THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF TEACHER LEADERS IN OHIO:

A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

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The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore and conceptualize how teacher leaders are trained, developed, and supported both formally and informally to be effective in their roles. The study furthered examined teachers' perceptions of the Ohio teacher leader endorsement and its' impact on them as teacher leaders. The study was conducted in an urban and suburban school district located in central Ohio. The eight teachers were selected to participate in the study because they held the Ohio teacher leader endorsement and work as teacher leaders in either a formal or informal role in their district. Five themes emerged from this study: (a) Formal training and support is essential for teacher leaders and can provide teachers with credibility among their colleagues, (b) Teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles are necessary to impact change in their organization, (c) Formal teacher leaders can lead from the classroom, (d) Informal support for teacher leaders, and (e) Stronger connections between statewide initiatives and the work of teacher leaders are necessary for educators to make sense out of the work of teacher leaders.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Mahlia, an aspiring educator. I appreciate your patience, understanding, encouragement, and willingness to share me with the process of completing this work. Throughout this process, I hope you gained a better understanding of the habits of mind that will allow you to push past obstacles that may come your way.

Keep Proverbs 3:5-6 in your heart at all times, “Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not on your own understandings. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path.” You will always by my CHAMPION!
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I would also like to express sincere appreciation to my family. My family is my foundation and means the world to me. I remember the first bible scripture my parents instilled in my soul as a child: Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.” I meditated on this scripture constantly throughout my journey. My parents have encouraged me to be a fearless leader and march to my own beat. I am blessed to have sisters, Tracy and Nikki, who are my best friends. Their guidance and support helped me daily. Finally, I would like to thank my daughter, Mahlia for her patience and understanding.
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CHAPTER I

Personal Statement

I became a master teacher in the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in 2005. At that time, I did not realize the challenging task I was taking on. I assumed if I could work in some of the toughest schools in a large urban school district, what challenges could teachers possibly bring? The year I decided to leave my classroom and begin working with teachers as a master teacher was an enormous shift for my thinking and learning. The master and mentor teachers were given a week of training on an in-depth instructional rubric and the program. It was all a whirlwind. I can remember sitting in trainings on the TAP rubric and attempting to understand a very complex rubric on teaching and learning. During this week, we were trained on effective coaching strategies, leadership principles, and how to effectively script observations in the classroom. I remember feeling very overwhelmed and nervous about my new role as a teacher leader.

Butterflies fluttered in my stomach as I stood in front of my peers for my very first weekly cluster meeting at my new school. I can remember feeling like darting out of the room to head to the restroom right before the meeting began. I did not know what to expect from the adults I was standing before. I was new to the building as a teacher leader, and I did not know any of the teachers. The teachers were very suspicious of me because the program and I were new to the building. The teachers were aware that I was the “master teacher,” and I would be charged with evaluating, coaching, and providing weekly on-going professional learning with them. I remember overhearing teachers questioning, “Who is she?” or “Why was she chosen to be the master teacher?” in the
hallways the first week of school. Standing in front of my peers was much scarier than any classroom I had ever taught previously.

It wasn’t long before I realized that teachers could be just as challenging, if not more, than children in the classroom. During my initial cluster meetings, some refused to participate, while others chose to disrupt my meetings with chronic complaining about every aspect of schooling: duty schedules, bus dismissal, students not bringing in homework, discipline issues, teaching schedules, etc. I had a clear agenda and plan for each meeting but it became quite obvious that the teachers had an agenda as well.

The TAP program was mandated in the school. The principal didn’t appear to be too fond of the program or sharing leadership, so I did not receive much support from her. Teachers acted out weekly in cluster meeting right in front of the principal, and it appeared the principal enjoyed it. I quickly became frustrated and began to feel isolated. I didn’t have anyone to talk to in my building. The teachers didn’t trust me because they thought I was a spy or a “pseudo assistant principal” for the principal. The principal felt I was stepping on her toes because she believed she should have been the sole leader in the building.

Fortunately, we had monthly master teacher meetings for all of the master teachers in the district taking on these teacher leaders’ roles. During these meetings, the master teachers would gather in a learning community and share building updates, teaching strategies, and research articles on teaching learning and adult learning theory. It was during this time, that I realized I was not the only teacher leader who was feeling isolated, frustrated, and overwhelmed. Many of the master teachers complained about the
reticent teachers and the challenging task of creating a learning community without the
support of the administrators.

Early on in my transition into the position of a teacher leader, I realized I needed
many skills and strategies to work with adults. I needed strategies to deal with reticent
adults to impact change within my building. Building relationships with the teachers was
critical, if I was charged with transforming the behaviors of the adults in the building to
impact teacher and student learning.

Over the years, that I was a master teacher I learned a lot about myself, and
teachers as adult learners. I have always been a reflective practitioner. If I ventured out
into a new area in the teaching profession, I sought out experts in that area to enhance my
understanding around my scope of work. It was important that I equipped myself with a
mentor that provided me with constructive feedback about my work. I quickly learned
that all teachers are not the same. There are a few that are highly reflective and thrive off
of feedback, while there are others who view feedback as criticism and negativity.
Reflection was a huge piece of the program and every person, including myself was
evaluated and expected to reflect on his or her craft.

It quickly became apparent to me that the teachers were not used to reflecting on
their practice. Many teachers became very defensive during classroom observations,
coaching sessions, and during cluster meetings. I was surprised at how some teacher
could take offense to an open-ended question such as; “Tell me about the worksheet you
chose to use for this particular lesson.” The teachers in the building did not believe
anyone had the right to question their teaching practices. And, if anyone did, they were
obviously attacking their teaching skills and it was personal. I became incensed with the
arrogance of the teachers, who were failing children on a daily basis and held this belief. Many teachers questioned why they had to participate in weekly learning communities, which were embedded in their workday, where they analyzed student work and data, created common assessment, and identified best practices and teaching strategies that would enhance teaching and student learning.

As I began to reflect upon the behaviors of the teachers and administrator, I realized educators have been conditioned to work in isolation. In the past teachers did not have to link their teaching practices to student learning or results. I cannot recall any coursework from my own undergraduate program that taught critical reflection and collaboration before entering the field of teaching. Educators are now being held accountable for their actions in the classrooms. Teacher leaders are being called upon to be instructional leaders and impact change within classrooms that will enhance both teacher and student learning.

As a teacher leader, I was not quite sure how I would be effective with my peers. Initially, I felt like I was not adequately prepared to lead other adult educators. How was I going to help them to transform their practices? What supports were in place to ensure my effectiveness as a teacher leader? What type of formal or informal training did I need to be successful with adults? I was an excellent classroom teacher, but did that mean I could effectively lead adults as a teacher leader? These questions consumed my colleagues and myself as teacher leaders. Our questions led many of us to earn our teacher leader endorsement at a nearby university and use our professional learning time to gain a better understanding of our role as teacher leaders and effectively transform our
organization into effective learning communities where all individuals were expected to learn and maximize student learning.

Introduction

In a time of education accountability and school reform an immense amount of pressure is being put on teachers to increase student achievement for all students and close achievement gaps among groups of students (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Many reform efforts are putting teachers at the center of school reform initiatives. Much research has indicated that effective teachers play a more important role than any other school related variable in increasing student achievement (Danielson, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie, 2012; US Department of Education, 2010). Teachers are encouraged to take on more leadership roles than ever before with little to no preparation or training. With teachers being put at the hub of increasing student achievement, efforts must be put in place to ensure both teacher and student success.

Effective teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles within their schools to help other teachers become more effective in teaching and learning to increase student outcomes. Teachers are being asked to work within professional learning communities, conduct action research, develop rigorous lessons and assessments that are aligned to teaching standards, analyze data, lead their colleagues, and reflect on their practices. Although some teachers are eager to take on such roles, many feel they are inadequately prepared (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Developing successful teacher leaders to impact change within schools is critical, if schools are going to be transformed into learning
organizations where teachers are refining and reflecting on their practice to increase student achievement.

**Background**

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* report pointed out that the American public education system was not meeting needs of its children and was lagging behind many countries in the world. Since that report, strong emphasis has been placed on increasing student achievement, developing academic standards for students, teacher quality, and leadership and financial support (US Department of Education, 2008). The report recommended that states adopt more rigorous and measurable standards. This led many states to implement a standards-based system in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The principle behind developing standards was to outline what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade in each subject, use the standards to guide instruction within classrooms, and to establish assessments to measure whether students are meeting the standards (Hanushek & Lindseth, 2009). Accountability was the major focus of the large school reform initiatives in the 1980s (Fullan, 2007).

In early 2002, The No Child Left Behind Act was adopted. This federal accountability statute pushed the work of *A Nation at Risk* further by asking states to measure and report on results of students in terms of standards and accountability (Hanushek & Lindseth, 2009). The No Child Left Behind Act set ambitious goals for students such as, every child reading on grade level by 2014. Since the enactment of No Child Left Behind, all states have adopted content standards and assessments. These assessments have left districts and states with a plethora of data that disaggregate results by subgroups, such as English language learners, students with disabilities, and ethnic or
racial minorities. The data also exposed gaps between groups of students, which urged many educators, stakeholders, and policymakers to call for more reform efforts (Hanushek & Lindseth, 2009).

In 2010, the Reauthorization for the Elementary School Secondary Education (ESEA) Act called for a new goal, that by 2020, the United States would once again lead the world in college completion (US Department of Education, 2010). The Blueprint for reform was designed to extend the work of the American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009. The priorities in the blueprint for reform called for a re-envisioned federal role to build on the following key priorities:

- College and Career-Ready Students
- Great Teachers and Leaders in Every School
- Equity and Opportunity for all Students
- Raise the Bar and Reward Excellence
- Promote Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Ohio was one of the early states to receive federal funds from the Race to the Top Grant. Under this grant, the Department of Education strengthened and developed school reform initiatives to increase student achievement in schools. Some of the major reform initiatives that align to ESEA and the Reauthorization are the development and adoption of the Common Core standards, PARCC Assessment, The Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) and the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES), The Resident Educator Program, Teacher Career Lattice, and the restructured licensure system.

Standards for Ohio Educators
In 1997, Ohio developed state standards for student learning. The standards were created around six content areas, which explained what students would know and do once they completed high school. After 1997, Ohio created standards for students, teachers, principals, and professional development, with the hopes of increasing student achievement in the state. Senate Bill 1, which called for the standards, also mandated assessments that were aligned to the standards. The passage of Senate Bill 2 followed in 2004. The bill mandated the creation of the Education Standards Board (ESB).

The ESB was charged with developing standards for the teachers, principals, and professional development. These standards are considered the Educator Standards. According to the Ohio Educators Standards. The ESB consists of teachers, principals, administrators, and higher education representatives. The standards developed by the ESB and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE, 2005) was designed to provide principles of professional practice for all Professional teachers and school leaders, with the intent to ensure quality teaching in every classroom in Ohio. Common themes were used to design the three sets of standards, which include:

- A focus on student achievement;
- Data-based decision making (principals use data to lead the development of a vision and goal of the school; teachers use data to set their professional plans and professional development goals);
- Communication and collaboration;
- Shared leadership;
- Principals as instructional leaders;
- Continuous professional development.
According to the ESB, “As the standards are implemented, they will inform daily practice, become the driver for teacher and principal education programs and on going professional development, as well as informing local district evaluation and assessment of teachers and principals” (ESB & ODE, 2015).

The Ohio teaching profession standards define expectations for teachers based on skills and traits of effective teachers. There are seven standards that teachers should use to reflect upon their practices.

1. Students: Effective teachers understand student learning and development, and respect the diverse students they teach.

2. Content: Effective teachers understand the content they teach.

3. Assessment: Effective teachers understand and use varied assessments to evaluate student learning and inform instruction.

4. Instruction: Effective teachers plan and deliver instruction that is tailored to the needs of each student.

5. Learning Environment: Effective teachers create safe, supportive, and respectful learning environments.

6. Collaboration and Communication: Effective teachers collaborate and communicate with students, parents, other educators, administrators and community members to support student learning.

7. Professional Responsibility and Growth: Effective teachers understand that professional development is a continuous process for which they are responsible.

The indicators for the teaching profession standards are written to show teachers performance at three levels; proficient, accomplished, and distinguished. According to
the teaching profession standards, all teachers are expected to perform at the proficient and accomplished level. The levels clearly define teachers’ expectations and performance for each indicator. According to the indicators and levels, a teacher performing at the distinguished level is clearly a teacher leader. A teacher leader who is taking on leadership responsibility at the classroom level, but also outside of the classroom by possibly collaborating with colleagues, leading professional development, and working to impact policy around teaching and learning. Teachers can use the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession as a guide for self-reflection to improve their effectiveness throughout their teaching profession life.

Principals are essential in impacting student achievement within schools. It is critical that principals create environments where both teachers and students can be successful. Effective principals understand that they alone cannot bring about change within an organization (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). According to Katzenmeyer and Moller, (2009), “Leadership cannot be successful with a single, heroic leader, rather, the leader must consider how to cultivate relationships so that all teachers, administrators, and parents work together to improve student outcomes” (p.90). Therefore, effective principals create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to learn and lead (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

The Ohio Standards for Principals were developed so that principals could continually reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout stages of their careers (ESB & ODE, 2005). According to the Standards for Ohio Educators, there are five standards that principals should reflect on throughout their career:
1. Principals help create a shared vision and clear goals for their schools and ensure continuous progress toward achieving goals.

2. Principals support the implementation of high-quality standards based instruction that results in higher-level achievement for all students.

3. Principals allocate resources and manage school operations in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment.

4. Principals establish and sustain collaborative learning and shared leadership to promote learning and achievement of all students.

5. Principals engage parents and community members in the educational process and create an environment where community resources support student learning, achievement, and well-being.

These standards depict the skills and traits of an effective leader. According to the Educators Standards, “The result will be an educational system in which all teachers instruct and students achieve at the highest levels” (ESB & ODE, p.41). The Ohio Educators Standards find it essential that effective principals are change agents, distributing leadership, and encouraging professional learning communities within their organizations. Principals who are operating at the distinguished level are learning leaders. Principals are most effective when they are devoting their time and energy to building teachers’ capacity and creating and monitoring professional learning communities (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

High quality professional development is essential in motivating and developing teachers to increase student achievement. According to the Ohio Standards for Professional Development, “Ongoing professional growth is essential for ensuring that
educators have the knowledge and skills they need to meet the increasing demands of their profession” (2005). The professional development standards are designed so that school leaders can embed professional development into the day-to-day actions of educators within schools. The Ohio Standards for Professional Development are:

1. High quality professional development (HQPD) is a purposeful, structured and continuous process.
2. High quality professional development (HQPD) is informed by multiple sources of data.
3. High quality professional development (HQPD) is collaborative.
4. High quality professional development (HQPD) includes varied learning experiences that accommodate individual educators’ knowledge and skills.
5. High quality professional development (HQPD) is evaluated by its short- and long–term impact on professional practice and achievement of all students.
6. High quality professional development results in the acquisition, enhancement, or refinement of skills and knowledge.

The standards above define the characteristics of high quality professional development. The following can use the professional development standards: (a) individual educators who are planning their own professional development; (b) planners of professional development, (c) providers of professional development; (d) evaluators of existing professional development programs and systems. Professionals within school organizations who are aligning their work around these standards are operating as communities of learners and engage in the work of action research to build their capacity and increase student achievement.
Ohio’s Teacher Career Lattice

Empowering teachers to take on both formal and informal leadership roles within schools is essential for schools to be successful. Along with the Standards for Ohio Educators, Senate Bill 2 directed the ESB along with the ODE to develop a proposal for a teacher career ladder program. Teaching career ladders can offer teachers the opportunity to take on leadership roles, while remaining in the classroom (ESB & ODE, 2006). Core principles were identified for the Ohio career lattice framework. As identified in the proposal, Ohio’s career ladder framework should:

1. Be anchored in the state’s new teaching, principal, and professional development standards;
2. Clearly underscore the relationships between high quality teaching and student learning;
3. Define multiple and diverse opportunities for all teachers to grow and lead; and
4. Create and sustain a community of professional practice.

Ohio’s Career Lattice Framework seeks to provide more opportunities for teachers outside of the classroom. In the past when a teacher wanted to move beyond the classroom into a leadership role, he or she typically became an administrator. If the framework is implemented correctly, teachers can have the opportunity to be acknowledged for their expertise, rewarded, and compensated. The Career Lattice Framework seeks to keep effective teachers in the classroom, while allowing them opportunities to work along side their colleagues to enhance their professional practice.

In 2011, Ohio restructured the teacher licensure system, to allow for teachers to advance through stages throughout their teaching career as leaders for school
The levels were created under ODE’s and the State Board of Education’s belief that effective instruction is essential in increasing student achievement for all students. House Bill 1 was instrumental in creating four licensure levels, which include:

1. Resident Educators License
2. Professional Educator License
3. Senior Professional Educator License
4. Lead Professional Educator License

Each level is clearly defined for educators and identifies how educators can progress through the various levels if educators decide to take on leadership and mentoring roles within their buildings and districts. The next section will provide a brief overview of each level.

**Resident Educator License.** A four-year license that is non-renewable but extendable on a case-by-case basis. Candidates must have a bachelor degree from an accredited teacher preparation program and will be expected to enter a four-year teacher residency program. Teachers are required to work in a school or district, complete the four-year Resident Educator Program, and successfully pass a performance-based assessment called the Resident Educator Summative Assessment.

**Professional Educator License.** A five-year license that is renewable. Teachers must successfully complete the Ohio Resident Educator Program before they can apply for the Professional Educator License.

**Senior Professional Educator License.** A five-year license that is renewable. To attain this license, teachers must have a master’s degree from an accredited higher
education institution, have nine years of teaching experience under a standard teaching license, and successfully complete the Master Teacher Portfolio.

**Lead Professional Educator License.** A five-year license that is renewable. To attain this license, teachers must have a master’s degree from an accredited higher education institution, have nine years of teaching experience under a standard teaching license, earn the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement, and successfully complete the Master Teacher Portfolio, or hold National Board Certification.

**Problem Statement**

In a time of accountability, teachers are under pressure to ensure all groups of students are learning. Reform initiatives are putting teachers at the center of most improvement efforts. Teacher leaders are being called upon to mentor, model, coach, evaluate, collaborate, and develop their peers. Teacher leaders are expected to help transform the behaviors or build capacity in adults in their building to increase student achievement. Often, effective classroom teachers are expected to be leaders. These teachers are thrown into formal and informal leadership roles with very little formal training or ongoing support on how to transform adult behaviors in schools (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Sherrill (1999) affirmed, “Teachers are not accustomed to teaching adults” (p. 58). Past studies have shown that both teachers and principals need deliberate preparation for teacher leadership to flourish (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Sherrill, 1999; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Previous research on teacher leadership has focused on several topics. There have been several studies that sought out to define teacher leadership, which many researchers found challenging. The lack of clearly defining teacher leadership has been consistent
within the literature (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) identified teacher leadership in three waves. The first waves of teacher leaders were an extension of administration and acted in formal roles. They were placed to help schools run more efficiently. The second wave of teacher leaders acted in formal roles but were appointed to these roles. In this wave, teacher leaders were curriculum directors, mentors, and coaches. The third wave and most current put teachers at the center of re-culturing schools. Instructional improvement remained the goal, but through continuous learning and a collaborative culture.

Other research focused on identifying teacher leaders, while some attempted to understand what they do. There is also research that focuses on the types of conditions that influences teacher leadership. Much of this literature focuses on school culture, structures, and roles and relationships (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teachers often feel frustrated when taking on formal and informal leadership roles. Teaching in isolation and egalitarian beliefs held by teachers in schools can further discourage teachers from taking on leadership roles. Administrators may be reluctant to release leadership responsibility to teachers because they feel threatened by teacher leaders (Danielson, 2006). Lieberman and Miller (2004) described this as contested ground between teachers and administrators. Typically, teacher leaders are exceptional classroom teachers but may lack an understanding or formal training in change process, adult learning theory, mentoring and coaching, and leadership.

Previous research on teacher leadership focused primarily on the skills and dispositions needed by teacher leaders. Some of the research focused on the types of teacher leadership and how teacher leaders perceive themselves. Other studies focused on
how teacher leaders impact teachers in their schools. Teacher leadership development is a complex task (Sherrill, 1999; Smylie & Denny, 1990). Smylie and Denny (1990) stated, “Little attention has been paid to preparing the school as a setting for new forms of leadership” (p. 237). Principals and teachers must be prepared to embrace teacher leaders. Although, there has been research on the knowledge, skills, and responsibilities of teacher leaders (Barth, 2004; Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Sherrill, 1999; Wasley, 1991), there is minimal research directed toward how teacher leaders are developed and supported (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Examining how successful teacher leaders and principals are prepared for teacher leadership both formally (colleges/universities) and informally (job-embedded training) can provide educators with greater insight on how to create environments within schools, where all individuals can embrace leading and learning and ensure student learning is maximized. Focusing on teacher leader development and support provides a perspective on initial training and sustained support and development from the individuals who are responsible for transforming their schools into thought provoking, curious, and engaging learning communities.

**Research Question**

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to examine how teacher leaders are developed and supported both formally and informally to be effective in their roles and to gain an understanding of teacher leaders’ perception of the Ohio teacher leader endorsement and its’ impact on them as teacher leaders. Three research questions drove this study:

1. What type of school environments support and develop teacher leaders?
2. What are teacher leaders’ perceptions of the Ohio teacher leader endorsement?

3. What are the barriers teacher leaders faces in their roles as teacher leaders?

**Overview of Methodology**

This study sought to further the research on the development and support of teacher leaders by using a grounded theory approach to exploring the research questions. A systematic design was used to analyze the data collected. According to Rich (2012), “…grounded theory seeks to literally ground the research in the data in a way that any theory produced is readily verifiable” (p. 2). The majority of the data were collected through the initial semi-structured interviews, follow-up interviews, and email correspondences. A lot of rich data was collected from the participants in the study. To ensure I did not force the data into preconceived categories, I went through a series of steps where I organized the data, analyzed the data, and posed questions to make sense out of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I simultaneously conducted interviews and analyzed the data collected throughout the research process (Rich, 2012). I engaged in multiple steps through the data collection and analysis process. Once the data was collected the data was first coded, I next used memos to make sense out of the data, and lastly, I classified and categorized the data to identify emerging trends and patterns in the data. Rich clarifies, “As systematic as grounded theory is, it is important to remember that it is not a lock-step research methodology in which a researcher can only move to the next stage after successfully completing the prior one” (p. 4). In the data analysis process I constantly reviewed and analyzed the data collected at various points throughout processes to make sense out of the data I gathered. This was done to construct a grounded theory connected to data.
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined to enhance the understanding of information presented in subsequent chapters.

**Teacher Leadership.** The process by which teachers, individually or collectively influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement (Yorke-Barr & Duke, 2004).

**Teacher Leaders.** Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, influence others toward improved educational practices, and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

**Informal Teacher Leaders.** Classroom teachers that take on leadership roles and responsibilities within their school. These teachers do not have a formal title or job expectations other than those attributed to them by other teachers, administrators, and parents. Their influence stems from how others view them, not from any ascribed authority or power that comes with the position (Donaldson, 2007).

**Formal Teacher Leadership.** Teachers who are in a full-time or part-time leadership position outside of the classroom. They are also considered Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA). These teachers may be instructional coaches, mentors, master teachers, curriculum developers, etc.

**Reflective Practitioner.** An educator examining his or her own teaching methods in light of how well students are learning, determining in collaboration with colleagues or
coaches how to improve one’s practice, examining the results of an intervention and making necessary changes (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2010).

**Professional Learning Community.** A collaborative process in which teachers and other educational professionals commit to engage in continuous improvement through ongoing professional learning. This process is characterized by collegial exchange in which educators work together to improve student learning by investigating professional learning strategies such as lesson planning, examining student work and peer coaching; reflecting on practice, and holding one another accountable for improved practices and result (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2010).

**Job-Embedded Learning.** Planned and purposeful learning that occurs while teachers and administrators engage in their daily work. While simultaneously performing their job duties, participants specify goals for professional learning and achieve those goals through a process of collaboration with colleagues on matters related to their work. They learn by doing, reflecting on their experiences and then generating and sharing new insights and learning with one another (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2010).

**Delimitations**

This grounded theory study was confined to teacher leaders in Ohio who held the Teacher Leaders Endorsement. Therefore, its uniqueness makes it difficult to generalize to other populations. I worked in the urban district with the teacher leaders utilized in the study. The small sample size also is a limitation in the study. Teacher leaders in a large urban and suburban district were used in this study. Lastly, I have the Teacher Leader
Endorsement and may have some biases about how the endorsement supports and develops teachers as leaders.
CHAPTER II

Introduction

In the past couple of decades, school reform initiatives have attempted to make schools in the US more productive at increasing student achievement for all students. Many initiatives such as a *Nation at Risk* and The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act have attempted to improve the quality of teachers and conditions of teaching (Smylie & Denny, 1990; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Reform initiatives are holding principals and teachers more accountable than ever before (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009; Danielson, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Greenwood, 2011). Teachers are expected to increase learning for all students regardless of their race or socioeconomic background (Danielson, 2006; Darling Hammond et al., 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Teacher effectiveness is being linked student achievement (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Due to these initiatives, schools have been searching for school improvement initiatives that will help to increase both teacher performance and student achievement in schools.

Leadership is essential to school improvement (Fullan, 2005; Muijs & Harris, 2007; Reeves, 2008). There is a significant correlation between leadership and student achievement (Reeves, 2008). Principals can no longer be the sole leaders in schools due to complexity of the work that must take place (Greenwood, 2011; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Murphy, 2005). Principals shape the culture of their schools. Deal and Peterson (2009) stated, “Research on distributive leadership suggests that effective leadership is ‘stretched’ over the staff” (p. 11). In positive school cultures leadership is distributed, teachers are engaged in job-embedded professional learning, and teacher
leaders are respected and valued by staff members (Peterson, 2002). School improvement efforts are expanding leadership roles for teachers within their organizations (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Murphy, 2005).

Teacher leadership is not a new concept (Darling Hammond et al., 1995; Harris, 2005; Smylie & Denny, 1990; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Administrators have often selected a small number of teachers to distribute leadership in both formal and informal ways. Often these teachers took on pseudo-administrative tasks in the building, which often led to mistrust among teachers in the building (Bradley – Levine, 2011). Teachers also have taken on roles outside of their classroom such as mentors, union representatives, textbook chairperson, and lead teachers or department heads in their schools (Darling Hammond et al., 1995; Little, 1995; Smlyie & Denny, 1990). Perspective on teacher leadership has evolved over the years (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; York-Barr & Duke). Educators are identifying teacher leadership as a key force to sustaining school improvement efforts (Harris, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Katzemeyer and Moller, “Within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership that can be a strong catalyst for making changes to improve student learning” (2009, p. 2).

It is essential that leadership roles are extended beyond principals and superintendents schools, if school improvement efforts are going to be successful (Louis, Leithwood, Anderson, & Walstrom, 2004). Teaching is a very complex and demanding task (Danielson, 2009; Darling- Hammond, 2006). Teachers play a significant role in impacting student performance (Danielson, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Reeves, 2008). Muijs and Harris (2007) stated, “While the quality of teaching most strongly
influences levels of pupil motivation and achievement, it has been demonstrated that the quality of leadership matters in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching in the classroom” (p. 111).

**Why Teacher Leadership**

If schools are going to become more effective, systems must be designed to sustain school improvement initiatives over time regardless of the school administrator (Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Teachers work alongside students daily and are the largest group of employees within schools (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) referred to teachers as the sleeping giants because they can be strong catalysts for change in schools and increasing student achievement.

The research on teacher leadership clearly identifies the importance of advancing the concept of teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The literature on teacher leadership creates a compelling argument on how teachers can transform schools if given the opportunity to lead within schools. Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) rationale for teacher leadership rests on four perspectives: (a) building organization capacity, (b) modeling democratic communities, (c) empowering teachers, and (d) enhancing teacher professionalism. This section on why teacher leadership is divided into three groups: Distributing leadership, teacher development, and benefits to teacher and students. Findings in the literature are described in each group.

**Distributing Leadership**

In the past leadership in schools was designed solely for principals (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002; Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Teachers often do not see themselves as leaders beyond their students and classroom due to the hierarchal design
and structures of schools. Organizational structures that are bureaucratic inhibit the
development of distributive leadership (Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Seashore Louis,
2009). Spillane (2005) noted the term distributive leadership is “used interchangeably
with ‘shared leadership,’ ‘team leadership,’ and ‘democratic leadership’” (p.143). It is
clear in the literature that Individual principals do not single-handedly lead schools to
greatness (Spillane, 2005).

