

January 01, 2012

## Leading for change: how leadership style impacts teachers' perceptions

Cara Procek  
*Northeastern University*

---

### Recommended Citation

Procek, Cara, "Leading for change: how leadership style impacts teachers' perceptions" (2012). *Education Doctoral Theses*. Paper 28.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20002618>

This work is available open access, hosted by Northeastern University.

Leading for Change:  
How Leadership Style Impacts Teachers' Experience

A dissertation presented

by

Cara Procek

to

The College of Professional Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

In the field of

Educational Leadership

Northeastern University  
Boston, Massachusetts  
February 21, 2012

## Abstract

This research study explored how one middle school in a suburban New Hampshire town translates existing models of leadership into practice and how teachers experience these differences in practice. The research examined how school leaders balance formal and cultural models of leadership to affect change on a day-to-day level. In addition, the research explored how a particular context, including climate and culture, of a district affects the implementation of a leadership model. Finally, it examined how teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate. This research followed a single site case study of one middle school and included embedded cases studying various groups and stakeholders within the school.

*Keywords:* leadership, distributed leadership, school change, professional learning communities, teacher perceptions

### **Acknowledgements**

The following people have helped me to accomplish this doctoral project. I would like to acknowledge and thank:

Dr. Chris Unger for his patience, guidance and encouragement;

Dr. Sara Ewell for her excellent feedback and advice;

Dr. Marge Harris for her support and encouragement;

Dr. Angela Bermudez for advising me through the first half of this work;

The faculty and staff of Northeastern University for providing such an excellent program;

My colleagues at Southern New Hampshire University for encouraging me through this process;

The faculty and staff at the case study site for their willingness to share so openly;

My family: Mike, Kathleen, Zachary, Nathaniel and Mom and Dad for believe in me and helping me to celebrate this accomplishment.

It has been a pleasure.

**Table of Contents**

ABSTRACT .....	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	4
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	6
Problem of Practice .....	6
Significance of the Problem .....	8
Research Questions .....	11
Organization of this Document .....	12
Theoretical Framework .....	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	19
Professional Learning Communities .....	20
Practice and Thinking Process of Principals .....	27
Distributed Leadership .....	36
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN .....	45
Research Questions .....	45
Methodology .....	46
Context for the Case Study .....	48
Data Collection .....	50
Data Analysis .....	53
Limitations and Reliability .....	56
Protection of Human Subjects .....	59
Conclusion .....	62
CHAPTER FOUR: REPORT OF RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	62
Review of Study Context, Participants and Methodology .....	63
Themes .....	66
Summary of Findings .....	97
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	98
Summary of the Problem .....	98
Review of the Methodology .....	100
Summary of Findings .....	100
Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework .....	109
Discussion of Findings in Relationship to the Literature Review .....	114
Conclusion .....	119
Next Steps .....	123
Final Words .....	125
References .....	126
Appendices .....	134
Appendix A .....	134

Appendix B ..... 136  
Appendix C ..... 138

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Problem of Practice**

The United States is in the middle of a time of significant change in education. The increased emphasis on standards based education, combined with the passage of the No Child Left Behind law has created a climate of accountability that is determined by students' performance on high stakes standardized tests. School leaders need, more than ever, to be able to move their staff toward new ways of working in the field of education. With the growing emphasis on school accountability, school leaders are increasingly required to perform roles that they have not in the past (Baker, Betebenner, & Linn, 2002). Leaders now are responsible for curriculum leadership, professional development and leading faculty members through the change process so that schools can meet the demands of accountability (Leithwood, 2007). School leaders need to be more purposeful about the leadership skills that they use (Fullan, 2006). The changes happening in schools today require leaders to understand what is required and to provide the specific leadership that will be most productive in any given situation. Leithwood (2007) states that "a compelling body of recent evidence tells us that successfully implementing local change of the sort that accountability policies advocate requires transformational forms of leadership – at the least" (p. 193).

In the past, school leaders were managers; they met with parents, worked with children and ensured the smooth operation of the school. Today, leaders still do all of those things, but are also required to do more. Now, to meet the requirements of accountability, they must work with the faculty and staff to affect change in curriculum and teaching practices that improve student learning. Accountability is based on students' ability to achieve on standardized tests

(Baker, et al., 2002). This requires that schools ensure they are teaching the material tested and that students are taught how to take tests while also maintaining the integrity of a broader curriculum and continuing to utilize developmentally appropriate teaching practices. Meeting these two very different demands has proven to be a significant challenge for educators and requires that leaders be accomplished at working with people through the change process. This is a complex task that requires a different style of leadership than most administrators have used in the past. School leaders must learn to build leadership capacity in their buildings or districts (Fullan, 2008).

Evans (1996) believes that there are practical strategies all educational leaders can use to learn about themselves as leaders and transfer that new knowledge to strategies they can use to help the people within an educational organization work through change. Some aspects of this work involve including many people in the decision making process, being able to facilitate discussions and creating the kind of work environment that allows teachers to operate at peak performance. In today's schools, teachers must learn to work together. The days of closing the door and working alone are gone. School leaders must promote collaboration (Fullan, 2006). In a world of continuous school improvement, leaders must ensure that all stakeholders in a school are able to perform at their highest levels, both while teaching in the classroom and while working with their colleagues. As Mallory and Reavis (2007) say, "If a disconnect, or gap, exists between the organizational culture and the teaching and learning core of a school, school improvement is very difficult, if not impossible" (p.10). Closing this gap requires that school leaders are able to create a climate for change. There is a need to "foster dynamic administrators who cultivate a learning community for other leaders, teachers, staff members, parents and students" (Williams, Matthews & Baugh, 2004, p.55). Understanding leadership for change in

education, as well as understanding how teachers experience different models of leadership will help leaders make purposeful choices that will unify the organizational culture and the teaching and learning core of the school.

I addressed this problem of practice through a research project that examined the impact of both formal models and cultural models of leadership on the change process in K-12 public education and explored how teachers experience different models of leadership. These issues were examined through a case study of a middle school that practices both formal and cultural models of leadership, in order to provide models of practical application of leadership practices and insight about teachers' experience of different models of leadership to a broader educational audience.

### **Significance of the Problem**

This problem is significant in the national educational context as well as in my local community. Education in the United States has changed. It has become driven by accountability and the threat of negative consequences. President Bush signed no Child Left Behind into law in January of 2002. As part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the law is focused on implementing standards-based reform. The law requires all states to set curriculum standards and develop assessments that test student achievement of those standards. Schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are subject to increasing sanctions and penalties (Baker, et al., 2002).

With the advent of such tremendous external pressures on schools, educational leaders have had to comply with mandates about curriculum and testing. This has often resulted in the purchase and implementation of packaged educational programs, the revision of curriculum across grades and the creation of common assessments across a grade or discipline (Boulay,

Gamse, Horst, Jacob, & Unlu, 2008) . These initiatives cannot be accomplished through the use of previous school management styles. While these changes are aimed at meeting the demands of accountability, they have also changed the expectations and practices of many teachers and schools.

These changes require school leaders to be at the forefront of schools, being directly involved with teaching and learning in ways that they never have before. To do this successfully requires leaders to use different leadership skills than they have needed in the past (Fullan, 2006). Throughout my career, I have had professional positions that required that I work in many different K-12 schools. Based on this work I have been able to see the vast differences in the approach to leadership found in most schools. Some schools are fortunate to have leaders that are comfortable working with people and value their role as change agent. In those schools, teachers were nervous about change, but felt supported and took risks that ultimately resulted in their growth and professional satisfaction. Most schools that I worked in, however, have had leaders that were more comfortable being managers. These leaders mandated change, but did little to support their faculty. As a result, teachers feared change and did whatever they could to avoid it.

Change is difficult at best. In a profession as personal and autonomous as education, it is often traumatic (Evans, 1996). While many of the initiatives regarding curriculum and testing are implemented on an organizational and structural level, in order for change to be deep and sustainable, it must take place on a cultural level. It is important for teachers to buy in to the change. They should have ownership over the change and an understanding of the reasoning behind the change (Fullan, 2008). The following are two contrasting examples from my own professional experience that illustrate this idea.

In one school, leadership made the decision to implement a packaged reading program in order to improve students' scores on standardized tests. While there was a process for adoption including a committee and pilot teachers, little effort was made to educate the faculty about the reasons for the decision and the program was adopted in spite of the objections of the faculty. The principal hired a reading specialist to monitor and lead the implementation of the program. She spent three years policing the faculty. Teachers were treated with disrespect, their class scores displayed in school meetings and any deviations from the program were dealt with harshly by the reading specialist, with the full support of the principal.

Faculty concerns about the change process should be addressed (Fullan, 2006, 2008). In the example above, any concerns the teachers expressed were considered whining or insubordination. These factors played a key role in creating a very negative climate in the school that ultimately resulted in little change. School leaders must be able to utilize the unique skills and styles of leadership that help people through the change process in order for school improvements to be successful (Fullan, 2008).

In another school, leaders implemented Professional Learning Communities (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009). The process began three years ago when the principal and assistant principal attended a workshop about the practice. They thought it would be a valuable addition to the school and carefully planned the process they would use to introduce it. During the first year, they used faculty meetings and workshop days to educate the faculty about the concept. At the end of the first year and continuing through the second year, they asked teams of teachers to begin meeting in curriculum areas to discuss how they could use the concepts. The principal involved district curriculum leaders to work with subject area teams to set goals and develop group processes. In the third year the teams were formally established. The principal and

assistant principal, with the assistance of the curriculum leaders, supported the implementation of the teams. Again, faculty meetings and workshop days were used to support the process, brainstorm solutions to problems and share successes. This initiative was implemented on an organizational and structural level, but it also took place on a cultural level. The leadership in this school went slowly and carefully planned the implementation. They took the time to educate the faculty, which helped the teachers buy in to the change. Leaders took the time to thoroughly explain the reasons behind the change. They invited faculty members to make suggestions and modifications to the process resulting in faculty ownership over the change. Faculty concerns were addressed and the leadership remained responsive to the realities of the implementation at that school and open to making adjustments as needed. These two examples are useful to show the consequences of different styles of leadership for the successful implementation of change, and thus they help to explain why it is important to look deeper into how they are implemented in schools.

### **Research Questions**

This research study explored, in a systematic way, how one school translates existing models of leadership into practice and how teachers experience these differences in practice.

The research investigated the following questions:

1. How do school leaders balance formal and cultural models of leadership? What works? What does not?
2. How do school leaders affect change on a day to day level?
3. How does the particular context, including climate and culture, of a district or an institution affect the implementation of a leadership model?

4. How do teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate?

Research into this problem of practice brought deeper insight into the impact of both formal models and cultural models of leadership on the change process in K-12 public education and how teachers experience different models of leadership. It is essential to understand this issue in order to inform our practice as educational leaders so that we are able to manage change on a deeper and more sustainable level by helping teachers think and function in new ways. The requirements for public education in the United States have changed and school leaders need to be the driving force behind leading for change in schools.

These questions were investigated through a case study of a local school that allowed me to better understand the uses of various approaches to school leadership and their impact on teachers. In a broader context, developing a better understanding of leadership for school change will inform administrator preparation programs, influence professional development for school leaders and provide for stronger, more appropriate educational leadership in the future.

### **Organization of this Document**

The remainder of this thesis includes the second section of this chapter, which describes the theoretical framework, followed by four chapters: the literature review, the research design, the report of research findings and the discussion of research findings. In the following section, I present the theoretical framework that informed my research. This framework includes two components: Leadership Theory and Constructive-Developmental Theory and Adult Development. In the next section, I review bodies of literature that that helped place my research in a broader context. First I examine the role of Professional Learning Communities and how they sustain cultural change in schools and empower teachers as leaders. I also examine how

principals view the changing requirements of their job and the choices they make when working with teachers to create a climate for change. This leads into an examination of the literature on distributed leadership with a focus on how it is enacted in schools. Following this literature review, I describe the research design for this study. After explaining the data collection and analysis procedures, I discuss how I safeguarded the validity and credibility of my study and how I considered the ethical implications of the study for the participants. This is followed by a brief conclusion, reviewing how the preceding sections inform one another. The report of research findings presents the data collected during this research and the discussion of research findings relates conclusions drawn from this work.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Research questions were informed by an exploration of Leadership Theory (Robinson, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007; Fullan, 2008) and by Constructive-Developmental Theory and Adult Development ((Drago-Severson, 2004; Baker, Drath, McCauley, O'Connor & Palus, 2006). The research examined formal and cultural leadership practices in the context of public schools today and assessed them, based on their influence on teachers' experience of school climate and their impact on the change process. This framework guided my questions, analysis and interpretations about the effectiveness of formal and cultural leadership practices against criteria stated in these models, such as creating a positive climate and support for change. The Constructive-Developmental Theory and Adult Development guided my thinking about teacher development and learning.

**Leadership Theory.** An exploration of leadership for school change in public, K-12 education was undertaken through the lens of Leadership Theory (Robinson, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007; Fullan, 2008). This theory was chosen to examine this issue because it emphasizes the

importance of examining leadership styles in a variety of educational settings (Collinson & Cook, 2007). The theory examines two different approaches. One approach focuses on hierarchy and bureaucracy (Bush, 2003). This approach is very data driven. Curriculum decisions are often made based on scores on standardized tests. In addition, leadership decisions are often made based on the positional information inherent in organizational structures and roles. This approach does little to address the human aspects of the structure and roles (Evans, 1996). The other approach focuses on culture and human resources (Bush, 2003). This approach is driven by relationships and knowledge of people to explain what makes successful leadership decisions. Curriculum decisions take into account the results of standardized tests, but also draw on the professional experiences and opinions of teachers.

Bush (2003) describes the concepts of bureaucracy and hierarchy as formal models of leadership within the theoretical framework and states that these models “assume that organizations are hierarchical systems in which managers use rational means to pursue agreed upon goals. Heads possess authority legitimized by their formal positions within the organization and are accountable to sponsoring bodies for the activities of their institutions” (p. 37). Bureaucracy also places importance on hierarchy. Decisions and behavior are governed by rules and regulations and relationships between staff are viewed as impersonal (Bush, 2003).

Bush (2003) states that formal models of leadership are based on the manufacturing economy, which was prevalent in the past. As a result, these models are very top-down, which was suitable to understanding and working in a factory. However, he describes the difficulties of applying formal models to schools and colleges because of the professional role of teachers. Teachers need to own innovations, not be required to do them (Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008; Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006; Hargreaves, 2004, 2009). If teachers do not have

ownership of a change, it can lead to failure of the change initiative (Bush, 2003, p. 46). As our society has changed from a manufacturing/industrial work focus to a knowledge-based environment, new models for managing culture and human resources have surfaced that are more appropriate to a professional workplace (Fullan, 2008; Leithwood, 2007).

Cultural models of Leadership Theory “assume that beliefs, values and ideology are at the heart of organizations” (Bush, 2003, p. 156). These models call for leaders to understand the change process and have strong relationships with faculty and staff (Evans, 1996; Leithwood, 2007). Strong leaders invite stakeholders to participate in defining a vision and planning for change, which results in shared ownership, as well as knowledge of and responsibility for the change initiative (Fullan, 2008).

Cultural models rely on personal experience that translates into leadership (Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008; Evans, 1996; Hargreaves, 2004, 2009; Slater, 2005). Fullan (2002) lists five characteristics of leadership for change: moral purpose, understanding the change process, strong relationships, knowledge sharing and coherence (p. 17). Each of these characteristics falls under the cultural aspect of leading for change. Leaders with moral purpose are seeking to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Truly understanding the change process involves much more than proposing innovative ideas. It involves understanding how change happens in organizations from a structural as well as a personal point of view. According to Fullan, Cuttress and Kilcher (2009), there are eight key elements of the change process. They are: engaging people’s moral purposes, building capacity that increases people’s power to move the system forward, understanding the change process and developing cultures for learning, including learning during the change process. Other elements include developing cultures of evaluation, focusing on leadership for change – which could include distributing leadership, fostering

coherence making or helping people do develop strategies that link adult and student learning and tri-level development of individuals, organizations and systems. A cultural change leader uses strong relationships to help stakeholders move through the change process (Bush, 2003). This leader also shares knowledge of the change, involving others in the heart of the process. Finally, strong cultural leaders help all members of the organization understand the big picture of the change (Fullan, 2008).

Change in education can arrive in many different forms, however many educators group change in two ways: change that is mandated and change that is self-initiated (Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008; Evans, 1996; Hargreaves, 2004, 2009; Slater, 2005). Hargreaves (2004, 2009) explored teachers' emotional experiences of these two types of educational change. Results of his work show that teachers' emotional responses to self-initiated change are predominantly positive, while their emotional responses to mandated change are predominantly negative. In exploring this issue further, Hargreaves (2004, 2009) discovered that what matters most to teachers is whether change includes or excludes their professional purposes and considers the day to day realities of their working lives. A common theme that emerged was that teachers' experiences of positive change were consistently linked to what they believed would benefit students. Hargreaves' (2004, 2009) work was done in Canada and in the context of a large-scale government mandated change. Hargreaves' (2004, 2009) final point is that the challenge for educational leaders is learning how to create an inclusive environment for change within the context of mandatory reform.

**Constructive-Developmental Theory and Adult Development.** Drago-Severson (2004), Erikson (2006), and Helsing, Howell, Kegan, & Lahey (2008) have done extensive research on adult developmental learning. Drago-Severson (2004) has situated this work within

the Constructive-Developmental Theory and Adult Development. She (2004) differentiates between two types of learning; informational learning that increases what a person knows, and transformational learning that changes the way a person constructs or makes sense of experience (p. 23). She believes that much of adult learning is transformational in nature and uses Kegan's (2008) work in Constructive-Developmental Theory to describe adult learning processes.

Kegan's theory is based on two ideas. First, people construct, or make sense of, the reality in which they live. Second, learning is a lifelong process and people can change and develop over time (Kegan, et al., 2008).

Included in this theory are three different ways that adults make meaning, the instrumental way of knowing, the socializing way of knowing and the self-authoring way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004; Baker, Drath, McCauley, O'Connor & Palus, 2006 ). An adult learner with an instrumental way of knowing is conscious of the give and take between individuals. They want to offer their own knowledge and get knowledge in return. An adult with a socializing way of knowing is a person who learns best working with others. This type of learner is able to reflect on their own thinking while hearing the perspectives of other learners. Self-authoring people have the capacity to take ownership and responsibility of their own learning. They can chart their path and take next steps in their own growth (Drago-Severson, 2004; Baker, Drath, McCauley, O'Connor & Palus, 2006). Constructive developmental theory also emphasizes the importance of "holding environments" (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 33; Baker, Drath, McCauley, O'Connor & Palus, 2006; Erikson, 2006). These are situations adult learners exist in that have an appropriate level of support and challenge. Adult learners need enough support to affirm their thinking but enough challenge to push their thinking or expose

them to new ways of thinking (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 33; Baker, Drath, McCauley, O'Connor & Palus, 2006; Erikson, 2006).

An understanding of Constructivist-Developmental Theory and Adult Development is important because some professional development opportunities offered in schools do not match the ways of knowing of the adults that work there (Helsing, et al., 2008). In order for an educational leader to be effective, he or she must customize their efforts in the school to match the learning modes of the faculty (Drago-Severson, 2004). In addition, understanding this theory will help leaders to see that adults do not simply grow in *what* they know, but can also grow in *how* they know.

To summarize, the components of my theoretical frameworks – leadership theory and constructivist-developmental theory and adult development – informed this inquiry in several ways. First, understanding the importance of examining leadership styles in a variety of educational settings guided my search for literature. Findings in this framework helped me to focus my research questions and design the type of data I collected in this study. In addition, understanding the differences between formal and cultural models of leadership helped me to explain the tensions that I described in my problem of practice that may also have been in evidence at the site of this research. This information also translated into a deeper understanding of the change process in education and how different models of leadership help or hinder that process. Finally, an understanding of constructive-developmental theory and adult development helped me to make sense of the level of effectiveness of the leadership that is shared at the case study site. While this function of the theoretical framework did not directly influence this inquiry, it helped me to understand the outside factors that may have influenced the effectiveness of the leadership strategies at the school site.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The United States is in the middle of a time of significant change in education. School leaders need, more than ever, to be able to move their staff toward new ways of working in the field of education (Fullan, 2008). With the growing emphasis on school accountability, school leaders are increasingly required to perform roles that they have not in the past (Baker, Betenbenner & Linn, 2002). These new demands require that leaders be accomplished at working with people through the change process (Fullan, 2008).

This research took place at a single school site and utilized a case study format to explore teachers' experiences of different models of leadership. The project provided a context specific view of how one school utilizes various approaches to leadership on a day to day basis and how those approaches impact the school. This literature review looks at how leadership is manifested in other schools. Specifically, several studies (Angelle, 2010; Brenninkmeyer & Spillane, 2008; Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009; Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006; Gordon & Patterson, 2006; Hargreaves, 2004; Hulpia, Devos & Rosseel, 2009; Penlington, Kington & Day, 2010; Printy, Marks & Bowers, 2009; Rutherford, 2006; Wells & Feun, 2008) were examined to inform the review and to place the related literature into an authentic school context. This review also explored what the literature already identified in relation to my research question. The literature review provided guidelines to make the case analysis sharper, as well as provided a larger context in which to locate the findings of this study.

This literature review aims to investigate the following questions:

1. What is the impact of both formal models and cultural models of leadership on the change process in K-12 public education?
2. How do teachers experience different models of leadership?

These questions are important in the reality of public education today. As discussed earlier, while many educational initiatives are implemented on an organizational and structural level (Bush, 2003, Hargreaves, 2004, 2009), in order for change to be deep and sustainable, it must take place on a cultural level (Fullan, 2006, 2008, 2009). Understanding which leadership approaches create the best climate for change will help leaders make purposeful choices that will unify the organizational culture and the teaching and learning core of the school.

