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A Story of Distributed Leadership at a Turnaround High School:

Identifying Settings and Practices

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Jeanne Sesky

2014

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Story of Distributed Leadership at a Turnaround High School:

Identifying Settings and Practices

by

Jeanne Sesky

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Megan Franke, Chair

Urban high schools seldom achieve turnaround status. Many variables have been studied in relation to effective school turnaround; however, distributed leadership is a theory of leadership that has seldom been linked in the literature to school turnaround and sustainability. This study investigated the phenomenon of distributed leadership at a southern California urban high school, where indicators revealed that the site achieved turnaround status by moving out of Program Improvement over a ten-year period and by increasing college admission rates, even with multiple principal successions. This study contributes to the field of educational leadership and school improvement by informing *how* distributed leadership functioned across settings and practices. This unique case study targeted the settings and practices used by multiple stakeholders during the turnaround period. Leadership was characterized by influence and activities, not by roles of site members. Data were collected via in-depth interviews, which were coded by themes of distributed

leadership: collegiality, trust, efficacy, autonomy, ownership, collaboration, data-driven design, interaction, teacher talk, emotional support, teacher learning, and a culture of caring. The findings showed that members of a school site took on leadership activities in various settings, influencing one another's' practice. Interview data revealed that teachers, administrators and staff worked in formal and informal settings to influence one another's beliefs and practices. Participants highlighted the importance of conditions that exist when leadership was distributed: ownership, autonomy, trust, and efficacy. These findings suggest that teachers and administrators at urban turnaround schools need to be aware of the differences between formal and informal settings and their effects on distribute leadership practices; by utilizing the unique opportunities each setting offers, learning outcomes for students can be improved and sustained over time.

The dissertation of Jeanne Sesky is approved.

Louis Gomez

James Stigler

Eugene Tucker

Megan Franke, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

DEDICATION

I dedicate this manuscript to my parents William and Maureen Sesky, who throughout my life have

modeled a love for learning and a curiosity to look at life in new and different ways. With their

support and love, I have pursued interests that have shaped my personal and professional mindsets. I

have discovered a passion to support others and to understand how to support organizational change

through the mindsets that I have adopted. The freedom that they gave me as a child has allowed me to

chase my dreams, and it is this freedom that I wish to share with others.

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I would like to acknowledge the participants and district personnel from the site where I conducted my study. Their willingness to be open, contribute time, offer resources, and remain flexible as data were collected made this study possible. The love and care that they bring to their students and share with one another is an inspiration.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who championed alongside me to see this project to fruition: Mom, Dad, and Eva thanks for your constant belief in my abilities. Kat, thanks for you assistance with editing. Heather and Mel, thanks for being co-parents to my "child" Ferhan so that I was freed up to work. And, my fellowship of friends: Alex, Ayako, and Sami— you each shared patience and cheered me on so that I could complete the Educational Leadership Program.

VITA

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

With so many of the nation's persistently under-performing schools focused on school improvement, few achieve school *turnaround* status (Huberman, Arellanes, Schambaugh, 2011; Murphy & Meyers, 2009; Villavicencio & Grayman, 2012). In fact, school improvement reports suggest that no more than 2% of California's lowest performing schools are considered *turnaround* successes that exhibit sustainable change (Huberman et al, 2011). The term *turnaround* originated in the corporate world where a high degree of intolerance was given toward prolonged failure (Leithwood, Harris & Strauss, 2010). The concept of turnaround has surfaced only in recent years in school reform and policy contexts. Since that time, researchers and practitioners have grappled to identify which aspects of school turnaround are the most predictable.

Recent studies reveal that "successful" turnaround schools tend to regress after a change in leadership. Of the reported turnaround schools, the large majority have been elementary schools, which appear to plateau after registering initial gains in test scores (Fullan, 2003; Stein, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2004). Secondary schools, however, are less apt to change—and when fundamental shifts are achieved, new innovations rarely last or spread (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). In fact, organizational theorists indicate that for organizational recovery to take place, a change of leadership is essential (Murphy, 2008). Few California turnaround schools have displayed sustained growth even without leadership turnover (CA Department of Education, 2010; Huberman, et al. 2011). However, little research exists on California's successful turnaround schools; and, of those studies, none inspect how leadership turnover has affected their sustainability.

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This study focused on the leadership conditions that enabled one southern California turnaround school to rise above the status quo and sustain real capacity change, even after a change in leadership. From a distributive leadership framework, this study addressed how *organizational learning* contributed to sustainable turnaround. Specifically, the settings and practices taken up by members of a school site during a period of school turnaround were examined in order to determine the role of distributed leadership in learning and sustainability.

To understand how one unique school made steady growth over the last decade, I examined *how* it achieved and sustained its growth through a single case study. I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews and to gain understanding of how distributed leadership affected site turnaround. Distributed leadership is a process whereby people influence one another and learn from one another; therefore, anyone can lead or follow, depending on the situation. The goal of this study was to identify *how* site participants influenced one another and learned from one another, ultimately resulting in a culture shift that turned the school around, moved it out of Program Improvement for an extended period of time, and increased students college admission rates. I crafted an interview protocol that elicited responses to find out how collective learning took place at the school site. Specifically, I identified and described the *settings* that allowed participants to influence and learn from one another, as well as the *practices* that were involved in collective learning.

THEORETICAL FRAME: Turnaround Schools and Distributed Leadership

Schools, like living organisms, have the potential to adapt and learn. This learning happens when the members of an organization are involved in what organizational theorists term *second order change* (Burke, W. 2010). Academic researchers categorize change into two different "orders": first and second order change. In "first order" change, issues can be addressed with

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prevailing values and norms; the existing knowledge and skill set of the organizational actors are sufficient to implement change. However, in the case of "second order" change, new approaches or mindsets are essential for change to take place because the status quo has not been sufficient to enact needed growth. Second order change requires leaders to work more deeply with constituents, which requires the values or norms of the organization to be disrupted (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992).

According to organizational behavior researchers, true learning that exhibits sustainable change takes place when an entire teaching faculty and support staff takes ownership for the organization's change, seeing that it is their responsibility to affect student outcomes (Hallinger, 2003). Organizations that expand their knowledge, increasing core productivity, are termed *learning organizations (*Marquart, 2011; Senge*, 1990)*. Second order change empowers all *learners* in an organization to take responsibility and action towards sustained change (Argyris, 2002). Research suggests a shift in the behavior of members of an organization—in group, intergroup, and organizational processes— is necessary for sustained change to take place (Argyris, 1976). Thus, when a faculty takes on leadership qualities, second order change can blossom.

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Though the concept of school turnaround is controversial, the need for schools to change is not. Some of the discord comes from the definition for school *turnaround*. Across studies, the definition for how to measure school turnaround varies greatly (Huberman et al, 2011). In the recently released *School Turnaround Field Guide,* Kutash and researchers (2010) note that the word *turnaround* has been "used broadly and means different things to different people" (p. 12). The definition from Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore & Lash (2007) is "a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in an underperforming school that: (a) produces significant gains in achievement

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within two years; and (b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performing organization" (p. 73). For this study, the definition of school turnaround centered on California schools that had established growth over a seven-year period, using 10 selection criteria employed by WestEd's report, *Turnaround Schools in California: Who Are They and What Strategies Do They Use?* Recent achievement data were used from the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) databases; demographic data and performance measures were taken from the Base Academic Performance Index (API) databases.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

A distributed leadership perspective undergirded this study. The site selected for this study utilized a distributed leadership model, which placed the learning of the organization into the "hands of many," not just into the hands of formal leadership. *Distributive leadership* (DL) can be defined as a form of power distribution in organizations, which extends authority and influence to groups or individuals, in a way that is at least partially contrary to hierarchical arrangements commonly found in K-12 education (Spillane & Healey, 2010; Arrowsmith, 2007). Distributed leadership exercises both leadership and management in educational arenas through formal and informal actors. Researchers believe that the distributed perspective, as a conceptual framework, has the potential to open up new ways of understanding how school leadership is executed (Spillane et al, 2010; Gronn, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004).

This study focused on the distributed leadership in a secondary school in southern California that sustained turnaround growth over a period of ten years, with a change of principals more than once after the site exited Program Improvement. I utilized the following research questions:

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do participants describe the settings in which leadership practices occurred during the school's turnaround process?

2. What do participants identify as key settings and practices that positively affected site turnaround and its sustainability?

3. How did distributed leadership support settings and practices at this one site?

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

After the results of the case study were analyzed, I communicated the findings to the site and the district office. I also shared the findings with *The California Collaborative on District Reform,* a group of State superintendents who study school turnaround and reform. It is my intention to publish the findings from this dissertation by writing articles for educational leadership publications. The findings from this study are timely, and I wish for turnaround schools to benefit from the findings and implications discovered from this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education awarded $4 billion dollars in School Improvement Grants (SIG) to the nation's most persistently under-achieving schools. The majority of funding was awarded to turnaround schools, in which teachers were involved in job-embedded professional development (PD) as part of a school's comprehensive instructional program (SEA Priorities in Awarding School Improvement Grants, 2010, p. 66366). Since that time, fewer than 2% of the California schools have achieved turnaround status. It appears that this program is not working as it was intended. Although a body of research supports the need for high-quality teachers to work with under-performing students (Coggshall, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton, & Jacques, 2012; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 1999) few California schools are making a difference with their present instructional programs. Such research suggests that teacher practice is key to improving schools; unfortunately, research on *how* teachers learn and the best ways to educate them is a relatively young field of research. What recent research does indicate is that high-quality teachers continue to learn and grow, they become adaptive experts, they innovate within constraints, they develop metacognitive approaches, and they develop competence in methods of inquiry (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). With such evidence connecting school improvement to teacher quality, it is imperative that turnaround schools support teacher development as part of their comprehensive turnaround programs.

To construct a conceptual framework of how underperforming schools turn around, I built upon several theoretical models. First, I looked at the literature on sustainability and capacity building in underperforming schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012; Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Hopkins, Harris, Stoll, & Mackay, 2011; Rowan, Correnti, Miller & Camburn, 2009; Stoll & Fink, 1996), as

well as organizational change theory (Burke, 2010; Fullan, 2009; Hall & Hord, 2002) to investigate how schools function as learning organizations (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Sergiovanni, 2012). I proposed that successful schools engage in intentional strategies that improve teaching practices (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood, Anderson, Mascall & Strauss, 2009). These practices strengthen teachers' effectiveness, allowing schools to build capacity. My theoretical framework is informed by Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, in which adult learners gain new practices and settings from one another. Next, I discussed how distributed leadership, where teachers take on leadership roles (Harris, 2009; & Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001), create sustaining effects on school turnaround. According to distributed leadership theory, adults can learn from one another within school cultures that provide interaction and collaboration among its members, regardless of formal leadership designations. Accordingly, Knowles, Holton and Swanson's work on adult learning theory (2012) suggests that adults learn best when learning is self-directed, problem-centered, and self-moderated. When these conditions are part of a site's culture, the distribution of leadership supports school improvement. Finally, I investigated the phenomenon of principal succession on school turnaround (Hargreaves, 2005) as it is common for turnaround efforts to decline after a change in leadership.

Part I: Sustainability and Capacity-Building in Under-Performing Schools

In 1998, the U.S. Department of Education enacted national reform policy to address the insufficiency of school turnaround efforts. This program, known as Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), provided incentives for schools to develop comprehensive reform programs based upon scientific research and effective practices (https://www.ed.gov/programs/compreform/2pager.html). Some researchers have argued that the best hope U.S. schools have is for the current generation of CSR models to take root (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Spillane, 2012; Slavin, 1997). One

factor that makes this model compelling to school administrators is that it addresses a site's specific culture and context. For over a decade, educational reformers have argued about the efficacy of one-size-fits-all, hierarchical plans to turn around underperforming schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012; Fullan, 2009; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000). More recently, researchers have focused on customized approaches to school turnaround (Hagreaves & Fink, 2012). In fact, a number of educational organizations now provide empirical research and promising practices for turnaround leaders to use in order to create customized turnaround plans. School leaders are relying more and more on multiple agencies to provide research, resources, and support. Thus, the "scaling up" movement, where leaders use one-size-fits-all plans, is losing ground; instead a strategic approach, based on a site's context and culture, is steadily gaining momentum.

Even though a large body of school improvement literature offers strategies for school turnaround, few underperforming schools demonstrate that access to this literature has made a difference. School improvement literature suggests that an emphasis on teaching and learning, data-informed leadership, and high-quality professional development can help to guide failing schools (Coggshall, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton, & Jacques, 2012); however, the turnaround school rate is abysmally low, considering the amount of money and resources made available. This lack of improvement in California's lowest performing schools has pushed school leaders to look more deeply into capacity building conditions. Recent studies have suggested that when conditions, opportunities, and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning are created, turnaround efforts are successful (Camburn et al. 2003; Harris, 2001). Thus, school leaders should seek to understand the conditions that create effective collaboration and who should be involved in collaboration and learning development.

In the past, reform initiatives targeted the principal as the sole agent of change; however, newer studies suggest that a leadership team, where roles are distributed, can impact school improvement. In fact, researchers suggest that outside agencies, such as school districts, county offices, partnerships, and foundations, should offer needed support for struggling schools (Harris, 2001). Often these agencies have rich resources that the local school or district cannot afford, so a network of support emerges. These agencies offer funding to sites, which increases accountability and effects capacity. In addition to outside agencies, internal agents at school sites also work towards collaborative reform: teacher leaders, content experts, learning community members, and parent or community groups, all work together by sharing leadership roles. This kind of collaborative leadership approach distributes the load to capable change agents, rather than reserving reform responsibilities solely for the principal.

Although a strong leadership team has impact on school turnaround, the unique context and culture of a school site cannot be overlooked. In a large-scale, longitudinal study, Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) examined the perceptions and experiences of high school leaders and teachers in order to study the context of educational change. This study took place over three decades at eight high schools, in Canada and the U.S. Their findings revealed that most educational change efforts neglect to look at political, historical, and longitudinal aspects of change. These findings suggest that "snapshot" studies fail to capture the ways in which change takes place over time (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Therefore, this case study examined the site's historical and political context. The experiences and processes that have been in place before change efforts commence are part of the school's DNA; a school's culture offers important clues about what its unique sociocultural makeup.

Part II: Turnaround Schools and Comprehensive Reform

The turnaround model emerged in 2009 from The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which targeted substantial School Improvement Grants (SIGs) to the nation's "persistently lowest achieving" public schools. Schools that met the "lowest-achieving" and "lack of progress" thresholds within their states received prioritized eligibility. To be labeled a "priority school," the school must be within the lowest 5% of Title 1 schools in the state (U.S. Department of Education, Office of School Turnaround, 2011). From 2009 to 2011, approximately $6 million was awarded to designated schools (Dee, 2012). To receive the SIG funding, every aspect of the school had to be restructured and re-cultured (Fullan, 2009; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Sarason, 2000); however, few schools have exited Program Improvement status by following this model. The federal model does not address how school leaders should address school culture and local context: two vital components in school turnaround.

In the past, the focus on school improvement was on isolated programs, which may or may not have targeted the academic performance of all students (Rowan, Correnti, Miller, & Camburn, 2009; Oakes, 2004; Powers, 2004). However, the CSR model targets a host of methods and strategies for teaching, learning, and school management, providing a flexible and comprehensive approach to school planning. In CSR models, improvement efforts are not focused on one type of reform or one person, rather reform becomes a process in which all members of a school community become vital to school renewal and success. To guide CSR, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of School Turnaround (OST) published a 2011 report in which it lists research-based principles for turnaround: Effective leaders and teachers; supportive and safe school environment; increased time for teaching and collaboration; operational flexibilities and capacity building; strong aligned and responsive instruction; and, family and community engagement. In addition, California's turnaround model calls for the principal and at least one half of the staff to be

replaced (http://www.cde.ca.gov). This model is designed to bring in new, highly qualified staff, as well as new programs, training, and support (California Department of Education, 2013). The California model is comprehensive in nature: It calls for revised instructional programs, new types of professional development, the use of data to inform instruction, expansion of learning time, provision of wraparound services, and the development of new governance structures. This model allows for flexible implementation; however, the enormity of the task is overwhelming, which is why site leaders often turn to blueprints, rather than taking the time to create customized approaches to turnaround.

While the number of struggling schools across the country is concerning, so too is the fact that these schools serve a disproportionate number of low-income, students of color, Hispanic, and English Language learners. California's persistently underachieving schools contain higher proportions of all these subgroups compared to schools that are not under achieving. For instance, forty-four of students in California's 2010 SIG-eligible schools are ELs, compared to 24 percent statewide (Knudson, Shambaugh, & Day, 2011). While much is known about how to address the needs of these disenfranchised learners, how they are being supported may not be clear in school turnaround plans. California continues to fail to break the cycle of low academic performance for these populations. However, by making these populations a priority at a school site, staff can learn much about students' and community values, and design methods to improve learning outcomes.

Leadership-ping in School Turnaround

The job of school turnaround is one of teamwork, not the job of a single leader. More recently, the literature on school turnaround leadership has begun to address the collaborative efforts of leadership, held by the district, partnerships and outside agencies. This idea is supported in a 2011 report, *The California Collaborative on District Reform (CCDR),* a policy and practice

brief that lists strategies for school turnaround. One theme noted in the CCDR brief is the strategy

of "developing and deploying strong leadership" (Knudson, Shambaugh, & Day, 2011, p.3). This

brief establishes that districts should support site principals and other site leaders in a more

customized approach. The report suggests that the district and outside agencies all may be powerful

partners in the turnaround process. In fact, other studies suggest that the context of a school is a

significant part of reform (Knudso, Shambaugh, & O'Day, 2011). However, a school's context is

not just bound to its site, or even to its district. Outside factors have the potential to influence the

settings, practices and the culture of a site, so they should be examined for their potential

contributions. Thus, the concept of a leadership as a distributed process was important to this study:

I examined the concept of *turnaround leadership* (Leithwood, Harris, Hopkins, 2008; Fullan,

2006), with the role of leadership not just on the shoulders of the site principal but also on the

shoulders of the members who supported the work at this site.

Although leadership was defined in this study as a process--not a specific role that is

contained by any one individual—the role of the site principal cannot be underestimated. The

literature on school turnaround specifies that a site leader can make a dramatic difference on

turnaround success (Aladjem, Birman, Orland, Harr-Robins, Hereida, Parrish, & Ruffini, 2010;

Herman et al. 2008; Peurach & Marx, 2010). In fact, there are few examples of improving student

achievement that were not led by an effective principal (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, &

Anderson, 2010). The literature suggests that school leaders need to employ strategies where they

can tackle the complexities of change by interacting with their staff (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012).

Traditionally, principals have avoided interaction with teachers because of deeply institutionalized

patterns of "hands-off" management, where teachers and unions have fought to keep classrooms

free from outside influences (Peuarch and Marx, 2010). However, the new wave of comprehensive reform includes the principal in multiple layers of school change.