The strong demands of distributed leadership in the literature entails leadership
being spread across the school and not restricted to one individual (Deal & Peterson,
2009; Fitzgerald & Gunther, 2008; Ghamrawi, 2013; Harris & Spillane, 2008) and also to
improve instruction in schools (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Distributive leadership focuses
on the interactions between individuals within schools more than a leader’s actions
(Harris & Muijs, 2005; Spillane, 2005). When leadership is distributed across the school
all individuals are held responsible for making school-wide decisions, building a positive
school culture, and supporting on-going learning for staff members and students.
Crowther et al. (2009) defined a similar process as parallel leadership, a process whereby
teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity.

Muijs and Harris (2007) conducted three qualitative case studies to look at ways
teacher leadership operated in schools and to determine what school factors were in place
that could help develop teacher leadership. The researchers concluded that teacher
leadership needed to be deeply embedded in the culture of the school and done in a
careful deliberate process. The authors also noted that all staff must understand and want
to be involved in the leadership activities. Principals who encourage teacher leadership
understand that genuine leadership has less to do with title and position than it does with
influence (Reeves, 2008). Schools must be restructured so that teachers understand that leadership is not an additional responsibility but a role for all individuals within the organization (Danielson, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). When enough teachers take on both formal and informal leadership roles in a school they are more likely to enhance and sustain school improvement efforts, even when there is a change in administration (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Harris and Spillane (2008) pointed out that distributive leadership is not necessarily a good or bad thing, nor does it automatically improve performance. They stated, “It is the nature and quality of leadership practices that matters” (p. 33).

Professional Learning

High teacher learning is linked to increased student learning (Hord, 1997; York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006). Senge defined learning organizations as “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990, p.4). Senge identified five disciplines that are necessary to build a learning organization. The five disciplines are identified and defined below:

- **Systems Thinking.** A conceptual framework that is the cornerstone of the learning organization. The organization is viewed as a whole, rather than a collection of segmented parts. All parts are interrelated and affect each other.

- **Personal Mastery.** “Organizations learn only through individuals who learn” (p. 139). Individuals with high levels of personal mastery are life-long learners. It is
important that individuals continually clarify and deepen their personal vision, focus their energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively.

- **Mental Models.** Deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action. Developing an organization’s capacity to work with mental models involves both learning new skills and implementing institutional innovations that help to bring these skills into regular practice. Reflection and inquiry are essential in making tacit knowledge visible and shared.

- **Building Shared Vision.** Collectively individuals hold a common belief about the purpose of their organization. “When people truly share a vision they are connected, bound together by a common aspiration” (p. 206). Shared visions are important because they focus the learning within the organization.

- **Team Learning.** Individuals within the organization learning together. “The process of aligning and developing the capacity of the team to create the results its members truly desire” (p. 236).

According to Senge (1990), all five disciplines work together to create a learning organization.

Building off of the work of learning organizations, many researchers have suggested that schools embrace Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to improve schools by addressing the complexities of teaching, building collaborative communities, and increasing the learning of both teachers and students (Dufour, Eaker, & Dufour, 2005; Hord, 1997; Schmoker, 2006). Many educators who have an interest in school improvement use the term professional learning communities loosely (Dufour, 2005).
Administrators and teachers may view their schools as utilizing PLCs whenever groups of teachers meet in large or small groups to discuss the students. The concept of learning communities is misunderstood by educators, which can ultimately lead to failure (Dufour, 2005).

Sergiovanni (1994), defined a learning community as a place, “where members are committed thinking, growing, and inquiring and where learning is for everyone an attitude as well as activity, a way of life as well as a process” (p. 71). Dufour (2005) identified three big ideas that professional learning communities rest upon: (a) ensuring that students learn, (b) culture of collaboration, and (c) a focus on results. A brief overview of each big idea will be provided in the following paragraph.

In professional learning communities, teachers must shift their focus from teaching to a focus on student learning (Dufour, 2005). There is not enough time spent on assessing how effective educators are at ensuring students are learning and the types of modifications and adjustments teachers must make in future lessons. When teachers are ensuring that all students learn, every professional engages with colleagues on three important questions:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

Focused questions around student learning can guide teacher reflection, dialogue, and action on how to deliberately use instructional strategies to maximize teacher and student learning in schools.
Professional Learning Communities are characterized by powerful collaboration (Dufour, 2005), continuous learning, and reflection on instructional practices (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Wei, Darling- Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Teachers often gather and meet with one another throughout the day and after work in schools. However, time spent in these meetings often has little do with building teachers’ capacity around teaching and learning.

Dufour (2005) identified how schools can support the powerful process of collaboration by stating

…The schools must ensure that everyone belong to a team that focuses on student learning. Each team must have time to meet during the workday and throughout the school year. Teams must focus their efforts on crucial questions related to learning and generate products that reflect that focus, such as lists of essential outcomes, different kinds of assessment, analyses of student achievement, and strategies for improving results. Teams must develop norms or protocols to clarify expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and relationships among team members. Teams must adopt student achievement goals linked with school and district goals. (p. 38)

When teachers work together in professional learning communities they are taking on leadership roles both inside and outside of their classrooms, which can enhance the professional practice of all educators within their school (Crowther, Kaagan, & Ferguson, 2002; Danielson, 2006; Dufour, 2005), and lead to increased student achievement (Dufour, 2005). Leithwood and Seashore Lewis (2012) stated, “Collective leadership has a stronger influence on student learning than any individual source of leadership” (p. 66).
Benefits to Teachers and Students

When schools operate as true learning communities everyone benefits. Teacher leadership has the potential to bring school communities together and advance learning for all (Barth, 2001; Crowther et al., 2009). According to Barth (2001), “The teacher who is always leading and learning will generate students who are capable of both leading and learning” (p. 82). Barth envisioned schools as places where everyone is involved in teaching and learning.

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL, 2008) conducted a study on how principals encourage teacher leadership in high schools and how teachers practice it. Surveys and interviews with teachers and principals were used to gather data. The researchers used the MetLife National Leadership Survey for high school principals to gather information about teacher leadership from the principals’ perspective. The study used principals’ responses from 76 high schools and teachers from six high schools. Telephone interviews were utilized to collect specific school-level information on teacher leadership. IEL used a set of criteria based on the literature relevant to the research question to identify to select schools for the interviews. The criteria identified 15 schools with favorable conditions for the cultivation of teacher leadership. Out of the 15 schools identified, six schools participated in the interview portion of the study. Interviews were conducted with principals and groups of teachers selected by the principals.

The study found that everyone in the school benefitted from teacher leadership. The principals viewed teacher leaders as vital members of their administrative team and believed that their schools would not be as successful without them. Teachers benefited from the sense of community created by their teamwork and efforts beyond the
classroom, which led to better working environments. According to the study, most importantly the students benefited from teacher leadership. All of the schools in the survey sample met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two or three years prior to survey. However, in the study the researchers clearly noted that AYP is an imperfect measure of student success.

Although there is a limited amount of large scale quantitative studies that establish a clear relationship between teacher leadership and its effect on student achievement (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), over the past two decades studies on teacher leadership have linked benefits to schools (Barth, 2001; IEL, 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Sergiovanni, 1994, York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), described several benefits of teacher leadership that affect principals, teachers, students, and parents. Below is a brief description of the benefits identified.

• **Professional Efficacy.** When teachers act as leaders, they view themselves as capable of improving student learning through their own actions. They understand their responsibility and role for improving student learning and place less blame on factors outside of their control.

• **Retain Excellent Teachers.** Teacher leadership opportunities can promote the teaching profession as a more desirable career. Teachers have opportunities take on leadership roles outside of their classroom. Collaboration in schools reduces teacher isolation and teachers may feel more supported. Talented teachers are challenged and encouraged to stay in the profession through the use of career ladders. Teachers can be a part of change process within school.
• **Overcome Resistance to Change.** Credible teachers can influence their colleagues to examine their practice and try new practices. Teachers are less resistant to change when teacher leaders participate in the process. “If teachers are know another teacher has had success with a new approach, and the approach matches their own beliefs about what is best for students, they are more likely to adopt the innovation” (p. 33).

• **Career Enhancement.** When teachers take on leadership roles outside of the classroom they are taking on more complex challenges. Teachers have the opportunity to expand their influence beyond their classroom to other adults within their school. The challenges of leadership roles can revitalize teachers.

• **Improve Own Performance.** Teacher leadership roles allow teachers to improve their own instructional practice. When teachers develop and conduct professional development for teachers, and act as peer coaches and curriculum specialists they have the opportunity to examine their own practices. “Teacher leaders learn through classroom observations and coaching, faculty study groups, and conducting action research within their own and others’ classrooms” (p.33).

• **Influence Other Teachers.** When principals distribute leadership responsibilities to teachers they have a larger realm of influence over the teaching and learning that takes place within their school. When teacher leaders collaborate with principals, they can alleviate some of the demands and responsibilities of administrators. They can build capacity in other teachers as well as influence practices and policies in their school.
- **Accountability for Results.** The goal of teacher leadership is to improve teacher practice and increase student performance. When teachers work collectively toward school improvement efforts alongside their principals they become more accountable for students’ learning.

- **Sustainability.** Relying on one leader in a school to maintain and sustain the momentum for innovation is risky. Teachers are essential to sustaining change and innovations because they are most likely to remain in schools after principals are gone. A critical mass of teachers can sustain change even when new leadership is established in the school.

Darling–Hammond et al. (1995) examined data from in-depth case studies of seven Professional Development Schools (PDSs) along with research in other PDSs to trace new forms of teacher leadership emerging in PDSs. The authors analyzed the data on teacher leadership in professional development schools and made three claims: (a) teacher leadership is inextricably connected to teacher learning; (b) that teacher leadership can be embedded in tasks and roles that do not create artificial, imposed, formal hierarchies; and (c) that such approaches may lead to greater profession-wide leadership as the “normal” role of teacher is expanded, thereby improving the capacity of schools to respond to the needs of students.

In highly developed PDSs, all teachers engage in teacher leadership roles, not just a few (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Similar to Katzenmeyer and Mollers’ (2009) findings, the researchers found teachers benefit by taking on leadership roles. Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) asserted, “stepping outside of the confines of the classroom forces these teacher-leaders to forge a new identity in the school, think differently about
their colleagues, change their style of work in a school, and find new ways to organize 
staff participation” (p. 103). The authors noted that process as being demanding and 
intellectually challenging.

When schools operate democratically, everyone is leading and learning (Barth, 
2001). Barth (2001) also noted that when teachers take on leadership roles within their 
schools and are permitted to be a part of the decision making process they are taking a 
huge step toward transforming their school from dictatorship to democracy. Barth (2001) 
summarized the benefits of teachers taking on leadership roles by asserting:

They experience a reduction of isolation; the personal and professional 
satisfaction that comes from improving their schools; a sense of instrumentality, 
investment, and membership in the school community; and new learning about 
schools, about the process of change, and about themselves. And all of these 
positive experiences spill over into their classroom teaching. These teachers 
become owners and investors in the school, rather than mere tenants. They 
become professionals. (p. 444).

The literature reviewed creates a compelling argument for the need of teacher 
leadership. Schools benefit greatly when leadership is distributed. Principals cannot 
 improve schools single-handedly. They must work alongside teachers if they want to 
transform their school into professional learning communities. The more opportunities 
teachers have to lead the greater their morale, participation, and commitment is to the 
teacher leadership suggests that teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in 
the ways schools operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning” (p. 255).
Students become committed to learning when they are immersed in a culture that values learning. When teacher leadership is used correctly, it has the power to develop community within schools and build a democracy. In the book, *Stories of the Courage to Teach: Honoring the Teacher’s Heart* (2002), Palmer poignantly described the need for teacher leaders in the Forward claiming:

One of the major challenges in educational reform is for teachers – who see themselves as working in service to the young – to see themselves also as leaders in service to our schools and society. By embracing a larger leadership role, teachers would not dilute but deepen their commitment to children and youth. If more and more educational leaders were to rise from the ranks of teachers – transforming both our schools and the way our society supports them – the ultimate beneficiaries would be our young people, the most precious asset any society has. (p. xxiv)

**What is Teacher Leadership?**

The Institute of Education Leadership (IEL, 2008) claimed teacher leadership has historical roots that run deep and confirm that the norms of collegiality and collaboration are significant to quality teaching, the instructional climate, and student achievement. Conceptions of teacher leadership have changed over time (Silva et al., 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leadership has not been clearly defined in the literature (Murphy, 2005; Wasley, 1991, York-Barr & Duke, 2004), although authors noted its’ importance to school improvement (Barth, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Reeves, 2008; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). York-Barr and Duke stated, “The lack of the definition may be due, in part, to the expansive territory encompassed under the umbrella term
Teacher leadership” (p. 260). Teacher leadership has been defined in multiple ways throughout the literature (Muijs & Harris, 2007). According to Harris, 2005, much of the literature reflects overlapping competing definitions for the term. Tables 2.1 below provide examples of teacher leadership definitions in the literature.
Table 2.1. Definitions of Teacher Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All teachers have the capacity to lead their schools down a more positive path, to enlist their abundant experience and craft knowledge in the service of school improvement. (p. 444)</td>
<td>Barth (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leaders are those teachers who influence the behavior of both students and adults in the school setting.</td>
<td>Brownlee (1979)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leadership is essentially an ethical stance that is based on views of both a better world and the power of teachers to shape meaning systems. It manifests in new forms of understanding and practice that contribute to school success and to the quality of life of the community in the long term. (p. 28)</td>
<td>Crowther, Ferguson, &amp; Hann (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere. (p. 12)</td>
<td>Danielson (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leaders are those whose dreams of making a difference have either been kept alive or have been reawakened by engaging with colleagues and working within a professional culture. (p. 33)</td>
<td>Lambert (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; Identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership. (p. 6)</td>
<td>Katzenmeyer &amp; Moller (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leadership is a means to move teaching to a higher level of professionalism. Leading and learning are closely aligned, so as teachers take on leadership roles, they learn, and as they learn, they lead. (p. 32)</td>
<td>Moller &amp; Pankake (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who are exemplars in the classroom, effective coaches of their peers, and change agents who contribute to school, district, state, and national educational reform. (p. 4)</td>
<td>Snell &amp; Swanson (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively; influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. (p. 287-288)</td>
<td>York-Barr &amp; Duke (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher leadership is defined as the ability of teacher leaders to engage colleagues in experimentation and then examination of more powerful instructional practices in the service of more engaged student learning. (p. 170)</td>
<td>Wasley (1991)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) shared how teacher leadership has evolved through time by noting three waves of teacher leadership. The first wave focused on maintaining an effective and efficient educational system. Teacher leaders in the first wave took on more formal roles such as department heads, head teacher, master teacher, and union representatives. Teachers were viewed as managers in the first wave. The second wave was developed out of the limitations of the first wave according to Silva and her colleagues. According to Silva et al. the second wave of teacher leadership acknowledged teachers as instructional leaders and the positions created for these teachers’ instructional expertise. Positions such as staff developer and curriculum writer came out of this wave. The third wave of teacher leadership focused on teachers in the classroom taking on leadership roles to help restructure their school. Silva et al. gave a description of teacher leadership in third wave:

Teacher leaders would ‘slide the doors open’ to collaborate with other teachers, discuss common problems, share approaches to various learning situations, explore ways to overcome the structural constraints of limited time, space, resources, and restrictive policies, or investigate motivational strategies to bring students to deeper engagement with their learning. (p. 781)

The three waves of teacher leadership as described by Silva et al. (2000) evolved from primarily formal roles toward re-culturing schools to professional learning communities with teacher leading from the classroom.

Snell and Swanson (2000) defined teacher leaders as, “those who are exemplars in the classroom, effective coaches of their peers, and change agents who contribute to school, district, state, and national educational reform” (p. 4). Lambert (2003) asserted,
“Teachers become more fully alive when their schools and districts provide opportunities for skillful participation, inquiry, dialogue and reflection. They become more fully alive in the company of others” (p. 422). In schools where teacher leadership is embraced, there is a high level of professional collaboration among the individuals. When teachers in schools engage in constant dialogue surrounding their practices and student outcomes, teachers see a strong link between teaching and learning.

Many researchers believe that all teachers have the capability to lead within their schools (Barth, 2001; Crowther et al., 2002; Darling Hammond et al., 1995; Lambert, 2003). Barth (2001) commented on the notion that all teachers are not capable of leading:

Skeptics might amend this assertion to ‘some teachers,’ or ‘a few teachers,’ or even ‘many teachers.’ These low expectations are as destructive, limiting, and self-fulfilling as ‘some children can learn.’ The fact of the matter is that all teachers harbor leadership capabilities waiting to be unlocked and engaged for the good of the school. (p. 444)

Following the same concept, other definitions contend teacher leadership can transform schools. Crowther et al. (2002) asserted, “Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-school success. It applies the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults. And it contributes to long term, enhanced quality of community life” (p. 10). Barth (2001) shared the same concept with his idea of schools as a democracy. According to Danielson (2006), the teaching profession is never fully mastered and is quite complex.

Danielson (2006) described the term teacher leadership as, “. . . set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that
extend beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere (p. 12). In her definitions, the teachers remain in the classroom but yet they exert influence over their school. Danielson believes it is essential for teacher leaders to work closely with their colleagues and develop a collaborative culture within their school. It is critical that teacher leaders engage in action research with their colleagues and reflect on their practices to enhance student learning and school improvement.

Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) definition of teacher leadership has evolved in the past years by adding an accountability piece to their definition. They attempt to clarify the definition by declaring, “Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6). Their definition appears to conceptualize what teacher leadership should ideally look like currently. When teachers act as leaders within their school, they play an important role in re-culturing schools into learning communities, where increasing student achievement is the outcome.

**Who are Teacher Leaders?**

According to the research teacher leaders are effective teachers, who are respected by their peers, and may hold formal or informal leadership roles (Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; & Lambert, 2003; Moller & Pankake; 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leaders influence their colleagues to become more effective teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Effective teacher leaders are highly reflective, thrive off of learning, and accountable for both adult and student learning. Not only are these teachers willing to learn but also they are willing to share their practices others
(Pankake & Moller, 2006). “Teacher leaders move beyond vision, take action, and are responsible for the outcomes” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 11).

Teacher leaders can be effective in either formal or informal roles (Moller & Pankake, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Moller and Pankake (2006) do not advocate for a specific type of leadership role claiming, “...we need to seek teacher leadership that best supports the improvement of teaching and learning; this may vary from school to school” (p. 27). Therefore, it is important that principals and teachers understand the type of teacher leadership that will best support their community.

In the past leadership was not associated with classroom teachers. Leadership is usually situated within a hierarchy. If teachers wanted to advance their career or affect student learning on a broader scale they had to leave the classroom and go into administration (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Some states are recognizing the importance of providing career lattices for teachers, so that they do not lose effective teachers. Career lattices recognize the work of effective teachers and also provide teachers opportunities to take on leadership roles without having to leave the classroom for good. Wasley (1991) noted, “A major consideration in the teacher leadership discussions is whether teachers should retain some classroom responsibility or whether they should be on full-time release” (p. 143).

Informal Teacher Leaders

For the purpose of this study, informal teacher leaders are identified as classroom teachers who take on additional responsibilities outside of their classroom to improve their schools (Darling-Hammond et al.; 1995; Silva et. al, 2000). Silva et al. (2000) referred to informal teachers leaders in the third wave of teacher leadership. Recent
research is noting that teachers do not have to leave their classroom to become leaders (Barth, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Teacher leaders in informal roles may be able to have a stronger impact on other teachers within their school than teacher leaders in formal roles (Pankake & Moller, 2006). Informal teacher leaders have opportunities to be more transparent in their teacher practices and serve as instructional models for teachers in their schools (Wasley, 1991). Informal teacher leaders may find it less challenging to build credibility among their colleagues.

Wasley (1991) conducted a case study with three teacher leaders to help to define and better understand the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders. The researcher purposely chose teachers leaders with varying roles in different parts of the United States.

The purpose of the teachers taking on teacher leadership roles was to influence the instructional practices of the teachers within their school. Out of the three teacher leaders in her case study, one of the teachers remained in the classroom and took on informal teacher leader roles, while the other two took on formal leadership roles. All of the teachers taught students as part of their leadership responsibilities. Similar to Moller and Pankake’s (2006) assertion, all three of the teacher leaders believed that their teaching in the classroom enhanced their credibility. Confirming this idea, Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000) noted three dimensions of effective teacher leaders, (a) competence, (b) credibility, and (c) approach. The authors note that teacher leaders must be competent in the classroom and have strong credibility and reputation among peers, and staff members must feel comfortable approaching these individuals.
Silva et al. (2000) focused on three classroom teachers who wanted to take on more leadership responsibility in their schools to gain better insight on ways to facilitate the third wave of teacher leadership. Through the teacher leaders’ stories, the researchers were able to draw five conclusions around classroom teachers taking on leadership.

- Teacher leaders navigate the structures of schools.
- Teacher leaders nurture relationships.
- Teacher leaders encourage professional growth.
- Teacher leaders help others with change.
- Teacher leaders challenge the status quo by raising children’s voices.

Informal teacher leaders are capable of transforming their school. Although teacher leaders do not hold any authoritative power over other teachers (Bowman, 2004; Harris & Mujis, 2005), they can empower other teachers and students to take on leadership roles to transform their school into a democratic community (Barth, 2001). Teachers do not have to leave the classroom or divorce themselves from teaching and learning to become leaders (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Darling –Hammond et al. (1995) contended, “Teacher leadership can be embedded in tasks and roles that do not create artificial, imposed, formal hierarchies and positions” (p. 89). They can lead their colleagues in solving problems, inquiry, professional learning, and action research while teaching in the classroom.

Teachers may shy away from taking on leadership roles outside of their classroom due to the lack of time, administrative support, and confidence in leading their colleagues (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Wasley’s (1991) case study found that the informal teacher leader was concerned about being pulled out of his classroom too often to support other
teachers. He thought his students resented his being out of the classroom at times. 
Teacher leaders may struggle with balancing their responsibilities and being successful both inside and outside of the classroom.

**Formal Teacher Leaders**

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) acknowledge that teacher leaders may leave the classroom and remain quite effective in working with other teachers. Formal teacher leaders have the capability to be just as effective with classroom teachers as informal leaders. Teachers may choose to take on formal teacher leader roles due to the challenges of juggling a full-time classroom and taking on demanding leadership roles (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The authors noted their work is still focused on teaching learning, but it typically takes place within their colleagues’ classrooms. School district officials typically call upon talented formal teacher leaders when they are attempting to implement school improvement initiatives to enhance teacher quality and close gaps among groups of students (Moller & Pankake, 2006). Formal teacher leaders can be hand selected to work in schools by central office officials or building principals because of their excellent work inside and outside of their classroom. These teachers can be viewed as selected teachers who are “appointed and anointed” by school officials (Darling-Hammond, 1995).

Similar to informal teacher leaders, formal teacher leaders do not hold authoritative power. Deliberate structures must be in place within schools for both formal and informal teacher leadership to support school improvement efforts (Mujis & Harris, 2007). It may take more time for formal teacher leaders to earn trust and respect from their colleagues if they come from outside of the building. Often the roles of formal
teacher leaders lack clarity. Killion and Harris (2006) stated, “because the work of school-based coaches is broad and often unspecified, understanding the roles helps both coaches and those who supervise them communicate about the coaches’ work” (p. 29). Principals must be careful not to have formal teacher leaders engaging in quasi-administrative tasks that may take them away from working alongside classroom teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This may lead to mistrust between formal teacher leaders and teachers.

Teacher leaders in both formal and informal leadership roles are responsible for the learning for themselves and their colleagues (Barth, 2001; Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lambert, 2002; Wasley, 1991). Regardless of the role teacher leaders take on, one thing is clear in much of the research, all teachers have the right, capability, and responsibility to be leaders (Barth, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Lambert, 2003; Snell & Swanson, 2000). When teachers become leaders in their schools, they can be the catalyst for change that can be sustained over time.

**Roles of Teacher Leaders**

Teacher leaders operate in a variety of numerous formal and informal roles within schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teachers take on leadership roles in schools to improve student learning (Danielson, 2006). According to Danielson (2006) “teacher leaders can emerge in many different ways” (p. 24). The roles may come about through an external mandate or teachers taking initiative on their own to solve problems in their schools. Some of the formal teacher leadership roles in schools Danielson identified are master teacher, department chair, team leader, helping teacher, and mentor (Danielson, 2006).
In 2004, Lieberman and Miller called for new roles for teachers as teacher leaders, coaches, and teacher researchers, creating a culture the foster investigation and inquiry, and focuses on teaching and learning. Killion and Harris (2006) identified 10 roles of school-based coaches, which include:

- Resource provider
- Data coach
- Instructional specialist
- Curriculum specialist
- Classroom supporter
- Learning facilitator
- Mentor
- School leader
- Catalyst for change
- Learner

The authors noted that coaches may fill the roles simultaneously depending on their job description.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) provided examples of formal teacher leadership roles as union representatives, department heads, curriculum specialists, mentors, or members of site-based management teams. The authors described informal roles as coaching peers to resolve instructional problems, encouraging parent participation, working with colleagues in small groups and teams, modeling reflective practice, or articulating a vision for improvement. York-Barr and Duke’s findings from their comprehensive
review of the teacher leadership literature identified domains of teacher leadership practice, which included formal and informal leadership roles. The dimensions of practice they categorized in the literature were coordination and management, school or district curriculum work, professional development of colleagues, participation of school change and improvement initiatives, parent and community involvement, contribution to the profession of teachers, and pre-service teacher education (p. 266-267).

**Barriers to Teacher Leadership**

Although teacher leadership has been around for quite some time, there are factors that may cause it not to flourish in many schools. Many researchers have noted barriers to teacher leadership over time. York-Barr and Duke (2004) identified three main categories of conditions that may cultivate and support teacher leadership, as well as challenge or diminish its effectiveness. The three categories were school culture, roles and relationships, and structures. The authors noted that egalitarianism is one the most prevailing norms among the teaching profession, and many teachers believe that teachers who take on leadership roles are stepping out of line. They also found the relationship between teacher leaders and their colleagues and principal was critical. Traditional cultures within schools that are hierarchal and where teachers work in isolation also may hinder teacher leadership.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) realized that teachers were reluctant in being identified as leaders even when they were heavily involved in leadership activities for three major reasons. First, teachers described school contexts that did not call for teacher leadership. “The quality of teacher leadership depends on the culture of the school.” (p. 5). Second, teachers did not believe they had the skill to lead other adults. Many leaders
such as principals are required to learn leadership skills, but teacher leaders are rarely provided opportunities to engage in building such skills. Third, egalitarian norms of school cultures suggest that all teachers should be equal. Teachers are hesitant about drawing attention to themselves in fear of the reaction by their colleagues in such a culture.

In Harris and Muijs’ (2003) literature review on teacher leadership the authors noted organizational barriers and professional barriers that need to be overcome for genuine teacher leadership activity to take place in schools. The organizational barriers primarily consisted of the traditional “top down” leadership model, with very little leadership responsibility and power relinquished to teachers. Professional barriers included teachers being ostracized by their colleagues (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2000), isolated from their colleagues (Lieberman et al., 2004), and feeling less connected to their peers when engaging in teacher leadership activities (Troen & Boles, 1992).

Danielson noted both cultural and structural factors that may inhibit teacher leadership (2006). Danielson placed the cultural factors in two categories: administrators threatened by teacher leadership and teacher reluctance. She also shared that some administrators may fear they are giving up control when they empower teachers to take on leadership roles. Danielson stated, “Many teachers are reluctant to step up to propose a new program or idea; they feel they are stepping over the line of acceptable behavior” (p. 130). This finding also lines up with what Yorke Barr and Duke stated about the egalitarian beliefs of teachers. In the literature, there is an abundance of researchers who identify teachers’ egalitarian beliefs about teaching, which may cause many teachers to frown upon teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Little, 1995; Murphy,
2005; Moller & Pankake, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In some cases, teacher unions have helped to perpetuate this belief among teacher that all teachers are equal (Lambert, 2003) and should not be treated different. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) stated, “The teaching profession is designed as a flat profession in which every teacher is expected to be equal, except in seniority. Moving outside this norm can be treacherous for teaching leaders . . .” (p. 130).

