

DISSERTATION

ELEMENTARY TEACHER LEADERS: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF  
DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2014

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## ABSTRACT

### ELEMENTARY TEACHER LEADERS: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT

Education reform in K-12 public education continues to be a national priority. The call for improvement includes teachers to emerge as leaders to reform K-12 education where it matters most – at the classroom level. In the past decade, the discussion of teacher leadership is gaining legitimacy in education literature as well as in educational practice. The first section discusses topics in current educational reform that have led to the conclusion a new paradigm is needed in the teaching profession. The second part considers challenges of teacher leadership. The third part discusses what is known about teacher leadership. This review is an attempt to place teacher leadership in context of changing work force issues and improving student achievement in Jefferson County Schools K-6.

The purposes of this study are to explain teacher leadership in Jefferson County K-6 public education and to identify the principles of effective teacher leadership and the barriers that inhibit teacher leader participation in public school reform efforts.

This study presented eight principles from complexity theory. Complexity theory suggests K-6 public education be viewed as a complex organization calling for leadership that can transform education from past practices and to prepare public education for the twenty-first century. Identification of a set of guiding principles in teacher leadership practice could further empower classroom teachers in public school reform. The eight principles and implications for teacher leadership explain how educational and organizational theories apply to issues related to teacher leadership in elementary public education.

Several factors were studied related to distributive leadership. Leadership types, roles and positions, influence, context, and expertise are factors. If factors are considered with regard to interactions of leaders, followers, and the situation, then practice can be placed centrally in a framework for leadership practice. The tenets used to frame the analysis were related to distributed leadership and pertaining to elementary public education.

Sociocultural learning was a way to analyze how teachers were learning to be teacher leaders in public elementary education. A teacher (person) is learning in characteristic ways by engaging in social processes (activity) in a defined community of practice (world). Teacher leaders participate in various activities in the school system. Participation sets a teacher leader on a trajectory to becoming a member in the social world of elementary public education. Sociocultural learning theory provides a lens through which the social world and participation in activities that places the person as the focal point. This view suggests practice in social structures as a way of explaining the person as a learner. This perspective maintains an explicit focus on the whole person as inseparable from learning by membership in a learning community. From this view, learning to lead is an activity engaged in by classroom teachers in elementary education.

Given this study of teacher leaders is a grounded theory from case studies, a theoretical framework explains the key constructs that were studied and presumed relationships among them. The three theoretical constructs for this study of teacher leaders are the guiding principles of complexity of their work, qualities of practices in the distribution of leadership, and sociocultural learning experience. The outcome of this study is a theory and a process of teacher leaders' development and practice

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this work has been my most important academic accomplishment to date. In my effort to fulfill my goals, many people are to thank for their encouragement, support, and immeasurable influence.

I wish to thank Jefferson County Schools, the principals, and teacher leaders who chose to participate in my study. You were a cornerstone in the building of a theory I believe in.

I extend my gratitude to the Department of Education at CSU. Each of you will always have an influence on my life that transcends your classroom. I am especially thankful for the support from Dr. Jean P. Lehmann, Dr. Timothy G. Davies, Dr. James H. Banning, and Dr. Norberto Valdez who provided instruction and advisement during my dissertation development.

I express my sincere appreciation to my committee members. Dr. William M. Timpson served as Dissertation Chair, helped me pull my project together, and assisted me in many ways to keep my work moving along. Dr. James H. Banning advised me with methodological guidance. He was a wealth of knowledge and tremendous resource. Dr. James Folkestad provided on-going support to bring my study to fruition. Dr. Antonette Aragon assisted me in finishing my dissertation during the final stages of the project. Dr. Albert Bimper offered his valuable insights on my study.

Above all, I am grateful for my family who has shared in my dream of pursuing my education. My father, John E. Medina, and mother, Adelina Medina gave me their blessings and unconditional love through all my life's undertakings.

## DEDICATION

To my father, John E. Medina (October 10, 1930 – May 27, 2002). I learned a lot from you in our time together. To my mother, Adelina Medina. You always wanted more for me than for yourself. Dreams come true.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with my personal experience as a teacher leader in a formal position of instructional leader. Three broad constructs inform my discussion along with relevant concepts based on my experience. The first construct discussed is complexity of instructional leadership, followed by distribution of labor involved with instructional leadership, and third is sociocultural learning as instructional leaders. Next, I present a call for teacher leadership and topics in current education reform including some challenges of teacher leadership. The last section is the purpose statement for this study.

### Researcher's Perspective

I began teaching in Jefferson County School District in 1993. My first teaching position was with 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in an elementary school in the south area of the school district. I am an Hispanic male and my experience in elementary education has offered opportunities for me to practice leadership as a classroom teacher during my teaching career. I have committed my professional life to educating children in public schools. I have set and achieved high education goals for myself because I am passionate about education. Also, being a male has allowed me to serve as a role model in elementary schools. Hispanic male teachers in elementary education are too few, yet I believe that all teachers in elementary education need to be recognized for our work. Being an Hispanic male in elementary education has proven to students, colleagues, and community that I am a teacher who leads in elementary public education.

#### *Complexity of instructional leadership.*

As a teacher for twenty years my experience had been that decisions related to school improvement were typically passed down and teachers were to implement decisions in the classroom. Teachers' voices and participation in decision making were seldom heard or active.

I was more likely to have open and meaningful work-related conversations with my colleagues away from staff meetings. Team meetings or the staff lounge, the hallway, and the parking lot provided more opportunities to speak up. It was in this way and in such places that I began realizing how many of the most important conversations happen among my colleagues.

Teachers are the closest point of contact with student achievement. Teachers have the best insights as to what issues may be affecting student achievement and potential ways to address the issues. Like minded with other teachers, I believe in my teaching practices. I recognize the enduring influence effective classroom teachers can have on student achievement (Haycock, 1998; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997).

In the spring of 2007 I was approached by the principal to consider taking on an additional responsibility to teaching. He asked me to join the leadership team as an instructional leader. The leadership team consisted of the principal, an instructional coach, two teachers as leaders (instructional leaders by role identification), and other district level personnel on an as need basis. The leadership team was assembled for decision making with representative teachers as liaisons between faculty and administration. The instructional leadership positions were a new endeavor in the school district for the 2008-2009 school year. The position offered several incentives such as one thousand dollars additional pay for the school year, monthly leadership sessions held at central administration, monthly meetings with the principal and the leadership team for school level decision making, and opportunities to collaborate with other teachers beyond grade level and department boundaries. Such incentives served to motivate, strengthen, and inform district- and school-level administration, and staff developers. I was more than happy to accept the offer for personal professional reasons.

One of our initial charges as a leadership team was to improve student achievement in reading. As an instructional leader I aimed to offer a positive contribution to my classroom, school, and school district. In carrying on my duties, I soon recognized the complexity of my aim. Just as I believe in my instructional practices, rightfully, so do other teachers. Unseen forces formed by convictions of practice shape the professional behaviors observed around the school. The processes and procedures for the way school business is conducted may be by habit or tradition by most faculty members. Also, I saw that despite apparent differences among teachers, co-creation of practice and policy seemed to occur. Although practice and policy implementation may not occur uniformly across the entire school, what was uniform was teacher participation in general.

*Distribution of labor.*

With a curriculum alignment project as one of the leadership team's school improvement efforts, teacher participation was key in implementation. The charisma of the principal was helpful in the initial stages. The joint effort among the leadership team was also valuable. Clearly, what became most crucial over time was the distribution of labor beyond the leadership team. Titles of our professional positions designated our roles. However, the practice of our roles was personally defined since this was our first year. Our roles as leaders were paradoxically different than our practice as leaders. My role as leader seemed to serve only so far and with limited purpose. However, leadership practice apparently carried further. Knowledge, skill, and ability of leadership practice extended beyond role, title, or designation. Instead, leaders were better identified by other teachers according to influence each had. The ones who could generate the most social influence regardless of official title or position acted as leaders by practicing the habits of leaders. There were teachers who took initiative in getting the

curriculum alignment project started in their classrooms and shared with others what they were doing and how they were doing it. Others stepped up to sustain the effort. The complexion of efforts varied from one individual to another as well as one group to another. I attributed the variation to each individual or group situation. Over all, the project implementation was progressing very well due to the distribution of labor involved in leading, given this particular situation.

*Sociocultural learning.*

One of the benefits of being an instructional leader was given the time to meet with other instructional leaders from other schools. Once a month all the instructional leaders would meet at the central administration building. The meetings were typically from 4:00pm to 7:00pm. Agenda items included leadership development, updates on the implementation of the curriculum alignment project, and reports on what was and was not working well at each school.

From my perspective and from conversations with other instructional leaders, I gathered that our experiences as instructional leaders varied from school to school. Every school seemed to reflect its own culture. By comparison, my school has an environment co-created by many people such as the faculty and staff, the students, and the community. Circumstances that affect people can in turn affect the school. For example, the school and the community where I teach are characterized with families of lower economic and have higher mobility rates compared to other district schools. The school was reported as low academic achievement according to the School Accountability Report in 2008 (Colorado Department of Education [CDE], 2009).

These factors, and others, consequently play into the instructional decisions that are made and the instructional practices that are used. Instructional decisions and practices are informed further by the professional tools used at a particular school. For instance, the conversations

instructional leaders have during various meetings indicate some of the intellectual talents teachers use in matters of professional practice in schools. Also, the professional resources teachers utilize are the tools of our craft. Together, intellectual talents and the tools of our craft vary from school to school and seem to be adapted to each in a way that fits the environment.

Although some professional curriculum resources are the same at many schools, mathematics resources, for example, appeared to me to be used differently among area schools. There was some freedom and flexibility in pace, depth, and breadth of instruction. Though there was latitude, teachers tended to use sound discretion in instructional decisions in the delivery of instruction to meet the academic needs of the students.

Teachers' judgment in how to work with professional issues seemed to be influenced more by a flow of deliberate actions than a hodgepodge of activities. The dynamic process seems to occur from an initial point of engagement to a point of realization and may involve some calculated risks. For example, a part of the implementation of the curriculum alignment project, teachers were to determine the essential learning for each content area of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. There were three ways students could evidence their learning: (a) knowledge of facts and information, (b) understanding of concepts and principles, and (c) demonstration of skills and /or procedures. True to fashion of teacher leaders, we set out to incorporate the use of essential learning into our classroom practices. Early attempts at best were approximations. In time the approximations became more accurate, higher in quality, and more integrated into the teaching-learning transactions. The point that I want to make here is that disciplined intentionality leads teacher leaders to certain desirable outcomes.

What may be an integral part of the teacher leader's growth in a given situation is in the company one keeps. I can think of no other single contributor than contributions of peers to my

own emergence and reach toward teacher leadership. What is more, teachers, like me, tend to thrive in collaboration with more capable peers.

The interaction teacher leaders have with peers can take place in a variety of ways. Generally, my experiences have been with interactions that were informal, formal, and technological. Each type or combination serves teachers as leaders very well. From my experiences, whatever type of interaction used, the context in which it is used ought to be considered. All forms of professional activities occur in the teacher leader's context.

In reflecting on my experience as a teacher leader in this newly implemented position of instructional leader, I had more questions than answers. What was my role on the team and in the school? How did my colleagues see the position of instructional leader? Do positions such as this improve student achievement? Do teachers feel represented by those who hold these positions? What practices of leadership allow for distribution of labor? How can our work fit with our particular school environment? Can teacher autonomy co-exist with collaboration in school reform?

Such questions prompted me to explore teacher leadership practice. This study is my attempt to explain teacher leadership practices by studying the work of teachers as leaders. I believe there are practices of teacher leadership that can form a theory grounded in data and may inform and strengthen teacher leadership practice.

Education reform and improvement in K-12 continue to be a national priority. Research within the past half century has brought to the forefront the brutal truth that American public education needs improvement (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The call for improvement includes the need for teachers to emerge from silence and isolation in their classrooms to be leaders to reform and improve K-12 education where it matters most – at the classroom level.

## A Call for Teacher Leadership

In the past decade, the discussion of teacher leadership has drawn considerable attention and is gaining legitimacy in education literature as well as in educational practice. A review of policy developments illuminates the call for teachers to lead. This section begins with a discussion of topics in current educational reform that have led to the conclusion a new paradigm is needed in the teaching profession. The second part considers challenges of teacher leadership. The third part discusses what is known about teacher leadership. This review is my attempt to place a call for teacher leadership in context.

### Topics in Current Education Reform

#### *Attracting and Retaining Teachers.*

In his book *Teachers Wanted*, Daniel A. Heller (2004) discusses challenges of attracting and retaining well-qualified teachers. A teacher shortage, predicted to worsen, is no longer an idle threat, but has become reality. He reports that 60 percent of current teachers are eligible to retire by 2010. An estimated 2.2 million teachers (over 200,000 new teachers on average annually) will be needed to meet U.S. schools' demands. Additionally, Heller (2004) points out while the number of teachers is decreasing, states are making entry into teaching increasingly difficult by using high-stakes testing for teachers and increasing standards of teacher certification.

If entry into the profession is not challenging enough, expectations that classroom teachers meet increasing demands to also be counselors, disciplinarians, curriculum writers, and advisors among other duties take a toll on new teachers and experienced teachers alike. However, new teachers are likely to leave education within the first five years, making teaching one of the professions with the highest attrition rates (Heller, 2004)

Heller (2004) purposes several models to address the areas of pre-service, induction, in-service, and retention. He suggests taking a long, critical look at teacher training, seek for them to work and remain in the field, and expect them to be true professionals. Educational leaders must take charge of the situation or it will take charge of us.

Although the issues of attracting and retaining quality teachers have varied over time, the perceived need to address the issues has not. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) investigated factors that affect teachers' decisions to switch schools or leave the profession. Factors investigated included salary, working conditions, alternative work opportunities, district hiring and retention practices, and student demographics. Hanushek and his colleagues (2004) concluded schools serving academically disadvantaged students have lower chance of retaining teachers. Teaching lower achieving students is a strong factor in teachers' decisions to leave schools. Salary bonuses for teachers in disadvantaged urban schools were considered, however, it appears to be unlikely to lessen high exit rates. What is more, rather than salaries as incentives, improving working conditions may be an alternative in schools where teacher turnover is high. A final point is focused on retention of quality teachers. Retention of teachers, generally speaking, implies quantity. When teacher turnover is high, then the likelihood of having higher proportions of inexperienced teachers in particular schools will be greater. Inexperienced teachers are on average lower performing. Kenushek et al. (2004) suggest that improvement in certain problem areas of schools such as student discipline, general safety issues, and poor leadership may reduce teacher turnover. Poor leadership implies the need for better leadership at all levels of the school, in addition to the principal.

Retaining and attracting quality teachers in "hard to staff" areas experience the most difficulty. However, teacher supply is not the central problem. Lowe (2006) addressed the high

turnover rate among teachers in small and rural schools. He argues the importance for rural schools to develop mechanisms for recruiting and keeping good teachers. Moreover, rural schools should consider recruiting and retaining teachers integral to a school program strategically aimed at attracting and retaining the best teachers possible. Recruitment of the best teachers is an on-going effort to enhance the number and quality of rural school teachers.

Attracting and retaining teachers remains an issue pressing to be addressed. Teacher attrition rate due to inadequate pre-service preparation, student discipline and violence, low supply of new teachers to replace retiring teachers or other factors is a major area of concern (Hanushek et al., 2004; Heller, 2004; Lowe, 2006)

#### *Recent Education Legislation.*

Another major area of concern is education legislation and how to meet its requirements. A significant act was No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001. Briefly described, the NCLB Act reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. NCLB included increased accountability for states, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students especially those attending low performing schools; more flexibility for states and local education agencies to use federal funds; and an emphasis on early reading (United States Department of Education [U.S.D.E.], n.d.).

#### *Accountability.*

Accountability by testing every child sets NCLB apart from earlier versions of the law (Guilfoyle, 2006). Standardized test results carry consequences for schools and districts that fail to have students who are proficient. Consequences imposed on schools not meeting student proficiency goals under NCLB include having to offer parents and students choice of public school or supplemental education services. If, for five consecutive years a school is deemed “in

need of improvement”, then schools risk restructuring or state take over. However, annual standardized tests have limits to assess student progress. Efforts to improve problems with the accountability structures include altering the way tests scores determine adequate yearly progress, exploring ways states track individual student progress, and offering supplemental education services before providing school choice the following year. Guilfoyle (2006) suggests using measures of student learning that emphasize standardized tests less and meaningful assessment data more at the school level. School level performance assessments measure student learning directly, as well as guide instruction and professional development. Thus, school level performance data empowers teachers to lead.

Assessing student learning to support each student’s success is a skill all teachers should have. Teachers are considered instructional leaders in their classroom because of skill. Darling-Hammond and Berry (2006) report students are less likely to succeed if not provided with skillful teachers who know subject area content and how to teach it. Skillful teachers are important for all students, but especially for students with high needs. Such skillful teachers are ensured by NCLB as requiring “highly qualified” teachers for every student. To be highly qualified, teachers of core academic subjects are expected to have at least a bachelor’s degree, state certification, and competency in the subject areas they teach. This requirement of NCLB indicates several good results such as many states reporting 90 percent of classes are taught by highly qualified teachers, emergency-permit teachers enrolling in organized education programs, administrators considering teacher assignments more purposefully, and improved efforts to recruit better teachers. However, there are some less positive outcomes. As for some states, up to 30 percent of teachers do not meet the “highly qualified” requirements, highly qualified regulatory definitions vary across states, and lack of federal support is creating obstacles.

Darling-Hammond and Barry (2006) argue for a stronger federal role in addressing the need for highly qualified teachers such as monetary incentives in the form of scholarships, forgivable loans, and better pay. They also suggest federal support for improved work conditions including manageable assignments, mentoring, professional development, and teacher empowerment. Finally, they call for federal policy created for a national labor market for teachers to help meet teacher supply and demand across states.

In "Transitioning from Teacher to Instructional Leader", Yost, Vogel, and Rosenberg (2009) examined teacher leader training and the effects it had on teaching performance and student achievement. This study was conducted from 2005 to 2007 in an urban middle school. The first year of implementation involved teacher peer coaching, joint lesson planning, and collaborative work groups. The second year focused on developing six teachers as teacher leaders. They were responsible for working with 42 fifth through eighth grade teachers in a school of about 1,150 students. Responsibilities included modeling lessons, planning lessons, and providing workshops aligned with a professional development plan created the year before. Data from pre- and post-questionnaire responses; and observation protocols were used at the beginning, middle, and end of year to indicate teacher growth over time. Student achievement data were collected from curriculum assessments and standardized test results. Comparisons of data were made with a like middle school. The teacher leader observations were noted on a checklist indicating if teaching behaviors occurred or not. These data were calculated into percentage scores of teacher competencies. From October to May, teacher growth indicated nearly 30% increase in use of teaching strategies. Student achievement indicated improvement on mid-year curriculum assessments and state standardized tests. Yost et al. (2009) concluded, "In this age of accountability, it is important that all schools search for ways to improve

instructional expertise" (p. 8). Teachers, as adult learners, need contextualized and personalized professional development. Teacher leaders need training and mentoring if they are to succeed in their roles.

All students deserve good teachers. Current reform efforts indicate American schools are headed toward attracting and retaining quality teachers. Furthermore, good teachers are being dispersed so more students have access to these teachers. Moreover, when teachers lead, teachers and students reap the benefits. (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; Guilfoyle, 2006; Yost et al., 2009).

*Highly qualified teachers.*

Highly qualified teachers in every classroom are but one aim of NCLB and current education reform. Another aim is focused on the results highly qualified teachers are having on student achievement as indicated by testing. Kati Haycock (2006) argues NCLB has provided a spotlight on academic performance of students at disadvantage. Academic performance of poor and minority students, English language learners, and students with disabilities has come into view and schools focus more attention on these students' education. Generally, improvement in student achievement in reading, writing, and math and narrowing of gaps between students at disadvantage and students who are well served by the education system were noted from the data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Improvement was indicated especially on state tests in elementary grades where most of NCLB resources are focused. The middle grades showed some improvement as well. However, by comparison to data from the elementary years, trends in the data from 2003-2005 indicate an overall decline or stagnation and gaps among groups widen in the middle grades and into high school. Kati Haycock (2006) concludes NCLB has focused on performance of all students and the United States is gaining on

inequities in public education. Further commitment is needed to help turn around low performing schools and to provide students at disadvantage their share of teaching talent.

While NCLB and public school reform promises to improve students' school performance and close achievement gaps, the efforts and results are not without criticism. By focusing on education as the means to resolve social and economic inequities, current school reform emphasizes standardizing curriculum and assessment. Standardized assessments question highly qualified teachers' ability to accurately assess student performance. Hursh (2007) argues in light of the emphasis of the law, NCLB undermines its intentions. The testing, accountability, and curricular aspects of NCLB have had certain consequences. Firstly, tests are developed and administered by each state independently, so the tests vary in quality, content, and rigor. Also, high-stakes testing has led to higher dropout rates for special populations. Secondly, accountability, according to adequate yearly progress (AYP) measures, implies schools are improving based on tests scores. Should a particular school's scores fall, but remain above the threshold, it meets AYP. If a school that is initially low on testing performance and remains low despite significant improvement on test scores means it does not meet AYP. In other words, AYP has less to do with improvement according to test scores and more to do with exceeding minimum thresholds. Lastly, the curriculum is narrowed and simplified when systems of testing and accountability are created. Teaching to the test with test-prep materials becomes prevalent while enrichment activities and non-tested subjects (i.e., arts, sciences) are reduced. Hursh (2007) maintains NCLB is a failed policy with regards to provision of assessment and accountability as a means to improving schools, education and achievement. Accordingly, the law implies teachers cannot be trusted assessing student learning.

Given insights on NCLB on student achievement, accountability, and educational equality, adversity abounds. Taking indicators of what seems to be working well and not so well, decisions for school reform may be better informed. The emphasis on testing has been on reading, writing, and math. Science was added in the 2007- 2008 school year. Popham, Keller, Moulding, Pellegrino, and Sandifer (2005) explored possibilities of constructing science tests required by NCLB that could be instructionally effective for teachers and not harmful to progress made in science instruction. Commentaries on testing issues such as the breadth of test content, specific domains of science, student attitude, utility of test data to teachers, and test item selection based on “carefully conducted educational research” were considered. Popham and his colleagues (2005) argue for realistic, cost effective, and meaningful assessments closely related to classroom learning as possible. Taking the caveats issued from commentators on large-scale accountability testing into serious consideration, Popham et al. (2005) maintain instructionally supportive accountability tests can be beneficial for science instruction. More importantly, classroom assessment will yield the most meaningful information. It is the responsibility of the assessment and science community to empower teachers with the capacity to accurately assess classroom learning.

Thus far the discussion has focused on issues in the context of current public school reform since the passage of NCLB in 2001. Generally, accountability, attracting and retaining quality teachers, and educational equity reform efforts rely on classroom teachers as a crucial variable in the school improvement equation. However, teachers are considered as leaders mostly in their classrooms rather than the school. Teaching is for teachers and leading is for administrators remains a notion in need of further investigation.

## Challenges of Teacher Leadership

### *Organizational Structures*

From the review of the literature, the teacher as leader factor remains bound more to classroom level work rather than school level work. The work of teacher leaders tends to function in traditional perspectives and models of leadership in school systems and schools. Traditionally, leadership is attributed to positions of authority. Administrators are perceived authorities where power flows “downward” to teachers. In this sense, educational leadership is defined in hierarchical and positional terms (Berlinger & Biddle, 1995). School systems and schools have yet to recognize teachers as leaders due in part to organizational structures that are decades old and remain intact. Additionally, leadership maintains its focus almost entirely on formal positions. In this view, leadership is related to assigned responsibility to principals and classroom leadership assigned to teachers (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002).

Teachers as leaders have indeed been acknowledged as leaders for quite some time; however, their leadership has been more strictly confined to instruction and student interaction rather than school-level change. Adherence to a hierarchical organizational structure maintains formal authority of teachers in their classrooms where, at best, it is considered the extent of their formal influence. As a result, teachers have been cast in minor roles in school reform initiatives, rather than influencing policy or restructuring schools or participating in decision making.

### *Defining Teacher Leadership.*

Teacher leadership may be essential to educational change, but what exactly teacher leadership means remains ambiguous (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Limited scholarship suggests that teacher leadership is a relatively new concept. Although teachers have been considered leaders within their classrooms, it has been in the recent quarter century the concept

of teachers as leaders beyond their classrooms has emerged. The scholarship on this concept has begun to burgeon and no well established body of literature has been established.

With consideration of the scholarship thus far, the concept of teacher leadership is enormously complex in practice (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2007) and is generally defined in several ways. In practice, teacher leadership is defined by reform movements such as NCLB or improvement of at-risk schools. Also, it can be defined by different groups such as teachers' unions, administrators, and professional education organizations. There are additional meanings among teachers. Some teachers see it as a means to affect change. Others see it as career advancement (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

*Revitalizing Public Education.*

Historically, schools are hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations. A resounding point of contention is the rhetoric for school reform and revitalization of the teaching profession. Revitalization stems from the observation that the existing administrative structure inhibits opportunities for teacher leadership because bureaucratic structures, in general, put teachers at the bottom and are obsolete (Rungling & Gover, 1991).

Bureaucracy is counterproductive to the work of educators within schools. It can undermine the authority of teachers as participants in a professional organization by top-down control. Furthermore, it is undermining in that teachers are held bound to their position in the hierarchy, discouraging taking on additional responsibilities. Also, inconsistency exists between the bureaucratic governance-management design for control and the democratic ideal for shared leadership. Given such controls on the organizational structure of education, revitalization of the teaching profession begins with improving schools for the adults who work in them (Smylie &

Hart, 1999) and restructuring schools around a democratic model (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

In efforts to revitalize schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the hierarchical bureaucratic structures must shift from a “power over” to a “power to” approach. A more decentralized and organic system focused on capacity building (Crowther et al., 2002) is forming new perspectives for school organization and management.

