the literature also highlighted the essential connection between learning and leadership. Typically, teacher leadership roles are established to harness the talents of highly effective teachers in order to support student achievement, to improve adult learning and collaboration, and to contribute to school and system improvement (Curtis, 2013). This expansion of leadership capacity results in a broad-based level of skillful participation in the work of learning and leadership (Lambert, 2003). However, developing a shared leadership model requires not only a shift in the traditional hierarchical structures of schools but also in the expansion of the knowledge and skills of teachers and formal school leaders (Brosky, 2011). This expansion of knowledge improves the effectiveness of teachers as they modify their instructional practices, and teacher leaders can play an important role. The Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2011) suggests that a “teacher leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the teaching and learning processes and uses this knowledge to advance the professional skills of colleagues by being a continuous learner and modeling reflective practice.” The focus of this project was to support the use of facilitated reflection with the teacher leaders in the two districts. In order to gain additional perspectives and help guide this project, I also interviewed two



educator practitioners with unique insights into teacher leadership as a part of the scan phase.

### **Revisiting the Literature**

The North Carolina Educator Evaluation process calls for teachers to be reflective leaders who develop and implement strategies to improve personal performance (NCDPI, 2008). The literature scan highlighted that doing so requires making time and space to think and reflect, which usually “conflicts with the typical educator norm of doing and the value placed on decisiveness in our organizations” (York-Barr, 2006, p. 67). With these ideas gained from the literature scan, the face-to-face activities of this project were designed to provide time for the participants to use reflective strategies to examine their local practices through the lens of the newly adopted Teacher Leadership Specialist evaluation standards. Since reflection activities are at the center of the activities of this improvement project, scanning literature in this area helped to frame the reflective process to better guide the activities.

Within the scan, one mechanism for adult learning continued to surface, reinforcing the idea that reflection is clearly a critical aspect of adult learning and leadership. The conceptualization of reflective thinking is attributed to John Dewey. In his seminal work, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*, he divided thinking into two types: uncontrolled thought, and controlled, focused thought (Dewey, 1933). He coined the term reflective thinking to describe controlled, focused thought. Later research and investigation has expanded and built upon these initial ideas. Carol Rodgers expanded reflection into four distinct types:

1. reflection as a meaning making process
2. reflection as a rigorous way of thinking
3. reflection in community
4. reflection as a set of attitudes (Rodgers, 2002)

Across this scan of literature on adult learning and reflection, expertise, collaboration, reflection, and empowerment are firmly established as essential elements of teacher leadership (Snell & Swanson, 2000), but often, little time is provided for individual thinking, reflection, and learning. This additional review of the literature for the scanning phase helped to set the design of the activities for the professional development of teacher leaders in this project. One important priority had to be the provision of dedicated time within the sessions to develop deeper expertise, collaborate with one another, and purposefully reflect on their learning and work. This additional scan of the literature offered important guidance, but the literature alone was not enough. Since this improvement project was functioning as a pilot for the state education agency, insights and perspectives from within my organization had to be considered, in order to help fine-tune the context and design of the activities that would make up the Focus portion of the 90-Day-Cycle.

### **Consulting Practitioners**

Improvement science offers approaches that are designed to support innovation and help implement new organizational practices (Langley et al., 2009). One improvement science strategy within the activities of a 90-Day-Cycle is the Networked Improvement Community or NIC. As an intentionally-formed network of relevant stakeholders, an NIC is organized for the purpose of accomplishing a defined

improvement goal (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015). NICs help to bridge the divide between theoretical and practical knowledge (Senechal, 2015), so in addition to reviewing the literature as a part the scan phase of my 90-Day-Cycle activities, I wanted to tap into the knowledge of practitioners with a history of working with district-level teacher leaders in North Carolina. To gain perspectives that would offer relevant guidance to my inquiry efforts, I conferred with two seasoned educators, who each had significant experience as educational leaders in roles that supported the reflective practices of teacher leaders.

At the time of our consultation, Joyce Gardner was serving as the Executive Director of the North Carolina Governor's Teacher Network. In that role, she supported a team of educators providing guidance to 225 teachers, engaged in action research to improve their instructional practice. Joyce's perspectives were relevant because she has more than 20 years of experience working with school and district level teacher leaders. As a Senior Administrator for Elementary Mathematics in a large urban school district, she coordinated the professional development and support of elementary math teachers. In that role, she supervised teacher leaders and designed professional development and activities to help teachers think deeply and critically about their practice. She also worked closely with university staff at NC State University and was involved in the development of her school district's mentoring program, which was influenced by the work of Dr. Alan Reiman, an important North Carolina voice in the research on teacher learning and leadership. Joyce subsequently went on to serve as the North Carolina Director of Educator Preparation, and her perspectives continued to contribute to the teacher leadership supports provided by NCDPI.

Another important voice in my exploration of perspectives from practitioners was that of LeeAnn Segalla. LeeAnn is a retired educator with more than 20 years of experience working with school and district-level teacher leaders in large urban school districts. In her role as Senior Director for Elementary Curriculum and Instruction in a large school district, she helped to design and lead a school-based teacher leadership effort which put teacher leaders in every elementary school in the district. LeeAnn worked with a curriculum team to provide support to these teacher leaders as they supported the other teachers in their schools. One important activity LeeAnn facilitated was dedicated time for reflection on their practice at the conclusion of each professional development session. In addition to her instructional leadership experiences across multiple districts, her perspectives were especially important to me because she was deeply engaged in the two-year development process of the NC Teacher Leadership Specialist standards. Through that work, she has provided guidance and insights in the design of this project and her perspectives have been important for guiding this work.

From the inception of this project, Joyce and LeeAnn have been an important part of my Networked Improvement Community, serving as additional practitioner voices to offer relevant insights and independent perspectives. Sometimes I sought their perspectives formally, through a problem-solving discussion or by including them on a planning team. Other times, they advised me in less formal ways through conversations in passing or as reviewers of draft documents for this project. In fact, they were instrumental in helping me frame the professional development and reflection activities for this project. Not surprisingly, there were similarities in the advice Joyce and LeeAnn provided me. They both emphasized the importance of professional reflection for

continuous improvement of instructional practice. Echoing what I had learned from the literature, LeeAnn cautioned me not to short change the time needed for reflection, and encouraged me to use written prompts for individual reflection before opening up to group discussion. This strategy allows everyone to have the opportunity to think and capture their ideas before sharing, thus allowing introspective individuals to process their thoughts privately. Then they can depend on their written notes in whole group discussions if they wish to share their thoughts. The critical advice that Joyce offered was to be careful, as the leader of reflective activities, to give the participants space for thinking by asking questions that are open-ended and responding in ways that do not stop the flow of ideas, but keep them open by asking follow-up questions like, “Tell me more about that,” or, “What makes you say that?”

### **The Focus Phase**

The initial review of literature in the area of teacher leadership, the additional scan in the area of adult learning and reflection, as well as the practitioner perspectives, helped to guide and narrow the focus of this project. Adult learners bring their own experiences and perspectives to new learning situations. Honoring and incorporating those perspectives is an important aspect of andragogy and adult learning design. Jennifer York-Barr (2006) asserts that “to make the subtleties of our teaching and leadership practices known and to develop new insights and understandings, we must choose a reflective stance” (p. 66). The North Carolina Educator Evaluation process calls for teachers to be reflective leaders who develop and implement strategies to improve personal performance (NCDPI, 2008). Developing strategies for improvement requires establishing time for educators to think and reflect. This project explored the use of

facilitated reflection with two groups of adult learners in their initial year of implementing the North Carolina Teacher Leadership Specialist standards, with the goal of increasing safety and engagement in reflection activities, so that the activities and outcomes could be used to inform the development of web-based Teacher Leadership resources offered by NCDPI to support teacher leadership efforts of the districts and charter schools of North Carolina. Since the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards were designed to define and evaluate the work of teacher leaders with the primary role of helping other teachers to improve their instructional practices I presented these teacher leaders with data about their practices, and facilitated reflective activities to process the information and prioritize next steps.

Guided by the literature and the practitioner perspectives, this Focus Phase involved monthly face-to-face sessions with the teacher leaders in Davidson and Henderson Counties to develop their understanding of the standards and my understanding of their work. These monthly sessions included discussion of practice and written reflection activities, which served as artifacts of the thinking of the participants. Direct instruction on the scope and purpose of the TLS standards, facilitated discussions, written reflections, and document analysis all helped to accomplish the goals of this project, which included:

- Engaging participating teacher leaders in monthly written reflection activities to explore their insights and ideas about the work they were doing and what they may need to do better to support the teachers they serve

- Identifying the unique scope and function of the teacher leader roles in Davidson and Henderson Counties, so state-level resource development can focus on common needs
- Providing direct support to each district's professional development activities with teacher leaders, so they develop a deeper understanding of the scope and purpose of the TLS standards
- Determining the degree of alignment of the TLS standards to the district teacher leader's actual practice, in order to inform the development of appropriate state-developed resources for supporting teacher leadership
- Establishing priorities for recommending resources and activities to include in web-based support NCDPI should design to provide resources to districts and charter schools regarding local support for Teacher Leaders

### **Improving Writing as a Tool for Thinking**

The Focus Phase of a basic 90-Day-Cycle lasts about 30 days (Park & Takahashi, 2013), but for this project, the focus activities spanned the entire second semester, from approximately February to June. Over this period of time in monthly intervals, I engaged the teacher leaders in a series of activities, with each activity informing the next, by presenting information about the standards and data about their practice while engaging them in reflective activities to process the information, identify their needs, and set priorities for future work. I used prompts for individual written reflection and an interactive audience response system as strategies for creating the thinking space required for the teacher leaders to reflect deeply on their actions, to consider the standards that guide their work, and to prioritize next steps. For the initial face-to-face session, I

included a writing task as the first activity. The purpose of the task was to focus each participant's awareness directly on their work in order to anchor the discussions and activities that would take place over the duration of the session.

**Improving specificity in reflection.** As I worked to design prompts to get these teacher leaders to think about their work and offer some description of their actions, I worked with the practitioners on my team. LeeAnn and Joyce encouraged me to frame the initial prompt in a positive way to highlight a success. We all agreed that keeping the first writing positive was the best way to start. Based on their input, the prompt for this first writing task was, "What is something someone said or did this week that makes you especially proud to be an Instructional Program Specialist/Instructional Coach?" The design of the prompt called for teacher leaders to reflect on their work from the past week and to cite an example from the actions of an individual that made them proud. I expected the prompt to generate specific examples in the responses that would offer a picture of an event or action. In fact, we had carefully crafted the question so that the participants would not necessarily have to describe their own actions, but instead could offer something they had seen or heard from someone else. I was surprised when I received the first iteration of the reflection form. In Davidson County, responses were general and brief. For some responses, it was difficult to ascertain from the written response alone what was even being described. Follow-up dialogue was required to understand the responses. I was initially disappointed with the level of effort the teacher leaders put into the process. I discussed my disappointment with Joyce and LeeAnn, and they helped me to realize if I wanted more, I had to be sure I articulated my expectations, so before conducting the same activity with teacher leaders in Henderson County, I thought of a



way to frame the prompt with additional verbal instructions by asking participants to offer enough information in their responses that someone unfamiliar with their work would have a reasonable picture of what they were describing. Then I provided the same written prompt that was provided in Davidson County. The response content from the Henderson County teacher leaders was notably different on this second iteration. Instead of phrases and sentence fragments, complete sentences and brief paragraphs made up the bulk of the responses. The samples in Figure 2 offer a visual comparison between the two districts.

Reflecting on Past Work Prompt 1	
Iteration 1 Davidson County	Iteration 2 Henderson County
<p>What is something someone said or did this week that makes you especially proud to be an ICP?</p> <p>The <u>entire</u> conversation I had with NAME Deleted</p> <hr/> <p>What is something that is really high on your priority list to do next week?</p> <p>• Instructional Rounds - preparing PD for <u>NCPS</u> -</p> <p>• Registration at <u>South</u></p> <hr/> <p>What observations, reflections, or questions do you have?</p> <p>(continue on back side if needed)</p>	<p>What is something someone said or did this week that makes you especially proud to be an Instructional Coach?</p> <p>• Principal was doing walkthroughs at the end of the day on the "half" day and went into one of the teachers I work with and caught her teaching up until the last minute. She asked for why and the response was something like "this is why we're here." Last year it was <u>Exit Exits</u> and <u>exit games</u> made.</p> <p>• All of my data team leaders were able to run their collaborative planning sessions and data mining on their own and I was able to move to grades "on call" to support the analysis and <u>instructional plan</u> while the structure and steps were handled by <u>each team</u>.</p> <hr/> <p>What is something that is really high on your priority list to do next week?</p> <p>Discuss plan to continue success of vertical math PLC with <u>Dena</u> (the leader) and reboot guided reading vertical PLC with changes based on changes in staff and grade level. We need a new leader for guided reading due to that teacher staying home with her newborn.</p> <hr/> <p>What observations, reflections, or questions do you have?</p> <p>I've been rereading <u>Focus</u> again and you present using the effective lecture that he discusses and chapters.</p> <p>(continue on back side if needed)</p>

Figure 2. Comparison of Reflection Prompt 1 Responses.