The purpose of this literature review is to place this project within the ongoing conversations of three bodies of literature. The first conversation concerns the use of professional learning communities in schools. The second conversation concerns the practices and thinking process of principals and their impact on the types of leadership practiced in schools. The third is a conversation about the growing use of distributed leadership in the school setting.

### **Professional Learning Communities**

Professional learning communities are a relatively new way for schools to organize themselves to consider teaching and learning (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2009). Teachers work in teams to review student outcome data in relation to their instructional practices (Dufour, 2004; Dufour, et al, 2009). The ultimate goal of professional learning communities is to de-privatize teaching practice, building on the most successful instructional practices in order to improve student learning (DuFour, 2004). I approached this body of literature with the question, *can this approach create deep, sustainable change in how educators think about teaching and learning?* I wanted to discover: *Do teachers view professional learning communities as opportunities for shared leadership?*

This segment of the review is organized into three main sections. The first, *Sustaining Cultural Change in Schools and Districts*, addresses the possibilities inherent in the use of the professional learning community to positively influence the culture of a school or district. The second section, *Empowering Teachers as Leaders*, discusses how professional learning communities can contribute to the development of teachers as school leaders. The third section, *Required Structures*, describes the organizational structures that school leaders need to put into place to ensure that professional learning communities are successful. Following these sections, I identify implications of this strand of literature for my investigation.

**Sustaining cultural change in schools and districts.** Emerging research indicates that the use of Professional Learning Communities is an important method of sustaining cultural change in schools and districts (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009; Giles, & Hargreaves, 2006; Nelson, Slavit, Perkins, & Hathorn, 2008; Schmoker, 2004). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) provide opportunities for teachers to make informed, collaborative decisions about curriculum, instruction and assessment, and creates a focus on all learners of the grade, or school, not simply the students an individual teaches. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) explain that the deeper and more important goal of PLCs is a vehicle to change the learning culture of schools.

The inception of professional learning communities is relatively recent, but research is emerging about their effectiveness in creating and sustaining a culture of change in schools and districts. DuFour (2004) describes his work with PLCs and the resulting changes in the culture of his school. He reports that as a result of PLCs, teachers have learned to work together, to utilize student assessment data and to make collaborative decisions about instruction across grades and subjects. Supovitz & Christman, (2005) expand on this by addressing the need for these

communities of teachers to possess autonomy. They believe that while administration should provide guidance, autonomy in decisions about curriculum enhances community identity and fosters a culture of instructional improvement in the school. In a study that illustrates these points, Wells and Feun (2008) examined the growth and impact of professional learning communities that had been implemented over three years in several large high schools. Results of the study show that after three years, the largest growth area was in collaboration. This was echoed in the literature that cites one of the most important and immediate results of PLCs is increased collaboration within the school (DuFour, 2004; Dooner, et al., 2008; Nelson, et al., 2008; Giles, & Hargreaves, 2006). Results of this study also indicated problems with the implementation of PLCs. While teachers were more open to working together and collaborating on lessons and planning, they did not analyze student results and use those results to improve instruction (Wells & Feun, 2008). This lack of change showed that the deeper, more important opportunities made possible by PLCs were missed in these high schools. In fact, three years into the work, teachers in most departments still had not created common assessments, a necessary component of PLCs (Wells & Feun, 2008). Experts in the field of PLCs cite the importance of using student data to inform instruction and decisions regarding curriculum change (DuFour, 2004; Dooner, et al., 2008; Nelson, et al., 2008; Giles, & Hargreaves, 2006). Further exploration into this issue in the study showed that administrators in the schools had not pushed for the development of common assessments, which negatively affected the potential of cultural change through the use of PLCs in the high schools studied (Wells & Feun, 2008). Administrator involvement in PLCs is important to the success of the work. Administrators need to help groups to set instructional goals, provide boundaries and sometimes facilitate group processes

(DuFour, 2004; Dooner, et al., 2008; Nelson, et al., 2008; Giles, & Hargreaves, 2006; Fullan, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Supovitz, & Christman, 2005).

Unfortunately, as happens with many new educational innovations, there is risk connected to the superficial use of PLCs. Fullan (2006) offers cautions and suggestions to capitalize on the potential of PLCs as a vehicle for deep and lasting cultural change. As is often the case with a new educational initiative, the term is used loosely and does not resemble in any way the intent of the initiative. Unfortunately, that is the case with the use of the term PLC. Another caution experts offer is the impression some educators may have that PLCs are just the latest in a long stream of innovations (Fullan, 2006, 2008, 2009; Helsing, et al., 2008; Lieberman & Mace, 2009; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Nelson, et al. 2008; DuFour, et al., 2009). This could have the potential of causing schools to overlook the usefulness of the process. Fullan (2006) is also concerned that PLCs are being used to change individual schools, but are not being used for their greater potential to change school systems. Fullan (2006) cites research done by Richard Elmore about the ineffectiveness of school improvement as a result of the difficulty to change culture. Without a deeper motivation of using PLCs to transform cultures in schools, the superficial use of the process can marginalize their value as a vehicle to transform the culture of schools and school systems.

However, PLCs do have the potential to change culture in schools (Fullan, 2006, 2008, 2009; Helsing, et al., 2008; Lieberman & Mace, 2009; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Nelson, et al. 2008; DuFour, et al., 2009). They call for teachers to collaborate and collaborative cultures build capacity for continuous learning and improvement (Fullan, 2006; Supovitz & Christman, 2005; Dooner, et al., 2008). Ideally, PLCs deprivatize teaching in order to create a community of collaboration (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009). Inherent in this type of atmosphere is an

openness to improvement, trust and respect, and supportive leadership. In light of this, I looked at the data gathered during my study to find a way to differentiate superficial changes in everyday actions from deeper cultural changes. I tried to discover how the deep cultural changes manifest in ways that are different from actions and practices taken by the participants. This allowed me to assess if a change is superficial or deep rooted and if it transformed understanding and values in the school and not just routines.

In summary, evident in each of these works is the concept of the professional learning community as an opportunity to create and sustain deep cultural change in a school and district. Also present, however are cautions to be aware that while this practice has great potential, it can also easily be misused.

**Empowering teachers as leaders.** PLCs empower teachers as leaders because they provide the kind of venue and mode of thinking conducive to making collaborative decisions (Dooner, et al., 2008; Nelson, et al., 2008; Achinstein, 2002; Lieberman & Mace, 2009). Again, looking to the study by Wells and Feun (2008) to illustrate this point, one could argue that administrators play a key role in the success of PLCs. Wells and Feun (2008) support this argument by saying that many teacher respondents in their study of long term professional learning communities, reported that trust in administration was necessary for progress. Teachers were concerned that they would be evaluated based on student outcome data of common assessments. Wells and Feun (2008) also believe that principals need ongoing training in the implementation and support of PLCs and that without an administrator communicating a clear vision for the use of PLCs, the process will fail. Experts emphasize that the spread of professional learning communities is about the proliferation of leadership (Fullan, 2006, 2008, 2009; DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009, Lieberman & Mace, 2009). As teachers begin to take

leadership through the PLC process, it sets a pattern of expectation that grows into teacher empowerment. This is because PLCs provide opportunities for reflection and problem solving that allow teachers to construct knowledge and change their practice based on their learning (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). There are also challenges within groups. Dooner, Mandzuk, & Clifton, (2008) suggest that the internal workings of these groups are often difficult as individual teachers tend to have a powerful voice that can limit the contributions of other teachers in the group.

**Required structures.** The success of PLCs requires certain structures (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009). These include common planning time for teachers to meet and talk, which encourages teams of teachers to work together toward a common goal, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures, teacher empowerment through distributed leadership and school autonomy (Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). When these structures are embedded into the teaching day, they create leadership opportunities because they cause teachers to work together to make decisions about curriculum, assessment and instruction (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). As these communities develop, they become stronger when principals relinquish control and help others take on leadership roles in the school (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). For example, in one high school a department designed a rotating teaching assignment so that teachers developed multiple levels of expertise and adopted interdependent teaching roles (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). In an elementary school, the administration created multiple grade level learning communities to encourage inquiry and collaboration. In addition, the same elementary school redesigned staff meetings so that faculty, rather than administration, facilitated discussions on decision-making, professional development and cycles of inquiry (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Supovitz & Christman (2005) report that

in order for administrators to support learning communities, they need to provide protected time within the school day for teachers to work together. Their work echoes that of others who emphasize the importance of protecting that time from interruption and ensuring that it is not taken up with the smaller decisions that teachers are called on to make during the school day (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009).

**Implications for my inquiry.** The preceding analysis of professional learning communities provides the broad context for my inquiry. In order to fully comprehend the potential of the practice, it is useful to understand that while teachers may learn to be more collaborative and will take on more leadership, in order for this practice to impact student learning, it must include common analysis and reflection of student data in order to impact instruction (Wells and Feun, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009). Administrators play a key role in achieving this aspect of professional learning communities (Dooner, et al., 2008; Schmoker, 2004; Nelson, et al., 2008; Lieberman & Mace, 2009). While shared leadership implies that PLCs would be a place where teachers are responsible for making leadership decisions, the administrator must still provide direction and guidance to the groups. Indeed, administrators who provide clear instructions to these groups and empower teachers to develop common assessments are laying the foundation for leadership opportunities for teachers (Lieberman & Mace, 2009; Nelson, et al., 2008; Fullan, 2009). This body of literature also indicated that in order for leadership to create and sustain a culture for change, building strong relationships with faculty and creating an environment of trust is essential (Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). My own research explored how this is done in one school. Finally, this body of literature concluded that structures can be put into place in schools and districts that provide for the success of professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004;

DuFour, et al., 2009). The implication for my study is that I included an accounting and analysis of how the structures in place at my case study site contribute to or hamper leadership.

### **Practices and Thinking Process of Principals**

Research has been done that looks closely at the practices and thinking process of principals and how those practices and processes impact leadership and schooling (Evans, 1996; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Devos & Brouckenoghe, 2009; Brenninkmeyer & Spillane, 2008; Drago-Severson, 2004; Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006). I approached this body of literature with the question, *how do the practices and thinking process of principals have an impact on the types of leadership that create a climate for change?* I wanted to discover: *How do those practices and processes impact leadership and schooling? And, which characteristics define leadership approaches that facilitate change?* This segment of the review is organized into three main sections; new leadership requirements, working with teachers to facilitate growth, and creating a climate for change. Following these sections, I identify implications of this strand of literature for my investigation.

**New leadership requirements.** Fullan (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) emphasizes the need to produce principals that are strong in the skills needed in the “new” educational climate. He is not alone. Current thinkers in this field recommend principal-development programs that include mentoring, apprenticeship and coaching for new principals (Robinson, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2007; Baker, et al., 2006). The goals of these programs align with openness of practice, precision, creativity, wise and continuous use of data, learning from each other inside and outside the organization and linking school practice to the big picture. Slater (2005) lists five emotional competencies that she believes are required leadership competencies in collaborative workplaces – self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy and adeptness of

relationships (p. 328). These competencies are reflected and expanded on in the literature about the link between quality leadership and improved student learning (Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, Fullan, et al., 2009, Hargreaves, 2004; Mallory & Reavis, 2007). Experts believe that the principal is the nerve center of school improvement, and that when principal leadership is strong even the most challenged schools can thrive (Schmoker, 2004; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Leithwood, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2007).

Additional literature indicates that principal behaviors are ultimately linked to how principals view their roles as leaders (Leithwood, 2007; Helsing, et al., 2008). In one study that illustrates this point, Devos and Bouckenooghe (2009) examined principals' cognitive conceptions of their roles. Their work is based on two broad categories of leaders: instructional and transformational. Instructional leadership is strong and directive, focused on curriculum and instruction (Bush, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2007; Schmoker, 2004). Transformational leadership works to build the capacity of a school faculty to set its own goals and support the changes to teaching and learning that result from those self-selected goals (Leithwood, 2007; Evans, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2007; Fullan, 2009). Results of the study by Devos and Bouckenooghe (2009) show that a principal's cognitive conception of his or her role is closely tied to his or her actions. In fact, the authors found that the way principals envision their role in the school is influenced by their level of expertise on leadership and by what they believe the role of the principal should be (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). With these ideas in mind, the study narrowed down the more broad categories of leadership to two specific mindsets of building principals – people minded and administrative minded. While other authors did not use these specific terms, the different outlooks – focused on people and relationships versus managing the school, is a concept addressed in the literature on principal thinking and behaviors (Sergiovanni, 2007; Evans, 2007;

Bush, 2003; Leithwood, 2007; Helsing, et al., 2008). Devos & Bouckenooghe 2009 recognize that individuals usually possess a combination of the two mindsets, but that leaders tended to gravitate toward one mindset or the other enough that they could generalize. One theme that resulted from this study and that is affirmed in the literature is that principals who worked to develop relationships with their staffs, learned about people as individuals and tailored their interactions and levels of support to people were what would be considered people minded principals (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009; Leithwood, 2007; Fullan, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2007). These principals were also rarely in their offices and spent their days in classrooms interacting with faculty, staff and students. Another theme that arose is the importance of vision. One principal in the study shared that he attached much importance to the development and implementation of a shared vision for the school (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). The importance of a school leader having and being able to communicate a vision for the school is noted in the literature about effective school leadership (Leithwood, 2007; Fullan, 2007, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2007; Lieberman, et al., 2007). This principal also considered involving teachers in the policy development of the school to be one of his main tasks (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). This theme of utilizing shared leadership is also common in the current literature about school leadership ((Leithwood, 2007; Fullan, 2007, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2007; Lieberman, et al., 2007; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; Wright, 2008; Spillane, 2009). Results of this study also showed that administrative minded principals, on the other hand, spent most of their time in their offices doing paperwork and thus had little personal contact with the people in the school (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). They tended to view people in a positional manner and not as individuals. One of the principals in the study believed that her main role was to keep things running and organized. This reflects Bush's (2003) description of

the managerial style of leadership. In addition, this principal also shared that she considered innovation to be a threat to the smooth organization and operation of the school (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009).

Devos & Bouckenooghe's (2009) study showed that people minded principals lead the strong schools examined in the study and administrative minded principals lead the weak schools included in the study. In fact, there were no administrative minded principals in any of the strong schools and no people minded principals in any of the weak schools included in the study. While the definition of what makes a strong school was unclear from the study, research confirms that leaders who are what the study termed people minded are more effective at leading schools (Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, Sergiovanni, 2007; Evans, 2007; Leithwood, 2007). A final note made by Devos & Bouckenooghe (2009) is that further examination of the data showed that administrative minded principals were lacking in skills that could be taught in mentor or preparation programs.

**Working with teachers to facilitate growth.** In the past, school leaders have been more like managers. They managed the day-to-day running of the school through scheduling, budgets, parent meetings, hiring, facilities management, etc. (Sergiovanni, 2007; Bush, 2003). Now, since the passage of No Child Left Behind and the progress of the standards movement, they are required to do more (Leithwood, 2007; Baker et al., 2002; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). School leaders must now be strong in people skills and know how to work with teachers to facilitate their growth in ways never required before (Leithwood, 2007; Fullan, 2009). In one study that illustrates what these changes in leadership look like and how they impact teachers, Slater (2005) used focus groups to answer the question: How does the principal support collaboration? In one school, the faculty took over the planning and running of faculty meetings and professional

development days. As a result, the principal became a supporter and facilitator. Because he adopted this role, he became just one of many collaborative individuals in the school, allowing teachers to be empowered to grow and take risks, which ultimately built leadership capacity in the school. Empowering teachers through the use of shared leadership is a widely studied approach to leading that has been validated in the current literature (Fullan, 2008, 2009; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007).

Results of the Slater (2005) study show that principal behaviors that support collaboration include: modeling, communication skills, valuing people and advocacy. Principals who supported teacher growth continued to lead the school, but were not controlling. They maintained responsibility for decisions made in the school whether the decisions were made alone or as part of a team. These principals also focused less on running “tight ships” and more on creating “tightly knit communities” (p. 323). Slater noted that collaborative leadership requires emotional competencies such as understanding others, self-awareness, and relationships. Participants in the study noted that listening and openness were the most important aspects of supporting growth and that principals need to develop new skills in order to do this work. An analysis of the corresponding literature,(Fullan, 2006. 2007, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2007; Lieberman et al., 2007; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; & Louis, 2008) summarize and clarify these emotional competencies.

This body of research also indicates a need for educational leaders to understand adult learning (Robinson, 2006; Baker, et al., 2006; Supovitz & Christman, 2005; Drago-Severson, 2004). A broad study done by Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006) provided an authentic context in which to situate this concept. One theme that came from their report is that school principals have the greatest responsibility for helping teachers learn (Drago-Severson and Pinto, 2006).

This analysis can be linked with other literature that examines the role of the principal in teacher learning. For example, Fullan (2009) believes that the job of a principal is to enhance the skills and knowledge of people in the organization. In this study Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006) define learning oriented school leadership as helping teachers develop the capacity to handle their complex work by bringing teachers together to learn from each other. They also stress the importance of creating a collaborative climate in schools as the key to teacher growth and development. This definition connects closely to the work outlined in the previous section regarding professional learning communities. An analysis of the literature included in that section clearly indicates that through the development and ongoing support of professional learning communities, school leaders can create a collaborative climate that will help teachers grow (Nelson et al., 2008; Dooner, et al., 2008; Supovitz & Christman, 2005). Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006) also suggest that developing knowledge about adult learning may enable leaders to create school climates that are conducive to change. The human experience of school change is influenced by the level of understanding about adult growth and development that a school leader possesses (Evans, 1996, 2007). In this study by Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006), the authors explored how school leaders understand and experience their role in support of teacher learning, the practices that school leaders use to support teachers' learning and the developmental principles that inform the practices that support adult transformational learning. Printy, Marks and Bowers (2009) expand on this idea by emphasizing how leaders have the ability to encourage teachers to develop to their greatest potential. Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006) outline some of the practices that the principals in the study utilized to support adult learning. These included involving teachers in shared decision making, encouraging teachers to

offer and accept feedback, inviting teachers to reflect on the school's mission and asking teachers to contribute to the school's vision.

The study included twenty-five school leaders in the United States and concluded that successful principals develop opportunities for teachers to collaborate in order to support adult growth and development (Drago-Severson and Pinto, 2006). Teaming and partnering with colleagues reduces teacher isolation and encourages teachers to learn from each other. Mentoring supports adult growth and development because it provides opportunity for transformational learning through sharing and reflection amongst colleagues, which lead to changes in ways of thinking (Drago-Severson, 2004; Leithwood, 2007; Erikson, 2006). Mentoring also helps teachers grow because it allows teachers to take on leadership roles (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006). According to Lieberman and Mace (2009), providing guidance to new teachers, veteran staff are required to respond to questions and ideas offered by newer faculty, resulting in newer thinking, creative ideas and reflection.

**Creating a climate for change.** As Mallory and Reavis (2007) say, "If a disconnect, or gap, exists between the organizational culture and the teaching and learning core of a school, school improvement is very difficult, if not impossible"(p.10). Closing this gap requires that school leaders are able to create a climate for change. Devos & Bouckenoghe (2009) believe that school leaders have a key role in developing strong and effective school climates. This idea is widely represented in the relevant literature and is expanded through the identification several characteristics of strong school climates – goal orientedness, participative decision making, innovativeness, and cooperation between teachers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Printy, et al., 2009; Slater, 2005; Williams, et al., 2004; Hargreaves, 2004; Nelson, et al., 2008; Wahlstrom &

Louis, 2008). Devos and Bouckennooghe (2009) also shared that differences in principals' role conceptions, expertise and leadership behavior lead to differences in school climate.

Brenninkmeyer and Spillane (2008) explored the differences in problem solving processes utilized by expert and typical principals. They define problem solving processes as the thinking processes that principals use to reason through various instructional and administrative scenarios. An analysis of the relevant literature showed that this study extended previous research on principal problem solving processes by looking at instructional leadership scenarios instead of administrative ones. Results of the study revealed significant differences in leadership problem solving processes of expert vs. typical principals. Expert principals were more likely to delegate, gather data and plan their approach to problems. Typical principals tended to tell negative and unsuccessful anecdotes and worry about the consequences scenarios pose for themselves. Results also indicated that there are expert problem-solving processes that might be taught to novice or typical principals to make them more effective. The authors also suggest that separate consideration be given to problem solving processes unique to a given subject, such as mathematics or literacy. Several of these themes can also be seen in the literature regarding principal development. Fullan (2007) believes that leaders must constantly cultivate their knowledge, understanding and leadership skills. Leithwood (2007) recommends that school leaders constantly keep the needs of the students and faculty in the front of their minds and make their decisions based on what the best available information advises.

The examples outlined in Brenninkmeyer and Spillane's (2008) study reinforced the idea that principals continue to play an important role in the schools they lead. In addition, educational leaders who are skilled at working with people can be stronger than those who do not address the human aspects of change.

**Implications for my inquiry.** The preceding analysis of the literature on the practices and problem solving process of principals provides the broad context for my inquiry. In order to fully apply this body of literature to my own research, it is useful to understand the practices and thinking process of existing leaders. Most of the leaders currently working in schools received their training before the climate of accountability began (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Mallory & Reavis, 2007; Baker, et al., 2002; Sergiovanni, 2007). As a result, they are working in an environment that asks more of them than what they trained for. Understanding how they developed and changed their approaches to leading to meet the changing needs of education was important to my study because it helped to focus the information I sought through interviews with the principal and assistant principal.

Additionally, this body of literature indicated that how a principal views him or herself is very important to how they approach leadership decisions (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). Researchers differentiated between leaders that view themselves as managers and those that view themselves as change agents. It was important to determine how the participants in my study viewed themselves because it impacted how I viewed the decisions they made. Similarly, research included in this section of the literature review indicated that principals who are focused on people are more effective than those who focus on administrative tasks (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). This informed my work because I was curious about how that might carry over into the case study site. I wanted to discover if an overall approach in one of the extremes was practiced at my site or if different approaches were used in different situations.

Finally, this body of the literature contained information about how leaders work with teachers to facilitate growth (Drago-Severson, 2004; Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006).