A new model for school management reconceptualizes schools informed by the needs of society. A new model with shared leadership and the ethic of collaboration promises to revitalize the teaching profession (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) and offers a reorientation for schools to be transformed from bureaucratic control to professional empowerment. The notion of change from principal as manager to principal as facilitator and from teacher as worker to teacher as leader (Beck & Murphy, 1993) puts a premium on the development of human resources, purpose, and values (Sergiovanni, 1990).

### *Problem Statement*

In their book *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, Tyack and Cuban (1995) provide a historical view of the past one hundred years of school reform in America. They discuss how public school reform can improve schools and society. They argue that tensions between intense faith in American education and the gradual change in education practices have spurred much debate as to how to improve the young through education. Faith in education has helped in creating the most comprehensive system of public schooling in the world; however, disillusionment with education as the panacea has led to blaming schools for not solving problems beyond their reach. Tyack and Cuban (1995) speak of reforms as planned efforts to change schools to correct perceived social and educational problems. Change, accordingly, may not be synonymous with

progress. When reform aims to change or eradicate social injustices such as violence, discrimination, and achievement gaps, an appropriate period for evaluation may be a generation or more. What is more, educational reforms are intrinsically political. The institutional character of schools can influence whether a specific reform would be implemented, and how teachers and the public would value the reform effort. Tyack and Cuban (1995) offer a social historical perspective of school reform to affect change with teachers as key actors.

Burch (2007) examined tensions that competing policy models create in improving schools within high poverty communities. She found that policy evaluation indicates district level administrators favored competition among schools and accurate and complete information as shown by the high value for data and the role of competition for motivating change. Also, district-level administrators reported relying on commercially produced instructional materials to assist with instructional reform. Collaboration with other schools was also valued. By comparison to district-level administrators, school-level administrators valued collaboration and professional dialogue over data collection. Further, school-level administrators and classroom teachers were similar in how they described their work with instructional reform. Both made reference to the risks of reliance on test data and the importance of collaboration among teachers and students. The results of reform efforts tend to be highly dependent on the context of decisions and the relationships district- and school-level administrators have with teachers (Burch, 2007). Classroom teachers appear to be the source of instructional leadership. What is more, during policy implementation principals sought to expand leadership by leveraging teacher expertise.

The teacher's role becomes key in educational change through the delivery of instruction. Whittle (2006) scrutinizes K-12 education in America claiming that student test scores reported

on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate below basic levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy at all grade levels. In light of NAEP data over three decades, he challenges educators by raising the question of how schools can continue to educate students today as they have decades ago. He suggests that schools remain impervious to change due to lack of outrage to the low performance of American education maintaining the status quo, and the lost belief of educators in what our schools could be. Whittle (2006) contends that teachers ought to be compensated for innovative curriculum re-design, professionalized pedagogy, and development of more powerful school design.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has been called the largest and most publicized initiative to improve teaching in American education. Boyde and Reese (2006) examined the effect of the NBPTS on improving American public education. They report on the impact that NBPTS has had on improving American public education. According to Boyde and Reese (2006), NBPTS has shown change in the profession of teaching by setting and gaining acceptance of high standards. NBPTS requires appraisal of both teaching and resulting learning. More attention is needed on increasing the cost effectiveness and the multiplier effect of board certified teachers (BCT) as leaders and exemplars. Boyde and Reese (2006) contend that NBPTS can provide teachers, who achieve higher standards, leverage as teacher leaders. Furthermore, the potential for National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) to share their expertise may be key for reforming education, improving teaching, and providing educational leadership.

John G. Gabriel (2005) explains in his professional practice book *How to Thrive as a Teacher Leader* that there seems to be an apparent need for teacher leaders, however, there is very little written by teacher leaders. His work was grounded in his experience as a high school

teacher, department chair, and administrator. Based on his experience, Gabriel (2005) suggests the charge to the teacher leader be categorized into four broad areas: (a) influencing school culture, (b) building and maintaining a successful team, (c) equipping other potential teacher leaders, and (d) enhancing or improving student achievement. Gabriel (2005) offers suggestions and techniques that could be beneficial to teacher leaders or those aspiring to leadership roles.

Administrators can encourage and support teacher leadership and reveal effective motivators for teachers to be leaders in their schools. What encourages and what discourages teachers to be leaders? Birky et al. (2006) found that administrators encouraged teacher leadership activities through such practices as valuing and respecting the person, the time and effort and the role of teacher leaders; embracing change, experimentation, and risk taking by teachers; and involving faculty members in decision making. By contrast to what administrators did to encourage teacher leadership, the following practices did more to discourage leadership initiatives such as withholding, controlling, or limiting power from teachers, placing teachers in isolation rather than in collaboration, and micromanaging details of work instead of providing and supporting greater outcomes. The relationship between administrators and teacher leaders is a key in a school reform environment according to Birky and her colleagues (2006).

Little (2003) examined how teacher leadership comes to be conceived, invoked, and enacted by teachers under policy and reform conditions. She sought to understand how teacher leadership roles were characterized by policy makers, administrators, and teachers themselves at different policy and reform periods. Secondly, she wanted to understand how teacher leadership, be it in formal positions or in more distributed and informal ways, empowers teachers to take on professional issues of practice and student learning. The roles for teacher leadership shift according to policy and reform agenda. Further, teacher leadership in some cases can be defined

as a division of managerial labor. Little (2003) suggests teacher leadership can be defined by historical context. The condition of a particular policy or reform effort seems to influence the role of the teacher as leader.

Emergence of teacher leadership in Professional Development Schools (PDS) cultivates more widespread and equalitarian forms of teacher leadership. PDSs provide professional development to pre-service and in-service teachers, promote inquiry for knowledge of schooling, and provide exemplary education for a segment of P-12 education (Clark, 1999). Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995) studied how teacher leadership roles in PDSs challenge the hierarchical and positional practices commonly held in schools. Furthermore, PDSs can offer organic forms of professional leadership that develop intrinsically in connection with systemic organizational change within a school. Also, PDSs have shown to develop a climate where leadership opportunities are widely available within a new definition of the professional role that focuses on responsibility for finding ways to succeed with students. PDSs provide support for teacher leadership not by formal title, but by restructured time and relationships empowering teachers to take on leadership tasks such as curriculum development, mentoring, and other leadership functions in which they are ready to engage. Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) suggest that to be a teacher leader may not require an official title or position. The potential for teacher leadership can be largely fostered by the context in which leadership roles are practiced specifically in PDSs.

Public education in America has been continuously researched and debated. Over time K-12 education has experienced many reform efforts as a result. Implementation of change has attempted to improve contemporary education through such endeavors as national and local policy formulation; school, curriculum, and instructional redesign; and standards-based

credentialing. Although reform and change have taken different routes, the one common factor determining the success of a new policy or practice is the role of teachers (Boyd & Reese, 2006; Burch, 2007; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Whittle, 2006). The role of teachers in implementing change comes to forefront. Educational reform seems to be reliant on the role of teachers as leaders. In the research, the roles of teacher leaders appears as key to improvement of K-12 education in America. The literature suggests teacher leadership roles can improve school culture by exerting influence on colleagues and improving student achievement, collaborating with administrators, and addressing current issues in their particular area of influence (Birky, V. D., Shelton, M., & Headley, S., 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Gabriel, 2005; Little, 2003). The need for teacher leader roles remains an important element in reforming and improving America's schools.

Although teacher leadership continues to be studied and described, little is known about the development of teachers as leaders in their complex, contextualized roles. Perhaps if the development of teacher leadership was better understood by identifying universally guiding principles of practice, then stakeholders in public school reform could empower its most valuable and influential actor – the classroom teacher.

#### Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purposes of this study are to explore teacher leadership in Denver area K-6 public education and to identify the principles of effective teacher leadership and the barriers that inhibit teacher leader participation in public school reform efforts.

The grand tour (Spradley, 1980) research question to be addressed in this study is:  
What is the theory that explains teacher leadership in Denver area K-6 public education as a defined community of practice?

### *Research Questions*

1. What are the defining characteristics of teacher leaders?
2. How do teachers K-6 develop to be leaders while in the teaching ranks?
3. What are the distinguishing qualities of teacher leaders?
4. What practices allow for the emergence of teacher leaders?
5. How can teacher leaders contribute to reform, revitalization, and renewal of public education?
6. What distinctions in teacher leadership are there between what exists and what is needed?
7. What are the universal guiding principles that teacher leaders exhibit in leadership practice?
8. How do teachers become full participants in public education as community of practice?

### *Definition of Terms.*

The following working definitions are the basis for understanding how these terms are used in this study. A **leader** is a person who, by word and/or personal example, markedly influences the behaviors, thoughts, and/or feelings of significant number of their fellow human beings. This definition was provided by Howard Gardener (1995) from his book *Leading Minds*. **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 (Crowther et al., 2002). **Practice** means a professional act that is carried on in a customary or habitual manner. **Principles** are generalizations that can be related across situations reliably. “**Community of practice** is a set of relations among persons, activities, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98).

## Study Limitations

This study was limited to Jefferson County School District R-1 and elementary schools within the school district. The participants were elementary teachers who had full-time teaching responsibilities and had leadership responsibilities. The teacher leaders who participated in this study were identified and recommended by their principals to participate.

A list of twenty Jefferson County School District elementary schools was utilized to identify potential elementary schools and contact information for the principals of the schools. The principals of the three participating schools agreed to grant me access to teacher leaders at their school. Three elementary schools were identified to participate. Participation was decided by the principals of the schools. One teacher leader from each of the elementary schools identified by their principal participated in the study. The three teacher leaders who participated in this study were white females who taught full-time and had leadership roles in elementary K-6 public education.

## CHAPTER 2: THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this review of the literature is to describe the position, practice, and context of the teacher leader. The work of the teacher leader has been often noted in the research as a dynamic role involving sharing leadership and shaped by the context of the teacher leader's work (Leiberman, 1988). The first section of this chapter is a review of the research on the complex role of a teacher leader K-6 public education context. The second section is a review of the literature on sharing leadership with teachers in relation to organizational behavior and teacher leadership practice. The third section is on sociocultural learning in context of the teacher leader's work in a defined community of practice.

Sources for this review of the literature were obtained from the topics of complexity theory, organizational systems theory, distributed leadership, sociocultural learning theory, social justice, situated learning theory, and documents from the U.S. Department of Education.

### *Background.*

Tyack and Cuban (1995) explain that periodically widespread and intense concern for public education amasses so it becomes a national issue, highlighted in the media, debated by politicians, and creating reform advocates. These concerns and events are referred to as reform periods. Typically, some major change triggers a period of reform. Generally, reform periods can be categorized in two ways. The first is domestic. Historically, domestic concerns have centered on issues such as immigration, poverty, civil rights, or changes in work force education. The second is international concerns such as national competition, war, or global economics.

Since the 1980s, there have been two major reform periods or waves. The first wave of educational reform occurred during the Reagan administration when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report titled a *Nation at Risk* (National Commission on

Excellence in Education, 1983). The report has been a landmark event that touched off a wave of federal, state, and local reform efforts. This publication, as implied by the title, suggested that American education was failing the nation due to mediocrity, which in turn leads to national underachievement. The report made several recommendations including content standards and expectations, time, teaching, leadership, and fiscal support.

The effects on teaching were widely experienced; however, the intended results from this report were not realized. Some reasons for the mandate coming up short include criticisms that legislated learning would not have an effect on the quality of schooling, centralized regulation would not allow teachers to respond to the diverse needs of students, and bureaucratization of schools emphasizes control rather than learning (McCloskey, Porvenzo, M. Cohen, & Kottkamp, 1975; McNeil, 1986; Wise, 1979).

The message that was once told regarding the achievement among poor and minority students that neighborhood conditions prevail and schools make little difference is now a myth that has been busted. Kati Haycock (1998) argues that the evidence from large-scale studies provide convincing proof that what is done in education matters. Teachers really do make a difference. The effectiveness of teachers can be clearly seen when the ‘least effective teachers’ are compared to the ‘most effective teachers’ after students have spent one year in their charge. Haycock (1998) explains that on average the least effective teachers produce gains of about 14 percentile points. Whereas, the most effective teachers produce gains of about 53 percentile points on overall achievement as measured by state assessments.

The second wave of school reform began in 2001 with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA). According to Great Expectations, a report from the U.S. Department of Education (United States Department of Education [U.S.D.E.], 2009), a major purpose of the

NCLBA is to close achievement gaps of several categories of historically underserved students – minority, low income, limited English proficient, and disabilities. Accordingly, three other major parts of the Act aim to accomplish the above purpose. The first is testing every child to identify relative strengths and weaknesses in achievement. The second is school accountability through annual testing, proven instructional methods, parental choices and options, and flexibility for states and schools to fund school improvement that show results in testing. The third is a highly qualified teacher in every classroom (USDE, 2009). A highly qualified teacher is one concept; however, a highly effective teacher is yet another.

The improvement of K-12 students' academic achievement has long been the focal point for educators in the United States. Over time many innovations for improving academic achievement have been tried and tested (Tyack & Cuban, 2004). Marzano (2006) states that not even the best educational innovations, such as time in school, decreased teacher-student ratio, or increased use of technology has shown to impact student achievement like the most intuitive variable in education – the effective classroom teacher. Many of these innovations have been valuable, yet none have proven to be as valuable as the classroom teacher.

*The complex role of a teacher leader K-12 in public education context.*

Wheatley (1999) explains in her book *Leadership and the New Science* work in the new science has just begun discovering and inventing new organizational form fit for the twenty-first century. To be responsible inventors and discoverers, courage is needed to let go of the old world, of what has been cherished, and of what has and has not worked. She questions whether machine imagery of seventeenth century scholars adequately explains how the world works. The machine imagery maintains analysis of the parts is the key to understanding the whole as it has been applied in business, education, medicine, and other fields. The new science

suggests a different view by focusing on the key principle of holism rather than parts. Whole systems are understood by giving attention to the network of relationships within a system. This perspective suggests viewing the system not in isolated parts, but to sense the dynamic processes, which take form in organizational behavior.

The complex problems seen in K-12 public education are steeped in paradoxes and dilemmas. Leaders are often expected to solve problems with simple, one-sided, and once-and-for-all solutions. Instead of seeking leaders as saviors, the calling ought to be for leadership that can present problems squarely before those who can take up the challenge to find solutions that require learning new ways. Fullan (2001) asserts “Leadership, then, is not about mobilizing others to solve problems we already know how to solve, but to help them to confront problems that have never yet been successfully addressed” (p. 3).

*Hierarchical system of k-12 education.*

The history of American education clearly traces the development of the current bureaucratization of the education system. According to Berlinger and Biddle (1995) the influence the industrial age has had on the establishment of the hierarchy of the school system remains currently. They provide an illustration (p. 252) of a hierarchy of a typical large school district, showing how it is modeled after the industrial models prevalent in the mid to late nineteenth century. A typical school district is characterized by a hierarchy with a superintendent at the top from where directives flow down to the bottom of the organization. Positions for administrators, coordinators, and teachers are clearly defined. Levels of attainment demonstrating students’ progress from one level to the next are established system wide. Graded courses of study assure uniformity of instruction and an importance for planning, order, and regularity are prevalent.

Forster (1997) explores through a synthesis of definitional issues and discusses implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education related to the complexity of teacher leadership. She argues teacher leadership is lacking common definitions and concepts necessary for clarity. In an attempt for clarity, defining and re-defining terms often creates confusion. Developments in concepts lack context providing the big picture, interrelationships among concepts, and the scope of educational goals and initiatives. Teacher leadership needs to be viewed as threefold process to: (a) facilitate change and improvement, (b) develop professional commitment, and (c) transform education bureaucracy to learning communities. To do so, the first step would be to instill and support teacher leadership as a fundamental function of teaching. When teachers function in the context of a learning community, they lead in supportive and productive environments for themselves and students. Additionally, collaboration in professional development is the key to further teacher competencies for school improvement. Accordingly, Forster (1997) concludes the right and responsibility for teachers to lead must be supported in the complex context of education including teacher education institutions, teacher in-service professional development providers, and collaboration between higher education and K-12 school systems. Leadership is inherent in teaching and commitment to lead begins in pre-service and ought to be reinforced thereafter.

*Relationships among professional networks.*

Knowing the structure of the bureaucratic system is the first principle. Knowing the relationship among the roles and titles is the second principle. One can no longer ignore the complexity of relationships in leadership effectiveness. More and more is concluded on partnership, followership, networks, and the role of context (Wheatley, 1999).

An essential dimension of teacher leadership is teacher leaders have influence through their relationships. They have a power base for authority that allows them to influence others. Fowler (2004) argues, “Power permeates the education system.” (p 41) Power is differentiated for each role in the hierarchy, but any particular person can extend the power of his or her role through special effort. According to Fowler (2004), teachers have the powers of economic dominance and legal authority as granted to them by the school district system. Should they choose, teachers can build their power several ways such as establishing competent authority, participating in professional organizations, and/or making a convincing presentation within their circle of influence.

Another type of power that can be obtained is the power of building networks. Fragmentation and isolation common in education means teacher-leaders must establish and maintain networks of relationships within their professional field. They can determine the level of participation in professional forums within which they choose to be affiliated ranging from reading scholarly journals, to attending conferences, to presenting at events, to assuming formal leadership roles in the organization (Fowler, 2004).

In their study, Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992) presented findings from an exploratory study of the development of working relationships between teacher leaders and their principals. This study was conducted in a Midwestern suburban K-8 school district of about 230 teachers and 3,100 students. The teacher leader positions were created over a multi-year period beginning in 1986 as a district wide initiative. A micropolitical perspective was used to investigate strategies the individuals and groups in organizational contexts used to influence others and further their interests. Key to micropolitics is interpersonal and strategic transactions among individuals and groups without formal operating procedures. The sample consisted of

seven pairs of teacher leaders and their principals. Data were collected through 60- to 90-minute semi-structured, recorded interviews of the teacher leaders separately from their principals. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Several factors related to the development of working relationships between teacher leaders and principals included ambiguities and uncertainties, interests and prerogatives, expectations, obligations, strategic interaction, and key events. Smylie and his colleague (1992) identified and described these factors in light of a micropolitical perspective to show how a working relationship between teacher leaders and principals evolves. They concluded that a development of new working relationships may involve a progression from self-interest and an interpersonal dimension to a collaborative, task-oriented relationship. Teachers and principals may have to resolve interpersonal issues first, then establish trust and effective communication so new roles and working relationships gain full potential.

Nascent research suggests that teacher leadership roles are dependent on supportive relationships from principals. Mangin (2007) conducted an exploratory, comparative case study of conditions that lead elementary principals to support school-based instructional leaders. Data were collected from 2003-2004 from five school districts and included interviews with 15 elementary school principals, 12 math teacher leaders, and six district-level supervisors from New Jersey schools. Interview data were analyzed with computer software, memoing, coding, and then triangulated for accuracy. Analysis of data revealed several themes related to principals support of teacher leaders including district and school contexts, principals' introduction to teacher leadership, knowledge of the position, support strategies, interaction with teacher leaders, and constraints to interaction. Mangin (2007) found a link between principals' knowledge of teacher leader roles and interaction with teacher leaders to support. Looking across cases, there

is a clear link between the principals' level of knowledge, interaction, and support. Greater knowledge and interaction resulted in greater support, less knowledge and interaction resulted in lack of support. Increasing principal knowledge and purposes of teacher leadership can promote principals' relationship to the role.

Recent investigations of leadership activities in schools include leadership activities of teachers that influence other teachers' instructional practice. Supovitz, Sirinides, and Henry May (2010) examined the effects of principal leadership and peer teacher influence on teachers' instructional practice and student learning. Data were collected from 2006 to 2007 from a midsized urban district in southeastern United States. Teacher survey data came from a district administered survey. Student achievement data were collected and linked by student identifier to teachers using a teacher identifier. The number of participants included 11,397 students and 721 teachers from grades 2 through 8. A multilevel structural equation model was used to examine the structural relationships between student learning and theorized dimensions of principal leadership, teacher peer influence, and changes in teachers' instructional practice. Supovitz et al. (2010) found principal leadership influences student learning indirectly through teachers' instructional practice. Moreover, a major finding from this study was the strong and significant impacts teacher peer influence has on instructional practice. Empirical evidence suggests teachers' leadership influences classroom practices of teachers that contribute to student learning outcomes.

When relationships are valued and leadership is supported at all levels of public education, professional culture changes. Teachers overcome barriers and commit to collaboration, problem solving, and planning together. Mongiello, Brady, Johnson, and Harrison (2009) illustrate how one school district in central Massachusetts faced its challenges by

developing teacher leaders who could facilitate their colleagues in forming learning communities. When the district began its initiative, the district-level leadership team recognized existing assets that would support their efforts such as high school department heads, middle school curriculum leaders, and elementary curriculum coordinators. Teacher leaders were either recruited, emerged from current leadership positions, or expressed interest in leadership work as classroom teachers. The leadership team established collaborative relationships among faculty at each school by developing shared language and a school calendar conducive to their work. Administrators' roles required a shift in how instructional leadership is distributed. Networks across the district were formed by horizontal teaming to assess what students need to know, understand, and do. Within schools, vertical teaming provided perspective on instructional content and alignment. Including parents was also key. In light of the fact that the school calendar changed meant a longer school year to accommodate professional learning days. Parents needed to understand the benefits so they could be supportive of improved instruction, focused curriculum, and assessment of instructional practice. Mongiello, et al. (2009) concludes that the relationships among the stakeholders was key to establishing self-sustaining professional learning, drawing upon internal expertise and resources to meet professional learning needs, developing a core elementary program across schools, and redefining what it means to be a colleague.

Although schools can expect many benefits for teachers working together, teacher teaming needs to be more than collaborative. Teacher teams also need to be effective. Troen and Boles (2010) argue collaboration is not synonymous with effective teaming and teams often lack tools and resources to help them be successful. Working with teacher teams in one K-8 school, teams were introduced to practices for improving student learning, enhancing inclusion

strategies, initiating new teachers, and developing peer coaching relationships. Team work was guided by a framework for improving teaching and learning that included: a) task focus, b) leadership, c) structures and processes, d) collaborative climate and e) personal accountability. Troen and Boles (2010) found that by the end of the school year teachers were able to assess their own and their team's progress and set team goals. Also, the framework had potential to provide tangible improvements in teaching practice and student achievement, making teaming effective.

*Essential diversity.*

Although most forums and arenas that teacher-leaders choose to participate in convene like-minded individuals, diversity within the network is to be expected. A third principle in complexity theory is diversity, a necessary element in the co-creation of nature (Wheatley, (1999). It is probable that the principle not only applies to nature but to human life and organizations. Fullan (2001) suggests that leaders be relationship builders with diverse people and groups. He explains that successful organizations seek diversity among employees. The teacher-leader's experience deals with this characteristic when working with others within their networks.

Leading in a culture of diversity presents unique challenges. Timpson, Canetto, Borrayo, and Yang (2003) explore in their book, *Teaching Diversity*, the challenges of teaching and learning which involve critical analyses of various dimensions of diversity such as age, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and physical disabilities, as well as learning/teaching styles, personality, and development. The mosaic of factors constitutes the classroom environment. Timpson et al. (2003) maintain, "We believe that diversity content is an essential foundation for

discussion and, by extension, to a complete education for our students and to their personal and professional competence” (p. 10).

A case study of the Colorado Partnership for Educational Renewal’s (CoPER) initiative known as the Equity Cadre documented how the Equity Cadre functioned to learn how participants benefited from the efforts of the Cadre (Rodriguez, Mantle-Bromley, Bailey, & Paccione, 2003). The Cadre began as a group of seven teachers as leaders experienced at working with students from a variety of linguistic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. The Cadre grew to include 40 teacher leaders K-12 from 16 member districts of CoPER. Data were collected from CoPER’s governing board and directors, participants of the Cadre, and the Cadre’s facilitator. Focus groups, individual interviews, field notes, and observations were conducted to collect data. Data were analyzed for emergent themes then triangulated using multiple data sources for accuracy. To begin, the Cadre’s work was designed to provide a resource for school districts and teachers to receive support from the Cadre member to become responsive to the needs of underserved students. Additional findings identified member benefits to included personal support such as collegiality and trust among Cadre members. Personal renewal and professional growth were noted from camaraderie and shared learning. Recognition and respect were a third benefit identified by being explicitly valued by administrators and colleagues. What is more, benefits were reported to include participant schools, school districts, and partner teacher preparation programs. Cadre member efforts included leading discussion and study groups, supervising teacher candidates, mentoring and assisting other teachers, serving on panels, and other initiatives. Rodriguez et al. (2003) maintain the Equity Cadre is benefiting teachers who are committed to equity in K-12 education and it is common for classrooms and school systems to be resistant to change.

If change for underserved students is to occur, teachers who are committed to issues of equity must become active leaders in their schools. In order to do this, these teachers must be supported in their development of leadership skills. The Colorado Partnership for Educational Renewal has created a vehicle—the Equity Cadre—that recognizes potential leaders and supports them as they gain the skills and confidence to work with others to bring about long-needed changes (Rodriguez et al., 2003, p. 229).

School improvement focuses on student achievement, learning, and accountability.