School Structures

Traditional school structures may also be a factor in hindering teacher leadership. Many schools are not designed for teachers to take on leadership roles. Teachers work in isolation for the bulk of their day (Danielson, 2009). Teachers in many schools are used to working by themselves and many times prefer it. Not all teachers want to take on leadership roles. They believe it is the job of the principal to take on leadership (Moller & Pankake, 2006). Teachers are also inundated with endless work and challenging students and may not believe they have time or understand how to take on leadership roles (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Teachers engage in so many tasks throughout their day. Some of tasks include; learning and understanding the curriculum, grading papers, following the school’s pacing guides, developing lesson plans and units, differentiating instruction, and meeting with parents to keep them updated about their child’s progress. Teaching is a complex challenging task and it is just about impossible to perfect it (Danielson, 2006; Darling-Hammond; 2010; Shulman, 2004). Teaching is a job that is in the moment and teachers are expected to deal with students from all types of backgrounds. Therefore, after their day is complete teachers must tweak and modify their plans and work even more to ensure they are prepared to go back into the classroom the next day.
Finding a balance can be a challenge between work and personal life for teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Some teachers believe that taking on leadership roles is adding more work to their day, and they are not sure on how to manage such tasks. If schools are going to become more effective, all teachers should be encouraged to take on some sort of leadership role. Leadership is not an option nor is designed for a selected few chosen by the administrator. Many researchers assert that all teachers are capable of being leaders (Barth, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Lambert, 2003; Moller & Pankake, 2006). Lambert 2003 stated, “In the same way that everyone is born to learn, everyone is born to lead” (p. 33). Schools must be redesigned so that teachers are not working privately behind closed doors and feeling overwhelmed and isolated. Teachers must be encouraged to work collaboratively with their colleagues, observe and provide one another with feedback, conduct action research, and examine student work together.

According to Danielson (2006),

Administrative leadership is not sufficient; it must be complimented by teacher leadership, that informal, spontaneous exercise of initiative and creativity that results in enhanced student learning. The litmus test of effective leadership (exercised by administrators or teachers) is whether improved learning survives the departure of the leader, whether it has become institutionalized. (p. 17)

Therefore, if schools are going to be highly effective everyone within the organization must take some sort of leadership role to ensure all students are learning at high levels. Every individual must be held accountable for increased student achievement and by allowing teachers to lead is great way to distribute ownership for the outcomes within the school.
Teacher leadership challenges current school structure and the relationships among individuals that are important in transforming schools (Murphy, 2005). Teachers must engage in continual collective job-embedded professional learning to increase student learning. Although teachers are typically given a few hours to plan weekly there are some researchers who do not believe this is enough time. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), veteran teachers receive 15 to 25 hours to plan collaboratively, analyze student-learning, plan and develop lessons, conduct action research, and observe one another teaching to improve teaching practices in other countries where the achievement gap is closed. In the US, the time is considerably less and the time is not spent well. Teachers often utilize planning time to plan field trips, complain about students, colleagues, and parents, and grade papers. Providing teachers with common planning time throughout the day is not enough. Many principals assume if they provide teachers with common planning time, they are working in professional learning communities and collaborating. Although teachers are given common planning times in many cases the teachers are not clear about what they should be focusing on and monitoring. They also may not understand the true meaning of collaboration (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The principal and teacher leaders must provide a model of what common planning time should look like. They also should be a part of this time to help facilitate and provide feedback to teachers. Leaders must inspect what they expect. Therefore, leaders can be there to provide support for teachers and ensure they are collaborating in a manner that is going to enhance student achievement and teacher growth. Ongoing learning within schools is not an option for individuals within schools. It should not be viewed as
an add-on or extra work for teachers but an integral part to teaching and learning. Danielson (2009) stated, “Establishing and maintaining such culture is central to the work of both administrative and teacher leadership” (p. 24).

Finding time for teachers to work together collectively is a huge challenge in schools (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Darling-Hammond (1995) asserted, restructuring time to allow teachers to collaborate, plan and design lessons collegially, and mentor one another is critical in fostering and developing professional relationship among teachers. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) identified four challenges for teacher leadership: (a) deciding to accept a leadership role, (b) building principal/teacher leadership relationship, (c) working with peers, and (d) facilitating professional learning for self and others. The authors noted that before teachers take on a leadership role they should reflect on four factors that may influence their success as teacher leaders: (a) organizational commitment to teacher leadership, (b) teaching culture, (c) professional learning, and (d) personal balance. Teacher leaders in a dysfunctional school may need to reflect even more in those areas when deciding to take on leadership roles within their school.

Muijs and Harris (2007) conducted three case studies that looked at teacher leadership in three schools in the United Kingdom. In the schools where leadership flourished there were deliberate structures put in place that embraced a collaborative culture. Teachers were encouraged to take on leadership roles and were given clear leadership roles. In the school where there was a lack of teacher leadership the authors found that the school culture was very traditional. The teachers perceived the leaders to use a top-down approach to leadership. The teachers were reluctant to take on leadership roles, and the staff needed a lot of encouragement. Teachers were reticent about taking on
leadership roles due to a lack of clarity of roles. The school lacked a shared vision and collaborative culture. Muijs and Harris believe there must be a shift in the school’s culture and structure if teacher leadership is going to prevail. Schools must become more collaborative and inclusive. If teacher leadership is going to thrive in schools, the authors noted the importance of a shared vision, beliefs, trust, and rewards.

Traditional school structures do not encourage teachers to act as leaders. There must be a shift in how schools are designed if teachers are going take on leadership roles. Teachers need time for collaboration, planning, observations, professional learning, and reflection if they are going to enhance teaching and learning within the schools where they are working. Creating professional learning communities in schools can be a challenge and must be a deliberate process both internally and externally (Danielson, 2006). Time is a major barrier in most schools when attempting to gather individuals for collaboration. Administrators and principals must embrace teacher leadership if it is expected to take root and grow. Principals play a major role in distributing leadership across their organization and encouraging teachers to take risks and step into leadership roles.

Principals as Barriers

Principals play a significant role in helping teachers develop into leaders (Harris & Mujis, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Distributing leadership throughout the organization may be a challenge for principals. Some principals may feel threatened by teacher leadership (Danielson, 2006). Barth (2001) noted that weaker principals are less likely to encourage teacher leadership than stronger principals. Principals may feel that if they distribute leadership they are relinquishing power and control of their building
and/or that teachers are not capable of making sound school-wide decisions (Moller & Pankake, 2006). The belief that ultimately principals are accountable for the results of student learning in their building may be another reason that discourages principals from distributing responsibility and leadership in schools (Barth, 2001). Many principals are used to operating schools in a traditional hierarchal manner.

In many cases, teachers find their principals as obstacles when they take on leadership roles (Barth, 2001). In the Silva et al. (2000) case study all three—teacher leaders felt constrained by their building principal to exercise leadership. Principals may hold on to the “I am the boss” belief and feel they must make all the decisions in the school. There are principals who say they are open to distributing leadership but they lack awareness of how to work with teacher leaders (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Principals must be trained to work with teacher leaders to ease frustration, to help teachers develop necessary knowledge and skills, and to shift the school’s culture into an organization where leading, teaching, learning, and reflection can flourish for all individuals.

In many administrative training programs aspiring principals take courses on budgeting and finance, school law, management and leadership, and possibly a course or two on change process. Many of the Education Leadership programs put little emphasis on building relationships, creating professional learning communities, distributing leadership, and building leadership capacity within teachers (Moller & Pankake, 2006). In all three case studies Wasley (1991) found that the principal was problematic in relationship to the teacher leadership positions. In regards to the relationship between the teacher leaders and the principals Wasley concluded:
The creation of teacher leadership roles means that teachers and principals must forge new working relationships and must be willing to share responsibility for instructional improvement in the building. Traditional modes of interaction –like delegation – are not real acts of shared leadership. In delegation, the person who holds the authority makes the decision. In shared leadership, administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers share the decision making in order to determine how best to improve schooling for children and then how best to implement their mutual recommendations. (p. 164)

After reviewing two decades of literature on teacher leadership York-Barr and Duke (2004) assert “There is evidence to suggest that principal support of teacher leadership is more readily espoused than enacted” (p. 274). Reasons noted by the authors included: the struggle and messiness of clarifying domains of teacher leadership, domains of principal leadership, and areas of common ground. It is clear in the literature that principals can become a barrier to teacher leaders within school intentionally and unintentionally. Principals may benefit from training and professional development on how to distribute leadership and foster and support teacher leadership within schools. York-Barr and Duke (2004) created a detailed list from the literature that identified ways principals can support teacher leadership. The list is compiled into table 2 below.
Table 2.2. Ways Principals Can Support Teacher Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways to Support Teacher Leadership</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build a school culture and environment that is inclusive to teacher leadership, including both formal structures and informal behavior.</td>
<td>Bishop, Tinley, &amp; Berman 1997; Kahrs, 1996; Lieberman, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect leadership, relinquish authority, trust teachers, empower teachers, include others, protect teacher leaders from their colleagues, share responsibility for failure, and give credit for success.</td>
<td>Barth, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redefine the role of the principal from instructional leader to developer of community of leaders.</td>
<td>Troen &amp; Boles, 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create opportunities for teachers to lead; build professional learning communities; provide quality, results-driven professional development; and celebrate innovation and teacher expertise.</td>
<td>Childs-Bowen et al., 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a school environment in which teachers engage in reflective practice and can implement ideas that grow from reflection.</td>
<td>Terry, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay attention to the change process and human relationships, listen well, communicate respect, perpetuate ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning, and encourage teachers to act on shared visions.</td>
<td>Conzemius, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer “diligent, supportive, visible, and frequent reinforcement of the real power of teacher leaders”. (p.)</td>
<td>Hart, 1994</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preparation for Teacher Leaders**

The work of teacher leaders is quite complex and ambiguous (Danielson, 2006; Murphy, 2005). In the past, many educators assumed that if teachers were excellent in the
classroom, they would be great leaders within their school (Moller & Pankake, 2006). These teachers may be encouraged to move out of the classroom and into more formal leadership roles such as mentors, consultants, and/or coaches within the district. In many cases teachers are thrown into leadership positions with very little or no training and development (Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Murphy, 2005; Sherrill, 1999). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) stated, “We cannot ask teachers to assume leadership roles without any preparation or coaching, simply because they appear to intuitively know how to work with their colleagues” (p. 44).

Sherrill (1999) identified core competencies that teacher leaders needed developed in order to support teachers effectively during various career stages: pre-service preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development. According to Barth (2001):

Many teachers seem to lack the personal, interpersonal, and group skills essential to the successful exercise of leadership. The classic hallmark of collegiality – talking about practice, sharing craft knowledge, rooting for the success of other, observing one another engaged in practice – are simply absent. (p. 446)

Teachers are not equipped with skills that are necessary when working with other adults. Teacher leadership requires that teachers interact with adults frequently (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009):

Too often, we assume that competent, credible, and approachable teachers, who have instructional proficiency with their own students, are ready to be leaders; this assumes they should know how to work with adults, understand the change process in schools, and grasp the potential challenges of their leadership work. (p. 44)
In most undergraduate programs, teachers are developed and trained to work with students in the classroom. Teacher preparation programs do not provide teachers enough opportunities to gain leadership skills needed to lead beyond the classroom (Danielson, 2006).

As shared earlier in this paper, teacher leaders need to possess a set of skills to be effective. Skills such as collaboration, mentoring and coaching, facilitating group learning, analyzing data, motivating reticent teachers, and problem solving are essential to the work of teacher leaders (Danielson, 2006; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Moller & Pankake, 2006; Yorke-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leaders’ roles can prove to be quite challenging and many times individuals are learning their roles on site (Sherrill, 1999). In *Awakening the Sleeping Giant*, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) noted ways teacher leaders could influence development and growth in teachers around them:

- Building relationships and trust with others
- Inspiring and motivating others through feedback and providing opportunities to learn
- Dealing with resistant or difficult colleagues
- Entrusting others with responsibilities beyond regular job responsibilities
- Modeling behaviors of continuous learning
- Acting as mentor, coach, or counselor for colleagues

Leaders who have some training and understanding of adult learning theory may find it less challenging to build these skills in their colleagues. Sherrill (1999) also noted core expectations of teacher leaders, which included; demonstrating exemplary teaching and learning, understanding theory and research about teaching and learning, understanding
theories of adult development, cultivating desired dispositions in teachers, demonstrating knowledge of clinical supervision, and guiding colleagues by means of reflection and inquiry orientation.

Snell and Swanson (2001) conducted a study to identify essential skills and knowledge, which were important to teacher leadership. They studied 10 exemplar teacher leaders in urban middle schools in hope to identify variables that constitute teacher leadership. Swanson and Snell identified “Five Dimensions of Teacher Leadership” which explained what teacher leaders should know and be able to do at high levels to function effectively as leaders. The dimensions noted were: empowerment, expertise, reflection, collaboration, and flexibility. The authors believed that expertise is the most important and the foundation of all five dimensions of teacher leadership. Before teachers can lead others, they must have a strong understanding of content and pedagogy. Snell and Swanson also noted that expertise is essential in establishing credibility among the teacher leaders’ colleagues.

**Summary**

The literature review in this section stresses the importance of increasing leadership opportunities for teachers so that schools can be transformed into learning organizations. Research suggests that teacher learning can directly impact student learning (Muijs & Harris, 2007). According to Muijs and Harris (2007), “Building the capacity for school improvement requires paying careful attention to how collaborative processes in schools are fostered and developed. In particular, it is concerned with maximizing teacher leadership and teacher learning” (p. 37).
In order for teacher leadership to be successful there must be a deliberate process for supporting and developing teacher leaders. Teacher leadership should be deeply rooted in the culture of the school (Muijs & Harris, 2007). In many cases, teachers do not feel they are adequately prepared and/or supported to take on leadership roles within their schools. This study explored how teachers are supported both formally and informally. The review of literature helped to establish the rationale for this study and the need for both formal and informal training for teacher leaders. Chapter III describes the design of the study and methodology.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

Researchers use qualitative research when they seek to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it (Creswell, 2008; Hatch, 2002). The purpose of this study was to examine teacher leadership in Ohio, with individuals who hold the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement; to gain insight on the types of environments they believed encouraged successful teacher leadership and to determine how teachers leaders are best developed and supported. Qualitative data were collected to gain a better understanding of this study. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) design of study, (b) context of Study, (c) role of researcher, (d) population and sampling procedures, (e) analysis of data, and (f) trustworthiness and credibility. The overarching question addressed in this study was, how are teacher leaders developed and supported both formally and informally to become successful teacher leaders. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are teacher leaders’ perceptions of how the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement Programs developed them as teacher leaders?
2. What type of school environments support and develop teacher leaders?
3. What are the barriers teacher leaders faces in teacher leadership?

Design of Study

A qualitative grounded theory design is used when a researcher need a broad theory or explanation of a process (Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell, “A grounded theory design is a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate theory that explains,
at a broad conceptual level a process, an action, or an interaction about an substantive topic” (p. 432). I wanted to explore the process of how teacher leaders were developed in teacher leadership programs in Ohio and gain an in-depth of understanding of how these teachers were developed and supported within their school environments for the purpose of identifying a theory for ways in which teacher leaders should be formally and informally developed and supported. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in their world (Merriam, 2002a). Teachers who held the Ohio Teacher Leadership Endorsement were selected for this study because they all had formal training at a college or a university on aspects of teacher leadership to attain the endorsement. By specifically focusing on teachers who hold the Teacher Leader Endorsement, this study adds to the body of research that focuses on developing, supporting, and training teacher leaders.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) identified seven categories of support for teacher leaders in their Teacher Leadership School Survey (TLSS) school instrument. The seven dimensions were used as a conceptual framework for part of this qualitative study to identify teacher leaders’ perceptions of how teacher leadership is developed and supported in their schools. Interview questions (see appendix 4) were developed around the seven categories using the TLSS to allow teacher leaders the opportunity to share their perceptions of how their schools support or lack to support teacher leadership within seven dimensions. The seven dimensions are (a) developmental focus, (b) recognition, (c) autonomy, (d) collegiality, (e) participation, (f) open communication, and (g) positive environment. The definition for each dimension is described in depth below.
Developmental Focus. Teachers are assisted in gaining new knowledge and skills and are encouraged to help others learn. Teachers are provided with needed assistance, guidance and coaching.

Recognition. Teachers are recognized for roles they take and the contributions they make. A spirit of mutual respect and caring exists among teachers. There are processes for the recognition of effective work.

Autonomy. Teachers are encouraged to be proactive in making improvements and innovations. Barriers are removed and resources are found to support teachers’ efforts.

Collegiality. Teachers collaborate on instructional and student-related matters. Examples of collegial behavior include teachers discussing strategies, sharing materials, or observing in one another’s classroom.

Participation. Teachers are actively involved in making decisions and having input on important matters. Department chairpersons, team leaders, and other key leaders are selected with the participation of teachers.

Open Communication. Teachers send and receive information relevant to the effective functioning of the school in open, honest ways. Teachers feel informed about what is happening in the school. Teachers easily share opinions and feelings. Teachers are not blamed when things go wrong.

Positive Environment. There is general satisfaction with the work environment. Teachers feel respected by one another, parents, students, and administrators. Teachers perceive the school as having effective administrative leadership. Appointed or informal teams work together effectively in the interests of students.
Context of Study (Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement Origins)

In January of 2011, House Bill 1 restructured Ohio’s teacher licensure system to provide opportunities for teachers to advance in their careers and serve as leaders of school improvement by establishing a new career ladder for teachers. The four-tiered teacher licensure structure levels are:

- Resident Educator License
- Professional Educator License
- Senior Professional Educator License
- Lead Professional Educator License

Initially, when the four-tiered licensure structure was created in 2011 the goal was for newly hired candidates in the four-year Resident Educator Program to receive mentoring and guidance from teacher leaders who held the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement. The teacher leader endorsement was designed to facilitate the support of the Ohio Resident Educator Program by preparing educators to serve as teacher leaders and employ skills of working with adult learners, facilitating and leading change, managing conflict, and coaching and mentoring teachers at all stages in their careers (ODE, 2012). If teachers would like to attain the Lead Educator Professional license, they must hold a master’s degree and have nine years of teaching experience. Teachers must also earn the teacher leader endorsement and successfully complete the Master Teacher Portfolio, or hold active National Board Certification (NBPTS).

The Teacher Leader Endorsement is added to a professional teaching license or permanent teaching certificate. Initially, teachers were required to hold a master’s degree and have at least four years of successful teaching experience to be eligible to participate
in a teacher leader program at a college or university. Four universities piloted the teacher leader endorsement program in 2009. The four universities included: Ohio Dominican University, Kent State University, University of Cincinnati, and Wright State University. According to the ESB, teachers in the teacher leader programs are expected to take coursework and participate in a practicum experience, which requires them to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions at the distinguished level that are described in the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession. There are now many universities across Ohio that offers the teacher leader endorsement in Ohio.

**Role of Researcher**

I am an educational consultant at the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in the Center for the Teaching Profession and the office of Educator Effectiveness. I work directly with the Resident Educator Program, which is a four-year induction program for new teachers. Prior to working at ODE, I was a master teacher in the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in the urban district used in this study. Part of my responsibilities in that role were to coach, evaluate, and provide professional development for teachers. In 2010, the master and mentor teachers in the TAP program were given the opportunity to participate in a grant that provided us the opportunity to participate in the teacher leader program at Ohio Dominican University. The majority of the master teachers took advantage of this opportunity and participated in the three courses to attain the teacher leader endorsement. I currently hold the teacher leader endorsement. My journey in this district sparked my curiosity about many of Ohio’s school reform initiatives, teacher leadership, and the Ohio teacher leader endorsement. I
worked in the urban district used in this study and utilized previous colleagues for participants in the study.

As a consultant at the Ohio Department of Education, I work with the Resident Educator Program, which is a four-year induction program for new teachers. In this role, I am responsible for leading the development of the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA). The RESA is a teacher performance assessment that Resident Educators must pass in their third or fourth year of teaching before they are eligible to apply for their five-year professional license. The RE team and I are also responsible for developing and revising state trainings for state trainers and mentors, providing technical support to the field, delivering professional development for the RE Program, and program evaluation at the state level. Mentor support and development is a critical component of the Resident Educator Program.

My prior roles and current experience leads me to believe that teacher leaders are essential component to school reform initiatives. Teacher leaders can support and develop their colleagues in many different ways if given the opportunity and when working in a school culture that embraces teacher leadership. I attained to the teacher leader endorsement to receive formal training on teacher leadership add the endorsement to my current teaching license.

**Population and Sampling Procedures**

The study was conducted with teachers who held the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement in three school districts in Ohio. In the fall of 2014, I contacted the Ohio Department of Education to request a list of all teachers who hold the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement. The teachers were purposively selected for interviews utilizing the
list of teachers with the Ohio teacher leader endorsement. Teachers were selected from rural, suburban, and urban school district in Ohio for maximum variation. According to Creswell (2008), “Maximal variation sampling is a purposeful strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait” (p. 214). The goal was to develop many perspectives (Creswell, 2008) and diversity in the sites selected (urban, rural, and suburban) to apply results to a greater range of situations by readers and consumers of the research (Merriam, 2002b).

Emails were sent out to all teachers in the selected urban, suburban, and rural schools that held the Ohio teacher leader endorsement. Initially, I planned to interview four teacher leaders in each setting; with two of the teachers operating in formal teacher leadership roles and two operating in informal teacher leadership roles. I planned to interview the first two formal and informal leaders who agreed to participate in the study. The teachers in the urban district agreed to participate in the study upon receiving the initial email. In the suburban district, only two teachers responded to the initial email. After receiving a low response, I contacted the Human Resource office in the suburban district to attain access to teachers who held the Ohio teacher leader endorsement and worked in formal roles. A director in central office was very helpful with targeting participants for my study. I sent a second email out to teachers requesting their participation in the study again a month later. Three teachers responded to the email and two agreed to participate in the study. Lastly, I sent out three emails to the teachers in the rural district over a period of 3 months. Only one teacher agreed to participate in the study and the teacher later decided not to participate for unknown reasons. Therefore, I was unable to collect data from the rural district.
Participants

University guidelines were followed pertaining to use of Human Subjects. A detailed description of the study was provided the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) and approval was granted. I contacted teachers who held the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement through email. The teachers who agreed to participate signed an informed consent form. The informed consent form outlined the purpose of the study, benefits, participants’ rights, and their voluntary participation in the study (see appendix). The participants’ names and schools were changed to protect their identity. Creswell 2008 stated, “It is important to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who participate in the study” (p. 157). All of the data collected was secured in my home office in a locked file cabinet. The backgrounds of the 12 participants are listed in appendix.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview process was utilized. According to Merriam (2002b) “This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the responding world view of the respondent, and to the/new ideas on the topic” (p. 74). A list of open-ended questions were generated by the researcher and used to guide the interview process (See Appendix C). Both in-person and telephone interviews were conducted with the participants. Each participant was interviewed at least once for approximately 60-90 minutes. Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed by the researcher. After each interview was transcribed, the researcher sent the transcription to
the teacher leader to review for accuracy. In-depth qualitative data on the teacher leaders’ perceptions were collected and analyzed to gain an understanding of the types of supports teacher leaders deem necessary to effectively lead and enhance both teacher and student learning within schools.

Sites – Description of Districts

Urban.

Four teachers from an urban district were selected to participate in this study. The urban district is located in central Ohio and currently serves approximately 51,000 students. The demographic breakdowns of all students in the district are: Black, 57.3%, White, 26.8%, Hispanic, 8.0%, Multiracial 5.2%, and Asian, 2.5%. There are a total of 116 K-12 schools within the district, which includes 22 high schools and career centers, 22 K-8 and middle schools, and 72 elementary schools.

Suburban.

Four teachers from a suburban district were selected to participate in this study. The suburban district is located in central Ohio and currently serves approximately 14,500 students. The demographic breakdowns of all students in the district are: White, 68.5%, Asian, 17.0%, Black, 4.3%, Hispanic, 4.6%, and Multiracial, 5.4%. There are a total of 19 schools in the district: 3 high schools, 4 middle schools, and 12 elementary schools.
Table 3.1.
Demographics of School Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Type</th>
<th>Total # of students</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Multiracial</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

A systematic design was used to analyze the data collected. According to Rich (2012), “…grounded theory seeks to literally ground the research in the data in a way that any theory produced in readily verifiable.” (p. 2). The majority of the data were collected through the initial semi-structured interviews, follow-up interviews, and email correspondences. A lot of rich data was collected from the participants in the study. To ensure I did not force the data into preconceived categories, I went through a series of steps where I organized the data, analyzed the data, and posed questions to make sense out of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I simultaneously conducted interviews and analyzed the data collected throughout the research process (Rich, 2012). I engaged in multiple steps through the data collection and analysis process. Once the data was collected the data was first coded, I next used memos to make sense out of the data, and lastly, I classified and categorized the data to identify emerging trends and patterns in the data. Rich clarifies, “As systematic as grounded theory is, it is important to remember that it is not a lock-step research methodology in which a researcher can only move to the next stage after successfully completing the prior one” (p. 4). In the data analysis process I weaved in and out of the processes to make sense of the data that I gathered and was
analyzing to construct a grounded theory connected to data. The processes and procedures are detailed next to provide an understanding of the steps taken to ensure accuracy of this grounded theory study.

According to Chamaz (2006), “Coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” (p. 43). After transcribing each interview, I immediately started coding the data. This process was helpful in interpreting and analyzing statements from teacher leaders at first glance. Teacher leader responses were reviewed line-by-line and I attached analytical ideas or concepts to their responses. Throughout the process, I used a constant comparative method to compare teacher leaders’ responses to one another and compared data with categories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I posed questions about the data as interacted with it. I had to constantly ask myself, “What is the data suggesting”? Chamaz (2006) explained that “the openness of the initial coding should spark your thinking and allow new ideas to emerge” (p. 48).

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I used memos to jot down connections between concepts and to elaborate on concepts (Rich, 2012). Memo-writing encouraged me to think about emerging ideas and concepts as they arose throughout the data analysis process. It also allowed me to stay objective and not force data into categories and allowed me to identify gaps in my data collection (Chamaz, 2006). The early coding processes lead me to defining the categories and themes in this study. The process of coding was grounded in the data and I remained open to the data to allow new ideas to emerge throughout the process (Chamaz, 2006).
Theoretical sampling was utilized to further develop themes and categories identified. Through this process, I found it critical to send out more questions to the participants, conduct follow-up phone interviews, and seek out candidates in specific roles for the study. Remaining close to the data increased my confidence and competence in the emergent categories and themes identified in this study (Charmaz, 2006).

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

According to Creswell (2003), “Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative” (p. 182). Researchers filter information through their own lens to make sense out of the data. Specific strategies were used in the study to ensure the accuracy of the data. Due to being the primary instrument used to capture the data it was important that I identified my roles as the researcher to identify my assumptions and personal biases at the onset of the study. The participants were also given their transcribed interview to review them to ensure their interview accurately depicted their perceptions. Follow-up questions through email and short phone interviews were used for clarifying and gathering further information from the participants. Codes and themes were also shared with participant to seek in-depth accuracy of the data from the participants.

**Summary**

Chapter III provided an overview of the methodology used in this study. This chapter discussed the design of the study, context of study, role of researcher, population and sampling, data analysis, trustworthiness and credibility, and summary. Chapter IV will provide an analysis of the data collected along with the findings related to the research questions.
CHAPTER IV

Results of Data Analysis

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore and conceptualize how teacher leaders are trained, developed, and supported both formally and informally to be effective in their roles. The study furthered examined teachers perceptions of the Ohio teacher leader endorsement and its’ impact on them as teacher leaders. The study was conducted in an urban and suburban school district located in central Ohio. The eight teachers were selected to participate in the study because they held the Ohio teacher leader endorsement and work as teacher leaders in either a formal or informal role in their district.

This chapter will start out with a description of the population sample. Next, a summary of the methodology, which will include a description of the participants and demographics, will follow. Lastly, the findings from the data analysis will be presented used to address each research question. The chapter will end with a brief summary and introduction to Chapter V.

Description of Population

A total of eight teacher leaders who held the Ohio teacher leader endorsement participated in the study. Four of the teacher leaders taught in an urban school district and four taught in a suburban school district located in central Ohio. The participants were selected for this study in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of how teacher leaders are trained, developed in supported in both formal and informal teacher leadership roles. I attempted to interview teacher leaders who operated in formal and informal roles in both districts. Informal teacher leaders were identified as full-time classroom teachers who
took on leadership roles within and beyond their classroom. Formal teacher leaders were identified as teacher leaders who held a special title as a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA). The following provides a description of the teachers in the urban and suburban school settings.