As I considered the design of the beginning reflection activity I planned to use the following month, I recognized that the improved response volume for the Henderson County iteration suggested that the prompt, as it was originally worded, was not enough on its own to compel every writer to go into detail. It required my additional verbal instructions to communicate the level of detail I was expecting, and I did see visible change when the verbal instructions were added. I wanted the next prompt to require reflection on past work, and to elicit a more detailed response, without extra verbal clarification. Since statewide teacher leadership resources developed at the conclusion of this project will likely exist in a static web-based collection, the information and direction for the reflective tasks must be guided through a clear, comprehensive prompt. Knowing that, I needed to consider the phrasing of the written prompt carefully for the next meeting, so that it could stand alone without my verbal intervention. The prompt used for the next round was, “Describe something from the past month that offers visible evidence of your work as an Instructional Program Specialist/Instructional Coach.” A second line, below this prompt included the following additional instructions, “What changed or improved, and how do you know?” No discussion of the prompt or expectations of the response occurred before the participants began to write. This time, the volume and detail was similar within and across each of the two groups. The similarity is visually evident in the two examples illustrated in Figure 3.

More careful wording, and the addition of written clarifying instruction for the second reflecting-on-the-work prompt seemed to offer a good method for generating deeper responses from participants, as they offered a more detailed description of their work in their writing. With this in mind, it will be necessary to use specific prompts with

clarifying instructions for any reflective protocols and activities included in the statewide resources developed for supporting teacher leadership. Since there is no way to ensure that an on-site face-to-face facilitator will be with teacher leaders using the state resources, it is important to construct the prompts so that the protocol alone can elicit a depth of response that does not require someone on hand to clarify or reframe the prompt.

Reflecting on past work Prompt 2	
Iteration 1 Davidson County	Iteration 2 Henderson County
<p>Describe something from the past month that offers visible evidence of your work as an Instructional Program Specialist. (What changed or improved, and how do you know?)</p> <p>participated in 3 PD sessions at NDE's focusing on how to use Google Classroom in order to better reach students where they are with technology.</p> <p>I had assumed that some teachers would have already been using G.C. but "I WAS WRONG" Over the course of 8 weeks or so I saw a huge increase of the number of teachers using G.C. and experimenting with ways to incorporate the tech. to improve the ways they teach and reach students.</p> <p>What is something that is really high on your priority list to do next week?</p> <p>-training with Fredrick Nash from NC New Schools on Instructional Coaching</p> <p>What observations, reflections, or questions do you have?</p> <p>My biggest "A-ha" moment today is to frame my work next year around the teacher standards - that way teachers will have a better understanding of what they are doing what they're doing.</p> <p>Davidson County Instructional Program Specialist May 8th, 2015</p>	<p>Describe something from the past month that offers visible evidence of your work as an Instructional Coach. (What changed or improved, and how do you know?)</p> <p>In teacher A's room, there has been a shift of students taking responsibility for learning. This has been a year-long process after the teacher had poor results on the EOGs and a clear cause for the drop in scores &amp; lack of growth. The tangible evidence is in the student journals, assessments, and in the margins of their texts. They are taking notes, identifying key details, and using the "tab 9" when their reading both in make sense of what they read and to ensure most of the strategies that are working. As they take responsibility, the level of OLC is increasing from remembering all of the complex thinking that the teacher did to using what they remember to analyze texts, make connections, and to reflect on what they are learning. The learning targets are at or approaching the level of the students and, really, the assignments are matching the level of the target skills or applying this thinking on the assignments and assessment.</p> <p>What is something that is really high on your priority list to do next week?</p> <p>Give specific feedback on instructional practices in math rooms K-5 at one school and 4-5 in another and get results by my 2nd visit on small, clear, steps.</p> <p>What observations, reflections, or questions do you have?</p> <p>This has been very powerful indeed! I appreciate your demonstrating effective strategies and techniques as you work with us. This is an exciting time to be a coach because there is so much more that we can access together to ensure on both sides it benefits &amp; improves our country.</p> <p>Henderson County Instructional Coaches May 8th, 2015</p>

Figure 3. Comparison of Reflection Prompt 2 Responses.

**Corollary benefit of improved reflective prompt.** It is interesting to note that as the clarification and specificity of the prompt was adjusted and responses seemed to increase in length and depth for that specific item, written responses on other activities seemed to indirectly benefit from the improvement. For each version of the reflective prompt activities used above, at the end of the session, participants ended the day by

writing down reflections about the session. The question for this section of the reflection sheet was, “What observations, reflections, or questions do you have?” On the first iteration of the activity in both counties, the responses were brief and several were left completely blank. At the conclusion of the second session in each district, responses to the conclusion section mirrored the depth and thinking of the responses offered to the refined reflection prompt at the beginning of the session. As these teacher leaders wrote more about their thinking and learning, the depth of their responses increased. While some of this improvement is likely due to the growing relationship I was developing with participants, and their awareness that writing was going to be a regular part of our work together, it is very important to recognize that the careful construction of written reflection prompts is an important factor in influencing the depth of the ideas participants expressed.

In addition to the reflecting-on-past-work activities and providing feedback on the session as described above, written responses were used for other activities within the face-to-face sessions with Davidson and Henderson Counties. Getting these teachers to reflect on their work so that I could make iterative improvements to the prompts I used to facilitate their thinking was only one aspect of what I needed to accomplish with the written reflection activities. As I worked through the focus phase of this project to get practical information from these two pilot districts to inform the future development of statewide resources to support teacher leadership, I also needed their insights to guide the scope and type of resources that should ultimately be considered. Without information regarding the experiences and opinions of practicing teacher leaders like those in

Davidson and Henderson Counties, NCDPI runs the risk of putting time and energy into designing resources and materials that may not be relevant to teacher leaders in districts.

**Improving reflection through sequencing.** Using writing as a tool for thinking and reflecting in a way that would allow the insights of teacher leaders to inform future resource development in productive ways meant I needed to carefully consider where I positioned these activities in the sequence of our face-to-face sessions. If I collected the information too early, I may get limited ideas, and based on my experience with the reflection prompt, and the effort it required to get richer responses, I believe that would have been the case. I recognized that I needed to wait a while to try to collect their ideas about what helpful resources and support the state might provide. In addition to refining the reflection prompt, the first two sessions with each group allowed me to introduce the standards and encourage the teacher leaders to consider how they would determine what the teachers they serve understood about their responsibilities and work. Over the first two sessions as I developed a rapport with each group, participants became increasingly comfortable sharing their ideas in discussions, sometimes extending or even challenging the ideas of colleagues as we talked about the intention of the standards and the alignment to their work. Evidence of that growing rapport emerged in some of the responses on the closing reflections of our third session in written comments like:

“Matching activity to standards is helping me to put a face on the standards, please continue.”

“Excited about these standards and this process.”

“Excellent conversation and work to help us understand these standards.”

Even a simple “Thank You” on the closing reflection suggested a growing rapport with these teacher leaders, but one response that really caught my attention was, “I have been reading the book *Focus*, and your presentation style is what the author discusses and champions in his book.” The affirmation of these comments let me know that the group was ready and would likely be candid and honest when I asked what resources they needed.

**Reflecting on teachers’ response to leadership.** The topic of the third session for each group was the exploration of teacher’s perceptions of the work of Instructional Program Specialists and Instructional Coaches. Prior to these sessions, the teacher leaders sent out a questionnaire to teachers in the schools they served. The questionnaire was electronic, and responses fed back to a spreadsheet so that I would have access to the information in order to share it. For this session, I aggregated the teacher’s responses and presented them to the teacher leaders in a visual form. Data from this session is discussed in greater detail later, in the “Intended versus enacted expectations” section of this chapter, but it was within the context of this information that I sought the opinions of my participants about “What actions or conditions are critical for a successful Instructional Program Specialist/Instructional Coach program?” and “What supports or resources should be provided by NCDPI?” In order for the state-level resources for supporting teacher leadership to be most helpful to districts, a simple collection of materials and resources is not enough. Recommendations and insights to guide successful teacher leadership programs need to be included in addition to basic tools and resources. I believe the regular use of written reflection with participants and the rapport established over

previous meetings allowed for honest and direct responses, reflecting insights that can help to authentically inform future recommendations.

**Identifying conditions for success.** Teacher Leaders in both districts offered important perspectives to consider during our third session. Not surprisingly, there were differences in the answers between the two groups. Davidson's teacher leader responses revealed a need for internal structure and support, which I believe is to be expected with a role that is brand new. These teacher leaders identified some internal communication issues and role clarity concerns, whereas the ideas shared by Henderson's teacher leaders were more broad and programmatic, as one might expect from educators in roles that are well established and have a long history in the organization. In spite of these differences, when all responses, from both districts were organized and coded, ten success conditions emerged. In order of frequency, they were:

1. Establish role clarity, so that teachers, administrators, and teacher leaders have a shared vision of the work teacher leaders are expected to do.
2. Provide professional development to address the skills coaches need to move the prioritized work of the district and individual schools forward.
3. Define a reasonable scope of work for teacher leaders with school assignment patterns that don't spread the teacher leader too thin.
4. Allow time for collaboration with other teacher leaders, as well as schedules that allow teacher leaders time to collaborate with individual teachers and professional learning communities.
5. Create conditions that lead to support of teacher leadership priorities and actions from both district and school-level leaders.

6. Establish time and structures for mentoring teacher leaders as they continue to define, refine, and align their leadership practices.
7. Develop safety and trust so that teacher leaders can provide active instructional support to the teachers they serve.
8. Commit to consistent school placement of coaches from year to year, so that established relationships can continue to grow over time.
9. Cultivate a growth mindset so that student growth is understood to be a top priority across all layers of the district.
10. Align required activities and assignments to data-based priorities of the district and/or individual schools.

In both districts, district-level leaders participated in the discussion of the conditions for success and the unique list for each district was provided to the district leaders so they could consider how the list might inform future management decisions and assignments. For this project, these ideas and the teacher leaders' perceived needs for success will offer important guidance for the resources and recommendations the state ultimately provides to support teacher leadership.

### **Determining the Scope of Expectations**

The Teacher Leadership Specialist standards were conceptualized and designed to evaluate teacher leadership practices that would support teacher practices across the domains of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Across the state of North Carolina, teacher leadership is addressed in different ways. Some districts develop teacher leadership roles to support classroom teachers with improving their instructional practices. Other districts may design their teacher leadership roles to address priorities



identified in data or to address strategies in district improvement plans. District size and available funding can influence the degree to which teacher leadership roles are implemented across the state. Some districts depend heavily on their teacher leaders to help deliver professional development initiatives and support school improvement efforts. Other districts may allow individual principals to set the priorities for school-based teacher leaders, based on individual school need. Due to these and other variables, the structure of and expectations for teacher leaders varies from district to district. Since the goal of this project was to improve the design of state-level resources for supporting teacher leadership, it was very important to develop a deeper understanding of the actual practices of teacher leadership roles, so I had to find a way to determine the specific scope of teacher leadership expectations Davidson and Henderson counties had for their teacher leaders.

Informal discussions with the teacher leaders in Davidson and Henderson shed some light on their work. Both were expected to support teachers with improving instructional practices. Both were involved in delivering professional development to address district priorities, but I needed to find a more formal articulation of the expectations of these roles so that I could understand the scope of the teacher leadership role functions in these two districts as I work through all parts of this project to determine whether the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards address appropriate aspects of district-level teacher leadership roles. Achieving this involved analyzing two sources of data:

- Document analysis of job descriptions and other relevant material to yield a synthesis of existing categories or domains of leadership these roles call for in each district
- Descriptive coding of survey responses from teacher leaders and the teachers they serve, regarding operational scope of the teacher leadership role in each district

### **Standards Analysis and Expectations in Davidson County**

Establishing a clear picture of the expectations of the teacher leadership roles in the participating districts required analysis of various role-guidance documents. In Davidson County, job descriptions were available for Instructional Program Specialists (IPS) in the areas of Humanities, and STEM (see Appendix C). In addition to a brief position summary, these documents outlined the basic scope of the IPS role by identifying expectations in the following areas:

- Duties and Responsibilities
- Knowledge/Skills/Abilities
- Working Conditions
- Physical Demands
- Minimum Education and Experience

Focusing on the area of Duties and Responsibilities section of the job descriptions, an analysis of the verbs reveals an expectation for active, collaborative involvement on the part of the IPS for supporting teachers and school leaders in improving instructional practices at their schools. “Support,” “assist,” “serve,” and “collaborate” are the most common verbs found in the Duties and Responsibilities section of these job descriptions,

suggesting role expectations which are collaboratively engaged in school-level improvement efforts.

Within the Knowledge/Skills/Abilities section of the job descriptions, specific areas of expertise are defined. In this area, the expectation of high levels of knowledge and demonstrated ability are noted, specifically in the areas of instruction and assessment, curriculum development, differentiation, professional development, and interpersonal skills. The requirements of these skills and abilities further support the vision of a leadership role that is highly collaborative and interactively involved in school-level improvement efforts. Taken together, the Duties and Responsibilities, and Knowledge/Skills/Abilities sections of these job descriptions reveal a high degree of alignment to the expectations of the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards. Tables 1–5 represent a sample of the alignment found between the two areas of the job descriptions and the domains of the TLS standards.