Additionally, focus must include facilitating teachers as social justice workers committed to citizenship, ethics, and diversity. Mullan and Jones (2008) investigated processes and collaborative structures that facilitated leadership, including related teacher roles and selection. What does teacher leadership look like in high-performing elementary schools and how are capacity-building cultures built? A multi-site case study was used to elicit processes principals have developed for teacher leadership roles within their schools and to discern various leadership roles teachers filled. Survey, interview, and focus group data were collected from three high-performing, urban, public elementary schools in central Florida. Data were coded, compared, and triangulated from the three sources. Mullan and Jones (2008) found school leaders and administrative team participants provided teacher leadership opportunities primarily by forming school committees. School leaders and teachers understood the roles they played in the overall success of their schools. Administrators and teachers perceived leadership differently. Principals characterized leadership roles as non-paid. Teachers associated leadership roles with paid positions. Support systems that enable the development of teachers as leaders focus on values and commitments, tone and style of principals' a) creation of leadership opportunities, b) solicitation of teacher input, and c) modeling communication and accessibility while setting high expectations for performance. Teachers in this study reported they want to work with principals who listen, are supportive, and trust in what teachers say and do. Through their actions,

principals and administrative teams succeeded in empowering teachers through shared decision making and built capacity for teacher leadership through on-going professional development. The principal's leadership style, school-based leadership opportunities, and professional learning were all inextricably linked to preparation of teachers as leaders.

*Motivation to lead.*

Motivation, the next principle, is hard to define, yet it is self-evident in those who possess it. A culture of complexity and change requires teachers to be fully aware of what incentives are motivating for both the teacher leader and his or her colleagues (Wasley, 1991). Complexity brings ambiguity and ambiguity can cause a person to feel lost and wallow in uncertainty. As a result, frustration sets in and motivation diminishes. In a climate of complexity, the teacher leader must be prepared to connect work with core values of the school and/or school system. The values are what give a person meaning in work and in life (Wheatley, 1994). Meaning will instill a deep purpose and ultimately one arrives at a higher level of motivation (Gardner, 1990; Senge, 1994; Wheatley, 1999).

In view of the literature on teacher leadership, it is clearly noted collaboration with other educators is one of the most meaningful incentives to participate in leadership (Gabriel, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent, & Richert, 1996; McLaughlin & Yee, 1988; Wasley, 1991).

The depth and breadth of what motivates teachers to lead varies across cases. Wasley (1991) found for teachers with whom she worked meaningful incentives to lead included improved teacher-student relationships, collaboration with other educators, and autonomy in their work. However, incentives and disincentives (see table 2.1) must be considered for both those who lead and those who are led.

Table 2.1

*Incentives and Disincentives for teacher leadership*

For Self	For Others
Incentives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve student performance</li> <li>• Collaboration with other teachers</li>   <li>• Autonomy in leading</li> <li>• Flexible schedule</li> <li>• Support from principal</li>   <li>• Observe others teach</li> <li>• Sharing, struggling, and celebrating together</li> <li>• Career ladder</li> <li>• Performance pay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater student productivity</li> <li>• Collaboration with like minded teachers</li>   <li>• Opportunity to participate with leaders</li>   <li>• Opportunity to share with adults</li>   <li>• Delegation of administrative duties</li> </ul>
Disincentives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time constraints to meet demands</li> <li>• Collaboration/Isolation paradox</li>   <li>• Teacher resistance</li> <li>• Lack of administrative support</li>   <li>• Pigeon hole in hierarchical system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gave up their own time</li> <li>• Worked in isolation at their own school</li>   <li>• Lacked support from administration</li> <li>• Feelings of coercion</li> <li>• Conflicts of beliefs and interests</li> <li>• Limited effect on instruction</li> <li>• Exclusion from opportunities</li> <li>• Time/schedule conflicts</li> <li>• Defined roles in hierarchy</li> </ul>

Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (1997) investigated the commonalities and differences in teacher leadership at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Eighteen teacher leaders from Northern California were selected by survey of their peers. Using case study methodology, six teacher leaders from each school level were studied to compare teacher leadership characteristics, motivations, supports, and practices with data collected from surveys, interviews,

focus groups, observations, and documents. Triangulation by three research colleagues assisted validation of conclusions. Teacher leadership was defined as supportive to other teachers, catalysts to teacher learning, and involvement in decision making. Findings suggest teacher leaders tend to be more experienced, have more formal education, and teach full- or part-time while fulfilling leadership roles. Additionally, teacher leaders engage in activities that helped to build trust and rapport among colleagues, examine organizational context, develop skills and confidence in others, and work for change.

Furthermore, teacher leadership positions were generally designed by district or site administration. Selection of teacher leaders varied by request, election, invitation, volunteering, or negotiation of school law or guidelines. Moreover, reasons for teachers to lead included personal interests such as intrinsic satisfaction, personal benefits, and motivation. Professional reasons included improving teaching, collaboration/collegiality, broadening one's view, and professional growth. Stone and her colleagues (1997) maintain that designation of teacher leadership roles and selection of leaders involves many factors. Likewise, motivation to lead involves many professional factors broadly explained as personal, intrinsic motivation.

#### *Autonomy.*

The principle of freedom is another drawn from complexity theory. "This world insists that we develop a different understanding of autonomy and self-determination, moving far from the command-and-control approaches of the past" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 166). What is more, autonomy results in support of all members in the system. Members are free to do what is meaningful to them. Thus, autonomy and participation generates motivation.

Empowering responsibilities are the autonomy in decision making. Autonomy may be a teacher leader's most beneficial professional provision. For teacher leaders, autonomy in

deciding what instructional strategies to use was informed by theory coupled with practical experience. Autonomy is extended to teachers with regard to instruction and program development. Teachers are provided latitude in the how and what of teaching. Autonomy takes form in professional respect from trust that teachers are fully prepared to teach in their respective subject areas. Choice of instructional approach is empowering so that teachers can use their judgment to maximize student achievement. Another empowering responsibility is the freedom to experiment with instructional strategies. Teacher leaders gain confidence in their practices when they take risks and experiment with new or different teaching behaviors. Freedom to try new things allows a teacher to press the limits of one's expertise. A third one is to take opportunities for further learning in their fields. Self-direction for on-going learning in individual areas of expertise is the obligation of the teacher leader (Blase & Blase, 2004). Autonomy provides a means for teachers to do their best and to encourage innovation.

Autonomy may be a means; however, it is not an end. Michael Fullan (2001) offers a caveat about the good and bad nature of autonomy in education. On one hand, autonomy can be observed as isolation fortifying individualism and conservatism. This can contribute to a teacher's perception of disconnection with the professional community and lack of efficacy. In contrast, professional autonomy provides an allowance to try, to risk, and to practice so that one can contribute to the professional community. Thus, autonomy and participation in a learning community can be mutually reinforcing.

Wyman (2001) reports on how the school culture and the teachers' working conditions factor into attracting and retaining good teachers. School and teacher leadership are one factor that has been shown to improve teachers' satisfaction in their working conditions. The right combination of administrative leadership and support and teacher autonomy provides an

atmosphere for teacher satisfaction. Teachers, in general, want to increase their participation in decision making and their autonomy in instructional practices. Improving leadership at the school level for both principals and teachers improves teacher satisfaction.

Teachers as leaders is built on the belief that teachers have a particular view of teaching that positions them to be logical leaders of changed practice. However, autonomy and egalitarianism remain favorable among teachers. Mengin (2005) examined how teacher leaders negotiated access to classrooms and encouraged instructional change. Using a comparative case study methodology, 12 elementary-level teacher leaders on full-time leave from teaching responsibilities used their role to assist colleagues with instructional improvement. Participants were purposefully sampled from districts based on existence of formal teacher leadership roles at the elementary level and with low-socioeconomic status. Data were collected from interviews and observations. A cross-case analysis compared experiences of teacher leaders using data matrices, memorandums, and contact summary sheets. Data were triangulated with the interviews. Teacher leaders use three strategies in combination to maximize access to classrooms (Mengin, 2005). Developing relationships, engaging in non-threatening leadership, and targeting subsets of teachers were perceived as strategies effective for gaining access to classrooms and teachers. Furthermore, administrator functions of setting expectations for faculty, supporting instructional change, and offering guidance were useful for teacher leaders to perform their leadership roles. When teacher leaders in formalized support roles provide teachers with context specific, instructionally focused, collaborative professional development, this form of professional development offers potential benefits to improved instructional practice. However, school culture predicated on autonomy and egalitarianism may diminish the benefits of peer leadership roles.

At heart of teacher leadership is the potential to improve instructional practice and student achievement. Teacher leadership can be evident in many forms such as shared decision making, committees, and roles across grade levels and subject areas in K- 8 schools. Teacher leadership offers opportunities for teachers to reinvent their work by shifting from their traditional roles and responsibilities and reflecting an image of themselves as leaders. Regardless of position, age, or years of experience, teachers are willing to take the challenge of leading. “Conditions of trust and respect continue to grow . . ., which strives to provide a learning environment in which teachers embrace leadership responsibilities centering on curriculum and instruction – trusting that they have the freedom to do what is best for students” (Olivier & Hipp, 2006, p. 512).

*Participation.*

Complexity theory suggests life systems are dependent on participation. “All life participates actively with its environment in the process of co-adaptation and co-evolution” (Wheatley, 2001, p. 163). Participation serves as another guiding principle. The professional life of a teacher co-exists with other educators in a professional community. Teachers thrive when they participate in the creation of their world of work.

Teachers can emerge as leaders when they seek and find ways to extend their capacity in the classroom to other roles (Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent & Richert, 1996). In so doing, participation in collegial relationships becomes valuable opportunities to overcome the barriers created by organizational structures. Intentional participation in school related matters serves a deeper purpose for teachers to lead and participating in school matters forms new images of leadership. Collegial relationships thrive in a culture with mutual respect for values and purposes. Conversely, teacher leadership is not possible in rigid authoritarian, hierarchical

structures. Changes in our view of systems are creating opportunities for teachers to lead as change agents (Lambert et al., 1996).

A principal's ability to communicate desired instructional practice and to support teachers to improve their instruction has been associated with student achievement. Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, and Garnier (2009) investigated the relationship between principals' values in leadership and teachers' participation in a new literacy coaching program. Interview data were collected from principals and coaches and survey data were collected from teachers in 29 elementary schools. Coach and principal data were transcribed, coded, and organized into categories of support. Teacher surveys were analyzed for teacher participation with coaching activities and correlation coefficients were investigated the relationship between teacher participation with coaches and each category of principal support. Also, correlations coefficients were computed to investigate the association between teachers' participation in coaching activities and the congruence with principals' values of the coaching program. Sartoris, et al. (2009) found significant correlations between principal support and teachers participating in conferring with the coach in grade-level teams and being observed by the coach. Principals' values in leadership during a reform effort were associated with high teacher participation and engagement with literacy coaches. Teacher participation with coaches can positively contribute to school improvement and student achievement.

An excellent illustration of teacher leadership was provided by White (2007) when collaborating with a teacher who was a 'naysayer' (Fullan, 2005). The naysayer is one who disagrees, doubts, or challenges an initiative. The naysayer first appears to be creating problems, and, in this case, expressed concerns that were less than positive for recent initiatives. Typically, such individuals are silenced by a group or by the principal. Instead, a faculty forum was

designed for all to participate so they could voice concerns. This can be a risky situation as the naysayer can provide insights that may have been overlooked. When the naysayer(s) were able to participate in the faculty forum, share their values, find meaning in their work, and explore their purposes, even negative feedback provided important information to the leadership team. What was more, the naysayer took part in initiating a productive meeting about school reform.

*Interaction of three principles: Motivation, autonomy, and participation.*

Teacher leadership practices ought to include certain empowering provisions for teachers. One is motivation to lead. Incentives can provide various sources of motivation. Another is autonomy in constructing meaning in personal professional aims. For teacher leaders, autonomy can be argued as a necessity in deciding how and what to teach, allied with theory and practical experiences. Another is the participation to co-create the world in which they work. Teacher leaders gain confidence in their practices when they take risks and experiment with new or different teaching behaviors.

Freedom and autonomy must be practiced with discipline; otherwise freedom of action and freedom from external constraints within a broader and more complex system can have adverse results such as misdirection, misalignment, and lower performance. Freedom to create results is the freedom one truly desires. It is the freedom people who seek personal mastery want most. Freedom of choice is crucial for fostering personal mastery. ‘Freedom to’ differs from ‘freedom from’ at the heart of the learning organization. The motivation to generative learning is the desire to create something new, valuable, and meaningful to people (Senge, 1994).

The school environment and the working conditions factor into attracting and retaining good teachers. School and teacher leadership are factors that have been shown to improve teachers’ satisfaction with their working conditions. The right combination of administrative

leadership and support and teacher autonomy provides an environment for teacher motivation. Teachers, in general, want to increase their autonomy in instructional practices and their participation in decision making. Improving leadership at the school level for both principals and teachers improves teacher satisfaction (Wyman, 2001).

*Sustainable leadership.*

The principle of sustainability (Wheatley, 1999) suggests that any living thing will change only as a means of self-preservation. The “self” is the lens through which one references events that are occurring. Through a complex process, events are sorted so those that are meaningful to who a person is captures a person’s attention. What captures a person’s attention are those events perceived to help him/her become what one wants or helps a person gain more of what is needed to sustain oneself.

Wasley (1991) retells a story of a hypothetical teacher named Horace who finds himself in a moral dilemma. Pulled in multiple directions by students’ needs, school structures, curriculum, administration, and the community, he is pressed to make decisions on what he knows his students really need and what the system is directing him to do. He chooses to compromise personal professional judgment in exchange for self-preservation of remaining what he wants most – being a teacher. He chooses to do as the system directs him. Meanwhile, he sees his students continue passively and disengaged.

What can an individual do to sustain teacher leadership? Fullan (2005) argues that key to individual sustainability is cyclical energizing through sources and situations that press the limits of energy and then seek planned periodic rejuvenation. He reports four energy sources: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. He suggests revisiting and stretching one’s moral purpose,

because deep purpose provides energy to continue. Furthermore, collaborating with others to address complex problems can be rewarding when working on an important matter.

Murray (2007) describes her experience as a teacher leader being rewarding and exhausting. Seeking balance in her work as a classroom teacher, as a teacher leader, and in her personal life leads her to question whether or not such efforts will be sustainable. Her emotional investment in her work keeps her pressing forward. “I wonder” asserts Murray, “how long I can sustain this work-around-the-clock-to-make-the-world-better approach of mine” (p. 199).

School-based teacher collaboration, inquiry, and learning focus on student achievement. A specific student need may be a more productive and sustainable focus rather than learning something of general value. Sanders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009) studied the effects on student achievement in schools that introduced grade-level teams in elementary schools focused exclusively on improving students’ classroom learning. A quasi-experimental investigation was conducted in Southern California. Nine Title I treatment schools were matched with 6 Title I comparison schools based on demographics and achievement. SAT-9, a state mandated test for all students grades 2 through 5, data were used to analyze national percentile ranks, normal curve equivalents (NCEs), scaled scores, and Z scores. To compare change over time between the matched schools, data were analyzed using repeated-measures ANOVA with one variable (treatment vs. control) and one outcome over 4 years from 1999-2002. Saunders et al. (2009) found that when only principals were provided with training for the Getting Results (GR) project in the treatment schools, there was minimal implementation of intended changes and no detectable effects on achievement measures. After teacher leaders and principals were provided with training in the third year, significant achievement gains were realized. Every school in the GR group improved in rank according to state mandated test results. Evidence suggests learning

teams in elementary schools can effect change and student achievement. Sustainability of focus on student achievement with principals and teacher leaders is key.

Teacher leadership capacity and collective efficacy can create and sustain continual professional learning and inquiry. Olivier and Hipp (2006) explored the connection between leadership capacity and collective efficacy as a reciprocal relationship for sustainability of professional learning and inquiry focused on student learning. Data were collected from a series of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess school-level leadership, efficacy, and professional learning communities (PLCs). Surveys, interviews, observations and documents were used to triangulate data in a case study at Lake Elementary, a pre-K – 8 school located in Louisiana, USA. Olivier and Hipp (2006) found high leadership capacity at the heart of teacher leadership which was evident in shared leadership. Shared leadership took form in various roles and responsibilities such as committees and communications. Another way was in daily collaboration as working together became the norm in sharing practice and problem solving of student issues. A strong sense of collective efficacy was another finding. The staff maintained strong belief that they made a difference in their students' learning as supported by 6 years of student performance scores. A third finding was a strong sense of collective responsibility, collaboration, and teamwork. Teachers readily and openly lent a hand to one another for professional aid or personal support. When the actions of collaboration and teamwork, collective responsibility, and focus on continual learning for teachers and students are in place, school culture is enhanced. Establishing these norms is key to sustainability of professional learning and inquiry as it relates to student learning.

Systems can change toward sustainability through leadership at all levels. Leaders are explicitly conscious of how they are broadening others capacity beyond their position or role.

The key to systems change is the development of more system thinkers. Leadership in this way will create an awareness of the system as a whole, thus changing the system (Fullan, 2005).

*Organizational behavior and the teacher leader.*

The eighth principle of holism (Wheatley, 1999) suggests whole systems are created by relational parts internally connected so that individual qualities become indistinguishable and individual properties are no longer meaningful for understanding the whole. Commonly, this notion is explained as the sum of the whole is greater than the parts. Holism presents challenges for organizational design. The challenge is in the struggle to find designs that will replace bureaucracies. Wheatley (1999) argues “We must invent organizations where process is allowed its varied-tempo dance, where structures come and go as they support the work that needs to get done, and where forms arise to support necessary relationships” (p. 70). Fundamentally new relationships are formed in fluid and permeable structures. The dissolution of rigid structures allows for new order to form that can be energizing for the whole system. The whole system can thrive in evolving, creative new forms.

Senge (1990) proposes in his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, a theory of the learning organization. To deal with many of the problems organizations are faced depends on the ability to comprehend and work with increasingly complex systems. He suggests that five ‘component technologies’ converge to innovate learning organizations. Systems thinking is the binding concept of the other four component technologies. Systems thinking requires a shared vision to sustain long-term commitments. Mental models assist in self-reflection as to how one understands the world and resulting actions. Team learning cultivates collective capacity that exceeds the intelligence of individuals of the team and allows for groups to see the larger picture. Lastly, personal mastery, discipline of continually deepening a person’s capacity, promotes

individual proficiency of what really matters to fulfill our highest aspirations. However, systems thinking alone is not enough. The practitioner is equally important in innovating the conceptual framework of the Fifth Discipline. The Fifth Discipline requires a new type of leader practitioner. The leader as teacher must first develop capacities in systems thinking and then teach others to do likewise. Senge (1990) suggests that the five disciplines are relevant to corporate leaders, public educators, and all who are in leadership positions.

Leadership at all levels within the school and policy makers outside the school influence the organizational structures of K-12 public education (Katzenmeyer, & Moller, 2001). These structures often inhibit and hinder teachers causing professional disinvestment. Structural changes in the school system are needed. Within a school, some structures that promote teachers' leadership include planning collaborative faculty meetings, arranging common planning times for teachers, scheduling time during the school day for teachers to meet to discuss student data, and to observe other teachers' demonstration lessons. Structures for teacher leaders outside the school such as recognition, communication, and participation in the school system need to be deliberate in the design. Teachers will be motivated to sustain leadership work if organizational structures acknowledge their efforts to create something beneficial to others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

An example of a learning organization and systems thinking in action was a case in an elementary school in Richmond, Texas. Velasquez Elementary opened its doors to 622 students as a new Pre-K – 5 school in 2007. The principal was an experienced administrator, teachers were new hires and transfers from within the school district, and students were reassigned from low-performing neighboring schools. A challenge faced by the principal and teachers was to create a school where every student experienced success. In one year Velasquez Elementary was

recognized as an Exemplary School, the highest award given to Texas schools for outstanding academic results. At the onset of the school year, teachers created a social contract that became foundational for building a collaborative culture. The first days of school were difficult because some of the student behaviors included fighting, bullying, and disrupting classrooms. The principal and teachers took charge by holding true to their social contract and holding students to their expectations. Within weeks, student culture was aligning with a safe and orderly environment. Parents were involved in disciplining their child based on the expectation that their child will not fail. As the school year progressed, student academic records needed to be addressed as students had a history of low performance on state assessments. The teachers had inhibitions if students could make significant gains by spring in time for state testing. Teachers, with support from the principal, developed a belief in their collective talents. With collective efficacy, teachers believed a majority of students could pass the state assessments. Teachers' learning and sharing together became key for improvement. Student achievement data were continually analyzed with the principal and a core team of teacher leaders. Their purpose was to identify strategies and interventions for students who were struggling. Academic progress was monitored with common formative and summative assessment data. Teacher leaders visited and/or co-taught using intervention strategies in classrooms. Work in classrooms was developed in regularly scheduled times. Every seventh day teachers had a two-hour block for professional learning. Time was used for professional reading, student data, and lesson planning. Teachers maintained focus on student progress. Every Wednesday afternoon, teachers gathered for one hour. One Wednesday they worked in vertical teams on curriculum, instruction, and assessments and on alternate Wednesdays, they shared their work in whole-school meetings. A 30-minute session at the end of each day was designed for and provided to every student. Students who

were struggling got interventions and students who were at mastery got challenged with activities aligned with objectives. Some organizational behaviors that Velasquez Elementary exhibited included a culture of collaboration and respect built on a shared vision, communication among teachers and staff, professional learning and collective efficacy, and parents were included in school work. Students made academic gains and teachers experienced intrinsic rewards (Berkey & Dow, 2008).

This section discussed principles of complexity theory. Complexity theory suggests K-12 public education be viewed as a complex organization in need of leadership that transcends former trends and prepares for the future (Berlinger & Biddle, 1995; Fullan, 2001). Leadership must involve teachers and teachers need to be supported in context of K-12 school systems. Relationships and networks need to be built so that leadership can gain full potential (Fowler, 2004; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). Leaders need to be relationship builders with diverse people and groups as part of one's professional competencies (Fullan, 2001; Timpson, Yang, Borrayo, & Canetto, 2005). Motivation for teachers to lead include improved relationships with others, autonomy in their work, and other professional intrinsic factors (Stone et al., 1997; Wasley, 1991). Autonomy or freedom provided with regard to instruction can be beneficial to teacher leaders as an allowance to practice to contribute to the professional community which is necessary for co-evolution of practice. Participation is valuable in creating professional relationships (Lambert et al., 1996; Wheatley, 1999). Sustainability of participation is a means for self-preservation. Sustainability requires planned periodic rejuvenation (Fullan, 2005; Wheatley, 1999). Holism suggests that whole systems are created by relational parts. Understanding relational parts of complex systems allows for learning organizations where

teacher leaders can innovate practices beneficial to others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Senge, 1994; Wheatley, 1999).

The study of teacher leadership can provide much needed understanding about teachers as leaders in their contextualized roles. Identification of guiding principles and the implications in teacher leadership practice could further empower the classroom teacher in public school reform. The eight principles and their implications for teacher leadership delineated above describe how educational and organizational theories apply to issues related to teacher leadership.

### Distributing Leadership with Teachers

An important concept in teacher leadership is the distributed leadership. Although many teachers who lead experience a sense of loneliness at times, distributing the workload is necessary and constitutes many factors. One factor to consider is leadership types such as democratic, situational, and distributed (Spillane, 2006). Other factors to consider both separately and collectively are leadership roles, situation, and influence. These three interact affecting one another. A last factor is teacher leader's expertise. Expertise is the dynamic function of knowledge, skills, and abilities practiced in context. At the core of these factors is practice. Practice is constituted by all the factors.

Distributed leadership begins with teachers working together. Wasley (1991) explains collaboration and collegiality as a means for positive change in school reform efforts. Collaborative relationships are needed among all stakeholders of an educational undertaking for significant change to occur. A key finding in her study was teacher leaders need some measure of autonomy and some ability to make decisions at the school level, and it is shared leadership that provides teacher leaders with the potential power for their jobs.

In his book, *Distributed Leadership*, Spillane (2006) explains how leadership is distributed. He investigated how leadership practice involves two or more leaders and how followers and the situation constitute practice. His five year study beginning in 1999 involved fifteen K-5 and K-8 schools in the Chicago area. He used a mixed methods design including ethnography, observations, interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and video recordings. Distributed leadership is a framework for leadership practice. This perspective on leadership practice maintains sight of individual contributions, but focuses more on practice defined in the interactions of leaders, followers, and situations. Additionally, distributed leadership is a way to think about the work of leading schools involving more than the leadership of the school principal.

Although distributed leadership suggests leading schools involves more than the school principal, this depiction of teacher leadership does not relieve principals of their work responsibilities. Mengin (2005) explains how distributed leadership could increase principals' workload. Involvement of principals may promote teachers' leadership opportunities to improve instruction. When principals support teacher leaders with clear expectations regarding instructional change and follow through with supervision and evaluation, teacher leaders may be viewed as a resource. A strong supervisory approach is key to instructional reform when all teachers are held accountable for changing instruction, teacher leaders are used as a resource, teacher leaders are regarded for their expertise and appear non-threatening, and stigmas for asking for help are reduced. With the provision that administrators support teacher leaders' work, real possibilities for instructional improvement can be realized. With this in mind, teacher leadership within the distributed leadership framework could create additional work for principals because demand for support is increased.

In their study, Brooks et al. (2007) explored how social justice leadership practice was distributed throughout a school and the efficacy of a conceptual framework for distributed practice for social justice. This phenomenology took place in an urban public high school in the southeastern United States over two academic years. Data were collected from interviews, observations and documents. Snowball sampling was used to recruit 42 participants. Data were analyzed using an inductive and iterative coding process with open coding that formed axial codes. Internal validity was achieved by triangulating data with field notes, observations, and document analysis. Brooks et al. (2009) concluded that leadership for social justice is something practiced by formal and informal leaders in situations as an organization evolves, rather than activist-minded individuals. Further, the culture, climate, and community leaders influence each other, and in turn influences leadership activity. Relationships, philosophies, and structures created and supported by the leader influences followers at many organizational levels throughout and beyond the school. In addition, leadership bridges work, critical activism, and transformational public intellectualism can be stretched over leaders, followers, and situations over time. Leadership for social justice is dynamic and versatile. It is practiced by leaders and followers as mediated by tools, routines, and structures in context. The distributed perspective provides a way to examine diverse issues in context.