**Urban Teacher Leader Profile**

Four teachers teacher leaders in a large urban school district agreed to participate in the study. Initially, I set out to interview two formal and two informal teacher leaders. Only one informal teacher leader agreed to participate in the study and three formal teacher leaders agreed to participate in the study. Every teacher leader that agreed to participate in the study worked at the elementary school level although; initially I did not set out to interview only elementary teacher leaders. The teacher leaders all taught at different schools within the district. All of the teachers were female and ranged in age from 45-58 with a mean age of 50. The range of the teacher leaders teaching experience was from 17-25 years. Two of the teacher leaders were White and two were Black. The informal teacher leader taught third grade in her school. The formal teacher leaders were all College and Career Instructional Teacher (CCIT) on Special Assignment and held the role as Literacy Coaches in the district. All of the formal teacher leaders in the district taught in a classroom for half of the day. Two of the three teachers worked in two buildings, while the other worked in one building in her assignment. One out of the four teacher leaders held the lead professional license. The rest of the teachers held professional licenses.
Table 4.1.
Urban Teacher Leaders Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
<th>TL Role</th>
<th>License Level</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th># Years of Experience</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>CCIT TOSA Literacy Coach / 2nd Grade</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>CCIT TOSA Literacy Coach / 1st Grade</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>CCIT TOSA Literacy Coach / 2nd Grade 3rd Grade</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Lead Professional</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie</td>
<td>3rd Grade Informal Professional</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of Urban Teacher Leaders

Vivian.

Vivian is a second grade teacher and a College and Career Instructional TOSA (CCIT). In this role, she acts as a literacy coach in her school. She has been teaching for 25 years. She began her teaching career in Nigeria, teaching geography to seventh and eighth grade students. Vivian has been a teacher to special needs students for her entire career in the United States. She currently holds three five year professional licenses. The first is an elementary 1-8 teaching license, the second is a five year professional license for education of the handicapped k-12. This license allows her to teach developmentally handicap (DH), multi-handicapped (MH), specific learning disabled (SLD), and severe behavior handicapped (SBH). Lastly, the third license Vivian holds is a five year professional supervisor license, which is sometimes referred to as an administrative license. Attached to the licenses is a teacher leader endorsement and she just finished coursework and is waiting to take the Praxis to add the reading endorsement to her licenses.
Vivian’s highest degree is a Ph.D., which she attained from the Ohio State University. She has taught many grade levels across elementary, middle, and high school. Vivian passionately explained why she became an educator by stating, “Teaching is my calling. I don’t see teaching as a job. It is a calling. I look at it as a ministry. This is what God called me to do.” Vivian is an advocate for children and considers teaching her life work.

Why Teacher Leadership. Vivian have always considered herself a teacher leader. She always took on leadership roles within and beyond her classroom. Vivian shared why she thought it was important to take on leadership roles by claiming:

As a teacher leader, when I am in the classroom I only effect just those number of students in my room. But being a teacher leader, I have the opportunity to build teacher’s capacity, which will in turn build their students. Which will allow me to reach more students.

In her formal leadership role, Vivian provides professional development to teachers on teaching strategies. She also co-teach and model lessons in classrooms. She is also a member on the building leadership team.

Half of Vivian’s day is spent in a second grade classroom teaching reading. During this time she co-teaches with another classroom teacher and spend part of her time doing Reading Recovery. The other part of her day is spent supporting teachers as an instructional leader. When she is not working in her classroom during the day she is working alongside teachers coaching them, acting as a liaison between teachers and parents, and providing resources to teachers. Building teacher’s capacity to increase student achievement is her goal as a teacher leader.
Carrie.

Carrie is entering her 21st year of teaching. She is currently hold the title of a CCIT in her school and also a first grade teacher. She works in two buildings as a classroom teacher and literacy coach. Carrie currently hold a five year professional license kindergarten –elementary (K-8). She held a 2 year provisional license – principal, which is expired. Attached to her license is the Teacher Leader and Reading endorsement. Carrie’s highest degree earned is Masters of Education.

Carrie was only in the classroom for five of her 21 years in this urban school district. The majority of her teaching experience has been as a teacher leader as a part of an initiative called Project Grad where she was a component director for classroom management and school climate. Carrie provided a description of the initiative’s goal by stating, “Our objective was to provide professional development to the schools based on the specific need of the buildings.” She explained how they used discipline data, student academic data, and surveys from students, teachers, and parents to design professional development to support teachers with implementing strategies in the classroom.

Why Teacher Leadership. The majority of Carrie’s teaching career has been in a formal teacher leader role. Early in her career she was encouraged by her building principal to take on a new Teacher on Special Assignment position in the Project Grad program that was coming to their school. Initially, she did not see herself as a teacher leader and simply thought that her principal wanted her in this role because she was a positive person and willing to take on any role. Below she explains what her principal seen in her early in her career.
I had this ability to communicate with adults in way that made them want to change their instructional practices and I had a way of making it safe to do that, and they were willing to put themselves in vulnerable positions because they knew that I would not judge them.

Carrie’s passion is to work with adults to help them better understand teaching and learning. She has a huge personality and expressed her joy in working with both adults and students.

Carrie expressed frustration in regards to her roles and responsibilities within the district. She shared how her role is not clear to anyone in the district, including herself. The district does not have a person in a role as a director to oversee her work, which is different from the past year. The university that the district is partnering with has huge expectations for the teacher leaders in these roles but have a little say so in their actual day-to-day work.

Carrie is required to teach part of the day, according to the local university the districts partners with, in order to earn the certification as a Literacy Collaborative trainer. She is assigned to two schools in the district and is responsible for teaching half of the day in both buildings. Half of her day is spent teaching reading in a first grade classroom. She is responsible for implementing the Literacy Collaborative Framework for part of the day in each building. According to her job responsibilities the other part of her day in both schools is spent coaching and supporting teachers with the implementation of Literacy Collaborative. Carrie is also responsible for delivering professional development to teachers in both buildings.
Tracy.

Tracy is a CCIT Literacy Coach in her school district. She also teaches reading in a second grade classroom daily for half of her day. Tracy started out her teaching career as an instructional assistant. While being an instructional assistant, Tracy went to school to attain her teaching license. She has been a classroom teacher in the district for 15 years in elementary schools. Tracy is a National Board Certified teacher and currently hold a Five Year Lead Professional Educator License kindergarten – elementary (K-8), which is the highest teaching license offered in Ohio. She has three endorsements on her licenses which are, reading K-12, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) PreK-12, and Teacher Leader. Lastly, Tracy is designated a Master Teacher in her district based on the guidelines developed by ODE. Tracy’s highest degree is a Master of Education.

Although Tracy has many distinguished credentials, she is a bit reserved when talking about the credentials she hold and expresses, “I don’t really like to tell other teachers that I hold certain credentials. Only my close friends know all the stuff that I have.” Tracy finds it important to fit in with her colleagues and not set herself apart from them. She expresses her love of learning and taking on challenging tasks and does not believe every teacher shares her passion. She has taught just about every grade at the elementary level. The majority of her career has been spent working in the most challenging schools in this district. This year she made the decision to work in two higher performing schools in the district, which she is enjoying.

Why Teacher Leadership. Learning, seeking out knowledge, and sharing knowledge is very important to Tracy as an educator. She became a teacher leader
because she enjoys teaching and she believes she is quite effective with students. Tracy loves working with adults and she feels confident that she can make them more effective teachers. Although she enjoys her teaching assignments, she expresses some concerns with how she is utilized in one the buildings. In one building, she teaches a reading block in a second grade classroom part of the day, and coach and support teachers the other half of the day. In the other building which is a higher performing school, she is expected to co-teach for the entire day in a second grade classroom. The district does not really emphasize coaching and supporting teachers in schools where students are not struggling. Tracy believed these teachers needed coaching very similar to the teachers in her other school. She states,

…they [teachers] are high performing at [second school] because the parents are involved in the education of their children. The parents are doing a lot. The teachers are good don’t get me wrong. We have good teachers at both of these schools. But the teachers could be even more effective if they were able to be supported and coached as outlined in my job description. I have two professional developments days where I work with all of the teachers, but I only get to work alongside one teacher in the building, and that is the teacher I am co-teaching with.

Tracy coaches and support teachers on Literacy Collaborative. In the school where she is not in the classroom for the entire day she is able model lessons, co-teach, and facilitate teacher-based team meetings with the teachers. Tracy has a strong relationship with her colleagues. She stresses the importance of building relationships with her colleagues by
claiming, “I may have all of these degrees and accomplishments but if I cannot relate to people it doesn’t matter.”

Leslie.

Leslie has been a classroom teacher for 18 years. She has taught third grade for the majority of her career. She currently holds a Five Year Professional License – Kindergarten-Primary (K-3). Along with her professional license, she has the Teacher Leader endorsement. Leslie will be adding the reading endorsement onto her license this year and is trained in Literacy Collaborative. She just completed her last course this past summer to attain the reading endorsement. Her highest degree is a Master’s in Education.

This year Leslie is moving to a new building to teach third grade. She is both excited and nervous about her move because she has never taught in a different school. Leslie was heavily involved in her previous school. She was the senior faculty representative for the past 14 years and sat on many committees in her building. Leslie loves teaching students in the classroom and cannot imagine herself in any other role as an educator. She has been very successful with her students and proudly shares her student academic achievements in her classrooms over the years.

Why Teacher Leadership. Initially Leslie did not see herself as a teacher leader. She just considered herself a classroom teacher who enjoyed taking on additional roles outside of teaching in her classroom. This may be because she does not hold a formal title as formal teacher leaders hold in her school district. As she discussed her roles and responsibilities in her school and district, she gradually came to the realization that she is a teacher leader. She exclaimed, “Oh my gosh, I guess I am a teacher leader! I did not think so at first, but as sit here and reflect upon everything I am engaged in…I am.”
Leslie discussed how teachers in her old school came to her for support both professionally and personally. She also co-taught with a few of her colleagues. During her fourth year of teaching, the building principal approached her and asked her if she would like to be a cooperating teacher for student teachers. Leslie connects her role as a cooperating teacher to teacher leadership in her statement below.

I’ve had student teachers and FEEP teachers. Last year was my only year not having one. I would say I’ve had student teachers for 13 or 14 years. Oh wow, you are making me think. That is a teacher leader. That is one thing I really do like, having student teachers because they are in the process of becoming teachers and so you can show them the things they will need to be successful teachers.

During Leslie’s first years of teaching she did not have anyone in her building to guide and support her. She had a Peer Assistant and Review (PAR) consultant but that person was not housed in her building. She explained,

I need someone to lean on. I needed somebody to support me. I needed somebody to listen to me. I needed somebody to help me with different resources, and that didn’t happen. And I thought, when I mature as a teacher I won’t never let that happen to another teacher in a building I am working in.

Leslie’s principal noticed early in her career that she did not back down from challenges and that she actually thrived off of them. The principal along with other staff members encouraged her to be the faculty representative in her building early in her career. She has been a part of many committees such as the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) team, Intervention and Assistance Team (IAT), Teacher Based Team (TBT), International Committee, and the Social Committee. As she transitions to her new
building she is considering how she can work alongside her colleagues to support both teachers and students.

**Suburban Teacher Leader Profile**

Four teacher leaders in a suburban school district in central Ohio agreed to participate in the study. Two of the teacher leaders held formal teacher leadership roles and the other two held informal teacher leader roles. Three of the four teachers worked in elementary schools. The other teacher leaders worked with both elementary and middle schools in the district. All of the teacher leaders in this district are white females and their ages range from 34-39 with a mean age of 36.25. The range of teaching experience was from 7-17 years. The two formal teacher leaders in the district were TOSAs. One of the teacher leaders was a K-2 math literacy coach and a fourth grade teacher. She taught half of the day in a fourth grade classroom and the other half of her day working as math coach with primary teachers. This teacher leader worked in one school. The second formal teacher leader was a math and numeracy coach and was housed in one of the middle schools in the district. The teacher worked with six elementary schools and two of the middle schools. Both informal teacher leaders worked in elementary schools. The first teacher leader was a first grade teacher and the second teacher leader was an ELL teacher for first and fourth grade students. One out of the four teacher leaders held the lead professional license. The rest of the teachers held professional licenses.
Description of Suburban Teacher Leaders

Melissa.

Melissa is a TOSA Math Numeracy Coach for Intervention Specialists (IS) this year in her school district. This is her first year in this role. Throughout her teaching career, she has taught in one other district, which was a rural district not too far away from her current district. Melissa is in her 17th year of teaching. She has taught in her current district for 12 years and her previous district for five years. Melissa holds the Five Year Lead Professional Educator License – Education of the Handicapped (K-12) for multi-handicapped students with her teacher leader endorsement attached to this license. She also has the Five Year Professional License – Principal for grades PK-6 and 5-12. Melissa also is a designated Master Teacher in her district based on guidelines outlined by ODE. Her highest degree is a Master’s in Education and a Master’s in Education Leadership.

Melissa is one of the two Math Numeracy Coaches that serve the elementary IS teachers in the district. She is full-time coach in the district. She also has additional roles

Table 4.2.
Suburban Teacher Leader Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
<th>TL Role</th>
<th>License Level</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th># Years of Experience</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>TOSA Math Numeracy Coach</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Lead Professional</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kara</td>
<td>Math Numeracy Coach/ 4th grade</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Lead Professional</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>1st Grade Teacher</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>1st and 4th Grade ELL</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the district such as serving as mentor to a couple of new teacher who are ISs in the Resident Educator (RE) Program.

**Why teacher leadership.** Melissa has always taken on leadership roles in school prior to moving into this formal leadership role. She makes it clear that she will always consider herself first and foremost as a teacher regardless of the role in the district. Below she explains why she has chosen to take on a more formal leadership role in her district.

First and foremost, I have a passion for education and educating students and within this passion I want to help develop the talents within our teaching staff. Helping other reach their potential to be the best teachers that they can be. To make sure their students are growing and becoming independent adults.

Working alongside her colleagues is not a new concept for Melissa. In her previous building as an informal teacher leader, she collaborated with other teachers, led professional development, and supported teacher with instructional strategies to work with struggling students.

Kara is new to the formal teacher leader role this year. She discusses how the district addressed the skepticisms and concerns of teachers in regard to the formal teacher leaders’ roles in the district below:

The better part of this year has just been getting our foot in the door and letting people know what the coaching model is about and we are not being sent here because the principal don’t think you are doing a good job. We are here for job-embedded PD. We are not sending you out for PD: we are bring it to you. That is the hardest part for teachers, to open their doors to have a colleague see what they are doing and work together to see if there are targeted things that we can look at,
changing or increasing...that kind of thing. But there is definitely a common perception that these coaching role were created, especially since they only did it at the elementary, because we are not doing our job well...and you are going to report to my principal and you are observing me and judging me. So we spent a lot of time just trying to get what are role truly is. That we are not evaluators and we are not sharing anything with your principal. This is between us.

Becoming a formal coach is the beginning step that Melissa believes is essential to her here moving into other leadership roles within the districts. In this role, she is provided the opportunity within her district to further explore other leadership opportunities. Melissa is planning on becoming a building administrator in the near future, with her ultimate goal of being a superintendent of a district.

**Kara.**

Kara has been teaching for 17 years in two school districts. Her first nine years of teaching was in an urban district nearby. She has been teaching in her current district for the past eight years. Kara currently is a K-2 numeracy coach and a fourth grade teacher in the only low performing school in her school district. Unlike most coaches in her district, Kara only works in one building and teaches part-time. She has taught most grades and subjects at the elementary level outside of kindergarten and fifth grade. Kara currently holds two professional licenses. The first is the Five Year Lead Professional Educator License - Elementary (1-8). The second is an administrative license; the Five Year Professional License – Principal grades PK- 6 and 4-9. She also has the teacher leader endorsement. Kara highest degree is a Master’s in Education.
Kara is currently working in a suburban district that is considered a high performing according to the state report card. The district scored an A for both the performance index and indicators met on its’ report card for the 2013-2014 school year. The school that Kara is currently working in is a struggling suburban school. The student demographics in her school does not match the districts. Her school’s achievement scores consisted of a B for the Performance Index score and an F for the Indicators met on the 2013-2014 Report Card. Kara shares that the staff in her building often feel like the “black sheep” in the district due to its’ state report card rating. The principal was selected and assigned to this building because of his successful past experience in a neighboring district with a school very similar to this one. Kara has credited the district with providing the school with additional resources and autonomy to increase student achievement.

Kara enjoys teaching in her current school, she exclaims, “I cannot see myself working at any other school in this district. I love the challenges that come with working in this building and I honestly believe I work alongside some of the best educators.” Working in the urban district prior to teaching in her current district has prepared her for teaching in her current school and taking on teacher leadership roles. Outside of teaching in the classroom in her old district, Kara also was a math coach, curriculum writer in the math department, and participated in the STEM development. She spoke proudly of her experiences and trainings in the urban district and shares how some of her colleagues’ perceived her when she first started teaching in her current district.

People have no idea. They [teachers in current district] acted like I was from the back woods when I came from [urban district], and it’s like you people are about ten years behind where [urban district] is, and even now as they are introducing
new things, I am like people I’ve been here for eight years and [urban district] was like doing this in my second year of teaching. Like, get over it.

In Kara’s current school district, she is experiencing some of the same perceptions from educators in other schools. Often, teachers make the assumption that their students’ performance is a direct reflection of them, good or bad. These teachers tend to look down on teachers who work with high poverty and minority students, regardless of what their value-added data may indicate.

*Why Teacher Leadership.* Kara has always taken on leadership roles as a classroom teacher. In Kara’s current role she teaches fourth grade math, science, and social studies for part of her day and spends the second half of her day working alongside her colleagues in grades K-2. Initially, Kara thought she wanted to be a building principal. She explains how her journey to becoming a principal helped her to refine the role she would play as an educator.

The more that I got into my administrative coursework; the more I realized it didn’t play to my strength. I don’t think I would be a very effective administrator. I do think that my passion is teaching and watching kids learn and working with children. And I found that the teacher leader endorsement allowed me to stay in the classroom. It was offered as part of my program so it would be something that would be easy to do. I also knew that it might open some doors for me to step into some teacher leadership coaching roles that I previously had in [urban district]. When I came to [suburban district] I went back into the classroom full-time. I knew that I missed that coaching piece and I wasn’t sure what it would look like in the future but I knew it would open the door to a new opportunity.
Building capacity in both teachers and students is Kara’s goal as a teacher leader. She has the opportunity to work alongside her colleagues daily to coach and support their understanding of the new math curriculum the district is implementing.

Lori.

Lori is a first grade teacher in her current school. She has seven years of teaching experience. Lori is teaching in the same school district that she attended as child and graduated from. She holds two 5 year Professional Licenses. She have the 5 Year Professional License – Early Childhood (Grades P-3) and the 5 Year Professional License – Principal grades PK-6 and 4-9. Lori also has two endorsements attached to her teaching license. She has a Reading (P-3) and Teacher Leader Endorsement. She holds a Master degree in Educational Administration.

This year is one of Lori’s toughest years as a classroom. She has a low number of students in her first grade classroom and shares how she is overwhelmed by this group of students daily.

This class currently has a few students that I have never dealt with. I think there are all sorts of things going on with them; physical and emotional, and I don’t know how to do it. I can’t even imagine if I had four or five more kids in here…but it’s just that…you are always on, even when you are at home. When I am in bed at times I roll over and write ideas down and I have to remind myself to turn my brain off and I am like, “turn your brain off, turn your brain off…stop, stop, stop.

Working with this group of students has made it a bit more difficult for Lori to take on leadership roles in the building. Lori has taken on many leadership roles in her school
building in the past. She is a member on the Building Leadership Team (BLT) and Professional Learning Team (PLT). She also serves as leader for her grade level Teacher Based Team (TBT). She worked with a group of teacher to plan a multi-cultural day in her school last year, which was very successful. Lori is also the testing coordinator in her building. Lori hopes to become a building principal someday. For the past few years, the assistant principal in her building have been encouraging her to take on more leadership roles.

**Why Teacher Leadership.** Initially, Lori sought out to get her administrative license through a district initiative that partnered with a university to grow their own principals. Toward the end of program, she learned that she could get the Teacher Leader endorsement by taking an additional course. Lori views principals as teacher leaders. She confessed that she really did not see the point of teachers getting the teacher leader endorsement. This is partly due to her lack of the purpose behind the Teacher Leader Endorsement. As a teacher, she feels overwhelmed with all of the new state-wide initiatives teachers have to engage in at the classroom level. She discussed her confusion around Ohio’s Four Tiered Licensure Structure, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, Ohio’s Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), and Ohio’s New Learning Standards. She admitted to not seeing an alignment between the initiatives and found them to be a lot of busy work and pointless. She states, “It’s like all of this stuff we have to do, and we don’t know what the end goal is or why you are doing it. You are just told that you have to do it.”

At the end of the 2013-2014 school year coaching positions were created for fulltime math coaches in the district. Administrators reached out to Lori and other
teachers in the district who held the Teacher Leader endorsement, to see if they would be interested in taking on these new positions. Surprisingly, the majority of these teachers were not interested in the positions. When I asked her why she was not interested in the position she responded,

I didn’t want that because nobody knew what the job was or what their role is. It is viewed very negatively and as forced PD and there are going to take it away. We did this crap when I first came here. We are like recycling all of this.

Ambiguity around the roles and responsibilities of the new coaches in the district caused many teachers with the Teacher Leader endorsement to refuse to accept the position. These teachers were also concerned with the number of schools they would be assigned to and the fact that they would no longer be able to have their own classroom. Lori was also concerned with her colleagues’ perception of her in this role and the longevity of this position. Although, Lori expressed some concern and dismay around these positions, she does believe that teacher leaders are important and every teacher has the potential to lead.

Erin.

Erin is an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher for first and fourth grade students in her school. She has 11 years of teaching experience in her current school district. She has taught in four different elementary schools in the district. Erin has a 5 Year Professional License – Early Childhood (P-3). She also has three endorsements on her professional license; a Bilingual, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) PreK-12, and the Teacher Leader endorsement. Erin’s highest degree is a Master’s in Education.
As a child, Erin knew that she wanted to be a teacher. At a young age, she participated in a program at her school for students who were interested in becoming a teacher. Erin shares what she participated in the program by stating,

I decided I wanted to be a teacher when I was 12 and I was helping a kindergarten program at my school. It was for the students who were behind in Kindergarten, so they offered them an extra hour of kindergarten every day. I gave up my recess to be a teacher helper and ever since then I decided I wanted to go into teaching.

I’d always taken on babysitting and different kinds of roles as a child.

She became interested in working with Migrant students during her undergraduate college years. Each summer she worked in a small town in Northwest Ohio with Migrant Educational Counsel. During this time she taught reading and math to migrant students who went to school year round. There are currently 3 ELL teachers in Erin’s building and each teacher works with two grade levels. Erin currently works with 62 ELL students in her building on a weekly basis.

Why Teacher Leadership. Erin views herself as a teacher leader. Although she is a fulltime classroom teacher, she believes she has a responsibility to take on leadership roles in her building. Erin has always worked alongside her colleagues as an ELL teacher because she shares her students with other classroom teachers. Erin believe it is her responsibility to be an advocate for her students both inside and outside of the classroom. She describes how she initially started taking on leadership roles in her teaching career.

Well you know before I took the teacher leader endorsement, you know, I was just looking at the needs of my students and talking with colleagues and making changes in the building. You know, you do things like go to conferences and get
ideas to bring back to your classroom. My colleagues and I started presented at different conferences. Just things like that, I think when you work with a good team, sometimes it’s stronger and the leadership that you can have is better because you got 4 or 5 people working toward the same goal. So that is kind of where my leadership started. So when I switched schools and they offered the teacher leader endorsement I thought it would be a good thing to just continue.

Erin admitted to not knowing what the teacher leader endorsement was but thought it sounded interesting. She knew that she did not want to become a building principal but was wanted to learn more about leadership and taking on more roles in her building.

When the district decided to offer the Teacher Leader endorsement to their teachers at discounted rate, she could not turn the offer down. It was convenient and practical. Erin had the opportunity to take courses that were being taught by principals in and faculty members at a neighboring high school. Erin states, “It was really nice because you could talk with people that were in your district and that were experiencing the same struggles, but you could see how it was different in each building and at different levels.”

**Data Collection Methods**

Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews that lasted 60-90 minutes. Six of the eight interviews were conducted in-person and two of the interviews were conducted over the phone. Follow-up questions were emailed to candidates for clarifications purposes. I also conducted follow-up interviews with candidates over the phone and in-person that lasted no longer than 30 minutes. See Chapter III for an in-depth description of the data collection methods. The findings reported in the next section are
representative of all eight teacher leaders who participated in the study. The finding will be presented through themes that emerged from the data analysis. The chapter will conclude with the research questions and TL responses that correlated to the overarching questions.

**Thematic Findings**

This section outlines the findings from the teacher leaders through the themes and subthemes that emerged through the grounded theory process in this study. Each teacher expressed their unique ideas, beliefs, and experiences in their own words. Five major themes emerged from the data analysis and are outlined through the teacher leaders’ voices.

Theme 1: Formal training and support is essential for teacher leaders and can provide teachers with credibility among their colleagues.

**Urban District**

The teacher leaders in the urban district all received the teacher leader endorsement together when they were a part of the TAP program in the district. The district received a grant, which paid for the three courses the teachers took at a local university. All of the teacher leaders indicated they took the courses because it was free and because they were already in formal teacher leader roles at the time. These teachers were among the first group of teachers in the state to get the teacher leader endorsement in 2011. All of the formal teacher leaders in the urban district had formal training prior to attaining their teacher leader endorsement. This may be due to their level of teaching experience these teachers have.
Each teacher believed the courses they took to attain the teacher leader endorsement helped them to become more effective in their role as teacher leaders. When Vivian was asked whether she felt the courses were useful she responded:

Yes, because you think about what you are doing, the research, and how you can bring that research into practice. In the position that I was in at the time I had the opportunity to practice what we learned in the classes.

Carrie believed the courses helped her to become more effective teacher leaders. She said:

I became even more self-reflective and if my professional development, or my follow up with the teachers, or my coaching wasn’t working I didn’t take it as personally because I learned more than I had already known about teachers as learners. They are some of the hardest students.

Although many of the teacher leaders claimed they have taken courses on leadership and had prior trainings in other roles leadership roles, they all believed the courses for the endorsement significantly developed them in their roles.

Some of the teacher leaders were surprised at how the teacher leader endorsement helped to establish credibility among their colleagues in their roles. Carrie explained how she did not initially get the teacher leader endorsement thinking it would give her credibility because she felt she already had credibility among her colleagues. After taking the courses, Carrie’s views changed and she stated:

I think it gave me more credibility because teachers knew I was learning more about how to work with them. Just as I was trying to teach them more about how to work with their students, and they respected that.
Similarly, Tracy expressed how the TL endorsement helped build credibility by sharing:

I flat out told the teachers I was working on attaining the teacher leader endorsement so I could be a better support for them. Many of the teachers appreciated the fact that I was taking courses to better myself in my role as a teacher leader. I think modeling for them that learning is on-going helped them to embrace me as a teacher leader. Also, the fact that I now have a teacher leader endorsement to add my license validates my work in a way, which is surprising because I really didn’t think it [teacher leader endorsement] would initially.

Working in a cohort with other teacher leaders was also critical piece of the TL Endorsement programs. All of the teachers in the urban district were a part of cohort 1 and took all of the three courses together. Leslie identified how the courses provided a platform for teacher leaders to discuss issues with one another stated, “Many of us [teacher leaders] didn’t even realize we were having the same issues in our roles until class discussion.” Tracy agreed with Leslie commenting, “We [teacher leaders] were shocked to find that we were all dealing with the same issues and this allowed us to discuss our concerns, brainstorm ways to address them, and apply solutions in our work.” The teacher leaders learned from one another and built a system to support one another in the work they were tackling together.
Suburban District

The teachers in the suburban district discussed how their district is working to grow their own leaders in both teacher and principal roles. Their district partnered with a local university. The courses were taught by administrators in the district and professors from the university at a high school in the district. The University offered a 50 percent discount to teachers who participated in the cohort and the district offered tuition reimbursement to the teachers, which covered part of the remaining tuition. The majority of the teachers indicated they took the courses because of the convenience of the courses being offered within their district, the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues, and the discounted rate of the courses offered by the university.

The majority of the teacher leaders believed that formal training is important in developing teacher leaders. The teacher all indicated the courses they took to attain the teacher leader endorsement developed them in various areas. Kellie exclaimed, “Yes, the courses helped me tremendously. Especially the leadership course I took. I gained a deeper understanding about the school vision, commitment, and communication.” Melissa shared why she believed formal training is essential to teacher leaders:

…you [teacher leaders] need to think about the leadership principles that guide the work that goes on in schools. Contrary to what people believe, there is a lot of leadership theory that under guards what we do in school every day. It’s not only about getting people to listen but also communication. It helped me learn how to enhance my written communication, my oral communication, but I really think the learning about the different theories of leadership and how schools are
organized that balance the school’s framework. I think that is essential to understanding what true teacher leadership is. I think you can be a great classroom teacher but that is different from being a teacher leader. Can you communicate your practice? Can you see a vision beyond the walls in your classroom? Again, you can be a phenomenal classroom teacher, that doesn’t necessarily mean you would be a great teacher leader.