Table 1

*Representation of the Leadership Domain in the Job Description*

Standard I: Teacher leadership specialists demonstrate leadership. Leadership Domain: <i>Teacher Leaders help teachers become better leaders</i>	
Duties and Responsibilities:	Knowledge/Skills/Abilities:
<p>Serves as liaison between the Division of Curriculum and Instruction in all issues related to instructional best practices that are aligned to performance management standards for teachers</p> <p>Works in collaboration with other departments and areas to maximize teacher effectiveness as it relates to . . . curriculum, instruction, and assessment</p>	<p>Excellent interpersonal skills needed to work effectively with administrators, staff, and community members</p> <p>Experience with curriculum development</p>

Table 2

*Representation of the Equity Domain in the Job Description*

<p>Standard II: Teacher leadership specialists support an environment that is respectful of a diverse population of educators.</p> <p>Equity Domain: Teacher Leaders help teachers become more skilled at working with diverse learners</p>	
Duties and Responsibilities:	Knowledge/Skills/Abilities:
Assists administrators in supporting, training, and coaching teachers and staff	<p>Detailed knowledge and experience with standards-based instruction and assessment best practices</p> <p>Demonstrated knowledge in differentiation and meeting the needs of varied learners</p>

Table 3

*Representation of the Content Knowledge Domain in the Job Description*

<p>Standard III: Teacher leadership specialists incorporate adult learning strategies and effective teaching and learning practices as they implement change</p> <p>Content Knowledge Domain: Teacher Leaders help teachers become stronger in their content knowledge</p>	
Duties and Responsibilities:	Knowledge/Skills/Abilities:
<p>Assists administrators in supporting, training, and coaching teachers and staff</p> <p>Designs and delivers training to administrators/teachers in providing feedback to students to improve instructional delivery</p> <p>Provides ad hoc reports on the status of standards-based instruction/progress reporting and develops recommendations for improvement</p> <p>Works in collaboration with other departments and areas to maximize teacher effectiveness as it relates to curriculum, instruction, and assessment</p>	<p>Demonstrated ability to develop and deliver training to adult learners across multiple disciplines and levels</p> <p>Detailed knowledge and experience with standards-based instruction and assessment best practices</p> <p>Excellent interpersonal skills needed to work effectively with administrators, staff, and community members</p> <p>Experience with curriculum development</p>

Table 4

*Representation of the Instructional Practice Domain in the Job Description*

Standard IV: Teacher leadership specialists facilitate the growth and development of educators.	
Instructional Practice Domain: Teacher Leaders help teachers become stronger in their instructional practices	
Duties and Responsibilities:	Knowledge/Skills/Abilities:
Assists administrators in supporting, training, and coaching teachers and staff	Detailed knowledge and experience with standards-based instruction and assessment best practices  Demonstrated ability to develop and deliver training to adult learners across multiple disciplines and levels
Designs and delivers training to administrators/teachers in providing feedback to students to improve instructional delivery	
Identifies resources and supports teachers with differentiation to meet all students' needs	

Table 5

*Representation of the Reflective Practice Domain in the Job Description*

Standard V: Teacher leadership specialists engage in and facilitate reflective practice.	
Reflection Domain: Teacher Leaders help teachers become more reflective in their practice	
Duties and Responsibilities:	Knowledge/Skills/Abilities:
Identifies resources and supports teachers with differentiation to meet all students' needs	Demonstrated knowledge in differentiation and meeting the needs of varied learners

Through this analysis, it is evident that each of the five domains of the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards are represented in the intended scope of the Instructional

Program Specialist role in Davidson County, and specific job expectations align directly to domains of the TLS standards.

### **Standards Analysis and Expectations in Henderson County**

In Henderson County Schools, a job description was not readily available for the Instructional Coach (IC) role, so for this district, the document analysis focused on the two guidance documents that were available. One document was a list of performance responsibilities the ICs use to communicate their roles to teachers and principals (See Appendix D). The other document was a monthly log template (see Appendix E), which articulates six specific areas in which ICs reflect on and report their work each month. Analysis of the verb statements in the Performance Responsibilities document reveal an expectation for active, collaborative involvement on the part of the ICs for supporting teachers and school leaders in improving instructional practices at their schools. “Support,” “assist,” “facilitate,” and “collaborate” are the most common verbs found in the document, suggesting role expectations which are collaboratively engaged in school-level improvement efforts. Beyond the active nature of the verbs, the performance responsibilities specify specific target areas of expertise, specifically in the areas of coaching, providing feedback, supporting school improvement, collecting data, and supporting differentiated instruction. The inclusion of these areas in the performance responsibilities further supports the vision of a leadership role that is highly collaborative and interactively involved in school-level improvement efforts.

In addition to the Performance Responsibilities document, the frame of the ICs Monthly Log template provides evidence of specific role expectations. Including these areas as categories for ICs to use as a structure for reporting the activities in which they

engage each month reveals the intentional focus of the work of ICs to help teachers at their schools to improve their instructional practices through modeling, feedback, and professional development. Document analysis of the Monthly Coaching Log reveals prompts that align with the TLS standards. The table below shows the alignment of prompts with specific areas of the TLS standards.

Table 6

*Alignment of Monthly Log to TLS Standards*

Log Prompt 1: Meetings with Principal/Administrative Team
<p>Standard I: Teacher leadership specialists demonstrate leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Teacher leadership specialists lead in their school(s)/discipline(s). They facilitate teamwork and leadership.</li> <li>b) Teacher leadership specialists model collaboration. They collaborate with colleagues at the district level. They partner with other educators to facilitate professional learning.</li> <li>c) Teacher leadership specialists advocate for students, educators, schools, and sound educational programs.</li> <li>d) Teacher leadership specialists demonstrate high ethical standards.</li> </ul>
Log Prompt 2: Grade Level/Department Meetings (discussing data, student work, teaching strategies, assessment for learning, etc.)
<p>Standard III: Teacher leadership specialists incorporate adult learning strategies and effective teaching and learning practices as they implement change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Teacher leadership specialists align support for educators with the NC Professional Teaching Standards.</li> <li>b) Teacher leadership specialists use their knowledge of the structure and content of the NC Standard Course of Study to support educators.</li> <li>c) Teacher leadership specialists apply their understanding of the dynamic nature of teaching and learning.</li> <li>d) Teacher leadership specialists engage colleagues in challenging conversations about data to develop appropriate solutions.</li> <li>e) Teacher leadership specialists plan and deliver professional support. They use effective adult learning strategies. They support stages of change and innovation in the school and district.</li> </ul>

Table 6

*(Cont.)*

Log Prompt 3: Teacher Support
<p>Standard II: Teacher leadership specialists support an environment that is respectful of a diverse population of educators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Teacher leadership specialists model respectful communication strategies.</li> <li>b) Teacher leadership specialists differentiate professional learning to meet the diverse learning needs in the school/district.</li> </ul>
<p>Log Prompt 4: Modeling or Co-Teaching Lessons (in any and all content areas)  Log Prompt 5: Informal Classroom Observations and Feedback</p>
<p>Standard IV: Teacher leadership specialists facilitate the growth and development of educators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Teacher leadership specialists deliver a continuum of support strategies to maximize educator effectiveness.</li> <li>b) Teacher leadership specialists employ a variety of resources to help educators improve their effectiveness.</li> <li>c) Teacher leadership specialists effectively employ appropriate and available technology as they support educators.</li> <li>d) Teacher leadership specialists incorporate the Framework for 21st Century Learning to enhance educators' instructional planning and assessment.</li> </ul>
Log Prompt 6: Professional Planning/Learning
<p>Standard V: Teacher leadership specialists engage in and facilitate reflective practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Teacher leadership specialists assess the effectiveness of the support they provide and revise their practices based on findings.</li> <li>b) Teacher leadership specialists base their own professional development activities on the needs of those they serve.</li> <li>c) Teacher leadership specialists facilitate reflective practice in others.</li> </ul>

Table 7 shows additional areas of alignment between the monthly log prompt and the tasks articulated in the performance responsibilities document.



Table 7

*Alignment of Monthly Log Prompts and Performance Responsibilities*

Log Prompt 1: Meetings with Principal/Administrative Team
Performance Responsibilities:  Collaborate with principals, individual teachers and teams of teachers Support the school improvement team
Log Prompt 2: Grade Level/Department Meetings (discussing data, student work, teaching strategies, assessment for learning, etc. )
Performance Responsibilities:  Collaborate with principals, individual teachers and teams of teachers Support the school improvement team
Log Prompt 3: Teacher Support
Performance Responsibilities:  Provide teacher support for identified professional development initiatives in the form of modeling, coaching, providing feedback and facilitating group discussions at the school level Assist in the collection of data on the impact of Instructional Coach activities and student achievement.
Log Prompt 4: Modeling or Co-Teaching Lessons (in any and all content areas)
Performance Responsibilities:  Provide teacher support for identified professional development initiatives in the form of modeling, coaching, providing feedback and facilitating group discussions at the school level
Log Prompt 5: Informal Classroom Observations and Feedback
Performance Responsibilities:  Facilitate training and coaching on Learning-Focused instructional framework, classroom management, literacy strategies across the content areas, research-based math instruction, and differentiated instruction.
Log Prompt 6: Professional Planning/Learning
Performance Responsibilities  Assist with design and implementation of all building level and district level professional development

Even though the type and structure of documents analyzed varied by district, it is evident that in each district core elements of the expectations of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards were already represented. The presence of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards in the two districts cluster similarly on specific standards, but there are slight differences across the two districts. While Davidson County had more expectations aligned to standard 3, which involves using adult learning strategies to help teachers improve their content knowledge and instructional practices, Henderson documents offer a stronger reference to professional reflection, which aligns to TLS standard 5.

### **Intended Versus Enacted Expectations**

While the formal documents analyzed above establish the written expectations of the teacher leadership roles in Davidson and Henderson counties, these documents merely identify intent. In order to develop a full picture of the work of these teacher leaders, I needed a lens into their actual practice. To do this, I asked the teacher leaders to distribute a questionnaire to the teachers they serve to collect their perspectives on the services teacher leaders provide. The identity of respondents was kept anonymous. The questionnaire asked teachers to identify the most important thing that teacher leaders do in their district, and then, using a Likert scale, to express their level of agreement regarding how the teacher leader helps teachers improve their practices in each of the five domains of the NC Professional Teaching Standards. Overall, the open-ended responses were quite candid, with some respondents describing specific supports teacher leaders provided to them, while others indicated they had no idea who their teacher leaders were or what they were supposed to be doing. Figures 4–8 show Likert-scale responses of

teachers in Davidson and Henderson Counties indicating level of agreement that teachers receive support each of the five domains of the standards from teacher leaders.

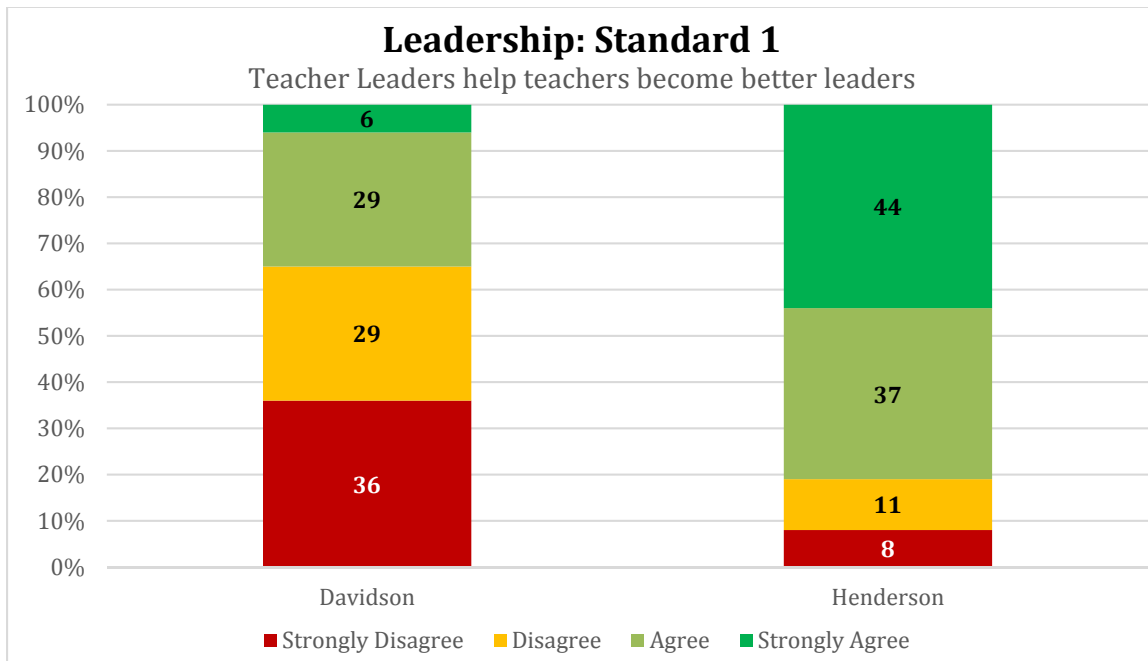


Figure 4. Teacher-Leader Support for the Leadership Domain.