Implications for my study based on this idea included determining how the leaders at the site

work with teachers to help them grow and including the perspectives of teachers regarding the level of effectiveness of these efforts.

### **Distributed Leadership**

Distributed leadership includes models of educational leadership where the decision-making responsibility no longer resides with one person (typically the principal). Leadership is, instead, shared with members of the school community, including teachers. As demands on education change to meet the needs of society, more and more schools and districts are recognizing that distributed leadership models may be a positive way to promote change through leadership (Lieberman, et al., 2007; Spillane, 2005, 2009; Mayrowetz, 2008; Wright, 2008; Timperley, 2005; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Hargreaves, 2004; Hulpia, et al., 2009; Printy, et al., 2009; Rutherford, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Angelle, 2010).

I approached this body of literature with the question *how is distributed leadership practiced in schools?* I wanted to discover *a definition of distributed leadership*. I also wanted to explore the question *does distributed leadership help an organization learn and grow?* This segment of the review is organized into three main sections; definitions, needs and practices. Following these sections, I identify implications of this strand of literature for my investigation.

**Definitions.** The changes in education that have resulted from this era of accountability have necessitated a change in leadership style for educational leaders (Baker, et al., 2002; Leithwood, 2007; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). School leaders must learn to build leadership capacity in their buildings or districts (Fullan, 2006, 2009; Mallory & Reavis, 2007). The role of the principal as a school leader is growing more complex and is becoming almost impossible for one person to do (Fullan, 2009, Leithwood, 2007). Hulpia, et al. (2009) define distributed leadership as a situation where “various leadership functions are distributed to multiple

individuals acting as leaders” (p. 292). However, they stress that the distribution of leadership does not simply mean that tasks are shared, but rather that all functions of leadership and the corresponding responsibility associated with those functions is stretched across a number of individuals. Spillane & Diamond (2007), Printy, et al. (2009), and Rutherford (2006) believe that a distributed perspective acknowledges that the work of leading and managing schools involves multiple individuals. It shifts the focus of leadership from one or two administrators to acknowledge the work of all individuals who have a hand in leadership and management practice.

**Organizational learning or needs.** While educators are learning more about how individual leaders learn and change, much is also being learned about how organizations learn and change to adapt to changing needs and context. Collinson and Cook (2007) describe organizational learning as “the deliberate use of individual, group, and system learning to embed new thinking and practices that continuously renew and transform the organization in ways that support shared aims”(p. 8). The authors go beyond the one dimensional view of the principal as the only leader and include leaders in all levels of school districts. Rutherford (2006) lists the creation of common planning times, autonomous work teams, schools-within-schools and collaborative faculty meetings as ways to use group and system learning to embed new thinking and practices that enhance the distribution of leadership.

Studies included in this collection of the literature show that the ideals of distributive leadership can happen in the top down structure of American education (Hulpia, et al., 2009; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Lieberman, et al., 2007; Fullan, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Spillane, 2009; Wright, 2008;). In a study by Hulpia, et al. (2009), the authors used distributed leadership as a theoretical framework to investigate the relation between distributed

leadership, team cohesion, participative decision-making and the organizational commitment and job satisfaction of teachers and teacher leaders. They noted that when teachers believed they could participate in school decision making, they felt highly committed to the school and were very satisfied with their jobs. This is confirmed in the associated literature that investigates teacher responses to the use of distributed leadership (Wahlstrom & Lewis, 2008; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Lieberman, et al., 2007). Results of the study by Hulpia, et al. (2009) show that the size of a school matters and that to increase the level of organizational commitment and job satisfaction of teachers and teacher leaders, large schools need to invest in cohesion among leadership team members. When there is not cohesion on this level, it affects the climate of the school. That said, it is important to attract school leaders that fit well with other leadership team members. Results of the study also indicated that not all tasks must be distributed. The development of school vision and support should be distributed, but supervision of faculty should be concentrated within one or two leaders in order to be most effective.

Rutherford (2006) contributes to the understanding of distributed leadership through her attempt to answer the question, “can changes in the structure of school leadership affect teacher leadership?” She noted that traditional models of school organization are built on a hierarchy that concentrated power and authority with one or two individuals. This idea is echoed in the relevant literature about school leadership (Bush, 2003; Robinson, 2006; Leithwood, 2007; Fullan, et al., 2009). Decentralizing power and authority and distributing leadership throughout the organization results in a more resilient organization because growth and improvement continue regardless of personnel changes (Rutherford, 2006). Rutherford (2006) also shared that distributing leadership results in the growth of teachers as they take on additional

responsibilities. The systematic creation of opportunities for leadership results in teachers interacting in ways where teachers intentionally transfer knowledge. This reflects findings by Baker, et al. (2006), Drago-Severson (2004) and Darling-Hammond (2009). In addition, results of Rutherford's (2006) work indicate that stratification of leadership roles and inclusive decision-making created an environment where leadership was truly distributed throughout the school. In addition, structural arrangements created new roles and processes that allowed for distributed leadership. For example, Rutherford (2006) described one school that created lead and senior teacher positions. Teachers in these roles assisted the principal in administrative, assessment, curriculum and hiring duties. They were assigned groups of teachers to lead and facilitated work on all levels of leadership within their groups. This structure created a stratified model of leadership that allowed teachers to work alongside the principal in the performance of leadership and administrative tasks at the school. The study suggests that teacher leadership may improve student achievement, structure matters to distributed leadership and teachers can lead while still being connected to the classroom. This concept is directly reflected in the literature surrounding professional learning communities that continuously cites the value of teachers leadership in improving student learning (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009).

**Practices.** A study by Gordon and Patterson (2006) is included in this review as an attempt to situate the concept of how distributed leadership is practiced within school environments. Gordon and Patterson (2006) studied twelve schools within the A+ Schools Program to examine effective leadership practices within each school. Findings of the study indicated that different types of leaders are considered effective in different school settings. In addition, the authors of the study identified five leadership types they found in the schools studied: open top-down leadership, covert top-down leadership, vanguard leadership, network

leadership and network wannabe leadership. Overt and covert top -down leadership approaches both keep most of the power within the hands of the principal. While overt leaders are comfortable with being top-down, covert leaders try to appear to be not top-down. In these forms of leadership, the expertise of teachers is focused on the classrooms. This expertise is acknowledged and teachers feel empowered within their areas of influence (p. 214). Vanguard leadership is like distributed leadership in that power and authority do not reside with just one leader, but with several leaders (Spillane, 2009; Wright, 2008). Even more like distributed leadership, network leadership happens when leadership is spread evenly throughout the school (Gordon & Patterson, 2006). Schools with this type of leadership tend to have collaborative cultures and professional learning communities (Gordon & Patterson, 2006, p.218). Network wannabe leaders put all of the structures in place to distribute leadership and appear to want collaborative decision making, but do not actually share leadership (Gordon & Patterson, 2006). These leaders must work to discern the expectations and readiness of faculty to adopt leadership roles and go slowly so that authority is clear.

While not all of the types of leadership identified in this study used distributed leadership techniques, all types were found to be effective in different situations. Gordon and Patterson (2006) cited the importance of each style of leadership meeting the needs and expectations of each school and noted teachers' expectations of leadership change as the context and climate of the school changed. Leithwood (2007), Fullan (2007) Barth (2007) and DuFour, et al. (2009) support this notion in their work on the effects of teacher leadership on the climate and culture of a school. Results of Gordon and Patterson's (2006) study showed that regardless of the type of leader, all effective leaders exhibit concern for people, demonstrate their own expertise and recognize expertise in others through the use of distributed leadership practices. Again, this

finding is widely recognized in the literature on effective school leadership (Sergiovanni, 2007; Leithwood, 2007; Evans, 2007; Fullan, 2007, 2008, 2009; Barth, 2007; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007).

In another study that serves to situate these concepts in an authentic school setting, Angelle (2010) examined one middle school based on the practice of distributed leadership within the school. Her study helps readers to understand what distributed leadership might look like on the school level. Findings of the study show that three elements shaped the organization of the focus school: leadership practices, trust and relationships. Specifically, in this school, the principal gave up power to involve teachers in decision making for the school. Trust was an important factor in the organization of the school, allowing teachers to take risks and offer opinions. Results of the study found that, in this school, teachers felt that greater responsibility came with greater empowerment. This study reflects relevant literature that repeatedly emphasizes the importance of trust and relationships to the effectiveness of school leadership (Slater, 2005, Evans, 1996, 2007; Fullan, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009; Hargreaves, 2004; Drago-Severson, 2004).

The use of distributed leadership can also affect student outcomes (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009). Penlington, et al. (2008) investigated the impact of school leadership on student outcomes. The study included twenty schools involved in the Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes project. Study results indicate the emergence of four key themes regarding the effect of school leadership on pupil outcomes. First is the role of headteacher (principal) in leading school success (change) (Penlington, et al., 2008). The principal of a school has an important role in encouraging and supporting staff to introduce innovations and can also give staff a voice in how change might be best implemented within a school

(Hargreaves, 2004; Drago-Severson, 2004; Mallory & Reavis, 2007). Penlington, et al. (2008) also found that there is a complex relationship between leadership distribution and school effectiveness. Associated literature confirms this and shows that this is because the distribution of leadership works to cultivate ownership amongst the staff and helps to develop a shared vision within schools (Wahlstrom & Lewis, 2008; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Mayrowetz, 2008). Penlington, et al.'s (2008) study also showed that faculty made the distinction between delegating tasks and empowering teachers. This study also showed that there are common strategies used by leaders to develop capacity. These strategies are also reflected in the literature about distributing and sharing leadership and show that administrators work to develop leadership opportunities for staff, build confidence in their faculty and adopt an increasingly strategic approach to professional development by linking teacher learning to the goals of the school and faculty (DuFour, 2004; DuFour, et al., 2009; Wahlstrom & Lewin, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Wright, 2008). Results of Penlington, et al.'s (2008) study also indicated that leaders in more challenging school environments don't necessarily need to use different leadership strategies to get the same level of improvement that their colleagues do in schools that are less challenging.

**Implications for my investigation.** Research on distributed leadership helped me place my inquiry in the context of current research and practice. Current conversations on the practice of distributive leadership informed my exploration of the role distributed leadership plays at my case study site. I sought examples of what inclusive decision making looks like in the school. In addition, I attempted to build an understanding of how the context and climate of the school and district have influenced leadership choices at the school. The literature provided a definition of distributed leadership (Hulpia, et al., 2009), an explanation of its place in organizational learning

(Collinson & Cook, 2007) and some common practices (Printy, et al., 2009; Rutherford, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Hulpia, et al., 2009; Angelle, 2010). My inquiry shared these questions but focused on how one school embodies these concepts. The focus on one school site provided in depth information about how one school practices distributed leadership on a day to day basis.

### **A Review of Methodological Approaches**

There were several different methodological approaches utilized in the literature regarding the focus of this study. Based upon the studies collected, a quantitative method, qualitative method, or mixed method can be used. However, in this collection of literature, qualitative methods appear to be the most common approach used by researchers. The studies collected for this review utilized surveys, case studies, semi-structured interviews, grounded theory and focus groups to gather data. Several of the studies that explored school sites used the case study method. This informed my own choice to pursue that line of inquiry. Purposive sampling and stratified random sampling were used in most of the studies. This approach allowed researchers to narrow the field of possible participants and also to group participants appropriately (Cresswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). Coding allowed qualitative research to be analyzed based on theme (Cresswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). Statistical analysis assisted researchers utilizing mixed or quantitative methods to identify relationships between variables studied (Cresswell, 2009). Cautions that arose in this collection of research indicated that clear reporting of data analysis procedures for qualitative research need to be taken into consideration in order to create a credible, reliable and valid study (Cresswell, 2009, Yin, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994).

**Summary**

The inquiry presented in this proposal is informed by each of the three conversations explored in this literature review. First, I explored the practice of Professional Learning Communities. This is a practice that is growing in popularity and is being used to build communities of collaboration in schools (DuFour, et al., 2009). The goal of PLCs is to deprivatize teaching practice and to create a deep and lasting cultural change in school (DuFour, 2004). The literature showed that while PLCs have the potential to radically change teaching and learning, they can also be ineffective if leaders do not implement them correctly (DuFour, et al., 2009, Fullan, 2008, 2009; Fullan, et al., 2009; Barth, 2007). This led to the second conversation in the literature review, an exploration of the behaviors and thinking processes of principals. This literature describes the new requirements educational leaders face (Baker, et al., 2002; Leithwood, 2007). One of these new requirements is to work with teachers to help them grow (Drago-Severson, 2004; Robinson, 2006). In addition, to meet the changing demands on education, leaders need to understand how to create a climate for change in their schools so that educators can continue to move forward (Mallory & Reavis, 2007; Fullan, 2009; Evans, 1996). Distributed leadership was a theme that was mentioned frequently in the literature about the behaviors and thinking process of principals (Spillane, 2005, 2009; Wright, 2008; Mayrowetz, 2008). This led to the final strand of the literature review that focused on distributed leadership. This literature offered a definition of distributed leadership, suggestions for how organizations need to change and restructure to support the distribution of leadership as well as examples of models of practice that are being used in schools (Hulpia, et al., 2009; Printy, 2009; Rutherford, 2006; Slater, 2005; Angelle, 2010).

Through the process of researching and writing this literature review, it became clear that my research would be informed by these bodies of literature. While the three themes noted in this review came up repeatedly in the literature, the themes of distributed leadership and adult development and learning appeared most frequently. Professional learning communities were included in most of the literature as a way to distribute leadership, however, emerging research is showing the technique to be a powerful method of creating a climate of collaboration in a school (DuFour, et al., 2009). The top down structure of American education does allow building and district administrators to create structures for collaborative adult learning and shared governance in their schools and districts (Bush, 2003, Leithwood, 2007). In contrast, the top down structure also inhibits distributive leadership practices because progress is highly dependent on the personality and training of individual administrators (Sergiovanni, 2007; Fullan, 2009; Evans, 2007). While much of the literature addressed these issues, I was unable to find literature that addressed how or when educational leaders could develop the new ways of thinking conducive to distributed leadership and adult learning.

### **Chapter Three: Research Design**

#### **Research Questions**

My problem of practice was driven by an observation that the leadership requirements in schools have changed, requiring more and different skills of administrators. This problem leads to questions about what kinds of leadership are most effective in the current educational climate and how teachers perceive leadership. To address this problem, I explore, in a systematic way, how one school translates existing models of leadership into practice and how teachers in that school experience these differences in practice. My primary research question was: *How do school leaders balance formal and cultural models of leadership? What works? What does not?*

Three secondary research questions focused my inquiry on the specifics of practice and on teachers' perceptions of leadership. The questions were: *How do school leaders affect change on a day to day level? How does the particular context, including climate and culture, of a district or an institution affect the implementation of a leadership model? And How do teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate?*

This research provides detailed information about how leadership is enacted on a day to day basis in one school site. Results of this study can be used to inform leadership preparation programs, as well as the daily practice of educational leaders.

### **Methodology**

**Approach.** The research on this problem of practice called for a qualitative approach because this researcher was seeking to understand the meanings of an issue as experienced by a group of participants (Creswell, 2009). This case involved an exploration of the use of leadership in one school and a reporting of how teachers at the school perceive that leadership. Creswell indicates that the characteristics of qualitative research include (2009, pp. 175-6), the use of a natural setting, the researcher as a key instrument in the research, the use of multiple sources of data, an inductive process for data analysis, an emphasis on the meanings participants bring to the research, the use of a theoretical lens and the development of a complex picture of the issue under study. The most applicable characteristic in this list to my research is the emphasis on the meanings that participants bring to the research. My research questions anticipated that all participants, regardless of their level of or contribution to the leadership of the school would contribute to the findings of the research. In addition, by using multiple methods

of data collection and thick description, I created a complex picture of how leadership is carried out at the site.

Case study methodology was selected to capture the complex and contextual nature of the problem I explored. Yin (2003) calls for a case study when a set of how or why questions are being asked about a set of events that are directly tied to a bounded situation. This research study met all of these conditions as I attempted to explore the experience of participants within a single school site.

An in depth, single case study approach was appropriate for this investigation because this was a representative or typical case (Yin, 2009). This study examined a school to learn more about the various leadership approaches utilized on a day to day basis and how teachers perceive those approaches. The lessons learned from this single case study were informative about the experiences of a typical school.

As I focused on one school, this research method was a single-case study with an embedded case design (Yin, 2003). While the study focused on a single school site, it also included analysis of the perspectives and experiences of several subgroups including administration, core subject area teachers and integrated arts teachers. Individual groups of teachers and administrators provided a second unit of analysis. By identifying small groups, such as PLC groups or grade level teachers, within the larger school context, I was able to develop a detailed analysis of the experiences of homogenous groups of participants and cross check the findings with those resulting from an analysis of the large group as a whole.

This case study was descriptive in nature. The case study attempted to inform the researcher about how school leaders balance models of leadership, affect change on a day to day level and how the particular context affects the implementation of a leadership model. In

addition, the researcher sought to explain how teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership at this case study site. The descriptive nature of the study also explored the culture and sub-cultures of the school site, in order to discover the interpersonal effects of the different models of leadership practiced at the school (Yin, 2003).

### **Context for the Case Study**

The case study took place at a middle school in a suburban, New Hampshire town. This school was opened in 2007, when the school district built and opened its first high school, built a new middle school and reconfigured the remaining K-8 schools in the district. Prior to 2007, students in grades 6-8 attended a different middle school. With the move to the new middle school building, grade six became part of the intermediate school. In addition, the assistant principal of the old middle school became the principal of the new middle school and a new assistant principal was hired.

Beginning with the opening of the school, the principal and assistant principal established a leadership style and philosophy that would create a climate of shared leadership and responsibility at the school. Now, nearly five years later, this effort is still underway and is beginning to yield results.

During the first year, the administration began to expose the faculty to the idea of professional learning communities (PLCs). This included professional development in understanding and using data. In the second year, the principal and assistant principal reconfigured the master schedule to allow for weekly curriculum area PLC meetings. In the third year, administration asked teachers to set professional goals as PLC groups and to begin to develop common assessments across each grade level subject. In addition to these initiatives, teachers were invited to participate on a faculty council and on child decision teams. These

committees provided important opportunities for staff involvement in decision making.

Throughout this time, administrators provided training and support in each task that was asked of teachers. Faculty and department meetings were devoted to working through the challenges associated with these changes. Open communication was a priority at the school and the principal and assistant principal consistently reinforced the idea that the school was a team with a common goal and a common mission. This combination of structures and approaches to change exemplifies issues identified in the problem of practice. This research project provided a means of checking in on the results of these comprehensive efforts. By gathering information about teachers' perceptions of the leadership at the school and pairing that with a systematic documentation of the day to day strategies utilized by the administration, stakeholders will be able to determine what is working and what needs to be changed. In the end, the information should lead to improved processes at the school.

**Site and participants.** The site selected for this case study was based on a reasonable expectation of access because I have personal contacts at the school. The school serves 759 students and has a staff of 120. The school is in an affluent, predominantly white suburban town in New Hampshire. The staff consists of a mix of newer and senior faculty with approximately 60 percent of the staff teaching for less than ten years and 40 percent of the staff in teaching for more than ten years. There is a very low level of staff turnover. The school follows a true middle school model with teachers working in teams of four content teachers (math, science, social studies and language arts), who share the same one hundred students. Each grade has four of these teams of students. In addition to their regular core classes, students also attend classes in integrated arts, foreign languages or support classes.

Participants in this case study included the principal and assistant principal, one curriculum coordinator and the faculty of the school. Some participants were more involved in the study than others. For example, groups of teachers were observed while working in committees, but several teachers, the principal, assistant principal and the curriculum coordinator were also interviewed. Creswell (2009) states that the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (p. 178). In this inquiry, purposive sampling was used to determine what groups were observed and who was interviewed. For example, observations were done of the first faculty meeting of the year, professional learning communities of curriculum groups and grade level meetings because each of these events was an opportunity for faculty to share in the leadership of the school and the meetings would be useful in determining how leadership was carried out in this context. Interviews were done with the administration because I wanted to understand their choices and motivations for the leadership structures they put into place and the communication techniques they use. Teacher interviewees were chosen based on teaching focus with core subject area teachers from each grade, an integrated arts teacher and a reading specialist. In all, thirteen teachers and three administrators were interviewed. This choice allowed me to gather information from the prominent subgroups within the school. In addition, these groups experienced and perceived leadership in different ways. Documenting these varied perspectives helped to create an accurate picture of leadership at the school in a more complete way.

### **Data Collection**

In order to build a multi-faceted description of how leadership plays out at this school on a day to day basis and how teachers experience this leadership, I included multiple data sources.

These sources included observations, interviews, and a document review. Data collection began during the summer of 2011 with interviews with the principal, assistant principal and curriculum coordinator. During the time period of August, 2011 to November, 2011, additional teacher interviews, observations and a document review were completed.

**Observations.** Using the research questions to develop protocol, I conducted structured observations of several faculty groups. I also conducted multiple observations of different groups. I paid attention to the connections between what the groups were working on and the school wide strategies that were determined at the beginning of the school year. I also looked for the methods each group used to meet their goals. Communication amongst group members and with building administration was noted. In addition, observations of faculty groups that were working with building administration focused on the interactions between faculty and administration. While conducting these observations, I was a non-participant observer and took descriptive field notes describing the events, activities and people without becoming involved in the activities of the participants (Creswell, 2009). I also recorded and transcribed conversations and discussions. I added an additional layer to these notes by creating reflective field notes that included personal observations, hunches, insights and broad themes that emerged (Creswell, 2009). Observations included:

- A pre-workshop faculty meeting. This meeting set tone for the day and identified goals for the school as a whole.
- Four PLC meetings of curriculum groups. It was during these meetings that goals were carried out and leadership was evidenced.

- One department meeting. This meeting included all faculty who teach in two subject areas. Decisions were made regarding scheduling, grade level issues and integrated curriculum. This is another aspect of school life where leadership was evidenced.