#### *Leadership practice types.*

In the last two decades, instructional leadership has become a popular theme in educational leadership. Instructional leadership suggests the principal and teachers figure into leadership work. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) address the central question of the extent leadership determines if a school is effective or ineffective in impacting student achievement in their book, *School Leadership that Works*. In their analysis of research from the

last 35 years from 1970 to the present, more than 5,000 articles and studies on leadership in schools were identified to investigate the quantitative relationship between building level leadership and student achievement. After examining 69 studies using meta-analysis, a correlation between leadership behavior of the principal and academic achievement of the students in the same school was suggestive that effective school leaders can have a dramatic influence on the overall academic achievement of students. Marzano et al. (2005) conclude leadership has long been perceived to be important to effective functioning of schools. Meta analysis indicated school leadership can have a substantial effect on student achievement and offers guidance for experienced and aspiring educational leaders. School leadership is the responsibility of a leadership team within a school rather than the principal acting alone. Leadership teams are composed of principals and teachers.

Table 2.2 includes several types of leadership that are related to distributed leadership, but are not the same. Although these types of leadership are related, and a distributed perspective allows for different leadership types, Spillane (2006) maintains the difference exists in the situations, interactions, and practice among leaders and followers. Likewise, leadership positions and roles fit with the distributed perspective and other types.

Table 2.2

*Leadership types and descriptions including to distributed leadership*

Type	Description
Collaborative	“The skillful and mission-oriented facilitation of relevant relationships. It is the juncture of organizing and management” (Rubin, 2009, p. 2).
Shared	“A dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 1).
Co-leadership	“Is all inclusive, celebrates those who work at articulating the organization’s vision...Power and responsibility are dispersed, giving the enterprise a whole constellation of co-stars – co-leaders with shared values and aspirations, all of whom work together toward common goals” (Heenan & Bennis, 1999, p. 5).
Participative	“Consults with subordinates, solicits their suggestions and takes these suggestions seriously into consideration before making a decision” (Head, Jr., Baum, Preston, & Cooperrider, 1998, p. 174).
Transformational	“One or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality... Their purposes become fused” (Burns, 1978, p. 101).
Distributed	“A framework for thinking about and framing investigations of leadership practice...to acknowledge that leadership practice is defined in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation” (Spillane, 2006, p. 102-103).

*Leadership positions and roles.*

Leadership positions are formally designated. For example, principals, curriculum coordinators, and staff developers are formal positions in schools (Spillane, 2006), whereas roles may be informal. From a distributed leadership perspective, responsibility is distributed among appointed leaders and de facto informal leaders (Spillane, 2006). Teacher leaders, with or without official title, take up the work perceived as necessary in school reform. Teachers take

responsibility for roles such as subject area innovator, mentor, and discussion leader (Gabriel, 2005).

The crux of school reform is the work is plenty, workers are too few. “Teaching in its current state is problematic and unlikely to produce more competent students in the years to come. Changes are desperately needed if teachers are to be able to contribute to the revitalization of schools,” according to Wasley (1991, p. 21). Attracting and retaining good teachers can be challenging unless changes are made. “There appears to be a growing consensus that teachers must be involved in the restructuring of their own profession, and such participation demands new leadership roles for teachers (Wasley, 1991, p. 21).

In his book, *How to Thrive as a Teacher Leader*, John Gabriel (2005) explains teacher leadership’s uniqueness to command influence in a school and K-12 education. Teacher leaders can choose from a variety of responsibilities (Gabriel, 2005, p. 5-14) which provide opportunities to have a role in improving school practices and functions, and in turn help students achieve. Responsibilities change over time. For example, one may be a subject area leader for language arts, but not math. Likewise, one could be a presenter this week, but not next week. “These fluid and spontaneous roles are just as essential as the leader to the success of the team” (p. 4).

Teacher leadership roles empower teachers to realize the value of their work in their classrooms and beyond. While most teacher leaders participate to affect decisions related to instructional practice and student achievement, they do not perform leadership roles as a means to advance to administrative ranks, necessarily. However, should some teacher leaders decide to become administrators and if they carry their expertise into these positions, then they make for excellent leaders (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

Middlebrooks (2004) investigated teacher leadership and professionalism. A mixed methods design was used to analyze data about leadership and professional behaviors that characterized teachers as leaders in secondary schools. Forty-three secondary schools from New York and Georgia were selected for participation. Focus group interviews and discussions were conducted with 185 student participants, in groups of 3 to 16 participants. Individual interviews were conducted with 52 administrators and 90 certified teachers. Some of the teacher leadership roles were broadly defined as managers, decision makers, role models, change agents, and advocates. Another finding was distributed leadership acknowledges leadership at the administrative and teacher levels. Further, most teachers interviewed felt they were consistently in the follower mode, largely due to organizational structure and hierarchy of authority. Yet, teachers seldom recognized leadership skills required for effective instructional practices. Additionally, a systemic approach to organizing a community of professional leaders was found to be a challenge. Leadership skills of teachers need to be acknowledged so leadership can be distributed resulting in a community of professional leaders, who in turn, share and support school improvement. This study focused on teacher leaders' practices for improving teaching, leading, and learning. Establishment and acknowledgement of the value of a community of professional teacher leaders in schools were reported.

Leadership and followership are intertwined in such a way that teachers are inevitably a part of leadership in elementary schools. Elementary teachers shape leadership relationships with lack of formal power and position. Bedell and Burrello (2006) conducted a case study to investigate how leadership is conceptualized as a distributed practice, extended over the social and situational contexts of an elementary school. Data were collected from a public, K-6 elementary school in a Midwestern state with 348 students. Videotaping and transcribing

interviews with the principal, nine teachers, two work teams, six parents, a grandparent, and a representative from the Schlechty Center, a private, nonprofit organization partnering with schools across the U.S. Classroom observations and document analysis were conducted. Participants were chosen in part by recommendation of the principal, teachers, or parents. Data were analyzed using four central ideas within the distributed leadership framework offered by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004). Bedell and Burrello (2006) found several ways faculty and staff carried out leadership tasks and functions such as researching models for school improvement, constructing a school vision, writing grants, and facilitating meetings. Findings included how teachers and parents enacted leadership tasks including restructuring school events and committees, facilitating protocols to evaluate students' work, and conducting research and sharing what they learned with colleagues. Additionally, faculty and staff developed a framework for school improvement that exemplifies social distribution of task enactment. Work was not simply divided among faculty, instead interest drove pursuits of models and teams explored them together. Further, situational distribution of leadership practice disperses into a web of persons, tools, and the situation. When the school's achievement scores fell, the faculty identified what they had been doing was no longer working. The situation was the impetus for change. The teachers who aspired for the school to be high-achieving created the drive for change. Teachers as leaders rise to a challenge when there are common purposes, principles, and practices. Collective action precedes positions and roles.

Multiple demands placed on a principal come in part from reliance on a hierarchical division of labor with a principal at the top. Grubb and Flessa (2006) examined 10 elementary schools, 9 from California and 1 from Massachusetts, with context-specific and nontraditional alternatives to the principalship. For this case study, interviews and observations were used to

gather data for understanding how reform practices and school environments were related. From emergent categories, Grubb and Flessa (2006) found alternative approaches to a single principal originated for different reasons in different contexts. Co-principalships commonly occurred in elementary schools that had high student enrollment or required a principal to manage multiple programs within the school or co-principalships fit with the school model. Another finding was the nature of distributed leadership between administrators and teachers. Co-principals retained responsibilities of conventional principals though with smaller numbers of staff and students. Distribution of labor varied among co-principals and teachers according to grade levels or programs, areas of specialized interest, or effectiveness. Effectiveness was determined at the co-principals' discretion. Teachers, in some cases, had many opportunities for leadership roles because this practice aligned with the school vision. The benefits of alternative approaches to a principalship included sharing decisions, having supervision in the school when one principal cannot be present, having accessibility to a principal, reducing stress levels of co-principals, and addressing leadership succession when a principalship is about to change. Additional findings suggest the roles of districts that allow conditions that affect how principals work can be contradictory. A district may initiate co-principalships, but yet do poorly at implementing the new roles. A district may favor a traditional bureaucratic model, even though the school supports an alternative approach. Financial conflicts at the district level favor conventional equal distribution of administrative resources, rather than allowing school-site budgeting. In light of the potential and challenges of alternatives to one principal per school, the benefits for distributing responsibility among principals and teachers as leaders become more obvious.

A new vision of effective leadership is emerging where multiple school members exercise instructional leadership to effect curricular change and instructional improvement. This new vision is a departure from a single heroic leader, but rather is distributed leadership. Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) studied distributed leadership in the context of comprehensive school reform (CSR) models. Data were collected in spring of 2002 using two instruments: School Leader Questionnaire (SLQ) was sent to elementary school teachers and the School Characteristics Inventory (SCI) was sent to principals. Data was analyzed from 110 principals and 114 schools located in 45 different school districts, in 15 states, and 17 metropolitan areas. Camburn, et al. (2003) found elementary school leadership is provided by small, heterogeneous teams of three to seven people (with respect to leadership function), rather than by one person. Also, schools' implementation of CSR models appears to be a significant factor associated with leadership configuration and extent of leadership activity. Specifically, CSR programs appear to affect the distribution of leadership by configuring size and composing of leadership teams. In addition, CSR participation initiates leadership practices through professional development. Leaders' professional development appeared to be associated with their tendency to engage in leadership practices including instructional leadership and boundary spanning. CSR processes more clearly specify instructional leadership roles and provide specific training in instructional leadership practices are reported to be associated with higher levels of instructional leadership.

Research about school leadership from a distributed perspective has focused on individuals in both formal and informal positions and their roles with whom leadership work can be distributed. Spillane, Camburn, and Pareja (2007) examined the distribution of leadership across people from the perspective of the school principal. This mixed-method longitudinal

study was conducted in one midsized urban school district in the Southeastern United States. Baseline data were collected from 52 school principals from elementary, middle, high and special schools. Data were collected from experience sampling method (ESM) logs, end-of-day principal logs (EOD), principal questionnaires, staff questionnaires and principal and staff observations, interviews, and responses to open-ended scenarios. Responses were validated against observation data. Spillane, et al. (2007) found leadership work to be distributed over multiple actors with formal titles and informal roles. Classroom teachers with no formal designation, especially, were noted in administration, curriculum and instruction related activities. Closer examination of principals' practice in situations involving distributed leadership showed principals coperformed almost half of their responsibilities. Coperformers included formal and informal leaders. Again, classroom teachers with no formal positions figured more prominently than others in formal positions. Further, the extent leadership work was distributed across two or more actors differed according to type of activity. Principals reported taking responsibility for over three-quarters of all administration type activities and just over half of instruction and curriculum activities. This study adds to the corpus of research indicating leadership is distributed across multiple formal and informal leaders by indications of the principal coperforming administration-, curriculum-, and instruction-related activities.

The focus on distributed leadership has been within school cases. Distributed leadership also applies to school districts. Firestone and Martinez (2007) examined four schools in three districts in New Jersey, United States as a focus for case study to explore how leadership is distributed in districts and the role of teacher leaders. Participants included principals, teacher leaders, and on average, eight teachers from each school. Data were collected from 2003 to 2006 through observation, interviews, and document analysis. Data were transcribed, coded, and

sorted into analytic categories. Firestone and Martinez (2007) found teacher leaders' work complemented district efforts. Teacher leaders and districts worked toward similar means such as procuring and distributing materials, monitoring school improvement, and developing people. Teacher leaders and districts perform leadership tasks differently. Districts operate at a distance and rely on formal authority, while teachers lead with reliance on close relationships. Teacher leaders are limited in time, personal expertise, and tensions between monitoring and professional development with regard to maintaining trust. Distributed leadership provides insights to how teacher leaders can be integrated into a district reform effort. District level reform may be more influential on teaching with the complementary work of teacher leaders. Teacher leaders were able to influence teachers to comply with district curriculum mandates. Teachers gradually changed because of the source of leadership.

Teacher leadership is performed by both formal and informal leaders. Teachers who lead contribute to improving teaching and learning. Leadership positions and roles are essential and equally valued (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Middlebrooks, 2004; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). Leadership, however, must be contextualized because of the interplay of site culture and leadership responsibilities.

*Situated leadership.*

Context of a situation is important to the success or failure of teacher leadership work in collaborative efforts. Each site has its own culture and the conception, development, and implementation of teacher leadership is contextually bound.

“How enormously complex teacher leadership roles are as they play out in practice. They involve power, authority, and an decision-making relationships as well as different kinds of collaborations; and they communicate beliefs and attitudes about the nature of teaching and learning” (Wasley, 1991, p. 154).

To understand how leadership is constructed, leadership can be investigated from followers' perspectives. Teachers base their constructions on four forms of capital. Human capital refers to a people's expertise. Cultural capital refers to actions and interactions valued in particular contexts and situations. Social capital includes social networks and prevalence of social norms among individuals in an organization. Economic capital includes financial and material resources. Spillane (2006) found teachers identified other teachers as leaders first by cultural capital. Social, human, and economic capital followed respectively. The situation is one of the core constitute elements to distributed leadership activity. Circumstances are made up of a web of actors and artifacts. Leadership activity can be enabled or diminished by aspects of the situation. Activities can change aspects of the situation over time. Artifacts are integral to the situation and leadership activity because they are more than evidence of ideas and action. They are a means for thought (Bedell & Burrello, 2006).

Teacher leaders do not turn a blind eye to a situation when they perceive the integrity of their schools are being compromised. As bureaucratic organizations, schools project an image of orderliness, stability, and coherence in functions, operations and situations. An assumption is that teachers consent to administrative directives. However, teachers may experience practical or ethical constraints diminishing school improvement efforts. Barriers exist in schools' culture and structure. Teacher leaders, as responsible professionals, recognize when barriers diminish organizational integrity. Teacher leaders challenge the status quo by taking responsibility for work that fits the school vision and situation in context. In essence, teacher leadership calls for 'teaching against the grain' when constraints diminish the work of their school (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009).

Distributed leadership takes account of both the situation and the followers. Spillane (2006) argues from this perspective, the situation differs from the context within which school leaders practice. The situation is a defining element of practice and it shapes leadership practice from the inside out, where context shapes practice from the outside in. Distributed leadership holds stock in interaction with leaders and followers mutually constituting leadership practice in the situation. The situation with leaders and followers defines practice. “Leaders work in interaction not just with followers but also with aspects of the situation, including routines and tools. School leaders...do not work directly on the world; they work with various aspects of their situation” (p. 17). In practices involving human improvement, the situations are more complex because work is often conducted in collectives and dependent on others in accomplishing a given task. Leadership practices need to be viewed in terms of interactions. Although individual actions are important, they are better understood as interactions in a situation. It is suggested that development of leadership practices need to involve attention to the situation. The principle of design and redesign of aspects of the situation allows leadership practices to evolve. Spillane (2006) concludes heroics of leadership have a stranglehold on how leadership is perceived. The myth of individualism remains prevalent in much of the work in Western society. A distributed perspective on leadership maintains importance of individuality; however, leadership practice is defined by the situation of interactions of the leaders and followers.

Hersey and Blanchard (2000) have been at the forefront of leadership studies and have been associated prominently with developing situational leadership theory. In their book, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, they propose from their research a framework for understanding human behavior and management theory within an organization. Two instruments

were developed for gathering data about the behavior of leaders. The leader effectiveness and adaptability description (LEAD) Self instrument contains 12 leadership situations designed to measure self-perceptions of three aspects of leader behavior: (a) style, (b) style range, and (c) style adaptability. The LEAD Other instrument gathered leadership style information from followers of leaders. Data were collected from over 20,000 leadership events, interviews with about 2,000 middle managers from education and industry, and more than 500 in-depth interviews with leaders and leaders' followers. The data were interpreted into a model composed of four quadrants describing leader behavior matched with follower readiness (figure 2.1). Style 1 – *telling* indicates high task - low relation focus. Style 2 – *selling* indicates high task - high relationship. Style 3 – *participating* style indicates high relationship - low task focus. Style 4 – *delegating* indicates low relationship – low task focus. Situational leadership is a way of understanding how leadership behaviors can adapt to features of the situation and the followers (Hersey et al., 2000). Followers' effectiveness depends on the leaders directive and supportive behaviors (figure 2.1). Effective leaders need to adapt to the requirements of situations. Thus, the leader must know when to use a particular style and how to fit each style with the situation to maximize followers' performance.

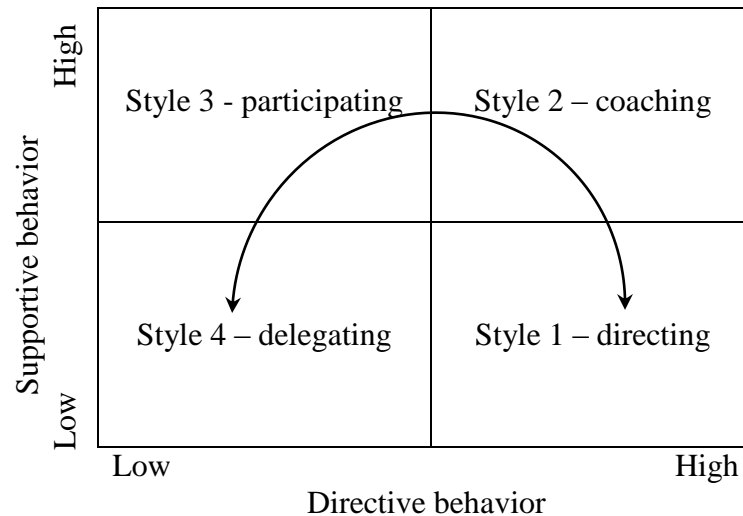


Figure 2.1

*Situational leadership model*

The importance of situations requires careful attention by teacher leaders. Teacher leadership is constructed by colleagues in context. Every school has its own culture and leadership practice is context specific (Crowther et al., 2009; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). Educators are seen as leaders because of the influence they have on school culture.

*Influence.*

Some educators are identified as influential leaders by teachers regardless of title or position, according to Spillane (2006). Formal positions are not necessary when positive relationships exist. He asserts “Teachers are leaders based on their interactions with [teachers] as well as conversations with colleagues about these individuals” (p. 48). Teacher leadership is influencing others to improve educational practice. Influencing colleagues can be learned, although complex. Teacher leaders influence others by being approachable and personal power. Relationships with others are key. Also, influencing others is possible when teacher leaders establish credibility first by sharing and/or modeling best practices with others. Moreover, the

balance of relationships is a challenge for teacher leaders, “Teachers can join other leaders in moving school reform along because they are at the center of the learning process and because they influence what happens in the school” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 8).

Teacher leadership for school improvement is at the heart of the learning process and influences what happens in schools. School improvement leadership is also an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate efforts for improvements in teaching and learning. The emphasis is placed on school leadership for improved practices. The effect of leadership is largely mediated by sociocurricular conditions in schools and focuses on learning outcomes (Heck & Hallinger, 2009).

A caveat about teacher involvement in influencing school-wide change is that it is not always satisfying for teacher leaders because there can be disparities among the return on investment of time spent in meetings and what is meaningful and purposeful to teachers. Governance structures such as shared decision making and site-based management can leave teachers bogged down in organizational issues while little attention is given to what matters most to teachers – student performance. Teacher leadership is not limited to governance structures (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Teacher leadership can be influential in ways that maintain focus on what is important to teachers and students by taking on roles such as demonstration classrooms, peer coaches, study group leader, and many others (Gabriel, 2005). Teacher leaders use their voices to influence colleagues, parents, and the community. Each teacher leader brings his or her relative strengths to school improvement efforts that may result in comprehensive schoolwide change. To sustain the work of school improvement, teacher leaders are needed to exert influence on the school level (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

Distributed leadership at the district level involving teacher leaders is complementary in leadership tasks. Three tasks that both districts and teacher leaders performed are provision of materials, mentoring and supporting professional growth and development of people. Monitoring and supporting professional growth is a key task of teacher leaders. Teacher leaders' capacity to perform these tasks depend on a skill set built on trust (Firestone & Martinez, 2007).

Margolis (2008) examined what happens when teachers seek to influence colleagues' instructional practices to improve student learning. This phenomenology used qualitative methods primarily with complementary quantitative data from pre- and post-surveys. Data were collected during the 2006 - 2007 school year and included group interviews with teachers, field notes and artifacts from staff development sessions, and pre- and post-survey responses. Four themes of teacher leadership emerged – organizational leadership, collegial relations, effectiveness of strategies, and experience of leading. Findings suggest teacher leadership appears to be a locally embodied experience. On an individual level, the act of leading seems to bring out confidence from teachers to lead. On the school level, quality relations and supportive social environments allow teacher leadership to flourish. Teacher leaders may be uniquely positioned within a school for pedagogical reforms in ways that policy makers and administrators are not. Rather, teacher leadership can be a way to make use of the talents down the hall as teachers make theory come alive in use, address the realities of implementation, show student data, and advocate for change from within. Principals who facilitate distributed leadership inspire teacher loyalty and confidence.

Teachers' collegial relations were found to be supportive with relative lack of resistance to colleagues leading as they generally supported teachers in leadership activities and wanted teacher leaders to succeed. Effective strategies revolved around several themes: creating a

comfortable environment, validating teachers' work, keeping learners engaged, and emphasizing relevance and ease. Teachers were more at ease with leading as they moved from feelings of fear and anxiety to comfort. Feelings of ease developed in relation to collegial responsiveness.

Opportunities for teacher leadership tend to reduce the fear of leading and increase the quality of the leadership experiences for both teacher leader and audience. Teacher leaders can use their knowledge of teachers and teaching to design effective professional development. Given the complexity of contemporary K-12 education, mandates, and other external change forces appear insufficient, formal and informal teacher leadership roles stemming from local talent hold promise in school reform efforts.

"Teacher leaders are uniquely positioned to provide the necessary link between educational research and practice, ideals and reality, as well as policy and lived experience. Their potential, however, is only optimized when supportive structures and relationships are in place" (Margolis, 2008, p. 308).

The impetus of teacher leadership is to influence others for school improvement.

Influences of teacher leaders need not come from having official titles, positions, or governance structures. Influence occurs when teacher leaders in formal and informal situations use cultural and human capital to improve schools (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2006).

*Three factors interplay: roles, situation, and influence.*

The three factors of leadership -- roles, situation, and influence -- are considered separately above. It is important to consider these three collectively because of the interplay among them. The context in which teacher leaders do their work significantly impacts teacher leaders' ability to influence others (Wasley, 1991), as it defines the role which in turn affects how others are influenced. Another way to consider these factors is from Spillane's (2006) distributed perspective. He argues leaders' interactions with followers and their situation gives form to leadership practice. In this view roles influence others and the situation. As teacher

leaders influence situations in their schools through their actions (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Actions can be influenced by such acts as mentoring or modeling instruction for other teachers. In addition, actions can be influential to other aspects of education such as policy formulation or acquiring community resources. This perspective suggests the role influences people or other aspects of schooling or both. The three factors of role, situation, and influence interact dynamically in the work of teacher leadership.

Although teacher leaders' work involves understanding factors that shape their work, it is also helpful to teacher leaders to understand factors that contribute to their acquisition of expertise.

*Expertise.*

Teacher leaders' experiences in their roles or positions aid personal professional growth. Experience offered a greater understanding of the educational organization, insights into the variations of the teacher/student interaction, and opportunities to collaborate with outside experts. These experiences aided development of teacher leaders' expertise in addition to preparatory training in their specialty areas (Wasley, 1991). However, several gaps were identified include; learning of educational change, leading change, and conflict resolution. Also lacking was understanding how to work with groups, how to analyze needs, and how to read school culture and understanding of multiple ways to engage adult learning.

Expertise in practice is crucial for teacher leaders. Greater attention to leadership practice is needed rather than leader development according to Spillane (2006). He argues that practice does not necessarily follow from new knowledge and skill. In other words, teacher leaders' newly acquired expertise needs to be practiced in context. This view on practice of expertise presses beyond individual leaders to see what collective leadership brings to school

work. The distributed perspective focuses on leadership practice, not just one leader. Study of leadership expertise is complex because the collective interactions of all involved and the situation must be considered.

A teacher leader’s expertise derives from credibility of knowledge, skills, and practice. Expertise in a teacher leader’s area of specialty provides their power base (table 2.3). The concept of power can have positive or negative connotations for many teachers. However, power resides in formal teacher leader positions and informal teacher leader roles (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

Table 2.3

*Leadership power bases through formal authority and personal actions*

<i>Positional Power Bases – Power through formal authority</i>	
<u>Type of power</u>	<u>Perceived power</u>
Reward	Distribution of rewards such as funding or professional growth opportunities
Coercive	Punish such as reprimand or termination
Legitimate	Authority from rank and/or position such as principals fulfilling their duties
Connection	Influential relationships such as membership in professional educational organizations
<i>Personal Power Bases – Power through personal actions</i>	
Referent	Subordinate’s identification or association with the leader such as aligned values
Informational	Giving or withholding valuable information such as “being in the know” of school business
Expert	A leader’s specialty or expertise such as credibility of knowledge, skills, and ability in practice

School leadership at all levels utilizes these power bases. Teacher leaders, in particular, use personal power bases in their collegial relationships (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) in the context of practice.