Most teachers agreed that teacher leaders required a skill set beyond being an exceptional classroom teacher. Understanding how to influence adults without having positional power can be challenging and critical in their work. Kara explained how she views her role as teacher leader working alongside her colleagues:

You [teacher leaders] don’t really have positional power and there is always that delicate line that you have to walk and as the administrator you can just say, ‘Hey, this is how it goes’, and you know, as a teacher leader you are with your peers and I never want anyone to think I am nothing, but their peer I don’t ever want them (peers/colleagues) to say like, ‘well she is here and I am here.’ No, I am your colleague.

The teachers in the suburban district were really concerned with how their colleagues perceived them as teacher leaders. Many of them did not want to take on formal teacher leadership roles with a title, because of the perception of these roles within the district. Many teachers perceived teacher leaders in formal roles as “quasi-administrators” and they were frowned upon. The teacher leader courses helped some of the teachers learn
how to tear down walls and build rapport and credibility with their colleagues in their formal or informal role.

The teacher leaders appreciated the convenience of taking the courses in their school district. They also like the design of the courses, specifically, how they were co-taught or facilitated by district administrators and university faculty. Kelli shared how having district administrators teach some of the courses helped teachers make connections to their work in the district:

A couple of the classes were taught by a middle school principal and some were taught by professors by the university and they would come to us. But everything we did related back to what we were doing on a daily basis. It really helped to have a district administrator teaching it because they know what we go through on a daily basis.

Erika agreed with the other teachers in her claims of why she was participated in the program:

The thing that intrigued me about it was, they [district administrators and professors] said whatever you are doing in your daily job or in your building on a daily basis that’s what we want you to use. When you are thinking about this class and the work that you are going to be doing, it will be applicable to what you are doing day-to-day. It wasn’t going to be something in addition and something where I would just be learning all of these theories and then be sent out. I really liked that it was going to be in the district and taught by district administrators.
Similar to the urban district the teacher leaders believed there was a benefit to working in a cohort with other teacher leaders in their district. Although the teachers were not in the same cohort they did enjoy working alongside their colleagues and learning from one another.

**Cross-District Analysis**

The teachers leaders in this study decided to attain the teacher leadership for various reasons. Whether the teacher leaders set out to attain the license because it was free, discounted, convenient, practical, or needed for the renewal of their license, every teacher leader indicated the courses were instrumental in developing them in their roles as teacher leaders. All of the teacher leaders were very satisfied with the TL programs. Although many of the teacher leaders did not set out to get the endorsement with the thought that it would make a huge difference in their work with their colleagues and themselves, most found that the endorsement did help them navigate their roles as teacher leaders.

The majority of the teacher leaders stated they had formal training before attaining the teacher leader endorsement. This may be due level of teaching experience the teachers have. Most of the teacher leader expressed the importance of formal training and support for teachers who are taking on leadership responsibilities. Seven out of eight of teacher leaders believed formal training is necessary for teacher leaders. Most teachers agreed that teacher leaders required a skill set beyond being an exceptional classroom teacher.

Formal training for teacher leaders helps them to navigate their roles both formally and informally. The courses allowed teachers to connect with their colleagues;
share and their experiences, problem solve issues, and strengthen and develop a common understanding of their work. Although most teachers leaders did not know much about the endorsement prior to taken the coursework that all believed the training made them more effective in their roles and the teacher leader endorsement provides them with credibility as they work alongside their peers.

Working in a cohort with other teacher leaders in cohorts was also critical piece of the TL Endorsement programs. Teacher leaders are often lonely, overwhelmed, and frustrated in their roles. Teacher leaders in both districts relied on their colleagues in the courses to learn from one another, discuss issues and concerns that were specific to their roles in the district, and identify ways to navigate as teacher leader. Teacher leaders often feel isolated in their roles and the cohorts provided teachers with a safe place to collaborate and learn alongside their colleagues.

Theme 2: Teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles are necessary to impact change in their organization.

**Urban District**

The teacher leaders believed their main role was to lead by example, build capacity, and support their colleagues to maximize student learning. They all described teacher leaders as mentors, coaches, and facilitators that work alongside their colleagues. The teacher leaders felt it was important that they were not viewed as administrators or managers. Vivian provided a description of how she operates as a teacher leader:

…Not managing or telling you what to do. Ok, I provide suggestions, best practices, and then you decide what to do with it. As a leader it is not my job to
make you do something. It is my job to provide you with variety of what can be beneficial to you and the students and it your responsibility to weigh it all out, and see what will benefit you most and go with it.

Leslie confirmed this idea by claiming, “Walk your talk… leaders are an example to the people they are leading. They are guiding, directing, supporting, and not managing.”

Teacher leaders clearly are leaders beyond their own classroom, as they are working not only with their students, but other classrooms teachers and their students. Carrie summed it up this way:

I think that teacher leadership means I am taking the initiative to go above and beyond what is required of a classroom teacher, and that I am taking teachers under my wing as I am learning, but I am also supporting their learning to bring them to a higher learning… I see myself as a teacher of teachers.

Vivian supported this belief by stating, “Teacher leaders are responsible for setting up situation where they [teachers] can learn from you.” Tracy added to this idea when she explained who teacher leaders are:

A teacher leader is more like a mentor someone that, you know, a teacher looks to for guidance… a trusting person that is going to steer this person in the right direction and give them opportunities to be successful… make them a better teacher through the experiences they have encountered or that I have encountered.

The teachers all had a strong understanding around their role in supporting their colleagues. The message was the same from teacher leaders in formal and informal roles. Teacher leaders must focus on building relationships and rapport with their colleagues, if
they are going to be responsible for facilitating their understanding of teaching and learning and maximizing their performance in the classroom. Tracy explained:

Well, rapport is important. In your approach, you can’t come in and dictate – like, I have these experiences and this is how we are going to do it. If you take that approach, I don’t think people are going to listen. You know, you have to know how to handle people. Sometimes tiptoe and get your point across a backhanded way. You know, you may have all this knowledge. That is what I always say, I may have all of these degrees and accomplishments but if I cannot relate to people it doesn’t matter.

Teachers working in both formal and informal roles is essential to the success of schools. Leslie shares why she believes it is important to have teachers operating in various roles:

It's just like in every other area; you need somebody who will be the one to get things going. If you don’t have a teacher leader there will be some things that will be left undone because no one will assume the responsibility. But, the fact that you have a leader either self-identified [informal] or officially [formal], someone is taking the responsibility to get things done within an organization.

Vivian added to Leslie’s view by explaining:

Teacher leaders can be any teacher who takes a leadership role. It may be a grade level…you have three or four teachers working together and you see one that is ready to get things going, to call meetings, you know, to say ‘we have to do this,
let’s look at student work, and all of that.’ We read a book in one of my schools titled: You Don't Need to Have a Title to Be a Leader. A teacher leader sometimes is somebody appointed and sometimes is someone assuming the leadership role. Some have an official title and some don’t.

Carrie described some defining characteristics of teacher leaders and also further elaborates on their roles:

Well, they come in a variety of forms but you can pick them out because they do have some common characteristics. They take the time to ask questions about what they are doing. They are not naysayers but they take the time to ask ‘why and how does this fit in’? They are goal-oriented. They are team players. They understand because they make it a point to understand how various initiatives fit. They have a firm understanding of what best instructional practices are and they help teachers who don’t see how all those pieces fit. They help them to put the puzzle together.

Regardless of the teacher leaders’ role or title, the teacher leaders felt that all teacher leaders’ roles were essential to improving their schools. This was very clear through their rich descriptions of teacher leaders.

**Suburban District**

Melissa and Kara are both teacher leaders in formal roles. Although they both held the same title as Math Numeracy Coaches, their roles and responsibilities were quite different. Kara taught part-time in the classroom every day and coached only the teachers in her building. The majority of the teacher leaders in the formal roles did not teach part-time in the classroom. Only the coaches in Kara’s school had this option. Melissa did not
have a classroom of her own and coached teachers in multiple buildings. Melissa also had other administrative roles assigned to her in the district. Lori and Erin were fulltime classroom teachers and were identified as informal teacher leaders in this study. The formal teacher leadership roles is new to the district this school year. The majority teacher leaders were not too optimistic of the new roles that were created for teacher leaders. Interestingly, these teachers still expressed a view that teacher leaders were important in both formal and informal roles.

All teachers are capable of leading and taking on leadership roles. Most of the teacher leaders conveyed this belief in some way. Erika comes to this realization as she describes who the teacher leaders are in her building:

…Um, definitely the principal and administration in the building. You know, there a lot of teachers that get paid to be in roles…like on the literacy committee and they get paid extra money to go and do extra work and bring things back to the building. So, when it first comes to my mind I would think principals and people on committees but really it can be anyone in the building who wants to step up and take that leadership role.

The Teacher leaders all stated are responsible for modeling best practices and building capacity in other teachers within their organization. Kara explained how leadership is a systemic facilitative process that develops individuals around the goal of the organization.

I think leadership is helping people realize their potential to grow and move in a direction that is beneficial to the organization. I really think it’s not about telling
people what to do but how can we act in a way to inspire others to find it within themselves. Leadership really is about building capacity. About helping people grow and move in a direction together…brining people together to accomplish a goal, whatever that goal may be.

Lori shared characteristics of effective teacher leaders and also explains what they do by stating:

- Trusting people, setting examples, listening, communicating, strong support system, risk taking, um… it’s kind of the lead by example thing, less managing, more being able to show, I guess. Someone that is a model, you know, that can become a leader without necessarily being labeled that. I think, like, in terms of management – you are telling people what to do and your micro-managing, sometimes things that if you led properly or you taught them [teachers] how to lead themselves a lot of that could be taken off of your [the leaders] plate.

The idea of teacher leaders acting as managers was viewed negatively by the teacher leaders. The teacher leaders believed their role was to be supportive and facilitative.

In order for teacher leaders to be able to effectively build capacity within their colleagues they must first build trusting relationships. Kara provides an example on how she built relationships with her colleague through modeling and allowing teachers to see her imperfections in the classroom:

- Building relationships with my colleagues is important for me in my role. I also feel like when I am in the room modeling or when people come in and watch my room and they see that ok, so this does not always work out like it’s supposed to.
Like, I was in a classroom [modeling] today and it was crazy and the teacher was just like, ‘ah, this makes me feel better’! I said, ‘Did you think I was going to come in and everything was going to be perfect’? I said, ‘No, I am a teacher too and when you see me misstep or when I am in your room observing and I see something in your classroom, I recognize the same thing in my classroom’ and it helps to bond us together.

Transparency is a great way for teacher leaders to build relationships with their colleagues. Kara being open and honest with her colleagues provides opportunities for her to effectively coach teachers.

The teacher leaders in this district were really concerned about their colleague’s perception of them. Teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles reflected on their effectiveness. The teacher leaders measured their effectiveness by the shifts in practices by the educators they worked with. Teachers reaching out to teacher leaders for support and feedback was also used as an indicator to measure their effectiveness. Kara summarizes this belief by stating, “I feel like I’m most effective when people seek me out. When they want to work with me, but also when I see a few shifts in practice. I really feel it’s that piece where people want to work with you.” Lindsay confirms this idea of how teacher leaders know they are effective stating, “By the amount of people coming to you for advice, leaders asking you to do things, and the results.” Erika shared some formal ways she worked with her colleagues to gather feedback from their colleagues about their roles and efforts:
I think that is hard. Sometimes I think the best thing you can do is get feedback from others. When we were doing some different things at some of the other buildings we sent out surveys to the teachers or we sat down with grade levels teams and had conversations and we tried to encourage the teachers to be as honest as possible, that we needed their help to make sure what we were doing was effective and it met their needs along with the students’ needs. You know, just being open to feedback and willing to make some changes.

Erika is an informal teacher leaders and understands the importance of reflecting on feedback from her colleagues. When teacher leaders are open to critique from their colleagues, it can help to build rapport and respect among educators in all roles.

**Cross-District Analysis**

All of the teachers strongly believed that teacher leaders’ major roles are to build capacity in their colleagues around content and instruction, being and advocate for both their colleagues and students, and supporting change in that will positively impact their organization. When teacher leaders were asked who are teacher leaders all of the teacher leaders described teachers who were leaders in both formal and informal roles. Through the interviews it became evident that the teacher leaders had many common ideas about the characteristics of teacher leaders. Most of teacher leaders described teacher leaders as individuals who impact change within their organization through modeling and developing the adults working in the building. Teacher leaders in both the urban and suburban districts strongly expressed that leaders are not dictators or managers but act more as facilitators. Most teacher leaders indicated that leading beyond the classroom and developing their colleagues is an expectation of teacher leaders.
Teacher leaders may work in formal or informal roles. The teacher leaders in the urban district appeared to embrace the formal teacher leadership roles. They believed it was important to have teachers operate in both formal and informal roles to support teachers and students. The TOSA coaching roles are not new to the district. The role of the literacy coaches has evolved a bit over the years. In the past teachers who were in these roles did not teach part-time in the classroom. With the changes in the roles the formal teacher leaders expressed concerns about the lack of clarity around their roles in their district and how they were being used by their administrators.

The teacher leaders in the suburban district were a bit hesitant about taking on the formal coaching roles in their district. Many were concerned about the lack of clarity around the roles, their colleagues perceptions’ of teachers in these roles, and the difficulty in working in multiple schools where they may not be too familiar with the staff. This is not the first time the district has used TOSA’s as coaches and many of the teachers indicated these positions may not be around long. Therefore, they were not sure if they wanted to leave their current position to take a position with uncertainty. The majority of the teachers in these roles do not teach in the classroom and they may be assigned other duties outside of coaching. All of the teachers indicated these roles may be useful if used appropriately. They have worked with some of the coaches and found their support beneficial. The teacher leaders who did not want to operate in the formal roles said they wanted to wait and see how these teachers would be utilized. Teacher leaders may consider taking on these roles in the next year or so, if they find these roles to be useful.
A consistent message from all of the teacher leaders was that teacher leaders do not have to be appointed or titled to be considered a leader. Their actions, behaviors, and effectiveness in their work is what distinguishes them as leaders. All of the teachers interviewed considered themselves teacher leaders, regardless of their current role and also identified other teachers in both formal and informal roles as teacher leaders. The teachers all had a strong understanding around their role in supporting their colleagues. The teachers also communicated the importance of having teacher leaders operate in both formal and informal roles. Teacher leaders in both the urban and suburban districts felt the roles of formal teacher leaders need to be clarified to administrators, teachers, and those in that particular role. The lack of clarity around formal teacher leader roles may cause confusion and misuse of teacher leaders. Teacher leaders are needed in both formal and informal roles to transform schools into effective organizations where both teacher and student learning is maximized.

Theme 3: Formal teacher leaders can lead from the classroom.

**Urban District**

Vivian, Carrie, and Tracy are teacher leaders who hold a formal role and title in their district. Leslie was the only teacher leader teaching full-time in her classroom and operated as an informal teacher leader. All of the teachers, regardless of their roles, taught at least part-time in one or two buildings. They all considered themselves classroom teachers, first and foremost. Initially, I was surprised to learn that the teacher leaders in formal positions also had their own classroom for part of the day. The teachers were not provided an additional stipend to take on the formal teacher leader roles.
The teacher leaders had job descriptions that detailed the work they were expected to engage in daily. All of the formal teacher leaders shared how their work could vary depending on how their building principals chose to utilize them. Therefore, their roles could vary from building to building. Vivian works in one building. She provided a brief description of her day:

I am in a classroom all morning with the literacy block and the afternoon I have my four reading recovery students. So I don't have as much time to go into teachers’ classroom. Now, for teacher support, I meet with the teachers before or after school. I am here at the school at 7 am every day.

During this year Vivian is finding it difficult to find time to coach and support teachers as she has in previous years. She explained how her role differs from last year:

My first year I worked as a common core specialist and I helped the teachers unpack the common core in reading, looking for strategies, looking for sample questions, looking for how to break it down. In my second year, I went through the reading recovery training. So, weekly I went to reading recovery trainings for a half day on Wednesdays. The other days I worked with four reading recovery students. Then I had a little bit of time working with teachers. I reviewed a lot of resources, gathered materials, conducted research, and I think I conducted maybe ten to twelve full day PDs.

Carrie described her work in two different buildings in her role last year:

I am in two different buildings and half of my day, no matter which building I’m in, half of my day I’m teaching a group of primary students, implementing the Literacy Collaborative framework and then the other half of my day is still to be
determined, but what I am expected to do according to the university we partner with is the Literacy Collaborative initiative. I am expected to be providing professional development to teachers and coaching and supporting their implementation of Literacy Collaborative.

Most of the formal teacher leaders expressed the need to continue teaching students in the classroom. The teachers expressed a concern about being out of the classroom for a long period of time. Carrie was a bit unsure about how she would be utilized this year but hoped she would continue teaching in the classroom. She expresses her hopes by stating:

Hopefully my principals will allow me to continue teaching in the classroom, because I firmly believe that if I am not teaching in the classroom than my PD is just going to be based on a past experience in what I’ve done or a whole lot of theory and I think our teachers have a ton of theory. They are ready for practice.

Although the teacher leaders in the urban district enjoyed working directly with students in their role, they also expressed a concern about the amount of time they are spending teaching students and the amount of time they are actually doing the work they were hired to do through the literacy collaborative initiative. They are hoping to have a better balance in their work to better support teachers.

**Suburban District**

The majority of the formal teacher leaders in the suburban district did not teach part-time in the classroom. Melissa and Kara are both formal teacher leaders in their district but their roles differ quite a bit. Melissa does not teach part-time in the classroom in her role. Kara was one of the few teacher leaders who teach in the classroom and hold a formal teacher leader position in the district. Kara’s principal is instrumental in
designing her role so that she is able to be a K-2 Numeracy Coach and teach in the classroom part-time. Kara is responsible for teaching her classroom and coaching the teachers in the same building. She provided a detail of her day:

In the morning before school, I am involved in a lot of planning meeting with our K, 1, and 2 teachers and also with the fourth grade team. From 9:00 – 11:30 is when I am actually teaching and working with kids, my fourth graders. We have math for about 100 minutes and the rest of the time is spent on science or social studies. And then I go right into working with first grade. That may be modeling a lesson, collecting data on kids, interacting with the kids. The rest of the afternoon there is also kindergarten and second grade that I work with. So, I might rotate in between teachers. Currently, I’m going to be working with one teacher who is not very confident right now in how her math workshop is setup, so I am going to be working with her for the next two weeks and I am going to be in there every day modeling and doing that gradual release of responsibility and doing some co-teaching, and then being in there just to observe. They also have their planning time in the afternoon so; I will sit down and plan with k, 1, and 2. There is also a piece to the building level, we have our coaching team and we meet weekly with Bryan as a team, just to talk about how things are going, what supports we need, and to plan professional development for the building, look at data.

Kara has time designated daily to work alongside her colleagues in the primary grades to support and develop them. There are three other coaches in her building that have similar
schedules. Kara’s school is the only school in her district, which she is aware of, that is using coaches in this manner. Kara shared that she would not have taken this position if she could not continue to teach students. Working part-time in the classroom also allows Kara to understand the daily work that her colleagues are engaged in. She also believed that teaching in the classroom helps to build credibility among her colleagues.

Working alongside her colleagues and teaching students is Kara’s passion. She initially thought she wanted to be building principal. Kara described why she attained the teacher leader endorsement:

…the deeper that I got into learning about administration; the more I realized that it wasn’t the career path for me. So the teacher leader endorsement path, I felt, would allow me to be a teacher leader because I would now have the education behind it and it would also allow me to demonstrate some of those leadership skills and still allow me to be in the classroom with kids. I found that the more I got into the administrative duties and learning about the roles of a principal, I felt like, it took me farther away from what I truly, truly loved and that was teaching.

Teacher leaders should not have leave the classroom if they want to work in formal teacher leadership roles. Kara’s principal created a position for his coaches, which allows the coaches to continue teaching in the classroom and also work alongside their colleagues. He created structures so that they are able to effectively do their job. He met with his coaches weekly to discuss their work and he wanted to know how to support them in their work.

This finding was especially interesting from the teachers in the suburban district because the formal teacher leadership training allowed them to take both administrative
courses and teacher leadership courses. Some of these teachers added the teacher leadership endorsement after attaining their masters in administration because it was only two additional courses. Taking the courses together may help teachers gain a better understanding of how this work fits together and also help teachers identify how they will impact their organization as leaders. With a huge smile Kara exclaims, “I have learned so much from observing and co-teaching alongside my colleagues. I can’t imagine doing anything other than what I do here daily!”

**Cross-District Analysis**

Teacher leaders in formal roles leading from the classroom was another interesting theme that emerged from the interviews. The teacher in both formal and informal roles relied heavily on their own classrooms to model effective practices, field test strategies, reflect on their practice and support and develop their colleagues. Informal teacher leaders are typically classroom teachers that take on leadership roles within their school. It could be in various forms such as: leading their grade level team, being a part of the building leadership team or district leadership team, or being a union representative to name a few examples. Often, teacher leaders in formal teacher leader roles do not have their own classroom. They may have an office that they work out of and utilize other teacher’s classrooms to co-teach, model teaching, and field-test instructional strategies. Formal teacher leaders who teach part-time can use their classroom as laboratories for both teacher and student learning.

The formal teacher leaders in this study all had titles as content area coaches. The formal teacher leaders in the urban district all had their own classrooms. The teachers enjoyed being able to have their own classroom and teach both students and teachers but
ran into some challenges in these roles. A couple of the teachers were not provided much time to develop and support teachers. Vivian had to use time before and after school to coach teachers. All of the teacher leaders relied heavily on the professional development days to engage teachers in learning. Little time was built into their daily schedules to develop and support teachers, which often conflicted with their job descriptions of their roles. Two of the teacher leaders expressed interest in becoming a building administrator out of the eight. The other six teachers said they did not have the desire to become an administrator and they only wanted to work with students and colleagues in teacher leadership roles.

Kara was one of a few teacher leaders in the suburban district who hold the title of TOSA Numeracy Coach and classroom teacher. Most other formal teacher leaders in the district did not teach part-time. Kara’s principals put structures in place to ensure she had time embedded in her day to coach, observe, model, and support teachers in their building. The teacher leaders in Kara’s building all operate in the same manner. Kara’s building has an ideal model of how formal teacher leaders can work alongside informal teacher leaders to support and develop their colleagues to maximize student learning.

Four out of the five formal teacher leaders interviewed stressed the importance of having their own classroom or opportunities to co-teach in a classroom daily. The formal teacher leaders believed that teaching alongside their colleagues helped to build credibility and rapport with their colleagues and also allowed them to learn from their colleague. Teacher leaders operating in formal roles can continue to teach in the classroom and coach and support teachers. School leaders must ensure structures are in place to appropriately support formal teacher leaders in these new roles.
Theme 4: Informal support for teacher leaders is important to empowering and sustaining teacher leaders.

To gain an understanding of the types of school cultures the teacher leaders worked in and their perceptions on how they were developed and supported as teacher leaders in their schools and districts, I used Kaatzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) seven dimensions to determine how healthy their school culture is for leadership. After transcribing the interviews I analyzed the data around Katzenmeyer and Moller’s seven dimensions which are: developmental focus, Recognition, autonomy, collegiality, participation, open communication, and positive environment. The findings from the teachers’ perceptions across each dimension will be shared.

**Developmental Focus**

Developmental focus identifies how teachers are supported in learning new knowledge and skills and are encouraged to help other learn. Teacher leaders are provided with needed assistance, guidance, and coaching. The teacher leaders shared how they believed they were developed in their roles as teacher leaders by their principals and district administrators.

**Urban**

The teacher leaders in the urban district shared their thoughts on how they are developed and supported within their districts. The urban district partnered with a local university to support CCIT Coaches. Tracy shared how she felt supported and respected by her school administrators and the local university in her role:

Right now I can feel the support. [local university] come and observe me… I know [local university] is supporting me by coming out for evaluations, giving
me suggestions on what to try, and providing me with good feedback. My
administrators now are supportive because they want me working with teachers.
They (principals) say, ‘go in there’. They are not saying, ‘hey I need you to take
care of testing’. They don’t ask me to do anything except be in the classroom and
work with the teachers. When it's like that, they respect my job. They want their
teachers to be better. So they are allowing someone to come into the classroom
and make them better, which is nice. This is the first time I felt this kind of
support.

Tracy appreciated the support she received from both the local university and her new
administrators. In the past she did not receive this type of support from her administrators
in this role.

Although most of teachers agreed they were supported and trained around the
content they were teaching. Carrie did not always feel supported by her principals and
district leaders. Carrie explained how the lack of resources in her role did not allow her to
fully support her teachers in one of her buildings:

I didn’t have any resources. I had to spend hundreds of dollars of my own money
to buy the books for my [local university] coursework to be a literacy
collaborative coach because I’m in building that don’t [sic] have any more money
to buy books. There are about four thousand dollars’ worth of materials that is
required of you if you are going to become a Literacy Collaborative trainer and
there was no money in neither [sic] one of my schools.

Carrie continues to express her frustration with the lack of resources in her schools by
exclaiming:
It was difficult because I wanted to plan a PD session but I did not have the videos to show because the whole video kit was 700 or 800 dollars on its own and I had to borrow it from another school. So, I had to wait until they finished showing all of their videos so I could borrow the videos because my school couldn’t buy any and I couldn’t afford it on my own. Oh, it’s, yea, our district whoever, and I will say this on record, whoever signed the deal with the devil did not get their pocket book out and write a check to the devil. Because someone in our district agreed to have this relationship with the partnering university and move forward with Literacy Collaborative and the partnering university had all of these expectations for what it means and they are not unrealistic expectations but the district did not want to spend any money to make it happen.

A lack of resources and demanding expectations from the partnering university hindered Carrie from effectively planning and leading professional development for teachers in her schools. She was frustrated because her schools did not have a budget that supported her work as a teacher leader. Although the teacher leaders in the urban school district held the same title, the funding varied from school to school, and all schools did not have equity in materials to support teachers in their role as teacher leaders. Vivian discussed how she felt about her principal’s support by stating: “My principal does not have any hands-on experience with developing me as a leader.” She shared how she relied on her colleagues for support and development.

I get informal support from my peers who are doing what I am doing. We give one another coaching and support. And I also have a trainer assigned to me from local university who came out for two site visits.
The formal teacher leaders in the urban school district spoke about the local university providing them with support in their roles. The leaders all agreed that their principals did not play a huge role in developing them as leaders. They did suggest that their principals provided them with some opportunities to work with their colleagues. Carrie explained how she was expected to support her colleagues.

I am responsible for ensuring that teachers understand and are implementing the Common Core for reading. I am responsible for trainings teachers on how to use the technology associated with the BOY (Beginning of Year), MOY (Middle of Year), and EOY (End of Year), which is on an IPod. I am responsible for assuring that teachers are completing the BOY (Beginning of Year), MOY (Middle of Year), and EOY (End of Year) benchmark testing.

The formal teacher leaders in the urban district lacked informal support and development in their roles as teacher leaders. The teachers in formal roles were provided support from the local university they partnered with but much of this training was around the content of Literacy Collaborative. There was not much training or support for them in their leadership roles. The teachers were not provided with much training or support around leadership, adult learning, and coaching.

Leslie was the only informal teacher leader in the urban district. She did not feel informal teacher leaders were supported. She stated, “I am saying the teacher leader in the classroom need more training. I have not had any principals develop me as a leader.” The teacher leaders all believed trainings and support in their role was lacking and would be beneficial to them.
Kara and Melissa felt they were supported well in their formal roles as teacher leaders. They both agreed that the district put emphasis into developing and supporting teacher leaders. If the teachers felt they needed training, support, and resources in their roles they felt confident that the administrators in central office would ensure they received whatever they needed to be successful. Kara further explained how the director of the coaches supported them:

…If I email our director and tell her I want to learn more about something, she is going to find a way. She is going to find an online course or a book. But the good thing is – it is not a blanket because they realize that as coaches we are all in different places, and what one coach need may not be what another coach needs.

Kara appreciated her school and district administrators. She felt administrators were approachable and willing to provide teachers with individualized support based on their needs. All of the formal teacher leaders in the suburban district shared this belief.

The coaches in the district had opportunities to work with a local university to get training on curriculum content classroom teachers are using. Melissa shared, “[local university] is supporting the math coaches with a course so they get together twice a month for that.” She also discussed how teachers were trained and developed in their roles in the summer:

In our district alone we did a week long PD this summer as coaches. It was coaching based. We’ve done some content work as we transitioned over to Common Core as a district. Um, but I really feel like that is one area our district is working to develop.
The informal teacher leaders appreciated the opportunities the district provided them in getting the teacher leader endorsement but did not feel adequately supported in being developed as leaders at all times. Lori conveyed this idea in her reflection:

Informal support…I don’t know. I mean I do a lot of things on my own. I read and I have conversations about things with my leader. We do a lot of professional development here. I am trying to think…I mean I don’t think leadership wise that I get much professional development. I don’t know that if I was in a designated leadership role [formal role], if that would be different, it probably would be, but as a classroom teacher I do the professional development and that’s we all do. Sometimes, I am a part of the leading of that but that’s not really developing me as a teacher leader.