To attain the full potential of professional development within a turnaround model, studies support that principals must champion the efforts (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). According to studies on *turnaround principal* effectiveness, the site principal is key to the development of the staff (Day, 2010; Copeland, 2003). In one small, phenomenological, qualitative study, the beliefs of varied instructional leaders in an elementary school setting were compared to the national standards and research literature on what characterizes effective professional development. This study recognized that effective professional development was key to teacher and student learning; the findings suggested that a leader should work collaboratively with their staff to create professional learning based on data (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). This builds upon the literature that suggests that professional development of teachers is considered the most effective way to improve the teaching process (Eun, 2008; add more citations), which, ultimately, will result in school-wide success. In addition to planning and implementing effective professional learning opportunities, the principal's participation as a learner, alongside teachers, was listed as a strategy to increase teachers learning. Because of the importance of professional development to a leader's success, the interactions between the principals in my study and their staff was analyzed for evidence of both implementation of professional development and the principal as a learner.

In addition to being involved in the learning process with their staffs, studies of successful turnaround principals also cite the need for principals to become more responsible for determining the topics for professional development and its delivery (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). This supports the concept that school improvement is a craft, whereby the principal utilizes all possible tools and resources to customize site professional development

(Harris, 2003). Accordingly, in a 2011 report conducted by the *National Staff Development Council (NSDC),* the following key themes emerged related to the nature of effective professional development: *ongoingness, collaboration, data-driven design, interest-driven design,* and *interaction.* When these themes were shared with both principals and assistant principals as part of the study, each agreed with the themes *ongoingness, collaborative,* and *data-driven design.* Principals believed that PD should be *interactive;* whereas, the assistant principals believed that PD should be *interest-driven.* This is an interesting observation, which may be related to the support role of the assistant principal. Assistant principals may be more in touch with the staff's motivations since they support day-to-day needs of teachers. On the other hand, the site principals may be more concerned with the "big picture" and are not as in touch with the staff's motivations. The findings from this report lent insight to my study. I examined *how* professional development was developed and delivered, considering key themes from leadership-learning literature.

Part III. The Importance of Teacher Quality and Teacher Leadership on School Reform

Teacher quality and teacher leadership are at the forefront of current reform movements. There is strong consensus that the quality of the teacher, more than any other factor, impacts student achievement (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002). Because of this emphasis on teacher quality, present school reform efforts stress the importance of improving teacher learning.

Teacher Learning Is a Predictor of Student Growth

Teacher learning is a prerequisite to school improvement. Some studies suggest that teachers' learning *processes* are an important focus of reform activity (Harris, 2001; Hopkins, 1997; Ravitch, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010). The focus on processes, or *how* teachers learn, is an important aspect of my study because the phenomenon of

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how teacher learning affected school turnaround has gone undocumented in past research. Plenty of studies reveal *what* teachers should learn; yet the literature on *how* the teacher-learning process affects school turnaround is still emerging.

Factors that Influence Strong Professional Development

Recent research has defined a new paradigm for professional development for teachers—one that replaces the "drive by" workshop model with an ongoing, coherent model where teachers are connected to site-level curriculum, assessment, standards and data during professional learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Some experts argue that the content of professional development can enhance teacher competence, rather than simply provide a forum for teachers to talk. These researchers suggest professional development should emphasize active teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection rather than abstract discussion (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). In a 2012 report, "Generating Teaching Effectiveness: The Role of Job-Embedded Professional Learning in Teacher Evaluation," from the *National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality*, a major focus of teachers' professional development is for learning to be job-embedded. The report examined four approaches by which teachers learn: learner-centered, knowledge-centered; community-centered; and, assessment-centered. All four approaches were found to be effective ways in which teachers learn when tied to the daily work. Moreover, Hargreaves, Halasz & Pont (2008) suggest that when teachers focus on conditions, processes, and goals, student outcomes are positively affected. Finally, teacher development that focuses on student learning and helps teachers develop the pedagogical skills to teach specific kinds of content has strong positive effects on practice (Blank, de las Alas & Smith, 2007; Wenglinsky, 2000). My study took into account *how* teachers learned

over the course of their site turnaround, accounting for processes and conditions that enhanced their learning.

Researchers point out that teacher collaboration is an important condition for teacher learning (Darling-Hammond & Robertson, 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The last two decades of research on the effectiveness of teacher collaboration suggests that interdependency and collaborative relationships largely affect positive student outcomes (Meirink, Imants, Meijer & Verloop, 2010; Little, 1990; Rosenholz, 1989). Other research suggests that collaboration is a key feature in continuing professional development (Cassidy, Christie, Coutts, Dunn, Sinclair, Skinner, & Wilson, 2008; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). With volumes of research pointing to teacher collaboration as a solution for under-performing schools, why have so few studies revealed *how* collaboration affects student outcomes? School change experts, Saunders and Goldenberg (2005), look into this question and suggest that we have overlooked *settings* in which professional exchange and learning takes place, which I discuss later in the section *The Necessity of Distributed Leadership.*

Years of literature on the effectiveness of PLCs claim that PLCs serve as an important contributor to instructional improvement and school reform (Andrews & Lewis, 2007; Little, 2001, 1990; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996). In fact, many researchers argue that the progress of educational reform depends on teachers' individual and collective capacities (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006). However, understanding the effectiveness of PLCs and *how* teachers can best collaborate to effect school turnaround is at a relatively early stage of development in the research. Studies that have followed *how* learning communities are formed have found that they develop slowly, and are fraught with conflicts, silences, and misunderstandings. So teachers who work in PLCs must persistently work through their challenges in order for new

learning to emerge (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001). The process of learning with

colleagues creates trust and support (Dunne, Nave, & Lewis, 2000). In my study, I sought to

understand how the interactions in PLCs contributed to the positive increase in achievement data,

over a series of years. Equally as important, I sought to understand how the acting principals

contributed to the teachers' learning processes. The teacher-to-teacher interactions and the teacher-

to-principal interactions were each important factors that may have strongly influenced continuous

student growth.

Factors that Contribute to Teacher Learning

Understanding the factors that contribute to professional learning is crucial for school

turnaround. Studies support several factors that contribute to the success of teachers' professional

growth. One factor that researchers suggest will help teachers adopt new practices more readily is

when teacher-leaders set clear expectations with group members, so that all members of a PLC

understand why an instructional practice is of value, useful, or appropriate for their students

(Camburn & Han, 2005). Studies reveal that lack of clarity in instructional practices can be a

persistent barrier to change (Harris, 2009: Camburn & Han, 2005). In fact, situational learning

theorists uphold that learning is a social process, occurring in socio-cultural settings. By applying

situational learning theory to the adoption of new teaching practices, Anderson, Reder, and Simon

(1996) report, "instruction must be done in complex, social environments." From this perspective, I

reasoned that teachers had learned new strategies when working with one another. Other

researchers point out that teachers should learn within the context of their own classrooms (Putnam

and Borko, 2000; Camburn & Han, 2005). Researchers contend that when teachers' learning

opportunities are embedded in day-to-day practice, they are more likely to become aware of what

constitutes effective, practical, or appropriate instruction within their classrooms (Camburn and

Han, 2005). Additionally, studies suggest that *sense making* may be either enabled or constrained

by the situation in which it takes place (Spillane, 2001; Resnick, 1991). Thus, learning that is tied to

the context of one's own teaching creates opportunity for teachers to adopt new practices.

Teacher Leadership: A Pivotal Factor in School Turnaround

The focus of the teacher-leader in professional literature is concurrent with the school

turnaround movement. In 2001, Barth summoned a call for teacher leadership, saying, "all teachers

have the capacity to lead their schools down a more positive path, to enlist their abundant

experience and craft knowledge in the service of school improvement" (p. 244). His report inspired

a movement towards greater teacher leadership in U.S. reform models (Gray & Bishop, 2009). This

attention to the promising effects of teacher leadership prompted a thorough review of teacher

leadership research literature by researchers. York-Barr and Duke (2004) concluded that teacher

leadership enhances teachers' status, builds leadership skills, improves and corroborates

professional knowledge, and enhances motivation and intellectual stimulation. These variables are

key to understanding how teacher leaders affect student outcomes.

Scholars define *teacher leadership* based upon the roles that teachers hold, as well as the

effects that those roles have upon other teachers and their students. For instance, Liston, Bork &

Whitcomb (2008) describe teacher leadership according to formal and informal roles; these types of

roles are often situated within the context of PLCs or peer coaching. Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster

and Cobb (1995) contend that the informal role, as it is embedded in leadership tasks, is free from

artificially imposed, formal hierarchies and positions (p. 89). The dismissal of formalized roles

allows for a more level power structure. This enables teachers to approach one another as peers with

similar goals, rather than viewing one another through a hierarchy where preconceived expectations

fall upon the leader-follower relationship.

Thus, Darling-Hammond, et al. (1995) argue that leadership should be an expectation extended to all teachers, suggesting that, "such approaches may lead to greater professional-wide leadership as the 'normal' role of the teacher is expanded" (p. 89). This approach allows for untraditional leaders to be "discovered" at school sites, while increasing the collective capacity for buy-in because more teachers are involved—a more democratic practice. Additionally, York-Barr & Duke (2004) describe teacher leadership as a way to mobilize teacher expertise. They propose that teacher interaction has a mobilizing effect on both teacher learning and pedagogy. They claim that expertise sharing develops sound instructional practice, as well as works at the organizational level, by creating settings and routines to support instructional practice. Accordingly, this study investigated this leadership phenomenon by seeking to understand *how* teacher expertise is mobilized, and by identifying situations and settings that lent opportunities for expert exchanges.

Part IV. The Necessity of Distributed Leadership

Distributing leadership holds promise for the sustainability of school turnaround. The evidence base for distributed leadership in school improvement is growing, with increasing evidence connecting it to organizational change (Leithwood et al., 2009). In fact, a variety of studies explore how different patterns of distribution influence organizational outcomes and organizational changecassca (Spillane and Camburn, 2006; Harris, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009b; Mayrowtetz et al., 2009; Camburn and Won Han, 2010; Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Camburn, 2003). Findings show that the distribution of leadership is important and that certain patterns of distribution have a more positive effect than others upon organizational development and change (Leithwood et al., 2009). The empirical evidence shows that purposeful or planned leadership distribution is more likely to impact positively on school development and change (Harris, 2009; Day et al., 2009).

Distributed Leadership Improves Instructional Practice

Instructional practice is a key focus of school reformers, especially distributive leadership advocates. Leaders of instructional change have widely begun to consider the viewpoint held by organizational change experts, who suggest that no one individual can lead the change process (Harris, 2005; Fullan 2001; Hopkins, 2001; Spillane, 2001). Spillane (2001) suggests that "…the interdependence of the individual and the environment shows how human activity as distributed in the interactive web of actors, artifacts, and the situation is the appropriate unit of analysis for studying practice." By distributing the workload from the shoulders of one individual to the "shoulders of many," leadership can be measured and understood in new ways. Instead of seeing leadership as a position or title, the distributed leadership perspective places responsibility for making change happen on all stakeholders within an organization (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2012). Such a definition informs my study, where all members of a school community will be considered to understand how they contributed to make their school high performing after years of documented under-performance.

Leadership, from a distributed viewpoint, is considered a shared relationship that focuses on interactions between leaders, followers and situations (Spillane 2012; 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Such interactions can have profound effects at the classroom level when functions of school improvement are taken into account. Researchers uphold the following list of functions, which they argue as essential for instructional leaders to utilize during school turnaround: constructing and selling an instructional vision; building norms of trust, collaboration, and academic press; supporting teacher development; and monitoring instruction and innovation (Spillane, 2001; Firestone & Corbett, 1988). Though these functions have been reserved for formal leader roles, like principals and district office administrators, researchers who support a distributed leadership perspective believe that these leadership functions can be dispersed to informal leaders, submitting

that they may be better positioned to communicate ideas or who may be more expert in content or pedagogy. Although formal leadership roles are necessary to any organization, the power of informal leadership cannot and should not be left out when examining organizational change. By looking at both aspects of school change, I hoped to gain a fuller picture of how this site moved through the change process.

The first empirical study to consider distributed leadership was conducted by Camburn et al. (2003), who revealed the important connection between a leader's role and their status. The study examined 114 schools to see how responsibilities for leadership functions were distributed among staff holding formal leadership roles. Using self-reports, leaders were categorized into four broad roles: principal, assistant principal, CSR-Coach, and "other leaders." Camburn et al. (2003) found evidence of leadership role enactment at schools using a comprehensive design. He also found that schools using this design allocated more leaders per teacher, which was an intention of the program, to add more leadership positions and, thus, support teacher development. A review of the study indicates that teacher-leaders received significant training in *how* to perform instructional leadership roles.

Distributed Leadership Is Activity-Bound, Not Role Bound

As part of a distributed leadership perspective, the concept of leadership put forth in this paper attends to a leader's thinking and action *in situ.* In other words, the appropriate unit of analysis is leadership *activity*, not the leader's title or tasks commonly thought to belong to a certain leadership position. This concept of leadership is well described by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004), where they make a distinction between macro functions and micro functions of leadership. They argue that leadership activity is constituted in the interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation as leadership tasks are executed. This perspective, Spillane et al. (2004) contend,

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shifts the unit of analysis from an individual actor or group of actors to a "web of leaders, followers, and situation that give activity its form" (p.10). I argued that in order to examine how the majority of members of a school site affected school turnaround, it was imperative to conceive of leadership through this perspective.

Researchers, who have examined the relationship between school leadership distribution and instructional innovation, describe leadership through differing functions that are not role-bound (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Elmore, 2000; Gronn, 2002; Murphy, 1988; Bennet, Wise, Woods & Harvey, 2003; Pounder, Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). To distinguish how leadership is disseminated across activity, not positions, Spillane et al. (2004) detail two distinct types of roles: macro-functions and micro-tasks. They suggest that leadership functions provide a framework for analyzing leadership activity, or tasks, and explore the relation of those tasks in relation to instructional innovation. An extensive literature identifies macro-school-level functions that are thought to be essential for instructional innovation (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982; Firestone and Corbett, 1988; Blasé and Kirby, 1993; Louis and Kruse, 1995; Sheppard 1996; Blasé and Blasé 1999). This literature suggests several functions that are important to instructional leadership and describes these functions as existing on a "macro," or larger, level within a school organization.

Some functions that are attributed to macro-level leadership are: constructing and communicating an instructional vision; developing and managing a school culture that builds norms of trust and collaboration; procuring resources; supporting professional development; monitoring instruction; and, establishing a positive school climate. These functions are considered to be large-scale; and in the past, were solely thought to belong to the building principal or extensions of administrative leadership, like district office personnel, or even outside experts. However, for the confines of this study, these macro-functions were analyzed according to the activities *in situ,* and

not the role of the person who had conducted the activity. Rather, this study sought to understand how macro-level functions set up micro-tasks, which were tied to school improvement.

To grasp a full understanding of school leadership, I argued that we needed to understand the links that exist between the *macro-functions* and the *micro-tasks* of school leadership. The macro-function is a broad task, such as "constructing a school vision," while the *micro-task* is an individual activity that helps to enact the macro-function. An example would be for a principal to conduct a meeting in which they ask certain school leaders to brainstorm how they might best communicate the school vision to all members of a school site. The function of communicating the vision is a macro-function, but the activity of meeting with members of a school site and arriving at conclusions that can then be broadly shared is a micro-task, for it is situated in a singular activity. Thus, it is typical for a principal to have the responsibilities of macro-functions; alternately, *micro-tasks* more commonly involve teachers and other faculty members who are committed to performing a particular task. By looking at individual micro-tasks that are situated within the day-to-day activities of a school site, I identified and analyzed the actions that contributed to school improvement on an activity level, creating a more direct link between distributed leadership and school improvement.

Multiple Settings Affect the Distribution of Leadership Practices

Perhaps an overlooked variable in the turnaround school literature is how *settings* affect school turnaround. In their research, Saunders and Goldenberg (2005) argue that little is known about how school settings affect school success. By looking at the various settings in which change happens at a school site, those settings may become predictors for school change. At present, many schools have implemented PLCs and other learning communities, yet the productivity and effectiveness of such communities is not guaranteed. Some feel that it is up to chance and depends

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on how collegial members of learning communities are with one another. I argued that both formal and informal settings had variables that warranted further study. In fact, in their six-year study on theories of action and how settings affected a Title I school, Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009) reasoned that one difference worth noting was a heavy emphasis on providing grade-level teams and school-wide instructional leadership groups with predictable, consistent settings during which they could carry out this work. They noted that in many formalized settings, little was done to focus on students' academic needs and how to use instruction to address those needs. However, to date, little has been studied to see how settings affect school improvement. Of the research linked to school improvement and settings, most of the data refer to variables of formalized settings. And while very little is known about how formal settings function, even less is recorded about the informal settings and interactions. Thus, to understand how leadership transfers back and forth and ultimately affects school growth is an area that requires further study.

Student-Teacher Connectedness

A side of school improvement literature that is important to note is the relationship between the student and the teacher. In his research, Howard (2009) cites that students identified three central teaching strategies that students reported to affect them positively: "Teachers who (1) establish family, community, and home-like characteristics; who establish culturally connected caring relationships; and who use certain types of verbal communication and affirmation. Other researchers who concentrate on relational connectedness between student and teacher suggest that too few teachers are adequately prepared to teach students from ethically diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2002).

Researchers who investigate the effectiveness of teachers based on their relationships with diverse students have found that teachers who maintain caring relationships and attitudes with

Latino students improve students' achievement (Del Rosario, 2011; Haberman, 2005). This study captured data that supported these researcher's claims, and revealed that the impact of the teacher had impact on students, resulting in school improvement.

Barriers to Distributed Leadership and Instructional Change

Reforming classroom instruction is key to school turnaround and student growth. Yet, it is well endorsed that change in the classroom often meets strong resistance (Cuban 1990; Fullan, 1991; Harris, 2009; Sarason, 1990). Because the teacher is the last loop within the chain of change, the teacher becomes the ultimate "broker of change" (Harris, 2009). Therefore, school leaders, especially of turnaround sites where students are consistently underperforming, would best influence instructional change by creating positive and supportive channels of communication with teachers. When teachers have control over own learning development, they are more committed and more apt to implement needed change. However, this type of teacher leadership, with positive results towards school improvement, is not found often in turnaround schools, where I hold it is the most necessary. Instead barriers exist to instructional change, such as teachers not agreeing that a certain change is beneficial; or, when teachers do make changes, the changes may not be to the extent necessary for improvement in instruction to take place (Cohen, 1990, Firestone, 1989; Fullan, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987; Spillane et al., 2002). Even though some teachers may believe that instructional change can positively impact their learning and students outcomes through collegial collaboration, this does not necessarily compel them to sacrifice individual pedagogies. Thus, unremitted norms of privacy and isolation are largely believed to stand in the way of effective teamwork (Fullan, 1991; Little, 1990). The subjects of my study overcame these barriers that are often experienced at underperforming sites. Therefore, it was my intent to capture the culture and settings put in place that helped these teachers overcome or avoid such barriers.