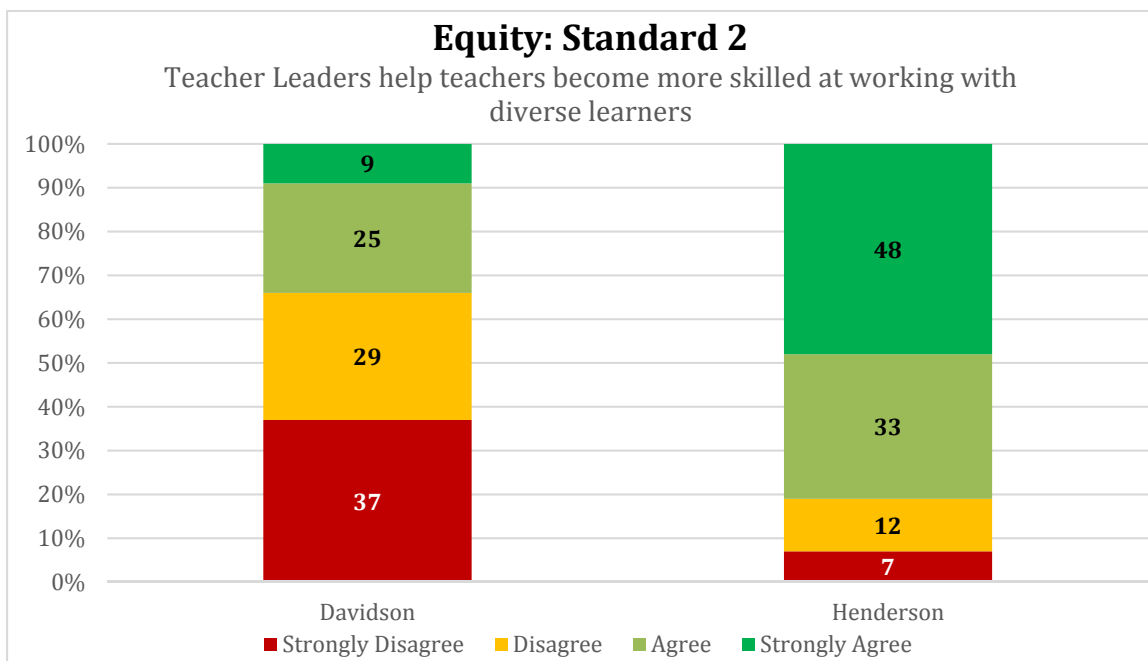
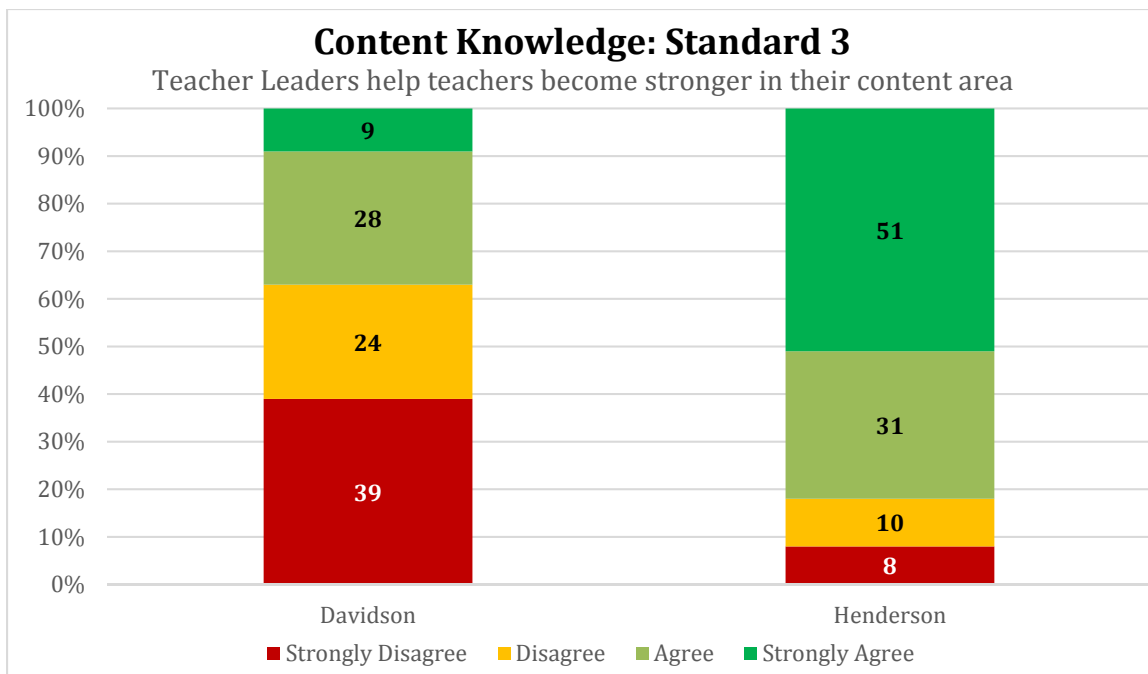
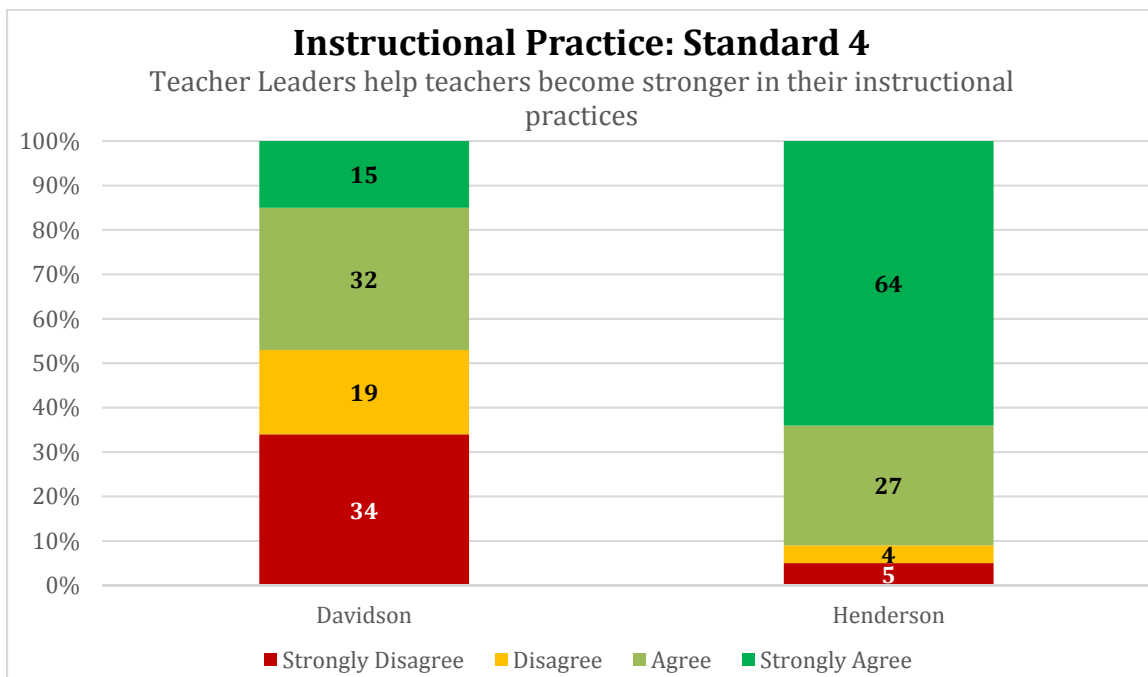


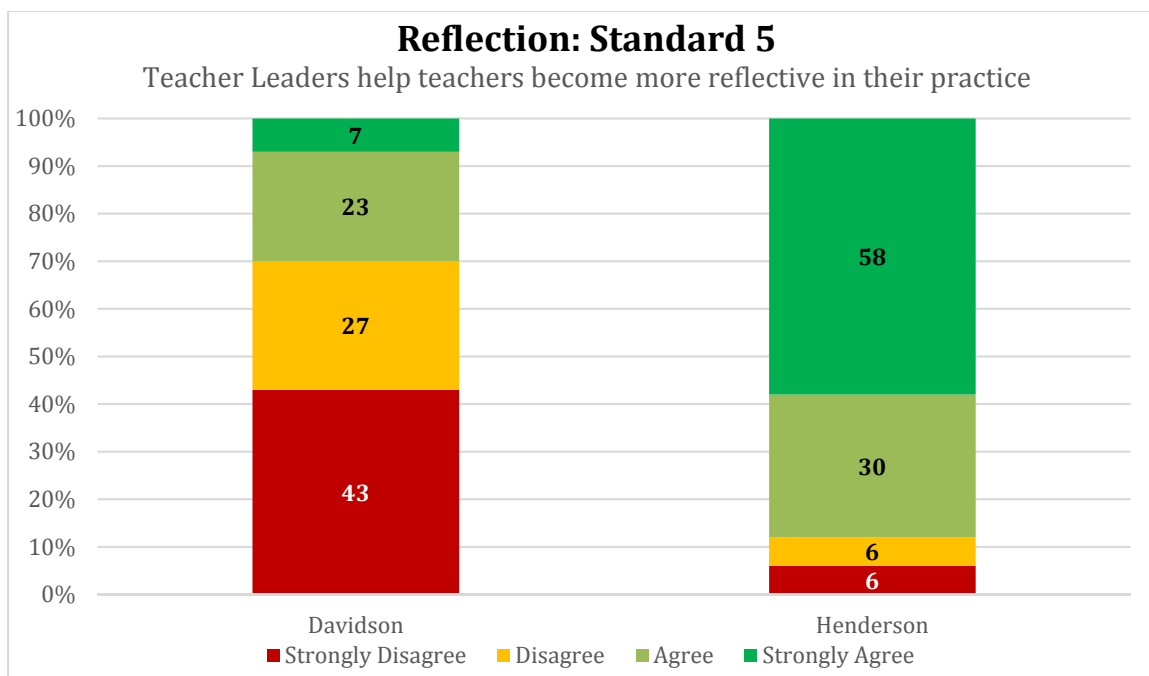
Figure 5. Teacher-Leader Support for the Equity Domain.



*Figure 6.* Teacher-Leader Support for the Content Knowledge Domain.



*Figure 7.* Teacher-Leader Support for the Instructional Practice Domain.



*Figure 8.* Teacher-Leader Support for the Reflective Practice Domain.

The rate of agreement differed between Davidson and Henderson counties for each of the five domains, with Henderson County teachers indicating stronger agreement that Instructional Coaches support the improvement of teacher practices for each of the five standards. Based on teacher perspectives alone, general practices measured by the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards are evident in both districts, with about a 30% level of agreement in Davidson county, and an 80% agreement in Henderson County. While the differences between the perspectives of teachers in these two districts varies, it must be noted that the Davidson county role is in its first year, while in Henderson County, the Teacher Leadership role has been in place for more than ten years.

In addition to the Likert scale items, an open-ended question asked teachers to describe the most important thing teacher leaders in their district do. The length, depth, and specificity of the ideas shared for this item varied. In order to identify patterns and

similarities in the behaviors teachers described, the responses were coded to identify the unique behaviors described by the teachers in order to determine the various kinds of actions and services teachers perceived their teacher leaders provided at the school. In order of frequency, the coded list for Davidson included the following categories:

- Don't Know
- Instructional Support
- Resources
- Professional Development
- Technology
- Testing
- Collaboration
- District Support
- Model Lessons Data

The Henderson list of categories was somewhat longer. In order of frequency the categories of teacher leadership actions and services were:

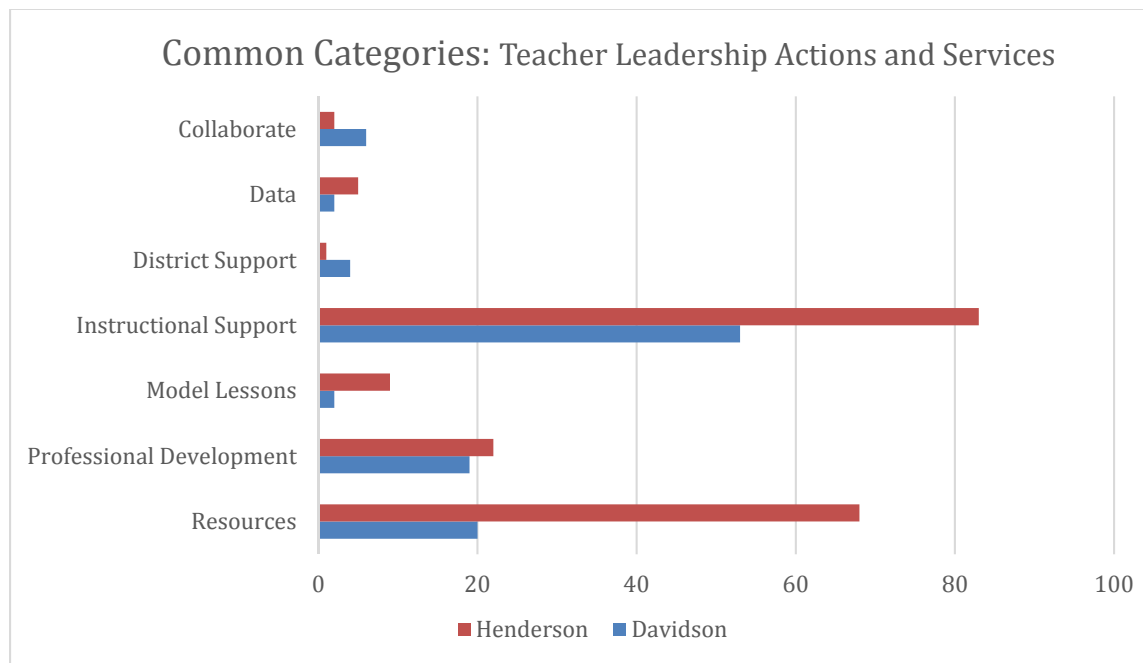
- Instructional Support
- Resources
- Professional Development
- New Teacher Support
- Peer Coaching
- Model Lessons
- Feedback
- Not Applicable

- Data
- Co-teaching
- Expertise
- Collaboration
- District Support

Not surprisingly, there was variation between the two districts in the types of activities described. Many Davidson County teachers indicated they were not entirely sure what the most important thing was that teacher leaders were supposed to do, which likely had a direct effect on their responses to the previously-discussed Likert scale questions. In spite of the number of teachers who were unsure, nine different types of teacher leader support were articulated by teachers in Davidson County. A longer list emerged in Henderson County, where thirteen unique types of support were identified. Even though the two lists varied, Davidson and Henderson teachers did identify seven common areas. These common actions and services provided by teacher leaders in both districts are represented in Figure 9.