Erin shared how informal teacher leaders were able to attend professional development in the district but had difficulty identifying professional development sessions that would develop and support her in leadership roles. Erin explained:

Professional Development…I don’t know so much for teacher leadership. I think most of the PD we received is on teaching and how to take that back to the classroom. So, I don’t know if I really received that much for actual teacher leadership.

Erin further explained how an administrator she worked with wanted her to take on leadership roles but did not provide much support:

Some administrators will back you up and when you ask them can you help me communicate this to the staff, they are willing to do whatever they can to help you. I have also had principals who want you to take the leadership roles with a
group of people, but they don’t back you up – and so you are going in their
making some change and meeting some resistance. It should have been the
principal who should have communicated it, so sometime people [teachers] get a
little upset with you, when you are communicating something from a higher up
person that put you in that leadership role.

When teacher leaders engage in leadership roles they are looking for support from their
building principals. Teacher leaders may be less likely to take on leadership roles if they
don’t feel they are supported in their roles.

**Cross-District Analysis**

Teacher leaders in formal roles in urban districts did not feel they were supported
and developed much in their roles as coaches. The training they did receive was mainly
on the schools literacy program. The lack of resources hindered one of the coaches in
effectively engaging in her role. The teacher leaders all communicated that their
administrators did not provide them with adequate support. The formal teacher leaders in
in the suburban district were satisfied with the training and support they were provided
from district leadership and their building principals. The informal teacher leaders in both
districts did not believe they were supported and developed well as teacher leaders. They
did believe the teachers in formal teacher leadership roles may receive more support.
Formal Teacher leaders in both urban and suburban districts linked being supported with
administrators understanding their job responsibilities and teacher leaders being allowed
to operate within their roles and responsibilities.

Principals and district leaders must ensure they are creating an environment for
teacher leaders to thrive in both formal and informal roles. If teacher leaders do not feel
supported they will be less likely to take on or stay in leadership roles. Teacher leadership development was low for the majority of the teachers in interviewed. The formal teachers in the suburban district were the only group of teacher leaders who felt they were being supported and developed as teacher leaders.

**Recognition**

This dimension is about how teachers are respected and recognized for the professional roles they take and the contributions they make. Teachers mutually respect and care for one another. Processes are in place to recognize educators and their effective work.

**Urban**

The teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles shared how their principals and teachers expressed their appreciation for the work they do daily. Leslie stated, “I feel valued and supported by my colleagues.” She provided an example of how some of the reticent teachers she worked with expressed gratitude to her for taking on leadership roles:

> Many of the teachers that I had issues with still came back and said thank you. So, I would not say all, but most of my colleagues acknowledge and appreciate my support. The ones who I thought would never ever say thank you, were the ones who said thank you the most.

Tracy discussed how she modeled a lesson in reading on interactive writing in a teacher’s classroom. She described how the teacher expresses gratitude:
She tells me every day I’m so glad you are here, don’t ever leave, I am learning so much. So it’s nice. She’s like come back any time… I will come to you if I need anything. She is just like come in anytime.

Modeling instruction in classrooms can help teachers move beyond talking about strategies to implementing strategies to support both teacher and student learning. Teachers may feel more comfortable working with colleagues they feel are competent and credible. Vivian shared how she feels valued as a teacher leader.

Teachers show appreciation for the work I do. They come, ask questions. When they are confused by something, they come for clarity and they request PD, and request meetings with me…every other day after school they want to meet. Here especially my administrator appreciates me so much.

Tracy agreed stating, “I feel valued and I know my administrators have confidence in me. They trust me.” Carrie explained how one of her building administrator expressed appreciation for her as coach in her building.

She is always very complimentary of me. She thinks that I do a very good job of delivering a message to parents, students, staff, and stakeholders; um she has no concerns, and she has voiced this to me about my performance.

The majority of the teacher leaders said their colleagues or principals appreciated the work they do on a daily basis. Carrie did not feel respected by both of her principals and she had issues with not having all the materials to adequately coach and support teachers. They all agreed that many of their principals were not sure how to best utilize theme and did not clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
The teacher leaders in the suburban district also felt appreciated and recognized by their colleagues and principals. Kara shared how her principal recognized the teacher in her school and relied on their professional knowledge weekly.

He [principal] emails us weekly. He just sent us an email today directed to all of the kindergarten teachers stating, “I just want to tell you all of the work that I am seeing. Kids are excited about learning, I see differentiated instruction, and I appreciate your willingness.” He will come to me and say, “Well here is this grade level and this is what I am seeing in the rooms. Is that what you are seeing when you go in? He will than say this is what I am thinking, a direction that you might go in.

Recognizing teachers is great way to build trust and relationships among staff members. It can also open up the lines of communication between the teachers and administrators in the building. Through recognizing teachers and showing appreciation Kara believed her building principal was creating a culture where teachers enjoyed learning with one another. Although Kara felt valued in her role as a teacher leader in her building, she understood how some teacher leaders may not feel valued. She provided an example of how some coaches in other buildings are used:

In other buildings, the coaching job may have been thrown on some administrators. I don’t think that every administrator understand how to use coaches wisely. I think sometime administrators say, “well you are just going to work with so-and-so because she is not doing well”. Well, every single person in the building knows why the administrator said go work with her and now they just
shattered that relationship and I feel like maybe, um, administrators need to be very familiar with, how can we implement coaching effectively.

Erika appreciated the leadership opportunities her principal encouraged her to engage in from her goals she sets in her Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP):

I think that comes from when I write my goals for my IPDP and I write my goals for when I meet with my principal for my observation she kind of knows that is the path that I am on. She knows that my goals are to be a leader, so she put me in positions where I can do that or help me align my goals with that. And just like knowing that is my background and giving me more opportunities.

Teacher in both formal and informal leadership roles believed that they were appreciated by their administrators and colleagues. The teacher leaders appreciated small gestures of gratitude by their colleagues and administrators.

**Cross-District Analysis**

The teachers in both urban and suburban districts believed they were appreciated in their schools. They all shared examples of teachers or their administrators expressing gratitude in the instructional support they provide in most cases. Teacher leaders may feel isolated and unappreciated at times and words and actions that communicate gratitude may encourage teachers to continue taking on leadership responsibilities. Often formal teacher leaders are not aware of the impact they are making on their colleagues and students. Many of the teachers in both districts felt they could be supported better in their roles.
**Autonomy**

Teachers are encouraged to take initiative in making improvements and innovations. Barriers are removed, and resources are found to support teachers’ efforts.

**Urban**

The teacher leaders in the urban district did not express a high level of autonomy in their schools. The teachers experienced various levels of autonomy in their schools. It varied from school to school and it depended on how comfortable and competent their school leader was with them in their teacher leadership roles. Carrie expressed a concern with the district and the university not being on the same page in regards to their roles and responsibilities. She did not believe the district was concerned with her roles and responsibilities as outlined by the university. Roni shared this concern by stating:

We are expected to have this set of materials to video tape ourselves teaching and then use these materials to provide research and support behind the theory and practice. But, none of us have the materials, so we are adjusting our expectation. Um, we were supposed to provide 20 hours of PD last year but nobody did, so they [university] adjusted their expectation of us.

Roni does not feel she is able to truly support teacher with a lack of resources. The formal teacher leaders viewed autonomy as being able to do their jobs and having the appropriate resources to be effective. Tracy claimed:

With my administrators now I feel are supported because they want me working with teachers. They (principals) say, ‘go in there.’ They’re not saying, ‘Hey, I need you to take care of testing.’ They don’t ask me to do anything except be in the classroom and work with the teachers. When it's like that, they respect my job.
They want their teachers to be better. So they are allowing someone to come into
the classroom and make them better, which is nice. This is the first time I felt this
kind of support.

The teacher leaders are having a difficult time managing the university’s and districts
expectations of them. A couple of the teacher leaders shared how the lack of resources
and being asked to operate in other roles outside of their job descriptions were barriers to
them effectively supporting teachers and students.

**Suburban**

Overall most of the teacher leaders felt they were encouraged to take on initiatives
and make improvements in their school. Teachers in both formal and informal roles
shared examples of how they were able to take initiative in theirs schools. Erin describes
a time when she worked with her colleagues to develop a better to support ELL students
in her school:

Last year we (teachers) noticed that our current pullout model was not reaching
kids and it wasn’t working because kids were being pulled out for reading, kids
were being pulled out for ESL, and kids were being pulled out for special
education but none of the teachers had time to collaborate together so we were all
kind of living in isolation. So, another teacher and I decided that something
needed to be done so we sat down with the principal and we shifted our service
model a little bit to be more cohesive. So it’s just little things like that, that make
a big difference for the students and collaboration of the staff and I kind of think
that is our role, you know, that when we something isn’t working we find a
solution or work toward that solution.
In the case shared above the teacher and her colleagues noticed a problem and took
initiative to resolve it. The teachers felt comfortable sharing the issue and problem
solving ways to create a better situation for both the teachers and students.

Kara explained how her principal trusted her judgments and decisions in her
daily work. Kara shared an example of how her principal allows her to make scheduling
decisions:

I used to have to submit a weekly schedule to a principal I had in my old school
district and I better be where I said I was on that schedule. Whereas, my principal
now gets that I have teachers that may request my support daily. He gives us the
flexibility to change our schedule in the moment. We have a lot of trust built up.

She further elaborated on her building administrator allowed her to make decisions
around coaching and resources.

Even with the autonomy… like the coaching work looks different based on who
you are working with. For me to feel free enough to find resources for teacher I
feel like my building principal trust me and he knows we (instructional coaches)
work our butts off. He sees the evidence in the classroom and he has created the
culture for the teachers that you are here to learn.

The teacher leaders appreciated having autonomy in their buildings. The teachers were
comfortable voicing concerns and ideas and felt comfortable working with their
colleagues to address them. When principals embrace teachers’ ideas and innovations
they encouraged them to take on more leadership roles, which may build their confidence
in leadership roles.
Cross-District Analysis

The teachers in the suburban district appeared to have a lot more autonomy than the teachers in the urban district. This may be due to the suburban district’s effort to build their own leaders. The teachers in the suburban district were comfortable in their roles and did not hesitate to brainstorm ideas with their colleagues and administrators. The formal teacher leaders in the urban district struggled with being innovative and supportive in their roles. The teacher leaders expressed concern with their district leaders in regards how they were be utilized in their buildings. The teachers struggled with conflicting messages between the university and district. At times the teacher leaders did not feel adequately supported.

Collegiality

Teachers collaborate on instructional and student-related matters. Examples of collegial behavior include teachers’ discussing strategies, sharing materials, or observing in one another classrooms. The teacher leaders provided examples of their collegiality in both the urban and suburban district.

Urban

The Instructional Literacy coaches are responsible for building capacity in teachers on Literacy Collaborative. The coaches had opportunities to model instructional strategies for teachers in co-teaching environments. Tracy shares an example of how she modeled an instructional strategy in a classroom:

Right now for Literacy Collaborative we are working on community writing. That is interactive writing. We are reading stories to kids and the entire class does
some writing together. We are sharing the pen. I had to go into this teacher room
to model this strategy. She was just like, I don’t like it. I don’t do interactive
writing. I don’t know how to do it. I don’t want to do it. It takes too long – blah
blah blah…She was just like no. I was like, well let me come in your class and
model it for you and tell me what you think. I came in and I did a read aloud and
the kids liked it and they’re interacting with it. I was like okay now we are going
to do some writing – we are going to write beginning, middle, and end of Jack and
the Beanstalk. We broke the story down into sequence. This happened first,
second, and third. I built a nice community and they came up with really good
first part of the story. I brought the kids up and she was concerned that if I
brought a kid up the whole class would go crazy. So the kids were coming up and
I kept the class in tact by saying you’re writing in the air, you are writing in the
carpet. I gave them something to do to add to what we were doing. By the time
we were finished the teacher thanked me for coming in and modeling interactive
writing. She told me she that she could not wait to try it with the class tomorrow
and asked me to come and observe the lesson.

Modeling instructional strategies in the classroom is a good way to support teachers and
build their understanding on how to use strategies. Tracy was also able to model for the
teacher ways to keep students engaged and on tasks throughout the lesson. Teacher
learning deepens when they have opportunities to observe their colleagues in the
classroom.

Vivian provided a summary of the work she engages in with other teachers, “I
provide professional development, I team teach, I provide strategies, resources, and I
model lessons and co-teach.” A larger workload have been added to Vivian’s roles and responsibilities this year and she is concerned that she will not be able to support teachers as well as she had in prior years with more classroom responsibilities. Carrie explained how opportunities to support and develop her colleagues impacted student learning:

In my building where I was able to give professional development and follow-up with coaching and support, students made games of roughly, on average 5 levels in their reading. In my other building the average gain was 1 one level of reading but they were all reading above grade level but they made an average of 1 level. Carrie linked her coaching and support to the students’ gains in reading. In the schools with the higher gains her principal wanted her to focus on developing the teachers. Her other principal used her as a tutor for the Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA) and other miscellaneous tasks in the school.

**Suburban**

Teachers working alongside their colleagues was an expectation that Kara’s building principal made clear to every teacher in the building. Her principal created structures within the teachers’ day so that they are able to observe teaching, plan lessons, and, model instructional strategies. Carrie explained how her principal used staff meeting days for teacher collaboration:

The principal in our building use our staff days for collaboration. He does not schedule formal meetings. He is very good at disseminating information through emails and if you don’t read your email…too bad for you. But he sets staff time aside so special education can meet with their grade level team that day and ELL can meet with their grade level teams.
The principal in Carrie’s school has a strong understanding of teacher leadership and understand his role in creating opportunities for his teachers to work together. Melissa served as a mentor with novice Intervention Specialist in the Resident Educator Program. She supported the teachers in writing IEPs for their students, recording lessons for the Resident Educator Summative Assessment, and modeling instructional strategies in the teachers’ classroom.

Cross-District Analysis

The teacher leaders described ways in which they collaborated with their colleagues to maximize teachers’ effectiveness and increase student achievement in the classroom. Working alongside their colleagues and observing one another teach was an important element of the formal teacher leaders day-to-day work. Many of the teachers in formal teacher leadership roles shared how they co-teach in their colleagues’ rooms to model various components of reading and math programs the teachers in their districts are expected to implement.

Not all teacher leaders felt comfortable modeling, observing, and providing feedback to their colleagues. The majority of the informal teacher leaders in both the urban and suburban district discussed how they participated on building leadership team and professional learning teams, but most never discussed how they modeled effective practices, observed one another’s practices, and/or provide feedback to one another.

Participation

Participation is about teachers being actively involved in making decisions and having input on important matters. Department or team leaders are selected with the participation of teachers.
Urban

All of the teacher leaders participated on leadership teams in the building and worked collaboratively with other teachers and the building principal to make important school-wide decisions. Most of the Literacy Coaches are a member of the Building Leadership Team (BLT). They also made decisions based on the data reviewed in the BLT meetings on the types of professional development they would provide to the staff. Carrie described how she participated on the BLT and provided professional development to teachers:

I am responsible for participating on the Building Leadership Team and for supporting the teachers based teams. I am responsible for providing 60 hours of PD per year to two buildings in Literacy Collaborative, which will certify the teachers according to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

Leslie was very active in her school. She was the senior faculty representative in her school and participated on the interview team each year. She described some of the other teams and committees she was a part of:

I am also a part of the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) and participate on a Teacher Based Team (TBT). On both of these teams we utilize data to make decisions about our daily work. On the IAT we identify strategies to support struggling students in the classroom. On the TBT we review student data to determine what instructional strategies we can use in the classroom, develop and analyze common formative assessments, review summative assessments, and identify best practices that will help us maximize student learning.
The teacher leaders all worked with their colleagues and principals and felt they were part of making decisions in their building. The teacher leaders thought it was important for teachers to be a part of various teams and committees and have input on decisions made in their schools.

**Suburban**

The teacher leaders in the suburban district also described how they were able to participate in decisionmaking processes in their schools. Many of the teachers participated on Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) and reviewed data to make decisions on the types of professional development they would provide to their colleagues. Lori believed that she was asked to lead her grade level PLT because of her past experiences and possibly because she held the teacher leader endorsement:

> I do things like, we had professional development this past January and because I was a part of PLT, I helped to lead that. I feel like sometimes you get asked to do things before other people because you have some experience with being a leader and going through school to get the Teacher Leader endorsement.

Erin discussed how her principal listened to teachers and supported them in revising their service model for their ELL students.

> When we [teachers] had talked about changing service models at Indian Run our administrators reached out to a teacher leader across the district and an administrator at central office. She actually got us release time from our building to go to other buildings and observe what they were doing. Without our administrator, we would not have been able to connect with those people and get release time from our building. So, that was really important for her to
acknowledge what we were saying and say ok, ‘well let’s look at some different ways people are doing some things and see what we can take away for our building’. So, she kind of led us in doing that. She addressed our concerns and that was really nice.

Erin felt that her principals genuinely acknowledged their concerns and allowed the teachers to address them in the manner they felt best. Teachers are more willing to take on leadership roles when they are included in making decisions and believe their voices and opinions matter to the building administrators.

**Cross-District Analysis**

All of the teachers who were a part of this study participated on some sort of building leadership team. The teachers all expressed the belief that teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom. The majority of the teachers engaged in and led professional development opportunities with their colleagues. The teacher leaders had input on the professional development with the building administrators. Often, the teachers and administrators used building-wide data to determine the needs of the teachers and students. The teacher leaders were included in the decision making process by their principals and district leaders and were trusted to lead the work of developing their colleagues and supporting students.

Principals can empower teachers by listening to them and creating opportunities for them to take on leadership responsibilities. The principal allowed teachers to express their concerns, observe other school structures, and develop and implement a plan to resolve the issue. Teachers appreciate when their administrators listen to them and rely on them to make decisions about their school.
Open Communication

This dimension deals with how teachers send and receive communication in open, honest ways in the school. Teachers feel informed about what is going on in the school. Teachers easily share opinions and feelings. Teachers are not blamed when things go wrong.

Urban

Communication between the principal and teacher leaders happened frequently in most of the teachers’ schools. The teacher leaders in formal roles meet with their principals weekly to discuss their work. The principal communicated updates to teachers through email frequently. Leslie explained how the principal communicates with staff in her building:

We meet every third Monday of the month for staff meetings. During the meetings, the principal generally spends the first 10 minutes providing updates. We also receive weekly bulletins containing important information and reminders for the week. The teachers can also put information in the bulletin, if needed. As a faculty representative, I have bulletin board in the teacher’s lounge where I provide staff with important information from the district. The principal also will provide me with a few minutes to provide the staff with updates during the staff meeting when needed.

Tracy said she used email frequently to communicate with teachers and principal throughout the day. If she found great tools or instructional strategies to support their work, she would often email teachers the information.
Communication with families in the building is also important. Teachers may find it challenging to communicate with disgruntled parents. Vivian shares how she serves as liaison between teachers and parents in her school.

Maybe there is no positive relationship between the parent and the teacher and you have that parent’s child in your classroom. It will definitely affect whatever is going on. I can talk to the child and the parent and be a support. The parents may see my role as neutral and sometimes they are more open to discuss things with me than the classroom teacher. I also facilitate meetings between teachers and parents, which teachers often find helpful.

Vivian believed it was important to support teachers in all aspects of their work. She said the teachers appreciated her working alongside them in the trenches.

Communication between school leaders and teachers is important. The teacher leaders felt that there were areas where the building leaders did a good job of communicating with them. The formal teacher leaders expressed a concern with not having a sole person overseeing their roles as teacher leaders, which led to building principals to using them however the principal thought was best. They agreed it would be helpful to have a director in a role to support them in the work outlined in their job description. The teacher leaders in formal roles did not always feel comfortable discussing how they were being used outside of their job descriptions with their building principals.

**Suburban**

Many of the teacher leaders in the suburban district believed communication was pretty good among their colleagues and building principals. The principals communicated
in a variety ways with teachers. Similar to the principals in the urban district they
communicated through email, bulletins, and face-to face. Kara shared how her principal
was strategic about how he used faculty meetings. Kara stated, “My principal does not
schedule traditional faculty meetings. He prefers to use that time for teachers to
collaborate with one another about instructional strategies we are using building-wide.”
Her building principal disseminated information to teachers through email so that they
could focus on teaching and learning during this time.

The teacher leaders often communicated messages to their colleagues during their
meetings with them or through email. Lori expressed frustration with some of the email
communications they receive from coaches:

We often get emails in the middle of the day from the literacy or math coach in
regards to professional development they will be providing to us. I check my
email at the end of the school day and I am always surprised that they have time
to email teachers in the middle of the day. Like, I don’t have time to stop what I
am doing to read an email about an upcoming training. I also wonder what they’re
doing if they have time to sit around email people all day.

Lori was curious about the formal teacher leader’s role. She wondered what the teachers
were actually doing throughout their day. Her perception of coaches is that they don’t
really do much in their roles and that they were not considerate in their communication
with other teachers. Lori said she understands they do have actual work but because their
roles are not clear with her, she is not sure about the work they are actually engaged in.

Teacher leaders in formal roles thought it was important to get feedback from
their colleagues in regards to the teacher’s perception of them. Kara described how she
communicated with her colleagues and receives feedback in regards to the work she is a part of in the school.

When we were doing some different things in our building, we sent out surveys to the teachers or we sat down with grade level teams and had conversations. We tried to encourage the teachers to be as honest as possible. We told them that we needed their help to make sure what we were doing was effective and that it met their needs along with the students’ needs. You know, just being open to feedback and willing to make changes is important in my role.

Collecting feedback from teachers through surveys is a great way to allow teachers to express their perception about various school topics in a non-threatening manner. Surveys may start out as beginning step in allowing teachers to share their thoughts and ideas that they may not feel comfortable vocalizing. Acknowledging teachers concerns, thoughts, and ideas is a great way to open communication pathways in schools.

**Cross-District Analysis**

Teachers and principals must be able to communicate openly and honestly with one another to be effective in their roles. All of the teacher leaders appeared to feel comfortable communicating with their principals at some level. The formal teacher leaders seem to work alongside their administrators a bit more than the informal teacher leaders. The formal teacher leaders in both districts were more comfortable communicating best practices with their colleagues and providing them with feedback around their instructional practices in the classroom. Informal teacher leaders expressed how they worked with their colleagues and principals to address building wide concerns.
The teacher leaders in the suburban district used surveys to learn about the teachers’ needs and to determine whether they were meeting their needs.

**Positive Environment**

Teachers experience general satisfaction with the work environment. Teachers feel respected by one another and by parents, students, and administrators. Teachers perceive the school as having effective administrative leaders.

**Urban District**

The formal teacher leaders shared different views about their work environment. Most of the teacher leaders worked in two schools as literacy coaches and would describe at least one of the schools as having a positive environment. The teacher leaders all seemed to enjoy the work they were engaged in daily, even if they were not in the most ideal situation. The teacher leaders thought the teachers were appreciative of the work they engaged in daily and they were willing to support the teachers any way possible. Formal teacher leaders expressed frustration at times with their administrators for not being able to engage in the work of developing and coaching teachers. Vivian shared how she is having a difficult time working with teachers due to her role and schedule changing:

Yes, my first year that I was here I had the opportunity to go into their classroom more. I developed schedule to where I am in two or three classrooms daily. But now my schedule is different. Now I am in a classroom all morning with the Literacy Block and the afternoon I have my four reading recovery students. So I don't have time to go to the classroom. Now for the support I meet with the teachers before or after school. I am here at the school at 7 am every day.
Vivian worked in a low performing school and there was a lot of pressure on teachers to increase students’ test scores. Therefore, she used as a tutor and support for students in the building. She expressed some frustration about the way she was being used in her buildings.

Carrie shared concerns similar to Vivian’s but one of her building principals attempted to create a positive environment for her by respecting her role as a literacy coach and supporting her:

I talked with my building principals and said, here is what I am hearing from the university. I don’t know what you are hearing from the district, but based on what I am hearing from the university this is what I had planned. If you want me to go a different way just let me know and I can adjust. And in my one building my principal was like you do exactly what the university tells you to do. That’s how you will be an effective leadership coach. And if you can’t buy all of your materials, I will spend my own money to get you those materials… I want you to be equipped to do it. You’re a strong teacher leader. You are definitely moving my building.

Carrie appreciated her principal who supported her work and allowed her to maintain fidelity to her coaching position. She was very satisfied with her work environment and enjoyed working in this building. The building principal trusted her and treated her and other teachers as professional in this building.

Tracy described how she co-taught with a veteran teacher to enhance her understanding of components of Literacy Collaborative. Her example shared how teachers are open to learning new strategies to support student learning:
I come in and I show her different ways of doing stuff and even after 27 years she’s like, ‘I did know that. All these years I’ve been doing this wrong’. And she says wrong. I am like’ no, no it's not wrong. This is just another way that gets results’. So, she’s great. I’ll do something. I will model it and she’s like, ‘I want to try it.’

Both Tracy and the teacher respected one another. Creating a positive environment where teachers are comfortable modeling for one another and open to learning new instructional strategies takes time. Tracy worked hard at building positive relationships with teachers in the building. Once she has a good relationship with teachers she is able to coach them effectively.

**Suburban District**

The teacher leaders in the suburban district appeared to be satisfied overall with the schools in which they worked. Both formal and informal teacher leaders expressed positive views of their colleagues and building principals. Although Kara worked in the lowest performing school in her district, she considered this school to be one of the best schools in which she has ever worked. The teachers worked together well and the principal was creating a school culture and climate where all the teachers were encouraged to take on leadership roles. Everyone in the school worked together as a team and they were increasing their students’ test scores gradually each year. The principal conveyed respect for teachers various ways. Kara explained:

He [the principal] has eliminated unnecessary meetings for teachers so that they can meet with us and collaborate. He is also very creative with scheduling so the collaboration can occur. I love it. I also like the support he is giving that he does
not know that he is giving me. He doesn’t ask me for information about teachers that I would feel uncomfortable giving. Again, my job is not to evaluate. Like, because he does his job, he does not have to put me in a bad situation. I am not a reporter; I am not a spy... I am a teacher. I go in, I work with teachers, and I do feel like I’ve heard in other buildings that is how the coaches are perceived. They are there to spy and report back [to administrators] and again that breeds mistrust.

Lori and Erin also enjoyed working in their informal leadership roles in their buildings. They had multiple opportunities to work alongside their colleagues to problem solve issues as they arose and led professional learning teams. There were times when the principal asked them to sit on committees and other times when they took initiative in their school to respond to the needs of their students.

**Cross-District Analysis**

A positive environment is important to the daily work of all teachers. When leadership is distributed across the organization, teachers seem to feel more a part of the organization. The teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles in the suburban district believed they worked in positive school environments. Kara provided specific examples of how her administrator creates a positive environment for all of the teachers in her building.

In the urban district, the teacher leaders did not believe their school environments were horrible, but they did believe there are some things that could have been improved. One major improvement suggested was the partnership between the university and their district. The teachers had difficulty performing their duties as outlined in their job descriptions and it caused some frustration for the teacher leaders. Not all of their schools
operated in this manner and some of the building principals went out of their way to find ways to support their coaches. The teacher leaders’ perceptions of a positive school environment varied from building to building. In the schools where they were given the opportunity to work alongside their colleagues, coach, and support them in various ways, the teacher leaders enjoyed their daily work.

Theme 5: Stronger connections between statewide initiatives and the work of teacher leaders are necessary for educators to make sense out of the work of teacher leaders.

**Urban District**

The teachers in the urban district had some understanding of the various statewide school reform initiatives and how the teacher leader endorsement tied into them. Tracy was the only teacher leader out of the urban teacher leaders to hold the top tier license, the Lead Professional Educator License. Tracy was Nationally Board Certified and distinguished as Master Teacher in her district.

When the teachers were asked why they got the Teacher Leader Endorsement during the interview, none of them mentioned Ohio’s Four Tiered Licensure Structure or other statewide initiatives. Two of the teachers were unfamiliar with the license structure that the state put in place to encourage career lattices for teachers. Most teachers did not mention the Four Tiered Licensure Structure during the interview or how their leadership roles were connected to other statewide initiatives. After the interview I followed-up with all of the teachers to ask them their thoughts on the licensure structure and its’ purposes. Leslie responded, “I am not sure what that is. I think I may have heard it mentioned in some of our courses but our district do not talk much about it.” The teachers
did not connect their leadership to the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession (OSTP) or the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES).