Another barrier to effective school improvement efforts is the constant repositioning of initiatives at school sites. Continuous shifts in policy, at federal, state, or local levels, mean that schools cannot sustain focus on present initiatives. Many instructional changes that are started up, do not gain ground (Harris, 2009; Cuban, 1990). Accompanied with guidance from district administrators, consultants, and state agencies, policy shifts can even become a source of competition against an instructional focus. "Top down" initiatives become disruptive "innovations," rather than positive motivators for authentic change (Bower & Christensen, 1995). It is not the idea of innovation that stands in the way; it is the constant barrage of initiatives that confront school leaders. In other words, innovation is not problematic; rather, innovation is necessary for the livelihood of any organization (Burke, 2008). But rather, it is the repeated start up and abandoning of initiatives that frustrate school leaders and their staff, which potentially dismisses attention from quality innovation because "burn out" occurs after too many short-run efforts. Consequently, I predicted that the site involved in this study had evidence of resistance to initiatives that they deemed unfruitful, and evidence of consistency with initiatives that they perceived were effective as they moved through turnaround efforts.

Not only can inappropriate or untimely initiatives sidetrack a school staff's efforts to improve school growth, but a lack of explicit, clearly defined expectations for school leaders can also act as a barrier to change. Researchers found that prior systematic attempts to distribute leadership had failed due to a lack of clearly defined expectations for leadership responsibilities, a lack of explicit or extended training for new leaders, and pervasive isolation in schools which affects teacher leadership opportunities (Harris, 2009; Hart, 1995; Lieberman 1088; Little, 1995; Smylie et al., 2002). Even though such barriers challenge present leadership efforts, each of these barriers can be managed and overcome by a school principal and their staff as they work to inhibit

such constraints. Principals, therefore, have the challenge of confronting these barriers before they cause a staff to "turn off" to improvement efforts and fault the principal for poor leadership skills. The school leaders, who impacted the turnaround school of this study, acted in proactive ways to navigate such difficult barriers.

Characteristics of Distributed Leadership that Affect Instructional Practice

With the promise of transforming schools through individual leaders quickly fading, researchers and practitioners await models that will show leaders how to deal with the demands and challenges of today's schools. Some researchers caution that merely distributing leadership does not guarantee school improvement (Harris, 2008; Leithwood et al. 2007; Spillane, 2006). Such studies point to patterns of leadership distribution, which are both productive and unproductive (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007; Timperly, 2005). As an example, in Leithwood et al. (2007), researchers found that in order for distributed leadership to have positive effects on school improvement, two factors needed to be in place: First, leadership needs to be distributed to members who have, or can develop, the knowledge and expertise required to carry out the leadership tasks expected of them. This suggests that leadership tasks cannot be assigned to just any school staff member, but careful consideration should be given to who can carry out the change efforts and what kind of expertise and leadership qualities the individual possesses to lead the change movement. Second, effective distributed leadership needs to be coordinated, preferably in some planned way. Just to distribute leadership is not enough. Instead, principals and administrators who carry out a plan to implement distributed leadership need to carefully lay out plans that include the specific talents and expertise of members at their school sites. Just to give teachers the opportunity to meet and make decisions does not equate a sound plan for instructional change.

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Principles for setting up a successful distributed leadership plan can derived from Locke's (2002) 'integrated model' of leadership, which acknowledges the strengths of both lateral and vertical leadership influences. Unlike traditional distributed theories, an integrated model of distributed leadership allows for more than just lateral influence; this model allows for the inevitable sources of vertical, hierarchical leadership that exist in any successful organization (Gronn, 2002). In his article, Gronn (2002) argues for a "holistic" form of distributed leadership, in which the sum of the leaders' work adds up to more than the parts. With this form of distributed leadership, relationships are consciously managed and not left up to chance. This model also assumes that there are high levels of interdependence among those providing leadership; the leadership activities emerge from social processes that are dynamic and multidirectional (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Thus, for an underperforming school site to move out of program improvement, all the members of a school site are important figures. Both macro-levels and micro-levels of leadership allow members of school's staff, with the most expertise, to move across the leadership continuum and perform to the best of their abilities, ultimately influencing positive student outcomes.

Coaching: An Integrated Approach to Distributed Leadership

An integrated leadership approach, where both vertical and horizontal forms of leadership work in unison, holds promise for the distributed leadership perspective. As studies show that principals are more likely to provide macro-level support to staff, it is more likely for coaches to provide leadership that directly supports the improvement of teachers' practice (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In a landmark study on distributed leadership, Camburn and Han (2005) added to the research base on instructional change and distributed leadership. The findings of their study revealed that coaching roles impacted school improvement. In the study, coaches took on two types

of support: The design coaches took on broad leadership functions for implementation; while the literacy coaches took on more specialized functions, focusing efforts on direct assistance to teachers in which they modeled instructional strategies, observed teachers, and conducted follow-up observations where they provided feedback and support. Additionally, the literacy coaches analyzed student work alongside the teachers. Another finding that Camburn & Han (2005) reported is that the extent to which teachers sought out support from one another indicated a positive correlation with the adoption of new instructional practices. This aligns with Spillane's (2001) findings, which contend that when expertise is distributed, the school rather than the individual leader is the most appropriate unit of study to observe how practice is transferred. The model of my research study was situated in the findings from these models.

Teacher Talk Should Focus On Problems of Practice

Although collaboration alone is not a mechanism to improve teaching and learning, teacher talk and conversational routines that attend to problems of practice arguably are a potential instrument to increase capacity building and school turnaround. In a 2010 study, Little and Horn, investigated how conversational routines and work-related talk function to build capacity within schools. Specifically, the researchers attended to how conversations and practices within work groups forged, sustained, or supported teacher learning and improvement. To document their study, they audiotaped and videotaped records of teachers' work group interactions, supplemented by interviews and material artifacts, which were collected over a two-year period at two urban high schools.

Research from the past two decades has confirmed the importance of the collective capacity of schools (Bryk et al., 2009; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). In examining such collective capacity, Little et al. (2010) found that talk among teachers supplied opportunities for professional learning

and accounted for improvements in teaching. Their study analyzed two separate teacher groups that collaborated regularly. One was a group of math teachers, the other a group of English/Reading teachers. The two groups enacted routines that differed in how individuals and groups learned. In the math group, the routine positioned teachers to improve their understanding of how their teacher affected their students by discussing problems of practice, and by helping one another resolve or respond to teaching problems as they arose. The authors concluded that the math group had stronger outcomes based on the differences of three conditions: the degree to which they could rely on shared language and frame of reference (derived from ties to external networks and professional development) for interpreting problems of practice; the stage they had reached in the development of a common curriculum reflective of their goals and their views of teaching and learning in their subject area; and the norms and practices of group leadership and initiative on matters of practice. Notably, teacher leadership was a factor that was found to separate the two groups.

In Little et al.'s (2010) study, the groups differed in their execution for members to take leadership roles. While both groups shared a common commitment to improvement and a shared organizational context, the level of leadership during conversational routines and the types of input were vastly different. The two groups differed in approaches to individual and group learning, in the ways they positioned teachers in relation to problems of practice, and the degree of agency they took to resolve and respond to teaching problems that arose. The researchers credit these differences to group members' ability to support novice teachers to identify, investigate and learn from their own teaching dilJoannas, as well as the group's ability to deepen their collective competence and norms of mutual support. While further research needs to be conducted regarding conversational routines, these findings hold possibilities for documentation of both teacher learning and teacher leadership.

Leadership Succession Can Have A Strengthening Affect

Leadership succession is a factor in sustainability literature that isn't discussed as mush as other factors. Much focus goes into qualities or roles of leaders, frameworks or blueprints to follow with carefully detailed strategies to abide, and, of course, organizational change theory; but a less discussed aspect of sustainability is the plan for replacing a leader once it is known that the present leader will be leaving the school site. While not all departures are planned, much of the change in leadership of school sites is known for sometime before a principal departs; therefore, careful attention to the succession process is warranted. Society, especially the school environment, is unstable and in flux. Thus, to create stable, sustainable outcomes requires a deeper understanding of institutionalization. Hargreaves and Fink (2003), warn that we must pay careful attention to leadership succession, stating, "The departure of the initiating principal or the critical mass of early leaders from model or magnet schools is often the first symptom of decline." This concern for principal turnover is widespread (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010), yet districts or principals continue to struggle with this reform problem. In fact, Hargreaves & Fink (2003) argue that, "Few things succeed less than leadership succession" (p.17).

With such a small number of California's underperforming schools moving out of Program Improvement, the planning process of leadership succession is not a frivolous act. While some educators are swayed to believe that the charisma of a leader is the only answer for leadership turnover by replacing an exiting leader with a charismatic one, others argue that leadership succession is a planned and deliberate activity where by leadership is embedded in the hearts of many, not just a few (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012). Researchers contend that one reason why leadership succession fails is because of the type of knowledge leaders draw upon during the succession process (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Wenger (1998) describes several "trajectories" leaders can take as they move through their organization: inbound, insider, and outbound. Hargreaves

(2008) found that school systems are preoccupied with *inbound* knowledge. A pattern, he suggests is characteristic of charismatic leaders, where by the leaders convinces the staff to believe in their "mystical qualities" rather than believe in themselves. The charismatic leader's *inbound* knowledge can inspire great change, but this type of change is contingent upon them, so when they leave, the sustainability is lost. Wenger (1998) suggests that outbound knowledge, the knowledge to preserve past successes or keep initiatives going once a leader leaves, is missing from district succession plans. Studies point out that unsuccessful leadership succession appears to be a main contributor to the attrition of innovative energy over time (Fink, 2000; Gold, 1999; Smith, Dwyer, Prunty, & Kleine, 1987; Smith, Prunty, Dwyer, & Kleine, 1988; Smith, Prunty, Kleine, &, 1986).

In a large 2003 study of eight high schools in the U.S. and Canada, conducted with more than 250 interviews of principals and teachers, leadership succession was found to be a significant factor affecting the life of a school and the sustainability of school improvement efforts (Hargreaves, 2008). This study found that planned continuity yields successful leadership succession when insiders are groomed to follow in their leader's footsteps. This notion of distributed leadership—leadership that spreads across organizations without diminishing the importance of the principal's role—is starting to draw more attention (Crowther et a1. 2002; Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond 2001).

Conclusion

Because California's underperforming schools continue to experience failure, it is crucial that improvement efforts attend to change in new and innovative ways (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000; Louis, 2006; Sarason, 2000). School turnaround should be addressed by considering the context and culture of a singular school site, rather than by "one-size-fits-all" models (Harris, 2009; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Therefore, distributed leadership holds great promise because it accounts for

human capital situated at the site and district levels, and it acknowledges the generative and sustaining qualities forged through collaboration (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, Spillane 2001). Several studies have been cited in this literature review to highlight the effects of collaborative practices, distributed leadership, and leadership succession on successful school turnaround. However, a gap exists in the research on *how* these bodies of research work together. My study approached this gap in turnaround school literature by interpreting leadership practices and settings according to one site's comprehensive model of school turnaround.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

In previous chapters, I have argued that distributed leadership is key to turnaround efforts in California's lowest achieving schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012; Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Hopkins, Harris, Stoll, & Mackay, 2011; Rowan, Correnti, Miller & Camburn, 2009; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Although the federal government has poured money into school turnaround, the results remain dismal. School turnaround is too complex a job for any one leader; thus, a distributed leadership approach holds promise to unlocking change, ultimately to affect student learning.

This study investigated how distributed leadership affected one turnaround school. Traditionally, schools that exit Program Improvement often return to it, especially after the installment of a new principal (Hargreaves, 2005). In this study, I examined the settings in which school turnaround occurred. I sought to understand how distributed leadership was initiated, supported, and sustained in order to understand how leadership can effect a learning organization.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do participants describe the settings in which leadership practices occurred during the school's turnaround process?

2. What do participants identify as key settings and practices that positively affected site turnaround and its sustainability?

3. How did distributed leadership support settings and practices at this one site?

Rationale and Single-Case Study Design

To answer the research questions, I used a qualitative research design. Qualitative research design was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to look at human behavior and organizational learning, to extract meaning from the change process that took place at Sunny Brook High School. A qualitative design allowed me to construct and reconstruct questions, in order to "close in on" the phenomenon being studied. It allowed me to extract meaning from interview questions and to analyze from an inductive style, drilling down to the complexities of situations and context at the site. Case studies provide Rich description and insightful information, which other design methods do not produce (Yin, 2012). Previous studies on school turnaround have failed to capture the specific details of *how* members at school sites have implemented new practices and settings to affect student growth. They have not demonstrated how professional settings impact school change. To look at this phenomenon, a case study method allowed me to capture the processes as well as the outcomes of the innovative practices that took place at this site. This is an un-researched phenomenon that bore being studied. Merriam (2009) states, "the uniqueness of qualitative research is that you may produce findings that are not determined in advance and also the findings may be applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study." The purpose of this study was to do just that, to unravel the details of the site's success and to share the findings so that other schools might benefit.

Site Selection

Key to this study was the site selection. I selected one California high school for this case study based of its unique ability to achieve school turnaround status and sustain its growth. In 2003, Sunny Brook High School began to make strong gains in its API scores, eventually achieving turnaround status by 2010. A look at the site's API over a decade tells an unusual story. Sunny

Brook was like many urban high schools in California. It had low achievement data with a diverse student body. Sunny Brook has approximately 2,500 students, with a large Hispanic majority, most of who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. One-third of the student body is English Language learners (ELs). Despite these challenges, Sunny Brook improved proficiency rates on the California Standardized Test (CST): ELA scores increased from 32 percent to 46 percent; and math scores increased from 34 to 55 percent.

This site was featured in a comprehensive report on school turnaround because of its notable gains compared to schools of its kind. The report noted that during the turnaround period, more than one principal led the school. The first principal led the change efforts from 2000 to 2005. The second principal led from 2005 to 2010. Then, a third principal took over, starting in 2010 and is still there. The study controlled for student population over time. In other words, there was not a significant shift of demographics over the seven-year period that could explain student achievement gains. The researchers filtered out schools that had more than a fifteen percent decrease in students who received free or reduced-priced lunches, African American students, Hispanic students or ELs, over the seven-year period. They also filtered out schools with a decrease in enrollment greater than twenty percent during the same time period. Furthermore, in order to capture schools that showed true turnaround status, the researchers targeted schools that had not declined more than 0.1 standard deviations between the last two years of their study (2008 and 2009) when turnaround had already been achieved and was being sustained. Also, their subgroup performance could not decline more than 0.2 standard deviations during the same time period.

In addition to a close relationship with the district, the researchers report three main strategies that the site and the district held as key to its transformation: (1) First, extended learning time was given to students that needed support with targeted intervention in English and math; (2)

Secondly, data was used by administration and teachers to determine appropriate interventions; and (3) Thirdly, professional learning communities were put in to place. These three strategies provide some initial ideas about what supported the turnaround, yet tell little about the leadership that supported them.

The sample for this study was the staff and extended support members who were involved in the turnaround process at Sunny Brook High School from before the turnaround until present. The sample included the administrative staff, teaching staff, and support staff. Interviews were conducted with participants who had been identified as key to the past or present efforts to sustain student achievement. I chose to interview participants based on an initial observation of the site, as well as after speaking to the acting principal to learn what kind of professional settings were set up to effect school change. After the initial interview with one former principal and the acting principal, I start to interview teachers whom the principal identified as having been at Sunny Brook since the beginning of the turnaround period.

These initial interviews helped me to identify other key participants and also informal settings that were not identified at first. Interviewing took place in waves. From each wave of interviews, I gained new information about settings, practices and people. I interviewed twenty-three people, including principals, assistant principals, support staff, and teachers.

Recruitment

Initially, I gained access to the site and the district by calling the site principal. The principal knew of the turnaround report I had read and was interested in the study. After speaking with the principal, I was given the name of the Director of Research and Evaluation to contact. I also spoke with the Director, who equally expressed interest in the study. We discussed recruitment procedures. It was decided that I would go through the principal for initial contact with participants

at the site. After that, I attended a staff meeting in the fall of 2013 to describe my study and give the staff the opportunity to meet me and learn about my commitment to the study. Since I formerly worked at a successful turnaround school that utilized distributed leadership, I disclosed my personal interest in conducting the study, as well as ensured the staff that their participation was to be anonymous. I disclosed the methods and design to the staff, so that they felt comfortable with my presence once I began research.

In order to increase the validity of information collected, participants were told that their interviews were not to be made public. I interviewed participants who had been at the school before 2000, when the turnaround process began. I did have to seek out one participant who had retired. I had planned ahead to do a telephone interview, which I did.

Data Collection Methods

I used interviews as the basis for data collection. Prior to interviewing, I used direct observation to inform the preparation of my interview protocol. The interview data revealed how participants described site practices and settings throughout the process of school turnaround, how participants characterized their own learning during the turnaround process, as well as identified which practices and settings were key to achieving sustainability. Lastly, interviews were examined to confirm themes and patterns of distributed leadership.

The data collection process was iterative—data collection took place in phases, as I studied each wave of transcripts for new themes and patterns as they emerged. For instance, after conducting the first three preliminary interviews, I analyzed the transcripts for themes and patterns. Themes, patterns and suggested participants for the study surfaced.

With continuous iterations of delving for themes and informants, I believe that I was able to discover key leadership practices and settings.

Direct Observation

Observations were used to pinpoint interview participants, allowing me to probe for details of leadership that participants would not typically associate with leadership. By conducting observations before the interviews, I sought to get to know the site's leadership practices and settings, as well as to gain a level of trust with participants. Observations took place in several settings, where I observed principal's interactions and four different PLCs. Yin (2011) suggests that direct observation is "one of the highly valued aspects of doing case studies" (Kindle Edition, 2010). Thus, observation provided understanding of site-based practices and settings to inform the interview process.

At this site, several layers of teams exist. The site leadership team, grade-level teams, and intervention teams. I began my investigation of the settings at this site by first observing four PLCs. By seeing their interactions and discussion, I was informed early on by seeing leadership skills that the teachers used with one another.

Although the principal is the formal school leader, teachers demonstrated leadership skills. For instance, I watched members initiate ideas, problem-solve, provide support, and devise outcomes for next steps. I also heard teachers establish timelines, goals and report techniques that they used. They held one another accountable for completing tasks, such as sending out email reminders and setting calendar dates for subsequent meetings. Additionally, teacher talk revealed how teachers taught one another. Through observing PLC meetings, I will then be able to adjust the interview protocol to target *how* teachers at this site worked together.

Open-Ended Interviews

I conducted open-ended interviews in order to find out what participants viewed as key leadership practices and settings during the turnaround period. The interview protocol allowed me

to gain understanding of how leadership affected the design, implementation, and sustainability of site practices and settings. Questions targeted participants' experiences and how they reported changes to practices and settings. To more fully understand how leadership was distributed, I gathered data about how settings had allowed teachers and administrators to lead change at the school site.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol addressed the research questions. The protocol targeted central practices believed to contribute to the school's turnaround. Questions also targeted settings that emerged as part of turnaround, or were present before the turnaround, which became highly effective, resulting in sustainable change. Interviews revealed characteristics of leadership within various settings, such as supportive dialogue and using pressure to cause change in practices.