Teacher leaders often lead without formal authority as that of a principal. Teacher leaders must have some authority if they are to influence others. Hatch, White, and Faigenbaum (2005) examined four teachers as case studies to explore formal and informal roles these teachers held and the different kinds of influence they had on others. The cases were selected from participants in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). Based on literature of teacher leadership, situated learning, and organizational learning, the study analyzed how teachers' practices, ideas, and connections may contribute to their influence on others. Hatch and his colleagues (2005) maintain teacher leaders can influence others they know well and others they have never met, whether or not they hold formal leadership positions. Teacher leaders in these cases relied on their expertise and credibility developed from experience as opposed to that from formal authority. Expertise was evidenced by engaging in and demonstrating personal professional activities.

Leaders acquire background to perform leadership functions in different ways. Camburn, et al. (2003) found gender and ethnic background to be unrelated to leaders' performance of leadership functions. University coursework, by comparison, was a strong positive predictor of instructional leadership. This finding may explain the distribution of labor in elementary schools where teachers with stronger backgrounds in math or language arts are sought to perform instructional leadership roles. In other words, teachers with certain expertise are more likely to utilize that expertise in service of instructional leadership. Whereas, university coursework was found to be unrelated to noninstructional leadership functions such as building management. This finding suggests a connection between leaders' expertise and functions they perform.

Preparing principals in different ways may not be the solution to a complex set of challenges in elementary education. Given the complexity of schools, principals cannot

command expertise from teachers. Principals need to co-create a culture in which teachers develop expertise with others. This approach is more desirable than the rational bureaucratic approach, with reliance on a hierarchical division of labor with the principal at the apex, because it recognizes the expertise of teachers, capitalizing on this important resource. Models of professional organizations with less hierarchical structures and more opportunity for shared decision making provides a different image of schools. This conception of the distributed leadership portrays leadership in practice as distributed among administrators and staff rather than leadership by one principal (Grubb & Flessa, 2006).

*Teacher Leadership Practice.*

The context of practice depends on school level governance structures. Educational leaders of schools, who have governance structures for teacher decision making at the core, consider three basic requirements: (a) their school's readiness, (b) their personal philosophy, and (c) their leadership behavior. "We found that the behavior of successful shared governance principles takes each of these three factors into consideration; these behaviors lead, in turn, to democratization, professionalization, and empowerment" (Blase and Blase, 2001, p. 6).

Structures, roles, and expertise of leaders can change; however, leadership practice may remain the same. "One of the greatest challenges that education will face over the next several decades is understanding leadership practice as a basis for thinking about its improvement" (Spillane, 2006, p. 89). Illustrating a framework for thinking about leadership, a triangle is used showing leaders, followers, and situations at the three vertices (see figure 2.2). Leadership practice is placed centrally in the triangle. This suggests practice gets defined in the actions of leaders, followers, and the situation. The leaders aspect focuses on knowledge and expertise needed in leadership practice. The followers aspect focuses on followers' contributions to

leadership practice. The situations aspect focuses on elements of a situation that constitutes interactions among leaders and followers in practice.



Figure 2.2

*Distributed leadership framework*

A longitudinal study on leadership and renewal was conducted on The Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC). The study was on a five-year reform effort beginning in 1995 in the San Francisco Bay area (Copland, 2003). Initially, data were collected from surveys with principals and teachers from 86 BASRC schools. Observational data from BASRC principals' gatherings and school-level documents were collected and analyzed. Second, 16 Leadership schools (four high schools, eleven elementary, one K-8 school) were purposively sampled for closer study and survey data were analyzed quantitatively. Copland (2003) found formal leaders such as principals and teacher leaders provided the catalyst for change early in school reform efforts. New leadership structures emerged promoting broader involvement in school reform including rotating lead teachers, co-principals, and inter-school leadership structures and strategies. The principals' role changed mainly in distributing leadership functions and seeking

others in the work of change. Given role-based leadership has been unable to meet the complex challenges of school change and renewal, consideration ought to be made for leadership practice across roles within school systems.

Various distributed leadership approaches require stability at the school level because innovation takes time for teachers, parents, and students to adapt to a new practice. The process of reforming the elementary principal's role is developmental and early efforts require changes in defining roles and practices for both principals and teacher leaders. In unstable schools, with teacher and/or principal turnover, it would mean repeatedly experiencing a period of learning a variation of an approach and increase the likelihood of any innovation regressing to conventional bureaucratic practices (Grubb & Flessa, 2006).

There appears to be growing understanding for both the effects of school leadership and the means by which leadership practice influences school performance. Heck and Hallinger (2009) studied the effects of distributed leadership on school improvement. They examined student math achievement in a 4-year longitudinal, nonexperimental study with 195 elementary schools in one western state of the United States. Data were collected from teachers, students, and randomly selected parents through surveys and from student achievement data. Data were analyzed using multilevel latent change analysis. Heck and Hallinger (2009) found school leadership and capacity building are mutually reinforcing in their effects over time. Perceived stronger distributed leadership reinforced schools' ability to improve academic achievement. Likewise, perceived stronger academic capacity appeared to be advantageous to developing stronger leadership over time. These mutually reinforcing constructs were positively associated with school math achievement. Teachers' perceptions of distributed leadership and academic capacity were significantly associated with students' perceptions of the quality of the school.

These findings provide support for a broader and deeper capacity to share or distribute leadership among administrators and teachers in schools.

School principals face a challenge of managing and leading their schools in administrative, curricular, and instructional activities. Distributed leadership provides a perspective for studying principals' practice in leading and managing the school. The distributed perspective provides an analytic framework for studying the practice of how school principals leading and managing practice involves more than the principal. By contrast, some may propose a distributed perspective on leadership that downplays the principals' role in leading. A distributed perspective is not intended to discount the role of the principal, but rather understand how leadership practice involves actions from more actors than the principal alone (Spillane et al., 2007).

Leadership practice is at the core of school improvement. Teacher leaders draw from their knowledge and skill base when working in their context of practice. The behavior of school leaders carries into teacher empowerment. Leaders, followers, and situations constituted leadership practice (Blase & Blase, 2001; Copland, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2006).

The distribution of labor is important in the work of leadership. Distributive leadership requires consideration of several factors. Leadership types, roles and positions, influence, context, and expertise are some important factors. If factors are considered with regard to interactions of leaders, followers, and the situation, then practice can be placed centrally in a framework for leadership practice (Blase & Blase, 2001; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991).

This section discussed tenets of distributed leadership. Sharing leadership practice at the school level provides teacher leaders with potential power to do their jobs. Related, distributed leadership maintains focus on leadership practice defined by leaders, followers and situations. Leadership is practiced by both formal and informal leaders (Brooks et al., 2007; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). Research shows leadership types can effect student achievement and provide guidance for leaders. A distributed perspective of leadership practice allows for different leadership types, situations, interactions, and practice among leaders and followers making the difference (Marzano, Water, & McNulty, 2005; Spillane, 2006). Leadership positions and roles may be formal or informal. Teacher leadership demands new leadership roles for teachers to realize the value of their leadership. Teacher leadership positions and roles share in and support school improvement (Gabriel, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Middlebrooks, 2004; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991).

Success or failure of teacher leadership work depends on the context of a situation. Teacher leaders take responsibility for work that fits their school vision and situation and when to use a particular style to maximize followers' performance (Crowther et al., 2009; Hersey et al., 2000; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). Some educators are influential in practice regardless of title or position. They are influential because they can effect what happens in the school. Teacher leaders are uniquely positioned to link policy and research with lived experiences (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Margolis, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Experience in addition to preparatory training aid the development of teacher leaders' expertise, which involves expertise involves collective leadership practice in schools. Teacher leaders rely on their expertise and credibility in practice as opposed to formal authority to influence others (Hatch et al., 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). Understanding leadership practice

forms the basis for thinking about school improvement (Blase & Blase, 2001; Copland, 2003; Spillane, 2006). Leadership practice resides at the core of school governance structures for shared decision making.

### Sociocultural Learning

An emphasis in leadership research has been more on development and less on practice. Learning a practice requires consideration of the context of practice. A theoretical construct of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) supports the importance of learning in context. They argue that learning is an integral part of social practice as experienced by participants. They propose legitimate peripheral participation as an analytical viewpoint on learning. As a way to understand learning, legitimate peripheral participation means, in essence, characteristic ways of engaging in or belonging to a defined community of practice. It is a complex notion involving learners in relations of power and gaining access to a wide range of resources and opportunities for participation.

#### *Person.*

A focus on social practice and on participation in a defined community of practice suggests an explicit focus on the person. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that most learning theories concentrate on individualistic aspects of cognition, suggesting a person is a cognitive entity and learning is understood in terms of acquisition and assimilation. By comparison, concentrating on social practice and participation may seem at first glance to subordinate the person. However, a social perspective suggests a “focus on the person, but a person-in-the-world, as a member of a sociocultural community” (p. 52). Learning involves the whole person in relation to social communities. Thus, learning in a social community of practice requires a broader conception of individual or collective biographies. Leadership can no longer be defined

within a person. Leadership “is an attribute that moves from person to person within a workplace depending on the situation and who holds the power” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 29). Each person contributes to the work of leadership through evolving participation. Long-term relationships between persons and their place of practice develop personal identities of membership.

If learning in general takes place in a social community, then learning to lead can be considered in relation to a community of practice. Spillane (2006) argues that leadership practice involves more than one person and is constructed in the interactions among leaders, followers, and situations. “People are central to any analysis of leadership practice” (p. 57). A challenge in the analysis is to capture how leaders work as a group. Members of a group co-perform in the creation of leadership practice.

Teachers who take on leadership roles do more than assume a new position; rather, they position themselves and their work relative to others. Leander and Osborne (2008) analyzed two narratives of teacher-facilitator teams and argue teachers, as change agents, position themselves in relation to other educators, to students and parents, to knowing and learning curriculum, and to pedagogy. Data sources gathered from a K-5 staff-development program in rural central Illinois included classroom observations, interviews with teachers, informal conversations, and observations of large-group project meetings. The primary data source were science instructional units that teacher teams produced and presented to peer teachers. From a relational and situated perspective, the importance of one teacher of a two-teacher team to create a voice and identity distinct and separate from her teammate was noticed. One of the team had 8 years experience had been a student teacher and her teammate had 37 years had been the supervising teacher. Each teammate perceived their identities in relation to peers. The teammate who had

been the supervising teacher was perceived to be more authoritative, while the other was characterized as a listener, mediating between curriculum materials and peers. An additional note was how a teacher's practices and voice were reconfigured as she constructs her identity as a staff developer, transforming social meanings by individuals. More than a role being reproduced, transforming an entire learning context and set of voices was under way. By understanding teachers' voices from a relational theoretical view, we may be able to understand the nature of the positions from which they speak and promote change. While most institutions remain stable, structures and persons who construct them do evolve.

A focus on person is general at best, but can be informative. It is important to remember there is a great deal of diversity within learning communities and each person requires a unique portrait. A person and their environment are each different. Looking across cases of teacher leaders, some qualities of teachers who lead that emerge include presence, ambition, experience, and helpfulness to all (Wasley, 1991).

#### *Activity.*

A theory of social practice emphasizes a relationship of thought and activity of persons in a social world. Learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activities with a socially structured world. In a theory of practice in and with the social world, cognition and communication are situated in on-going activities.

Contemporary developments in psychology rooted in Vygotsky's work provoke an interpretation of the zone of proximal development to have a collectivist or societal perspective and to include activity theory. A societal interpretation focuses on the process of social transformation, extending the study of learning beyond pedagogical structuring to include social world structuring in the analysis. From this analysis, the zone of proximal development can be

defined as the distance between everyday activities of individuals and societal activities. “We place more emphasis on connecting issues of sociocultural transformations with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49).

In legitimate peripheral participation, it is suggested that “There are multiple, varied, more- or less- engaged and -inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community” (Lave & Wegner, 1991, p. 35-36). A participant can gain access and participate in a community of practice in unique and individualized ways. “The concept of legitimate peripheral participation obtains its meaning ...in its multiple, theoretically generative interactions with persons, activities, knowing and world” (p. 121). These interactions place participation in the community of practice as the key unit for analysis rather than each constituent of person, activities, knowing and the world separately.

Birky, Shelton, and Headley (2006) studied ways high school administrators could encourage and support teacher leadership in their schools using a distributive, balanced, and collaborative approach to leading effective change. Four informal teacher leaders identified by principals, Oregon Education Association representatives, and the site council chair were screened from 48 nominees in Oregon school districts. Data were gathered from surveys and interviews first in May of 2004 and in June of 2004. Teacher leadership activities were encouraged or discouraged by administrators in several ways (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4

*Administrators' support or nonsupport of teacher leader activities*

Encouraged	Discouraged
Values the person, work, and role	Withholds power
Embraces change, experimentation, and risk	Devalues the work and effort
Provides verbal and technical support	Creates isolation rather than
Empowers faculty members	collaboration
Makes themselves available	Micromanages
Leads by example	

Teacher leader activities are important in school reform, so are administrator actions for support necessarily important.

Teacher leadership assumes teachers learn from peers, participating as learners and seeing changed practices which motivate them to change their own practice. Wasley (1991) explains further, teachers need to choose to participate and they will be responsible to arrange participation. Responsibility for teacher leadership is placed squarely with teachers.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) argue teacher leaders need to invite other teachers into a community of leaders. Social relationships are the seed bed in which teacher leadership thrives.

An illustration of teacher leadership in practice was provided by Stockford (2007) as she describes her experience with colleagues in a high school English department. The nine members of the department were not a cohesive group initially, and they had been allowed to teach without much meaningful collegial work. Her professional priority was creating a climate where teachers could work together. By the fourth year in her position as chair, the teachers

were developing into a community of learners by setting yearly goals, working together, trusting each other, and collaborating on projects.

Educational reform is a priority in education today. Commitment to large-scale systemic reform is a central feature of reform. Borko, Wolf, Simone, and Uchiyama (2003) studied three elementary schools and three middle schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas of Washington as case studies for examining school capacity for making progress in implementing a state reform vision. From each school, one writing teacher and one mathematics teacher were identified for their practices and leadership roles in reform efforts in the schools. Data were collected from observations of teachers, semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and principals, and artifacts of practice. Observations were organized into categories derived from the conceptual framework. Interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and coded according to the framework. From the six cases, two schools were selected for purposes of enabling rich descriptions and detailed comparisons of capacity for change in state-wide reform. Borko, et al. (2003) found leadership a key factor in reform efforts. Leadership in these cases included principals and teachers in a distributed model of leadership. Distributed leadership was important in early reform stage because no one person had all the expertise needed for substantial change. In addition, a strong sense of professional community played a role in achieving reform goals. Teachers were committed to the reform effort and responsibility for achieving those goals was the entire school's. Furthermore, teachers' learning opportunities developed individual capacity to reform instruction. A strong commitment to professional development meant using available resources for learning opportunities for teachers to meet the goals on the state reform agenda. Instructional leadership and a distributed leadership model in particular are key factors of school reform. Both learning opportunities and professional

community further influence school capacity for reform. Professional development builds teachers' expertise and professional communities create a culture in which school improvement can flourish.

*World.*

A theory of social practice emphasizes interdependency of person and world. This perspective, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), suggests learning, thinking, and knowing relative to people in a socially and culturally structured world. This world is socially constituted by forms and systems of activities and by a person's experience of them. Thus, world and person mutually constitute each other.

Beauchum and Dintith (2004) explored what it means to be a teacher leader and further examination was given to the practices and process from the teachers' perspective who hold leadership roles in their schools. An ethnographic approach was used to gather data from unstructured group and individual interviews involving 25 teachers. Field notes were taken of observations of these teachers in committee work, team meetings, and faculty meetings. During eight months of observations in two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Three central themes explained the lived-experiences of teacher leaders. Particular school structures and organizational patterns such as teacher teaming and planning focused on teaching, committee work, student achievement, and school initiatives. Teachers and administrators were mutually supportive, and teachers initiated change and felt encouraged by administrators. Third, teachers emphasized engagement with the community beyond the school. Teachers at each school sought support from the community and ways to contribute to the community. Teacher leaders appear to be agents of cultural change in and out of their classrooms. They pushed school culture to be more inclusive and collaborative.

Given the demands on schools and teachers to improve student achievement, professional communities allow teachers' professionalism to thrive and build capacity for better performance. Eilers and Camacho (2007) studied the creation of school-level change process at a K-5 elementary school with about 350 students. A mixed methods case-study design investigated leadership within and between the school and district contexts. Data were collected from teachers and district staff with surveys, interviews, observations, and documents. Student data were collected from the state website. A social systems context approach provided a lens for data analysis. A change in school culture linked to changes in teacher professionalism, school collaboration, and use of evidence linked to classroom work was found (Eilers & Camacho, 2007). During a two year period, the school improved beyond district averages on measures of communities of practice, evidenced-based practice, and collaborative leadership with the placement of a proactive principal, in-school supports and district support. These three areas of improvement were accompanied by significant gains in student achievement. Multiple district supports provided to schools and collaborative leadership between levels of the district system resulted in improvement in school culture and student outcomes. The school demonstrated the capacity for and benefited from collaborative leadership and community of practice between school and district settings. This experience suggests that a leader can be a learner and teachers can learn to lead in professional communities.

Teacher leaders engage colleagues in experimentation and examination of instructional practices in an effort for more engaged student learning. Teacher leaders tend to focus on their classroom and instruction. School improvement programs engage teachers in the decision making process for improving their school. The world of teacher leaders entails the classroom, school, and professional practice (Wasley, 1991).

*Convergence of persons, activity, and world.*

Legitimate peripheral participation entails persons, actions, and the lived-in world. “As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities; but a relation to social communities – it implies becoming a full-participant, a member, a kind of person” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). In this way, learning means becoming a different person in relation to the activities provided within social communities. Identities are conceived in long-term relations between persons, place, and participation in communities of practice. Person, action, and social membership (world) mutually constitute each other (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In a community of practice a learner is involved in much more than acquiring technical knowledgeable skills of the community practitioners. A learner acts in relation among persons, activities, and the world, and in relation to corollary communities of practice. Rather than learning by replicating others or by transmitting information in instruction, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest, “Learning occurs through centripetal participation in the learning curriculum of the ambient community” (p. 100). Thus, in practice, members know they are becoming full participants in a community through growing involvement in work.

*Intentionality.*

Legitimate peripheral participation provides a lens through which learning can be understood in its characteristic ways of development of a defined community of practice. Legitimate peripheral participation suggests a way of describing a learner’s way of becoming a full participant in the sociocultural practices of a community in relations with persons, activity, and the world, as well as other communities. Centripetal participation, meaning more- or less-engaged ways of participating, in the community occurs through multiple and varied points of

access and growing involvement (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The notion of whole person can be understood by considering intentionality of practice in context. Intentionality is based on monitoring on-going flow of reflective moments. Flow of reflective moments can be organized around trajectories of participation. This implies that membership in a community of practice changes over time. In other words, intentionality for learning is not only necessary for membership, but is an evolving form of membership.

Reflective practice is necessary because teachers' knowledge is contextual, interactive, non-routine, and speculative. Reframing experiences, developing problem-solving skills, creating alternatives, building hypothesis, and assessing professional actions provide intentional on-going reflective opportunities for teachers while assuming increased awareness. This brings professional practices to a conscious level and can result in improvement of performance (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Leadership practice must involve on-going strategic decision making. Spillane (2006) maintains decisions include how leadership is distributed, who are the co-performers, and how the situation is being defined. Intentional design and redesign of structures and/or practices are central to leadership practice.

Teachers' perspective of everyday work of deliberate leadership were studied as teacher leaders were identified from a teacher leadership program, The Partnership for Systemic Change in New Jersey and Pennsylvania offered to teachers in elementary and middle schools in four districts (Sato, 2005). In 1998-1999, 12 teachers' cases were studied. Data were collected from individual and focus group interviews, transcripts were coded for themes, and interpreted in the theoretical tradition of practical reasoning. Soto (2005) found leadership actions lie at the center of practical leadership. Teachers enacted leadership in their everyday work by being responsive

to the situation and being proactive in their reasons for action. Leadership opportunities were available for all teachers and leadership enactment was understood to be constituted of the person, the situation, and the purpose of leadership. Thus, practical leadership enactment is formed by intentional action.

### *Tools.*

Practice is formed and reformed over time leaving trace artifacts of social structures. Becoming a full participant in a community of practice includes engaging with artifacts or tools of everyday practice and participating in social activities of the communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Participation involving the technologic tools is important because such artifacts of culture are a substantial part of a practice's heritage. Hence, understanding the technology of practice means more than learning the use of tools, but a means connecting with and participating in its cultural life history. Moreover, the transparency of technology exists with respect to purpose and is intricately connected to cultural practice in social organizations. In other words, a tool to be viewed as an artifact must serve in a process of specific participation and that technology fulfills a mediating function of learning.

Tools mediate how people practice in particular ways. Spillane (2006) maintains tools are externalized representations of ideas people use in practice. "In my research in schools, I find it impossible to describe leadership practice without referring to all sorts of tools, including observation protocols, student work, student test score data, and various organizational structures" (p. 18). Tools and routines such as committee structures and organizational culture are also important in leadership practice. Tools constitute practice among leaders and followers.

School-level tools entail many artifacts. Crowther et al. (2009) offer a school-level tool called the Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in Schools (IDEAS). IDEAS

incorporates four key constructs into school-based innovation processes. First is organizational alignment which allows teachers and administrators a way of thinking about whether or not their school is in alignment with the school's: (a) vision and values, (b) committees' expectations and aspirations, (c) infrastructures (i.e., time, space, curricula, technologies), (d) priority pedagogical practices, and (e) professional learning strategies. Their alignment tool (see Crowther et al., 2009, p. 150) provides a way to mediate a school's operations and philosophy with aligned practice. Second is the construct of pedagogical self. The pedagogical self entails authoritative pedagogies (theory), school wide pedagogy (vision), and personal pedagogy (individuality). This concept, referred to as Three Dimensional Pedagogy, situates the work of teachers at the core of improving and sustaining school operations. Parallel leadership is the third construct. Three qualities of parallel leadership – trust, shared purpose, and individual expression – are required if teacher leadership is to flourish and school capacity building is to gain practical meaning. The fourth construct is organizational development that is a five stage, multi-year effort. Crowther et al's. (2009) tool is an example of artifacts representing ideas in practice and fulfilling a mediating purpose from an organizational purpose.

Athanases et al. (2008) examined four action research case studies of lead teachers as mentors of new teachers in an induction program. Participants were selected for Northern California's Leadership Network for Teacher Induction (LNTI) supporting 2,750 new K-12 teachers from more than 60 districts. School sites varied by income, student demographics, and population size. Seven induction leaders were key participants during the 2002-2003 academic year. Data were collected from surveys, focus group conversations, and observations and analyzed using a constant comparative method. Athanase et al's. (2008) cross-case analysis of the lead teachers as mentors of new teachers suggested the need for three elements in a mentor

curriculum. First, tools (manuals, handouts, procedure guidelines, as well as conversation protocols and logs), scripts, and routines can support mentors' work, but generic scaffolds such as templates, protocols, state standards, and rubrics need to be adapted to fit local contexts. Tools serve as artifacts of knowledge about conceptions of students, teachers, and mentors. Also, tools carry messages about what education is for and relate curriculum-as-object for scrutiny. Second, the needs of new teachers may require connecting to student achievement. Mentor development should target assisting new teachers in focusing on student learning especially when high stakes assessment is a priority. Third, action research and inquiry skills can enable mentors as leaders to respond to particular needs when mentoring others. Leadership skills provide mentors with the ability to discern how mentoring curriculum fits the needs of mentors, new teachers, and students. These cases signify that investment in mentoring resources can support teacher leaders in developing their expertise, and also to better serve students.

*Relational perspective of knowing.*

Situated learning is about relational character of knowledge and learning, meaning, and concern for people involved. This perspective implies an emphasis on a comprehensive understanding of the relationship involves the whole person, activities, and the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991). "A theory of social practice emphasizes the relational interdependence of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing" (p. 50). "This view also claims that learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world" (p. 51). Accordingly, learning as a social practice involves the whole person and implies a relation to specific activities in social communities. Learning can involve broader systems of relations within and among newly acquired activities, tasks, functions, and understandings. Thus learning can be a way of

becoming a kind of person with respect to potential of systems of relations. Legitimate peripheral participation means learning is more than a condition for membership in a community of practice. It is an evolving form of membership. Identities as members are conceived in long-term, living relations among persons and places and participation. Therefore, learning in sociocultural context entails intrapersonal and interpersonal, and intracommunity and intercommunity identity.

“Knowing is inherent in the growth and transformation of identities and it is located in relations among practitioners, their practice, and the social organization and political economy of communities of practice. For newcomers, their shifting location as they move centripetally through a complex form of practice creates possibilities for understanding the world as experienced” (pp. 122-123).

Teacher leadership is important and relationships within the context are pivotal. Social interactions influence teacher leadership more than training, experiences, personal characteristics, abilities, and formal structures. Imperative to teacher leaders is developing and maintaining collegial relationships with fellow educators while practicing leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

Leadership practice involves leaders co-performing a routine collaboratively with followers. “Reciprocal interdependencies involve individuals playing off one another in the same place and time, with the actions of person A directly and immediately enabling (or potentially constraining) the actions of person B and vice versa” (Spillane, 2006, pp. 61-62). Leaders need to be aware of one another’s actions. Attentiveness to how persons relate in practice is key to leadership practice.