All of the teacher leaders agreed that their positions were important and that it allowed teacher to take leadership roles while continuing to teach in the classroom. They did not have to go into administration to take on leadership roles. Both Carrie and Leslie did not believe their district did a good job at encouraging teachers to take on leadership roles and sharing how they were related to other reform initiatives. Carries explained:

I am not aware if my district has distributed information on the four tiered licensure structure. Our professional development committee sometimes puts out classes for the teacher leadership endorsement or master teacher application. To my knowledge, there is never any mention of either of these opportunities being related to the licensure structure.”

Lisa expressed the same belief by sharing, “Our district does not do a good job of helping us understand the four-tiered licensure structure. No one really talks about it. I think it may have been mentioned in our teacher leadership courses with the university.”

Some of the teacher leaders believed that teacher leaders didn’t really see the purpose or incentive behind teachers attaining the master teacher designation, the Teacher Leader Endorsement, and advancing their license when they can keep a five year professional license for the rest of their career. Carrie stated:

I like the four tiered licensure structure because it provides a career lattice for educators. In theory, the structure could incentivize teachers to participate in professional development and leadership opportunities. However, I am not sure if
teachers will pursue these opportunities if there is no monetary factor to match the advanced status.

Teachers need an incentive to encourage them to move beyond their professional license. Carrie suggested some sort of monetary incentive to interest teachers in advancing their license and taking on more leadership roles.

Most teacher leaders had some level of understanding of the various statewide initiatives. They also believed that initially, teachers may need incentives to engage in professional learning and leadership. All of the teacher leaders claimed they received took the courses to attain the leadership endorsement because it was free, not because it was linked to any of the statewide initiatives. The teachers had various thoughts on some of the state-wide school initiatives. Tracy summarized her thoughts on the Four-Tiered Licensure structures below:

I feel the Four-Tier teacher Licensure Structure brings increased credibility to the teaching profession. It really forces new teachers to perfect their skills and prove that they are worthy of the title Teacher. On the other hand, it encourages veteran teachers not to become complacent and to keep current on research and best teaching practices. This system does not allow teaching professionals to teach behind closed doors and accept the status quo. It is designed to promote highly educated teachers that can deliver top-of-the-line instruction to today’s youth.

Tracy appeared to have a deep understanding around the license structure and its’ purpose. This may explain why she chose to advance all the way through the licensure structure to attain the Lead Professional License.
Suburban District

The teacher leaders in the urban district had similar views about many of the school reform initiatives that they are involved in at the district level. Two of the four teachers leaders interviewed held the Lead Professional license. Both Melissa and Kara hold the master teacher designation and the teacher leader endorsement, which allowed them to advance to the Lead Professional license.

Throughout the interviews, the teacher leaders mentioned various school reform initiatives such as OTES, student Common Core standards, Resident Educator Program, and the Master Teacher designation. As the interviews progressed it became clear that many of the teacher leaders believed that the majority teachers had very little understanding about a lot of the initiatives and they did not have a reason to attain the teacher leader endorsement or advance through the tiered licensure structure. Lori shared her thoughts on the licensure structure and the teacher leader endorsement. She also explained why she got the endorsement below:

I don’t think many of the people know about it [Teacher Leader Endorsement]. They see it as another class and they wonder, ‘what is it going to do exactly?’ And that whole step sheet of things, I don’t even know where I fit on it. I remember looking at it thinking this is going to change. Like, what’s the point? I don’t think it motivates anyone to do anything different because of lack of information. The way testing is going. The way we have all this stuff that we have to do, but you don’t know what the end goal is or why you are doing it. You are just told that you have to do it, so I feel like it’s the same thing. Like, why would I do this if it’s not going to do anything else? The only reason I did it was because
it was only one class. There is no way I would have gone through another program for it. Especially, since it seems, and I may be misconstrued, but it seems very political driven. So, if politics change, is that going to change again? I don’t want to pay more money, you know, if I don’t need it. I have everything I need if I want to step into an administrative role and that is all I am worried about. I mean I still could not tell you anything about the endorsement; it is just on my licenses.

Melissa made similar claims about the teachers’ being uninformed around many of the school reform initiatives by claiming:

I would honestly say that I don’t think in general most of our teachers really understand the differences or why you would want to get a different license, or this [teacher leader] endorsement, or why master teacher. I don’t think they understand the purpose. I know they know it’s available but I don’t think they know the reasons why that it’s important. I think they don’t understand the purpose. They don’t understand the different tiers and how it would serve them in the long run. I would still say that there is not a clear understanding of that or even of some of the other state initiatives.

Teacher leaders do not understand the purpose behind some of the state-wide initiatives. The lack of information around these initiatives may cause some distrust of the initiatives, make them appear as additional hoops for teachers to jump through, and/or possibly view them as pointless.
Cross-District Analysis

Overall, there were three teacher leaders in the study who advanced through the four-tiered licensure structure to the Lead Professional License. The teacher leaders in both the suburban and urban district did not see the connections between most of the statewide initiatives and the work they were engaged in daily. Many believed that teachers are not aware of the Four Tiered Licensure Structure and its’ purpose. Many of the teacher leaders were not too clear about it as well.

The teacher leaders mostly stated they got the teacher leader endorsement because it was free and they were in a teacher leader role. The teachers in the suburban district attained the license because of the discount offered from the university, the convenience of taking courses in their school district, and some stated that they took the courses as a part of their administrative license. The teachers had an incentive to get the endorsement. I am not sure if they would have attained it without the incentive. The teacher leaders overall believed that teachers needed an incentive to get the license. Most claimed that teachers do not see the point in advancing through the license structure without an incentive. Carrie believed the licensure structure should be connected to some sort of monetary incentive which, may incentivize teachers to take on more leadership roles. In her prior role as master teacher in TAP, she was paid a stipend for taking on more advanced leadership roles.

The teacher leaders all agreed that the state and their districts must make the purpose behind the initiatives clearer. Districts must also think of ways to provide incentives for teachers to engage in the initiatives. The teachers all believed that if
teacher had a stronger understanding about the initiative and the connections between their daily work and the initiatives, they would more likely embrace them.
CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore and conceptualize how teacher leaders are trained, developed, and supported both formally and informally to be effective in their roles. The study furthered examined teachers perceptions of the Ohio teacher leader endorsement and its’ impact on them as teacher leaders. A total of eight teacher leaders participated in 60-90 minute semi-structured interviews, email follow-up, and brief phone conversations over a four-month period of time. The results of this grounded theory study will be provided in this chapter followed by a discussion of the research questions. Chapter V concludes with a review of the limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications for action.

Major Findings

Past research has indicated that teachers are often put into teacher leadership roles with little to no training and support (Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Murphy, 2005; Sherrill, 1999). More emphasis must be placed on identifying, encouraging, developing, and supporting teacher leadership in higher education programs and in school district professional development and trainings (Harris, 2005; Raffanti, 2008; Yost, Vogel, & Liang, 2009). If teacher leaders are essential to school improvement efforts (Murphy, 2005; Reeves, 2008), school reform initiatives must focus on the development and support of teacher leaders. Some of the findings in this study supports past research on teacher leadership. The data collected and analyzed in this study uncovered some major themes around the development and support of teacher
leaders. Five major themes were discovered through the collection and analysis of data. The following are the themes:

- **Theme one:** Formal training and support is essential for teacher leaders and can provide teachers with credibility among their colleagues.
- **Theme two:** Teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles are necessary to impact change in their organization.
- **Theme three:** Formal teacher leaders can lead from the classroom.
- **Theme four:** Informal support for teacher leaders is important to empowering and sustaining teacher leadership.
- **Theme five:** Stronger connections between statewide initiatives and the work of teacher leaders are necessary for educators to make sense out of the work of teacher leaders.

A summary of the results for each theme is provided below.

**Theme One: Formal training and support is essential for teacher leaders and can provide teachers with credibility among their colleagues.** Teacher leaders must have formal training and support if they are going to be effective in their leadership roles. Teachers are often thrown into teacher leadership roles with little formal and informal training (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). According to Sherrill (2009), teacher leaders would benefit from deliberate and purposeful training. The teacher leaders all confirmed that the courses they took to attain the teacher leader endorsement increased their effectiveness as teacher leaders. Most of the teacher leaders were operating in leadership roles while they were taking the courses and they were able to apply what they were learning in their coursework to actual work they were engaged in daily as teacher leaders.
The teacher leaders in the urban districts were encouraged by their school principals to become teacher leaders. Leslie shared how her principal was impressed with her teaching skills as a novice teacher and he encouraged her to take on leadership roles in the building. Principals often assume if teachers are effective in the classroom they will be effective teacher leaders. According to the review of literature conducted in Chapter II, teacher leader roles are quite complex and rarely clearly defined (Danielson, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Murphy, 2005; Sherrill, 1999). Leslie admitted that she was very uncomfortable leading professional development with her colleagues on a weekly basis. Initially, she did not have the skill set needed to develop and support adult learning. The coursework she took for the teacher leader endorsement embedded adult learning throughout each course, which allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of how adults learn and equipped her with strategies she should use during her weekly professional development meeting with teachers.

All of the teacher leaders in the urban district took the courses because they were free through the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant and also because they were currently working in formal teacher leader roles. The suburban district was attempting to grow their own leaders so they partnered with a university to offer courses for teacher to attain their principal license or get the teacher leader endorsement. The teachers in the suburban district took the courses because they were offered a discounted rate and because of the convenience of the courses being offered in their district at a high school.

Regardless of the reasons why the teacher decided to get the teacher leader endorsement they all expressed high satisfaction with the university’s teacher leader endorsement program. The teachers also appreciated having the opportunity to
collaborate with their colleagues in similar roles, apply theory to practice in their roles, and learn alongside administrators in their district (suburban teacher leaders). After taking the courses seven out of eight of the teacher leaders believed that all teacher would benefit from similar training. Carrie and Kara shared how they learned to lead without having positional power and how to navigate their school structures in teacher leader roles.

A surprise finding in this section was that the teacher leaders believed the endorsement provided them with more credibility among their colleagues. Carrie shared with her colleagues that they were taking courses on teacher leadership and learned that her colleagues respected and appreciated the fact that she thought it was important to learn how to best work with them. The teachers respected the fact the teacher leaders took their roles seriously and wanted to be more effective in their roles.

Initially, the teachers did not get the teacher leader endorsement thinking it would give them credibility among their colleagues. Leslie now believes the endorsement validates her work as a teacher leader. Teachers leaders in informal roles in the suburban district believed they had a deeper understanding of school leadership and also began to understand teaching and learning beyond their classroom.

Analysis of the data showed that teacher leaders felt more confident in their roles as teacher leaders when they were formally trained. The teacher leader endorsement validates the work of teacher leaders and can possibly provide teachers more credibility in their roles as teacher leaders. Formal training should consist of courses on leadership theory, adult learning, communication and collaboration, critical reflection, and data analysis.
Theme 2: Teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles are necessary to impact change in their organization. When schools have teacher leaders operating in both formal and informal roles teacher and student learning may be maximized. The teacher leaders described teacher leaders in both formal and informal roles when they were asked to describe teacher leaders. They were all consistent with the belief that teacher leaders’ are individuals who impact change within their organization through modeling and developing the adults working in their schools. They also believed that teacher leaders lead within and beyond their classrooms (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

The majority of the teacher leaders believed their role was to act as a facilitator and not managers. They did not believe it was their duty to tell teachers what to do or how to teach. The teacher leaders who were in roles as coaches saw their role as working alongside their colleagues. Kara was enthusiastic about how much she has learned from her colleagues in her role as a math numeracy coach. She believed that learning is reciprocal and claimed, “I wish all teachers would take a coaching role at some point in their career. I’ve learned so much more in this role than I have ever learned in my 17 years of teaching.” Mujis and Harris (2007), discussed leadership as being fluid and emergent opposed to a fixed phenomenon, where teacher may move in and out of leadership roles at various points in their careers. Kara shared how she encouraged classroom teachers to go into other teachers’ classrooms to model the math workshop model they were using in her building. Kara encouraged and empowered teachers in her building to become leaders as well. Research indicates that teacher leadership is most effective and flourishes in cultures where teachers are collaborative (Mujis & Harris, 2007). All of the teacher leaders in this study believed that all teachers are capable of
leading. Leadership in their minds was not something that only certain people were capable of doing. Individuals can be taught the skills and knowledge needed to be effective leaders.

Analysis of data shows that teachers do not necessarily have to be appointed by anyone to be a leader. Leaders are identified by their actions and behaviors in their school. Formal teacher leaders’ roles in schools must be better clarified to all stakeholders in the organization. Teacher leaders in the suburban district were hesitant in taking on formal leadership roles in the district due to lack of clarity around those roles. Teachers did not want to be viewed by their peers as “quasi-administrators” or “crossing over to the other side.” Regardless of their roles, teacher leaders believed it was important to work alongside their colleagues. They did not want to be perceived as a part of a hierarchy above classroom teachers and they went out of their way to ensure teachers understood they were in their roles by choice and not because they were chosen or more effective than fulltime classroom teachers. If schools are going to be successful at maximizing teacher effectiveness and increasing student achievement both formal and informal leadership are essential (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Theme 3: **Formal teacher leaders can lead from the classroom.** When I started this study I thought I would use formal teacher leaders with a title and who were considered TOSAs. I was able to find formal teacher leaders in both districts, but I was surprised to learn that the four of the five formal teacher leaders were also teaching part-time in the classroom. The teachers were responsible for their class for half of their day. None of these teachers were paid additional stipends for their leadership roles. All of them worked in at least two school buildings, except for Kara.
Kara, Vivian, Carrie, and Tracy all enjoyed being able to teach part-time in the classroom as formal teacher leaders. They made comments such as, “I have my own classroom to field-test instructional strategies,” “Teachers can come into my room and observe me teaching my students anytime, and this helps me build credibility with other teachers in my role,” “I have the ability to link theory to practice in my own classroom.” Kara claimed that she would not have taken the role if she could not continue to teach in a classroom. Teachers may shy away from leadership roles if they are no longer able to work with students. The teachers believed that the classroom helped to establish rapport, respect, and credibility in their roles. They were also able to practice concepts in their own classroom and collect data on instructional strategies before sharing them with teachers.

The analysis of the data showed teacher leaders in formal roles want to be able to continue teaching in the classroom. These teachers do not become far removed from the classroom and have a better sense of the work the teachers are engaging in on a daily basis. Often, teachers claim that district leaders do not understand the daily work of classroom teachers. Classroom teachers have a lot of responsibilities in their day-to-day work. They are responsible for planning, teaching, and assessing students on various levels. They also have to create and grade common assessments, parent-teacher conferences, meet with their colleagues in teacher-based teams, among many others duties. The teacher leaders in formal roles also engaged in this work along with coaching and providing professional development for their colleagues. The teacher leaders did not mind their duality in their roles. Most believed that they did not need to be paid an additional stipend because they were only in the classroom for half a day and they would
work with teacher for the other half. They considered the teachers their students and they planned for their work with the teachers as they would have planned for their students.

Although the formal teacher leaders enjoyed working part-time in the classroom most of the teachers expressed a concern about not always being used appropriately by their administrators. The teachers in the urban district expressed a concern about principals using them as tutors for students in high-stakes testing grades. The teacher leaders were concerned that they were not given time to properly coach support teachers. More demands were being added to their plate each year, which was taking them away from some of their responsibilities that were outlined in their job description. Classroom teachers were asking the teacher leaders to come into their room to observe, coach, model, and provide feedback. The teachers were frustrated because they could not find the time to properly support the teachers. Establishing clear roles for teacher leaders is important. Teacher leaders did not feel respected by their principals when they did not allow them to adequately do their job.

Theme 4: Informal support for teacher leaders is important to empowering and sustaining teacher leadership. To gain an understanding of teacher leaders’ perception of their school culture I used Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) dimensions of school leadership as a framework. The dimensions include the following: developmental focus, recognition, autonomy, collegiality, participation, open communication, and positive environment. The teacher leaders in the suburban district believed their school district had pretty healthy culture in most of the dimensions. Their perception of the districts school culture was generally positive. The formal teacher leaders reported more positive statements than the informal teacher leaders. The perceptions of the teacher
leaders in the urban district were not as positive as the suburban teacher leaders. They reported a need for more support and development within their schools in multiple areas.

In the area of developmental focus the teacher leaders in the urban district expressed a need for training and development in their roles as coaches. These teachers were provided support on the curriculum they were supposed to teach the teachers. However, support was not currently being provided in the areas of coaching, support adult learning, and collaboration and communication. The teacher leaders received little to no development from their administrators in their buildings. The teacher in the suburban district felt they were supported in developed well in their district. The teacher were currently engaged in Cognitive Coaching training and stated that if they needed further training they could reach out to their director or principals for support. The informal teacher leaders in the district did not feel they were supported in leadership roles adequately. They believed the coaches in formal roles were provided much more training in their roles.

The teachers in both the urban and suburban district felt they were recognized for by their principals and colleagues for the work they engaged in daily. Teachers expressed appreciation to the teacher leaders verbally. There was sense of mutual respect between the teacher leaders and teachers in the district. The formal teacher leaders went out of their way to let their colleagues know they were working alongside them and not above them.

Kara shared how she had autonomy in her school to make decisions in her school. She created her own schedule in the afternoon that she felt would best fit the needs of the teachers. She was able to be flexible in her role and principal trusted her as a coach. Both
Erin and Lori provided an example of how they took initiative in their school to make improvements. The majority of the teacher leaders in the suburban district felt their leaders encouraged them to come up with innovations to support both teacher and students in their school. The teacher leaders in the urban district had a hard time operating in their roles due to a few barriers. Teacher leaders struggled with time not having enough time to support teachers. For example, Vivian and Carrie shared how they were assigned additional duties outside of their job description and therefore struggled with this dimension. Leslie believed she was able to take initiative in her prior school and help make improvements in various areas as she served on various committees.

The teacher leaders in the urban district shared how they worked alongside their colleagues coaching, modeling, and providing professional development for the teacher in their buildings. Tracy, Vivian, and Carrie shared how she modeled instructional strategies and led professional development on Literacy Collaborative. Some of the teacher leaders in the urban district expressed a concern with their coaching roles being gradually stripped from them by some of their principals. Kara believed her principal provided embedded structures in their school day that encouraged the teachers to be highly collegial.

All of the teacher leaders in both districts were involved in the decision making process. The teachers sat on various committees such as; Building Leadership Teams, Professional Learning Teams, and interview teams. This dimension was one of the most positive dimensions out of the seven areas.

Open Communication is another area that was reported positive by the formal teacher leaders in both districts. The formal teacher leader felt comfortable
communicating with their administrators and teachers in their building. Informal teacher leaders did not feel they were always informed about what was happening in their schools and felt frustration about receiving information at the last minute. Lori expressed a concern about email communication from some of teacher leaders in formal roles that did not teach in the classroom. Lack of clarity around their roles and responsibilities caused them to question the work these teachers were engaged in daily. Overall the teacher leaders felt communication was not a major issue.

The teacher leaders in the suburban district expressed high satisfaction with their work environment. They enjoyed coming to work daily and felt respected by their colleagues and district leaders. The teachers in the suburban district expressed some concern about their work environment. Vivian shared how teachers were requesting support in the classroom that she was unable to provide due to teaching her class in the morning and teaching Reading Recovery in the afternoon. Carrie also shared this same concern with the number of role and responsibilities put on her by one of her administrators. When teachers are unable to support teachers as outlined in their job description, they become frustrated and do not view their work environment as positive places.

The analysis of data shows that teacher leaders in formal and informal roles need more support and development in their roles. Building principals and district leaders are not providing professional development and support to teacher leaders in areas that will help them to become more effective in their roles. Kara’s school had a very healthy school environment. Her school could be used as a model for how building leaders and school principals can support teacher leaders in all seven areas. Her building principals
created structures for teacher leaders to lead in both formal and informal roles. He embedded time within all of the teachers’ day to ensure they were collaborated with one another around instructional strategies. Every teacher in the building was supported and coached by the teacher leaders regardless of their skill level and experience.

The teacher leaders in urban schools were concerned about the additional roles the district put on them in their schools. In some cases, administrators were not using them appropriately. Carrie said they principals could really use the formal teacher leaders as they pleased. She shared how one of her building principal used her as a coach and the teachers’ and students’ performance in school was maximized. In her other building the teachers did not see a parallel amount growth in their students. She believed it was linked to the lack of support she was able to provide the teachers. Building principals and district leaders must be supported and developed to understand how to best use teacher leaders.

**Theme 5: Stronger connections between statewide initiatives and the work of teacher leaders are necessary for educators to make sense out of the work of teacher leaders.** The state has put together a comprehensive system to support, develop, and evaluate teachers to ultimately increase student learning. Darling - Hammond (2012) stated, “Initiatives to measure and improve teaching effectiveness will have the greatest payoff if they stimulate practices known to support student learning and are embedded in systems that also develop greater teacher competence” (p. iv). The state has attempted to create a system that encourages on-going professional learning at all stages of a teachers career, a new comprehensive evaluation system, performance assessments at various points in teachers careers, and standards for both educators and students. Currently, most
districts are expected to implement the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, Resident Educator Program, Ohio’s New Learning Standards, Educator Standards, and the Four Tiered Licensure Structure. The teachers overwhelmingly believed that many teachers are unaware of the purposes of most of the initiatives. Even the teacher leaders who participated in this study and were engaged in many of the initiatives seemed to lack a clear understanding of them.

Lori admitted that she only got the endorsement because she only needed one additional course to attain it. She does not believe the endorsement serves her or her colleagues any use in informal teacher leader positions. Although she believed that teacher leaders needed formal training to be effective in their roles, she did not see why teachers would want to get the endorsement. Carrie, Tracy, Melissa, and Kara all believed the career lattices created for teachers through the tiered licensure structure could be a great way to motivate teachers to engage in high levels of professional learning and development in theory. The state and districts must find ways to incentivize teachers to advance through the career ladder built into the tiered licensure structure. The teacher leaders also held the belief that just because they attained advanced licenses, it did not mean their colleagues needed to attain further licenses. Maybe, every teacher did not have to lead or take on leadership role. Teacher leadership is not for all teachers all of the time.

Although many of the teacher leaders spoke about OTES and the RE Program only two of the teachers appeared to have a strong understanding of how these reform initiatives were connected. Melissa shared how teachers must be operating in leadership roles to be able to score at the highest level on the OTES rubric. Melissa shared how her
district spent time training their teachers on the OTES rubric to help them understand what effective teaching looked and sound like according to the rubric. She stated, “As we are in our second year of OTES teachers are beginning to see that there are parts of that evaluation system that definitely lends you to needing you to expand your role into more teacher leader type stuff.” Melissa was making some connections between the daily work of teachers and initiatives. Melissa was also a mentor teacher for Intervention Specialists in her district that were participating in the RE Program. She still struggled with fully conceptualizing the purpose of this program and aligning to other initiatives.

Many of the teachers expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and frustration with all of the new initiatives they are implementing. Lori shared her own stress over implementing the Common Core Standards or Ohio New Learning Standards, the Third Grade Guarantee, OTES, the Next Generation Assessments, and the RE Program in her school. She had a difficult time making sense out of all of these initiatives and shared her concern about how principals and teachers have a limited understanding of them. She was concerned with how information was disseminated to from the state to districts stating:

It’s like everything trickles down. So, it’s like your district administrators are hearing it and sending it to one mode of communication, which sends it to another, which sends it to another before it even gets to you, and by that time it’s so muddled.

Various Centers and offices at ODE typically communicate information through superintendents and district leaders only. Teachers do not receive direct communications from ODE. Although, as of recently educators can sign up to receive communication from ODE on the website. Over the past few years ODE has made major changes to their
evaluations system, induction program, teaching standards, state-wide assessments, and teacher licensure programs. Educators in districts in schools are overwhelmed with the major changes in legislation and are struggling with understanding them and appropriately implementing them. ODE have to do a better job helping district leaders and teachers understand how the initiatives are aligned and their purposes. Districts' interpretation of the initiatives are not always accurate and effectively executed, which may lead to educators being engaged in meaningless work that doesn’t truly support teachers or students. I developed a diagram which shows the alignment between many of the state-wide initiatives that districts may use to help teachers gain a deeper understanding of the initiatives and their purposes see Appendix E.

Discussion

This section reviews the research questions from Chapter I along with the results from the study. The section concludes with Table 5.1, which was created to shows the relationship between the research questions and each of the themes uncovered in the study.

Research Question 1: What type of school environments support and develop teacher leaders?

Research indicates that principals play a pivotal role in creating school contexts where teacher leaders can grow and thrive (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). If teacher leadership is going to be promoted in schools there must be an intentional change in the power structures that engages teachers as partners in making decisions collectively to address issues schools are facing (Moller & Pankake, 2006). The participants in this study believed their principal played a key role in creating structures that either hindered
or caused teacher leadership to flourish in their schools. In the schools where teacher leaders believed they had a healthy school environment the teacher experienced the following: (a) Clear expectations established, (b) leadership distributed, (c) time allocated for job-embedded professional learning, (d) teacher autonomy, (e) on-going communication, and (f) mutual respect. In this study Kara discussed and shared examples of how her school principal created a school environment where all of these areas were exemplified.

In the schools where the teacher leaders believed they were being supported and developed, the building principal established clear expectations. The principals worked alongside teacher leaders to ensure they had common expectations about their roles in the building and the teacher leaders expressed positive views about their school environment. Every teacher in the building had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Teacher leaders in formal roles thought it was important for their colleagues to have an understanding of the work they were to engage in daily.

Kara shared how her principal made it clear that everyone was expected to be coached in her building. The principal in her building established structures that allowed teachers to collaborate with one another throughout the day. Schedules were created which ensure teachers have common planning time. Staff meeting days were eliminated so that time could be used for teacher to collaborate and discuss best practices and instructional strategies. Formal teacher leaders spent part of their day in their classroom and the other half working alongside their colleagues, co-teaching, and modeling and observing lessons. Mujis and Harris (2007) suggested shared norms, values, and collaborative practices between teachers support the development of teacher leadership.
Everyone was expected to learn and lead in Kara’s school. The literature on leadership clearly indicates the effective organization does not rest leadership in the hands of one individual but rather it is dispersed across the organization (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Pankake & Moller, 2006)

A culture of respect and trust is essential for teachers to be willing to take on leadership roles and grow as teacher leaders. The principals in healthy school cultures did not put teacher leaders in compromising situations where they were expected to act as spies or take on additional work that would take them away from supporting and developing their colleagues. Teachers felt comfortable being honest and open with one another because they understood that the teacher leaders were there to support them and not evaluate their practices. The teacher leaders were also open to allowing other teachers see their imperfections in the classroom. It is helpful for teachers to understand that teaching and learning is not about putting on a “Dog and Pony” show when they were being observed but about constantly reflecting on their practice to become better as an educator. Teachers become open and honest about their practice when they feel safe in their environment.

Lastly, the teacher leaders in healthy school environments said they were granted autonomy in their day-to-day work. They were capable of making decisions within and outside of their classroom in their school. Teacher leaders had the ability to create their own schedules based on the needs of the teachers and students in their building. Teachers worked together to research, select, and implement instructional strategies to increase student achievement in their classrooms. The building principal met with all teachers weekly to discuss their work. He provided feedback to the teachers around their
instructional practices and reviewed school-wide data with teachers individually and in team. The principal requested feedback from teachers to understand how he could best support them in their roles. The teacher leader shared that their principal expressed appreciation to them verbally and through email. He always recognized them for the exceptional work they engaged in and it encouraged them to work harder in their roles.

**Research Question 2: What are teacher leaders’ perceptions of the Ohio teacher leader endorsement?**

The teacher leaders who participated in the study believed the Ohio Teacher Leader endorsement helped to give them credibility among their colleagues. Most of the teachers indicated that they did not get the endorsement with this thought in mind, but found it very helpful. The teachers also agreed that the courses they took through the university to attain the endorsement provided them with specific skills and knowledge, which allowed them to better navigate their roles as teacher leaders both formally and informally. The skills the teacher leaders believed were critical are: leadership theory, adult learning, data analysis and decision making, coaching and mentoring, change process, and collaboration and communication. Research indicates teachers often receive training on how to teach and manage students in their classrooms, but often lack formal training on leadership, adult learning theory, and analyzing using data to make decisions (Danielson, 2006, Sherrill, 1999). They were also able to apply much of the theory from the courses immediately in their work.

The majority of the teachers attained the endorsement because it was either discounted or free through a grant in their district. Some of the teachers indicated they may not have attained the endorsement if otherwise. The teacher leaders did not see the
purpose of the endorsement and how it was connected to other statewide initiatives. The teacher leaders in informal roles did not see how the district used the endorsement and encouraged teachers to attain it. These teacher leaders felt that the endorsement better served teachers in formal roles. Sherrill (1999) suggested policy makers and district leaders consider who will be responsible for teacher leader trainings and identify who will pay for it. Teachers are more likely to attain the teacher leader endorsement if it is free or discounted. Teachers question if this endorsement is worth their money or time without incentives attached to the endorsement. Districts covering the cost of the endorsement could be considered an incentive. Other incentives may include consideration for specific roles and/or increase in pay or stipends attached to the endorsement.