From the interviews, I expected participants to reveal site members who were involved in leadership practices, especially to discover those who had not been tied to formal leadership roles. For instance, participants that had been on the site leadership team named teachers who were not on the team, yet they were believed to be instrumental in developing a practice described by other participants as key to changing teachers' instruction. Thus, the interview protocol identified participants who had initiated practices, who had communicated expectations, and who were involved in maintaining new practices.

In addition to identifying *who* were involved in site practices, I also sought to find out *how* participants were involved in the changes that took place at this site. I sought to understand how members of the site influenced one another—a key aspect of leading others. The interview data revealed casual connections, described continuous improvement processes, described how they problem solved, used recursive inquiry, and used pressure and support for goal attainment; it also

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revealed non-critical speech and establish trust; it described informal settings; and reported stronger professional relationships from the inception of the school's change process until present. Interviews helped me to discover how teacher-talk worked to increase teachers' instructional practices.

I asked participants to characterize their own learning during the change process. I wanted to know who or what had the greatest impact on their learning, as well as how site changes had been initiated, supported and sustained. Participants reported that assistance from "capable others," or experts, became a practice during the site's change process. Members reported that sharing ideas and artifacts at meetings helped them to improve their practices; they also reported that opportunities to digest, follow-up, and "slow down" to process new ideas after PLCs or in-service had positive effects on their learning and translated to better outcomes in the classroom. Ultimately, I believe the themes and patterns have pointed to greater interaction within settings and practices.

Data Analysis

To analyze data, I used several passes through the data collected. As previously stated, transcribed the first few interviews before moving on to other participants. I transcribed each interview within a couple of days as to not lose important data. I summarized patterns and themes that emerged in the first set of interviews. From those transcriptions, I created summaries for each interview and organized the findings based on leadership themes. I expected to find themes like teacher talk, emotional support and trust-building, and teacher learning, which is what I discovered.

After the first few interviews were analyzed, I created codes for the themes. Then I conducted more interviews based on emergent themes from the first pass of data analysis. After the second set of interviews was transcribed, I read each interview with the first set of codes and themes in mind. I noted themes common across all interviews, as well as themes that were not

common to all. I did not code everything, but instead sought common themes that were strong across interviews.

After creating the categories, I coded the transcripts to see what kind of themes emerged, such as: trust building, or inserting opinions. Once the categories had been determined, I coded each transcript and organized data into subcategories. I used separate Word™ files for each category in order to "dump" the selected portions of each transcript into the subcategory file. As soon as I finished this process, I summarized the findings that emerged from each subcategory.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

The aim of my study was to understand the phenomenon that took place at one high school. Merriam (2009) suggests, "Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality." In fact, Maxwell (2005) states, "… one can never really capture reality." Thus, my purpose was to see that my study got as close as possible to the actual practices and settings that existed at the site over a period of ten years, to show the study's credibility. Although single case studies are not generalizable, they still offer a unique look into phenomenon that has not been examined by previous researchers. Because this case study lends new insights that have not yet been captured in previous school capacity or sustainability literature, it made studying this phenomenon worthwhile. Another issue that could have weaken the study's credibility was that it is common for schools to register initial gains during the turnaround process because of extra support and resources. However, it is undocumented that a school site could retain strong student growth after a change in principals during the turnaround process.

The variables that I collected maybe common to turnaround schools, however, to contrast school turnaround data with principal succession data had not been previously done. This model of school turnaround had cast new light into the organizational behavior and learning of schools. In

fact, Maxwell argues, "replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results." This strengthens my argument because the unique data that were collected about the site are not being cast as a blueprint for others to follow. Instead it offers to examine the complexities of the phenomenon and to add to our understanding of the complex nature of school turnaround—highlighting the uniqueness of each school turnaround.

To ensure for consistency and dependability, I managed the data. I collected interviews data that were aligned with a protocol, so that participants revealed information that were matched to the interview questions. By collecting data in this way, the consistency and dependability of the data were preserved. I also created an "audit trail" whereby readers of my study are able to "trace my steps" and replicate parts my research design that may suit their needs, which gave greater credibility to the study. Therefore, I described in detail how the data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions wer made throughout the inquiry process. I maintained a research journal to record meetings, email, conversations, and any outside input to my study. I reflected on the process, listed questions that I had, as well as described the decisions that I had made and how I had arrived at them. I kept a running record of my interactions with the data as I engaged in analysis and interpretation.

Lastly, I monitored my own bias that I brought to the study. Since I had worked at a successful turnaround middle school and had experiences similar to the results found in the study, I was careful to monitor my thoughts as I interviewed and transcribed recordings. I will needed to remind myself constantly to stay in a neutral mode, not to give commentary or add on to interviewee's comments. One way that I safeguarded any biased input was by being transparent in the beginning of the study that this was an area that I had planned to monitor. That way, I had provided an "auditory contract" with the site participants that I would avoid internal biases.

Ethical Issues

I worked to ensure that no ethical issues confounded the study's integrity. One issue that I addressed was the fact that I come with personal experience as a staff member of a turnaround school. I did not stay at the site after it turned around; however, I had to work to ensure that I did not make assumptions about the site or place my perceptions upon data as it was interpreted. My experience drove me to do this study, yet I did not seek to find what I imagined would be found. I guarded myself from this issue by being transparent with interviewees about my background and by describing the purpose for doing the study. At no time did I insert my personal experience or expectations upon any participants.

I informed participants of the intent and purpose of the study by an introductory letter and by a brief speech to the staff at a staff meeting. All participants were given access to the findings to increase their confidence in the integrity of the research study. I was not an employee of the district, so there were no insider threats or, unethical issues that could arise when someone conducts research in their own district or organization. The disclosure of information in no way put any participants in danger of losing their job or position. Thus, I took great strides to ensure participant confidentiality and secure methods of storing the information to avoid possible risks of threats. Before beginning the interviews, I secured consent forms from each individual who chose to participate. Accordingly, pseudonyms were applied when narrative or biographical accounts were used in the data reporting. I applied numbers to participants in exchange for their names to record interview data. Any documents with actual names of participants were protected via passwords. The transcriber that I hired destroyed all electronic files. Additionally, all data storage and retrieval were kept in secure locations.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction: Sunny Brook's Transformation

While most underperforming high schools rarely reach turnaround status, one unique site in southern California not only turned around, but it has also sustained its gains for more than a decade—even after several changes in principals. This site provides a special opportunity to investigate how a distributed leadership framework contributes to school turnaround. Distributed leadership refers to the process of engaging members of an organization in leadership activity by increasing interaction and influence across various settings. I chose to study this site because it provided a look into how an urban high school can break barriers of poverty and under-performance by utilizing distributed leadership to sustain achievement gains over time.

The findings in this chapter present the voices of the twenty-three participants that I interviewed. Their individual stories work to create a collective narrative of Sunny Brook's journey. I chose to present the data as a narrative account in order to preserve its Richness. This chapter begins with details about the turnaround period to situate the reader in the context of school accountability era. I organized this chapter by according to three phases, which surfaced as I interviewed participants. I used direct quotes to highlight themes of distributed leadership.

In order to identify participants that were influential to the site's turnaround, I began by interviewing the last two principals and one teacher, who had been at the site for over 40 years. I used snowballing to find out who participants indicated had made an impact on the site's turnaround. Staff members were invited to interview through an email invitation. From each response, I kept track of faculty and staff that I wished to interview. Realizing that not all the staff

had been at the site for the duration of the ten-year turnaround period, I sought to get an even number of participants that could speak about the different phases that took place over ten years.

To preserve the richness of the data, I wrote the findings as a descriptive account of Sunny Brook High School's transformation. As the participants told their stories, several cycles of change surfaced, which I organized in the following sections:

I.   Background

      a. Accountability Era in California

      b. Sunny Brook's Community

      c. Sunny Brook Reacts

II.   Distributed Leadership Emerges

      a. Administration's Role

      b. Teacher Leadership

      c. Early Stages of Distributed Leadership

      d. A Key Informal PLC

III.   Formal PLCs: A Key Setting for Distributed Leadership

      a. Teachers Took On Leadership Activities

      b. The I-Team: A Teacher Learning Model

      c. Expertise Sharing and Mutual Influence

      d. Trust and Connection

      e. A Culture of Openness

IV.   Other Settings of Distributed Leadership

      a. A Teacher Coaching Model

      b. Informal Settings

V.   A Turning Point: Intentional Design

    a. New Structures Increase Interaction

    b. Initial Success Spurs Increased Teacher Interaction

    c. New Interventions Create More Teacher Interaction

    d. Teachers Acted As Parental Figures

As I read across the transcripts, I coded for themes of distributed leadership. The following themes emerged, which were also found in the literature: teacher learning, belief, autonomy, collegiality, ownership, collective inquiry, flexibility, support/pressure, collaboration, relationships/trust, innovation, data culture, and effective communication. The combined narratives of the participants revealed evidence of these distributed leadership themes. To gain insights into how distributed leadership impacted the site, I based the interview protocol on the following research questions:

1.   How do participants describe the settings in which leadership practices occurred during the school's turnaround process?

2.   What do participants identify as key settings and practices that positively affected site turnaround and its sustainability?

3.   How did distributed leadership support settings and practices at this one site?

I. Background

The unique evolution of Sunny Brook High School is a tale that stretches well over a decade and involves the distribution of leadership across a host of stakeholders and settings. To understand this transformation, I believe it is important to understand the context of California's public school system at the beginning of the State's accountability movement because of its impact on the staff at

Sunny Brook. Likewise, it is important to have some history about Sunny Brook's culture, which primed it well for its distinctive transformation.

Accountability Era in California

In 1997, the California State legislature initiated use of the Academic Performance Index (API) to measure the academic performance and progress of individual schools as part of Public Schools Accountability Act. An API score is a single number on a scale of 200 to 1000 that indicates how well students in a school or district perform according to an assortment of factors, including economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities (https://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/pages/understandingtheapi.aspx). Schools received a decile rank according to their calculated API score; the API scores are collected in two-year cycles, with a Base Year and a Growth Year to compare scores and show change. API scores are sorted from highest to lowest according to school type and are divided into ten equal ranks. A rank of ten is the highest; and, a rank of one is the lowest.

Part of what made Sunny Brook a unique case to study was the fact that it had three principals from the time it was placed into PI and made its exit. In 2000, Sunny Brook had an API score of 498, and by 2012, it had risen to 802. This moved Sunny Hills from a decile 1 ranking, to a decile 9 ranking. The characteristics of the site were ranked against similar high schools that had a large population of economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities. Figure 1 is a breakdown of the school's community in (1999).

Figure 1

Group	% of enrollment	Group	% of enrollment
African American	1.7	White (Non-Hispanic)	1.5
American Indian	.6	Multiple or no response	1.6
Asian	1.3	Filipino	12.6
Hispanic/Latino	80.5	Pacific Islander	.3

Figure 2 is a chart of Sunny Brook's API scores over a thirteen-year span:

Figure 2

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
498	521	555	581	591	642	670	691	706				802

Sunny Brook's Community

Sunny Brook prides itself in its cultural richness and how it reflects its community. Repeatedly, during data collection, participants spoke of their deep roots with the surrounding community. Many staff members grew up in Sun City and went to school at Sunny Brook. Interview participants told me that the site's community-mindedness impacted their success. One teacher-leader, Tony, shared:

It was very clear that this site is very different. There is an incredible connection that people have to the school site. You have the community who sends its students to the school and believes in the school; you have the students who feel connected to the school because of their family members; and you have the staff who just feel connected with each other and felt empowered to do something for the students. It was an unusual combination of very passionate people working with a group of kids who they felt deserved more than what the reports were giving out.

Sunny Brook Reacts

In 1999, when Sunny Brook was identified as a State Program Improvement (PI) site, California placed it on a watch list. At the time, the State put districts and their PI sites on notice to either turn their schools around or to face the loss of control of those sites. The school received a ranking of "one," the lowest Statewide ranking possible. Sunny Brook scored a 461 out of 1000. This single report set a unique transformation into motion.

Sunny Brook's staff was shaken by this report. For the first time, they were confronted with data that placed them in poor light. Of the thirteen participants that were present at the site in 1999, five described the State report as impetus for change to take place. While many schools received this notice across the State, Sunny Brook' staff reacted with urgency. Steven, the Special Education lead teacher, recalled:

> The first time people realized we had to make a change was when we brought in an outsider. People realized that it wasn't just administration or one person telling us what to do. At that time, the consultant broke everything down to what was working and what wasn't.

In fact, eighty-six percent of participants that I interviewed voiced how the staff took ownership based on their feelings that the report did not fully characterize Sunny Brook's students and their real abilities.

Marlene, a lead English teacher and teacher-coach, who has taught at Sunny Brook for 27-years, reported:

> "We had an absolutely disastrous visitation … people said, 'You guys are in troube and you're going to basically be taken over … and it's going to be very frightening and terrifying.' So, as a staff our reaction was, 'We have to do something.' That was

the first kind of ground-shaking moment… We really had …a "come-to-Jesus"

moment."

Marlene believed that the State's visit caused the staff to take a critical look at how they had been operating. She reported that the site reacted by pulling together and working in new ways that previously had not existed. Another veteran teacher, Miranda, who has served at Sunny Brook for seventeen years, also discussed the emotional impact of the visit:

It's really easy to stick a bunch of labels on us, like "impoverished" or "high

minority"—which I cannot stand. We said, "This does not represent us in any way,

shape or form… We need to show that we can play with the Big Dogs."

Miranda's reaction showcases the first shift that took place at Sunny Brook. The staff was reported to react to the API ranking; and, although the District became involved in the changes that unfolded, the response came from within—it was not a top-down response.

This is seen in Rachel's interpretation of the staff's reaction:

We had many people who were very resistant to having an outsider come in and tell us

what we should do— things that could make this school better. There was a group of

us who felt that we couldn't just sit—that maybe we should look at some of the

recommendations.

Rachel's remarks reveal that she and a group of her colleagues decided to take action. A set of teachers began to meet with administration to work toward shared goals and outcomes, eventually becoming part of a leadership team that would lend input to the site. Prior to the accountability team's visit, teachers were reported to have mostly worked in isolation. Now teachers realized that they would need to lead the school to initiate change.

Rachel recalled:

We as a team started saying, "Hey, do you want to come and join us?" We started

getting these trainings. It created, I think, a bond between us as teachers where we

were always willing to do what it takes to help our school. … Maybe because we were

new. I do remember somebody asking me, "Hey, can you be a part of this?" "Sure,

I've never done it but okay." I'd never really been involved in school-wide activities.

Then from there, I could name a whole bunch of teachers who, we all took up these

leadership roles—all of us either sponsored a club, would do extracurricular activities

with sports, then all of us would go to football games and sit in the stands with

students. It became family.

While the staff did not agree with the State's use of API data to measure their success as a

school site, this was the first incidence in which they reported that they were driven to work

together as a whole school site. Prior to the report, members recalled working together on

committees and grade-level teams, but they had not worked closely on student achievement school

wide to the extent that they did once they began to address the implications of the State's report.

II. Distributed Leadership Emerges

The findings suggested that distributed leadership took place in several stages during the

turnaround period. While a number of conditions of distributed leadership were reported to exist

prior to the turnaround period, the distribution of leadership between teachers and staff took off

after the initial API report was released and the site was challenged to do something different. The

pressure to change was not held solely by administration, but rather, the staff shard the vision and

was involved from the onset in decisions for school turnaround. Leadership was distributed to

members of the school site who had expertise and skill to initiate and implement change. In fact, the phases of distributed leadership in this report mirror the three periods in which each principal governed the school.

Administration's Role

Sunny Brook had three principals from 1999 to 2014: Mr. Right, Mr. Henry, and Mr. Reyes. Not one of the principals' styles or personalities was described to be similar. Interview participants described Mr. Right, the first principal, as highly relational and strategic. He was reported to have installed teacher-leaders in key positions and to grant them resources, support and the freedom to make decisions. Next, Mr. Henry, the second principal was described by participants to be like a coach, where he approached change from an motivational and emotional stance, engaging students and staff through rallies and by using school media and other techniques to "rally the troops." Thirdly, participants described Mr. Reyes, the third principal, as a visionary, highly strategic, and dynamic in how he coached his administrative team and key teachers. He came in with the message that Sunny Brook would have a college going culture, with the goal that ninety-percent of the graduates would be admitted to college by 2020. While each principal was unique in his approach, these three principals all targeted key teachers and staff, supplying them with resources and support to build leadership capacity and become leaders at the site. Thus, each principal supported the distribution of leadership, recognizing that qualified teacher-leaders, not just administrators, could assist in running the campus and making macro-level decisions to affect positive student learning outcomes.

Participants of my study disclosed to me that administration shared goals with teacher leaders and left many decisions up to the teachers. I interviewed two principals: Mr. Henry and Mr. Reyes. Both principals shared that the central focus of administration was to aid teachers'

collaboration and professional development while leaving autonomous leadership in their hands. They also mentioned the importance of the district's guidance and support for this structure.

Mr. Henry, who was principal from 2005-2010, revealed:

In those days, we didn't have much time. It was primarily my admin team and I giving teachers information. Then Sara, the categorical coordinator, did a good job of setting up pull out days where people could in fact interact—even if it was just sharing.

Although Mr. Henry suggested that teachers were not given guidelines in the earliest stages for collaboration, his comment suggested that the distributed leadership model was school wide. He mentioned that teachers had begun to interact, suggesting that they had begun to share information that previously they had not shared before. Other participants supported the fact that school wide collaboration provided teachers with the opportunity to discuss curriculum, instruction and their students. Prior to the release of the report, teachers had worked mainly in silos, with minimal interaction. The structure of school wide PLCs opened up the professional channels for teachers to meet regularly with a common purpose and goal, which Mr. Reyes, who has been principal since 2010, discussed:

A lot of it was the structural foundation—the professional learning communities—and that's an initiative that the district embarked on. What I saw as a major shift was teachers going from working in isolation to the synergy that's created when teachers are working in grade-level groups under agreed-upon norms. That required the district to have the leadership and resources to get the staff trained. It's hard to be successful if you think you're going to throw people together and say, "Okay, work together." That required a lot of facilitation and training.

Mr. Reyes and other participants discussed how the development of communication and expectations from PLCs shifted from principal to principal. When Mr. Right arrived, Sara and other teacher-leaders assisted to create a school wide focus for collaboration. Then, when Mr. Henry arrived, he and the site teacher-leaders were able to use the school wide foundation to build structure to the PLCs. They also adjusted their focus, creating new interventions that needed to be put into place based on various forms of data. Finally, when Mr. Reyes became principal, PLCs had been in place and were ready to take on the new direction that Mr. Reyes had planned: teachers and administrators began to study data and make decisions about students based on feedback that they were getting from common assessments and from the specialized interventions that they began to run.

Teacher-Leadership

Participants revealed through interviews that teacher-leaders were key to school turnaround. A number of teachers were named during the interviews as having a large impact at Sunny Brook. Some had been established at the site for years, but others were relatively new and brought fresh ideas and insights. These teacher-leaders recognized the unique opportunity that administration had given them by including them in decision-making at the macro-level, which is usually reserved for the top layer of leadership at school sites. The largest shift that took place after the API report was published—this was the start up of whole site collaboration, ultimately, the beginning of the turnaround period. Prior to the turnaround, collaboration took place by a few teachers, but the vision for it to be systematic and school wide came at the beginning of Mr. Right's term as principal.