The document analyses and teacher perspectives revealed practices and expectations which were similar across the two districts. The level of alignment to the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards is promising and suggests that the design of the standards is a good match to the general teacher leadership practices in place in these two districts. While there are differences in the scope of expectations between these two districts, there are no major gaps regarding the support the TLS standards offer for each unique role. In considering how to best provide statewide support for district-level roles,

the common expectations will be most beneficial in guiding the development of state-level resources to support teacher leadership.



*Figure 9.* Common Categories of Actions and Services.

### **Aligning Leadership to the Expectations of the TLS Standards**

It is important for educators to understand the standards by which they will be evaluated. Having a thorough understanding of these standards can help teacher leaders assess the work they are currently doing and determine the level alignment to the expectations of the TLS standards. If areas of misalignment are discovered or the standards help to identify areas of focus for improvement and further development, teacher leaders will have practical guidance for action planning. This practical guidance is most effective if teacher leaders have a strong grasp of the scope and expectations of the standards.



### **Initial Assessment of Understanding**

In order to create conditions that could allow the teacher leaders in these two districts to deeply integrate the expectations of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards into their work, I believed that direct instruction with some active engagement offered the best way to help the teacher leaders understand the purpose of the standards, the history of their development, and their intentional alignment to the domains of the evaluation standards for classroom teachers. The first step to accomplish this was to assess their initial understanding of the standards based on a simple first read. To do so, a questionnaire was distributed electronically to each participating teacher leader, which included a Likert scale response for each element of the TLS standards. The question asked, “To what degree do the following descriptions of Teacher Leadership actions make sense to you?” Each element was presented sequentially. The available responses were:

- I could explain what this means to someone
- I get this one, but don't ask me to explain it
- I don't think I get this one
- I definitely do NOT get this one

### **Introducing the Standards**

I used information from the initial assessment to inform the design of the session to introduce the standards to the teacher leaders. Since the questionnaire confirmed that teacher leaders had a reasonably high level of literal understanding from the wording of the standards alone, the emphasis for the early work with the two groups could be on developing consistent awareness across all participants of some of the broader contextual

aspects of the standards. To accomplish this, an early session in the face-to-face sequence of meetings was dedicated to exploring the standards in a way that defined the purpose of the standards, outlined the history of their development, and highlighted the intentional alignment of the TLS standards to the domains of the evaluation standards for classroom teachers.

During this session, I provided a general overview of the process used to design the standards and align the expectations to the five existing domains of the state's educator evaluation processes. I used a collaborative learning strategy, known as a jigsaw, to support the active engagement of each participant, organizing the teacher leaders into five small groups. Each group took time to read and discuss the elements and descriptors of the single standard assigned to them, then developed a plan to clearly articulate the expectations of that standard to the rest of the group, so that by the end of the activity, each participant could have a deeper understanding of the single standard they explored directly and a general overview of the remaining four received from the group presentations. At the conclusion of this session, the teacher leaders completed the initial questionnaire a second time.

### **Improved Understanding**

Overall, there was a strong level of understanding indicated by the responses. Table 8 indicates the percent of participants who indicated at least a basic understanding through a response of either, "I get this one, but don't ask me to explain it," or, "I could explain what this means to someone."

Table 8

*Post-Instruction Understanding of the TLS Elements*

TLS Element	Percent who reported understanding
1 a) lead in their school(s)/discipline(s); facilitate teamwork and leadership.	88%
1 b) model collaboration; collaborate with colleagues at the district level; partner with other educators to facilitate professional learning.	81%
1 c) advocate for students, educators, schools, and sound educational programs.	81%
1 d) demonstrate high ethical standards.	81%
2 a) model respectful communication strategies.	81%
2 b) differentiate professional learning to meet the diverse learning needs in the school/district.	75%
3 a) align support for educators with the NC Professional Teaching Standards.	63%
3 b) use their knowledge of the structure and content of the NC Standard Course of Study to support educators.	88%
3 c) apply their understanding of the dynamic nature of teaching and learning.	75%
3 d) engage colleagues in challenging conversations about data to develop appropriate solutions.	88%
3 e) plan and deliver professional support; use effective adult learning strategies; support stages of change and innovation in the school and district.	69%
4 a) deliver a continuum of support strategies to maximize educator effectiveness.	81%
4 b) employ a variety of resources to help educators improve their effectiveness.	75%
4 c) effectively employ appropriate and available technology as they support educators.	69%
4 d) incorporate the Framework for 21st Century Learning to enhance educators' instructional planning and assessment.	56%
5 a) assess the effectiveness of the support they provide and revise their practices based on findings.	81%
5 b) base their own professional development activities on the needs of those they serve.	88%
5 c) facilitate reflective practice in others.	94%

## Implications

The strongest area of understanding was in facilitating reflective practice in others, and only four elements fell below 75%. Knowing that the standards were understood by the majority of participants at the conclusion of the session was affirming, but the most important part of this data to consider was the indicated areas of weaker understanding, as these are the areas that should specifically inform statewide resource development. Looking across all of the items, the following fell below 75%:

- Incorporate the Framework for 21st Century learning to enhance educators' instructional planning and assessment. (4d)
- Align support for educators with the NC Professional Teaching Standards. (3a)
- Plan and deliver professional support; use effective adult learning strategies; support stages of change and innovation in the school and district. (3e)
- Effectively employ appropriate and available technology as they support educators. (4c)

Upon further discussion, the participants indicated the issue was not that they did not understand what the standard said. They simply needed more clarity regarding what each element was addressing. Based on this extended discussion, the following clarifying questions emerged:

- What does it mean to align support to the NC Professional Teaching Standards?
- What are the most important adult learning strategies?

- Where can we learn more about supporting adults with change and innovation?
- What are some models of appropriate technology use in teacher leadership?

It is these lowest area of understanding and the questions they provoked that provide the most beneficial guidance as I consider what types of information should be included in the collection and development of state-level teacher leadership resources, so it was helpful to know the gaps in understanding that remained even after I had introduces the TLS standards.

### **Determining Alignment to Practice and Expectations**

Piloting the TLS standards with districts prior to beginning the development of statewide-support resources helped to address two important issues: first, determining the degree to which the standards aligned to the actual practices of the teacher leaders, and second to identify common aspects of district-level teacher leadership work that may benefit from additional state-provided resources. In order to do this, it was necessary to find a way to identify the actions these teacher leaders engaged in regularly. The method for doing so varied between the two districts. In Davidson County, there were no existing documents or activity logs to review to collect this information. In Henderson County, Instructional Coaches completed and submitted monthly logs of their activities to the central office supervisor.

### **Recording Teacher Leadership Activities in Davidson**

To document the activities of the Instructional Program Specialists in Davidson County, the IPSs completed a weekly work reflection each Friday for ten weeks. This instrument documented the work they completed during the week by collecting

information aligned to the five domains of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards. Eighteen of the items corresponded to the individual elements of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standard. Additional open-ended questions asked respondents to describe a success from the week, identify something they would do differently if they could, and to indicate what tools would have helped them to be more successful. This information was collected electronically (see Appendix F), and responses from each teacher leader were recorded in a single spreadsheet.

**Presence of the standards in the work.** While all of the elements of the Teacher Leadership Specialists standards were represented in the activities the Instructional Program Specialists reported doing during the period the data was collected, the most frequently reported activities included:

- Exhibiting and modeling ethical standards
- Collaborating with district leaders
- Advocating for students and teachers by supporting evidence-based instruction
- Considering the needs of the educators served during planning

The following were the least represented in the reported activities:

- Supporting teachers as they analyzed data to make instructional decisions
- Supporting educators' use of data as they reflect upon their own effectiveness

All eighteen elements of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards were evident in the work represented in the weekly reflection data. The areas that showed up the least were still evident about 50% of the time.

These outcomes suggest that the TLS standards offer a reasonable representation of the work IPSs do in Davidson County, and a potential area of consideration for state-level resource development may be in the area of using data to support instructional improvement. Resources developed for this area could address strategies for organizing student achievement and other academic data in ways that make it more informative for instructional decisions. Additionally, these resources should acknowledge the role of other types of data, so that teacher leaders would understand that the data they collect with activity logs, questionnaires, and surveys can also contribute valuable information for instructional decision making.

### **Recording Teacher Leadership Actions in Henderson County**

Unlike Davidson County, where no activity data was being routinely collected, in Henderson County, there was an existing practice of collecting monthly logs of the work completed by the Instructional Coaches (see Appendix E). These documents are completed electronically each month and submitted to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. The Coaches use this standard template to document their accomplishments based on six specific areas in which ICs reflect on and report their work. Considering structure alone, this document aligns directly to the expectations of the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards, as each of the areas aligns with one of the TLS standards. The alignment of the monthly log to the TLS standards was previously illustrated in Table 6.

**Presence of the standards in the work.** It was evident from the monthly log structure alone that existing expectations for Instructional Coaches align with the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards. This alignment was confirmed by an analysis of

completed logs. Within the completed logs, Instructional Coaches recorded specific activities carried out. Within the tasks reported in the narrative sections of completed logs are descriptions of leadership actions that align directly to the expectations of the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards. Table 9 displays a sample of monthly-log narrative quotes which offer exemplars of this alignment.

Table 9

*Alignment of Log-Reported Teacher Leadership Activities with the TLS Standards*

Standard I: Teacher leadership specialists demonstrate leadership.
“The principal and I meet regularly to discuss the weekly needs of our staff. This month our conversations centered on: the bi-literacy classrooms and how to best support those two teachers, our BTs, and Guided Reading professional development.”
Standard II: Teacher leadership specialists support an environment that is respectful of a diverse population of educators.
“I am a bit discouraged as several of the people I have been helping have gotten notice that they will not be rehired for next year. I believed I was making progress with some of them. Morale seems to have plummeted as teachers are getting their evaluations to review and have heard the news about some of their colleagues not returning. In April, I will work on building morale and trying to process the “Art of Coaching” book as far as looking through different lenses and try to understand that I am not “expected to fix” people, but to try to look through the different lenses as the school as a system and why certain things have been done. It was mentioned in a faculty meeting that we want to look at culture at North and that it is more important than instructional strategies.”
Standard III: Teacher leadership specialists incorporate adult learning strategies and effective teaching and learning practices as they implement change.
“Since the first week of school, I have spent quite a bit of time modeling procedural/routine-based lessons for my teachers at both schools. Several of the teachers wanted to focus on me modeling lessons from “The First 20 Days” helping teachers see the importance of setting up our Literacy and Math routines from Day 1. I then assisted a few teachers in setting up their procedures/routines for running “Stations” during their Guided Reading block. My next step is to model Guided Reading for our teachers, beginning in our K-2 classrooms—at both schools!”



Table 9

*(Cont.)*

Standard IV: Teacher leadership specialists facilitate the growth and development of educators.
“I observed and provided some resources for higher-order-thinking-skills lessons for a teacher who returned an email that seemed very defensive, so I met with him during his planning the following week to verify my role with him and that it was not being critical, just being supportive. I left him with a depth- of-knowledge chart and some higher-order-thinking-skills stems. He realized that I was saying there was a disconnect between what he had planned and what the students were producing and that he may want to have a discussion with them about research and constructing arguments and their justification.”
Standard V: Teacher leadership specialists engage in and facilitate reflective practice.
Met with each grade level with Donna once this month to discuss data- what interventions are in place for the lowest 20%? Which three close-to-proficient students can you push to proficiency? What will you do differently for them?

### **Results**

Using the improvement-science approach of the 90-day cycle gave me the opportunity to acquire a direct lens into the teacher leadership practices and expectations in both Davidson and Henderson Counties. The outcomes of my direct intervention to orient them to the expectations of the standards and improve the volume and depth of facilitated reflection with these teacher leaders as well as the insight I gained into their practices and expectations through surveys and document analysis offer important information for informing the development of state-level teacher leadership resources. Informing this resource development through pilot efforts like this project helps to ensure that the authentic needs of practicing teacher leaders have a direct impact on the content of the resources collected and created to support the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards and improve teacher leadership efforts in NC schools.

## CHAPTER FIVE: IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

### **Introduction**

As efforts to increase and improve teacher leadership in public education continue to grow nationally, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction initiated steps to promote and support teacher leadership. In October of 2014, the NC State Board of Education approved the Teacher Leadership Specialist (TLS) rubric, which articulates a set of standards and action expectations for teachers with the primary responsibility of helping other teachers improve their practice. Identifying and approving standards for supervising and evaluating the work of teacher leadership specialists was only the first step toward providing relevant statewide support for teacher leadership. Developing appropriate recommendations and resources for using the standards to guide teacher leadership efforts at the district level emerged as a new priority for NCDPI. In order to provide relevant statewide support for teacher leadership, it was necessary to find a way to inform the development of resources for doing so.