**Interviews.** Interviews contributed primarily to the development of embedded cases, documenting the experience of individual participants. Using my research questions to develop a protocol, I designed semi-structured interviews. This format allowed the participants to have a range of options for responding and allowed them to voice their experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2009). I kept the number of questions I asked to less than ten, allowing time to remain open to other information. Interviews were conducted with building and curriculum administration and with thirteen teachers including six teachers from grade eight, four teachers from grade seven, two teachers from the integrated arts group and one reading specialist. I used purposeful sampling when choosing individuals to interview. For example, when choosing teachers, I chose both newer and veteran teachers and considered the subjects they taught and any formal leadership roles they had in the building. I used the same criteria when choosing the integrated arts teacher and the reading specialist. My goal was that through the purposeful choice of individuals to interview, I would be able to create the most complete picture possible of leadership at the school.

Principal, Assistant Principal and Curriculum Coordinator interviews focused on the actions and strategies that these administrators utilized to share and practice leadership. They also delved into the motivations behind the leadership choices made by these individuals and how they thought leadership was perceived by teachers. Teacher interviews explored similar avenues, except from a different perspective. In addition, during these interviews I asked general questions about leadership.

Interviews were conducted in a one on one situation and were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. I obtained prior consent from each interviewee and ensured that it was clear that the interview could be stopped at any time. I met each interviewee where he or she was comfortable. Interviews were limited to thirty minutes.

**Document review.** The document review was a good source of text data and enabled me to infer aspects of teacher perceptions of leadership and also examine leadership strategies and intentions that were evidenced in the documents. I obtained permission before accessing the documents. The following existing documents were available and included in the analysis:

- Strategic plan documents. These documents contained plans made by the principal and assistant principal for the development of school structures and the planning of school goals to establish leadership opportunities. These documents also included professional development planning by the principal, assistant principal and curriculum coordinator as well as planning for monthly faculty meetings.
- PLC documents. These included group norms, goals and minutes from curriculum PLC meetings.
- Faculty council meeting notes. These document issues that arise on a day to day basis and how the faculty and administration chose to deal with those issues.
- Grade level meeting documents contained group norms and minutes from weekly grade level meetings.

### **Data Analysis**

This research project generated a large amount of qualitative data consisting of information gained through observations, interviews and existing documents. Huberman and Miles (1984) outline a set of shared ground rules for qualitative data analysis that involve

drawing conclusions and verifying their sturdiness. This process contains three steps: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification (Huberman and Miles, 1984).

Data analysis of this research was done through an inductive process and followed the three steps.

**Data reduction.** Once the data was collected, I prepared it for analysis by transcribing field notes and reflective notes. I read through the data to gain a general sense of the material. I eliminated data that did not relate to either the theoretical frameworks or research questions. I conducted an initial round of analysis that involved reading the data carefully looking for themes or categories that existed. I used these initial points to group the data in a more organized way. Following this initial organization, I analyzed the data using open coding to generate initial categories of data and developed descriptions and themes that were used in the research report (Creswell, 2009). In analyzing the data from the interviews and observations, I first utilized the strategies of grounded (emic) coding. By using this approach, I developed codes inductively that fit the case I am studying. These codes explained the actions and perceptions of each participant and the context in which the data was gathered. For example, the codes that I developed that connect to the perceptions of the building administration were different from the codes that I developed to describe the perceptions of the teacher participants. My goal with this approach was to differentiate the perspectives of each individual and to stay as close to the participants' meanings as possible (Scott & Howell, 2008). During the next round of data reduction and analysis, I utilized strategies of etic coding to place the initial codes in more general or theoretical categories (Scott & Howell, 2008). I was specifically looking for themes related to cultural and formal models of leadership, structures and strategies, shared leadership, educational change, adult learning and teacher perceptions of leadership, as explained in the theoretical

framework. Using the codes developed during both the emic and etic phases of coding, I created a codebook that contained lists and descriptors of all codes generated. I used the codebook to guide an additional round of data analysis during which I again reviewed all of the data collected using the analytical lens of the codes collected. Throughout each round of analysis, I combined codes that overlapped, repeated or went together thus gradually reducing and clarifying the number of codes used to sort the data. Throughout this phase, data was condensed and transformed so that they could be made intelligible in terms of my theoretical framework and research questions.

**Data display.** Miles and Huberman (1994) describe this second level of data analysis as going a step beyond data reduction in that it provides an organized, focused method of displaying data in a way that helps the researcher to draw conclusions. For this inquiry, the data display took the form of a chart that provided a new way of arranging the textually embedded data. Categories in the chart were used to organize the display based on the theoretical frameworks, research questions and other findings that resulted from the process of data reduction. I remained open to additional categories or themes that emerged during the display process. In addition, I displayed the data from each method of collection (interview, observation and document review) and used this to triangulate my findings.

**Conclusion drawing and verification.** During this final phase of data analysis, I stepped back and considered what the analyzed data meant and assessed that meaning in relation to my research questions. I revisited the data repeatedly in order to cross-check conclusions that seemed to emerge. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend thirteen tactics for generating meaning from data displays. These include “noting patterns and themes, clustering cases, making contrasts and comparisons, partitioning variables, and subsuming particulars in the

general” (1994, pp. 245-262). While I did not employ all of these tactics, I used this list to guide my process during this phase of data analysis. Specifically I noted patterns and themes, clustered cases in the form of responses, and compared and contrasted findings.

Table 1 presents the work plan for data collection and analysis.

Table 1

*Data collection activities and timeline*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Conduct and analyze interviews with principal, assistant principal and curriculum coordinator.	June-October 2011
Conduct document review and analyze data	Jul -August 2011
Introduce project to school faculty	August 2011
Conduct observations of curriculum groups and grade level group meetings and analyze data.	October 2011
Conduct and analyze interviews with thirteen teachers.	June-October 2011
Synthesize analysis into findings	November 2011-January 2012

### **Limitations and Reliability**

Reliability and validity of data collection and analysis are critical to help ensure that data resulting from the research are interpretable and findings are trustworthy.

**Validity.** In qualitative research, validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings (data and interpretations) by employing specific procedures (Creswell, 2009). Findings were validated in several ways. Data was collected from multiple sources and

using different methods to allow for the triangulation of data findings. The use of this strategy enhanced the validity because it functioned as a check and balance system. Each finding was confirmed through multiple sources and methods, allowing for a higher level of certainty. As I worked through the process of coding and analyzing the data, I used member checking by selecting participants to check the accuracy of the categories, interpretations and conclusions that I developed (Yin, 2009). An additional strategy I used to enhance validity was the construction of a rich, thick description to convey my findings, which made the results more comprehensible for an outside reader. Finally, because my office was located at the research site for four years, my research benefitted from prolonged time at the school. I have an in-depth understanding of the culture of the school and was able to convey details about the site and the people there that added credibility to my narrative (Creswell, 2009).

**Bias and reactivity.** Maxwell (1996) recommends identifying threats to a study's validity and planning for them. He considers bias and reactivity as the most significant threats to the validity of a study (p. 108). The most significant threat to the validity of the study related to my bias was my close connection to the school and the influence this connection could have on how I viewed the results of the study. My role in the district was the Curriculum Coordinator for Language Arts and Social Studies in grades K-8. My office was located in this school and I had oversight of the curriculum in the Language Arts and Social Studies departments. In addition, I was a part of the development of the strategy for PLC groups and was directly involved in the goals that groups in my department set. While I was not directly involved in most of the day to day aspects of leadership, my viewpoint as a curriculum administrator afforded me a perspective on how leadership was carried out at the school.

To ensure that the observation, beliefs and conclusions of the participants remained free of my viewpoint, I constantly took into account my own professional background and its potential influence. I kept a reflexive field journal with the intention of continuously testing my data, categories, interpretations and conclusions against my own biases (Lincoln and Guba, 1985.) In addition, I actively pursued questions about differences between my perspective and the perspectives of the participants. I sought out discrepant data (Yin, 2003) by purposely asking about challenges and negative experiences to offset my own perspective. Additionally, continuous dialog with the literature helped me to keep a distance from my own personal views.

It was also be important to prepare for the possibility that my role in the school may have influenced how participants responded. To counter this reactivity (Creswell, 2009), I utilized several strategies. At the beginning of the study, I took time with the faculty to explain the purpose of the study. I assured the group that I wanted to develop an honest portrayal of the case studied and that the best way for them to help me to achieve that was through frankness and honesty. The faculty knows me and I enjoy a level of trust and credibility, which helped participants to understand that candor was truly what I wanted from them. In addition, the use of multiple forms of data guarded against a reactive influence. The triangulation of this data helped me to establish the honesty of the participants' responses.

**Reliability.** Yin (2003) defines reliability as the likelihood that another researcher would reach the same conclusions about the same case study. Under this definition, reliability is an indication that data is collected in a consistent manner and can be replicated. Reliability was addressed through careful attention to the plan for the study and the way data was collected, analyzed and reported. Each phase of the data collection had a protocol that was identified ahead of time and used as a framework to guide the interviews and observations. The process and

evolution of each phase of the data collection has been documented in enough detail that an additional researcher could repeat the procedures (Yin, 2009). In addition, using the codebook I developed during the data analysis phase, I asked my advisor to participate in an exercise of inter-rater reliability using an excerpt of the data collected (Boyatzis, 1998).

**Limitations.** Limitations of this research included the fact that this was an individual case study. This research would be stronger with a multiple case comparison, but limitations due to time available and access to data have narrowed this project to one case. However, this study conveyed an in-depth and contextualized understanding of leadership at one school and also provided transferrable insights and comparable data for others to analyze (Lyons, 2009). In order to increase the likelihood of the transferability of my findings, I have created a thick description which will provide the widest possible range of information. In addition, I have provided detailed demographic data and situational description. This information, combined with a careful effort to connect my findings to theory, helped to inform the context of my findings and make the research easier to transfer (Lincoln and Guba, 1985.)

An additional concern is that data from this research will be subjective as it is made up of perceptions of the people in the environment of the case study site. Values of the participants will have an impact and should be understood and taken into account when conducting and reporting on the research.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Participation in this project did not present any obvious risks to participants. The project documented leadership practices in the school and explored participants' perceptions of those practices. It did not pose any consequences as a result of participation; therefore, it did not put the wellbeing or rights of participants at risk. However, I asked teachers and staff to provide

their perceptions of the effectiveness of the school leadership, which could be difficult if they wanted to be critical of the leaders, of other colleagues, or of their own work. Keeping this fact in mind, I ensured that information gained through this research project is protected and used only for the project. In addition, I kept as much information as possible to the use of general or background information about the overall description of the school. When using direct quotes or references to participant responses, I attempted to use statements that would not negatively affect their working relationships and I asked participants to review the transcripts of their interviews to assure they were comfortable. In addition, in the use of any direct quote, even though I used pseudonyms, I asked for the approval of the participant.

Participants may have benefitted from participation in the project because they had the opportunity to share their observations and opinions. This could lead, in the local context, to a potential influence on how leadership is enacted at the school on a day to day basis. In a broader context, participant input could inform the existing body of information about the effects of certain leadership practices.

Nonetheless, it was worth planning for some potential risks and implementing measures of protection for participants. I made several attempts at protecting the participants in this case study. I worked to develop a trust with them, promoted the integrity of the research, guarded against misconduct and impropriety and protected their personal privacy through data collection and analysis. I ensured that information gained through this research project was protected and used only for the project. In addition, I kept as much information as possible to the use of general or background information about the overall description of the school. When using direct quotes or references to participant responses, I attempted to use statements that would not negatively affect their working relationships and I asked participants to review the transcripts of

their interviews to assure they were comfortable. In addition, in the use of any direct quote, I asked for the approval of the participant. Confidentiality was offered to all participants who were concerned about their input. If a participant opted for confidentiality, their input was only used to build background understanding of the case. Before conducting any research, I ensured that participants understood the purpose of the study. I gained permission to conduct research at the site from gatekeepers and shared information such as why the site was chosen, what time and resources were required, what would be accomplished through the research at the site, what disruptions my presence may cause, what individuals involved in the research would gain and what would I do with the results (Creswell, 2009). I had my research plans reviewed and approved by Northeastern University's Institutional Review Board.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account. I informed participants of their rights, and their option to withdraw at any time. In addition, I ensured participants of their right to approve or request removal of any aspect of the results that they felt may be damaging. I obtained an agreement from the building principal that any data revealed by the research project would not be used for individual evaluation purposes. Research results were reported without revealing the identity of individual participants. However, because this project took place within a single school, anonymity could not be guaranteed. Participants were not named in any reports and their identities were concealed in data documentation and transcripts. A level of anonymity was achieved through the use of pseudonyms for individuals and place. Recordings were destroyed after transcription.

Confidentiality was offered to all participants who were concerned about their input. If a participant opted for confidentiality, their input would only be used to build background understanding of the case. I provided participants access to the results of the work. During the

analysis of the data phase of the study, I cross checked the accuracy of the data with selected participants. Data, once analyzed, will be kept for between five and ten years.

### **Conclusion**

The case study methodology used for this inquiry aligns with other research on leadership in schools. Collecting multiple sources of data lent itself to the creation of a rich, thick description of leadership in this school and how it is perceived by teachers. My long standing membership in the school community helped to provide an accurate representation of the events at the school. Careful coding and the use of peer review of the codes ensured reliability and enhanced the trustworthiness of the information and analysis. This project will benefit other leaders, teachers and researchers who are interested in current models of educational leadership.

### **Chapter 4: Report of Research Findings**

This chapter presents the key findings and analysis of research conducted over a six month period at one suburban middle school in New Hampshire. The first section provides a brief review of the study context and a description of the participants. The second section will provide an overview of the themes developed during the coding and analysis of the data. The third section will present a detailed examination of the broad themes and their corresponding sub-themes from the perspective of the stakeholders who participated in the study, including the administrators, the teachers and the researcher. Findings will be summarized in the final section.

The data was reviewed to answer four research questions developed at the onset of this study.

1. How do school leaders balance formal and cultural models of leadership? What works? What does not?

2. How do school leaders affect change on a day to day level? How does the organization respond?
3. How does the particular context, including climate and culture, of a district or an institution affect the implementation of a leadership model?
4. How do teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate?

### **Review of Study Context, Participants, and Methodology**

This research study explored how one middle school in a suburban New Hampshire town translates existing models of leadership into practice and how teachers experience these differences in practice. This school was opened in 2007, when the school district built and opened its first high school, built a new middle school and reconfigured the remaining K-8 schools in the district. Prior to 2007, students in grades 6-8 attended middle school in a building that had been in existence since the 1960s. With the move to the new middle school building, grade six became part of the district's intermediate school. In addition, the assistant principal of the old middle school became the principal of the new middle school and a new assistant principal was hired.

Beginning with the opening of the school, the principal and assistant principal established a leadership style and philosophy that would create a climate of shared leadership and responsibility at the school. Now, nearly five years later, this effort is still underway and is beginning to yield results.

During the first year, the administration began to expose the faculty to the idea of professional learning communities (PLCs). In the second and third years, the principal and assistant principal reconfigured the master schedule to allow for weekly curriculum area PLC

meetings, asked teachers to set professional goals as PLC groups and to begin to develop common curricula across each grade level subject. During the fourth year, teachers in the PLC groups were asked to develop common assessments across each subject area.

In addition to these initiatives, teachers were invited to participate on a faculty council and on child decision teams. These committees provided important opportunities for staff involvement in decision making. Throughout this time, administrators provided training and support in each task that was asked of teachers. Faculty and department meetings were devoted to working through the challenges associated with these changes. Open communication was a priority at the school and the principal and assistant principal consistently reinforced the idea that the school was a team with a common goal and a common mission.

This research examined how school leaders at this school balance formal and cultural models of leadership and affect change on a day to day basis. In addition, the research explored how the context of a district or an institution affects the implementation of a leadership model. The study also examined how teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate.

The research employed a single site case study of one middle school and included various groups and stakeholders within the school. Three administrators, including the building principal, assistant principal and district curriculum coordinator were interviewed. In addition, thirteen teachers including content area teachers, a reading specialist, a guidance counselor and a special education teacher were interviewed. All interviews were done in person at the school. The focus of the interviews was to gain the perspectives of the participants about how leadership is utilized and experienced at the school.

In addition to the interviews, this researcher conducted six observations of group meetings. The meetings consisted of four PLC meetings run by curriculum groups, one introductory meeting for a faculty workshop day and one department meeting. During each meeting, the researcher kept a journal of field notes focused on pertinent conversations, issues being discussed and decisions that were made and how those decisions were made. Finally, the researcher obtained documents generated by the school administrators that were used to plan workshops and meetings and to educate faculty members about school initiatives. Table 2 identifies data sources used in all four research questions of the study.

Table 2

*Use of data sources by research question*

Research Question	Administrator Interviews	Teacher Interviews	Researcher Observations	Documentary Evidence
How do school leaders balance formal and cultural models of leadership? What works? What does not?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How do school leaders affect change on a day to day level? How does the organization respond?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How does the particular context, including climate and culture, of a district or an institution affect the implementation of a leadership model?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How do teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Themes

Through the interviews, observations and document review, three overarching themes emerged. The first pertained to effective leadership. Within this overarching theme were several subthemes, including the source of leadership and authority, such as a leader's formal role or level of experience; the quality and relevance of relationships; and the use of distributed decision making. Another overarching theme was a successful change process. Sub-themes, such as including people in the decision making process, promoting collaboration and creating a conducive work environment repeatedly arose, providing depth to this theme. Finally, the role a positive climate plays in the implementation of leadership and in the creation of a successful change process was the final overarching theme that came from the data analysis. This theme contained the sub-themes of communication, trust and shared leadership. Table 3 outlines the key themes and sub-themes that emerged from this research data.

Table 3

### *Key Themes and Sub-themes*

<b>Key Theme</b>	Sub-theme	Sub-theme	Sub-theme
<b>Effective Leadership</b>	Source of Leadership and Authority	Quality and Relevance of Relationships	Distributed Decision Making
<b>Successful Change Process</b>	Including people in the decision making process	Promoting Collaboration	Creating a Conducive Work Environment
<b>Positive Climate</b>	Communication	Trust	Shared Leadership

**Effective Leadership.** Throughout this study, all participants reflected on aspects of effective leadership. Three sub-themes emerged from the research. These include (a) the source

of leadership and authority, such as a leader's formal role or level of experience, (b) the quality and relevance of relationships, and (c) the use of distributed decision making and shared leadership.

***Source of leadership and authority.***

*Administrator interviews.* When the school administrators were interviewed, all three of them expressed that they view their formal role as one ideally designed to serve those who work for them. They cited many examples of ways that they work hard to support the teachers in the building and create conditions that enabled teachers to do the best work possible. They shared the importance of holding this viewpoint in order to effectively lead others.

In order to gather background on the leaders interviewed, this researcher began by asking each administrator how they saw themselves as a leader. In answering this question, the principal responded, "I think you serve, and that's the thing, anytime you become a leader and are entrusted with that much responsibility, you are entrusted with the service to the people that you work for" (personal communication, June 27, 2011). This statement was reflected in the responses of both the assistant principal and the curriculum coordinator who each shared that they believe compassion is very important, as is the ability to listen carefully to what people are saying in order to more effectively support the people they are leading. Understanding that the leaders in this building hold the basic value of leadership as service helped to frame this analysis.

Administrators also recognized the vastness of their roles. All three stated that their jobs had changed and were growing in scope and responsibility each year. Managing all of the aspects and requirements of the job was an important part of leading effectively. They also said that staying focused was key to being successful and was difficult to do because of the fast pace of the job and the many different details they are required to manage each day. They reflected that

when they are most effective as leaders is when they are able to stay in touch with what really matters and keep themselves focused the priorities of the school.

The principal indicated that the requirements of leadership have changed and that those changes have placed new demands on leaders. He said,

When I first got into teaching, maybe one administrator would take a curricular lead and the other one would be more of a disciplinarian and they would both do the personnel stuff like hiring, dismissing, and they would do the budget. But now everything has expanded. We are expected to be curriculum leaders. We are expected to have similar curriculum in all the different grade levels and that requires a lot of effort and a lot of diversity in what you're doing. It's like everything is on steroids now. I can remember when we were first teaching there was no common curriculum. People taught what they wanted, and we got varied results. The kids all got where they needed to get but it was different. (personal communication, June 27, 2011)

Another challenge that leaders report is the tendency to be drawn away by the smaller daily details of running a school. The curriculum coordinator shared that she strives to stay in touch with what really matters and keep her focus. She says that leaders are battered by all of the things that they are responsible for in any given day and holding on to the right priorities is a big challenge. The principal elaborated on this point saying,

Every day, every year, you are faced with a different set of challenges in front of you and it's your job to figure out how to deal with them. And it's not clean. And you need to have conversations with people and you need to figure it out with the help of people. There are times when you need to shut the door and say a few bad words and then you go back out

there, put on a smiley face, and take the high road (personal communication, June 27, 2011).

*Teacher commentary.* Teachers also shared their perspectives regarding the source of leadership and authority. They reflected on the similarities between the approaches to leadership they felt the faculty would like and the actual model of leadership that is practiced in the building. One teacher said, “We feel like (the principal’s) leadership style is very similar to a lot of our leadership styles or the way we want them to be. We hear this all the time that (our principal) is a fantastic principal. He’s a great leader. I think individually most of us want to aspire to be that” (Teacher #11, personal communication, October 3, 2011).

*Researcher observations.* During the observations of one PLC group, teachers discussed the concept of leadership and authority. This group, like the rest of the groups, had been tasked with creating common assessments. This task was proving to be a challenge for this group. During the first meeting observed, they struggled to come to terms with the idea. During the second meeting they expressed their frustration with administration for asking them to develop the assessments. Teachers talked about how at first the idea of common assessments was suggested as a possibility and now it was a required part of their work. Teachers in this group wanted administrators to make the decision for them from the start because they would not choose this for themselves. This group believed that common assessments were required from the start and that administration had misled them by implying that the creation of the assessments was a suggestion.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, another PLC group welcomed the opportunity to create common assessments because the concept fit into how that group worked together anyway. This group perceived the request as simply that, a request. They felt that they

maintained their autonomy because they would have chosen to create common assessments even without administrative input.