One teacher-leader, Mary, who was named by other participants as a highly influential teacher-leader, and who had been at the site prior to its turnaround period, described how

administration involved teachers in structuring a collaborative environment at the beginning of the turnaround phase in 1999:

> The faculty advisory was strong. We lobbied to not just have department chairs, but departments could choose who they wanted to represent them. They aligned content areas with vertical teaming. It was important for each grade-level to see what was necessary for the next level.

This freedom for teachers to nominate other teachers as leads for their departments is a sign of distributed leadership. The school's leadership team was made up, in part, of teachers who had been selected by other teachers— the other half was made up of administrators and support staff. Also, findings from the interview data revealed that prior to the turnaround period administration had focused on building teacher-leadership and teacher autonomy. Though teacher-leadership was present before turnaround, teacher-leadership took on a whole new form when collaboration was formally introduced at the site.

Early Stages of Distributed Leadership

Participants reflected on the early stages of distributed leadership. One of those teacher-leaders was Angela. She described, through her interview, the beginnings of the first leadership team:

> There was kind of a game plan, an outline, and then we had measurable goals. But, to a certain extent, we were actually pretty free to create the plan.

Angela recalled that teachers were involved in the plan to turn the school around. The administration had ideas and goals, a macro-level approach; however, teachers were free to decide how to achieve those goals. Because of this freedom, participants revealed that some teachers

stepped in to lead the change process. In distributed leadership theory, capable and experienced teachers take on leadership activities for as long as necessary to accomplish goals. Roles are not assigned, but instead are assumed by those who see the needs and act on them. This was the case for teachers at Sunny Brook. Eva, a long-time science teacher, commented on her perception of the teacher's autonomy to make decisions and act on them:

> We could do whatever it took to help kids learn better. We created goals for
> ourselves. Sometimes they [administration] would give us guidelines, but really, how
> we were going to do that was up to us.

Eva felt the freedom to make decisions because she believed that administration would support what she wanted to do. Likewise, the majority of teachers reported feeling administrative support over the span of the decade in which the school made its turnaround. Interviewees talked about being able to request materials and resources, as long as they had a plan in place that aligned with the leadership team's goals and objectives. Title I, II or III monies were allocated, and the school's foundation also contributed money for requested resources. By allowing teachers the decision-making power with resources and giving them autonomy to choose the kind of support that they felt that they needed, teachers operated without being micromanaged. The decision-making power shifted to the teachers, creating a horizontal power structure. Teachers revealed that administration had given them clear expectations and boundaries all along the way. The majority of teachers reported that administration's support through autonomy and ownership aided their ability to make decisions.

Distributed leadership conditions like autonomy, ownership, collegiality and efficacy were all reported to exist prior to the turnaround period. And while these conditions were reported to exist at the onset of the school's change, they were reported to be present throughout the entire

turnaround period. Participants reported that PLCs were a district initiative, which allowed teachers to begin influencing one another as they took on leadership in more and more settings. In fact, the settings that emerged from collaboration were both formal and informal.

A Key Informal PLC

Right after the State report was released, Sunny Brook's staff began to grapple with the work to be done. At that time, an informal PLC emerged where teachers took on leadership activities and they began to work on many facets to help with school improvement. It was informal at first because teachers began meeting together and visioning how to change the school's outcomes for students. Then they met with administration to share their vision. Administration did not initiate this PLC, but became a partner with it in order to provide the necessary supports and resources. One of the teachers involved was Rachel, who recounted how she and this group of newly hired teachers took the initiative to create an informal PLC that would eventually become a force on campus:

> Someone said to me, "Hey, can you be a part of this?" So, I said, "Sure, I've never
>
> done it but okay." I'd never really been involved in school-wide activities. Then from
>
> there, I could name a whole bunch of teachers who all took up these leadership
>
> roles—We became a family!

Five participants told me that this informal PLC became an important forum for change on campus early on in the site's successful transformation, and this PLC stayed intact over the decade of turnaround. They were all new hires in 2000, and they united together as they tried to find their own identities on campus. Rachel shared her perception that the group became leaders on campus because they had the autonomy and initiative to make decisions to improve both the academic and socio-emotional aspects of the school. She described how she and her colleagues created and ran interventions and other activities that they felt would benefit the school. William, who was part of

that group, shared, "I think it was just that group by chance and luck that I got introduced to--It was somewhat of a support system." Likewise, Angela described her experience, "We had a team of people, and it was like everyone from department chairs to even the classified staff. It was like a leadership team." These teachers and staff members became informal leaders of the site's turnaround process. They reported that they took on leadership activities because they felt the autonomy to initiate change; the new settings where they began to lead opened up opportunities for them to interact and influence other staff at the site. They led interventions, school wide professional development, and continued to spur one another to new learning.

A few teachers involved in the informal PLC reported their perceptions of how colleagues took ownership to build capacity:

Angela remarked:

The unique thing about our group is that we kind of all contribute equally. We all bring a little bit of a different piece, but it all fits together really well. If I come up with an idea or a strategy to try, a colleague might help organize the next steps or volunteer to organize data to report out at the next PLC. I don't feel like there's one person driving everything. I feel like we're really all in it together.

Angela described her experience with her PLC. She recognized the differing strengths and abilities of her colleagues; some led by coming up with new intervention strategies and others took the lead by taking care of the functional matters, such as organizing data to report out at the next PLC. Leadership was expressed in various forms and dispersed to the members who wanted to contribute to the change process.

In the same way, William agreed:

"I was always able to have my ownership. I could work to create my own curriculum.

We shared ideas, but there was never one way."

Teachers reported that they had the freedom to create and contribute as they saw fit. They

did not report that administration mandated how change needed to take place. Many participants

mentioned that they worked together to create common lesson plans and common assessments.

Angela's comment that they all contributed equally suggests that distributed leadership was taking

place. In a distributed leadership framework, leaders are interchangeable and flexible according to

the needs. Teachers saw the opportunity to make changes to their work and took the initiative

because they knew that they had support from their colleagues as well as administration.

A Culture of Collaboration

As school-wide teacher interaction increased through the informal PLC, other teachers

began to take initiative in other settings by selecting tasks according to their preference or expertise.

Teachers took the lead to create school academic and social activities, such as after-school

interventions or fundraisers. Some teachers took on organizational leadership by managing the

timing and plans of their collaborative work; others focused on curriculum, instruction and

assessment. All of these activities were reported to be spurred by the need to improve student

outcomes based on the initial report in 1999.

By the time Mr. Henry became principal from 2005, a culture of collaboration had already

rooted beyond the one informal PLC. In his interview, Mr. Henry reflected on his observation of

how teachers split up the work and shared expertise:

Some [teachers] would say, "Oh, you're going to lead on that? Great!" Or, "I

developed these five formative assessments that I hope are telling me what kids are

getting." And, another teacher would say, "Oh, can I see that?" "Do you mind if I use that?"

Mr. Henry's perception was that PLCs allowed teachers to take initiative and share ideas and resources back and forth. He credited the teachers, saying, "It began to validate what we were talking about as administrators— the importance of teachers." This comment reveals that administration supported and encouraged teacher leadership, not just at the site, but district wide. Mr. Henry revealed his intent as the principal, stating, "Training was based on the individual growth of the teacher—with the intent that teachers would become masters of their own subject matter." Mr. Henry supported the leadership that grew from teachers' individual growth. As teachers improved their own teaching, they began to lead others because they knew that their impact on other teachers would make a difference. The leadership was organic and not controlled by any one source. Later, when Mr. Reyes arrived, he built upon the early PLC work by guiding the communication within PLCs to focus on data and interventions.

By the time Mr. Henry had arrived, the school wide approach had stretched to every department. Mr. Henry reported that he and teacher leaders began to target instructional needs on campus. They sought teachers with expertise in literacy, technology and math to take up leadership in their departments. They also encouraged a cross-content approach, where teachers shared strategies like reading and literacy skills. Some teachers took up leading ASB and student activities, even though they were not given titles for their work. Because the net had been spread to distribute leadership across content areas and enlist as many experts as possible, new interventions and activities sprung up.

As teachers shared content expertise, they became leaders within their departments. The leadership was flexible depending on the type of expertise needed; not all teachers became leaders,

which is accordant with distributed leadership literature. Some teachers were new and just took in all the new information. However, some of the new teachers reportedly developed into leaders quickly as they grew in confidence and their specific skill set was needed, such as technology and literacy.

III. Formal PLCs: A Key Setting for Distributed Leadership

In the earliest phases of turnaround, formal PLCs were an important setting for teachers to exchange ideas and support one another. Marlene, who had been at the site well before the turnaround, articulated several changes to professional settings that she voiced were beneficial:

At that time, we started a couple of different models that I think were incredibly

powerful in terms of turnaround: The first one was that we formulated PLCs—

Professional Learning Communities—within departments and across departments…

The second thing we did that was really powerful was to invest in the coaching

model.

Marlene's report revealed that collaboration and coaching started early on in response to the State's visit. Prior to the State's visit, Sunny Brook had faculty meetings and department meetings, but they were not collaborative in nature and teachers did not mutually support one another's practice to the extent that they did once collaboration as a whole staff commenced. Marlene and other participants stated that PLCs helped teachers to discuss what they were doing in their own classrooms; they began to increase their discussion and interactions with one another. Through these interactions, leadership by different teachers and staff emerged according to the needs.

Several teacher leaders were mentioned frequently as being instrumental to leading the site's turnaround. The first was, Sara, who arrived in 2000 and was the Title I coordinator. She helped

guide the direction of support and resources for professional development. She was reported to work closely with the newly formed site leadership team to guide and support the direction of PLCs. Likewise, another teacher leader, Mary, was mentioned in the majority of interviews as a key teacher-leader on campus. She worked to influence the English department's curricular decisions, as well as organized and guided school wide activities. Throughout the site's transformation other teacher leaders also emerged who guided and focused the direction of the school in a number of ways.

The District became another partner to the change efforts. The District supported all of its sites by providing professional development opportunities and funding to bolster collaboration. The District trained the sites in how to understand the blueprints and what to expect on CSTs. Many participants shared that they did not want to only teach to the narrow window of the CSTs, but they also knew that they needed to expand the content expertise and teaching pedagogies on campus. Alex, a lead-teacher, reflected on how teachers focused their planning and started to study blueprints, stating, "That was actually very beneficial for a lot of us because there needed to be that razor edge of how we were going to get here." Although the participants voiced that they did not agree with the State's message that they were an "under-performing" school, it was reported that the teachers did rally together to improve student outcomes. Essentially, leadership began to be distributed by key teacher leaders during this early collaboration stage as a response to the report.

Teachers Took On Leadership Activities

The new focus on collaboration created new settings for teachers to share practices and interact, ultimately resulting in mutual learning and support for one another's practice—teachers began to lead other teachers. Though PLCs were a district initiative, they were executed with teacher ownership and input. The initial PLCs allowed teachers to grapple together to understand

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the language of the new standards and how to reach common goals set by their PLCs. Those with literacy or content expertise took the lead in discussions of how to best support students, as the focus in 1999 was still on how to boost the API, which was tied into math and English. Although participants reported that the principal, Mr. Right engaged more than just math and English teachers. With the leadership team, Mr. Right encouraged all teachers and staff members to look at how they could best support students. Thus, history, art, science, and other content areas began to focus on student outcomes and share strategies, just as math and English teachers did. They began to share strategies across content areas, boosting their influence outside of only their PLCs.

Teachers met regularly and shared common lesson plans, common assessments, and analyze data together. The formal structure of the PLCs allowed teachers to have deep discussions—where they led one another in new strategy adoption or ways to think about their students-- because they had begun to align their curriculum. One well-loved science expert, Eva, who has been at the site for over 30 years, described how the science department shifted from working solitary conditions to sharing practices:

> We would meet together, and ask, 'What did you do that your kids got this right?—
> sharing worksheets and labs. It wasn't just me in the middle of nowhere trying to
> figure out what the heck to do… other people could help me."

She described how her department aided her pedagogy by exchanging practices or strategies. After looking at common assessment results, teachers discussed strategies that they had used and were successful. This spurred teachers' observation of one another's practices—a form of teacher-leadership whereby teachers lead one another is modeling best practices. Teachers began to go to one another's classrooms to see what had been described during the PLC meetings. This is how leadership took off. Teachers had multiple ways to learn. They could engage in their PLCs, but

they were also encouraged to seek out support informally by observing one another and interacting more during the workweek.

Steven, the Special Education PLC lead teacher, shared that he believed that turnaround began when "everyone started getting together and sharing lessons." He described his experience as a Special Education teacher:

> I went to see what the regular Ed. teachers were doing. It was really those things: the discussing, the observing, and then they would share what they saw in somebody's classroom. For me, I would go watch a regular ed teacher just to see what they were doing. That helped me the most, observing. Then I would debrief with them later, usually at lunch. So, I started to ask them, "Hey, I saw you doing this… How can I apply that?" For me it was the easiest way to learn. If I could physically get to them, I got a chance to ask questions.

Steven described his perceptions, recalling that, "We were forced to step it up a little now because we could see what other teachers were doing." Moreover, Steven thought that teachers' negotiating skills had made a difference in how effective his PLC ran:

> Everyone preaches that the teachers are going to get along and feed off each other— but that doesn't always happen. What's important is who's going to negotiate. You have to negotiate—keep that line of communication open. Sara started it off. The happy PLC—where everyone got along and stuff—that was to get conversations going. But later, we learned to work together, to come to consensus.

Steven's comment points to qualities reported in the distributed leadership literature: conflict and negotiation. In order for leading to take place, there needs to be a dilemma or issue for team members to work through. Dilemmas give rise to the need for negotiation and solution

finding. As teachers worked together to discern solutions, they led one another's thinking and understanding about how students learned best.

In addition to the necessity of conflict resolution, several other qualities of distributed leadership became apparent through the interview process. As I read across the transcripts to find support for Steven's perspective, two other distributed leadership themes surfaced: collegiality and beliefs. In fact, ninety-one percent of the participants credited a strong belief system for teacher learning. For instance, Sara commented, " If you believe in the teachers—give the teachers what they need—then they're going to excel. When you're with others who have the same belief, of course, yours grow." Likewise, Eva shared:

> We are the way we are as a direct outpouring of what we see in the kids, and what we
>
> want for them. We were willing to come together and share with each other so that
>
> we could make a difference for the kids.

The majority of the participants reported that the staffs' belief system influenced their ability to learn from one another.

The I-Team: A Teacher Learning Model

Participants told me that during the early phases of the site's turnaround a new setting, a technology team, arose in which teachers learned from one another. This new setting was initiated and overseen by Sara; however, other teacher-leaders also rose up to influence teachers' technology practices. Sara was reported to have successfully initiated a collaborative culture at a previous school before joining the staff. As Sunny Brook's Title 1 coordinator, Sara helped to lead a new intervention, referred to as The I-Team, or Intervention Team. Since she was also an instructor of

technology at a local college, she tapped into the credentialing program to find its strong teaching prospects.

Sara described how she created a peer-mentoring model that focused on technology:

We did it [teacher-training] in-house… I'd teach a few of them. Then, they'd start talking in the meetings. Later, we'd have sessions at lunch or after school—whenever they could get their answers. They'd get excited and they'd all work together and build off of each other. Then they'd go off or they'd come to me to get their answers. So it was a matter of sharing.

Sara recognized that the I-Team allowed teachers to learn from one another. The I-Team was an intervention where pre-service teachers came to work with both students and seasoned teachers. These pre-service teachers were highly skilled in computers and many wished to become teachers. They came to campus to help implement the use of technology on campus, but they also did something quite unique: They began to operate as support providers to teachers.

Sara reflected, "Teachers had every piece of new technology, to excite themselves and their students—so, they [teachers] took learning to the next level." She recognized that when teachers were creative and excited that they were willing to learn. She commented that emotions played a part in the learning process, "When teachers get excited, students get excited."

The I-Team became a sort of leadership lab for teachers. As the site's faculty learned how to operate technology from pre-service teachers, faculty became skilled in technology and started to implement the use of technology into their classrooms. At the same time, a number of the pre-service teachers were hired after their successful work with the I-Team intervention. The model allowed for younger, less experienced teachers to instruct veterans in the use of technology while at the same time the new hires were learning strong pedagogy from the veterans. This intervention

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model allowed for flexibility and information sharing. Soon-to-be teachers floated from room to room to assist students with technology while at the same time modeling for veteran teachers how to use the technology. This intervention allowed for risk-taking: both veteran and new teachers were encouraged to experiment with ideas picked up from observations and try them out. Teachers were also supported with resources and emotional support. Sara's office was open at any time for teachers, new or experienced, to go in and ask questions or bounce ideas off of her. Sara recalled, "Learning took off!"

Alex described how the I-Team began and has shifted to meet emerging needs:

She started the Intervention Team in 2002 or 2001 and the basic idea was the adult peer mentorship model. The adult mentors work with all these students. As it shifted to 2009, they were [intervention teachers] all making sure the students came to the mandatory student interventions.

Even though Sara retired, Alex described that this intervention had lasted and continued to emerge as the site's needs changed. The technology teachers came into the classrooms to support the core teachers by either working with them to infuse technology into lessons. Teachers were given Smart Boards, computers, and digital projectors and doc cams. Some, received tablets, too.

Sara encouraged the technology teachers to use their strengths: William reported how he would share a "Tech-Tip of the Day." He learned new techniques from the college students that had worked with him in his room. He recalled how the use of technology expanded across campus and how it affected his learning, "We got Wiler's Tablets—and once that was handed to me, oh my goodness, a whole new world opened up."

William's ability to influence staff members was a goal of Sara's and the administrative team. In William's words, "She introduced me to this stuff [technology] and supported me." Then,

William was asked by colleagues for more support after he was recognized as an expert at technology. "Other teachers wanted to do the same things, but it took time… So, I would do workshops on weekends or lunch time," he recalled.

When asked who would attend the workshops, he stated, "a few math teachers, social science teachers, English teachers." Thus, William became a technology leader to his colleagues as he willingly supported their learning. He reported how he influenced other teachers' inquiry into the use of technology, for he recalled, "I just shared it with those that asked." As teachers became excited about using technology, more teachers sought out support. The site had received a grant to resource the school with Smart Boards, tablets and other technology tools during this era. The emergent leadership seen by the incoming teachers is common in a distributed leadership approach, as those who have expertise are called upon to lead based on their knowledge and ability to provide support. Once teachers became proficient with technology, the site moved onto other areas of learning for teachers and students alike.

Expertise Sharing and Mutual Influence

As PLCs continued to develop, other leaders emerged in and between departments based on the needs of the school and the expertise of certain teachers. During the collaborative work time, lead teachers began to guide the creation of curriculum maps, assessments, as well as train one another in new strategies. Not all teachers became leaders, but many did and shared their expertise. For instance, Alicia, a chair for her math department, described the influence of teacher-leaders:

> At this site, a couple of teachers, who are math majors in our PLCs, are voicing loudly and clearly what their expectations are, or in terms of content what goes in an assessment.