The recent release of the Teacher Leadership Specialist rubric helped to catalyze this project and offered an appropriate and timely context in which to pilot the new standards with practicing teacher leaders. Through monthly face-to-face sessions in Davidson and Henderson counties, I used the improvement process of a 90-day-Cycle as a means to deploy the TLS standards as I worked to refine and improve strategies for reflection, sequencing, and alignment. The completion of the pilot activities within the focus portion of the 90-Day-Cycle allowed for the summarizing phase to be completed. Within this final phase, I considered the qualitative data and insights collected from the pilot activities in Davidson and Henderson counties during the focus phase. Using this

information, I began to review existing NCDPI resources, and considered which resources might contribute to the improvement of statewide support for teacher leadership. This chapter will address the impact of the project on participants and the implications for authentically informing and improving the design of state-level resources for supporting teacher leadership.

### **Impact on the Pilot Group**

Establishing a starting point for improving the design of state-level resources for supporting teacher leadership by identifying effective strategies to inform actions and priorities of teacher leadership roles was the overarching focus of this project. The teacher leaders in Davidson and Henderson counties provided specific district contexts for the work. In order for the outcomes to authentically inform and improve the design of state-level resources, I must first consider the impact the improvement efforts had on the pilot participants themselves. The 90-Day-Cycle activities were designed to engage participating teacher leaders in monthly face-to face sessions to address the following:

- Refine written reflection activities
- Identify the unique scope and function of the teacher leader roles
- Develop participant understanding of the scope and purpose of the TLS standards

The pilot activities had direct influence in each of the participating districts. Some of the outcomes will offer lasting benefits and advantages, and some aspect of the pilot influenced the planning for the 2015–16 school year in each district.

## **Benefits of Reflecting on Practice**

During this project, each face-to-face session included written reflection activities. Over the course of the pilot, as I increased the clarity of the written prompt, the reflective responses increased in length and specificity. These reflections required the teacher leaders to assess and evaluate their efforts since the last session, and, over time, the sequence of reflective prompts culminated in the consideration of next steps needed for success. Teacher leaders in both districts articulated that the teachers they served needed more information about the work teacher leaders do. While some Davidson county teacher leaders expressed a need for greater role clarity from their district-level leaders, the Henderson county teacher leaders turned the action expectation onto themselves. They identified practices for supporting and improving teacher understanding of the teacher leader specialist roles, which the specialists had direct control over changing and improving. At the conclusion of the pilot, I received links to resources two of the teacher leaders developed to use with the teachers they serve at the beginning of the 2015–16 school year. The resources are videos of introduction, available on YouTube at:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCM78kCCRMw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPpigBUn-fc>

In these videos, each teacher leader describes the role of an instructional coach and identifies some personal priorities for their work. I believe these teacher leaders developed the resources above as a direct result of awareness that emerged from the reflective activities I facilitated within this project, and because they used a web-based

delivery system, these resources have lasting value, as they can be used by these teacher leaders with the teachers they serve and shared with others electronically.

### **Common Needs of Different Districts**

As a part of this project, teacher leaders in both districts used a questionnaire to seek the perspectives of the teachers they serve regarding the work teacher leaders do and the needs of teachers in the schools. When the responses from teachers were coded, specific needs were evident in the responses. The list of needs from Davidson and Henderson varied. The differences in the two lists of needs were likely influenced by the variations in the expectations of the teacher leadership roles in the two districts. Each district has plans to address some of the needs through adjustments and strategies they will initiate in the 2015-16 school year, such as the role clarification efforts discussed in the section above, but the needs the two lists hold in common offer the greatest value to both NCDPI and the pilot districts. In both districts, instructional support, resource provision, and professional development emerged as high priorities. The identification of these similar needs and priorities opens the door for possible collaboration between Davidson and Henderson counties. Cross-district collaboration and sharing allows districts to maximize resources and should be a recommended best practice within the NCDPI teacher leadership support materials.

### **Deepening Understanding of the TLS Standards**

Assisting the pilot districts to implement the TLS rubric required a professional development session dedicated to exploring the standards in a way that defined the purpose of the standards, outlined the history of their development, and highlighted the intentional alignment of the TLS standards to the domains of the evaluation standards for

classroom teachers. Results of the post-assessment that followed that session indicated that the teacher leaders gained a deeper understanding of the scope, purpose, and intent of the TLS standards. The post assessment alone was evidence of improved understanding, but another verification of the success of the professional development came after the pilot was over. During the summer, when I received the introduction videos described above, I also received a presentation one of the Henderson coaches developed to use at her school to describe her goals for the 2015–16 school year. Within this presentation, (<https://prezi.com/scojq2rfknhg/what-is-your-job-anyway/>) she describes her role as an Instructional Coach and highlights the alignment of the TLS standards and the evaluation standards for teachers. This artifact verifies that the alignment was well understood by this coach, and, since the presentation was produced with a web-based tool, it can be used in a variety of ways and should be included as an exemplar in the statewide teacher leadership support materials.

### **Feedback from Teacher Leaders**

The qualitative data gathered throughout this project provided formative information to guide subsequent sessions and suggests that the activities were beneficial to the teacher leaders with whom I worked. But one final summative data collection effort confirmed the overall benefit. At the conclusion of the pilot, I sent a final survey to assess the participants' perceptions of the value of the work we did together. Of the 12 participants who responded (60%), 100% agreed or strongly agreed to the following statements:

- Reflecting regularly on the TLS Standards and my work helped me to:
  - Improve my understanding of the Teacher Leadership Specialist (TLS) Standards
  - Establish priorities and next steps for my future actions and strategies in my work
  - See where my work already aligns with the standards
  - Think about ways to better align my work with the TLS standards
  - Think about ways to explain and describe my role to the teachers I lead and support
  - Have strategies for reflecting on my work in the future
- The Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards help to:
  - Provide appropriate descriptions of tasks carried out by teacher leaders like me
  - Provide elements and descriptors that will support productive post-conference conversations
  - Identify reasonable measures of the scope of teacher leadership provided by teacher leaders in roles like mine
  - Assist teacher leaders like me with helping other teachers to teach better
  - Offer appropriate guidance to me for planning my own professional development
  - Provide a way for me to explain and describe my work to others
  - Support and improve the quality of the work I do

- Teacher Leaders should use the TLS standards as a guide for reflecting on their work
- I am glad my district will be using the TLS standards to evaluate the teacher leadership work I do
- I will use the TLS standards and rubric indicators to guide my continuous improvement in the 2015-16 school year
- I would encourage other districts to adopt the TLS standards for guiding and evaluating the work of their teacher leaders

The following additional affirming comments were provided in this section:

“I hold the NC Professional Teaching Standards in high regard and when used appropriately are an excellent tool for helping teachers improve. I'm glad to see an updated rubric for teacher leaders that directly aligns with the standards for the teachers we support.”

“Robert was a great facilitator and our time with him was purposeful, educational, and fun!”

“Thank you for helping to give us a common direction and purpose!”

The high level of agreement and the narrative comments on this final survey suggest that the sessions had a positive impact, and the Teacher Leadership Specialist rubric will be a helpful tool for the teacher leaders in both districts. These are promising results from the pilot that can directly inform the state's effort to improve teacher leadership in North Carolina.



### **Implications for Refining and Aligning Resources**

The positive impact of this project on the participants and my observations and learning throughout the 90-day cycle offer important guidance for the development of teacher leadership resources. The improvement efforts revealed existing actions and perceptions of practicing teacher leaders and also identified unique teacher leadership priorities in each of the two pilot districts. As a practitioner-researcher, I learned a great deal about the teacher leadership priorities in Davidson and Henderson counties. While the scale of this pilot, focusing on only two districts, may limit the opportunity to generalize to all teacher leadership roles throughout the state, it does offer enough practical information and insights to serve as initial guidance for refining and aligning the development of statewide resources for supporting district-level teacher leadership efforts.

### **Appropriateness of the Standards**

One important aspect of this improvement effort was to identify any changes that might need to be recommended to better align the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards to district-level teacher leadership priorities and practices. The self-reported activities of the teacher leaders in both districts, the job expectations outlined in the job descriptions, monthly log prompts, and performance responsibilities all indicated a high degree of alignment between the TLS standards and the local work of the teacher leaders in the pilot. In short, while there is variation of expectation and practice of the teacher leaders in the two districts, the expectations outlined in the TLS standards are well represented within the teacher leadership practices and expectations in both districts. Based on the alignment identified through the comparison of these standards to the work

of teacher leaders in Davidson and Henderson counties, the practices outlined in the standards and elements of the TLS rubric are reasonable for guiding real-life teacher leadership actions. Therefore, no adjustments or revisions to the rubric are recommended at this time.

### **Taking Support to Scale**

The design of this pilot improvement effort allowed for a hands-on intervention, where direct support from a state-level consultant was available throughout the 90-Day-Cycle. Unfortunately, staffing and budget constraints limit the capacity of NCDPI to replicate this level of direct, sustained support and take it to scale state wide. Given this limitation, an alternative method for providing and delivering support resources must be considered, and technology offers a readily available means for doing so. To move in this direction, the information and outcomes from this project can inform the design and collection of resources that should be made available via a NC Teacher Leadership Resource wiki.

Many NCDPI tools and resources are already provided to districts on wikis. A wiki is a website that allows for collaborative editing of the content and structure of the pages. Using a wiki in lieu of a traditional website allows for a greater number of NCDPI staff to be involved in the collection and sharing of resources. Additionally, the collaborative nature of the wiki environment creates an opportunity to directly engage teacher leaders throughout the state in the ongoing curation of resources for supporting teacher leadership, thus offering a collaborative opportunity for grassroots teacher leadership expertise to inform the direction and growth of the resource collection over

time, so that it may more responsively align with the ongoing practical needs of teacher leaders throughout the state.

NCDPI has an existing contract for a private label with Wikispaces, allowing the department to develop an unlimited number of web pages. There are already more than 100 wikis in use across the state, so it is a practical solution to leverage the Wikispaces environment for delivering teacher leadership resources. The initial shell to hold this growing collection of materials has already been established at <http://teacherleadership.ncdpi.wikispaces.net>. This wiki will become an ever-growing collection of resources for supporting teacher leadership throughout the state.

### **Prioritized Areas of Need**

As NCDPI considers what materials should be included in state-provided resources for supporting Teacher Leadership, it is important to recognize that these roles vary from district to district. It would be nearly impossible to develop a set of tools and resources to meet every nuanced teacher leadership need across the state. This project sought to establish a starting point for this resource development by identifying effective strategies to inform actions and priorities of teacher leadership roles in two pilot districts while assessing the alignment of the Teacher Leadership Standards to the work in those districts, so that the common needs could purposefully inform state efforts to assemble appropriate tools and resources for supporting teacher leadership. During the pilot, several specific areas of need were held in common by the teacher leaders in both counties. The common needs revealed through this improvement effort directly inform the resource recommendations that follow.

**Considerations for supporting reflection.** As I explored the use of facilitated reflection with the pilot participants as they implemented the North Carolina Teacher Leadership Specialist standards, adjustments I made to the written prompts improved the length and specificity of the responses the teacher leaders provided. My first attempts to improve the quality of their responses was to offer additional verbal direction and clarification during face-to-face sessions, which guided the next iteration of reflection, where I embedded the clarifying information within the written prompt so that my verbal intervention was not required. Identifying that refined written instructions did increase the volume, depth, and specificity of responses offer important information to consider when developing reflective activities within the statewide teacher leadership resource collection. Because current resources limit the capacity of NCDPI staff to provide on-site face-to-face support, reflective prompts and other instructional materials will need to be as clear and concise as possible, given the lack of an onsite facilitator. The reflective prompts developed during this pilot will be included in the initial teacher leadership resource materials, but the limited duration of this project did not allow for the development of a comprehensive set of protocols, and additional tools should be located or developed.

Most existing NCDPI professional development activities facilitate some degree of participant interaction and reflection. As I worked to summarize my 90-Day-Cycle's impact, and make recommendations, I discovered that many of the reflective tools already in use were adopted or adapted from a collection provided by the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF, 2014). On their mission page, this organization's website states that the "organization empowers educators to create meaningful learning experiences for

all, by collaborating effectively in reflective democratic communities that foster educational equity and social justice” (NSRF, 2014, para. 1). Given this mission, this site offers one appropriate source for reflective protocols. Since NCDPI already uses some of their free protocols within existing face-to-face and online professional development sessions, it seems prudent to continue to do so, and to investigate the collection more fully to determine whether there are specific protocols that should be included in teacher leadership materials.

**Developing 21st Century skills.** All North Carolina educator evaluation instruments are based on the framework for 21st Century Learning (NCDPI, 2008, 2015). While most teachers in the state can state this fact, many are unable to clearly articulate what it means. For this reason, supporting 21st century skills was included in the expectations of the Teacher Leadership Specialist rubric. Incorporating the Framework for 21st Century learning to enhance educators’ instructional planning and assessment is one area that both groups of teacher leaders indicated they would like more support with. The fact that only 56% of teacher leaders in the pilot indicated they understood it or could explain it to others, even after the professional development that introduced the standards, makes this a high area of priority for state-wide resource development. As I moved from the focus to the summarizing phase of this project, I discovered that supporting 21st century skills is not a new endeavor for the state, and there are existing NCDPI resources that could be linked or repurposed as a part of the Teacher Leadership wiki. The following two wikis are among those on this topic that are already accessible:

- <http://classroom21.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/>
- <http://region1rttt.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/CCSA+-+21st+Century+Skills>

These 21st Century Learning resources are already accessible and should be included with or adapted for use in the statewide teacher leadership resource collection.

**Highlighting alignment.** Just as the 21st Century Skills are fundamental to all Educator Evaluation tools in the state, other similarities undergird both the Teacher Leadership Specialist rubric and the teacher evaluation standards. It is important for teacher leaders to recognize and understand the direct relationships that exist between the evaluation tools, but during the pilot, only 63% of the participants indicated that they understood how to align support for educators with the NC Professional Teaching Standards. This gap in understanding existed even after professional development on the TLS standards, making this the second highest area of priority recommended for statewide resource development based on the pilot.