Lastly, teachers indicated that teachers do not see how the teacher leader endorsement is clearly tied into other statewide initiatives. This is may be one of the reasons why teachers do not see the purpose in attaining the endorsement. Although, most teachers indicated they were aware of the Four Tiered Licensure Structure. Many of the teacher leaders agreed that they really didn’t quite understand it. Several teachers did understand that this was states attempt at creating career lattices for teachers and it shows the professional learning the educators are expected to engage in over the course of their careers from pre-service through the life of their career. Although, the actual document does not clearly state this anywhere in it. The teacher leader endorsement is listed in a box under the Lead Professional Educator License at the bottom of the page. The teacher leaders said they learned a bit about the tiered licensure structure in their courses for the teacher leader endorsement but their district does not mention it. Therefore, if they did
not participate in the courses to attain the endorsement they may not have even been aware that it existed. I created a diagram to show an alignment between state-wide school reform initiatives along with a description of the diagram in Appendix F that teachers may use to gain an understanding of the initiatives are aligned and support teacher effectiveness.

**Research Question 3: What are the barriers teacher leaders faces in their roles as teacher leaders?**

The teacher leaders revealed barriers they faced in their roles in the interviews conducted. Five major barriers were uncovered in the analysis of the data: (a) lack of resources, (b) ambiguity in roles and responsibilities, (c) time, and (d) egalitarian beliefs among teachers. Many of these barriers were in the literature review section of the study. Lambert (2003) noted the following barriers to teacher leadership: lack of time, misconception of equity, hierarchal cultures of authority, peer opposition, and a desire for harmony and safety over conflict. Teacher leaders may shy or step away from leadership roles if barriers are not addressed within organizations.

Lack of resources and clarity around roles and responsibilities was an issue with the formal teacher leaders in the urban school district. Carrie shared how the university’s expectations and district expectations for their roles did not always line-up. As a literacy coach, she lacked materials to effectively support and develop the teachers as outlined in her job description. She complained about much of her time being used attempting to track down the resources from other instructional coaches and schedule her meetings around the times she had the resources available. Not having the resources made Carrie feel ill equipped as a teacher leader. She ended up using some of her own money to
purchase resources for her training. Vivian shared how her building principal used her as a Reading Recovery teacher in the afternoon, which hindered her coaching and supporting teachers. She was frustrated with her workload being increased each year by her building administrator, which was not allowing her to work directly with teachers.

With the additional responsibilities being added to Vivian’s work, she had little time to support and develop teachers. The only time she was available to work with teachers was before and after school. Tracy also shared a similar concern in one of her school buildings. She spent most of her time working with students in a classroom and did not have much time to work with the teachers in the building. Vivian and Carrie both worked in low performing schools and principals were responding to the district’s mandate to provide more support for students in the classroom. These teacher leaders were often being used as tutors in the classroom rather than as coaches for teachers. As a result, the teachers were concerned that they were not meeting the university’s expectations of them.

Both formal and informal teacher leaders expressed a concern that there was little support and development for them in their roles as teacher leaders. The formal teacher leaders said the university supported them on the content they were expected to teach the teachers, but little to no support was provided on their roles as coaches. The district did not provide the coaches with ongoing support and development in their roles. Prior research indicates that teacher leaders would benefit from ongoing professional development in a variety of areas such as; leadership development, adult learning, change process, data analysis, collaboration and communication, and reflection (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).
Informal teacher leaders in the suburban district shared that they did not want to take on the new formal teacher leaders roles. Lori shared that district leaders asked her if she was interested in becoming a coach in the district and she turned it down. There were other informal teacher leaders in the district that also tuned this role down. These teachers were not interested in the roles for a couple of reasons. The first reason was because the roles and responsibilities were unclear. Teachers were unsure of how the district planned to use these teacher leaders. The teachers expressed a concern that they would be responsible for working in multiple buildings and would no longer be able to work with students. Kara’s building was the only school that had coaches who were also classroom teachers and worked solely in their building. The teacher leaders also expressed a concern about how their colleagues viewed those positions. The initial perception of those positions was that these teachers would act as “quasi-administrators.” The informal teacher leaders believed it would be challenging to establish trust among teachers if they had to work in multiple building with teachers with whom they may be unfamiliar. Research shows that egalitarian norms are prevalent in school cultures and these norms discourage teachers from taking on teacher leadership roles in schools (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This belief may have also caused teachers not to engage in these leadership roles in the district.

Teacher leaders in this study faced barriers that hindered them from being effective in their roles or taking on formal leadership positions in their school. District leaders and building administrators would benefit from training on teacher leadership. Training and support on distributing leadership, creating a climate and culture that encourages teacher leadership, and job-embedded professional learning and professional
development on building capacity in teacher leaders. Table 5.1 below provides a connection of the research questions to the major themes identified in this study.

Table 5.1. Research Questions and Major Findings Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Related Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1: What types of school environments support and develop teacher leadership?</td>
<td>Themes 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: What are teachers’ perception of Ohio’s Teacher Leader Endorsement?</td>
<td>Themes 1 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: What are the barriers teacher leaders face in their roles as teacher leaders?</td>
<td>Themes 4 and 5</td>
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Through my study and the research of literature, I have further delineated that teacher leaders need stronger informal support and development. Informal support and development should not be limited to teachers, but also include administrators and district leaders. Support and development should focus on role clarity for both formal and informal teacher leaders and creating a school culture and climate that support and embrace teacher leadership. Formal training and support for teacher leaders can help teachers to become more confident and effective in navigating their roles. The combination of formal training and informal training will allow teacher leaders to be successful in their roles in building teacher capacity and increasing student achievement.

The following section will review the limitations of this study.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, limitations should be considered as the finding and results are interpreted in a study. The following limitations were identified for this study:
1. My prior experience with teacher leadership in urban schools may have affected the interpretation of the interview data. I was employed in the urban district used in this study four years ago. The teacher leaders in the urban district were my colleagues, while teaching in the urban district. I used the grounded theory process to interpret data based on the rigorous data analysis process and not on the perceptions that the researcher held based on prior knowledge of the district and participants.

2. The size of the study sample was small. The study sample reflected a small number of school districts and participants that participated in the study. Thus, the study is limited to a small number of teachers who hold the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement.

3. The study was limited to a large urban and suburban school district in Ohio. Initially, I sought to include a rural school district in the study. Due to lack of response from teacher leaders in the rural district, I was unable to collect data from a rural district. Increasing the school types would allow for greater generalization across the state.

**Recommendations**

**Education Leaders**

It is my belief that all educators are responsible for some level of leadership. Regardless of whether leadership takes place in informal or formal roles. Educators are responsible for constantly learning to increase their understanding of their craft. Educators who engage in leadership capacity not only increase their understanding of teaching and learning but also impact and influence those around them. Therefore,
teachers, principals, and district leaders are all included in this section for recommendations that will impact development and support of teacher effectiveness and increase student achievement.

Teachers must become an open book to their colleagues. Working in isolation and silos in schools does not create a school culture climate where teaching and learning is valued. When teachers move from working in isolation and begin opening their doors to their colleagues to share best practices, develop lesson plans and assessments, observe and receive feedback from one another, and work in professional learning communities both teacher and student will increase. Teacher leadership is not an option, but a necessity in schools for both teachers and students to thrive. Teacher leaders may take on formal or informal roles within their schools.

Teachers are hesitant to take on leadership roles because of their concerns about what their colleagues will think of them. Egalitarian beliefs and norms must be set aside if teacher leadership is going to flourish. Formal training and support by district leaders can provide teachers with confidence, the skills and knowledge, and credibility for them to work alongside their colleagues and support the development of all teachers within their district and schools. Teacher leaders must engage in ongoing learning through job-embedded professional learning and professional development to best understand how to navigate their roles.

District leaders and building principals can encourage leadership among all teachers by understanding the importance of teacher leadership through both formal and informal training. Building principals cannot transform schools by leading alone. Leadership must be distributed across schools to maximize the effectiveness of the
organization. District leaders can encourage teacher leadership by developing a deep understanding of the Four Tiered Licensure Structure and encouraging teachers to use the career lattice and advance their teaching license through the career lattice. The district must create incentives to encourage teachers to move toward more advance licenses. Incentives may include the following:

- Formal and informal roles developed and recognized by the district.
- Monetary rewards which may include stipends for teachers taking on additional roles outside of their classroom or differentiated pay schedules for teachers.
- Free or discounted courses for teachers who would like to attain the teacher leader endorsement.
- Districts providing teacher leadership courses within their school districts and being taught by administrators and teachers within their districts.

Building principals could benefit from taking additional courses on creating a school culture that embraces teacher leadership and distributed leadership so they do not feel threatened in their role. These leaders may benefit from taking leadership courses alongside teacher leaders to gain clarity around the roles and expectations of teacher leaders in their building. District leaders must also be able to show an alignment between school reform initiatives and teachers’ daily work. Leaders must be careful in the way they are interpreting initiatives. Leaders must have an in depth understanding of the initiative and ensure that all stakeholder hold this common understanding. Efforts must be made to ensure initiatives do not appear as additional work teachers must engage in,
but rather expected practices of highly effective educators. Teachers should be able to see how initiatives fit into their daily work.

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) should consider building teachers knowledge and understanding of leadership starting with pre-service programs. Teachers will be encouraged to take on leadership roles within their first years of teaching. New teachers may be expected to participate in professional learning teams, building leadership teams, and possibly be part of committees in their schools. New teachers are also expected to working alongside mentors to maximize performance in the classroom and ensure all students are learning in their first few years of teaching. Teachers must be aware that leadership is not designed for a few but expected from all teachers.

HEIs can also design their teacher leadership courses so they include both teachers and building administrators. When teachers and building administrators learn alongside one another teacher leadership barriers can be broken and common understandings may be developed. Teachers are more encouraged to take teacher leadership courses when the courses were offered within their districts at a discounted fee. It may benefit HEIs to partner with local school districts and the department of education to identify incentives that will attract teachers to participating in teacher leader endorsement programs.

**State Department of Education**

The Ohio Department of Education must do a better job of communicating school reform initiatives and their purposes to school districts, schools, and HEIs. Many school districts are struggling with implementing many of the initiatives and do not see an alignment between the initiatives. ODE would benefit from providing more professional
development and technical assistance to districts and schools to help them better understand how the initiatives are interrelated.

Schools and districts may also benefit from models of exemplary schools that are implementing the initiatives with fidelity and high success. District leaders and teachers are in search of more information and models of what many of these initiatives may look and sound like at the local level. Also, they need to understand how to implement these initiatives within their school structure. ODE must begin to communicate with more stakeholders in the state and not limit communication to superintendents and top district leaders or officials.

**Policy Makers**

Policy Makers must continue to support and encourage teacher leadership through various initiatives. Policies that encourage performance assessments for teachers throughout their careers beginning at pre-service, through multi-year induction programs which includes performance, and advanced licenses for teachers emphasizes the importance of ongoing learning and critical reflection by educators. Funding must be available to schools and districts if they are going to be expected to develop structures that support, develop, and encourage teacher learning at every level of their careers.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The completion of this study has led me to more questions than answers. The following question are recommended for future research:

1. How are building administrators developed and supported to understand their roles in distributing leadership and building a culture and climate that embraces teacher leaders?
2. What are the processes that building leaders engage in to create a positive culture leadership and learning?

3. What impact does teacher leadership have on student learning?

4. What types of leadership program design best develop and support teacher leaders and administrators?

5. How does districts interpretation of school reform initiatives impact teachers and administrators understanding and implementation of initiatives?

It would also be beneficial to complete this study in a rural district to identify teacher leaders’ perceptions of both formal and informal training and to gain insight on their perception on the Ohio’s Teacher Leader endorsement. Lastly, Kara’s school would be great for a study on how principals can distribute leadership across the organization to best support teacher and student learning. Kara’s school was a failing school in a high performing suburban school district. Although her school was failing according to the state report card her school value –added data was the highest in the district. The school was also the most diverse in regards to student ethnicity and social class. Studies could also be done to find out if high performing suburban districts tend to look like struggling urban districts when their student populations are similar. Kara’s school was certainly a surprise. I was not aware that her school district had a failing school with such demographics. Also, the value added data in her school was somewhat impressive and may be linked to the structures her administrator put in place to encourage constant teacher learning and support.
Summary and Conclusions

More accountability than ever is being put on both teachers and leaders to ensure all students are learning. Past research has linked high teacher learning to increased student learning. With increasing demands to close achievement gaps across all schools, educators must take on leadership roles within their schools to maximize teacher and student learning. Teachers will step into leadership roles when structures within their school are created that encourage and demand teachers to work in a collaborative manner and learn from one another. Egalitarian beliefs among teachers can be dismantled in such a school a school culture. Formal training is essential for teacher leaders to be competent and credible in their roles. Training may also help teachers feel more confident in their roles as leaders. District leaders and building leaders must provide ongoing support and development for teacher leaders to help them master their roles and also equip them with strategies so they are able to persevere when they encounter reticent colleagues and building leaders. Teacher leadership is not a new concept but rather an evolving concept. As educators begin to understand the complexities of teacher leadership theories and strategies will be developed to help both teachers and leaders best navigate these roles so that student learning is maximized and achievement gaps are closed.
References


APPENDIX A

EMAIL INVITATION TO TEACHER LEADERS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY
July 28, 2014

Dear (Specific name of Teacher Leader),

My name is Jennifer Ross and I am a doctoral student at Ashland University. I am conducting a study that investigates how teacher leaders are developed and supported. I am writing to ask you to participate in this study because you hold the Ohio Teacher Leader Endorsement. This study is necessary because, while prior research tells us the teacher leaders are critical and central to school improvement efforts, many teachers that hold formal and informal teacher leadership roles have had very little to no formal training on aspects of leadership. Often, these teachers are asked to take on leadership roles with little support and development from administrators within their district. The findings from this study will be used to identify ways to best develop and support teacher leaders within schools so that can be most effective in school improvement efforts.

If you agree to participate in the study you will be asked to complete the following:

- One 60-90 minute interview via phone or face-to-face, whichever is your preference
- Establish a way to communicate via email or telephone for follow-up questions and discussion throughout the study; and
- Review your interview transcription for accuracy.

Please reply to this email if you are interested in participating in this study. You may also contact me directly using my information below. As a fellow educator, I know your time is valuable and rather scarce. I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in helping me with this request, and I wish you the best in your continued efforts to educate your students and colleagues.

Sincerely,

Jennifer E. Ross
Ashland University, Leadership Studies, Ed.D. Candidate
Program Specialist, Ohio Department of Education

Jennifer3224@msn.com
614-288-9741 (c)
614-728-6916 (h)
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Formal and Informal Teacher Leader Development and Support

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Jennifer Ross, a doctoral student at Ashland University, is conducting a research study to gain an understanding on how teacher leaders are developed and supported both formally and informally. You are being invited to participate in this study because you hold the teacher leader endorsement.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to participate in one 60-90 minute telephone or in-person interview sharing your training and experience as a teacher leader.

2. Your responses from the interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes.

3. Once the interview data has been coded and analyzed, a draft of the data will be developed. Participants will have the opportunity to review the draft document and provide feedback. This process will involve the option of receiving your input via e-mail or postal delivery of written comments or verbally during a personal interview or personal phone call. Participation in this feedback process is important to the research but not mandatory.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.

D. BENEFITS

The direct benefit to participating teachers in this study will be the opportunity to share your voice and understanding of teacher leadership to the field of education.

E. COSTS
There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study.

F. PAYMENT

You will be paid $10 for your participation in this study. A gift card will be mailed to participants within 30 days after your participation in the study.

G. QUESTIONS

If you have any comments or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researchers. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Human Subjects Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 and 5:00, Monday through Friday, by calling (419) 521.6877. You may also E-mail Carol Reece, Chair of Human Subjects Review Board, at: creece1@ashland.edu.

H. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a [patient, student or employee].

If you agree to participate, you should sign below.

_________________________    _____________________________________________
                      Date    Signature of Study Participant

________________________       ____________________________________________
                      Date    Signature of Person Obtaining Consent
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Teacher Leader Interview Questions

Introduction
- Tell me a bit about yourself as an educator?
- What licenses/certifications/endorsements do you hold?
- What is your current role in your school/district?
- What made you become a teacher leader?
- What are your roles and responsibilities as a teacher leader?

Leadership Beliefs
- What does leadership mean to you?
- What does teacher leadership mean to you?
- Who are teacher leaders?
- Why are teacher leaders important?

Leadership Training/ Development
- Do you think teacher leaders need formal training?
- How were you trained to become a teacher leader?
- Why did you decide to get the Teacher Leader Endorsement?
- Where did you get your Teacher Leader Endorsement?
- How many courses did you have to take to get your endorsement?
- Did the courses help you become a more effective teacher leader?

Teacher Leader Skills and Knowledge
- What distinguishes an effective teacher leader from an ineffective teacher leader?
- What skills do teacher leaders need to be effective?
- How do you know if you are effective as a teacher leader?
- What does an effective teacher leader look and sound like?

Teacher Leader Support
- Do you feel valued and supported as a teacher leader?
- What role, if any, does your administrator play in helping you become an effective teacher leader?
- What types of informal support are you given as a teacher leader?
- What types of professional development have you taken to develop your teacher leadership skills?

Teacher Leader Celebrations/Challenges
- Describe a time when you were effective as a teacher leader.
- What is the most challenging part of being an effective teacher leader?
APPENDIX D

HSRB APPROVAL
TO: Jennifer Ross and Judy Alston
FROM: Carol Reece, HSRB Chair
DATE: July 11, 2014
SUBJECT: Student Research Project Approval

PROJECT TITLE: Development and Support of Teacher Leaders in Ohio

HSRB APPROVAL CODE: 06-12-14-#004

The Human Subjects Review Board has approved your research study. You may proceed with the study as you have outlined in your proposal. The approval is granted for one calendar year. Research participant interaction and/or data collection is to cease at this time, unless application for extension has been submitted and approval for continuance is obtained.

The primary role of the HSRB is to ensure the protection of human research participants. As a result of this mandate, we ask that you adhere to the ethical principles of autonomy, justice, and beneficence. We would also like to remind you of your responsibility to report any violation to participant protections immediately upon discovery. Likewise, we would like to remind you that any alteration to the research proposal as it was approved cannot move forward. Any amendment to the application must be submitted for approval before the project can resume.

We wish you success in your discoveries,

Carol S. Reece DNP, APRN, CPNP
Ashland University
Chair Human Subjects Review Board
APPENDIX E

DIAGRAM: COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR ALIGNED DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS
APPENDIX F

DESCRIPTION OF DIAGRAM
Description of Diagram

Ohio’s Comprehensive System for Supporting and Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness

The diagram was created to show an alignment between Ohio’s comprehensive school reform initiatives. These initiatives across the state are designed to create a world-class education system that support, develop, and evaluate teachers to enhance their effectiveness and increase student achievement. Educators struggle with fully implementing these initiatives because they do not see a connection between them and understand their purposes. This diagram is designed to help educator see the connection between the initiatives to better understand them.

The bottom of the graphic displays Ohio’s Standards for the Teaching Profession and Student Standards. All of the initiatives are grounded and aligned to these standards, which is why the standards are at the bottom of the page, to indicate they are the foundation for all of the initiatives implemented in Ohio. The standards should be used to help educators self-assess their performance, collaboratively discuss effective teaching practices, and guide educators professional development and learning decisions. Educators must also have an understanding of student standards to effectively provide instruction to students and ensure they are maximizing their learning.

All of the initiatives implemented in Ohio are directly aligned to the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession. The Continuum was designed to describe teacher’s progress throughout the course of their careers. This tool can be used by teachers to help self-assess their practice beginning in their pre-service years and throughout the life of their careers. The tool is aligned to the Ohio Standards for the
Teaching Profession. The continuum is not designed to be evaluative and should be used to with programs and systems to support and develop teachers over time. The Ohio Department of Education encourage Higher Education Institutions to use this tool to prepare, train, and develop pre-service teachers, which is why it is located above the standards and goes across the entire diagram. School districts may use this tool to support and develop educators. The Continuum can guide educators in setting goals and seeking out professional development and learning opportunities as they assess and self-assess areas they may need strengthened. The Ohio Resident Educator Program encourage educators to use this tool for mentoring and coaching teachers. Teachers may use the continuum at any point in their career to understand how they can move across it to become more effective in aspect of teaching and learning.

The Four-Tiered Teacher Licensure Structure outlines the professional development and learning, coursework, and performance-based assessments educators are required to engage in to attain, maintain, and advance their teaching license throughout the course of their career. The tiered licensure structure provides a career lattice for teachers, which allows teachers to advance their license to more distinguished licenses. Once teachers attain their professional educator license they may stay at the level for the remainder of their career with a Bachelors degree. Teachers may renew this license every five years by meeting the required guidelines outlined by the state. Some educators may choose to attain more advanced licenses, such as the senior professional and lead professional license, by attaining their Masters Degree and teaching for a minimum of nine years. These teachers must also attain the Master Teacher Designation,
Teacher Leader Endorsement, or become Nationally Board Certified to advance their license.

Ideally, districts would provide incentives for teachers to attain more advanced licenses and utilize these teachers to develop and support novice and struggling teachers within their districts. Teachers holding advanced licenses should be encouraged to be mentors for Resident Educators, OTES evaluators, instructional coaches, grade level and building team leaders, develop and facilitate professional learning in their schools, district, become scorers for performance assessments, and other professional meetings and conferences. Educators should see a direct alignment between the Educator Standards and teacher leadership. Teachers performing at the distinguished level are leaders who empower influence others beyond their classroom. Therefore, all teachers who want to be considered highly effective teachers must collaborate and work alongside their colleagues to advance along the continuum of teacher development. Taking on leadership responsibilities beyond their classroom is a great way to extend their understanding of teaching and learning and also support and develop their colleagues understanding.

The Teacher Performance-Based Assessments is situated above the Four-Tiered Licensure Structure because the state has embedded performance assessments at various points throughout a teacher’s career. Ohio had developed a structure in which licensing is aligned to teacher performance based assessments. New teachers or Resident Educators must successfully complete the Resident Educator Program and pass the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA), a performance assessment to attain their professional license. The RESA is designed to measure teacher’s effectiveness at the
proficient level according to the educator standards. Teachers should be teaching at the proficient level outlined on the Continuum of Teacher Development. Teachers may have experienced performance assessments during their pre-service years if they were required to take the EdTPA. Teachers are also encouraged to become Nationally Board Certified to attain the lead professional license in Ohio or attain both the Master teacher designation and the Ohio teacher leader endorsement. The Four Tiered licensure structure embeds performance-based assessments throughout educator’s careers to license new teachers and recognize accomplished teachers with advanced licenses.

Lastly, the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) is designed evaluative teachers effectiveness in the classroom. This evaluation model should also be used as a professional growth model. Multiple measures are used to determine the teacher’s effectiveness. Effective administrator use their teacher evaluation data to identify trends and patterns among educators in their schools and identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in their teachers, which will lead them to identifying professional development and learning needs for teachers in their building. Teachers may use the Professional Standards, Continuum of teacher development, and OTES rubric to structure teacher’s learning opportunities.

Educators must be aware of the alignment between the initiatives so that they can implement them at a deeper level. Educators are in the beginning stages of implementation with most of these initiatives and are more concerned about being compliant with the state initiatives opposed to developing and supporting all of their teachers. This visual can help begin a discussion around all of the initiatives and how they are aligned. Educators may be more willing to fully engage in initiatives if they
understand them. This will may also alleviate duplication of work across initiatives and allow educators to see how the initiatives, when used correctly, can be systems of support and development and not used for solely for punitive measures.
APPENDIX G

VIGNETTE – KARA (FORMAL TEACHER LEADER) SAMPLE SCHOOL DAY
Kara – Formal Teacher Leader – Lead Profession License

William Meyer Elementary School

Kara is a formal teacher leader who has a lead professional teaching license, the highest license according to the state department of education’s licensing structure. Her day at William Meyer Elementary School is structured to assist with developing the staff in the building that she teaches in. Her interactions with colleagues are deliberate and intentional to increase the shared knowledge around the practices of teaching and learning. Kara’s day consists of teaching in her own classroom and having teachers observe her practice, team teaching with other teachers, collaborating with teachers around to analyze teaching practices and data and relieving teachers to allow them to model lessons and provide support for teachers. Kara has demonstrated effective teaching practices at the distinguished level of performance as defined in the Ohio Professional Educator Standards.

The day begins at 7:00 for Kara. Her personal planning time is from 7:00-7:25. She can use this time to run copies of worksheets for her students, analyze formative assessments, or work on lesson plans for the next week. Once her personal planning time is completed, Kara is engaged in leading a PLT with first grade teachers using student data to plan math workshop for the day until 8:05. Student data was collected in the form of an exit ticket the previous day.

She greets her students at 8:05 and begins teaching math and science for a ninety-minute block of time. She has two visitors in her math class scripting her lesson, so that they can gain an understanding around her pedagogical practices. The focus for
observation is deconstructing a standard and the opening of a lesson within the math workshop. The expectation is that Kara and the observing teachers will have conversations about what they scripted about her lesson, and how her instruction and pedagogy lead to students’ academic successes.

Kara has a thirty-minute meeting with her principal and the other instructional coaches in the building scheduled from 12:00 -12:30. The topic of discussion is centered-around OTES data including walk-through data and the walkthrough feedback forms. The focus for walkthroughs was on learning targets posted and deconstructed in classrooms, and evidence of teachers teaching the learning targets that they posted. The data showed that 16 out of 18 learning targets were posted. Ten out of the 16 learning targets that were posted were deconstructed. Six out of 18 learning targets were deconstructed accurately. Kara, the principal and coaches planned to continue to have teachers to focus on posting and deconstructing learning targets along with teaching the standards posted the following week.

Kara’s next visited a first grade classroom to engage in a team teaching assignment between the times of 1:10-1:50. She and the first grade teacher, Holly were engaged in a team teaching model. Holly introduced the lesson, and Kara asked probing questions during discussions. While Holly introduced the lesson, Kara walked around and assessed students’ work. The questions that Kara asked were intentional and based on students’ misconceptions and understanding of the content. Kara at one time demonstrated an alternate method for problem solving on the board to lead all students to understanding.
Kara stayed in the first grade classroom form 1:50-2:10 to release the homeroom teacher, Holly who was a resident educator (RE) mentor to model a lesson for her mentee who was a second grade teacher. The RE mentor modeled a lesson that demonstrated deconstructing a standard for students and opening a lesson appropriately. Holly modeled underlining and circling nouns and verbs in the standard, and replacing the nouns with synonyms and pictures to help students understand the learning target. Holly also used a direct instruction approach to demonstrate the learning outcome for students. The RE took notes around the practices that Holly demonstrated to increase his understanding around deconstructing standards and opening a lesson. Holly and the RE had planned to debrief around the lesson that she taught the following day.

Holly went back to her classroom to dismiss her students. Once her students were dismissed for the day, she and Kara conversed about the lesson that they presented to the class. They looked at exit tickets and grouped kids accordingly for small groups the following day. They planned to bring in assignments that would meet the needs of their students to PLT the next morning.

Kara went back to her classroom to reorganize her classroom. She also looked at her classroom students’ exit tickets to see what she needed to teach or reteach the following day. She left the building at 3:15 to attend a cognitive coaching professional development session. She was charged with leading teachers within the district in cognitive coaching training. As a distinguished teacher according to the Educator Standards, Kara was involved in both informal and formal professional development and learning. The professional development and learning that she was involved in purposed to meet her professional goals that would ultimately increase her students’ understanding.
around content standards and her colleagues understanding around the educator standards that would enhance their teaching practices.
**Kara’s Daily Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00-8:00 am</td>
<td>Professional Learning Team (PLT) Meeting – leading a PLT with first grade teachers using student data – Implementing Math Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15-11:30 am</td>
<td>Morning Math and Science Block – in her fourth grade classroom teaching Math and Science – 90 minute math block – Teacher observing her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Instructional Coach Meeting with principal – Discussing classroom practices and plans for this week (OTES Data, Walk-Through data, and feedback forms. (Analysis data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10 pm – 1:50 pm</td>
<td>Team Teaching in First Grade Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50 pm – 2:10 pm</td>
<td>Kara releases the classroom teacher to go model a lesson in a second grade teacher’s classroom; Resident Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:25 pm – 2:45 pm</td>
<td>debriefing with first grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45 pm – 3:15 pm</td>
<td>in her classroom cleaning up and planning for the following day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm – 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Cognitive Coaching Training to become cognitive coach trainer for the district.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>