Alicia reflected on how her colleagues learned and developed a process for interaction:

I think now that I'm no longer in the PLC for geometry, for example, that happens

more [voicing ideas]. By removing myself, they were left with the PLC lead, but I

think now that they've had a couple of years under their belt, they're more confident in

sharing, creating, and doing things like that.

Alicia described the progression of learning that she experienced in her math department. As

leaders like her shared content expertise, they taught their colleagues. Then, when she stepped out

of that role, other teachers started to lead the department because they had developed the content

knowledge; leadership flexed and did not remain fixed.

In addition to influence and shared practice, both pressure and support were evident in

PLCs, which influenced teachers to learn. Joanna, who arrived at Sunny Brook in 2011, shared how

her English PLC used positive pressure:

We push on each other in a way that will generate more alignment. Different teachers

will kind of teach a little mini-lesson on how they would instruct their students on a

skill-- I think that's really beneficial and pulls us out of our comfort zone just enough

to consider the fact that we could teach something different or more in-depth. But

we're still kind of a community of colleagues that has that deeper bond where we're

allowed to bring those topics up without someone becoming offended.

She described that she and her colleagues used positive pressure to influence one another's

practice; they challenged one another to take risks and learn together. She thought that it was

important, too, to hold one another to deadlines so that they could have in-depth discussion over

common lessons.

Angela, recalled:

That PLC time was crunch time and you had to come with your stuff, share your stuff,

and then some times different things would come out of that. We would bounce ideas

off each other, because sometimes you've either never taught it before, or it's

unfamiliar, or you've taught it so many times that you're like, "Oh, I've done it this way

so many times; let's try something new.

She reported that she was introduced to insights that she would not have come up with on

her own. Different teachers had different strengths, so it could be one teacher leading a discussion

one week, and someone different the next, which was seen in her comment:

I think the unique thing about our group is that we kind of all contribute equally,

virtually. I mean, we all have different strengths and so we all bring different pieces to

it. One guy is just incredible with technology, and I'm fine with it, but he's just

amazing. He can put together all of this crazy stuff with technology for us, little CD

clips that go along with the lesson perfectly and that is really nice. And I'm more of the

structured learning experiences—so the corporative learning, but with highly

structured… That's kind of my piece. We have another person who is really, really into

history—I mean, I'm a history buff, but he knows crazy things, and he brings that

pieces. We all bring a little bit of a different piece, but it all fits together really well.

Teachers brought their individual strengths, which could be shared and tried out others.

Jessica commented: "I've tried to just grab onto those ideas [shared by other teachers]." Javier, a

language lead teacher, described his perception of his colleagues' learning: One of them was like,

"Oh, yeah, I've been doing it and I see improvement."

Some teachers model strategies for one another. Joanna said, "I think it's really beneficial

and pulls us out of our comfort zone, just enough to consider that we could teach something

differently, or more in-depth." She also praised their level of trust, saying, "We're allowed to bring those topics up without someone becoming offended."

Trust and Connectedness

Trust and connectedness through relationships were common themes that arose from participants' descriptions of their interactions with one another. Eight of the participants that I interviewed discussed the presence of trust and their perception of how it affected their practice.

Alex shared his perception of the faculty's trust and open communication:

And now we have a three-pronged approach of how we could fix a problem together whereas before, I would have just gone there alone with one of the APs and do this, this, and this. I would always bring the conversation back to another person—not because I can't figure it out myself, but to build that relationship, that trust, and the open communication.

Claudia also commented on how trust affected her:

I could call somebody in my little group that I work with where we could rely on each other. … With my little group, it got to the point where, for instance, I could call William who is a math teacher here, "Hey, William, I need you to cover this for me." Or he would call me, "Claudia, I want to…" It was this type of thing like, "Hey, let's try this and do a dance for students." We didn't need the ASB to help us or anything. We took over.

Similarly, Joanna connected trust to the community-mindedness that she experienced:

I think something kind of unique about this school is that a lot of the staff has deep roots here in the community.

Joanna started working at Sunny Brook four years ago, yet she carried the feelings of connectedness and trust that other participants told me existed.

Likewise, administrators like Alex commented on his perception of the level of trust he felt from teachers:

> For some of them, it's as easy as saying, "Hey, we want to do things this way, what
>
> do you think?" And they trust me. "I'm going to go with you no matter what."

Additionally, teachers and administrators commented how relationships built trust and revealed belief in one another. For instance, Mary shared:

> "We have a staff where many people have been here 15-20-25 years, over time, that's
>
> a great strength. At Sweetwater you set aside your disbelief."

Mary commented on the trust that Mr. Henry had in teachers: Mr. Braddock who was a wonderful man and loved the community put a lot of the trust in single individuals. Therefore, trust and connectedness was two-way: administrators trusting teachers, and teachers trusting administrators.

A Culture of Openness

Over time, as PLCs became more structured, the common language that they shared and common beliefs aided their mutual influence with one another. After setting a foundation for PLCs of common plans and practices, teachers began to share strategies and practices, exchanging information to teach one another. Marlene, a veteran English teacher on staff, reflected, "I think that it's the small goals… looking at a specific unit…" saying to each other, "this is what they [students] need to understand for this unit." Teachers discussed content together, creating a culture of openness where teachers could clarify or gain understanding.

Alex commented on the open nature that he observed and expertise sharing:

She would bring worksheets, data, district meetings—she shared all that stuff. She was very organized and very no-nonsense, like this was what we had to do and these were our ways to do it. She would kind of talk things out as a group and they would all plan together.

Rachel had the same experience in her PLC: "Whatever it was, we would try to share out: The instruction that maybe was done, or maybe class environment. After she listened to her colleagues, she would try out the strategies:

I would go try it. I took it to the next step. That's the thing; it's not so much what I did, but, "Oh, that's cool, let me see if I can change it." For example, our role-play became that they were reporters who had to do a newscast. So I made it my own. I think that's one of the things we learned from each other; we would say, "Let me see what you have and let me see if I can make it my own.

Marlene described how PLCs functioned, "We shared best practices, we were really collaborative, we worked very specifically, very frequently, on individual students: 'Who has this kid because I am having problems—is anybody else? And seeing what we can do to kinda nurture.'" She highlighted the fact that teachers shared strategies with one another to better their practice with individual students. By discussing students' socio-emotional needs, teachers learned how to deal with students that needed extra nurturing or support.

Jessica, another science teacher, who started in 2010, felt that each teacher shared a different strength that developed her curriculum knowledge. Jessica shared, "Even in our department, we have various people that wear different hats and bring different concerns to us when developing our curriculum. We all bring different strengths. And that has really helped me grow."

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Her colleague, Franklin, who also arrived at Sunny Brook in 2010, shared, "We've had big growth just within the department." He identified a science teacher that he felt impacted his practice: "Charise Crandall. She has actually helped just kind of bring the PLC group together a lot— I've learned a lot from her."

Eva described how the science department shared common assessments. She said it increased dialogue and support between teachers. They began to discuss the students by name and talked about what had worked and what hadn't. She said teachers changed their practice based on what colleagues were doing well on common assessments. She also shared that the entire chemistry department planned labs together, so that teachers could share equipment and discuss outcomes. Eva stated, "So the teacher that was not as strong got the benefit of a teacher that had more experience. That makes a big difference." Her perception was that mentoring went to a deep level, helping teachers change their practice to better support students.

Additionally, Jessica also reflected on how Charise influenced her:

Having Charise in this group, it influences what we start teaching as well. We integrated part of her lessons, whether it be annotations or directed readings into our own lessons. We all started sharing what was working. Our department, I feel, is very open to trying out new things. There are frustrations sometimes that things aren't working, but they're always willing to try it, if they see that it might make an impact on their students' performance.

Jessica's interaction with her department went beyond the scheduled and sometimes formal routines of the PLC, where teachers informally connected and continuously shared and supported one another's learning.

A math teacher, William, who had just started to teach at Sunny Brook in 2000, described his learning process:

I listened to other teachers talk about this new vocabulary. The more we discussed

the language, the more I understood what it meant."

William reported that in order to learn, he had to listen to the more experienced teachers to gain knowledge. In his PLC, William could partake in discussion about the blueprints, which he reported had aided his understanding.

IV. Other Settings of Distributed Leadership

A Teacher Coaching Model

In addition, participants also remarked how a teacher-coaching model, Cognitive Coaching, was used to expand teacher influence and share expertise. Sunny Brook teachers selected and used this coaching model to create mutual influence between its teachers and create a platform where the expertise of its teachers could be heard. As PLCs got underway, both administration and staff recognized that staff needed assistance in how to exchange ideas and support one another.

Mary, an influential teacher-leader, was credited by her colleagues for initiating the cognitive coaching model. She described her input:

Once a month there would be a new strategy introduced and all departments' people

agreed that we would try this across the board, across the curriculum, then report back

and if we needed assistance, the cognitive coaches helped out. I think that made a big

difference.

Likewise, Marlene described how coaching opened up conversations within her department:

There were two of us in the English department that were trained——and we would go

on teacher request in, watch and help them come to their own decisions about what to

do in their classroom, but provide the person that could take the data, could watch,

could help them and just give them a, "This is what happened," from the outside, and

really begin those conversations.

Jessica recalled how she learned from the coaching model:

It worked for me in my classroom and it was more one-on-one. It was almost like

someone I could talk to with regards to my curriculum. I told her what I wanted to do,

she helped me create a lesson, and then she would model it for me a couple of times, a

couple of periods, then I'd take over.

Marlene commented:

It forced conversation about what went well and what didn't go well. It also really

promoted this collegiality where we were, I think, very vested in the idea that we were

all going to get better.

A language teacher related how she coached her PLC:

One teacher said to me, "I noticed that you have your kids working in groups all of the

time. I want to do what you're doing." The interest was there. So, I started going in to

observe her to assist her. After others saw her success, they asked me to do the same.

Jessica shared:

We do help each other out with lessons. So even if it's AP bio or it's anatomy and

physiology, if they say something about a struggling point, we'll talk about it and, "Oh,

maybe you can try doing this or modifying that…" It's very kind of a troubleshoot. And if it works, great; if it doesn't, then try it again.

Alex shared how his process of supporting colleagues changed with a coaching model. He commented that coaching created a learning pattern, so that support tapered after a teacher had learned new practices:

Before, I would tell him exactly what to do and how to run everything, but I discovered that if I'm the only person who knows all the pieces, then nothing gets done. He would talk to me about his plan. I would ask him questions about how to maybe do it more effectively, and then he would carry it out. He is now able to do everything on his own, and that is generally the pattern. Coach, coach, coach. After a while, you have to coach less.

Informal Settings

In addition to the PLC settings, informal settings emerged that allowed teachers to engage in distributed leadership. Teachers began to exchange ideas and support one another outside of their PLCs: They met at lunch, between passing periods, before and after school, even on weekends. More than half of the participants commented on the impact informal settings had on their learning and sharing.

William described an informal exchange:

I was a math teacher and I found myself hanging out with non-math teachers. So, maybe a friend of mine taught social science. I saw how he used vocabulary strategies, to define a word, draw a picture of the word, and then share it.

William reported that he interacted frequently with non-math teachers to refine his practice by learning new vocabulary methods. Other interviewees also described informal settings in which they learned.

Kristina mentioned how discussion helped her to share ideas:

Then there's discussion, but it's more informal. We share a lot. You'll see different things, and someone will walk by and ask, "What's that? Show me that.

When asked how teachers approach one another for help, Jessica replied, "Pretty informally. It's very open. We see one another as tools to build each other up."

Javier reported that regular communication allowed him to share strategies and bounce ideas off of his colleagues. He commented, "I think the support of the colleagues is really important. I think just having them there and their support motivates you

Informal settings allowed for mutual influence. Kristina, a twelve-year veteran to the English department, shared her perspective, when asked how she best learned:

I would say, in just casual conversation with them, in that sense, attending conferences and things like that with them.

She went to trainings that were spurred from informal conversations. Later, teachers reported that they brought new learning and ideas back to colleagues, either informally or in PLCs, to share what they had learned.

Furthermore, participants reported that they spent more time together when their classrooms were closer. These informal settings allowed for exchanges where teachers influenced one another's practice.

V. A Turning Point: Intentional Design

In 2010, a new principal arrived, whom participants described as visionary and highly influential. Mr. Reyes's intentional design was reported by participants to bring teacher learning to a whole new level. Mr. Reyes came in with a strong message when he took the principal-ship, which was reported by participants: "How do we make them a college-going culture?"

Mr. Reyes, who became Sunny Brook's principal in 2010, was a teacher at another site when PLCs first rolled out. He reflected on the shift he observed district wide:

> A major shift was teachers going from working in isolation to the synergy of working in groups. Initiating PLCs, forced the whole district to rethink leadership. It required the district to have the leadership and resources to get staff trained. Where the rubber meets the road is at the school site. It's collegiality, really, the professionalism of teachers—establishing an environment of trust.

He also carefully thought about the design of distributed leadership, for he said, "In terms of interaction, what's important is to not structure the flow of information through a traditional hierarchy… you get resistance when things are perceived as top-down." He commented on the need to work horizontally, not top-down. He also spoke of his careful choice of rhetoric. He explained that he framed discussions and the work but didn't enforce ideas.

Kyle, an AP, shared that when Mr. Reyes came in, he restructured administrators' responsibilities "so that every AP had a role in curriculum and instruction." This kind of intentionality undergirds the distributed leadership model. The place for administrators in a DL model is to support and guide, while not micro-managing. "Our focus was "this is where we want to go," Kyle remarked.

Both AP and teachers commented on his ability to coach them to take on leadership activities:

Rachel, who attended leadership meetings, commented:

Mr. Reyes did not want to lead it. He didn't want to be the one like, "I'm doing this." He persuaded us. You know what I think he does? He includes a team. He will never tell you, "I want this and I'm going to do it." He creates—he includes me in the conversations. He says, "I need your vision, I need your support to help me disseminate this information back to your team."

He included other key people. His admin team was more than just the administrators; his admin team included teachers. When he arrived, he identified teacher-leaders. Mr. Reyes shared, "The single-most impactful variable on a teacher is another teacher." Thus, when he stepped in as principal, he communicated with his administrative staff that their role was to empower and support teachers, to support the lead-teachers who led the PLCs, so that everyone's voice was equally heard.

To accomplish this, he met with assistant principals (APs) to discuss professional development and how to structure conversations. Mr. Reyes wanted PLCs to be a place where consensus building took place and communication flowed. He modeled how to lead collaboration by leading discussion with his APs.

In his words:

What I thought would be the best way to approach it was through a distributed leadership framework—we met weekly and collaborated. I laid down the principle of trust and said it could not be violated. I told them the number one principle was trust between them and their lead teacher.

New Structures Increase Interaction

He laid down a structure where administrators could support the lead teachers. Joanna, a PLC lead teacher, commented: "Two of my closest colleagues share the same prep as me. I feel like this is our most productive time, we've taught the same lesson and go to each other's rooms, and say, "Hey, how'd it go?" In addition to the structure, Joanna commented on the frequency of their meetings, "I think the structure and frequency of our PLC meetings is beneficial." The extra prep period gives her time to talk and plan with other teachers before PLC meetings. This kind of intentional and disciplined focus is key to distributive leadership's success. She also commented on proximity. She and other English teachers have their rooms side-by-side, so that they can have regular, informal interaction throughout the week. She remarked, "I couldn't imagine working with them the way I do if they were somewhere far away." Mr. Reyes moved departments to certain areas of the school, so that they could have more frequent interaction because he believed it would affect their practice.

Initial Success Spurs Increased Teacher Interaction

As part of Mr. Reyes's strategic plan, assistant principals each oversaw a specific discipline: English, math, science and social science. The APs became coaches of the PLC lead teachers, so that they could communicate shared goals and learn how to support teachers.

Alex, the site intervention and categorical lead, retold:

Mr. Reyes had two beliefs about student learning: You have to either make them [kids] work harder or to teach them better. The thing that he was able to do was rally the crowd. The biggest mistake that a lot of leaders make in education is that they should make sure the teachers teach better. He totally avoided that. Then, he posed another question to our staff, which was another turning point. He asked, "Are we

okay with the success of our student being determined by an algorithm? And that stopped a lot of people. And that really started bringing out the conversation of grading for learning. How can we adjust our practices to make sure it's not just a statistic? So, that's when we came up with a general intervention plan.

The first intervention to see measurable success was with the Algebra department. In seven of the interviews, the Algebra intervention was mentioned as a pivotal event on campus. The Algebra teachers had created an intervention, within their PLC, that allowed the site to outscore every school in the district on the quarterly benchmark.

It started with Mr. Mr. Reyes meeting regularly with Sergio, the math AP. Mr. Reyes recalled:

I saw that algebra teachers had already been furthest along, already had a syllabus, already had some common quizzes, so I thought that Sergio would be instrumental in getting them to roll out the mandatory intervention.

Mr. Reyes recognized the readiness of the Algebra department since they were primed for data analysis.

Sergio recalled:

Initially, first, I met with the PLC lead one-on-one and talk about different outcomes that you guys [math teachers] wanted as a PLC, because by no means did we say, "This is what you guys are going to do and that's only what you're going to do."

Sergio described his coaching practice, which he had learned from Mr. Reyes. Mr. Reyes used the same one-on-one coaching model with the Aps. Out of the four assistant principals that I

interviewed, all of them described Mr. Reyes's coaching as instrumental to their practice with teachers.

Sergio further described:

But we talk one-on-one, about what the outcome is going to be, what things we want to see, and then we talk about what they think are going to be obstacles when they bring it up. There's going to be some push-back. We're going to anticipate different things that are going to come along with that. If prior conversations need to happen, then we do that, too. So, if we need to front-load some teachers before the PLC, then we do that.

Sergio described the coaching model. Since teachers had strong autonomy and ownership, administration began to coach the lead teachers in how to run PLCs. The PLC leads became responsible for providing pressure to get teachers to look at data in new ways.

Kyle, who was History AP at the time, commented:

We all look at data every single day. We saw Sergio's scores in the math; I saw mine in social science; they saw the science; they saw the English. We knew something was going on. Kyle recalled, "We jumped! We were head-and-shoulders above everybody. We [staff] actually started getting on board as well saying we needed to do it also.

This kind of short-term success excited the entire campus. Teachers and administrators asked, "What is Sergio doing over there?" recalled, Kyle. So, rather than mandate the approach, Mr. Mr. Reyes planned for a momentum to spiral outward from the success. "In that first year," shared Mr. Reyes, "We didn't have to jump into instruction and pedagogy, but we dove in head first into interventions. We immediately saw an increase in student learning as reflected in the state assessment." Mr. Reyes reported that the success of his strategy to focus on students, not teachers,

had initiated a school wide movement towards change. By creating more interventions, more teachers began to work together, affecting one another's practice.