Including reference materials that map and describe the strategic alignment between the Teacher Leadership Specialist rubric and the NC Professional Teaching Standards is a concrete strategy for supporting a better understanding of the alignment that exists between the various evaluation instruments. My review of existing NCDPI resources revealed that this is already an element of some face-to-face sessions that are currently underway, and these materials could be repurposed and modified to contribute to the web-based teacher leadership resources, additionally, the following NCDPI wiki resources are also accessible:

- <http://ncregion2.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/Introduction+to+the+Standards+and+the+Evaluation+Process>
- <http://ncregion2.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/Deconstructing+the+Teacher+Leadership+Specialist+Rubric>

These resources for developing a deeper understanding of evaluation standards are already available and should be included with or adapted for use in the state-wide teacher leadership resource collection.

**Facilitating adult learning.** Standard 3, element d, of the TLS standards states that the teacher leader must, “plan and deliver professional support; use effective adult learning strategies; support stages of change and innovation in the school and district” (NCDPI, 2015). This is an important dimension of teacher leadership that showed up in the expectations and actual practice of the teacher leaders in both districts, but only 69% of the pilot participants indicated they understood how to do it. Deeper discussion of this element brought to light that the teacher leaders wanted more support with developing and using adult-learning strategies in their work with teachers. A general search for resources to support adult learning reveals that there are innumerable professional resources already available to support this area of need. NCDPI teacher leadership resources should include a bibliography of recommended reference books for adult learning and instructional coaching. Other state-level resources are also available to support this area of need. The existing wiki, <http://teacherleaders.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/> Adult+Learning is one such resource that should be considered for supplementary support in this area.

**Integrating technology.** Teacher Leadership Specialists are expected to model the use of technology to support instruction, but at the conclusion of professional development during the pilot, only 69% of participants indicated that they understood what it meant to effectively employ appropriate and available technology as they support

educators. My post-pilot review of NCDPI resources revealed that the agency has already invested time and energy to support the use of instructional technology planning strategy called TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). This approach helps to balance technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge when making instructional design decisions and has already been a focus for internal staff development at NCDPI. Maintaining a link to this approach in the teacher leadership resources will provide a logical alignment to efforts and resource development already underway, so NCDPI should link to and continue to develop resources to help teacher leaders support educators to use instructional technology effectively and appropriately. The following NCDPI resources addressing the TPACK approach:

- <http://www.rt3nc.org/edtech/the-tpack-model/tpack/>
- <http://ites.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/Exploring+TPACK+Resources>

They are already accessible, and should be included with or adapted for use in the statewide teacher leadership resource collection.

### **Resources to Support Application and Understanding**

While the outcomes of this pilot did not indicate a need to make any changes to the content of the Teacher Leadership Specialist rubric, the activities helped to reveal that practical guidance for district efforts to build teacher leadership programs requires more than just the standards and elements of practice outlined within the performance expectations of the rubric. Supplementary materials, resources and recommendations need to accompany the evaluation tool so that the expectations of the rubric are contextualized through resources that will help district administrators design and execute



strong programs where teacher leaders can assess and improve their practices. Such tools need to be relevant, accessible, and up-to-date.

In addition to wikispaces, NCDPI also provides an online tool for completing teacher evaluation and professional development activities. These tools are a part of a statewide suite of tools called Home Base. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is using Home Base to streamline and maximize the services and resources the agency delivers. Utilizing web-based delivery systems offers unique advantages. Using them for supporting teacher leadership offers district administrators and teacher leaders ready access to the tools and resources as needed, rather than waiting for a real-time professional development session. Leveraging these existing available resource to build and expand teacher leadership support statewide offers a practical cost-saving solution for housing teacher leadership support resources and keeping them up-to-date.

**Evaluation tools.** Currently, the Teacher Leadership Specialist evaluation process, including the observation rubric and professional development plan, (PDP) is completed manually, using paper copies of the TLS rubric and other required evaluation forms. All other professional educator evaluation processes are completed electronically within the Home Base system in the online evaluation tool. Now that this pilot is complete and no revisions or adjustments are recommended for the standards, elements, or the rubric, the TLS evaluation process needs to be transitioned into the online evaluation tool so that teacher leaders and their evaluators can access them within Home Base. This work should start as soon as possible, but it is most appropriate to make a clean transition to start the process. Rather than initiating any change to the format of evaluation process for teacher leaders and their evaluators mid-year, steps should begin

now to upload the rubric, align process steps, and test the delivery system so that the TLS evaluation process may be completed online beginning in the fall of 2016.

**Professional development resources.** Supporting deeper understanding of the TLS standards was an important part of this improvement project, and professional development activities were completed face-to-face. Through the pilot, some specific areas of need emerged, and the Home-Base system also has a professional development tool which should be used to support these needs. Within this PD system, courses are already available on many topics. The catalog of courses in the Home Base PD system are delivered either synchronously or asynchronously. Both delivery methods are helpful, depending on the needs of the end-user. Asynchronous courses offer the greatest flexibility to educators, as they can be completed at the convenience of the learner.

There are courses available in the online PD system to build deeper understanding of both the Professional Teaching standards and the Teacher Leadership Specialist rubric. A complete list of current courses is available at: <http://www.rt3nc.org/>. Based on the interests and needs revealed through the pilot, the following existing courses have direct relevance for supporting district level teacher leadership efforts:

- Action Research for the Classroom: An Introduction
- Assessing Digital Tools
- Building and Sustaining Professional Development
- Connecting with our 21st Century Learners
- Data Literacy in Action
- Digital Literacies in the K-12 Classroom
- North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards

- NC Teacher Evaluation: Understanding the Process
- NC Teacher Leadership Specialist: Understanding the Evaluation Process
- Responsibilities of the 21st-Century Educator
- The Professional Educator: An Ethics Guide for North Carolina Teachers
- 21st-Century Mentoring

Currently, these courses are available as asynchronous modules, and may be used immediately by districts to support leadership. This collection of courses will be more fully developed over time as additional resources are added, but in the near-term, improving the awareness of educators that the courses are available needs to be a priority within the teacher leadership improvement effort. The Teacher Leadership Wiki should prominently display and promote these resources, so that they may be fully utilized by district and teacher leaders. As the user-base for these materials increases, feedback should be gathered to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the course material so they may be continuously improved.

**Maintaining and refining the resources over time.** The Teacher Leadership wiki will be a library-like resource that will continue to grow over time. Managed well, the wiki can provide timely, relevant recommendations, resources, and tools for district administrators and teacher leadership specialists to help them offer the leadership and collaborative support called for in the TLS standards, but the wiki alone is limited in the degree to which it can support users in learning new concepts and acquiring new skills. In consideration of this limitation, the wiki works in conjunction with Home Base for providing resources. Home Base delivers the evaluation process materials and the professional development tool, offering courses to assist teacher leaders and district

administrators to better understand the TLS standards, coach teachers, and support instructional improvement activities. In concert with other Home Base tools, the wiki can offer a rich and growing collection of resources to support educators serving in teacher leadership specialist roles.

Using wikispaces and Home Base as the primary vehicles for delivering resources for improving teacher leadership statewide allows a variety of staff members to contribute to the collection and maintain resources. This takes full advantage of shared productivity of existing NCDPI tools and offers greater immediacy and responsiveness to change than can be accommodated by a web designer in the office of communications. The time and process requirements of updating a complex series of interconnected web pages decreases the responsiveness of NCDPI in providing the most current, up-to-date resources for supporting teacher leadership and the TLS evaluation process. The accessibility of wikispaces allows me, as the practitioner-researcher, to use the insights gleaned from my work with the two districts and begin the assembly of the resource collection myself, based on the outcomes of the improvement efforts explored through this 90-Day-Cycle. Additionally, the shared nature of the Home Base and Wikispaces platforms allows other members of my team, and those who follow us, to continue to contribute to the resource development and management over time as NCDPI works to maintain and integrate new information to keep the statewide teacher leadership resources and support practical, comprehensive, and up-to-date.

### **Beyond This Project: Expanding Teacher Leadership Support**

From its inception, this project focused on a specific type of teacher leadership-- that which is provided through a dedicated role, designed to support teachers with

improving their practice. These roles have a variety of names in North Carolina; “coach,” “resource teacher,” and, “facilitator,” are just a few of the names ascribed to them. As these types of roles have increased throughout the state, there was a growing awareness that the existing teacher evaluation standards were not sufficient to fully address the unique work of these dedicated teacher leadership roles. In response to this growing need, the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards were designed to provide a framework for evaluating these roles, and this project offered some initial qualitative data and insights to inform the development of resources to improve statewide support for these types of roles. As this improvement effort concludes and the focus on related resource development is beginning, a new area of need for teacher leadership support has now emerged.

### **A Continuum of Teaching and Leadership**

As a practitioner researcher throughout this project, I had occasion to try to explain the purpose of the pilot effort I was conducting as a part of this improvement project. To offer a visual model to help me articulate what I was trying to accomplish, I developed the Span of Educator Roles Chart (Sox, 2015). This model was an attempt to locate my work, and the Teacher Leadership Specialist standards within the continuum of teacher practices in North Carolina, as they span from beginning teacher to district-level leadership roles in education. The current configuration of this draft model is shown in Figure 10.

Within this model, the bottom row identifies which North Carolina Educator Evaluation instrument applies to each teacher-type-column. Prior to the approval of the TLS standards, there was a gap, and this disquisition describes my efforts to affirm the

relevance of the TLS evaluation rubric to actual teacher leader practice and to influence and inform resource development efforts to close that gap. But as one gap closes, a new one is revealed, and there is a growing need for the teacher leadership support emphasis in NC to shift to the left on the model above to begin to consider the teacher leadership roles that immediately precede the Teacher Leadership Specialist column.

Span of Educator Roles								
	Beginning Teacher	Experienced Teacher	Model Teacher	Teacher Leader		Leaders of Teachers (external to classroom)		
				Single Classroom	Multiple Classroom	Teacher Leadership Specialists	Principals/Assistant Principals	Central Office
Description	Educators in their first three years of teaching	Educators with greater than four years of teaching experience	Educators who share and model best practices for others	Educators (who still have responsibility for a single classroom roster of students) who provide leadership and support to other teachers	Educators who provide leadership and support to other teachers, <i>and</i> take responsibility for the learning of the students they reach through the teachers they lead and serve	Educators (who no longer have responsibility for a roster of students) who provide leadership and support to other teachers,	Educators who serve as instructional leaders who provide building-level leadership and support	Educators who serve as instructional leaders who provide district-level leadership and support
Performance Evaluation	NC Professional Teaching Standards					NC Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards	NC School Executive Standards	NC Instructional Central Office Standards

Figure 10. Span of Educator Roles.

### Newly Legislated Direction

The Instructional Coaches and Instructional Program Specialists in this pilot are examples of teacher leader roles where the teacher leader no longer has responsibility for the direct instruction of students. However, there is a growing movement in North Carolina to financially incentivize teachers to provide leadership while still retaining responsibility for the direct instruction of students. On April 29, 2015, the General Assembly of North Carolina passed House Bill 662, to “provide for financially stable

advanced teaching roles . . . in order to leverage excellent classroom teachers to impact at least seventy-five percent (75%) of students in core subjects by becoming a leader for peers in positions formally accountable for students within their purview” (NC Evaluating Educators Act, 2015). This bill invites districts throughout the state to develop advanced teaching role prototypes. It is targeting a different type of teacher leadership than the project this narrative explores. The bill aligns with the “Multi Classroom” teacher leader in the Span of Educator Roles model above. It does not support or incentivize the Teacher Leadership Specialist role my pilot explored. In fact, the kinds of coaches for whom the TLS standards were developed are explicitly excluded from the incentives of HB662. In the bill, Section 1. (b) states, “For the purposes of this act, a classroom teacher is a teacher who works in the classroom providing instruction and who is not instructional support personnel” (NC Evaluating Educators Act, 2015). This bill, then, legislates a new direction for teacher leadership in North Carolina.

### **Moving Forward with Support**

Even with this newly incentivized teacher leadership model, the work of this pilot was not in vain, as it is unlikely that districts that have the types of positions for which the TLS standards were developed will abandon those positions. After all, they serve an important role in the continuum of instructional leadership within schools and districts. However, interests may now begin to shift toward the multiple-classroom teacher leadership roles HB 662 promotes, and state-level support for this new direction needs to be properly informed and well-conceived. Within the research on various approaches to teacher leadership, there is evidence that expectations must be clearly established at the inception of teacher leadership roles in order to prevent disparate and conflicting models

from emerging (Margolis & Huggins, 2012). With this in mind, the recent legislation in N.C. informs a new area of focus for teacher leadership in the state. The provision in the bill that individual districts can develop prototypes for these new teacher leadership roles could lead to disparate local models, so it is incumbent on the state education agency to offer well-informed guidance. Expanding research and engaging in improvement efforts that help to support the advanced teaching role prototypes promoted by HB 662 is the next new frontier for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as it continues to refine the development of resources and services in this state's ever-changing landscape of teacher leadership.