Killian and Wilkins (2009) investigated the effectiveness of cooperating teachers who supervise elementary student teachers using a pragmatic sequential mixed methods design. School sites sampled were within 15 miles of a large midwestern university, each had more than

three decades of a teacher education partnership with the university; a long-term university faculty coordinator for all placements and supervision; and cooperating teachers who were tenured and had experiences with field-experience student. For 13 cooperating-teacher/student-teacher pairs who participated, data were collected from interviews, weekly journals, time logs, and conversational notes. In the first stage of analysis, data were qualitatively analyzed for indicators of effectiveness. Teachers who evidenced high usage of recommended practices were identified as *highly effective*, others were identified as *less effective*. In the second stage, ex post facto methods were used to investigate causality pre-existing conditions could have on the participating group of teachers. Killian and Wilkins (2009) found highly effective university cooperating teachers were less concerned with student teachers duplicating their practices, rather they nudged them toward independent problem solving. Highly effective cooperating teachers were adept at providing corrective feedback. Although it wasn't easy, it was necessary. In addition, student teachers with highly effective cooperating teachers spent greater percentages of teaching time, attributed to team work rather than turn taking. Three factors common to highly effective teachers were 10-29 years teaching experience, supervisory experiences with student teachers, and sustained influence from a university supervisor. Cooperating teachers with graduate preparation in teacher leadership were disproportionately represented in the highly effective group. Most had master's degrees in teacher leadership. This study suggests the potential of teacher leadership in relation to teacher recruits, other teacher leaders, and university faculty.

In recent years, education reform has begun to include provisions for development of teacher professional community such as time allocated for teachers to meet, coaches for professional development, and activities for teachers' engagement in teaching and learning.

Coburn and Russell (2008) sought to identify key features of district policies and mechanisms that appear to influence teachers' social networks. An exploratory comparative case study was used to collect and analyze data from eight elementary schools from two New York school districts. Interviews and observations were made of teachers, coaches and principals and data were analyzed with qualitative social network analysis for structure of teachers' social networks. Participants were purposively sampled to study the phenomenon of interest. Coburn and Russell (2008) found policies can be influencing in some dimensions of teachers' social networks including structure, access to expertise, and depth of interaction within networks. The design of the policy matters when considering teachers' time and attention to multiple priorities. Evidence suggests school leaders mediate district policy in how resources are configured to shape frequency, closeness, and depth of social interactions. School leaders may alternately interrupt or intensify district efforts for development of teachers' professional communities at the school level. Second, policy was shown to have a role in the nature and configuration of social networks. Social networks formed as teachers sought others with whom to talk about instruction. Social policy was shown to indirectly influence social networks in that it shapes work roles and flows that lead to patterns of interaction. Social networks were formed among teachers for a range of reasons. Teachers' reasons for social network formation included proximity, history of relationships, and trust. Thus, policy can influence social networks to some degree, but not entirely because of dependence on whom teachers trust, relate to, and interact. Routines of interaction crafted by the district flowed into schools with coaches and once inside schools, routines moved from teacher to teacher. Routines of interaction have the potential to interrupt or reinforce teacher interactions which suggest social capital acts more than mechanisms for resources such as information and materials, but can create conditions for network development.

Social network analysis allows for understanding structures and content of teachers' professional relations. Social networks are key to understanding the relationship among professional communities, teaching practices, and student achievement.

*Dialogical cultural action.*

Knowing and learning are inherent in the development and transformation of identities and knowing and learning are located in relationship to defined communities of practice. For newcomers, their trajectories for learning in a complex form of practice provide a lens for understanding the world as a person may experience. "All of this takes place in a *social world*, dialectically constituted in social practices that are in the process of reproduction, transformation, and change" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 123).

In transforming the world of education, teachers as leaders cannot think without the learners or for the learners, but only with the learners. Revolutionary teacher-leaders ought to work in communion with the learners. Pedagogy that is in communion with the learners can be liberating for the learners. When the learners are oppressed, then this becomes a pedagogy of the oppressed. The pedagogy of the oppressed necessitates a pedagogy that is an art and science of humanism, uses a problem posing approach, and dialogical methods, to achieve critical consciousness. Paulo Friere (1970) argues in, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "Only in the encounter of the people with the revolutionary leaders – in their communion, in their praxis – can this theory be built" (p. 183).

The revolutionary teacher leader is integrated with the people. There is unity and organization, and no conquest or division. The revolutionary teacher leader communicates with the people who choose to follow. Communication as dialogue elicits cooperation and unifies the leaders and followers in a pedagogy of dialogical cultural action. Pedagogy is an art and science

of humanism, problem posing, communion, and cultural synthesis. Paulo Friere (1970) masterfully persuades all who are in education, “The revolutionary process is eminently educational in character. Thus the road to revolution involves openness to the people, not imperviousness to them; it involves communion with the people, not mistrust” (p. 138).

Jane Vella (2002) argues in *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* that adult learning is best achieved in dialogue. Life experiences allow for adults to be in dialogue with others and learn best in relation to that life experience.

“The basic assumption is that all learners come with both experience and personal perceptions of the world based on that experience and all deserve respect as subjects of a learning dialogue. Adult education, community education and training are most effective when we honor that assumption” (p. 27).

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue “Learning viewed as situated activity has as its central defining characteristic a process that we call *legitimate peripheral participation*. By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. ‘Legitimate peripheral participation’ provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. Legitimate peripheral participation concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. This social process includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills” (p. 29).

Teachers have been called to lead transformation of teacher education to better prepare pre-service and in-service teachers for school reform. Such transformation can take place in learning communities in which teachers practice and participate in constructing knowledge

through dialogue. Zellermyer and Margolin (2005) conducted an interpretive study of a professional learning community of teacher educators being established. Invitations to participate were offered to 15 college-based supervisors of student teaching in an elementary school program of a teacher education college. Of those invited, 5 joined the study project. Data were collected from transcripts of audiotapes from group discussions, informal, open-ended interviews with supervisors, and reflective notes written by participants. Data were analyzed for critical events from conversations about curricular change as identified by the supervisors and their students. Findings were triangulated with transcripts, interviews, and reflective notes. Zellermyer and Margolin (2005) found the community was established during the critical events causing reassessment of their professional identities and relationships. The events aroused extreme emotional response as participants reconsidered their professional roles and identities. The critical events resulted in a change in the group because their attention was on their own emotional response for a considerable amount of time. Also, the critical events were triggered by self-study presentations by the 5 participants. Other members were surprised and deeply affected by the exposure and risk-taking of their colleagues' reconsideration of practices. This study suggests in complex adaptive systems, the peripheral members need dialogue and self-exposure from the active group to articulate lived experiences, and the active group needs the peripheral members for empowerment. Paradoxically, this dynamic between groups defines the other's identity.

This section discussed several tenets of sociocultural learning theory. As it supports the importance of learning in context and characteristic ways of engaging in a defined community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A social perspective on learning suggests a focus on the whole person in relation to social communities. Leadership practice involves more than one person and

is constructed in interactions with persons and situations. A relational view may provide understanding of the nature of and diversity of the positions from which teachers speak and promote change (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leander & Osborne, 2008; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). A social interpretation of learning and leading focuses on activities of social transformation. Teacher leader activities are important in school reform and supportive actions by administrators are mutually important. Teacher leaders, teachers, and administrators need to participate as a community of learners and experience changed practice. Teacher leaders need to invite other teachers into a community of leaders (Birky, Virginia D. et al., 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wasley, 1991). A community of leaders works in a socially and culturally structured world. The world of a teacher leader includes their classroom, school, and professional practice (Beachum & Dintith, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wasley, 1991). The notion of whole person can be further understood by intentionality of practice in context. Intentional design and re-design of structures and practices are central to leadership practice. Leadership opportunities are available to all teachers when leadership enactment is understood to be constituted of person, situation, and purpose of leadership (Blase & Blase 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sato, 2005; Spillane, 2006). Intentional and purposeful leadership practice includes engaging with artifacts or tools of everyday practice such as protocols, student work, test data, and organizational structures. Artifacts and tools of social practice are embedded in leadership functions. Tools of leadership functions support the work of leaders but need to be adapted to fit particular contexts (Athanasios et al., 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Spillane, 2006). Situated learning in context is about the relational character of knowledge, meaning, and concern for the people involved in the community. A situated perspective implies a comprehensive understanding of

the relationship involving the whole person, activity and the world. Imperative to teacher leaders is maintaining collegial relationships while practicing leadership. Effective teacher leaders emphasize less that others duplicate their practice, but rather become independent problem solvers as an aspect of their relationship. (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Killian & Wilkins, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Spillane, 2006). The trajectories for newcomers' learning in a complex context of practice provide a lens for understanding the world as a person may experience it. All experiences take place in a social world, dialectically constituted in social practices in processes of reproduction, transformation, and change. Learning in context where practice is socially constituted necessitates a pedagogy of humanism, problem posing, and critical consciousness. The assumption that all learners come with experience and perceptions of the world and all deserve respect by honoring that assumption (Friere, 1970; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vella, 2002)

The research base for this study is buttressed by three theoretical constructs (a) complexity theory (b) distributed leadership, and (c) sociocultural learning. Figure 2.3 illustrates the conceptual map for this study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a conceptual framework explains graphically the key constructs to be studied and presumed relationships among them.

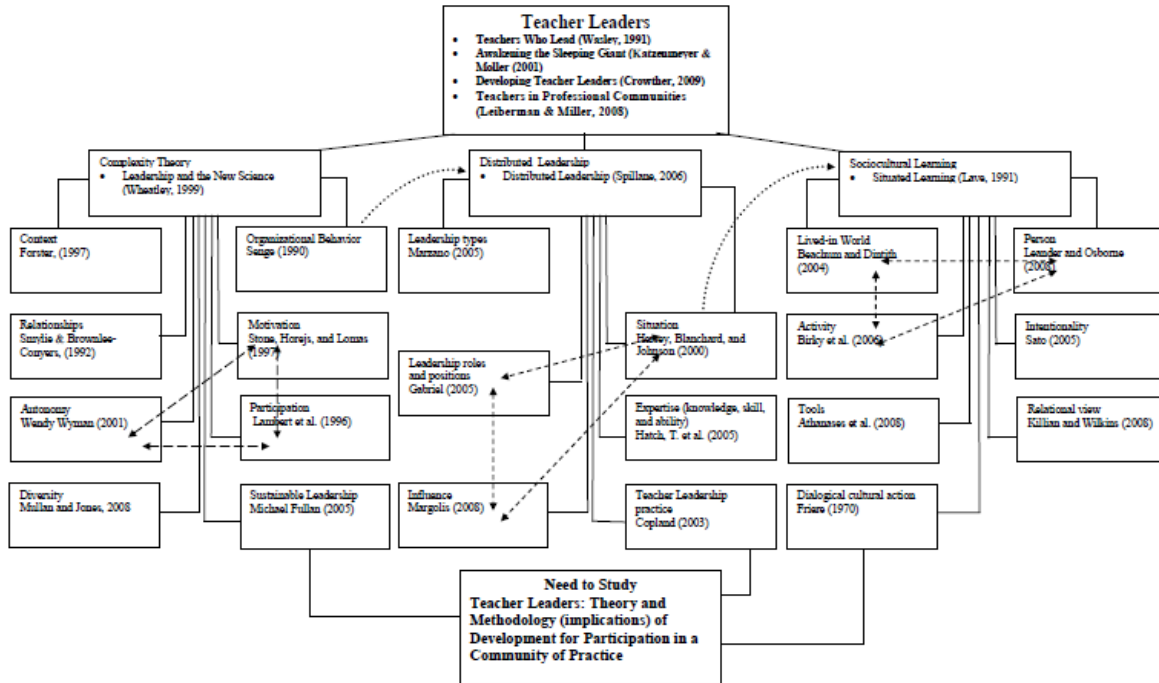


Figure 2.3

Concept map for teacher leadership

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the research methodology for this study. The first section is an explanation of the research design and rationale. The second section presents to the conceptual framework to connect the interrelationships of key themes and concepts studied. The next section explains the participation selection process. Data collection procedures are described in the following section. The method and process of data analysis are addressed in the next section. The final section provides the trustworthiness standards.

### Research Design and Rationale

The purposes of this qualitative study are to explain teacher leadership in K-6 public education and to identify implications of effective teacher leadership in full participation in a community of practice in public school reform efforts.

#### *Research Approach.*

A qualitative case study approach was used to accomplish the purpose of this study (Yin, 2009). Case studies as a strategy of inquiry in which the research explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals Stake (1995). Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. Creswell (1998, 2009) maintains, “A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g. an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection (p. 485)”

Case study seeks to explore a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group institution, or community. A single phenomena or entity is a bounded, integrated system. This approach is an intensive description and analysis of the case. Being that it is the unit of analysis that determines whether a study is a case study, other types of studies can be combined with case

study. The culture of a particular social group can be studied as an ethnographic case study. One could analyze case study data from a critical science perspective or obtain on person's story as narrative case study. Also, grounded theory could be built within a case study (Merriam, 2002).

Case study is a matter of choice of what is to be studied. The 'what' is a bounded system with a finite quality such as time, space, and/or components comprising the case. The case is a specific, complex, functioning unit with defined boundaries (Smith, 1978; Stake, 1995; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2009).

The study of a bounded system can include quantitative as well as qualitative data (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2009). For the purpose of this study, case study will have a qualitative focus and share with other qualitative research methodologies the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and a richly descriptive end product.

The issue of generalizability can be of concern with case study more so than other types of qualitative research. A lot can be learned from a particular case (Merriam, Sharan B., 1998). Readers can learn vicariously through the researcher's narrative description, according to Stake (2000). The rich description can create an excellent portrait that can become a prototype to be used in other situations. Erikson (1986) maintains that the general is in the particular, meaning, what is learned from a particular case can be generalized to similar situations. It is the reader, not the researcher, who generalizes the particulars of the case to his or her context.

Relating the above qualitative research concepts of data richness, persuasiveness of case study, and combining grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) can prove to be a valuable research strategy (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). Developing grounded theory from

case studies involves using one or more cases to generate theoretical constructs from case-based, empirical evidence. Cases form the basis from which a theory is developed inductively. A theory is developed by recognizing emergent patterns of relationships among constructs within and across cases (Yin, 2009).

Key to building theory for case studies is replication logic (Yin, 2009). Replication logic allows each case to serve as a distinct experiment that is a single analytic unit. Multiple cases are discrete units that can be analyzed as replications, contrasts, and extensions to an emerging theory. The cases and emerging theory maintain rich, real-world context in which the phenomenon is situated. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) argue and Yin (2009) concurs,

“Because case numbers are typically small, a few additional cases can significantly affect the quality of the emergent theory. For example, adding three cases to a single-case study is modest in terms of numbers, but offers four times the analytic power. Thus, theory building from multiple cases typically yields more robust, generalizable, and testable theory than single-case research (p. 27).”

Grounded theory from case studies is a relevant research strategy. Grounded theory from case studies relies on research design that includes justification for theory building, theoretical sampling, participant variation, evidence presented in tables and appendices in addition to rich narrative, and clarity of theoretical arguments (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009).

#### *Rationale for the Research Topic.*

The review of literature on teacher leaders provided a sizable body of literature. The bulk of the literature was case studies and descriptive studies (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2007; Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Blase, 2001; Blase & Blase, 2004; Crowther, 2009; Gabriel, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996; Wasley, 1991). Teacher leadership promises to affect the quality of schools like no other innovation. In view of the many cases, teacher leadership appears to be a crucial component in a complex system. Just as there are

many advances for teachers as leaders, there are many challenges to be confronted. Although no panacea exists for generating potential energy in teacher leadership, it remains clear that multiplying teacher leaders is a major challenge. A grounded theory of the lived experiences of teachers who lead offers insight into this phenomenon.

A grounded theory will be used to explain the action and interaction of teacher leaders in K-6 public education in the Denver metro area. This method was selected because it is a strategy in which the researcher can explain the teacher leader phenomenon systematically, accurately, and completely within the larger context of K-6 education in which it is embedded and the process of action/interaction that arises from events related to teacher leader practices (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

In this study the phenomenon included the experience, context, and process of teacher leaders' practices in K-6 public education as a community of practitioners and how the mastery of knowledge and skill requires participation in sociocultural practices of community. Further exploration will be the relations among practitioners and activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

#### *Need for Grounded Theory from Case Studies.*

Case studies of teacher leadership have been explored from a qualitative perspective. The case studies explored in depth programs or individuals. One qualitative grounded theory study was found that studied six high school teachers' conceptions of and purposes for using classroom discussion as an instructional method (Larson, 1997). In-depth interviews and think alouds were conducted to obtain teachers' conceptions of discussion as an instructional method. Purposive sampling was used to identify the teachers. Data were analyzed for common themes, categories, and properties using the constant comparative method until a 'theory-in-process'

emerged. Larson (1997) found teachers use discussion not only as an alternative method of instruction, but teachers teach the skill and dispositions needed for this method.

My study was grounded theory from case studies and used a similar strategy for data analysis. However, I will use theoretical sampling, involve teachers K-6, and focus on leadership practices rather than instructional methods. My study will be from the teacher leaders' perspective of their lived experiences to influence others at the classroom level and at the school level.

Three configurations of teacher leadership are currently practiced and have been studied. The first type is the teacher leader on full-time release from classroom teaching. The second is part-time release while having part-time classroom teaching responsibilities. The third is full-time classroom room teaching responsibilities with teacher leadership responsibilities (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). It is the third type of teacher leadership that I studied. For this study, teacher leaders were identified as a teacher who has: a) full-time classroom teaching responsibilities, b) experience in formal or informal leadership positions/roles, c) leadership expertise (knowledge, skills, and practice), and d) recognition by peers (i.e. teachers, principals and other administrators, parents) as a leader.

Full-time teachers are the largest force for influencing classroom and school level reform.

Further study through an in-depth analysis of teacher leaders' roles, practices, and culture will help to answer the research questions.

### *Research Questions.*

The grand tour (Spradley, 1980) research question addressed in this study is:  
What theory emerges from the roles, practices, and culture of teacher leaders in Denver area K-6 public education?

The subsequent questions are:

1. What are the guiding principles that inform teacher leaders in their roles?
2. What are the distinguishing qualities of teacher leaders' practices?
3. What characteristics of teacher leadership culture have these teachers experienced?

### Conceptual Framework

Given this study is a grounded theory from case studies, Figure 3.1 illustrates an emergent conceptual framework for this study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a conceptual framework explains graphically the key constructs to be studied and presumed relationships among them. Furthermore, theory building relies on a few key constructs that subsume a plethora of specifics. Identifying the key constructs and their interrelationship forms this conceptual framework.

To gain an understanding of the dynamics of teacher leadership, it is necessary to begin with a conceptual perspective. The conceptual perspective for this study serves two purposes. These purposes are (a) to provide a lens that focuses on what is being studied and (b) to formulate the questions asked (Creswell, 2009). Based on the two approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2009), the following conceptual framework (see Figure 3.1) has been developed to assist in organizing concepts and the relationship among them.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the conceptual framework for the study of teacher leaders. The three themes for study are the guiding principles of complexity of their work, qualities of practices in the distribution of leadership, and sociocultural learning experience. The lines indicate relationships may exist. The arrow suggests the direction of influence one concept may have on another. Under each theme are related concepts to the theme. The outcome of this study is a theory and a process of teacher leaders' development and practice. Mapping and

diagramming evolve and become more complex as the research progresses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) as will this conceptual framework.

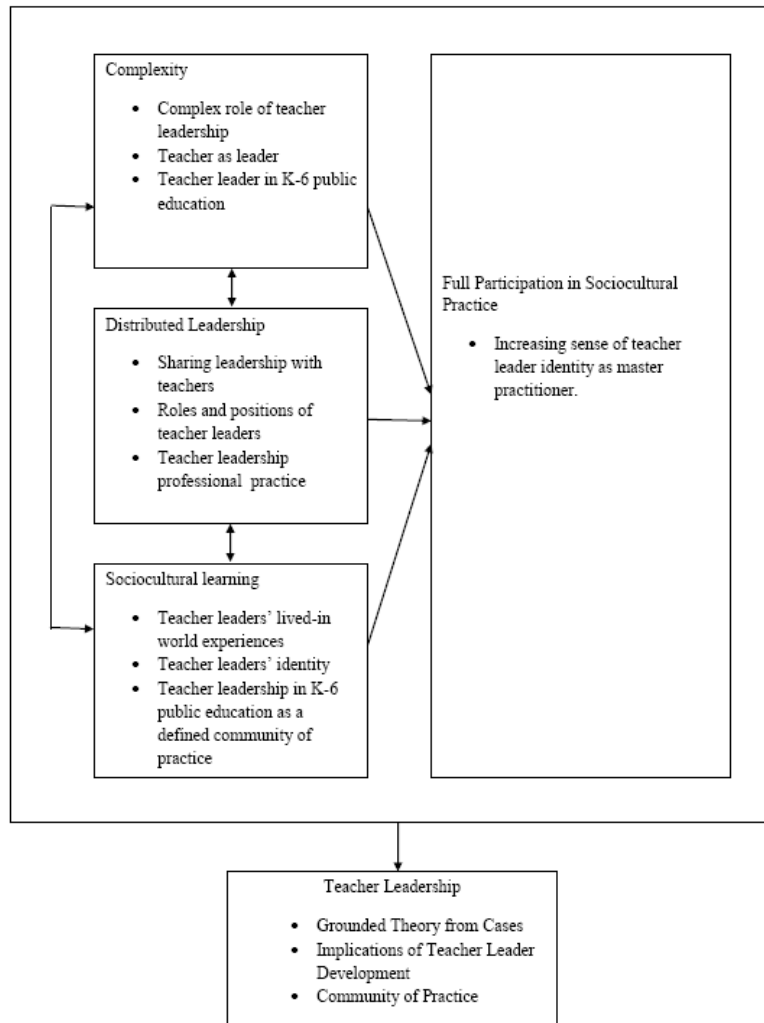


Figure 3.1

*Conceptual framework for the study of teacher leadership*

Location

Colorado has 178 school districts in eight regions. The Denver metropolitan region has eighteen school districts in ten counties. The counties are Adams, Arapaho, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Elbert, Gilpin, Jefferson, and Park. There are 423 elementary schools among counties (Colorado Department of Education [CDE], n.d.). Participants will be

convenience sampled from Jefferson County Schools, district R-1. Twenty elementary schools will be selected for sampling.

### Participant Selection

Theoretical sampling was used in selecting participants who had experience as or a connection to a teacher leader. An initial sample was chosen because of their logical relevance to the research problem. As data was collected and analyzed, gaps were identified in the data or in the theory. I then returned to the field to collect delimited data to fill conceptual gaps.

Participant selection was guided by concepts or themes derived from data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) explain the purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data that maximizes opportunities to collect data from people, places and events, and to develop concepts and relationships among concepts, and uncover variations. Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintain and Charmaz (2000) concurs that as the analyst collects, codes, and analyzes data, the analyst decides what data to collect next and where to collect it, to allow the theory to emerge. The sampling procedure may include participants that are quite diverse (Merriam, 2002), but all are elementary K-6 teachers.

Twenty K-6 public elementary schools from Jefferson County School District were purposively sampled to recruit the participants for this study. Twenty principals from the respective schools were initially contacted to acquire consent to conduct research in their school. Six principals gave consent and recommended teachers for participation in this study. The three teachers who agreed to participate in this study provided data from interview transcriptions, observational field notes, and documents. Three were theoretically sampled as teacher leaders. All participants were contacted using one of three types of recruitment communications: telephone, letter, or email to determine participation, action, and/or set up appointments (Appendix A).

## Data Collection Procedures

Three types of data collection were used. One was observations of teacher leaders in their work environment such as their classroom, conference rooms, and meeting areas. Another was audio recorded in-depth interviews with individual participants. Data from observations and interviews served as the primary source data. A third type of data collection was documents from the site (i.e., minutes from meetings, memos, emails) related to teacher leadership practice. The Human Research Committee (HRC) of Colorado State University (CSU) approved this proposal April 19, 2011 (Identification Number 09-1416H). Prior to the approval date, the HRC of CSU required a letter of consent from each participant (Appendix C). Informed consent was on official letterhead and signed by the participant.

### *Observations.*

Qualitative observations, according to Creswell (2009), are used by the researcher to take field notes on the participant at the site. The researcher may also engage in activities ranging from non-participant to complete participant. Observations were made as a non-participant at the teacher leaders schools (meetings, classrooms, and activities) from as early as June 2011 and continued to May 2012.

### *Interviews.*

The interviews were in-depth unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Merriam (1998) explains that for qualitative investigations, interviews tend to be open ended and less structured, allowing participants to define their world experiences in unique ways. Further, Corbin and Strauss (2008) illustrate how an unstructured interview allows participants to tell their story and only when the narrative is finished does the interviewer ask questions about points mentioned that needed further exploration. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibly

worded and less structured questions to address certain points. This allows the researcher to respond to the situation, to the emerging world view, and the new points on the topic (Merriam, S. B., 1998).

The individual interviews were scheduled at a time and location convenient for both the researcher and participant outside of school hours. Interviews were conducted from as early as June 2011 and continued to May 2012. Interviews lasted no longer than two hours. All participants and their school were identified by a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes. Pseudonyms were assigned in sequential order as interviews of participants were conducted and referred to each participant as participant with the chronological number (for example, Teacher Leader 1). During the study, the researcher maintained a participant list that links name to number only to assure that the research record is complete. The participant list will be destroyed at the end of the study. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Each participant was provided a copy of their transcribed interview and given two weeks for elaboration, clarification, or revisions.

#### *Documents.*

Documents can be useful to the researcher in obtaining the language of the participants, in ease of obtaining information, and in gaining written evidence sparing transcription (Creswell, 2009). Documents are metaphorically voices begging to be heard (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The documents for use in this study will be collected between April 2011 and December 2011. They serve as resources throughout the research process. Those collected at the school level may include agendas, school reports, newsletters, and school improvement plans. These provide insight on the sociocultural context of the teacher leaders' work. Additional documents collected

from teacher leader's may include newsletters, handouts from presentations, and written communications dated within the last twelve months.