The different perspectives of these two PLC groups showed that the leadership used in a given situation can be interpreted differently based on the current thinking of a group regarding an individual issue. The first group perceived that the building leadership was utilizing a top down mandate to require common assessments, while the second group felt that they were being given autonomy and were sharing in the decision. This was because the first group was resistant to the idea and regarded administration as making the decision for them. The second group embraced the idea because they would have chosen to do it on their own and as a result, they held the view that this was a form of shared leadership.

The PLC observations also revealed that building leadership makes choices regarding utilizing formal or cultural models of leadership in a given situation. One PLC group was struggling to agree on a common curriculum. This group had made little progress throughout the year. As a result, administration met with the group and directed them to come up with a common curriculum. In addition, administration asked this group to meet for an entire day to work on this issue and the curriculum coordinator responsible for that subject area spent the day with the group and facilitated the discussion. In this example, administration began by sharing leadership when they asked the group to find a way to come up with a common curriculum. They gave ample time for this work, but when the group was not successful, administration chose to be more directive and even became hands on in the work.

***Quality and relevance of relationships.***

*Administrator interviews.* Administrators discussed the quality and relevance of relationships with regard to effective leadership. They said that in order for a leader to be

effective, he or she must be open minded and not be of the opinion that their ideas are the only ones that matter. This is an example of how listening to people and knowing the faculty is important. Administrators also reported that being flexible is essential. They said that even the best ideas often go wrong and a successful leader is able to consult others and make changes mid-course if needed. All three described leadership as messy. They also think that being able to admit to making a mistake and showing willingness to learn and grow from mistakes strengthens relationships with others and allows for more successful leadership.

All leaders interviewed included the importance of having a vision for the school in their role as a leader. When asked what he felt were the most important characteristics a leader should possess, the principal responded, “it’s having a vision, and explaining your vision, and trying to get the majority of people on your side” (personal communication, June 27, 2011). He emphasized this as a necessary part of leadership, but also went on to share that it is also how he affects change on a day to day basis in his school. He said that following sharing his vision, he puts teachers in key leadership positions. These teachers share a similar philosophy and through ongoing conversations throughout the year with teacher leaders, more and more teachers take on the vision for the school and make it their own (personal communication, June 27, 2011).

All leaders cited the importance of knowing the people who work in a building. This often influences the form of leadership that may be used in a given situation. The principal said, “I think different people need different things. To know your staff and where they are at is crucial. Some people, I just need to sit down and have a conversation with them and say you know what, you are doing some great things. You need to take this up a level. And see if they’ll do that” (personal communication, June 27, 2011). When dealing with groups of teachers who are working on a project, he shared that he will often identify a person in the group who knows

the material or the process and will ask that person to take the lead. In another situation he may blend both formal and cultural models of leadership. For example, a group of teachers may need to improve in a particular area and the principal will tell them what needs to improve but leave it up to the group to decide how the improvements will be made. In this way, he is being directive, but is also allowing for teacher ownership of the process.

Administration also referenced listening as a tool to implement leadership. The assistant principal shared how important it is to him to get out of his office each day to connect with faculty. That is one way he listens to people. The principal agreed with this statement and added that he believes schools can't move forward unless leadership is watching and listening to the needs of the faculty. He believes it is important to be in tune with the people he is leading.

*Teacher commentary.* Throughout the interviews, teachers shared that they thought it was very important that leaders know the faculty that they are working with. Several teachers expressed surprise and admiration that the leadership in this building had taken the time to know teachers on a personal level and that they applied that knowledge to how decisions were made and communicated. Teachers also recognized that in this building, they are involved in the processing that happens after decisions have been made. They have seen the principal make mistakes, admit he is wrong and ask for help in moving forward and finding a better way. This openness on his part created a respect within the faculty. Several teachers also expressed that in order to lead successfully, administrators have to understand how adults learn and develop and they specified that this is very different from how students learn and develop.

Teacher #1 offered the following advice to administrators:

You have to know your people. You have to know that she's going to get mad, and she's going to cry, and she's just going to sit there quietly and then go back to her room. You

have to know your people so when big changes are going to happen or you have to weather through tough times, you can weather the storm together. To have that open door policy is so huge and not to just put a name on it, but to really live it, to really know what's going on in peoples' lives, that's commendable leadership. (personal communication, June 17, 2011)

***Distributed decision making and shared leadership.***

*Administrator interviews.* Both administrators and teachers recognized the use of distributed decision making as a tool for effective leadership. Administrators described their choice to share leadership as a way for them to do their jobs more efficiently, as well as a way to make better decisions. Given the expansive requirements of their jobs, sharing tasks and responsibility with teachers is a very effective way of making sure that the jobs get done. Involving people in decision making ensures that more viewpoints and ideas are considered, resulting in better decisions.

The assistant principal shared, “everyone chips in and has ideas about how to move forward. Sadly, I've been in buildings where people offer ideas, but the school doesn't end up moving forward in the right direction because the person at the top leadership position is very shortsighted and doesn't listen to those ideas”(personal communication, October 3, 2011). This statement shows his belief in the importance of a leadership model that is inclusive and is not hierarchical in determining who has a say in the direction of a building. When leaders value the input of all stakeholders, the school is more likely to be able to change in a positive way.

The curriculum coordinator described how she distributes leadership. Instead of opening leadership opportunities to all faculty, she makes careful decisions about who she asks to help revise curriculum. She has stalwarts that she knows she can get help from and these individuals

are knowledgeable about curriculum development and their content areas. However, she said she doesn't really hand pick individuals to lead curriculum development, but shares information with the faculty about upcoming work so that as many people as possible can get opportunities to participate. By doing this, she is holding on to a more formal leadership role because she is controlling who is leading curriculum work, but she also balances that control by inviting others to share in the work, which is a more cultural model of leadership.

Findings from this study indicate that in this school, leaders choose to share leadership. The principal reflected on the size of his job and his role in the building saying, "I can't do it all, and you know what, I'm not smart enough to do it all. You have to have good people in key positions to take on leadership roles. You've got to give them authority with their responsibility, and you have to support them" (personal communication, June 27, 2011). By giving teachers authority with their responsibility, he is, in fact, sharing leadership. Many leaders delegate tasks to others, but in this case, the authority to make decisions or come up with new ideas and the impact those will have on the progress of the school is what makes this shared leadership.

*Teacher interviews.* The teachers in this school had insights about the choices that the building administration makes regarding when to share leadership and when not to share leadership. Teacher #3 described the many instances that leadership is shared in the building but also offered this caution, "There are some things that I think administration puts out to everyone that they really don't have to, they could just make the decision and it would be a lot easier for everybody. I would say prioritize how much you decide to share for leadership" (personal communication, June 15, 2011). This quote reflects the responses that many teachers had regarding what is shared and what is not.

Even though there are times when administration does not share leadership, the majority of the time, leadership is shared in this school. Teacher #9 described leadership opportunities that teachers are given in the area of curriculum development. He said that teachers are allowed to choose a direction for their PLC groups and that when they want to make changes in their curriculum, they feel very comfortable going to the administration to tell them the direction they would like to go in, the rationale for that thinking and how they plan to get there.

He also described other ways that leadership is shared in the building. One of the ways is through formal committees. He described his participation in the CORE Committee. That is a group that meets once a month before faculty meetings. During this time, administration shares information with the group to take back to their content areas or grade level to get feedback on any initiatives that administration is trying to put into place. He said most of what the CORE committee deals with involves the day to day operations of the school such as fire drill procedures, scheduling and standardized testing (personal communication, October 17, 2011).

Teacher #7 shared how his PLC was responding positively to the building administration sharing leadership by allowing teachers to develop curriculum. He believes that it has been very effective and that teachers are coming out with energetic, exciting and cutting edge ideas. He described a recent workshop day when administrators fought to give building PLC teams time to be creative. Administrators provided significant time for teachers to work on curriculum. The time was patterned after the company Google's Google Days, where people spend chunks of time creating new ideas. In the past this has proven to be one of the most productive techniques Google has utilized to develop new and exciting ideas. On the workshop day teachers followed the same pattern. At the end of the day, faculty met and shared what they had done. Teacher #7 reported that the ideas teachers came up with were amazing. He listed whole new units,

technology pieces related to using climographs, the incorporation of Google Docs into curriculum areas, and many other projects and innovations. In addition, he said that in contrast to other workshop days when, by the end of the day, teachers were tired and wanted to go home, on this day, the room was filled with energy, interest and enthusiasm (personal communication, October 13, 2011).

Teachers shared that they appreciated the freedom to make decisions in the school, particularly with respect to curriculum or student needs. However, many teachers also stated that this administration sometimes offers too many opportunities to share in decisions. Examples of this consisted of the nuts and bolts decisions of running the school. Teachers did not want to be involved in these because it took away time they had to focus on their students. Thus, sharing decision making is important, but to be truly effective, administration should be careful about what decisions they decide to share.

Teacher #9 suggested that when administrators share leadership, it promotes change. He said, “My team feels like we have a lot of autonomy in deciding what we’re going to teach and how we’re going to teach it and the direction we are going to go. When we make curricular suggestions to our administrators we are seeking feedback but we definitely feel like we are being heard and listened to and that a lot of times the decisions are what we suggest”(personal communication, October 17, 2011).

Teacher #10 shared one example of when the administration did not share leadership and the results were successful. She described the decision made by administration to switch the teaching teams.

They took the approach where they didn't really let us choose who we wanted to work with. They kind of did what they thought was best and I think that was good. I think most

people fear change, and if you would ask them, most people wouldn't have wanted to switch. I think by saying this is where you're going to be and these are the people you're going to teach with, everyone had to make the adjustment and I think that helps people to stretch and it's really effective (personal communication, October 13, 2011).

Teachers also reported negative perceptions and experiences. Teacher #3 shared, "administration is always asking teachers their opinions on things. I think sometimes that's good and sometimes that's bad, depending on the situation. Some people just want to be told what to do, and others would be offended if they weren't asked what they think about a certain thing" (personal communication, June 15, 2011). Another teacher said, "Sometimes I will come away from a meeting with a task and I will be thinking, 'this is the principal's job. We shouldn't be making this decision.' Because we will come away not really knowing what the desired outcome is or why we are making the decision" (Teacher #1, personal communication, June 17, 2011). Several teachers reported that, while they understand and appreciate why they are asked to share leadership, they also wish that the leadership teams could spend more time in the classrooms and be part of that setting, as well. They believe that more administrative involvement in the daily teaching work with the students would create a deeper understanding from both aspects of the school that would help all stakeholders make the best decisions.

Regardless of their various positive and negative experiences with distributed leadership and shared leadership, teachers feel strongly about having a voice in the decisions made in the school. During their interviews, teachers were asked if they thought administrators should make all of the decisions in the school and leave teachers to their work of teaching in the classroom. Responses were very passionate. For example, Teacher #9 stated,

I don't understand how you divorce those two things. Because if you're telling me what to do, then my job in the classroom is fundamentally changed. It has become a job where I deliver something you've told me to deliver rather than to decide what's important, develop ways to find out whether kids have learned that and teach them. So I see the frustration teachers have with being asked to be involved in the nuts and bolts stuff like the scheduling and all this other stuff. But when it comes to the bigger parts of the job, that sentence doesn't make sense to me. I make decisions everyday about what to teach and how to teach it, so if leadership is telling me all those things, then what do you need me for (personal communication, October 17, 2011)?

*Researcher observations.* During observations of the four PLC meetings, the researcher noted the role the vision for the school played in each discussion. Teachers in each meeting referenced their understanding of that vision during discussions about curriculum. For example, one group of teachers was designing a new geography curriculum. They noted that part of the school's vision is to have active learners who are culturally aware and who incorporate technology into their learning. This idea structured their discussion and their ultimate curriculum decision to incorporate an academically based social networking feature into a project the students were doing about researching individual countries. In another group, both PLC meetings that were observed involved heated discussions about the creation of common assessments. Teachers in this group knew that the vision for the school involved having common assessments across the grade and subject in each curriculum area. This group struggled with this aspect of the vision because they felt it conflicted with their autonomy as teachers. No resolution was reached during the two meetings observed.

When asked how teachers respond to opportunities to lead, many teachers shared that the response would depend on level and kinds of leadership expected from individual teachers. Both veteran and relatively new teachers reflected on the changes in leadership expectation. Teacher #5 said, “I think the old-school idea of becoming a teacher meant you were instructed on how to teach, not necessarily how to lead” (personal communication, June 17, 2011). Several teachers echoed this idea saying that to many teachers shared leadership is a new concept that is not always welcomed. There are also many teachers who embrace the changing expectations of teacher leadership. One teacher shared how changing expectations have changed her role, “as a reading specialist in the old days, it was strictly working with the kids. In the past 5 to 7 years that role has evolved to include working with teachers. The district and the principal here have completely supported this role of leadership embedded into my regular job” (personal communication, June 15, 2011).

*Researcher observations.* In looking at the planning documents for each faculty meeting during the school year, the researcher noticed that there were standing topics derived from the CORE Committee, PLC groups, the reading specialist and the technology integration specialist. In addition, each meeting agenda included time to add additional issues teachers wanted to address. These meetings are limited to half an hour and, based on the number of topics that are led by faculty members, it is clear that the meetings are focused on the needs of the faculty. Review of the planning documents for the four building workshop days that take place during the year showed that each day began with a two hour professional development session led by the administration. These sessions included presentation time as well as large and small group work time. Each session was followed by PLC or grade level work time for the remainder of the day. While the topics focused on in each of these days changed, the emphasis on teacher participation

remained constant. The structure and emphasis on teacher participation during these whole faculty meetings provide additional evidence that distributed leadership and shared leadership are practiced in the school.

**Successful change process.** Another key theme that arose from this study is the creation of a successful change process. Three sub-themes emerged from the research. These themes are: (a) including people in the decision making process, (b) promoting collaboration and (c) creating a conducive work environment. All of these were identified as contributing to a successful change process at this school.

***Including people in the decision making process.***

*Administrator interviews.* Administrators reflected that in order to create a successful change process in the school, they rely heavily on including people in the decision making process. They described how they work with the faculty to develop common objectives and then empower teachers by allowing them to make decisions regarding how to meet those objectives. Communicating ideas with teachers was cited an important tool for creating a successful change process. Administrators shared examples of times when communication was not as solid as it should be and resulted in a negative outcome for initiatives in the building.

In addition to constantly working to communicate with people, they also shared that they try to be open to ideas. They may initially have a plan of how to move forward, but by communicating that plan to the faculty and then listening carefully to peoples' thoughts, they are often able to find better ways of making progress. The principal noted the importance of being open to the needs of the school and the faculty. He said, "the biggest mistake that I see leaders making is coming in with their own preconceived notions about how things are going to be and not having the ability to flex or change direction"(personal communication, June 27, 2011). He

shared that reflecting on choices and how they are affecting the school is very important. He believes that a building leader needs to be open to realizing he or she may be wrong about a leadership approach or a decision and be willing to make changes for the better.

The principal cited feedback he receives each year from some teachers who say they want him to make all of the decisions and that they will abide by those decisions. He said this group is a minority in the school and that he thinks this sentiment is not as common in teaching as it is in other professions because he believes that teachers are leaders and not followers and thus want a say in what is happening in the school. He does admit, however, that in his effort to share leadership to create a successful change process, he may err too often on the side of pulling people in to the decision making process (personal communication, June 27, 2011).

*Teacher commentary.* Teachers reflected that this administration works hard to build consensus before making decisions. They believe this is helpful because more opinions lead to better decisions, but also because if teachers have had input into a decision, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership over the initiative, which ultimately results in a successful change process.

Teachers also cited the importance of having control over the outcomes of an initiative. One teacher gave two examples of this concept. In the first example, he described the strong influence on curriculum that teachers have in this school and contrasted that with other schools where teachers are required to use packaged programs. He shared that in this school, teachers are open to change and to trying new ideas because they have some control over the outcome. On the contrary, in other schools that use mandated packaged programs, teachers have little to no say in the outcome and as a result, are highly resistant to the change that resulted from the adoption of the programs.

Teacher #12 shared a more generalized view of how leadership is shared in the building. I think for the most part, administration does a really good job of trying to build consensus before they make a decision. Which is good. Because then everybody has an input. It may not be a leadership input, but it's input that's going to help to affect the outcome of the decision. They really do a good job of trying to get as much information as they can to make that informed decision about whatever it is that they're going to do. Some people still don't like the decisions. But they usually don't just jump right into a decision and then tell us after it's been finished (personal communication, October 3, 2011).

These two teachers' responses provide information about how teachers are included in the decision making process. Administrators constantly attempt to build consensus as a method of shared decision making.

Teacher responses also indicated that they appreciate the importance of vision and how this administration shares that vision with them and asks them to be a part in creating the vision. Creating a vision for an entire school is not generally considered to be a part of a teacher's job. However, in this school, the leaders place a tremendous amount of importance on communicating their vision for the school with teachers. In turn, they ask teachers to participate in the creation and evolution of the vision and to ultimately adopt the vision and work with them to achieve success.

One teacher reflected on her perspective of how decisions are made in the school. She said, "the heart of leadership is looking at decisions that are made and carefully considering what worked and what didn't work and why and what you can make better." (Teacher #4, personal communication, June 15, 2011). It is through the decision making process that this teacher, and

others, are asked to help create and improve the vision for the school and to participate in a successful change process.

*Researcher observations.* During all four of the PLC meetings observed, teachers talked about how the building leadership was including people in the decision making process. Most of their reactions were mixed, as individuals within each group had different reactions to the work they were doing and the level of involvement administration had in that work. Some teachers had strong negative feelings about the changes they were being asked to make. This coincided with their struggle to complete the work or their resistance to change. Other teachers saw the same administrative requests as a form of shared leadership. These teachers tended to embrace the work, and in one group, the teachers discussed how it was their group that had originated the ideas for change.

In the department meeting observed, teachers easily took on a leadership role by determining the topics for the year and offering to lead the meetings. Teachers did not grumble and were happy with this structure. This was a positive experience for these teachers. Documents gathered from one faculty meeting where teachers were asked to provide written feedback about the process of implementing PLCs provided evidence of mixed perceptions and experiences. Some teachers responded that they resented the work and were not feeling productive. Other teachers reported success and enthusiasm in their group. These responses echoed the reactions this researcher observed during the PLC meetings.

***Promoting collaboration.***

*Administrator interviews.* Promoting collaboration also plays a role in a successful change process. Administrators in this school create a schedule where time to collaborate is built in to the regular school day. They protect this time by ensuring that no one makes demands of

the teachers while they are working together. Regarding directing this work time, administrators reported that they often tell a group what needs to be worked on and let them do the work or they identify a person within the group that has a skill set needed to get a job done and put that person in charge of leading the initiative.

*Teacher commentary.* When discussing collaboration, teachers all referred to their work in their PLC groups. Several teachers mentioned that they appreciate having the regularly scheduled, protected time to work with their colleagues. Some teachers said that their PLC groups were struggling to work together and that this has slowed the change process. These teachers thought that more involvement from administrators may make a positive difference. Teachers also noted that they collaborate as teaching teams and on committees and that the culture of the building is one in which people are expected to work together.

Several teachers commented that they think the administration facilitates teamwork among the people in the building in many ways such as through PLCs, the pod structure, grade level meetings and committees. These teachers felt that the building leadership team made that a priority by ensuring that there was scheduled time for all varieties of collaboration. Teacher #5 commented, “I don’t know many other schools that have that ability and do it as well as we do. I think that is huge for the climate of the school” (personal communication, June 17, 2011).

Several teachers reported positive perceptions and experiences with how collaboration is promoted in the building. The use of PLCs was mentioned frequently. For example, Teacher #7 stated, “in our PLCs, we are able to meet as a group and decide and talk about assessments within our curriculum areas. At this point, I’m in two. I’m doing social studies and I’m doing language arts so I have quite a bit of say on what we’re doing and how we’re doing it which is pretty empowering”(professional communication, October 13, 2011). Teacher #12 elaborated on

that point saying, “I think that we are entrusted to make the decisions that are correct that affect students’ learning. There is no involvement from administration saying things have to be done in a specific way. We are allowed to have leeway based on what we see in the classroom” (personal communication, October 3, 2011).

Teachers also reported positive experiences with how decisions are made in the management of the day to day issues of the school. Teacher #6 said, “For overall decisions that impact the grade level, the administrators want us to present them with our ideas before any decision is made. I feel like we are rarely told what to do” (personal communication, June 21, 2011).

*Researcher observations.* In the department meeting observed, the curriculum coordinator was asking the teachers what they would like to focus on during each of their monthly meetings throughout the year. Teachers brainstormed ideas and then the group chose the most important issues to be covered and assigned each issue to a month based on what was the most pressing issue for that time period. The curriculum coordinator then asked teachers if they wanted to take over the planning of each meeting or if they wanted her to do that work. Teachers decided to take over the planning themselves and chose individuals to plan the meetings based on who had the strongest knowledge base for each issue. This discussion progressed smoothly and teachers were comfortable taking the lead on deciding the topics for the year and also in running the meetings. This showed that in this school, teachers have expectations that they will collaborate on issues that help the school move forward in a positive way.

*Creating a conducive work environment.*

*Administrator interviews.* Creating a work environment that is conducive to change is also a focus in this school. Administrators related the importance of having the right people in the right jobs. This allows for a more smooth and effective change process. They also talked about the importance of transferring responsibility and not just tasks to teachers. In this way, teachers own the work and have a vested interest in the success of the change. Knowing the people in the school is also important. Different people need different things in order to work well and strong leaders have this knowledge and help people to get what they need in order to be successful. Leaders in this building also reflected on the importance of compassion and really listening to people. They stated that change is difficult for many people and that in order to facilitate a successful change process, leaders need to be in tune with the feelings of the people in the building.