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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TEACHER LEADERSHIP SPECIALIST STANDARDS

APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP SPECIALIST STANDARDS

APPENDIX C: DAVIDSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

APPENDIX D: DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONAL COACH PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

APPENDIX E: INSTRUCTIONAL COACH MONTHLY LOG

APPENDIX F: INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM SPECIALIST WEEKLY LOG

**APPENDIX A: TEACHER LEADERSHIP SPECIALIST STANDARDS****Standard I: Teacher leadership specialists demonstrate leadership.**

- a) Teacher leadership specialists lead in their school(s)/discipline(s). They facilitate teamwork and leadership.
- b) Teacher leadership specialists model collaboration. They collaborate with colleagues at the district level. They partner with other educators to facilitate professional learning.
- c) Teacher leadership specialists advocate for students, educators, schools, and sound educational programs.
- d) Teacher leadership specialists demonstrate high ethical standards.

**Standard II: Teacher leadership specialists support an environment that is respectful of a diverse population of educators.**

- a) Teacher leadership specialists model respectful communication strategies.
- b) Teacher leadership specialists differentiate professional learning to meet the diverse learning needs in the school/district.

**Standard III: Teacher leadership specialists incorporate adult learning strategies and effective teaching and learning practices as they implement change.**

- a) Teacher leadership specialists align support for educators with the NC Professional Teaching Standards.
- b) Teacher leadership specialists use their knowledge of the structure and content of the NC Standard Course of Study to support educators.
- c) Teacher leadership specialists apply their understanding of the dynamic nature of teaching and learning.
- d) Teacher leadership specialists engage colleagues in challenging conversations about data to develop appropriate solutions.
- e) Teacher leadership specialists plan and deliver professional support. They use effective adult learning strategies. They support stages of change and innovation in the school and district.

**Standard IV: Teacher leadership specialists facilitate the growth and development of educators.**

- a) Teacher leadership specialists deliver a continuum of support strategies to maximize educator effectiveness.
- b) Teacher leadership specialists employ a variety of resources to help educators improve their effectiveness.
- c) Teacher leadership specialists effectively employ appropriate and available technology as they support educators.
- d) Teacher leadership specialists incorporate the Framework for 21st Century Learning to enhance educators' instructional planning and assessment.

**Standard V: Teacher leadership specialists engage in and facilitate reflective practice.**

- a) Teacher leadership specialists assess the effectiveness of the support they provide and revise their practices based on findings.
- b) Teacher leadership specialists base their own professional development activities on the needs of those they serve.
- c) Teacher leadership specialists facilitate reflective practice in others.



## APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP SPECIALIST STANDARDS

**System to be improved:** The State Education Agency provides standards, resources, and support for supervising and evaluating the work of a variety of teacher and administrator roles. This project seeks to improve professional development support for Teacher Leadership Specialists in two counties, by facilitating monthly reflective discussions with participants in district-sponsored leadership development sessions in order to identify trends, discuss implications, and establish priorities for future professional development sessions that will best support teachers in the areas of:

- Leadership
- Equity
- Content Knowledge
- Instructional Practice
- Professional Reflection

**Population Focus:** A Teacher Leadership Specialist is a peer-support role that involves direct interaction with teachers for the purpose of improving instructional practice. This project will focus on a small group of site-based teacher leaders in two North Carolina districts. Instructional Program Specialists in Davidson County Schools and Instructional Coaches in Henderson County Schools will participate in this pilot.

**Intended Outcome:** This project will support the implementation of the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards with Instructional Program Specialists and Instructional Coaches in Davidson and Henderson Counties in order to:

- Align and improve professional development
- Increase the understanding of the TLS standards
- Increase understanding of Teacher Leadership work

**Timeframe:** February 2015-September 2015 support, and evaluate the implementation of the NCDPI Teacher Leadership Standards with 8 Instructional Program Specialists in Davidson County and 12 Instructional Coaches in Henderson County. Facilitate monthly reflective discussions of previous month's activities and set priorities for the next month's leadership work.

**Goals (Prediction of Improvement):** >90% of participating Teacher Leaders will agree or strongly agree to the following statements.

Reflecting regularly on my activities and accomplishments helped me to:

- Improve my understanding of the TLS standards
- Establish priorities and next steps for future work
- More closely align my work to the TLS standards

The Teacher Leadership Standards:

- Provide appropriate descriptions of the tasks carried out by Teacher Leaders in my role
- Create reasonable measures of the scope of teacher leadership provided by Teacher Leaders in my role
- Assist Teacher Leaders in my role with helping other teachers to improve their practice

**Initial Activities:** Establishing and scheduling activities will involve:

- Working with district leaders in participating districts to determine a schedule for monthly reflective discussions with teacher leaders
- Collecting Data regarding local understanding of the TLS standards, and the alignment of district Teacher Leadership practices with those standards, which will inform the reflective discussions

**Project Cycles:**

- **February/March 2015:** Initiate activities to orient participating teacher leaders to the structural underpinnings of the new standards, and introduce the required process aspects of implementation.
- **March 2015:** Survey teacher leaders, principals, and a sample of classroom teachers to gather initial perspectives on what teacher leaders do and the importance of the TLS standards.
- **March-May 2016:** Capture the scope of work accomplished through weekly and monthly logs.
- **March-May 2016:** Facilitate monthly reflective discussions with teacher leaders in order to:
  - Deepen their understanding of the TLS standards
  - Establish priorities and next steps for future work
  - Align actions with the TLS standards
- **June 2015:** Share synthesized data from the Spring improvement cycle activities with teacher leaders in each district in order to establish priorities for the new academic year, including:

- Personal goals for their Fall Teacher Leadership efforts
- Strategies for helping teachers to better understand what Teacher Leaders do
- **September 2015**: Survey Teacher Leaders in both districts to determine their perception of the level of improvement project activities provided.
- **October-December 2015**: Compile and synthesize data to identify the outcomes of the improvement cycles and recommend next steps for NCDPI to move forward in the most effective way to deploy and support the Teacher Leadership Specialist Standards statewide.

## APPENDIX C: DAVIDSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

### **Instructional Program Specialist: Humanities**

#### **Position Summary**

The Program Specialist for Humanities is responsible for assisting the Area Superintendent in the development and implementation of effective K-12 standards-based instruction, appropriate and balanced assessment, and standards-based grading and reporting.

#### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Assists schools in determining the level of implementation of standards-based instruction best practices in the Humanities programs
- Assists administrators in supporting, training, and coaching teachers and staff in the Humanities programs
- Supports the development of Power Standards and Reporting Standards K-12
- Designs and delivers training to administrators/teachers in providing feedback to students to improve instructional delivery
- Identifies resources and supports teachers with differentiation to meet all students' needs in the Humanities programs
- Provides individual assistance to schools experiencing grading issues
- Provides ad hoc reports on the status of standards-based instruction/progress reporting and develops recommendations for improvement
- Serves as liaison between the Division of Curriculum and Instruction in all issues related to instructional best practices that are aligned to performance management standards for teachers
- Works in collaboration with other departments and areas to maximize teacher effectiveness as it relates to the Humanities curriculum, instruction, and assessment

- Collaborates with Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction in the development of and revisions to new curriculum
- Assists schools in ways to integrate curriculum

**Knowledge/Skills/Abilities:**

- Detailed knowledge and experience with standards-based instruction and assessment best practices
- Experience with curriculum development
- Demonstrated ability to develop and deliver training to adult learners across multiple disciplines and levels
- Demonstrated knowledge in differentiation and meeting the needs of varied learners
- Ability to plan and implement short and long-range goals and objectives
- Ability to work with collaborative teams
- Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite
- Excellent interpersonal skills needed to work effectively with administrators, staff, and community members
- Excellent organizational and time management skills
- Excellent communication skills both orally and in writing

**Davidson County Schools****Working Conditions:**

- Normal office environment
- Will require travel between schools

**Physical Demands:**

- Routine physical activity associated with normal office environment
- Must be able to lift and carry up to 25 lbs. occasionally

**Minimum Education and Experience**

- Education: Bachelor's Degree in Education or in the areas of English, Language Arts, Social Studies, History, or World Languages required; Master's Degree preferred
- Licensed (or working towards licensure) in Educational Leadership preferred.
- Minimum of 3-5 years teaching experience.
- Fully subscribed to hands-on and manipulative learning approaches.
- Experience developing pacing guides, common assessments, benchmarks, report cards, and power standards at the school or district level.
- Experience facilitating adult learning.
- Experience leading teachers.
- Proven record of increasing student achievement at the school or district level.

**Reports to:** Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

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## Davidson County Schools

### **Instructional Program Specialist: STEM**

#### **Position Summary**

The Program Specialist for STEM is responsible for assisting the Assistant Superintendent in the development and implementation of effective K-12 standards-based instruction, appropriate and balanced assessment, and standards-based grading and reporting.

#### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Assists schools in determining the level of implementation of standards-based instruction best practices in the STEM programs
- Assists administrators in supporting, training, and coaching teachers and staff in the STEM programs
- Supports the development of Power Standards and Reporting Standards K-12
- Designs and delivers training to administrators/teachers in providing feedback to students to improve instructional delivery
- Identifies resources and supports teachers with differentiation to meet all students' needs in the STEM programs
- Provides individual assistance to schools experiencing grading issues
- Provides ad hoc reports on the status of standards-based instruction/progress reporting and develops recommendations for improvement
- Serves as liaison between the Division of Curriculum and Instruction in all issues related to instructional best practices that are aligned to performance management standards for teachers
- Works in collaboration with other departments and areas to maximize teacher effectiveness as it relates to the STEM curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Collaborates with Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction in the development of and revisions to new curriculum
- Assists schools in ways to integrate curriculum

#### **Knowledge/Skills/Abilities:**

- Detailed knowledge and experience with standards-based instruction and assessment best practices



- Experience with curriculum development
- Demonstrated ability to develop and deliver training to adult learners across multiple disciplines and levels
- Demonstrated knowledge in differentiation and meeting the needs of varied learners
- Ability to plan and implement short and long-range goals and objectives
- Ability to work with collaborative teams
- Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite
- Excellent interpersonal skills needed to work effectively with administrators, staff, and community members
- Excellent organizational and time management skills
- Excellent communication skills both orally and in writing

## Davidson County Schools

### **Working Conditions:**

- Normal office environment
- Will require travel between schools

### **Physical Demands:**

- Routine physical activity associated with normal office environment
- Must be able to lift and carry up to 25 lbs. occasionally

### **Minimum Education and Experience**

- Education: Bachelor's Degree in Education or in the areas of Math, Science, Engineering, or Technology required (Preference will be given to Math and Science); Master's Degree preferred
- Licensed (or working toward licensure) in Educational Leadership preferred.
- Minimum of 3-5 years teaching experience.
- Fully subscribed to hands-on and manipulative learning approaches.
- Experience developing pacing guides, common assessments, benchmarks, report cards, and power standards at the school or district level.
- Experience facilitating adult learning.
- Experience leading teachers.
- Proven record of increasing student achievement at the school or district level.

**Reports to:** Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

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APPENDIX D: DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONAL COACH PERFORMANCE  
RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide teacher support for identified professional development initiatives in the form of modeling, coaching, providing feedback and facilitating group discussions at the school level
- Facilitate training and coaching on Learning-Focused instructional framework, classroom management, literacy strategies across the content areas, research-based math instruction, and differentiated instruction.
- Collaborate with principals, individual teachers and teams of teachers
- Support the school improvement team
- Assist with design and implementation of all building level and district level professional development
- Assist in the collection of data on the impact of Instructional Coach activities and student achievement.

## APPENDIX E: INSTRUCTIONAL COACH MONTHLY LOG

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **School:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Month:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Submitted:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1. Meetings with Principal/Administrative Team:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>2. Grade Level/Department Meetings</b> (discussing data, student work, teaching strategies, assessment for learning, etc.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>3. Teacher Support:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>4. Modeling or Co-Teaching Lessons</b> (in any and all content areas): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>5. Informal Classroom Observations and <i>Feedback</i>:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>6. Professional Planning/Learning:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>

**Reflections for the month:**

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## APPENDIX F: INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM SPECIALIST WEEKLY LOG

<b>To what degree were the following activities a part of your work this past week?</b>	Many Times	A Few Times	Not Much	Not At All
I supported a Professional Learning Community.				
I collaborated with district leaders.				
I advocated for students and teachers by supporting evidence-based instruction.				
I exhibited and modeled ethical standards.				
I communicated effectively, taking into account cultural differences.				
I differentiated professional development based on the needs of individual educators.				
I supported teachers in alignment with the NC Professional Teaching Standards.				
I used my understanding of the Standard Course of Study to support teachers.				
I supported teachers as they implemented evidence-based instruction.				
I supported teachers as they analyzed data to make instructional decisions.				
I provided effective professional development and supported the teachers as they implement improved instruction.				
I used a variety of strategies to match my support with teacher needs.				
I was resourceful in getting teachers the support they needed to improve instruction.				
I used technology as appropriate in supporting teachers as they develop lessons.				
I integrated the NC Framework for 21st Century Learning as I supported educators in planning and assessment.				
I collected, analyzed, and interpreted data about my own effectiveness as I planned for my work.				

<b>To what degree were the following activities a part of your work this past week?</b>	Many Times	A Few Times	Not Much	Not At All
I considered the needs of the educators I serve as I planned.				
I supported educators' use of data as they reflect upon their own effectiveness.				

Please briefly describe a success you experienced this past week \*  
(Something about your work you are feeling great about)

Please share something from the past week you wish you could have done differently \*  
(You would fix this if you could turn back the clock)

What resources would have helped you to experience even more success this past week?  
\*

Please share any general reflections or thoughts on your experiences this past week  
(This question is optional)