## Data Analysis

### *Procedures for coding.*

The transcripts for both individual interviews was analyzed by first reading the transcript one time through and then a second time to identify open codes in the margin. The analysis process evolved from open coding to axial coding. Axial coding is the relating of open codes to one another, so that concepts can be formed. Concepts were further developed by analyzing the data for properties that characterized a concept. Each property was analyzed for its dimensions. Concepts, then properties and dimensions, formed themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Also, analysis of the data gathered from observations and documents was coded and examined in relation to the concepts or themes.

### *Constant Comparative Analysis.*

The three sets of data collected were analyzed using a constant comparative method by which

...each incident in the data is compared with other incidents for similarities and differences. Incidents found to be conceptually similar are grouped together under a higher-level descriptive concept. This type of comparison is essential to all analysis because it allows the researcher to differentiate one category/theme from another and to identify properties and dimensions specific to that category/theme (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 73).

Themes were identified by using the ten guidelines for the use of comparisons suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008). They provide direction for a researcher:

1. To grasp the meaning of events
2. To sensitize the researcher to possible properties and dimensions of concepts
3. To suggest further questions or observations

4. To move analysis from the level of description to the level of abstraction
5. To focus the analysis on the level of abstraction rather than a single case.
6. To examine one's own bias, assumptions, perspectives, and those of the participants
7. To examine and re-examine findings for the need to qualify or alter interpretations
8. To discover variation and general patterns
9. To reveal a fluid and creative stance toward the data
10. To assist linking and compressing of categories

#### Trustworthiness

Merriam (2002) states that what makes a good qualitative study is determined by how it was systematically and ethically carried out, and if the findings are trustworthy. Eight strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness for this study will include:

Table 3.1

*Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness*

Strategy	Implementation	Application
Triangulation	using multiple resources or methods to confirm data	Data will be confirmed among interview transcripts, documents, and observations.
Member checks	verifying initial interpretations with the participants	All participants will verify my interpretations for accuracy.
Peer review	discussing the research process with colleagues as the study progresses through its stages	Committee members will serve as peer review.
Researcher's position	self-reflecting to keep in check assumption and bias	Researcher's position will be kept in check with journals and memos and peer review.
Adequate engagement in data collection	seeking 'saturation' of the data	Data will be gathered from a number of participants to assure adequacy in data collection.
Maximum variation	seeking variation and diversity in the theoretical sample	Theoretical sampling procedures will seek maximum variation.
Audit trail	recording a detailed account of the research process	Journals, logs, and field notes will be included in the audit trail.
Rich, thick descriptions	providing description that enables the readers to gather and/or apply the research implications	Rich, thick, descriptions will be necessary to illuminate the complexity of teacher leader phenomenon and to inform the theory development.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Introduction

This chapter presents in two parts the analysis and findings from three case studies of K-6 Public Education teacher leaders whose professional practices extend beyond their classroom teaching responsibilities. These teacher leaders lead from the classroom without a formal position or title. The analyses include an explanation of teacher leadership in terms of why they choose to lead and how they are becoming a leader. Principles of leadership concepts, joined with tenets of leadership practice, and constructs of socio-cultural learning guide the analysis.

In part one, each case is introduced with a description of the teacher leader's professional profile from which they lead. Then each teacher leader's leadership work is explained relative to their teaching responsibilities. The findings of each case were derived from transcribed, semi-structured interviews, field notes from observations, and documents provided by the teacher leaders. The findings reported below are presented by individual case. Individual case findings include three sections. The first section describes the teacher leader's professional context. The second section contains the teacher leader's principles of leadership concepts, tenets of leadership practice, and constructs of learning toward becoming a teacher leader. The third section contains an explanation as to how the teacher leader enacts her leadership capacity.

In part two, across-case synthesis is presented that explains an analytic theory of teacher leadership. An analytic theory constructed from the three case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions in section two of the cases studied. A theory of teacher leadership suggests an explanation of 'how' and 'why' the teacher leaders in this study practice leadership without the need of a formal title or position.

## Participants

A list of twenty K-6 public elementary schools from Jefferson County School District was purposively sampled to recruit the participants for this study. Twenty principals from the respective schools were initially contacted to acquire consent to conduct research in their school. Six principals gave consent and recommended teachers for participation in this study. The three teachers who agreed to participate in this study provided data from interview transcriptions, observational field notes, and documents. The data were coded and analyzed for emerging themes, categories, and concepts.

The three teacher leaders were identified by first name pseudonyms to safeguard their identity and confidentiality in the provision of data. The first name pseudonyms were assigned and utilized for each teacher leader to create a repertoire conducive to candid and open interview responses and observed activities. The teacher leaders were honest and comfortable when providing interview responses and being observed. Confidentiality was further established by conducting interviews and observations at times and places convenient for the teacher leaders.

The three teacher leaders were women ranging in age from early thirties to fifties. All three have taught in K-6 public education exclusively. Their teaching experiences varied in years and in teaching positions. Years experience was from five years to more than fifteen years and positions spanned K-6. Each of the teacher leaders evidences a sincere commitment to educating children.

### Madison's Professional Profile

Madison is a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at an elementary school located in a southwest suburb of Jefferson County. Her school serves about 450 students pre-kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

There are five other elementary schools in the area that are feeder schools to one middle school and one high school for this particular articulation area within Jefferson County School District.

The school has thirty- seven staff members, 22 are general classroom teachers; 10 are specials teachers (art, music, P.E.) and academic support teachers; (special education and teacher librarian); 5 are office staff (principal, secretaries, clinic aide, and facilities manager); and 1 instructional coach. The staff provides general course requirements as per the school district guidelines. In addition, enrichment programs are offered through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) including art, computer, Spanish, and theater.

Most students live in the surrounding area. The school is a neighborhood elementary school. The neighborhood can be described socio-economically as upper middle-class. Two-thirds of the student population are white and one-third are minority (Asian, Black, Hispanic, and multi-racial). Student enrollment shows a 2% mobility rate annually. State assessment score reports indicate that 81% (average) of students perform proficient or above in reading, writing, and math in grades 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>.

Madison invited me to her home for our interview. She greeted me at the front door and welcomed me in. She led me to the kitchen area toward the back of her home. Between us and the kitchen table was a baby gate securely set in the door jam. On the opposite side of the baby gate was a Golden Retriever pup standing on his hind legs with his paws up against the baby gate. Madison and I stopped over the baby gate with the pup at our feet we situated ourselves at the kitchen table. Madison offers me a glass of ice water before we begin our interview. From where I am seated I can see into an adjoining room where an upright piano stands among bookshelves. Her home is beautiful and neatly kept all around us. Several books were neatly stacked on the table. One book was the Holy Bible and the others were titles pertaining to caring

for a Golden Retriever. Madison placed a goblet of water with ice on the table in front of me. As we settled ourselves at the table to begin the interview, the pup also settled down for a nap.

I began by asking Madison about her experience in K-6 public education. She explained that after completing her undergraduate degree, she went to graduate school. Her college degrees were focused on linguistics. Her first teaching assignment was at a Title 1 school in Jefferson County School District where she taught children who were learning English as a second language how to read. She worked with the children in small groups as a model of reading intervention her first year teaching. The following three years, she taught children in a general 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom while at the same Title 1 school. The recent two years Madison has been teaching at her current school after transferring from the Title 1 school. In the six years that she has been teaching, she has acquired experience and insight on K-6 public education. In her initial years of teaching, Madison tell of her acquisition of coming to understanding how the school district is structured, how the school system's departments function, and how teachers such as herself fit into the function of the school system.

Madison was recommended by her principal to participate in this study. My visits with Madison provided me with a clear view into her professional life as a teacher leader. From my view, I understand why her principal would identify her leadership talent. Madison's talent appear to have its roots in several principle-oriented leadership concepts.

*Complexity of teacher leadership in K-6 public education.*

“The District” is how Madison refers to Jefferson County School District. By identifying the school district in this way suggests that the school district is recognized primarily as a whole organization. The organization is constituted of many departments and organizational divisions, with each contributing to the whole organization. It takes all the parts of the school district to

provide an education for youngsters. K-6 education is an important part of the district; however, K-6 education alone is but one of the many parts that constitutes a school district. Madison understands her work is part of the school district and this system, though having organizational properties of a typical hierarchical system, causes teachers leaders to work with inherent ambiguities.

*Context.*

Feelings of ambiguity can be common as teachers lead from their classroom. From a classroom view, a teacher receives information from many district sources, decisions are made by several departments, and directives are given by many people. “The district seems to be going in a lot of different directions at all times,” explained Madison. Accepting the inherent ambiguities of a school system and learning to thrive in ambiguous contexts comes with teaching and leading in the public education system.

As a K-6 public educator Madison has teaching responsibilities for all subjects – literacy, math, language arts, science, and social studies. As a teacher leader she has additional responsibilities other than her classroom duties such as committees, team meetings, and occasionally facilitating professional development. For her to do her work she must create a sense of coherence among the different initiatives at the district level and their applicability to her school and classroom. She admits that she does not always know what all the initiatives are that the district is promoting. She attributes the many initiatives to the varied work of the multiple departments within the school district. “There are all these different areas and they each have their own direction. I feel like all those pieces are necessary to have,” said Madison. Putting all those pieces together in a coherent plan takes effort by a teacher leader to turn ambiguous initiatives into meaningful practice. She stated, “We [teachers] are the ones that have

to figure out how they all work together.” Indeed, figuring out how all the pieces work together is the work of teachers and others at the school level.

At the school level, Madison identified some of the inner workings of her elementary school. What seems to make her school work well involves two general structures. The first involves people in particular roles. Madison mentioned specifically the principal, coach, teachers, and secretaries and each of them carrying on their professional responsibilities. The second included advisory groups. Advisory groups that Madison spoke of included PTA, technology committee, vertical teams and grade-level teams. Such groups were tasked with decision-making on behalf of the school. Madison explained that decisions were made by many different departments, groups, and people and are passed down. Her role as a teacher leader was to take all of that into account as she did her job.

*Relationships among roles.*

Figuring out how all the pieces work together come by an effort that is put forth by a teacher leader. A teacher leader’s role in the work that needs to be done in K-6 education involves identifying and/or creating relationships among departments, roles, and people.

Jefferson County Public Schools is the largest school district in Colorado. Madison’s school where she currently teaches 4<sup>th</sup> graders is one of eighty-nine K-6 elementary schools in the district. The district offers support for elementary teachers’ professional development through the district’s administrative departments. Madison utilizes departmental resources to further her professional growth. She pointed out, “I always try to get as much information as possible, so I will go meetings or attend webinars.” Networking by attending meetings or webinars on district initiatives requires Madison to develop and/or maintain her knowledge of how administrative departments relate to each other and how they relate to Madison’s work at

her school and in her classroom. She acknowledged that each department has their particular directives and they are responsible for getting information to schools and teachers. Likewise, a teacher leader makes it her job to seek information from district-level sources.

District-level relationships can offer networking opportunities for supporting a teacher leader's professional growth relative to their general professional needs. Other than accessing administrative departments at the district level through meetings or digital technology, a teacher leader may be more likely to call upon collegial relationships for support at the school level. Collegial relationships in a teacher leader's immediate context may be her best source for support. Madison spoke of two types of school-level supportive relationships. The first being decision-making committees and the second being individuals. From her experience with participating on the technology committee, Madison was able to identify the roles committees play in school improvement efforts. School improvement can be accomplished by having a number of committees for different purposes. Each committee would have a purpose in making decisions or recommendations toward school improvement. Madison noted that committees within her school form "a kind of system" for a shared decision-making model.

A second kind of supportive relationship is among individual staff members. A teacher who leads, such as Madison, seeks partnerships among individual staff members. She spoke highly of the current principal of her school. She felt that he was someone she could go to for help finding possible answers to questions she had. The instructional coach was another staff member Madison worked closely with. Their work together focused mostly on instructional matters such as implementing district initiatives, analyzing student assessment data, and developing instructional practices. Teammates are also important in a teacher's professional life. Madison and her teammates use time together to share instructional practices and resources. Her

teammates are key in much of her work. Further, I observed Madison working with special educators as they collaborated on meeting certain individual student needs. Paraprofessionals were observed and teacher librarian and school secretaries were mentioned as being important in Madison's school-level network. School-level networking as exemplified in Madison's case was about identifying how school roles relate amongst themselves and creating relationships with people throughout the school. A teacher leader participates among diverse partnerships.

*Diversity abounds.*

K-6 public education is made possible by the work of many groups and people that represent diverse dimensions of education. The representative diversity was discussed by Madison on the organizational, group, and individual levels.

A teacher leader's work can be expected to be among diverse groups and individuals at the organizational level. Madison explained her view of the district-level decision-making structures as "factions". She identified specific administrative departments that may be considered a faction. For example, departments with a particular focus in a content area such as math, English language arts, or science can be a faction as a governance party. She also spoke of other parties that cross departments. Some parties are responsible for student assessment and data, while others are responsible for curriculum coordination with CAP are a couple of examples Madison noted. Each of these factions presents their position on school improvement. These factions are believed by Madison to be necessary.

Within Madison's elementary school are other factions. She reported that at a school level were similar governance structures as at the district level. Her elementary school utilized "teams" and "committees" that represent governance parties. Teams and committees typically form around school-level initiatives and allow those teachers with an interest in a committee's

initiative to join that committee. In Madison's case she was a member of the technology committee. The technology committee had the charge of making decisions for the school's direction regarding technology. The technology committee was one of many committees at the school level charged with the same task of decision making. Decision making was also given to vertical teams and grade level teams. Vertical teams are typically composed of one teacher from across grade levels and departments. A vertical team may include a 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in addition to a special educator, for example. Other configurations are possible and several vertical teams could be formed within an elementary school. Grade level teams are more common in a K-6 education. In an elementary school such as Madison's there would be seven grade-level teams. Madison's 4<sup>th</sup> grade team would be one of seven grade-level teams at her school. Madison's participation with committees and teams are essential to Madison's school in providing guidance toward school improvement. They allow for diversified perspectives on school issues.

Participation with diverse groups is part of a teacher leader's work. What is more, a teacher leader will also interact on an individual level within a K-6 educational culture of diversity. The diverse culture of Madison's school was observed with a focus on adult interaction from a teacher leader's perspective. My observations of Madison's leadership work with adult individuals were relative in two ways. First, I saw her collaborating with teammates, special educators, and a paraprofessional as these roles are relative to one another in educating youngsters and sustaining a school. An important task a teacher undertakes is to conceptualize how such roles relate to the function of a school. Second, with the same collection of individuals Madison displayed the ability to relate to them in a professional and personal way. Her pleasant demeanor allows for her to have quality professional relationships with varied individuals.

*Interaction of motivation, participation, and autonomy.*

From her interview and observations, I gathered that Madison thrives in relation to others. Her ability to thrive can be derived from feeling empowered to do the job she was hired to do as a valued teacher. Madison explained to me that with all her work what mattered for her to work hard at teaching and leading was recognition for her efforts. She gave momentary consideration to pay for performance and a Hawaiian vacation as an example to make her point. Recognition from her peers and principal was motivating for her more so than pay or prizes as incentives. In addition, Madison had latitude in conducting her professional practices. Although the principal and coach gave her direction, Madison was given sufficient leeway in her classroom to exercise her style of teaching and to try new practices. By taking the opportunity to try new practices in her classroom she was able to develop confidence to eventually share her practice with others. When Madison integrated SmartBoard technology into her classroom and then provided professional development so her colleagues could learn from her illustrates how a teacher's freedom to try new practices can be beneficial to her and may others. Furthermore, Madison's willingness to learn and then share her knowledge and experience with others allowed her to work with other teachers in her school. Participating in a school-wide effort seemed to be something Madison found to be enjoyable. Enjoyment in leading for the classroom stems from Madison's motivation from recognition for her effort, freedom to try new practices in her classroom, and participating in school-wide efforts directly with other teachers.

*Sustaining leadership work.*

Madison's motivation to be a teacher who leads comes from multiple sources. Sources that feed her drive to continue need to be considered with regard to sustainability. When I asked Madison what gets her to the classroom every day, she replied with, "I think the deep down

knowledge that, yes, I am really making a difference.” Making a difference in the lives of her students was important to her. She aspires to cultivate a “love of learning” in her students that can continue to grow over time. And, the difference that she aims to make goes beyond her classroom. When community members, co-workers, and the principal take notice of her work she finds that it is up-lifting to her spirit. With her spirit high, she believes she can keep on going.

*Organizational behavior.*

An energized spirit can most likely be seen in a person such as Madison. That same energy should be shared throughout a school system. Madison provided an excellent example of how shared energy can work in Jefferson County Schools. Madison explained how she and her teammate meet with the instructional coach to discuss school district initiatives. Among them, they looked at what the district initiatives may mean for their school. They use school data to assess where their school was relative to the district’s aim with an initiative. While they are discussing their assessment of the situation, Madison is mentally processing what the initiative may mean for her classroom. With the aide from a supportive coach, teammate, and school-level data, Madison returns to her classroom to put into practice an initiative. School-district-level personnel formalize district initiatives that school-level personnel such as an instructional coach or principal contextualizes and a classroom-level teacher then operationalizes it. A district initiative’s aim ought to be for educational improvement so teachers can provide a quality learning experience for students. Likewise, a teacher’s aim in operationalizing a district initiative ought to be for contributing to improving the school system. Thus, in this way a school system can function as a whole rather than isolated parts.

*Summary.*

Madison’s work as a teacher leader was oriented in several principles of practice.

Principles in leading guide a teacher as she leads from the classroom. Table 4.1 summarizes the principles Madison practices, her responsibility in conceptualizing each principle, and an explanation of how Madison applied the principles.

Table 4.1

*Principles of teacher leadership practice*

Principle of practice	Teacher leadership application	Explanation
Contextualized leadership	Contextualizing her role as a classroom teacher in Jefferson County Schools as a whole organization	Madison referred to the Jefferson County Schools as “The District”. A school district is constituted of many organizational units. She is working at identifying her role at the classroom-level within the school system.
Relationships among roles	Identifying/creating relationships among school district units	Madison obtained information and attends meetings the district offers. A teacher leader needs information to stay informed on school district initiatives. She is developing her professional network.
Essential diversity	Working among diverse groups and individuals	Madison described public school structures as “factions”. Factions are understood to be a group that tends to be self-seeking. She is becoming aware that diversity is inherent in a school system.
Interaction of motivation, autonomy, and participation	Having a purpose, focus, and willingness to participate in leadership work typically with teams and committees	Madison found recognition, freedom, and opportunity key to leading from her classroom. Motivation, autonomy, and participation constitute one another. She is establishing her professional values.
Sustainable leadership	Continuing with school improvement efforts over time	Madison believed that her commitment to her work benefits others and that allows her to keep on going. Teacher leaders need sources to renew their energy. She is obtaining her renewed energy from inspiration.
Systems thinking	Contributing to the educational system	Madison contributed to K-6 education by what means are available to her at the school and district level. A teacher leader alone cannot be expected to do it all or know it all. She is trusting in the system that others will make a contribution to the education of youngsters.

*Tenets of distributing leadership.*

Teacher leadership functions as an important part of the Jefferson County School system in the particular way that Madison practices leadership. Her practice of leadership lends itself to the concept of teachers performing leadership work. Principals and instructional coaches may not be able to carry alone the leadership load in K-6 education. Madison, as a teacher leader, demonstrated how leadership can be distributed so educators are working together for school improvement.

*Madison's teacher leadership types.*

An elementary school teacher exhibits leadership primarily in the classroom setting. Leadership in this setting allows a teacher to develop leadership types. Teacher leaders, such as Madison, can have a repertoire of multiple leadership types that can be practiced depending on a particular situation and with whom she may be working. Her types of leadership can be practiced inside and outside of her classroom.

I gathered that Madison had at least three leadership types that she practiced in teacher leadership. First, Madison was an instructional leader. Instructional leadership was a type of leadership she developed and honed in her classroom and was able to generalize to staff members. For example, when she provided staff development for using SmartBoard in the classroom, she was an instructional resource that her colleagues could turn to for her support. She was encouraging in facilitating learning with adult learners. Second, Madison shared leadership. Her involvement in committees and teams was aimed at achieving group and/or school goals. The technology committee was charged with deciding how to use technology for school improvement. Her grade-level team had the task of improving student performance. Her involvement means the labor was shared amongst other committee or team members. Third,

Madison was collaborative in leading. When I observed her in a team meeting, I saw her sit side-by-side with her teammate at a half-round table as they co-planned instruction. They met in Madison's classroom and each brought resources to the table. Together they planned for the upcoming weeks across all content areas. Madison's types of leadership grant her flexibility in how she participates in various leadership capacities.

*Expertise.*

As she takes part in different leadership capacities, Madison must take stock of her talent. An elementary teacher must be talented in teaching many content areas throughout the day. Madison teaches 4<sup>th</sup> grade with the same group of students all content areas all day. She is expected to have expertise across the academic content areas of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Furthermore, an elementary teacher ought to have expertise in professional management of her time, space, and materials. Madison describes herself as being very organized. The appearance of her classroom confirms her sentiment. However, her organizational management goes further than seating arrangements and bookshelves. She also organizes student data using spreadsheets. Spreadsheets help her to make student performance data relevant for planning instruction to meet student needs. In addition, a teacher leader often finds one or more areas of focus that which she develops her expertise. One that stood out for Madison was technology and its use in the classroom. A teacher leader has expertise in one or more areas and her expertise should be shared with others, so teachers and principals can take notice.

*Situation, roles, and influence interaction.*

A situation presents an opportunity for a teacher leader to share her expertise in an informal role where she can influence other teachers to improve their practice. When Madison

knew her school would be getting a SmartBoard, she wanted to learn as much as she could about how to use it in her classroom. She was one of the more knowledgeable teachers on staff who knew how to use one. With the help from PTA, every classroom had a SmartBoard installed. Madison's knowledge and experience with SmartBoard in addition to school wide implementation formed a situation fit for an informal and temporary leadership role. Her role was to serve as a resident expert on SmartBoard use in classrooms. She was provided the opportunity by her principal to do staff development and offer support for teachers in her school. This role, though temporary, allowed Madison to influence her colleagues to try using newly implemented technology in classroom practice. Teacher leaders take an opportunity in a given situation to serve in a role where influencing others to change or improve their practice.

*Teacher leadership in practice.*

Teacher leadership has leadership practice at its core. Practice of leadership is recognizing the situation to determine when to lead or follow, and then determining what action to take. There were situations when Madison filled the leadership role on the technology committee. Other committee members and her colleagues followed Madison's lead. Teacher leadership, however; isn't about always having to lead. When I observed Madison in a grade-level team meeting, I noticed she contributed to instructional planning by following her teammate's lead. For example, when they were planning for writing instruction, Madison's teammate had the CAP documents in front of her. The CAP documents were highlighted and annotated by the teammate. As they discussed the content of the CAP documents, it appeared to me that Madison's teammate lead the discussion and planning for writing instruction by referencing the CAP documents and suggesting instructional objectives. Madison viewed the CAP documents on her computer and contributed ideas about how they could teach certain

objectives. At times Madison stood up from the half-round table, walked over to her bookshelf to retrieve professional resources for writing instruction that might have been helpful for planning writing instruction. As the two team planned, Madison maintained teacher leadership practice by contributing to the situation of team planning. Her contribution was to follow her teammate's lead by offering ideas and materials for teaching. Teacher leadership practice was constituted by the situation of team planning, knowing when to lead and when to follow with a teammate, and plan for instructional activities. A good leader can also be a good follower in a given situation.

*Summary.*

Madison is a teacher in an elementary school where leadership can be shared by her principal. Shared leadership allowed Madison to develop and have her leadership type. The type of leader Madison is becoming can be used in the leadership roles she holds. In those roles she was able to assert her influence on other educators as a situation presented an opportunity for her. Madison also asserted herself in teacher leadership practice. In practice, the situation cued Madison to contribute to a task as a leader or follower. Figure 4.1 depicts a distributed leadership framework how Madison may practice teacher leadership.

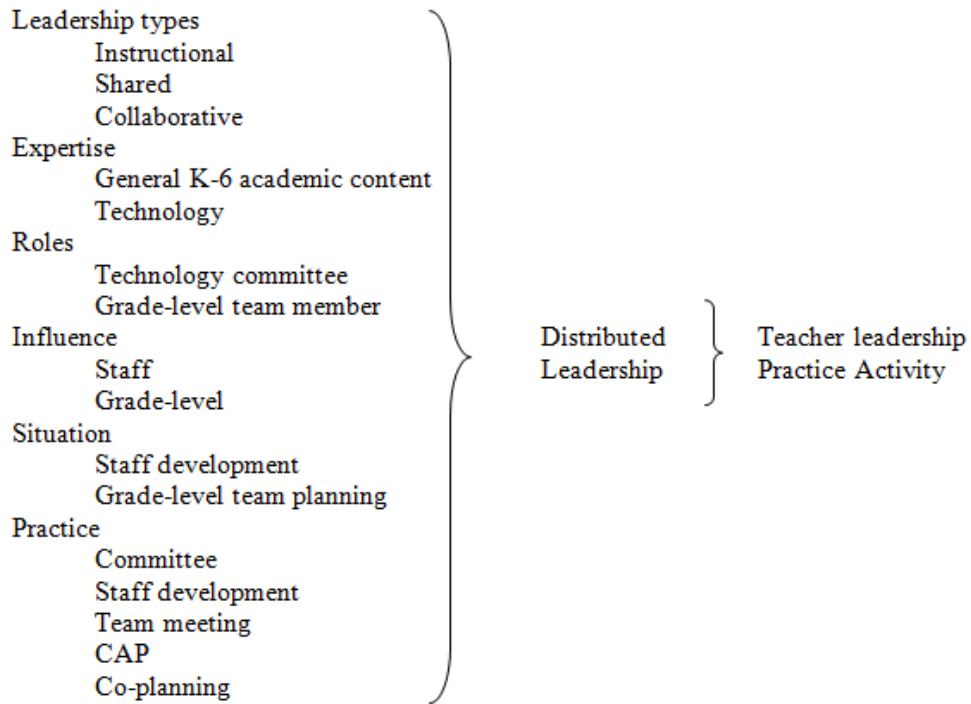


Figure 4.1

*Distributed leadership framework for Madison*

*Sociocultural construction of a teacher leader.*

Teacher leadership puts a premium on leadership practice in context. Learning to lead in context is imperative in social practice of teacher leadership as experienced by K-6 teachers in public schools. Madison is learning to be a teacher leader in relation to the social world of elementary education.