In speaking directly about how he creates a work environment that is conducive to change, the principal said, “when I look at my decisions, how I decide to treat people, how I decide to have every small interaction that happens during the day, how I make all those little decisions, builds a culture that allows me to be an effective leader” (personal communication, June 27, 2011).

*Teacher commentary.* Teachers attributed the creation of a conducive work environment to the way administrators in the building have broad oversight over what is happening there, but also provide flexibility within the structure of the day so that teaching teams and curriculum teams function as independent units. This allows teachers the freedom to be creative. Several teachers also remarked that the administration in the building encourages learning, that they are

always seeking ways to help the adults in the building continue learning. All of these efforts create a work environment that is conducive to a successful change process.

Teacher #1, who recently transferred into this school from another school in the district, elaborated on this point by sharing her experience.

I came from an environment where it was pretty much everybody on page 85 today. I can say firsthand that it doesn't work. People just smile and nod at the administration and then they do what they're going to do anyway. Because if you're being told that you have a certain level of professionalism as a teacher, but then you're being micromanaged to the point where you feel like you don't have that kind of respect, then you rebel. I would never want to be told, okay this is what you're doing there's no argument there is no discussion. Then it becomes dictatorial. And it sets up an environment of us versus them. I don't see that in this building. It's not us versus them. It's we are all on this team together (personal communication, June 17, 2011).

**The role of a positive climate in the implementation of leadership.** Another key theme that arose from this study is the role a positive climate plays in the implementation of leadership and in the creation of a successful change process. Several sub-themes emerged from the research, which are: (a) open communication, (b) mutual trust, and (c) shared leadership.

***Open communication.***

*Administrator interviews.* Open communication is very important to the creation of a positive climate. The principal shared that he is constantly listening to and watching people in order to determine their opinions about how the work of the school is progressing. He spends much of the day out of his office talking with faculty and students. This helps give him a clear picture of what is happening in the building. He also related that any time he asks a person to

take on a responsibility, he is very careful to provide a detailed explanation of what he would like. He believes that he needs to be able to communicate his thoughts with a high degree of detail because the teachers deserve that and also because it helps him to fully develop his ideas. He also said that how he treats people every day through small interactions and large decisions helps to create a positive climate in the school.

The principal also shared the importance of being very clear with the people he is asking to share leadership. He said,

Any time I am asking anyone to do anything I will always give them a very detailed explanation. I believe that when you give people good reasons as to why you're asking them to do something, it makes a huge difference on how they follow through on it. So, if I'm asking the teacher to do something, I'm telling them why. And I'm spending a tremendous amount of time and energy giving a good defense and getting them in the right place. It also makes me better, because you know what, if I'm explaining it and they're asking me questions, they might be right. So we are going to hit a better answer or better solution (personal communication, June 27, 2011).

This statement reflects the importance of communication and openness to feedback that the leaders in this building practice. While they may be asking teachers to take on a task or a role, they are very careful to communicate a well thought out rationale for the request. At the same time, they maintain an open mind because they know that even during an initial conversation, teachers may come up with better ideas or solutions that will change the direction or the outcome of the request.

The leaders in this building also report challenges with communication that they face. One difficulty is the sheer size of the job. They have difficulty managing all of the facets of the

job. Sometimes they forget to follow through on things or they do not have time to reach out to their staff when they need to make decisions. This becomes a problem because they have created a culture of shared leadership in the school. When communication fails or decisions are made internally, it sends a message to the faculty that shared leadership is being practiced in name only. While these incidents do not happen frequently, they can have a strong effect on the perceptions of teachers.

*Teacher interviews.* Teachers also shared that open communication is important in creating a positive climate in the school. They report having an understanding of the vision of the school and the initiatives that the school is working toward. They also shared that they appreciate that communication happens both ways – they are informed about what is happening and why, but they are also welcome to express their own opinions about any issue. This has created a sense of partnership and teamwork that teachers value.

Teacher #1 echoed this thought by saying that she believed that the level of communication teachers have with their administration is very effective. She feels that teachers can express agreement or disagreement with administrators and their opinions will be considered and respected (personal communication, June 17, 2011).

Teachers echoed the administrators' comments about the challenges related to communication. Several teachers said that they wanted more communication from the administration about decisions that were made that affected the daily functioning of the school. These teachers admitted that this was not a new problem, but also reflected that it was something that was getting more difficult to overcome because the amount of work the leadership was required to do was growing each year. Communication beyond the day to day running of the

school was also cited as an issue. Teacher #1 described her experience at the beginning of the PLC initiative.

We were told to meet as a PLC, but we didn't really know what we were supposed to do during that time. We didn't really know what the ultimate goal was. So just to sort of try to come together and figure things out on our own was really difficult. We felt like we needed some more direction from the top down (personal communication, June 17, 2011).

This statement was reflective of the opinions of several teachers who shared that they needed more communication from the building administration in order to successfully implement building initiatives.

*Researcher observations.* During observations of the faculty meeting and the PLC meetings, this researcher noted the challenges associated with communicating vision and ideas with teachers. For example, during the faculty meeting, building leadership carefully explained their vision for the work of the school. This explanation included a power point presentation, the presentation of data, whole and small group discussion and exit slips that teachers filled out that were used to determine the level of understanding and buy in on the part of the faculty. Yet, in spite of all of this and the fact that the exit slips showed that the teachers understood and were excited about the vision and direction of the school, the conversations observed in the PLC groups showed a different story. This researcher observed that teachers in most PLC groups struggled with the concepts discussed and had many questions that they did not ask during the faculty meeting. They also displayed attitudes that were less positive than those they displayed at the faculty meeting. The confusion and lack of enthusiasm translated into several PLC groups not being very productive. The challenge here is that in spite of providing high quality

professional development and receiving excellent feedback, the administration did not have an accurate idea of the understanding and beliefs of their faculty. They will need to find a way to discover this and then also make time in their already full schedules to revisit the initiative and vision with a large number of teachers in order to effectively create change in the school.

During one of the PLC meetings observed, the principal was in attendance because the teachers had requested clarification regarding the development of a common curriculum and common assessments. This group of teachers was struggling with the request and was looking for a way to maintain their individuality. They strongly objected to being asked to work in common and wanted the principal to hear their thoughts on the issue. Throughout the meeting, the principal listened carefully to their argument, asking questions that caused the teachers to reflect on their request. At the end of the meeting, he restated what he had heard in order to verify that he had understood what the group was saying. He told the group that he was going to think about what they said and get back to them. As a follow up to the meeting, this researcher asked the principal how the situation had resolved itself. He said that he reflected on what the group said and realized that their concerns stemmed from a misunderstanding about what they were being asked to do. He met with them again and provided them with additional professional development about the initiative. That helped ease their concerns and the group went on to slowly make progress toward the desired objectives. This series of events is an example of how the administration in this building uses open communication as a tool to create a positive climate.

***Mutual trust.***

*Administrator interviews.* Trust plays a vital role in the creation of the positive climate at this school. During interviews, administrators repeatedly shared that they trust the faculty to make the best decisions. This was displayed in the freedom teachers have in designing

curriculum, the structure of the Google Days type of workshop day and in the statements that administrators made about teachers being experts in their classrooms.

*Teacher commentary.* Teachers reported that they feel trusted by the administrators in the building. This trust is manifested in the approach to curriculum development utilized in the building, and in the time that administration invests in teachers to work together and make decisions. Several teachers contrasted the trust they receive from these administrators to the micro-managing they have experienced with other administrators. All reflected that the level of trust in the building has led to a better working environment. Interestingly, several teachers also reported that because of the way they are treated by administration, they trust them to make decisions they may not agree with. This indicated that because there is a positive climate in the school, administrators have earned leeway to make decisions in a more formal way and that when that happens, faculty trust them to make the best decisions possible.

Administrators in this building have earned a great deal of respect from the faculty. This has allowed them to utilize both formal and cultural models of leadership effectively. While most teachers reported responding positively to cultural models of leadership and cited negative reactions to top down models of leadership, the high regard the faculty has for the administrators has ensured that both models of leadership can be used effectively in this building. Teacher #1 captured this idea when she said,

We have a high level of respect for the administration here. I trust them to make the decisions that they make. So, I don't mind every now and then being told "we want you to do this." And maybe not knowing the reasons behind it, but "I'm your boss", and as my boss I will trust you. You have earned that. I've been in other situations where I wanted to

have a say in everything because I didn't trust my administration but that's not the case here. (personal communication, June 17, 2011)

Several teachers echoed this idea and expressed that in this school they feel listened to and respected. This creates a culture and climate of trust that makes implementing leadership more effective. Teacher #8 described the previously mentioned workshop day based on the Google Days format. She contrasted that day at this school with that day at the other district schools, saying, "In other buildings people had to sign in to show that they attended sessions. We didn't have to do that here. The principal trusts us. He said, 'I trust that you are going to do what you're supposed to do because you are all professionals'" (personal communication, October 17, 2011). Teacher #7 summed up how mutual trust has impacted the climate of the building, "it has allowed teachers to be more expressive and it has led to a better working climate, overall. I think people feel more relaxed. I think it helps shape a positive school climate which ultimately better impacts the teachers and therefore the students" (personal communication, October 13, 2011).

### ***Shared leadership.***

*Administrator interviews.* Shared leadership plays a role in creating a positive climate. Administrators reported that their choice to share leadership helps them make better decisions for the school. It also creates a feeling of teamwork in the school that is part of a positive climate.

One of the most common ways leadership is shared in this school is through the development and revision of curriculum. Teachers work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in their content areas and are responsible for curriculum decisions. Within this school, there are building wide initiatives such as the development of common assessments across content areas and the incorporation of constructed response into daily learning activities.

However, other aspects of curriculum are left up to the teachers to decide. The principal says,

“You give teachers parameters, there are things that need to be done and then they form the curriculum around that. Now you have people that have invested themselves into a curriculum, and it's better because they own it” (personal communication, June 27, 2011). Ownership is very important in getting people to care about their work. Sharing leadership is a key strategy for creating a sense of ownership.

The leaders in this school emphasize the benefits of sharing leadership. The assistant principal related an example of how sharing leadership in dealing with the school schedule was beneficial. He said that his choice to share leadership on this issue arose from his desire to get more information before making decisions and also to let teachers in the building get involved with things that reflect their strengths. He also stated that initially he had not involved other people in this issue and was not successful in designing the schedule. When difficulty occurred, individuals in the school offered to help him. He learned from this situation that part of his own leadership role should be not to wait for people to offer to help but to go to them and ask for help (personal communication, October 3, 2011).

In order to get teachers to share his thinking, the principal works hard to include them in the development and evolution of the vision for the school. He shared that, in his experience, when this is done well, things come together and people care about what they are doing and care about the bigger picture for the school. He believes that results in a culture that is positive and focused on the right things instead of the negatives. Ultimately, he said, “I think, and I hope, that teachers feel very valued. And feel ownership for what they're doing in their classrooms and part of the school. I would hope that they would view themselves as part of leadership” (personal communication, June 27, 2011).

*Teacher commentary.* Teachers reported that the many opportunities provided to share leadership help them feel like professionals. They have a real role in making decisions and the responsibility to make sure the school is successful. Many teachers interviewed have worked at the school through several administrative teams. These teachers recalled that when the current administration came on board, there was no specific statement that they were going to try a new strategy of leadership. Rather, these teachers remember that administration would regularly reach out to the staff to determine teachers' thoughts about the direction the school was heading. When something didn't go as planned, building leadership would ask teachers what they thought went wrong and what should be changed or done differently. Slowly, over years, this approach created a culture in which these teachers began to view themselves as part of leadership and set an expectation that they would have a say in the changes taking place in the school.

While leaders in this often opt to share leadership, there are challenges. Several teachers noted that in a shared leadership model there's always going to be a question of with whom leadership is being shared and whether or not leadership is being shared equitably among all staff. Teachers stated that that can create divisions among staff from a perception point of view. One example of this that teachers pointed to was the change in the teaching teams. Teachers said that there is a perception in the school that the changes in teaching teams happened more severely to the eighth-grade staff than it did to seventh grade staff. They believe that this reflected an unfair balance of shared leadership because there is a perception that some of the seventh grade had a say in the decisions regarding the changes and as a result, were allowed to stay with their own teams and not change.

Data gathered from teacher interviews also show that teacher have increased expectations that leadership will be shared and that based on those expectations, when leaders utilize more

formal models of leadership, it negatively affects the implementation of leadership. Several teachers who worked at the school during previous administrations described what the culture and climate were like during that time. They noted a top down type of leadership with an authoritarian style. If teachers deviated from what they were told to do, they were fearful of what would happen to them. Teachers shared that this form of leadership led to an efficient school, but a very stressful working environment. These teachers noted that when the current administration came on, the leadership style shifted. Teachers were asked for their input and their ideas were welcomed. The result of this is a satisfying workplace where creativity is rewarded. One teacher shared, “I have worked in a building with top-down leadership before, and I much prefer this type of leadership. It's a different feeling and it's a different world when someone's making every single decision for you, versus when you have some strengths that you get to share”(Teacher #11, personal communication, October 3, 2011).

Teacher interviews also addressed how shared leadership affects the culture and climate of a school and the implementation and success of leadership. Teacher #4 said, “I think having a principal with a shared leadership outlook is critical to the culture and climate of the school. Our principal is really involved with everyone on the faculty. In addition, he and the assistant principal have thoughtfully fielded out leadership roles to strong teachers within the school” (personal communication, June 15, 2011).

Other teachers said that they thought sharing leadership and involving other teachers was a smart thing to do. These teachers pointed out that if leaders approached education with a business leadership model, it would not work well in teaching. Their reasoning for this is that education is a people intensive business, and thus, employees are very sensitive. Several teachers also pointed out that many faculty members are getting masters degrees, earning PhD's or taking

intensive professional development, and that not tapping into that wellspring of knowledge would be a waste of resources. One teacher asked, “Why would you just sit in your office with one other person and try to make all the decisions yourself? You have people with valuable opinions and lots of different ways of seeing things - it seems like a waste to not tap into that” (Teacher #3, personal communication, June 15, 2011).

One teacher emphasized the importance of having a shared leadership model. She said, “I don't think that having two people make all the decisions about everything would yield the same educational environment. It is impossible for two people to know everything that's going on” (personal communication, October 3, 2011). Teacher # 10, referring to how leadership is shared in the building, said, “What's nice here is that I feel like there's enough structure in place where I don't have to make all these crazy decisions that overwhelm me or take too much of my time. I can focus more on the students. But it's an environment where I feel comfortable approaching administration if something's not working for me or if I feel like it's not working best for the kids”(personal communication, October 13, 2011). Several teachers responded in ways that agree with this statement and indicated that they felt that the school was in a positive place with regard to the spectrum from top down to shared leadership.

### **Summary of Findings**

In conclusion, this study yielded three overarching themes. In order to lead effectively, people need to carefully consider the sources of leadership and authority. Leaders need to flex between formal and cultural models of leadership based on each person and each situation. Relationships with people are very important to effective leadership. Education is a people focused business and teachers respond positively to having a genuine relationship with their

administrators. Sharing decision making is also a feature of effective leadership. Involving many people, in a substantive and appropriate way, helps leaders to succeed.

This study also indicated several factors that help produce a successful change process in the school. Again, the idea of including people in decision making played a major role in this concept. The more people had authentic involvement in decisions, the more they would be vested in the success of the change initiative. Administrators should also work hard to promote collaboration amongst the staff. When people work together, they benefit from the support of the group and are able to change. Administrators also need to create an environment that is conducive to change in order to have a successful change process. This could include structuring protected time for teachers to collaborate, encouraging teacher learning and being open to feedback.

Finally, a positive climate is key to effective leadership and a successful change process. Communication with faculty about initiatives and decisions is important, as is being willing to receive alternative ideas and feedback from faculty. Administrators must earn the trust of their faculty in order to have a positive climate. When there is little trust, it creates negative and stressful work environment that prevents forward progress. Once again, shared leadership arose as an important aspect of creating a positive climate.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion of Research Findings**

### **Summary of the Problem**

The growing emphasis on school accountability has required school leaders to take on roles that they have not in the past (Baker, et al., 2002). In order to be effective, school leaders need to be more purposeful about the leadership approaches that they use (Leithwood, 2007; Fullan, 2008). The changes happening in schools today require leaders to understand what is

required and to provide the specific leadership that will be most productive in any given situation (Leithwood, 2007, Fullan, 2009).

Meeting the demands of accountability has proven to be a significant challenge for educators and requires that leaders be accomplished at working with people through the change process (Evans, 2007; Fullan, 2009). This is a complex task that requires a different style of leadership than most administrators have used in the past (Robinson, 2006). School leaders must learn to build leadership capacity in their buildings or districts in order to successfully facilitate change (Fullan, 2008, 2009, Williams, et al., 2004). Understanding leadership for change in education, as well as understanding how teachers experience different models of leadership will help leaders make purposeful choices that will unify the organizational culture and the teaching and learning core of the school (Mallory & Reavis, 2007; Fullan, 2007; Barth, 2007; Wahlstrom & Lewis, 2008).

This study explored how one school balances formal and cultural models of leadership to affect change. Data gathered during the research revealed the perspectives and experiences of the school administration, as well as a significant number of faculty members. This study examined a school to learn more about the various leadership approaches utilized on a day to day basis and how teachers perceive those approaches. The lessons learned from this single case study will be informative about the experiences of a typical school.

Four research questions were developed for the purposes of this study:

1. How do school leaders balance formal and cultural models of leadership? What works? What does not?
2. How do school leaders affect change on a day to day level? How does the organization respond?

3. How does the particular context, including climate and culture, of a district or an institution affect the implementation of a leadership model?
4. How do teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate?

### **Review of the Methodology**

This research consisted of a qualitative single site case study in which teachers and administrators were interviewed in order to help answer the above research questions. In addition to interviews, six observations took place including four PLC meetings, one department meeting and one faculty meeting. Field notes were created during each observation and included themes of discussions, issues addressed and the processes used to arrive at solutions to problems. Finally, the researcher collected and reviewed documents created by the school administration that were used to plan faculty meetings as well as the implementation of building initiatives.

Limitations of this research included the fact that this was an individual case study. However, this study conveyed an in-depth and contextualized understanding of leadership at one school and also provided transferrable insights and comparable data for others to analyze (Lyons, 2009). In order to increase the likelihood of the transferability of the findings, I have created a thick description which will provide the widest possible range of information.

A summary of the research findings was presented in Chapter 4. Key themes that emerged through the analysis of data were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter will be organized in a manner in which the findings generated from this study's research questions will be summarized briefly and then examined in relation to the theoretical frameworks (chapter 1) and the literature review (chapter 2) that were reviewed for this study.

### Summary of Findings

**Research questions 1 and 2.** This section will address the first two research questions:

1. How do school leaders balance formal and cultural models of leadership? What works? What does not?
2. How do school leaders affect change on a day to day level? How does the organization respond?

These two questions are related as they both deal with behaviors or actions that leaders utilize to enact leadership and promote changes that will continuously move the school forward. In examining the data derived from these two research questions, several themes surfaced. Those themes are: (1) leading and affecting change by balancing formal and cultural models of leadership, (2) making choices of what form of leadership to use in a given situation, (3) sharing leadership, and (4) the challenges of leading in the current age of education.

The findings from this study were gathered through the thoughts and opinions of administrators and teachers based on interviews and observations. Examination of school documents provided corroboration and an additional viewpoint on the data gathered through interviews and observations. Data gathered during this study show that leaders in this school affect change on a day to day basis by balancing both formal and cultural models of leadership. For the purpose of this discussion, the term formal models of leadership includes hierarchical or top down leadership, while the term cultural models of leadership refers to forms of shared or distributed leadership.

The findings from this study suggest that careful thought needs to be utilized in order to balance formal and cultural models of leadership in order to successfully affect change. Looking at this issue from the perspectives of both the administration and the teachers, one can develop

an understanding of how that balance takes place in this school and the impact it has on the change process. The principal indicated that the requirements of leadership have changed and that those changes have placed new demands on leaders that have caused them to need to utilize both formal and cultural models of leadership in order to be successful. For example, the requirements of the job of an administrator have grown so large, that in order to be effective, leaders need to share aspects of that work with members of the faculty. This ensures that the work gets done and done well. With the changes that have happened with curriculum, teachers need to be more involved in making decisions that affect the school. Sharing leadership helps to create a culture where teacher input is expected and valued. Because so many different individuals are helping to determine the direction of the building, strong leaders work hard to build consensus before making decisions.

In spite of this, there are times when sharing leadership is not possible and an administrator would choose to use a formal model. This could be where decisions need to be made quickly and there is not time to get consensus, when members of the school community cannot agree on a decision and for the more minute details of running the school on a day to day basis. Formal models of leadership may also be utilized with teachers or groups of teachers who are resistant to change or who respond better to directives.

While this principal's personal philosophy of leadership is heavily influenced by cultural models of leading, he shared that even those leaders who prefer more formal models need to reach out to others and share leadership in order to move their schools forward and change for the positive.

Both administration and teachers noted the importance of the choices made regarding what form of leadership to use in a given situation. The stories each group related about the

value they place on the relationships that are developed within the building helped to illuminate the prominent role that knowledge of individuals plays in the choice of leadership model.

Administration shared that decisions about how to handle a situation are made based on what they think individuals or groups of individuals need. Teachers also expressed this idea by recognizing how much they appreciate that building leadership has taken the time to really get to know them and to understand what they need to be successful. This research shows that leaders make choices about what form of leadership will be used based on a situation or an issue. All leaders cited the importance of knowing the people who work in a building. This often influences the form of leadership that may be used in a given situation.