New Interventions Create More Teacher Interaction

With the initial success of the Algebra intervention, other departments adopted the coaching model. Six of the participants discussed the effects that the success of the Algebra intervention had on other content teachers. Teachers started to work on creating after-school and weekend interventions, where they worked closely with each other, sharing strategies and practices to ensure success of the interventions.

Alex recalled:

What you saw was the science teachers doing that [intervention] and over the course of the semester, all the science grades skyrocketed as well. History came on board and then everybody else came on board and you had this massive amount of tutoring along with targeted intervention. When we took that first exam for CAHSEE, the first year he got here, the reason why you saw such a massive increase was that that was the first time we really started mass interventions. You saw all the teachers realizing that it was all happening. There was a huge increase and there was a rallying cry. I think we got to 805 which is I think an increase of 76 points.

Javier commented:

We have a good group of teachers that communicate with each other, talk to each other, and support each other. We observe each other.

Jessica shared that they also had "dialogue and talk about the struggle—understanding that our goal here is to help the students." The teachers coached one another to understand the socio-emotional aspect of the students that attended the interventions.

"We began to look at data every single day," recalls Kyle. We got on board with how Sergio was working with teachers to affect students. It became a PLC for administrators. Mr. Mr. Reyes met with his administrative team, but rather than hand out orders, he modeled how to work with teachers in how he ran his administrative team meetings. He brought data to the Monday meeting. Kyle told me, "We sat around his round table with laptops and start looking at data in a variety of ways." Mr. Reyes forced us out of our comfort zones. At the same time, he supported us.

This balance between support and pressure is important in distributed leadership. Learners sometimes need the safety of support, but they also need to be pushed for change to happen.

Alex, the intervention and categorical lead teacher, commented:

I really, really respect all of the admin team that work here. I bounce ideas off them constantly in terms of how I should run different programs, how I should target the student, how I should approach a specific teacher about an issue, how I should ensure we're not going to get any conflict.

Mary shared her interpretation of Mr. Reyes's style:

Mr. Reyes says, "This is the vision; come stand here with me. Do you see it?" And you go, "Yes." And then, for him to step back and say, "Go do it" –You have no idea what difference that makes.

Jessica commented: "Of course there's always going to be top-bottom, district mandates, but he's [Mr. Reyes] has always been very supportive with our development." 86 percent of the teachers commented on support from administration as a factor to their professional development.

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Teachers Acted As Parental Figures

While student outcomes were a chief concern, teachers also focused on students' socio-emotional needs. They discussed why students were disengaged and how they could interact with students to motivate them to care more about learning. This community of caring was reported by more than half of the participants that I interviewed and appeared to be in place at the onset of school turnaround.

Mary commented:

I would say that everything in place here is really heart and your deep care for your kids. This isn't a job for most of us; this is our lives. The kids are part of our lives, our families are part of their lives, and it's not about, "Okay, let me teach them this or that...."

The participants highlighted this perspective in a number of interviews. They shared that they felt a moral and personal obligation to the students at Sunny Brook. They did not see that their school day ended when the last bell rang. They voiced that they had created a community of care intentionally to build in safety and trust with their students. Similarly,

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Evidence found in this study shows how distributed leadership worked to affect

organizational learning at a turnaround school. I sought to collect evidence on the settings and

practices that contributed to teachers and administrators' use of leadership activities. While there

were limitations to the study, the data that I collected suggest that both teachers and administrators

perceived that members of the site who took on leadership activities, in various settings, supported

the evolution of the school. A study of how leadership was distributed over a decade presented its

challenges, yet the findings made it clear to me that the mutual influence and learning that took

place by teachers and administrators affected the site's progress.

In my final chapter, I discuss recommendations from my research findings. The

recommendations are organized according to the chronology in which the findings appeared and

according to my theoretical framework: stages and conditions of distributed leadership,

connectedness, administration's role, settings, and practices. Within each section, I discuss the

conclusions that I have drawn from my research and the implications that these findings have on

each distinction. Following the discussion are my insights to the study's importance and its

limitations. I end with suggestions for schools and for future research, as well as considerations.

Discussion of Findings

A. Discussion of the Initial Stages of Distributed Leadership

*Distributed leadership occurs in stages, and within the initial stages, teachers and
administrators experience autonomy, ownership, and connectedness.*

The results of this study suggest that some elements of distributed leadership may need to be

in place early on in the implementation of distribute leadership models. Many of the participants

voiced that autonomy, ownership, and connectedness played a part during the start-up stages of distributed leadership at the site. Participants reported that these conditions were present during the initial stages of school turnaround. However, when or how these conditions were initiated was not part of the study. The presence of these conditions suggests that for a distributed leadership model to be effective, some early indicators may need to be present. Neither the presence of early indicators, nor how a distributed leadership model emerges is found in the literature.

Ownership

Distributed leadership is situated within a culture of autonomy and of teachers taking ownership, rather than a culture of control or hierarchical decision-making. In his research, Hallinger (2003) suggested that "true learning that exhibits sustainable change takes place when an entire teaching faculty and support staff takes ownership for the organization's change, seeing that it is their responsibility to affect student outcomes." This finding was present in this study. Eighty-six percent of the participants indicated that ownership was key as they became involved in leadership practices that affected school change. In fact, Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2012) suggest that adults learn best when learning is self-directed, problem-centered, and self-moderated.

Because the study required participants to reflect on an event that took place over ten years ago, it is unclear whether findings suggest that ownership existed before the State report initiated the chain reaction. What is evident is that ownership existed during the turnaround period, and it was reported to exist early on. The presence of ownership suggests that teachers felt the freedom to make decisions about their own professional learning and how to best support other teachers. Equally, the five administrators whom I interviewed spoke about how key teachers took ownership of PLCs and other settings where teachers lead one another.

Autonomy

Teachers perceived that they had the autonomy to make decisions, plan, and organize professional learning opportunities for one another. Some also reported that they had the flexibility to lead; teachers chose the lead teachers, and their positions changed. The findings revealed that teachers had autonomous control at the beginning of the turnaround. Ninety-one percent of the participants spoke about the autonomy that they had to try new practices and engage in different settings in order to increase their learning and mutually influence one another's practice. Also, seventy-eight percent of the participants commented on some level of trust that other teachers or administration had in them. I believe this is a key finding because Dunne, Nave, & Lewis (2000) found that "the process of learning with colleagues creates trust and support." Although this study doesn't address when distributed leadership began, these findings indicate that it was present at the beginning of the early stages of turnaround. Since the literature does not address how autonomy or ownership is developed within a distributed leadership framework, further study would inform the field to affect practice.

School Climate and Connectedness

The majority of participants also indicated that a deep connectedness was present within the school community. The presence of this finding was high, which surprised me because it was not frequent in the literature. The literature referred to *collegiality* rather than *community* or *school climate*. Participants spoke of their deep roots with the *surrounding* community and how their roots contributed it to their connectedness *within* the school community. The presence of connectedness is linked to teacher learning. In fact, a "community-centered approach" was one of four factors found to enhance teacher learning in a 2012 report, "Generating Teaching Effectiveness." Although, the literature referred to community-mindedness as an aspect contained within a school, the

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findings in my report suggest that the participants did not see boundaries between the outlying community and the school community. When they spoke of their own connectedness and school spirit, or when they spoke of the spirit that they perceived to exist within staff members, they asserted that their connectedness originated from their pride in their city and surrounding community. Even though the origins of their connectedness were perceived to be a factor from outside of the school, its presence affected the work within the distributed leadership model at the school.

Equally, another aspect of connectedness that was shared by participants was the commitment of the staff beyond the school day. Teachers and other staff members reported their level of commitment towards students as being *in loco parentis*—the majority of teachers reported their involvement with students extended beyond the regular school day. They participated in formal activities, such as ASB and fundraising, and they also participated in informal activities, such as leaving their rooms open well-beyond the school day to be used as space for students to socialize and do homework. Teachers reported that they interacted with students like a parent, where they spoke with students about concerns, aspirations and needs. Students knew that teachers were an emotional support system and that they had a place of safety, like a home, at Sunny Brook. This finding was exciting. Literature on English Language learners, Latinos in education, and critical race theories all discuss the need for teachers to become involved as caring, nurturing influences in their students' lives (Gallimore & Goldenberg 2001; Howard, 2003; Durand, 2011). This element of care was demonstrated through interview data; teachers and administrators spoke of the importance of being supportive of students as if they were parents. This link to cultural models and communities of care to distributed leadership theory is important and promising. The leading that educators do is more than in the area of cognitive development or school planning, but

stretches to a deeper and more personal level, where educators are extensions of the families within the communities where they work and serve.

B. The Development of Distributed Leadership

The findings indicate that distributed leadership developed in phases. This is important because Hargreaves & Goodson (2006) report that studies on school change need to capture the ways in which change takes place over time. I did not find record of how to develop distributed leadership in the literature: few empirical studies have been conducted to operationalize the phenomenon.

Structures of Distributed Leadership

The findings did reveal that early on, a small group of teachers joined administration to develop collaborative settings and a coaching model. This early phase was initiated by outside pressure, which researchers (Bolden, 2011; Day et al, 2009) suggest is usually motivated by a series of expectations, assumptions, and agendas, from outside agencies, which can reinforce a hierarchical structure. Indeed, there was a presence of hierarchical structure at Sunny Brook—the site had a strong working relationship with the district; and its administrative teams had internal structures by which communication and resources flowed; however, in this study, the findings indicated that pressure from outsiders worked to motivate teachers into distributing leadership activities, not to building power structures that fail to involve informal leaders. Hierarchies are a necessary configuration of any organization, yet the flow of decision-making needs to shift to informal participants for distributed leadership to be effective, as it did in this study. According to the literature, "the 'top–down' approaches to leadership and the internal school structures offer significant impediments to the development of distributed leadership (Harris, 2009).

Outsider Pressure During Initial Stages

During the initial stages of school turnaround, outsider pressure appears to have pushed the school to improve. Therefore, this finding suggests that outsider pressure may need to be present early on, in order to engage teachers in leadership activity. I did not see any mention of pressure as a precondition to a distributed leadership model, or any mention of a timeframe by which to apply pressure to initiate distributed leadership. What research does suggest is that when conditions, opportunities, and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning are created, turnaround efforts are successful (Camburn et al. 2003; Harris, 2001). Thus, it is reasonable to believe that pressure is an essential condition to initiate distributed leadership. Furthermore, that it is probable that pressure should exist in the early phases of distributed leadership, and continue throughout the change process at a school site.

Developmental Phases of Distributed Leadership

Additionally, the findings indicate that after the early phases of the school's evolution other phases of distributed leadership developed. The findings reveal that new settings by which teachers engaged in leadership activity developed according to two factors: new principals and new innovations. Innovation seemed to have started out of necessity to improve the school; and as a new principal arrived, their vision initiated new settings. Although how new settings evolve in relation to distributed leadership is not mentioned in the literature, it is clear that new settings are driven by different levers. This suggests that there is flexibility for distributing leadership, which is supported by Hagreaves & Fink (2012) that say distributed leadership is not a one-size-fits all approach (Hagreaves & Fink, 2012). Rather, it is a customized approach allows influence to come from multiple sources. How school leaders might customize a distributed leadership model and outline developmental stages has not been studied. In this study, it was key to see that levers, such as new

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principals and innovations, could create new settings in which practices could be exchanged and leadership practices engaged.

Another finding in this study was that teachers could choose to seek out support from the resources that they identified. Bandura's (1977) pivotal research on social learning theory indicates that adult learners gain new practices from one another; additionally, experts in adult learning theory state that adults learn best when they are highly motivated and can be in control of their own learning (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2012; Merriam 2001). What was not clear in the findings is what caused certain teachers to seek out support from their colleagues or elsewhere. It was also not clear which kinds of support they sought the most. The findings revealed that teachers tended to ask for support within PLCs, in informal ways, and from outside experts. They did voice that they appreciated flexibility, yet that does not answer how teachers in a distributed leadership model identify and seek out supports that are available to them.

While the findings suggest that teachers made intentional changes to their practices, it was not apparent how long teachers took to adjust their practices. This question was not addressed in the study and the findings did not indicate the timeframe by which new practices were adopted. With the knowledge that distributed leadership is, in part, initiated and impacted by pressure, it would be helpful to know how often and to what extent pressure was applied to incite teachers to seek out support. Even so, it would be a strong addition to the field to connect the impact of motivation on adults' learning processes and to connect those motivations to a distributed leadership framework. The individual learning that takes place by a teacher and the interactive aspect of distributed leadership have yet to be linked.

After the early stages of turnaround, the findings revealed that settings evolved and allowed leaders to emerge. Harris (2009) argued, "leadership needs to be distributed to members who have,

or can develop, the knowledge and expertise required to carry out the leadership tasks expected of them; and, secondly, effective distributed leadership needs to be coordinated and planned." Indeed, the findings showed that teacher leaders with expertise carried out leadership tasks, but one finding that was unexpected was the issue of teacher succession. Some of the teacher-leaders will retire soon. Since distributed leadership relies on teachers who have stepped into those positions, it reasons that other leaders will need to replace the retirees. In one interview, a teacher shared that she had begun to train another teacher to take over some of the leadership activities that she had. Although I had not considered leadership succession for teachers, this is an important concept for sites embarking in distributed leadership. Since the model relies on teacher-leaders, it would be prudent for school administrators and teacher-leaders to think about succession plans for teacher-leaders.

C. Administration's Role

Findings reveal that both administrators and teachers thought it vital that administrators' roles were horizontal, not top-down. While administrators communicated shared goals and district initiatives with teacher leaders, they left many decisions for teachers to make. For example, by involving teacher-leaders in the decision-making process about which innovations to start up, potential conflict may have been avoided between creation of innovations and an instructional focus. At this site, innovations were found to generate leadership activity, not to compete with its instructional focus, which Bowser and Christensen (1995) warn can become dueling entities if not carefully managed. Teachers and administrators described that they could control the emergence of activities so that conflict didn't take over. In one example, an administrator shared how she managed a situation where an innovative practice, grading for learning, interfered with a teachers' instructional focus. In order to avoid a battle, the assistant principal backed off and let the other

teachers who wished to take on the new policy discuss its advantages, with the hope that all the teachers would come to consensus.

Thus, administrators need to control the timing and implementation of new initiatives and innovations, so that they do not become burdensome to teachers. As innovations are kept in play, they can push mutual influence and discussion forward. However, if there are too many or they roll out too fast, they will alarm teachers and then the conditions for mutual influence and learning will disappear. In the findings, administrators did not withdraw innovative practices, for they knew that other teachers would act to pressure the teachers who were less willing to change their grading systems. Burke (2008) purports that **"**innovation is necessary for the livelihood of any organization"; yet, how to moderate innovation to ensure it doesn't escalate out of control is not mentioned in relation to distributing leadership. The findings support that innovations acted to create new settings where teacher learning and mutual support were taking place.

Finally, findings showed that both administrators and teachers focused on engaging the belief system of teachers to support learning. Both principals that I interviewed spoke of their intentionality in engaging teachers' belief systems. Teachers also commented on the presence of belief and their feelings of its importance. Teachers spoke about how others belief in them allowed them to be influenced by colleagues. While a distributed leadership approach does not focus on the individual beliefs of any one person, but rather on the shared beliefs of teachers who influence one another's practices, the presence of beliefs was a strong finding that cannot be overlooked. While researchers have illuminated the role of beliefs in the practice of distributed leadership (Timplerly, 2006), and some caution that beliefs may be tied to one instead of many, the findings in this study point to the importance of beliefs in settings and among practices where there is mutual learning

and influence between members of a school site. It would be interesting to see how the belief system of administrators and teachers contribute to the effectiveness of distributed leadership.

D. Principal Succession

Part of what made this an impactful study was that principal succession was found to stimulate the distribution of leadership through new settings and practices. This finding is important, for the literature on principal succession reveals that "few things succeed less than leadership succession" Hargreaves & Fink (2003); however, in this case, the site has succeeded, and through more than one succession of principals. Within the findings, I discovered that each new principal brought with them a new direction and vision that impacted settings to allow for teacher interaction:

- Mr. Smith used teachers to strategically set up a collaborative, coaching model;
- Mr. Braddock implemented interventions and focused on school culture, which stimulated new settings and practices;
- Mr. Mr. Reyes developed a PLC coaching model that spawned more innovation through strategic planning.

Although each principal's style and approach were different, each one spurred leadership activity through their own strategic plans. Findings revealed that all three principals worked alongside teachers to implement collaboration with the intent to involve multiple teacher-leaders. Additionally, teachers reported that they appreciated when administration left instructional decisions up to teachers.

Five participants reported one other important finding related to an administrator's role: They realized that during transitions when they knew that a principal was going to leave, it caused them stress and lowered their interaction. The API scores dipped at the same time period that

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teachers reported they were stressed about losing a principal. This finding matches what researchers contend is a reason why leadership succession fails—the insider knowledge that some leaders draw upon during the succession process does not set up the faculty to keep improvement going (Hargreaves, 2005; Fink & Brayman, 2006). While the findings were unclear why the teachers felt unsure about improvement lasting, it is evident that school sites with distributed leadership need to be able to anticipate changes in principals. Teacher interaction and support does not need to halt when principals succeed. This points to the notion that teachers understand that the principal and leadership team function to support them and grant them resources; however, it doesn't explain why they would be apprehensive that the incoming principal would withhold the same kind of support that they had from two prior principals. Thus, it raises several questions: How do school leaders support teachers during succession? And, is there a way to address teachers concerns to alleviate some of the tension created when principals are known to be leaving, or if they leave abruptly?

E. Formal and Informal Settings

Distributed leadership settings were both formal and informal, and these settings are dynamic, contributing to an innovative environment

The findings support that teachers interacted and influenced one another's teaching practices in both formal and informal settings. Formal settings, such as PLCs and faculty meetings, were strategically planned, whereas informal settings arose as needed. The research on settings emphasizes formalized settings, with a "heavy emphasis on providing grade-level teams and school wide instructional leadership groups with predictable, consistent settings during which they could carry out this work" (Goldenberg, 2004b; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2005). While formal settings are discussed within the literature, I did not find literature that addressed how informal settings are described among teachers or how informal settings impact distributed leadership. This finding surprised me because I expected formal settings to be the most impactful on teacher support and

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learning. While formal settings were found to create opportunities for teachers to use leadership skills and activities, informal settings were mentioned as frequently as key to building and using leadership activities. Teachers emphasized that they experienced interaction, strategy sharing, support and observation in places like the hallway, during passing periods, in the lunch room, or by stopping by unannounced to watch a colleague. While formal settings and informal settings both have different purposes, the findings made it clear that teachers were involved in leadership practices in both formal and informal settings. This was an important finding because currently many schools run PLCs with the expectation that they will act as a platform for teacher learning and growth; however, interactions in informal settings also affect teacher learning; however, how informal settings can be used to improve distributed leadership is not well known. It would be interesting to further study the impact of informal settings on a distributed leadership model.