Building on this idea, both groups also described the various ways leadership is shared in the building and how that sharing impacts the change process. Administrators spoke of the value in seeking broad opinions and ideas, explaining that the inclusion of teacher opinions results in richer solutions and more satisfying outcomes. Teachers related the importance of having a say in the decision making process in the school, as well as the creativity and professional satisfaction that comes with the sense of ownership that results from shared leadership.

While leaders in this school utilize both formal and cultural models of leadership to affect change, there are challenges. One of the major challenges comes through the use of shared leadership, which is a significant focus of this school's leadership. Several teachers noted that in a shared leadership model there's always going to be a question of with whom leadership is being shared and whether or not leadership is being shared equitably among all staff. Teachers noted that that can create divisions among staff from a perception point of view. One example of this that teachers pointed to was the change in the teaching teams. Teachers said that there is a perception in the school that the changes happened more severely to some staff than it did to

other staff. They believe that this reflected an unfair balance of shared leadership because there is a perception that some teachers had a say in the decisions regarding the changes and as a result, were allowed to stay with their own teams and not change.

Both groups also acknowledged that there are challenges for leading in the current age of education. The main issue noted was the sheer size of the job. All stakeholders acknowledged that the many facets of the job of the building administrator meant that it was no longer possible for one or two people to do. To be successful, leadership needs to be shared.

The results of the data gathered related to these questions show that managing change on a day to day level in a way that is effective, requires that school leaders understand how to utilize and balance both formal and cultural models of leadership.

**Research question #3.** In this section I will address research question number three:

3. How does the particular context, including climate and culture, of a district or an institution affect the implementation of a leadership model?

In examining the data derived from this question, the responses focused on (1) administrator behaviors or attitudes that contribute to the effective implementation of leadership, (2) administrators being open to the needs of the faculty, (3) changes in the kinds of leadership expected from teachers, (4) increased teacher expectations for leadership to be shared, and (5) how the culture and climate of a school affect the implementation of leadership.

In this school, all three administrators are open to sharing leadership. They each acknowledged that involving teachers in the work make their jobs easier and, most importantly, led to better decisions and higher quality outcomes. These leaders are open to learning from the faculty and recognize the strengths that teachers bring to the school. They work hard to capitalize on those strengths by putting teachers in leadership positions that utilize their

individual strengths. Administrators also report being very open about their own learning. They admit when they make mistakes, are open to feedback and realize that mid-course corrections are often the right choice to make. Finally, the administrators in this building invest time in listening to the faculty. They get to know people personally and this allows them to build relationships that lead to more effective leadership.

As a result of the strong relationships that are nurtured in this school, leaders are open to the needs of their faculty. For example, administrators know that some teachers prefer not to make certain kinds of decisions and that others want to be involved in as many decisions as possible. Administrators tailor their approaches with teachers based on this knowledge. As another example, one teacher, who is very interested in taking on leadership roles, is struggling with his own child's health issue. The leaders in this school have been very open with this teacher and have helped him to lighten his load both in the classroom and in his leadership duties. Administrators are constantly in touch with him to respond however they can to his needs. This teacher shared that this has been a great relief to him and that he knows that when things improve with his child, he will still have a multitude of opportunities to pursue at school.

There have also been changes in the kinds of leadership teachers take at this school. In the past, they may have participated in a committee, represented the school on a district committee or taken over some budgetary or clerical tasks. Now, however, teacher leadership is substantive and has a significant impact on the school. Teachers are leading curriculum change and development through their PLC teams, they are working with administration to create the vision for the school, they are organizing and presenting department meetings and are determining the agenda of faculty meetings. All of these changes have also created a collaborative atmosphere in the school. Teachers are excited about the work and the changes

that are happening in the school. They are sharing ideas and taking risks. They communicate their ideas openly with building administrators and their ideas and opinions are incorporated into the school.

In this school, because administration has chosen to share leadership in most cases, teachers now expect to be included in decision making. In the instances when this does not happen, teachers report frustration and a lower level of buy in. Teachers reported that in this school, their involvement in the leadership decisions increased the level of effectiveness of the leadership because teachers had a sense of ownership over the decisions and were very likely to implement the changes in their classrooms. The result of this is that the culture and climate of this building actually contributes to the implementation of leadership.

Findings from the data also revealed that the context, including the climate and culture, of a district or institution, has an impact on the implementation of leadership. Administrators in this building have earned a great deal of respect from the faculty. This has allowed them to utilize both formal and cultural models of leadership effectively. While most teachers reported responding positively to cultural models of leadership and cited negative reactions to top down models of leadership, the high regard the faculty has for the administrators has ensured that both models of leadership can be used effectively in this building.

Several teachers compared their experiences at this school with experiences they had with more formal, top down leadership styles in other schools. All of them reported that they much prefer the models of leadership used in this school. Some of the teachers reported that the faculty in the previous schools responded to the top down leadership by going back to their classrooms and doing what they wanted to do anyway. This indicated that in these schools, this model of leadership was not effective.

**Research question #4.** In this section I will address research question number four:

4. How do teachers perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate?

During interviews with administrators and teachers several themes arose. Those themes include: (1) views regarding how leadership has changed since the present administration began, (2) positive and negative perceptions and experiences, and (3) reflections on the overall impact of leadership in the building.

Findings from this study shed light onto how teachers at this school perceive and experience formal and cultural models of leadership and the change process they generate. Faculty interviewed consisted of both new and veteran teachers. Veteran teachers, who had worked under previous administrations, noted the changes in leadership approach the present administration have made. All of these teachers thought the changes were for the best and shared that previous administrative teams had relied heavily on formal models of leadership, which created a culture of fear in the school and a stressful workplace. Teachers did not recall an announcement being made that this leadership was going to change, but rather they sensed a gradual change as leadership was shared. This was a slow process and took place as faculty learned to trust the leaders in the building. The result is a climate where sharing is valued and teachers are respected and treated as professionals.

Teachers interviewed also shared many stories about both positive and negative experiences they have had with the leadership in the building. On the positive side, responses included feeling empowered by the responsibility given teacher through the PLC. Many of the teachers interviewed cited various aspects of how the PLC groups have positively impacted them. Teachers also cited many examples of how they are asked to use their strengths to move

the building forward. This included working with groups such as the scheduling committee, the CORE committee. It also included being asked to come up with innovative curriculum ideas. Teachers reported that the responsibility they are given through shared leadership makes them feel valued as professionals.

On the negative side, several teachers said that they feel administration almost shares leadership too much. They cited day to day decisions such as field trips and which students can attend dances as examples of the decisions they would rather have made by administration. They believe that making small decisions like that interfere with their work in the classroom. Teachers also discussed being asked to participate in tasks that they thought fell squarely under the principal's responsibility. So, while teachers want to share leadership, indeed, they expect to share leadership, there are still aspects of the decision making process that they do not want to be a part of. The challenge for administrators is that, based on this research, there was no single area of the work that all teachers indicated they did not want to become involved with. In order to get the balance of sharing and not sharing leadership, it is going to take knowing the faculty and considering each decision carefully. Even then, administrators will not be guaranteed that they will make the right choice.

In spite of the variety of experiences mentioned, the group overwhelmingly responded that they believe that the mix of approaches utilized in the building and the heavy emphasis on shared leadership has resulted in a positive workplace where change is welcomed. Teachers report feeling safe to take risks and try something new, they believe that their ideas are welcomed by the administration and they feel a sense of ownership in how the school is changing and moving forward for the positive.

This section has described findings of this research in relation to the four research questions that drove this study. The next section will examine these findings through the lens of the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 1.

### **Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework of this Study**

**Leadership theory.** Leadership theory emphasizes the importance of examining leadership styles in a variety of educational settings. The theory examines two different approaches, formal models and cultural models of leadership. Bush (2003) describes formal models as those that rely on hierarchy and bureaucracy and are driven by data. Leadership decisions in this model are often made based on positional information. He stated that formal models of leadership were created during the industrial age in order to ensure the smooth operation of factories. Decisions and leadership behaviors are governed by rules and regulations and relationships with staff are viewed as impersonal (Bush, 2003).

In contrast, cultural models of leadership rely on relationships and knowledge of people to enact leadership. Decisions are driven by beliefs, values and ideology. This model is often a better fit in education because, as Bush (2003) describes, teachers need to own innovations and not be required to do them. If teachers do not have ownership of a change, it can lead to failure of the change initiative (p. 46).

Understanding the differences between formal and cultural models of leadership and applying that knowledge to this research helped me to clearly see the different approaches used in different situations at the school. The findings from this study indicate that both administrators and teachers recognize the need to use both models of leadership to be successful within a school. While both groups gravitate toward the cultural model of leadership, they did relate instances where using a formal model was helpful.

In this school, the dominant model of leadership utilized is cultural. Administrators spend great amounts of time communicating with faculty to build relationships. These relationships are what create the positive climate in the school. Administrators trust the faculty and respect them as professionals. As a result, teachers are an integral part of the decisions that are made in the school and are given a great deal of autonomy with regard to the development of curriculum. Teachers report that the positive climate in the school has helped them to feel comfortable voicing their opinions about issues, taking responsibility for decisions and having ownership over innovations.

The formal model of leadership does have a role in the school. Building administration utilizes this model occasionally to finalize decisions when they cannot get consensus in the school. In addition, they reported that they will choose to be directive or top down with individual teachers or small groups of teachers when they sense that more direction is needed. Findings from the study showed however, that in this school, the administration tries very hard not to utilize this model of leadership. Teachers had slightly different opinions about the use of the formal leadership model. While they reported that they appreciated the trust, shared leadership and autonomy they were given based on the cultural model of leadership, they also wanted to see administrators use formal leadership more often. This was limited to only those decisions that many teachers reported that they did not want to make. These decisions related to the nuts and bolts running of the school, such as field trips and student attendance at school functions. Teachers expressed a desire for administrators to make these decisions without teacher input.

This theory also focuses on understanding the change process in education and how different leadership models help or hinder that process. Michael Fullan (2002) has written

extensively about leading for change and lists characteristics of leaders who successfully facilitate the change process. These characteristics include: moral purpose, understanding the change process, strong relationships, knowledge sharing and coherence. Added to these characteristics are Fullan, Cuttress and Kilcher's (2009) elements of a successful change process. These include: engaging peoples' moral purposes, building capacity, understanding the change process, developing cultures for learning, developing a culture of evaluation and focusing on leadership for change.

All of these ideas came up in the findings of this research. Administrator responses were all given in the context of how best to affect change and move the school forward. The building principal repeatedly described his role from a moral point of view. He spoke about how he understood the change process. All administrators related the importance of building strong relationships with the faculty. Decisions in the school are made through sharing knowledge whether that is about the vision of the school, or an initiative the school is working on or details of a request the principal is making to a teacher. In addition, in this school, leaders work hard to make sure that the school is unified in vision and goals and is working collaboratively to achieve those goals.

In addition to the characteristics of leading for change, the school also exemplifies Fullan, Cuttress and Kilcher's (2009) elements of a successful change process. Through the relationships that the administration nurtures with faculty and the careful creation and communication of the school's vision, leaders engage peoples' moral purposes. Through shared leadership, communication and professional development, leaders build capacity in the faculty. While neither administrators nor teachers specifically described how they promote understanding of the change process, their responses showed that change was an expected aspect of the daily

life of the school. By creating many opportunities for collaboration and welcoming open communication, administrators have developed a culture for learning in this school. They also encourage teachers to reflect on their work, which has developed a culture of evaluation.

**Constructive-Developmental Theory and Adult Development.** Eleanor Drago-Severson (2004) had done significant research on adult learning and has situated this work within constructive-developmental theory and adult development. She believes that much of adult learning is transformation in nature; that it changes the way a person constructs or makes sense of experience (p. 23). Drago-Severson uses Robert Kegan's work in constructive-developmental theory to describe the adult learning process. Kegan says that people construct, or make sense of, the reality in which they live and that learning is a lifelong process that can change and develop over time (Drago-Severson, 2004, p.24). He also says that adults need support to affirm their current thinking but also enough challenge to push them to new ways of thinking. Successful leaders need to understand that adult learners do not just grow in what they know, but can also grow in how they know.

While the focus of this research was not directly related to constructive-developmental theory and adult development, an understanding of it helped me to consider the level of effectiveness of leadership at the case study site. For example, the use of the PLC groups as a way to develop and refine curriculum was a new initiative for the school and represented a way of working and considering content that most teachers had never experienced. Administrators recognized that to do this work well, it would take time and was a learning process, not an assignment. In this way, they understood that learning is transformation in nature; that it changes the way a person constructs or makes sense of experience. The PLCs, over time, have the possibility of changing the way adults learn in this building. The PLCs also created a

different culture in the building. It went from individual autonomy to group autonomy. This marked a change in the reality of the way the school worked. Administrators recognized that teachers could adapt to this new reality and that over time, with careful education, it would become a key aspect of the way the school works.

The decisions the administrators made about when and how to share leadership fit in to the concept that adults need support to affirm their current thinking but also enough challenge to push them to new ways of thinking. Because administrators took the time to build relationships and get to know the people in the school, they were able to support and affirm people on an individual basis. That created a climate of trust and mutual respect in the building. Leaders built on this by asking people to work in PLCs, and take ownership and responsibility for decisions they were asked to make. This struck a balance between affirming current thinking and challenging teachers to develop new thinking that helped the adults in the building learn and grow. Finally, by changing the dynamic from individual autonomy to group autonomy, the administrators showed an expectation that teachers, as adult learners, could grow, not just in what they know, but also in how they know.

The information gained through this study supports the two theoretical frameworks of Leadership Theory and Constructivist-Developmental Theory and Adult Development. The different perspectives gained through interviews provide insight into the leadership models used in the building and how they contribute to effective leadership practices. Looking at the findings through the lenses of these theoretical frameworks also translated into a deeper understanding of the change process and how different leadership approaches help or hinder that process. Considering the findings in the context of constructivist-developmental theory and adult

development helped the researcher to consider other factors that influenced the leadership strategies utilized at this school site.

### **Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature Review**

The findings from this study relate well to the literature review. Two overarching questions directed the review. The first question was what is the impact of both formal models and cultural models of leadership on the change process in K-12 public education? The second was, how do teachers experience different models of leadership? In addition, the literature review was broken down into three areas: professional learning communities, the practices and thinking processes of principals and distributed leadership.

**Professional learning communities.** When approaching this topic, this researcher was attempting to determine if using PLCs could create deep, sustainable change in how educators think about teaching and learning. I also wanted to learn whether or not teachers view PLCs as opportunities for shared leadership. The findings of this study are in agreement with the current research on professional learning communities. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) say that the ultimate goal of PLCs is to change the learning culture of the school. At the case study site, it appears that this is working. In interviews with teachers, they constantly cited their PLCs as a vehicle for shared decision making and empowerment. The autonomy given to the groups through PLCs has changed the ways adults learn together. Because they work in PLCs, teachers are no longer making decisions as individuals. Instead, the groups are learning together.

Wells and Feun (2008) conducted research about the effectiveness of PLC in creating and sustaining a culture of change in schools. Their work sought to differentiate superficial changes in everyday actions from deeper cultural changes. Results of the research showed that while PLCs do change the culture of schools to collaboration, deeper changes could happen if

administrators were more directive about tasks needed to be done in PLCs. Wells and Feun (2008) specifically cite the benefits of creating common assessments as a key to creating a culture of change in schools. At the school studied for this research project, administrators and teachers described the four year process the school had taken to implement PLCs. The first year was used to educate the faculty about PLCs, the second year saw groups form and in the third year, teachers worked on creating a common curriculum. For the most recent year, administrators suggested the creation of common assessments. Response to this suggestion was spotty and as a result, administrators at the school were requiring the groups to create common assessments during the upcoming year. Thus, the work happening in this school supports the research of the use of PLCs as a vehicle to change the learning culture of the school.

Current literature also cites the possibility of PLCs to empower teachers as leaders. This also proved true at the study site. Michael Fullan (2006) believes that that the spread of PLCs is about the proliferation of leadership. As teachers begin to take on leadership responsibilities through PLCs, it sets a pattern of expectation that grows into teacher empowerment. Indeed, many teachers reported their expectations of leadership in curriculum through the PLCs. Many teachers cited the hands off approach administrators have with regard to curriculum and the autonomy they have within their groups. Teachers reported being trusted to make the best decisions for their students, the professionalism with which they are treated and the resulting sense of empowerment that they felt in relation to the work. In fact, one teacher reported that as he was a member of two curriculum area PLCs, he felt a tremendous sense of empowerment.

Current research emphasized the importance of structure to the success of PLCs. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) shared several structures embedded into the school day that help PLCs succeed. These included a high school where teachers rotated leadership roles within

scheduled PLC time, an elementary school where administration created multiple grade level PLCs to encourage inquiry and collaboration and another elementary school where staff meetings were redesigned so that faculty could facilitate discussions of decision-making, professional development and cycles of inquiry (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006). All of these structures are taking place at the school studied for this research. PLC meetings are regularly scheduled, embedded into the school day and protected from interruption. These meetings are led by teachers and leadership can rotate based on group tasks. Department meeting topics are decided as a group and are facilitated by faculty members. Faculty meetings, while still led by administrators, are dominated by topics derived from faculty suggestions.

**Practices and thinking process of principals.** When approaching this topic, this researcher was attempting to discover how the practices and thinking process of principals have an impact on the types of leadership that create a climate for change, how those practices and processes impact leadership and schooling and which characteristics define those leadership approaches that facilitate change. The findings of this study are in agreement with the current research.

Much of current research discusses new leadership requirements for school administrators. Some of the new requirements include emotional competencies, and aspects of transformational leadership including building capacity and supporting changes to teaching and learning based on co-selected goals. Slater (2005) lists five emotional competencies that she believes are required in collaborative workplaces. They include self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy and adeptness of relationships. Leaders at this case study site possess all of these competencies. Based on interview responses, they are extremely self-aware. All three administrators reported being reflective about their own practice and were open

to sharing how they have learned from mistakes made. The principal shared that he is able to list his own strengths and weaknesses and predict when he is in an area of strength or weakness. He is also aware of his emotions. He shared a story about how when he is frustrated with a situation, he goes in his office to vent a bit and then comes out and “takes the high road.” All three administrators are self-motivated and have a desire to serve others and to succeed. They also spoke extensively about how relationships with faculty drive their practice and most of their decisions.

Building administrators also utilize aspects of transformational leadership. By sharing leadership and empowering teachers, they build capacity among the teaching staff. Leaders in the building also support changes to teaching and learning based on co-selected goals. This is mainly done through the sharing and creation of a common vision and also through shared decision making about curriculum.

Current research also cites the importance of school leaders having the ability to working with teachers to facilitate growth. Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006) report that school principals have the greatest responsibility for helping teachers learn. This body of research suggests that the best principals achieve this by support collaboration amongst faculty, being open and willing to listen and by understanding adult learning. In this school, principals have created a schedule of PLC meetings and they aggressively protect that time. Doing this, combined with communicating clear goals such as agreeing on a common curriculum and creating common assessments supports collaboration among the faculty. Administrators in the building are also open to listening to faculty concerns. This was reflected in interviews with both administrators and teachers who reflected on the value of open communication. Finally, while school leaders did not directly mention understanding adult learning, when this researcher consider the findings

of the study in relation to the theoretical frameworks, she was able to see that administrators in this building make choices that display an understanding of adult learning. Some of these choices are creating a collaborative climate through the use of PLCs, involving teachers in shared decision making and asking teachers to contribute to the school's vision.

**Distributed leadership.** When approaching this topic, this researcher was attempting to determine the definition of distributed leadership, how it is practiced in schools, and whether distributed leadership helps an organization learn and grow.

Distributed leadership can be defined as models of educational leadership where the decision-making responsibility no longer resides with one person and instead is shared with members of the school community. Current research indicates that as demands on education grow distributed leadership may be a positive way to promote change. Spillane & Diamond (2007) believe that a distributed perspective acknowledges that the work of leading and managing schools involves multiple individuals.

Angelle (2010) studied how one middle school practiced distributed leadership. Findings from that study show that three elements shape the focus of the school: leadership practices, trust and relationships. In that school, all three elements were credited with the successful use of distributed leadership. In the current study's school, all three elements are also in play. Administrators utilize both formal and cultural models of leadership to meet different situations and individual needs. Teachers reported that there is a sense of trust in the school and both teachers and administrators shared the value they place on the personal relationships that are nurtured at the school. All three of these elements help the current case study site effectively practice distributed leadership.

It is also important that the type of leadership practiced in the school match the expectations of the faculty. This topic came up during teacher interviews and was reflected in the research. During interviews, teachers described the evolution of their expectation of leadership from the previous top down form of leadership to the current model of shared leadership. They described how it took time to accept the responsibility that came with shared leadership and also to build the trust that was necessary for success. Teachers reported that the leadership in the school is now similar to how they would also choose to lead. Gordon and Patterson (2006) cited the importance of each style of leadership meeting the needs and expectations of the school. This reflects the statements teachers at the case study site made.

The findings from this study were directly connected to the literature review. Professional learning communities, the practices and thinking processes of principals and distributed leadership have an impact on the change process in K-12 public education. Administrators play an important role in achieving change through the use of PLCs. In this school, leaders created and sustained a culture for change, built strong relationships with faculty and created an environment of trust through the use of PLCs. This study also supports the notion that the practices and thinking process of principals do affect the change process. Data gathered show the intentions and effects of the choices school leaders make and the reflection that they utilize to make better decisions. Distributed decision making is another tool successful leaders utilize to create a successful change process. The climate of this school set an expectation that leadership would be shared and resulted in the successful use of distributed leadership.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted on the premise that schools are constantly required to achieve higher academic standards and that the nature and effectiveness of school leadership is at the

heart of the change that needs to happen to meet these new demands. This study sought to determine how leaders in one school balance formal and cultural models of leadership and affect change on a day to day basis. The study also assessed how the particular context, including climate and culture, of a district or an institution affect the implementation of a leadership model and how teachers at this school perceive and experience cultural and formal models of leadership and the change process they generate. Through this study, the voices of school leaders and faculty members have been heard and their thoughts and opinions have shed light on how leadership is enacted at this school. What has been learned from this work is that there is not one single model of leadership that is most effective in education, but rather that leaders should thoughtfully balance both formal and cultural models of leadership based on each situation or person involved. In order to do this successfully, leaders must have a clear vision for the school, have deep knowledge about the people that work in the school, and have an understanding about how adults learn and develop.

This study also provided a picture of how leaders in this school affect change on a day to day basis. The main way this is done is through shared leadership. Through many venues, including PLCs, teachers are encouraged to share in the leadership of the school. This is empowering to teachers and has set an expectation in the school that teachers will have a voice in determining the future of the school. This technique creates a feeling of ownership over the building initiatives that are shared throughout the school, resulting in a smoother, more effective change process.

The climate and culture of the school studied in this research plays a role in the implementation of leadership. All parties involved in this study agreed that the school has a very positive climate. Teachers feel supported and respected and as a result, are open about their

thoughts and opinions and more creative in their ideas. Administrators reported that they purposely created this environment by including teachers in decision making, by stating and showing the faculty that they trust them and by working very hard to make themselves open to communication. This is an ongoing effort that is not without its challenges. Chief among the challenges is the idea of remaining consistent with people so that messages are clear. In a large school this can be very difficult. That is because personal communication is difficult to achieve with a large number of people. It is also challenging to reach consensus with a large group and it can become a problem when an individual offers an opinion, but it is not reflected in the final decision. Administrators need to be very careful to reach out to those people to explain the decision that was made. Creating this climate is not easy and requires constant effort and reflection. However both teachers and administrators cited the positive climate in the school as a major reason that leadership and the change process are so effective at this school.

This study provided information about how teachers at this school perceive and experience formal and cultural models of leadership and the change process they generate. Teachers overwhelmingly report positive perceptions and experiences. A large portion of responses cited the use of the PLC as a way teachers experience leadership and have a role in change. They also reflected on the amount of leadership that is shared in the building as being mostly positive.

One unexpected finding of this study was that teachers also reported some challenges with shared leadership. While they wanted to share in leadership decisions that affected their curriculum, they wanted school leaders to make the decisions about the more mundane aspects of the school day. It was interesting to see this different opinion because in this school, teachers expect to share leadership and to have a say in the running of the school. When pushed to give

examples, no teachers could specifically name all times when they did not want to share leadership or describe a balance of shared or more top down leadership, yet most strongly felt there were times that leadership was shared in the building when they did not think it should be.

**Significance of the study in the field.** This study is significant to the field of education because it has enhanced the existing body of literature about how leadership is perceived and practiced and how it can positively affect the change process in K-12 public education. This study is important because the leadership practiced at this school reflects the broad complexities of the leadership required in the current age of education.

Conducting this study within the context of this middle school was helpful for me to be able to develop a clearer understanding of how particular leadership practices can be used to affect change. This school uses techniques that are being tried in many schools, including shared leadership, the use of PLCs and tailoring professional development to adult development and learning. What sets this study apart from others in the field are the thoughts and opinions of the administration and teachers. They provide personal insight into practices that are being written about in current literature.

In addition, this study provided information that will be practically applied immediately. It will be utilized by the building administration to refine current practices in order to lead more effectively. Administration will be able to build on their successes with PLCs and other forms of shared leadership. This will make for a more efficient change process. In addition, building leaders may choose to change the kinds of leadership that is shared based on the perceptions and experiences of the teachers in the building.

Finally, this study has helped me to develop a different perspective on leadership. When I began this project, I was of the opinion that cultural models of leadership were a better fit for

education and that formal models should not be used at all. While I still believe that cultural models are better, particularly to create an effective change process, I now see a role for formal models. The responses from teachers helped me see that when formal models are used alone and teachers are told to adopt an initiative, the change process will not be successful. This is largely due to the level of education and professionalism teachers bring to the job and the vital role that a sense of ownership has in school change. However, there are instances, such as when a group stalls and is unproductive or when an individual is waiting for direction, that utilizing a more formal model is helpful. In addition, with a complete use of the cultural model of leadership, all decisions would be shared. As the teachers at this school responded, this is not always a positive thing and may be perceived as taking away from the important work teachers need to do. The key to successful leadership is to balance both formal and cultural models in such a way as to be able to smoothly switch from one to the other as is warranted.

### **Next Steps**

Further research should be conducted in the area of balancing formal and cultural models of leadership to affect change. This research reflected the demands being placed on educators today. The demands are largely based on accountability determined by standardized test scores. As a result, the emphasis of change in most schools has been placed on the development of common curriculum and common assessments that align with state or national curriculum frameworks. PLCs play a significant role in meeting these demands. However, as No Child Left Behind is reauthorized, it may contain different requirements. This may require a different sort of change and the balance of formal and cultural leadership models may need to be adjusted. Ongoing research into this topic will ensure that educators are presented with the most current information.

Additional qualitative field studies should also be conducted in other school settings to determine how schools balance models of leadership to affect change. This research focused on one suburban middle school. Additional studies could include high schools and elementary schools, as those schools typically have different daily structures and may use other methods to share leadership and encourage collaboration. Schools in urban areas should also be studied as the resources available to those schools would be different from those available to schools in affluent, suburban communities like the one included in this study.

This study was about a community where leadership was able to, in many ways, start from scratch with a new building and new staff. In addition, the school is in a fairly stable, relatively high-performing, well-supported environment (district-wise and staff-wise.) Future studies could address how to initiate this kind of positive culture with current leadership that has not engaged in these practices before. An additional area of exploration could be how and whether new leadership could foster this new form of leadership and culture in a previously chaotic, challenged, and dysfunctional culture. It would be of value to assess the degree to which this form of leadership and shared leadership could be newly instituted with the provision of new leadership or if present leadership can start anew to institute this form of leadership and foster this new culture.

Finally, future research should also explore the impact the climate and culture of the district a school is in has on the leadership practices at the school. While not directly referenced in this work, several teachers commented on the negative impact district leaders were beginning to have on the leadership in the school. They mentioned the high school's impact on the school's schedule and on the curriculum in all of the content areas. Teachers also noticed that in several instances, administrators in this school were forced to make decisions that were uncharacteristic

of their leadership style because they had an obligation to follow through on district directives. Research could shed light on how much of an impact outside influences have on the outcome of building level leadership.

### **Final Words**

*We need “leadership that is tough enough to demand a great deal from everyone, and leadership that is tender enough to encourage the heart.” – Thomas Sergiovanni (1996).*

Educational leadership plays a key role in creating the schools we need for tomorrow. Much has been learned from this study about effective school leadership and its impact on the change process. As time continues to pass and new demands are placed on schools, change will be a constant. School leaders must develop skills that will allow them to move their faculty forward. The solutions to the challenges facing schools are the direct responsibility of school administrators. By developing an understanding of effective leadership, administrators can develop the skills and expertise necessary to improve schools and ensure success into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## References

- Achinstein, B. (2002). Conflict amid community: the micropolitics of teacher collaboration. *Teachers College Record*, 104(3). Pp. 421-455.
- Angelle, P. (2010). An organizational perspective of distributed leadership: a portrait of a middle school. *Research in Middle Level Education Online*, 33(5), 1-16. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Baker, E., Betebenner, D. & Linn, R. (2002). Accountability systems: implications of requirements of the no child left behind act of 2001. Retrieved from <http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/Reports/TR567>
- Baker, B., Drath, W., McCauley, C., O'Connor, P. & Palus, C. (2006). The use of constructive-developmental theory to advance the understanding of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17, pp. 634-653.
- Barth, R. (2007). Culture in question. In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (p. 159-168). San Francisco, CA.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Brenninkmeyer, L., & Spillane, J. (2008). Problem-solving processes of expert and typical school principals: a quantitative look. *School Leadership and Management*, 28(5), 435-468. doi: 1080/13632430802517209
- Bush, T. (2003). *Theories of educational leadership and management*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Collinson, V., & Cook, T. (2007). *Organizational learning: improving learning, teaching, and leading in school systems*. Thousand Oaks, Ca. Sage Publications.

- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Ca. Sage Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2009). Teaching and the change wars: the professionalism hypothesis. In Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. Eds. *Change Wars*. (p. 45-70). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Devos, G., & Bouckenooghe, D. (2009). An exploratory study on principals' conceptions about their role as school leaders. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 8(2), 173-196. doi: 1080/15700760902737196
- Dooner, A., Mandzuk, D. & Clifton, R. (2008). Stages of collaboration and the realities of professional learning communities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 24. P. 564-574.
- Drago-Severson, E. (2004). *Helping teachers learn: principal leadership for adult growth and development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Drago-Severson, E. & Pinto, K. (2006). School leadership for reducing teacher isolation: Drawing from the well of human resources. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9(2), 129-155. Doi:10;1080/13603120500508080
- DuFour, R. (2004). What Is a "Professional Learning Community"? *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6-11.
- DuFour, R., DuFour, R. & Eaker, B. (2009). New insights into professional learning communities at work. In Fullan, M., Ed. *The Challenge of Change: Start School Improvement Now!* (p. 87-105). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Erikson, K. (2006). The constructive developmental theory of robert kegan. *The Family Journal*, 14, pp. 290-298. doi:10.1177/1066480706287799

- Evans, R. (1996). *The human side of school change: reform, resistance and the real-life problems of innovation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Evans, R. (2007). The authentic leader. In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (p. 135-158). San Francisco, CA.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Fullan, Michael, et al. (2007). *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Fullan, M. (2006, November). Leading professional learning. *The School Administrator*. 10-14.
- Fullan, M. (2006). *Quality leadership = quality learning*. Lionara, Glounthaune: Cork.
- Fullan, M. (2007). Understanding change. In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (p. 169-183). San Francisco, CA.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Fullan, M. (2008, April 9). School leadership's unfinished agenda. *Education Week*, 31, 36.
- Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Fullan, M., Cuttress, C. & Kilcher, A. (2009). 8 forces for leaders of change. In Fullan, M., Ed. *The Challenge of Change: Start School Improvement Now!* (p. 9-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M. (2009). The principal and change. In Fullan, M., Ed. *The Challenge of Change: Start School Improvement Now!* (p. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Giles, C. & Hargreaves, A. (2006). The sustainability of innovative schools as learning organizations and professional learning communities during standardized reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 42 p 124 DOI: 10.1177/0013161X05278189
- Gordon, J., & Patterson, J. (2006). School leadership in context: Narratives of practice and possibility. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 9(3), 205-228. doi: 10.1080/13603120600797831

- Hargreaves, A. (2004). Inclusive and exclusive educational change: emotional responses of teachers and implications for leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 24(2), 287-309.
- Hargreaves, A. (2009). The fourth way of change: Towards an age of inspiration and sustainability. In Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. Eds. *Change Wars*. (p. 11-44). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Hargreaves, A. & Shirley, D. (2009). The fourth way of change. In Fullan, M., Ed. *The Challenge of Change: Start School Improvement Now!* (p. 29-40). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Harris, A. & Spillane, J. (2008). Distributed leadership through the looking glass. *Management in Education*. 22(1). p. 31-34. DOI: 10.1177/0892020607085623
- Helsing, D., Howell, A., Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. (2008). Putting the “development” in professional development: Understanding and overturning educational leaders’ immunities to change. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(3), 437-465.
- Hulpia, H., Devos, G., & Rosseel, Y. (2009). The relationship between the perception of distributed leadership in secondary schools and teachers’ and teacher leaders’ job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 20(3), 291-317. doi:10.1080/09243450902909840
- Jacobs, J. & Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2010). Supervisor transformation within a professional learning community. *Teacher education quarterly*, 37(2), 97.
- Leithwood, K. & McAdie, P. (2007) Teacher working conditions that matter. *Education Canada*. 47(2). p42-45.

- Lieberman, A., & Mace, D. (2009). The role of 'accomplished teachers' in professional learning communities: uncovering practice and enabling leadership. *Teachers & Teaching, 15*(4), 459-470. doi:10.1080/13540600903057237
- Lieberman, A. Saxl, E. & Miles, M. (2007). Teacher leadership: ideology and practice. In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (p. 403-420). San Francisco, CA.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Leithwood, K. (2007). Transformation school leadership in a transactional policy world. In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (p. 183-196). San Francisco, CA.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Gruba, E.G. Naturalist inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Locke, L., Silverman, S., & Spirduso, W.W. (2003). *Reading and understanding research.* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lyons, H. (2009). Case study research methodology for publishing developments in ICT-facilitated learning in higher education-a prescriptive approach. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 46*(1), 27-39.
- Mallory, B., & Reavis, C. (2007). Planning for school improvement: closing the gap of culture with democratic principles. *Educational Planning, 16*(2), 8-18. <http://ebSCOhost.com>
- Mayrowetz, D. (2008). Making sense of distributed leadership: Exploring the multiple usages of the concept in the field. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44.* p. 424 DOI: 10.1177/0013161X07309480
- McLaughlin, M., & Talbert, J. (2006). *Building school-based teacher learning communities: professional strategies to improve student achievement.* New York. Teachers College Press.

Miles, M.B., and Huberman, A.M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis*, 16. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Miles, M.B., and Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p. 10-12. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (2008). *Reading first impact study: Final report*. Boulay, B., Gamse, B., Horst, M., Jacob, R. & Unlu, F.  
<http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED503344.pdf>

Nelson, T., Slavit, D., Perkins, M. & Hathorn, T. (2008). A culture of collaborative inquiry: Learning to develop and support professional learning communities. *Teachers College Record*. 110(6). pp. 1269-1303.

Penlington, C., Kington, A., Day, C. Leadership in improving schools: a qualitative perspective. *School Leadership and Management*, 28(1), 65-82. Doi:10.1080/1363213070180008

Printy, S., Marks, H., & Bowers, A. (2009). Integrated leadership: how principals and teachers share transformational and instructional influence. *Journal of School Leadership* (19), 504-532.

Robinson, V. (2006). Putting education back into educational leadership. *Leading & Managing*, Vol. 12 (1), pp. 62-75.

Rutherford, C. (2006). Teacher leadership and organizational structure. *Journal of educational change*, 7(1/2), 59-76. doi:10.1007/s10833-006

Schmoker, M. (2004). Tipping point: from feckless reform to substantive instructional improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 85(6). p. 424.

- Scott, K. & Howell, D. (2008). Clarifying analysis and interpretation in grounded theory: using a conditional relationship guide and reflective coding matrix. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 7(2).
- Sergiovanni, T. (2007). Rethinking leadership: A collection of articles. Corwin Press:Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Sergiovanni, T. (2007). Leadership as stewardship: “Who’s serving who?”. In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (p. 75-92). San Francisco, CA.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Slater, L. (2005). Leadership for collaboration: An affective process. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 8(4), 321-333. Doi:1080/13603120500088745
- Spillane, J. (2005). Distributed leadership. *The Educational Forum*. 69. P. 143.
- Spillane, J.P. & Diamond, J. B. (2007). *Distributed leadership in practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Spillane, J. (2009). Engaging practice: School leadership and management from a distributed perspective. In Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. Eds. *Change Wars*. (p.201-220). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Supovitz, J. & Christman, J.B. (2005). Small learning communities that actually learn: Lessons for school leaders. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 86(5).p. 651
- Timperley, H. (2005). Distributed leadership: developing theory from practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*.00 (0). p. 1-26

- Wahlstrom, K. & Louis, K. (2008). How teachers experience principal leadership: The roles of professional community, trust, efficacy, and shared responsibility. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 44(4). p. 458-495. DOI: 10.1177/0013161X08321502
- Wells, C., & Feun, L. (2008). What has changed? A study of three years of professional learning community work. *Planning and Changing*, 39(1/2), 42-66. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Williams, E., Matthews, J., & Baugh, S. (2004). Developing a mentoring internship model for school leadership: using legitimate peripheral participation. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 12(1), 53-70. <http://ebSCOhost.com>
- Wright, L. (2008). Merits and limitations of distributed leadership: Experiences and understandings of school principals. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*. 69.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: design and methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods*. (4<sup>th</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. - Chapter 2: Designing Case Studies (p. 25-66).

## Appendix A

## Request for Consent – Interview

Northeastern University

College of Professional Studies

Department of Education

Name of Investigators: Cara Procek, Graduate Student, Dr. Angela Bermudez, Principal Investigator

Title of Project: Leading for Change:

How Leadership Style Impacts Teachers' Experience

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

We are asking you to be in this study because you are a faculty member at Ross A. Lurgio Middle School. The purpose of this research is to explore how leadership is used in this school and how teachers perceive that leadership.

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to participate in an interview. During the interview you will be asked about ten questions that deal with leadership in this school and how you experience it, how it influences your work, and how you participate or not. The interview will be about thirty minutes long and will take place in the school.

Participation in this project does not present any obvious risks to you. The project will document leadership practices in the school and explore participants' perceptions of those practices. It will not pose any consequences as a result of participation. However, I will be asking you to share your perceptions of the effectiveness of the school leadership, which could be difficult if you want to be critical. In order to protect you, I will make sure that information you share is protected and used only for the project. I will keep as much information as possible as general or background information about the school. If I use a direct quote from you or talk about something you said, I will use statements that will not negatively affect your working relationships and will ask for your consent.

You may benefit from participating in this project because you will have the chance to share what you notice and think about leadership in this school. This could lead to a change in how leadership happens at the school on a day to day basis.

I will report the results of this study without sharing your identity. However, because this project will take place within a single school, I can't promise that you will be completely anonymous. You will not be named in any reports and your identity will be hidden in documentation and transcripts. I will use a false name for you. If you decide you don't want to be mentioned at all, even with a different name, I will only use your information to build background understanding of the case. You will be able to see the results of the work. During the analysis of the data phase of the study, only I will have access to the data and no one else will be able to see it. I will destroy all audio recordings after I record the conversations in writing. I

will keep all of the information for between five and ten years and store it in a fire safe in my home.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as an employee.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University Boston, MA 02115 tel. 617-373-7570, email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**I agree to take part in this research.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of person [parent] agreeing to take part      Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person above**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of person who explained the study to the      Date**  
**participant above and obtained consent**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person above**  
.....

## Appendix B

## Request for Consent – Observation

Northeastern University  
College of Professional Studies  
Department of Education

Name of Investigators: Cara Procek, Graduate Student, Dr. Angela Bermudez, Principal Investigator

Title of Project: Leading for Change:

How Leadership Style Impacts Teachers' Experience

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

We are asking you to be in this study because you are a faculty member at Ross A. Lurgio Middle School. The purpose of this research is to explore how leadership is used in this school and how teachers perceive that leadership.

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to agree to be part of a group that will be observed while working in a regular meeting. While your group works, I will audiotape your conversation and take notes about what I notice. This will happen during a regular scheduled meeting and you will not need to change your work goals or time frame at all. You will meet as a group and do all of the things that you do during all other meetings.

Participation in this project does not present any obvious risks to you. The project will document leadership practices in the school and explore participants' perceptions of those practices. It will not pose any consequences as a result of participation. However, I will be asking you to share your perceptions of the effectiveness of the school leadership, which could be difficult if you want to be critical. In order to protect you, I will make sure that information you share is protected and used only for the project. I will keep as much information as possible as general or background information about the school. If I use a direct quote from you or talk about something you said, I will use statements that will not negatively affect your working relationships and will ask for your consent.

You may benefit from participating in this project because you will have the chance to share what you notice and think about leadership in this school. This could lead to a change in how leadership happens at the school on a day to day basis.

I will report the results of this study without sharing your identity. However, because this project will take place within a single school, I can't promise that you will be completely anonymous. You will not be named in any reports and your identity will be hidden in documentation and transcripts. I will use a false name for you. If you decide you don't want to be mentioned at all, even with a different name, I will only use your information to build background understanding of the case. You will be able to see the results of the work. During the analysis of the data phase of the study, only I will have access to the data and no one else will be able to see it. I will destroy all audio recordings after I record the conversations in writing. I

will keep all of the information for between five and ten years and store it in a fire safe in my home.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as an employee.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University Boston, MA 02115 tel. 617-373-7570, email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**I agree to take part in this research.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of person [parent] agreeing to take part      Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person above**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of person who explained the study to the      Date**  
**participant above and obtained consent**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person above**  
.....

## Appendix C

## Draft Interview Questions

Principal, Assistant Principal and Curriculum Coordinator

- Please describe some of the leadership practices that you utilize on a day to day basis.
- Do you create structures within the school year or day that facilitate leadership? If so, what are they and how do they facilitate leadership? If not, why not?
- Do you attempt to share or distribute leadership in this school? Why or why not? What are pros and cons of doing so? In what situations is it a good idea and in what other situations is it a bad idea?
- What factors influence your choice to share leadership or not?
- Please describe the ways you purposefully share leadership in a broad sense (structures, etc.).
- Please share some examples of how you share leadership on a situational basis.
- How do you think teachers in this building perceive leadership?
- Do you think that teachers embrace or resist opportunities to lead?
- What are your leadership goals going ahead for this year?
- Will you be making any changes? Why or why not? If so, what are the changes?
- What are the disadvantages, or the cost to pay for distributing leadership?

Teachers

- Please describe some of the leadership opportunities that you are afforded on a day to day basis.
- Are there structures within the school year or day that facilitate leadership? If so, what are they and how do they facilitate leadership? If not, why not?
- What, if any, ways is leadership shared or distributed in this school?
- What is your perspective of the leadership approaches utilized in this building?
- Do you think that teachers embrace or resist opportunities to lead?
- What are your leadership goals going ahead for this year?
- Regarding shared leadership, what are some aspects in this school that are working? Not working?
- Describe one particular situation in which you engaged in a leadership activity? How did it work? What did you learn from that?
- If you were asked to propose any activity, initiative or project that you would like to lead, what would that be?
- Some people consider that it is better to leave all leadership to the principals and to let the teachers do their real job in the classroom. Do you agree?
- What would you change about how leadership is shared at this school? Why?