The findings did indicate that informal settings were within the teachers control and that teachers were both encouraged and supported to engage in informal settings by administration. While Little et al. (2010) found that talk among teachers supplied opportunities for professional learning and accounted for improvements in teaching, it is not clear in which settings such learning and improvement occur. Some experts argue that the content of professional development can enhance teacher competence, rather than simply to provide a forum for teachers to talk. These researchers suggest professional development should emphasize active teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection rather than abstract discussion (Darling-Hammond & Kyleardson, 2009). While the findings did not indicate whether teachers felt that formal settings were simply a forum to talk, some teachers did report that they found informal settings impactful on their practice because it allowed them time to talk and reflect with other teachers. Perhaps teachers do not have time or the structure set up within formal settings to have rich discussion or to reflect. It would be

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interesting to learn when and how teachers reflect in informal settings, and whether what they learn in an informal setting is later shared out in formal settings in order to have a distributed approach to learning.

Expertise Sharing

Expertise sharing was found to be a common finding in this study. What was interesting at this site is how expertise was viewed. Even though the site had harsh feelings during the initial stages of turnaround because of the pressure put on them from outsiders, they still took initiative to change their practice based on outsider's opinions. This may be because their sense of ownership and autonomy gave them a sense of control. Or, perhaps they felt the power to discontinue input from outside experts if they did not like the way their practices were being shaped. Regardless of the feelings that were reported about outsiders, the site invited professional consultants and district personnel to guide them. In fact, they spoke positively about the influence that outsiders had on how they gained new practices. In a tense era created from accountability measures, the level of trust that they displayed in outsiders may point to the strength that they had early on in their influence to control decisions about their practice. It is not common to invite outsiders' opinions unless the environment is one of trust and safety. The literature is clear that expertise is necessary in school turnaround; however, within the distributed leadership literature it is not clear how teacher leaders can control decisions about outsider's input, or how to build the internal culture of a site to be ready for outside pressure. In this study, the findings pointed to the benefits of outsider input and its influence on their collective practice.

Teachers on campus developed expertise. Although Leithwood (1999) notes that, "teacher leaders with high acceptability among their colleagues are not necessarily those with expertise," the findings in this study found that teachers with expertise were accepted by other teachers. Though

this was not the case in all the interviews, expertise sharing was commented on by fifty-two percent of the participants. This makes me wonder how teacher experts from this site gained the acceptance of their colleagues. Expertise is necessary for capacity buildings, but at the same time teachers may feel those with expertise have power over them and may not accept their influence. However, these feelings were not findings not reported widely, but instead findings revealed that teachers learned from those with expertise. It is unclear, too, whether teachers viewed those with expertise positively because they perceived that they gained the expertise in order to provide support and mutually influence their staff. In this case, expertise would not be viewed as a power lever but rather as a gesture of teamwork.

Additionally, the findings revealed that both teacher-coaches and one administrator used coaching to inspire thinking, rather than deliver how-tos or one-way approaches. Also, the findings showed that coaching was autonomous, not mandated. Both the principal and teacher-coaches were found to avoid the perception that coaching was a hierarchical process. The findings showed that coaching supported and influenced practice. What was not evident is the process that was used to plan coaching sessions. The findings only reported teachers' perceptions of coaching. It would have been informative to have more information from coaches on their process and intent to see if their purposes were met. Also, some teachers felt that coaching had digressed since it was initiated in the early phases of turnaround. Since findings revealed that coaching made an impact, I wonder if there was any attempt by administration to gather data on its effectiveness and report the results to the teachers. Camburn and Han (2005) revealed that coaching roles impact school improvement when distributed leadership is implemented, yet it is not clear how coaches prepare and implement coaching to be effective.

Impact of Innovation on Settings

Each principal introduced new initiatives once they arrived, which were situated in unique settings: like the CAHSEE interventions, the administrative-coaching PLC, and targeted interventions. This finding suggests that innovative settings contribute to the rise of leadership activity. Research supports that school improvement is affected when leaders focus on interactions like innovation (Spillane, 2001; Firestone & Corbett, 1988). However, the research does not indicate how innovation should be introduced; since the innovations were reported to be staggered in this study, this is an interesting finding. Little is known about and how to strategically space out innovations so that there is a steady increase of learning by teachers to build capacity. The teacher leaders and administration were able to avoid the conflict between moving forward and overwhelming the teachers. This may be because so many teachers were involved in decision-making that the staff had confidence in its support from administration, and that they believed they were not being micro-managed. Although, the findings indicated that teachers were not micro-managed, there was not a clear connection between their ability to voice their wishes and the pace by which innovations were implemented.

Suggestions for School Site Administrators and District Offices

Principals and district office administrators should consider the settings and practices of a distributed leadership approach. To avoid being viewed as a coming from a top-down approach, district office leaders should only institute common goals, broad initiatives, and district wide vision. To establish, distributed leadership, district offices need to leave most of the decision-making in the control of the local site, so that multiple stakeholders can control the pace of innovation and new settings.

Site administrators need to consider both formal and informal settings in which administrators and teachers interact. Administrators should provide strategic support for formal settings. For instance, by looking at student needs, administrators can identify new ways in which teachers can interact. Teachers should be included in the process of innovation and design of new settings, so that new settings are not seen as a strategy of administration, and also so that teachers can help moderate the amount of innovation that takes place so that they are not overwhelmed. To coach teachers, principals should begin by modeling distributed leadership to their leadership teams to provide practice in how to ask questions, how to analyze data in groups, and by demonstrating discretion in how to discuss teachers who need support.

Principals should consider whether pre-existing conditions exist before initiating distributed leadership. Administrators can use this knowledge to see if their staff is ready to take on distribute leadership practices. Where one or any of these conditions is not strong, they may want to foster those conditions. Therefore, school leaders can best influence interaction between members of a site by creating positive and supportive channels of communication with teachers. They should also study how teachers mutually influence one another within the context of their schools.

Lastly, once a principal is aware that they will be leaving, they should prepare an exit plan and communicate that plan to district office leadership; if possible, they should also communicate the plan to site leadership. Succession knowledge should not be *inbound*, where only the principal holds the "story" of the school. Rather superintendents and district leaders should pay careful attention to *how* principals exit their schools, to protect the staff from losing confidence in their future ability to impact decisions, or to receive support from future administration. By keeping in communication with teachers, district offices will buffer the uncertainty and help teachers through the transition. Succession knowledge needs to be *outbound*, where members of a school site have

the knowledge to preserve past successes or keep initiatives going once a leader leaves. This type of knowledge can be preserved by regularly communicating milestones and new goals to more than just the site leadership team. By involving more teachers, administration will keep the story of the school and its success alive. The milestones that teachers have made often get swept up in new challenges and initiative, but they need the emotional energy that comes from celebrating the victories.

Importance of the Study

Several findings were important to the field. The first finding that was unique is that distributed leadership occurs in phases, where settings emerge and morph as change takes place. The distribution of leadership is within the control of administration, in that they are needed to support, provide guidance, and ensure that teachers feel the autonomy to make decisions. This study is timely in that sites are adopting PLCs but little is known about how settings affect distributed leadership. While much is still unknown about how distributed leadership becomes sustainable, this study illuminated conditions that are critical to its success. For distributed leadership to be sustainable, administrators and teacher-leaders need to use outbound knowledge so that they can learn from their own story.

The timeliness of this study is key to teachers, site administrators, and stakeholders involved in teacher leadership and distributed leadership. The knowledge that formal settings allow groups of teachers to interact differently than informal settings focuses attention in more than one direction with more than one tactic: Administrators and teachers should investigate the effects of both formal and informal settings to see how they are affecting site culture and growth. Studies need to be conducted to investigate the impact of various settings on distributed leadership and how distributed leadership is affected by these settings.

Also, this study contributed the knowledge that distributed leadership is developmental and goes through stages. Early on, conditions existed which allowed teachers to feel safe and to feel that they had control over their decision-making. Not only that, this study presented that teacher-leaders were interchangeable: teachers helped to select other teacher-leaders. While not all teachers become teacher-leaders, those that do can provide support and expertise. They provide these in both formal and informal settings. Additionally, informal settings can impact teachers to interact and learn from one another. Although not all teachers will seek out support, if they interact in formal settings that are supportive, provide do a distributed leadership model situates the teacher to learn according to conditions that best suit them. Lastly, principal succession can cause teachers to disperse and decrease their leadership activities if the succession process is not set up to guide teachers' perceptions and avoid ambiguity.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation to the study was that data were collected more than ten years from some of the experiences that were described. When data is collected after a long time period, participants do not always recall specific details or events, which was the case in my data collection. If data were collected while a practices and settings were occurring, the data would lend descriptive accounts for analysis.

Another limitation was the availability of teachers who were suggested to have been involved in leadership activity at the site. While I interviewed 23 teachers with involvement in teacher leadership, other teacher-leaders did not respond to be interviewed. It is possible that the union negotiations that were taking place during my data collection dissuaded involvement because teachers were teaching bell-to-bell and did not have extra time in their day to be interviewed. This may have limited the richness of the data because I did not gain more perspectives of teachers who

had gone through similar experiences, such as the success of the 10th grade ELA team. I used

snowballing to identify teachers, yet not all of the teachers that I wished to interview responded.

Suggestions for Future Research

From this study, a number of areas for future research emerged. For one, teacher-learner

behaviors could be linked to school success and distributed leadership. This study reported how

teachers distributed leadership across settings. I believe it would be beneficial to also find out how

teachers seek support in both formal and informal settings. In which settings do teacher-leaders

learn best and how do they use their learning to distribute leadership activity so that it impacts the

school?

This study identified conditions of distributed leadership that existed prior to school

turnaround, but it did not identify which conditions were the most impactful and that perhaps

should be paid the most attention by school turnaround stakeholders when considering distributed

leadership activities. I wonder under which of these conditions teachers become involved in

leadership activities, and from which settings are they more likely to reach out for support? While

the teachers who participated in this study described activities that they participated in to further

their learning or to further a colleague's learning, it would be interesting to survey teachers about

the conditions in which they learn best and feel the most comfortable engaging in leadership

activities and why.

Another area for further study is to learn about the effects of community on distributed

leadership at a school site. In the findings, teachers and administrators reported the support from the

surrounding community. Researchers who wish to learn how the surrounding community affects

distributed leadership should look at settings and practices that community members may impact.

They also may wish to engage community members in the model of distributed leadership that their

site takes on. They should pay attention to which kinds of settings involve community members: either formal or informal settings. Areas of support from the community may come in the form of resources or socio-emotional support for students and staff. Research needs to be done to learn which settings are affected the most by community members and how those settings can best be sustained to further the distribution of leadership activities.

Fourthly, it is reasonable to believe that the phases of distributed leadership should undergo further study. Nowhere in the literature did I read about distributed leadership phases, yet in this study distinct conditions emerged early on. I believe that to fully understand how leadership activities are distributed, the conditions that best support the engagement and success of those activities should be further studied. Distributed leadership involves more than structural features; it also engages social-psychological features, such as autonomy, trust, and efficacy. To better understand how these conditions develop, it would be helpful for researchers to learn when certain conditions are initiated, so that educators can learn how to target these conditions within their faculty and staff. As the distribution of leadership is flexible and changing, researchers should learn about the phases of DL, including preconditions and necessary qualities for a staff to develop distributed leadership.

Additionally, I believe it would benefit the field to further operationalize language on settings found in distributed leadership settings in schools, especially informal settings. When researching the types of informal settings that affect schools, most of the research pointed to formal settings, such as PLCs, faculty meetings, etc. Little could be found to operationalize the ways in which teachers interact informally. I believe by studying the informal settings in which teachers engage to influence one another's practices, schools that wish to promote the use of distributed leadership will greatly benefit. By understanding informal settings, both teachers and administrators

can assess whether their sites are ready for distributed leadership models, or to assess which conditions are present that would best inculcate informal settings.

Lastly, it would be interesting to see how the belief system of administrators and teachers contribute to the effectiveness of distributed leadership. Research exists on the beliefs of both administrators and teachers and the impact beliefs have on school improvement, yet this research has not been directly linked to distributed leadership. Since distributed leadership involves the belief systems of stakeholders, I believe it would be helpful for key stakeholders at school sites to understand their own levels of efficacy and how their efficacy affects the distribution of leadership. Teachers and administrators mentioned that believing in one's ability to be successful was important, but they did not identify who inspired or molded their beliefs.

Implications

Conducting this study has led me to understand educational implications involved in distributed leadership at an urban secondary school. To start, school leadership can be conceptualized as being contained in people's actions, not by their roles. While the presence of hierarchies is necessary for organizational structure, how those hierarchies support and encourage leadership activity is crucial for a school to turnaround. Higher levels of formal leadership, such as principal leadership or department heads, cannot make an impact on their own; they need to engage expertise and motivate faculty and staff if they are to make sustainable, lasting growth. When leadership is distributed equitably, a greater number of actions work toward the common goal: school improvement.

Three key research questions guided the data collection and focus for this study. The first question was, "How do participants describe the settings in which leadership practices occurred during the school's turnaround process?" Participants identified that both formal and informal

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settings were necessary for turnaround. By looking at a school according to both its formal and informal settings, we can better understand how schools work to affect student outcomes. Formal settings, such as PLCs, leadership teams and content-alike teams, all must have adequate support and resources to thrive. Even more, site leadership teams need to understand how leadership is distributed and under which conditions distributed leadership is effective. Just placing people on teams and giving them time is not enough to ensure that they will take up leadership activity. To ensure that teachers and other support staff have opportunities to become leaders on their campuses, conditions such as ownership, autonomy, trust, collegiality, and efficacy are important at the onset. When faculty are empowered to make decisions about their work and their own professional development, they engage in new settings and practices that positively affect student outcomes.

One implication that can be taken from this study is the importance of involving as many faculty and staff as possible. By creating a widespread "net," school sites can employ the maximum human capacity and create opportunities for learning to take place. It's not enough to look at the current classes that they are teaching. Faculty need to be surveyed, even informally, and included in school visioning. If a site is to build capacity and maximize the expertise on campus, they need to collaborate and be supported in their collaboration efforts. When teachers feel that they are making a difference they are more vested in their work and bring an attitude that motivates others. Leadership is distributed effectively when teachers and staff have a common goal that they are all working toward. If a few teachers are labeled "coach" or an "expert," other staff may be turned off by the labels and not seek them out. By creating common work, through common lesson planning, or creating common assessments and sharing data, teams can employ the expertise of each qualified team member. Administrators are essential in this process, as they can approach a teacher about their contribution and invite them to be a part of the vision. The findings from this study implicate

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that when teachers are aware of their effectiveness in a short time period, they are encouraged to continue with the same efforts, which can catch on in other departments and have a ripple effect with faculty. Thus, common formative assessments that are used by all of a team are an effective way of gathering data and informing a teaching team of their success or failure.

An implication that can pay large dividends for sites is the interaction of students with a culturally competent teacher or administrator. When a teacher or administrator goes beyond their daily assigned duties and takes on the value of a parental figure in a student's life, the effects can be impactful. Teachers that stay in touch with students after the last school bell have a large impact on the focus and achievement of those students. No longer do students feel that school is a wasted chunk of time, but rather they sense the support and care of the teachers/administrators and bring their best to school with them. They may return after school to partake in interventions and school functions because they are reciprocating in the care that they have felt. Since many urban youth are in homes where parents both work and often parents work from dawn till late hours at night, the presence of a caring, nurturing adult brings safety and comfort like they feel from their own parents. These implications point to the need for educators to think holistically about urban teens; teens have emotional and social needs that can be met when their care is extended beyond the last minute of school. Educators that have approached their work with this belief system, find deep connections that are not only rewarding but also practical since the teens are more responsive during school hours when they can trust the adult figures. Districts and schools need to become creative in how to employ caring faculty to stretch their hours. Resources and support that are built in to the school vision can stretch beyond the typical school day to support students academically and socially as an extension of the community.

An important implication to this study is that school sustainability is supported through the succession of a principal. Although change is often associated with fear and the lack of momentum on behalf of a staff, when staff is operating under a distributed leadership framework, they have the autonomy and ownership to carry an established vision while new school administration is being set up. Although the school site dipped in its API in 2010, the findings suggested that this was because the faculty and staff were unsure about what style of principal was coming. This implication suggests to district office leadership that to sustain the confidence of a staff/faculty, it is important to reassure them of the characteristics that they are seeking and to include them in the hiring process. While many districts invite a wide range of stakeholders to sit on interview committees, they also need to keep in communication with sites undergoing succession and to reassure staff that they are working to install a leader with desirable attributes that will allow them to continue with their leadership practices. During data collection, participants voiced their concern that the next principal might not continue to support programs and activities that were successful. This is a real threat to committed staff and should to be dealt with strategically and carefully by district administration.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has provided discussion of the findings and the implications that they have for future distributed leadership approaches at urban schools. Distributed leadership is more than a paradigm for school administrators to use for managing communication, but rather it is a framework that enhances the opportunities for members of a school site to successfully learn from one another and build school culture. The participants in this study revealed several important implications in regards to sustainable growth: For distributed leadership to be successful, the settings and practices of administrators and faculty need to be strategically planned. Distributed

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leadership progresses in phases and school leaders should be aware of the conditions that affect it. Administrators have distinct roles within a distributed leadership model; distributed leadership is not void of hierarchies, but instead uses the ladder of command to provide structure and support for the distributed leadership model. Administrators are aware of the human capacity at their sites and use the model to tap into new leadership activity or expertise within a faculty/staff. Additionally, formal and informal settings operate under conditions that enhance the leadership capacity of faculty, which key school leaders need to understand. Informal settings may lead to relationships that have great impact on faculty and students alike. Ultimately, underperforming urban high schools can tap into their internal leadership capacities in order to build infrastructure and to withstand principal succession, which is a common factor in these schools.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about yourself and your role at this site:

    i) What is your name and position?

    ii) Do you have any other roles (dept. chair? lead?)

    iii) How long have you been (were you) on staff?

2. I'd like you to think back to when the site started to show signs of turnaround.

    i) Can you tell me about the early stages of success that the site experienced?

    ii) What were indicators that the site was turning around?

3. I am interested to know more about the interactions you have had with colleagues, and about the settings (places) in which these interactions took place, that you believe contributed to the site's success:

    i. Can you think of any settings or events that you believe contributed to your school's progress? (For example, PLCs or trainings in which staff interacted and/or exchanged information that would allow them to change practices associated with increasing positive student outcomes).

    ii. Can you tell which of these settings/events you believe have been the most productive for you and why?

    iii. Can you describe the interactions within these settings?

    iv. How has your work in this setting supported your practice?

    v. How has your work in this setting supported others' practices?

4. Now, I'd like you to think who's been instrumental to the turnaround process and in what ways.

    i.   How were tasks/decisions shared or exchanged?

    ii. What roles did you play?

    iii. What roles did others play?

5. Did members engage in any sort of process of setting goals for student learning? Think about a time when you worked with others to affect student learning.

    i.   Did you try a new strategy or shared activity in the classroom?

    ii. How did individuals decide who would do which task?

6. Think back to when your school started to turnaround and make gains. Can you think back to a challenge or a situation where you and your colleagues needed to problem solve together? How did you work through the challenges? What kinds of problem solving strategies did you use?

7. Is there anything that you would like me to know about the site that I have not asked that might help me to better understand the site's turnaround success?

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