*Teacher leader, activity, and social structure.*

Teacher leadership in K-6 public education involves a person in relation to others in her workplace. Madison, as a teacher leader, is learning to be a leader by on-going participation in school work that involves others. To illustrate, Madison was a member of the technology committee. Madison has her expertise in uses of technology in the classroom. The technology committee met as a group to discuss school-level needs on a regular basis. When she met with

fellow technology committee members, they, too, bring their expertise and they all can offer recommendations for teachers in the building to use technology. In committee, Madison is a leader among leaders. Madison contributes by participating in committee meetings where she is part of the decision-making for school use of technology as a member of the committee. Teacher leadership is about each person participating in a leadership practice within a defined professional community over time.

*Leading with intention.*

Madison's participation in leadership practice was guided by intentional activities such as co-planning with grade-level teammates. The intentional focus on lesson planning across content areas exemplified how practical leadership can be enacted during common planning time with grade-level teammates. Madison and her teammate had a common planning time everyday as part of their daily schedule. This time together provides the two teammates a social structure in elementary education to engage in intentional activities relevant to them at particular times. Leadership practice in team meetings involved intentional, on-going decision-making.

*Tools of teacher leaders.*

Teacher leadership with intentionality of practice involves social artifacts. Some social artifacts that Madison used as tools for mediating her learning in becoming a kind of teacher leader included professional social structures. In her elementary school she participated in the cultural life of K-6 public education with staff meetings, team meetings, professional development, and committee meetings. Participation is a way for engaging in learning in social activities. Also, she connected district-level CAP planning documents to her classroom-level lesson planning book. Documentation such as this becomes artifacts representing her leadership in practice. Additionally, she had at her convenience various professional resources kept in

school or her classroom. A collection of teacher guides, professional literature, teacher created materials, and digital equipment can be thought of as tools of the trade for teachers who lead. Last, she accesses professional data on student performance. Data accessed by Madison included TCAP (Transitional Colorado Assessment Program) state assessment, Acuity district assessment, and class work formative assessments. Student performance data offered Madison opportunities to reflect and self-direct her learning to improve as a teacher who leads in her classroom. Becoming a teacher leader in a defined professional community includes engaging with and leaving artifacts or tools of practice in social organizations.

*Collegial relationships.*

Becoming a teacher leader in a defined professional community of elementary education emphasizes a person in relation to others in the context of practice. A teacher leader maintains collegial relationships with other educators in leadership practice. Learning happens in relations among people in a social context. When I observed Madison in a grade-level team planning meeting, Madison and her teammate were co-planning their lessons. They shared resources and ideas openly with each other. Their conversation was professional and friendly. Madison explained to me that for her and her teammate, when given a choice by their principal what grade level they wanted to teach, grade level did not matter to them so long as they could be teammates. Learning from each other appeared to be reciprocal. The instructional coach and the principal were two others that Madison maintained work relationships with. The instructional coach helped with district initiatives pertaining mainly to curriculum and instruction. The principal supported her with guidance on her work performance. Another important relationship for a teacher leader can be with a student teacher. Madison was supervising a male college student for his student teaching experience. The organizational structure of Madison's

classroom, her experience, and her caring personality provided a positive experience for this new teacher recruit. I observed her consulting with him on his lessons. She provided clear direction for him and empowered him to make decisions on his own. She respected him as a colleague and not just a student. Becoming a teacher leader is an evolving effort for a teacher leader in her work among educators in professional practice.

*Dialogue for learning together.*

Teacher leadership practice in context can be effective when a teacher leader communicates with her colleagues. Communication in the form of dialogue allows teachers to think, learn, and practice together. Madison explained to me how she engaged in dialogue with grade-level team members regarding implementation of a new reading professional resource for teaching reading.

I think about the Café Daily 5 system. When that came out a couple years ago and our school was like well, this is going to be required reading next year. You can read it over the summer if you want to. So, I read it over the summer and just tried it as soon as it came out at the school. There were a couple of us that just gave it a go from day one to see how it would go. We'd have lunch conversations and coffee conversations about how this part worked for you, or, how you are structuring this part.

Also, she used dialogue to engage with the staff as she offered staff development on use of SmartBoard technology in the classroom. She had been using SmartBoard in her classroom, so she offered to other teachers an opportunity to reproduce her practice in ways that were meaningful to them. Additionally, Madison's dialogical participation with the technology committee allows her to further dialogue with staff members for school-level transformation and change through staff development. As she explained the process, "I was on the tech committee at this school. We made recommendations and they would take it to the staff. Everybody would have to have to agree on our decisions." Decisions were not made for other teachers, but with

them in dialogue. Teachers as leaders practice in social structures of K-6 education with dialogical processes for reproduction, transformation, and change of teaching.

*Summary.*

Teacher leadership occurs in activities in socially structured context of K-6 public education. A teacher leader is considered as a person relative to others, activities, and her school. Teacher leaders become a kind of leader through intentional practices. Practice involves engaging with and creating teaching tools of the trade. Professional tools can result from teachers co-performing leadership practice. Co-performance of practice in teaching can be effective when teacher leaders engage in dialogue with colleagues. A teacher leader is continuously becoming a kind of person by participating in varied and multiple activities in a defined professional community of practice of elementary education. Figure 4.2 illustrates Madison's participation in multiple ways in an elementary school within Jefferson County School District R-1.

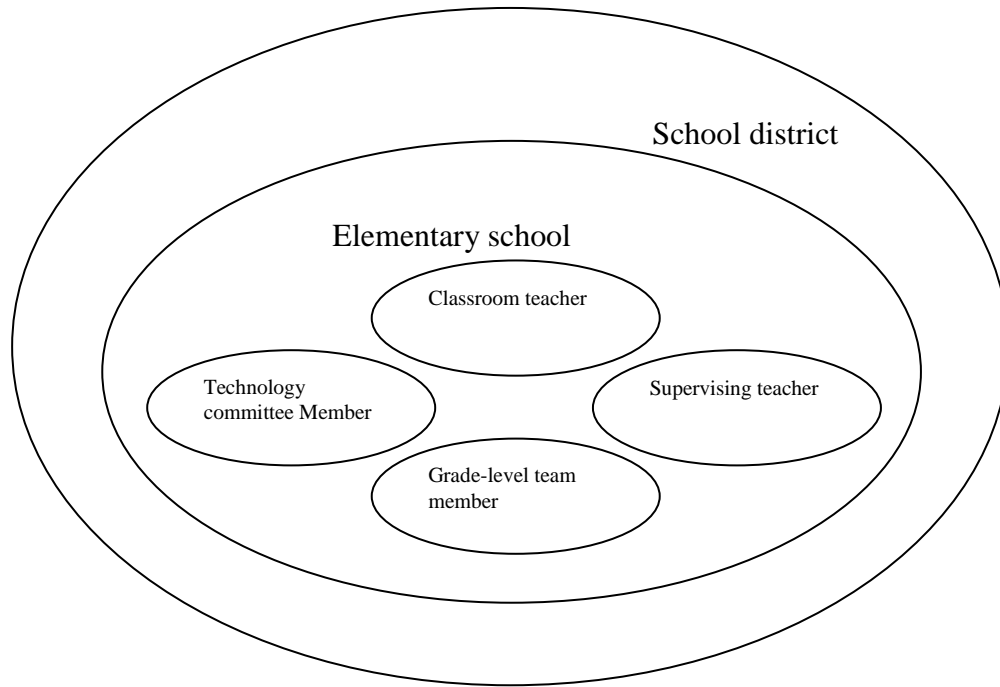


Figure 4.2

*Participation in multiple ways in Jefferson County Schools for Madison*

## Sandy's Professional Profile

Sandy was a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at one of Jefferson County's south schools. The school served about 570 students pre-kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Seven other elementary schools in the area feed into two middle schools and eventually one high school. These schools compose an articulation area in the south area of Jefferson County Schools.

The school had thirty-eight staff members; 20 general classroom teachers; 9 specials teachers (art, music, and PE) and academic support teachers (special education and teacher librarian); 5 office staff (principal, secretaries, clinic aide, facilities manager); 1 instructional coach; and 11 paraprofessionals. The Jefferson County Schools' curriculum was offered by the staff for all general courses.

The school is an elementary school located in a middle-class community. Most of the students lived in the immediate community. About three-fourths of the student population were white and about one-fourth are minority (Asian, Black, American, Indian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Multi-racial). The mobility rate indicates about 4% of enrollment changes annually. An average of 79% of students in grades 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> perform proficient or above on state assessments in reading, writing, and math.

Sandy and I arranged to meet at a Jefferson County public library for our first interview. I met her in the foriere of the library after I reserved a study room for us to use during the interview. Sandy had a professional appearance and a business air about her. Our conversation on the way to the study room was friendly.

Our conversation, once we were in the library study room, began with Sandy telling me about her experience in public education pertaining to her being a teacher leader in K-6 public education. She explained that she has taught in elementary schools for ten years. One year she

taught in Denver schools. The rest of her experience has been with Jefferson County Schools. During this time she has been a classroom teacher. In 2007 she became an instructional leader. An instructional leader is a classroom teacher who is "...a liaison between the district and the school," as Sandy explained. She acted in this role for three years. Meanwhile, she decided to pursue an administrator's credential. She earned an education specialists degree and a principal's license.

Sandy's principal recommended Sandy to participate in this study. She has experience and goals that make her shine as a teacher leader. Her experiences and goals seem to be guided by several principles of leadership concepts.

*Complexity of teacher leadership in K-6 public education.*

Leadership from the classroom required Sandy to recognize that her school is a part of the Jefferson County Schools' system. She explained her role as a building-level instructional leader as a liaison between the District and the school. Sandy uses the identifier of "The District" when speaking about Jefferson County Schools. "The District" implies a way that a teacher leader speaks of the entire school district organization. The entire organization has many schools like Sandy's that allows it to function as whole system. Although Sandy's school is important to her professional work, she seems to be aware that her school doesn't stand alone. Rather, it is part of a much larger structure. Sandy's work as a liaison can be a way to connect the district with the school and the school with the district so that the educational provisions for elementary educators and students become greater overall than what can be provided by a single school functioning as a separate part.

*Context.*

Having a sense of the overall function of the school system can be beneficial to a teacher leader so that her work in the elementary school can be contextualized within the school district. Sandy contextualize her teacher leadership work this way, “Jeffco has a central administration. From an elementary perspective, we keep in touch with the district with DLEA (Department of Learning and Educational Achievement). DLEA provides our curriculum and our support. The instructional leaders work through DLEA.”

Sandy was a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. Her teaching responsibilities included teaching of reading, writing, math, and social studies. She was paired with a grade-level teammate who taught science. Sandy and her teammate departmentalized science and social studies instruction so that the students would rotate to each teacher in the afternoon for these two courses. Planning for instruction was guided by DLEA and a set curriculum created by DLEA. The curriculum was communicated to schools by DLEA with curriculum documents. Sandy accessed the DLEA curriculum documents to plan for instruction in the context of their school and classroom. She explained, “Teachers are going to have to continuously look at the curriculum documents and plan accordingly.” She believed that by having a set curriculum to guide planning for instruction was important for the Jeffco as an organization. Likewise, it was important for a teacher leader to have school-based decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. The DLEA curriculum planning documents provide guidance for instruction, but for a teacher leader like Sandy, she has to be planning for instruction as it pertains to her school and classroom.

*Relationships among roles.*

Teacher leaders in elementary education who take on the role of instructional leader at the school level attend to leadership effectiveness. Effective leadership can be established in

relationship networks among school district departments and school level teams. Sandy spoke about how she attended leadership meetings for instructional leadership training at the Jeffco central administration building. At central administration she could network among the district-level departments that constitute DLEA. From these training meetings she would bring information to her school to convey to the school-level leadership team. Effective leadership can also be established in partnerships with district and school personnel. Sandy's work as a classroom teacher and an instructional leader allowed her opportunities to work in partnership with individual members of DLEA, instructional coaches, and other instructional leaders at the district level. She had further opportunities and responsibilities in partnership with an instructional coach, the leadership team, the principal, and the teachers at the school level. Teacher leaders network and partner with others to share information with teammates and plan professional development for the school. Effective teacher leaders network and partner with others in different departments, positions, and roles.

*Diversity abounds.*

Sandy's experience in K-6 public education has allowed her to work with diverse groups and individuals. She spoke to the concept of diversity from an instructional leader's perspective. As an instructional leader, she spoke of the various district-level departments she was involved with such as those that DLEA are composed of. DLEA, in general, includes all the academic content areas of English language arts, math science, and social studies as well as instructional data and other support services within Jefferson County Schools. She also addressed two school-level committees she was involved. The leadership team was one and professional learning communities (PLCs) were the other. Such committees can present diverse perspectives on school issues that can promote school improvement. In leading within diversity of elementary

education, Sandy stated that as a teacher leader she has discovered of herself, "...how to include everybody...it's the relationship, the communication, and the team building that is essential." Including everybody is important, but recognizing and embracing diversity in others is more than ethnic and gender identification. Sandy identified the faculty that she worked with in terms of diversity as mostly "white women...no minorities." What is more for teacher leaders to consider in terms of diversity are values attitudes, philosophy, experience, age, teaching styles, and learning styles to name a few attributes that could be present in individuals and/or groups. Teacher leaders in elementary education can expect to work in a diverse culture.

*Interaction of motivation, participation, and autonomy.*

Teacher leadership speaks to the notion of including teachers in leadership work. When teachers are included in leadership work by participating on leadership teams, they can be motivated to contribute to their school with provisions of autonomy in a leadership role. Sandy explained how in 2007 Jefferson County Schools implemented instructional leader positions in schools. She became an instructional leader then and remained in the position until 2010. Participating in leadership work as an instructional leader was motivating to her in two ways. Initially, being a part of the school leadership team and the stipend paid to instructional leaders were sources of motivation. The stipend was no longer offered after 2010, so enthusiasm about being or becoming an instructional leader was less. What seems to have remained motivating for Sandy was being in the leadership role where she can have some influence in her school. In a teacher leadership role she was able to influence her colleagues by having some autonomy to co-plan professional development with other leadership team members. Teachers can be motivated to do leadership work when given some freedom when participating in leadership team-work.

### *Sustaining leadership work.*

Leadership work can be motivating when a teacher is involved with a team who is working for school improvement. Teacher leaders such as Sandy sustain their school improvement effort by tapping into potential energy stores. One potential energy store is in collaborating with other colleagues. “When teachers collaborate, they all learn more and have a better feeling of professionalism,” explained Sandy. She understands from experience that working in isolation can be very difficult. “Isolationism is very difficult when teachers are by themselves thinking they are expected to be an expert at everything,” said Sandy. A second way to sustain teacher leader work is by maintaining focus on school goals. Sandy provided the example of having student writing performance as a school goal to focus on. Having a continual focus is helpful and as a leader trying to minimize distractions for teachers is important. Another potential means for sustainable leadership is in creation of leadership capacity. For Sandy, she believed leadership capacity is in part personality. A leader has a personality that drives her to want to learn to lead and engage in the work of leaders. In her case, she took the opportunity to be an instructional leader in her school. This allowed her to develop into other leadership capacities such as team work and collaboration with colleagues. She then found her way to seek and earn her graduate degree for an administrator’s license. Sustaining teacher leadership was made possible for Sandy by her continual effort in collaboration, focus, and capacity creation.

### *Organizational behavior.*

Teacher leaders cultivate their perspective of K-6 education so they open their mind to thinking about public education as a system. Thinking systemically develops from a mental model of the organizational structure and function of Jefferson County Schools. Sandy explained that Jeffco is organized generally with a central administration. Within central

administration is DLEA that is responsible for curriculum and support services for the district. Support personnel such as instructional coaches, instructional leaders (including teacher leaders) collaborate with DLEA personnel on curriculum matters. DLEA personnel in collaboration with school-level support personnel are responsible for most of the curriculum-related decision-making, and schools and teachers are expected to follow the curriculum provided through DLEA. Following the curriculum is a professional responsibility of teachers who lead from the classroom. Sandy explained how Jeffco curriculum was changed to align with changes made to Colorado state standards. Changes to instructional documents are common, though tend to be lesser than the re-alignment made recently. As a teacher leader, Sandy recognized that the district curriculum was changed and what was as important was how schools and teachers would use the newly aligned curriculum documents. She noted that teachers at her school responded to the changes at first with resentment because they perceived the work ahead as too much and unreasonable. Sandy's perspective was to maintain her practice to be continuously planning every single year. "I think there should always be continuous improvement for teachers, for education, and for students," explained Sandy. Teaching something for the first time may not be as good as something that was taught before. Rather, curriculum documents take time and work to develop into organizational practice. "If I can help other teachers understand and make sense of what the initiative is trying to do for students, then hopefully it's influencing how other people feel about it," said Sandy. Teacher leaders collaborate with other educators to develop organizational practice into a shared vision. Organizational behaviors are practiced with teacher leaders who create an accurate mental model of the function of the school district, design curriculum documents that teachers can make sense of on their own terms, and developed a share vision of school improvement over time.

*Summary.*

Sandy’s work as a teacher leader evidenced several principles of practice. Principles in leading guided her in classroom-level and school-level leadership. Table 4.2 summarizes the principles Sandy practiced, her responsibility in conceptualizing each principle, and an explanation of how she applied the principles.

Table 4.2

*Principles of teacher leadership practice for Sandy*

Principle of practice	Teacher leadership application	Explanation
Contextualized leadership	Contextualizing her role in Jefferson County Schools as a whole organization	Sandy referred to Jefferson County Schools as “The District”. Large school districts tend to have many constituent departments that model a hierarchy. Sandy was working at identifying her role at the classroom-level and school-level within the school system.
Relationships among roles	Identifying/creating relationships among school district units	Sandy obtained information and support from meetings she attended with other instructional leaders at Jeffco central administration. A teacher leader needs information and support to stay informed on school district initiatives and plan school-level professional development. She was developing her professional network and school-level leadership.
Essential diversity	Working among diverse departments, committees, and individuals	Sandy described her leadership work from an instructional leader’s perspective. She worked with diverse district-level departments and school-level committees. She was developing awareness as to how to collaborate among diverse groups so that she may contribute to school improvement.
Interaction of motivation, autonomy, and participation	Having a purpose, focus, and willingness to participate in leadership work typically with district-level departments, teams, and committees	Sandy found membership on a school-level leadership team and monetary incentives to be motivating to leading from her classroom. Motivation, autonomy, and participation constitute one another. She was identifying herself as a leader amongst her colleagues at the school level.
Sustainable leadership	Continuing with school improvement efforts over time in collaboration with others	Sandy explained that more teachers can benefit from professional collaboration. Teacher leaders need sources to renew their energy. Sandy was able to sustain her energy to lead from collaborating with colleagues.
Systems thinking	Contributing to the educational system as an instructional leader	Sandy contributed to K-6 education by becoming an instructional leader at the school level. Instructional leaders act as liaisons between district-level personnel and school-level personnel. She was collaborating with others to develop a shared vision of school improvement.

*Tenets of distributing leadership.*

A fifth grade teacher who leads from the classroom develops her leadership style(s) in the classroom and can protract her style(s) to other professional work such as leadership positions or committees. Sandy, an instructional leader, spoke of her leadership styles that she practiced in and out of her classroom depending on the context of her work. From interview data, I gathered Sandy had at least three leadership types that she practiced most often as an instructional leader at the school level: collaborative, shared, and co-leadership.

*Sandy's teacher leadership types.*

Her collaborative style allows for collegial relationships to develop so school improvement initiatives can be addressed. She explained that collaborating with other educators begins, "...with an attitude of this is important and why its important." As an example, when Sandy and the other teachers were implementing Response to Intervention (RTI), at her school she recognized that it was difficult to implement but important to understand what good it meant for students. Trying RTI in her classroom allowed her to collaborate with other teachers as to what worked and what didn't work. In turn, other teachers were likely to try. She felt that teachers were more likely to try a new initiative when she had developed a relationship of mutual respect. She believed, "When teachers collaborate, [we] all learn more."

Believing teachers learn more together suggests a process of interactive influence among teachers in order to achieve a goal. For the process to be effective, leadership work must be shared. Shared leadership is another leadership practice type discussed by Sandy. Being an instructional leader initially meant being involved in a program with Jefferson County Schools for teachers who lead. Teachers who lead were given a title and hold a position of instructional leader in their school. A building can have several instructional leaders. A primary role for

instructional leaders was to be a liaison between district personnel and school personnel. As a liaison, they attended district trainings and were responsible for sharing information at their school with the leadership team and staff members. Instructional leaders shared in leadership work as members of a school leadership team, helping to plan professional development, and influence colleagues to learn new practices and try them in their classrooms.

Shared leadership work ought to transcend leadership teams so a whole school could benefit from work of its leaders. Teacher leaders such as Sandy practice co-leadership. Co-leadership empowers other teachers to work together to accomplish school goals. According to Sandy, “The principals choose to recognize instructional leaders, teacher leaders, and use them. I think a smart principal does use them because principals need to keep a pulse on what’s happening in the classroom, what the teachers’ needs are, and be aware of how to meet those needs. I think that [awareness] gets lost if the principals don’t involve teachers in decision making.” Co-leadership is about recognizing talent of K-6 teachers and utilizing a host of talented teacher as co-leaders in school-level decision making.

Sandy’s leadership practices included but were not limited to collaborative, shared, and co-leadership. Her practice styles can be exercised in her classroom and in her professional roles and positions.

#### *Expertise.*

Sandy stepped up to becoming a teacher leader by taking advantage of a formal position of teacher leader that was offered by Jefferson County Schools and implemented in elementary schools. Sandy acquired the position because she believed she had expertise to fulfill the job responsibilities and her principal recognized her potential for the work. Her expertise was developed from experience teaching K-6 public education and from her formal education. Her

experiences lead her to acquire a pedagogy she practiced in her classroom teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade students reading, writing, math, and science. Her knowledge of teaching the content areas constituted a portion of her teaching responsibilities. Another portion was gathering, reporting, and analyzing student performance data. Data she gathered included but not limited to formative data from student work, Acuity assessment scores, and TCAP (Transitional Colorado Assessment Program) results. Student data informed her instructional practices and was reported on the Jefferson County Schools website for analysis at the school level. Sandy was able to bring this skill set coupled wither educational specialist degree for an administrator’s license to her teacher leadership position.

*Situation, roles, and influence interaction.*

Teacher leadership in Jefferson County Schools has been both a formal position and an informal role. Sandy explained her experience as a teacher leader by starting out in a teacher leader position. In 2007, the position of teacher leader was a more formal structure. The teacher leadership structure allowed teacher leaders the opportunity to take part in school leadership by planning for school improvement based on school data. At that time, teachers designated as teacher leaders were paid a stipend for their extra-contractual work. After the first year the stipend was no longer offered, but the formal title and structure remained. By comparison, teacher leadership may always exist in elementary education, but as informal roles. Teachers can lead, given a situation, based on personality, needs, and/or relationships. Sandy pointed out teacher leaders as a formal position is necessary for school improvement.

“I think it’s important to have the formal structures when you are looking at the whole school and being aware of where you are going and how you are going to get there. It needs to be more formal and there needs to be time and structure set up for that.”

Teacher leadership can be effective in bringing about school improvement through formal positions and informal roles. Whether a teacher is in a formal or informal leadership capacity, her ability to influence others is essential to her work.

Teacher leadership may be related more with influence of other K-6 educators than title, position, or role. What Sandy thought about how she was able to be influential in her school was by having information to disseminate to other teachers. Given a school-level situation such as a school initiative, if she had information about a school initiative, then she would share information with other teachers. She perceived that her influence began with her grade-level teammates. Sandy's influence was supported by other members of the leadership team. Together they would plan professional development for the school. Sandy indicated that she had some influence individually and some collectively as a team. In Sandy's case, teacher leadership was established in a formal position, then a situation was given to exercise leadership to influence others.

*Teacher leaders in practice.*

Key to teacher leadership is leadership practice. Leadership practice is constituted by knowing when to lead, when to follow, and the situation. Sandy explained to me an important way that she contributed to school improvement through her leadership practice. She began by situating her practice in a school-wide view, "We began by looking at school data to [develop] our Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)." The UIP framed a situation in which Sandy could begin to practice leadership. She then took the same data used for the UIP and looked at it more specifically to identify her students' needs. "Personally as a teacher, I used that data to identify which students were not where they needed to be and then I intentionally intervened for those students by providing additional instruction." She was then able to lead other teachers to do

similar work. She worked in smaller groups and grade-level teams to look at data. She recognizes where her influence was with others in a follower's role. "We set goals as a grade-level team for how we need to improve our students. As a classroom teacher I made sure I implemented those [goals]." The UIP framed a situation when Sandy could lead by example of how to use data for school improvement and then recognized followership with her grade-level team to set goals to contribute to school improvement.

*Summary.*

Sandy was a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in an elementary school where leadership was shared by her principal in a newly implemented and sustained formal structure of teacher leader. Shared leadership allowed leadership work to be distributed to the leadership team of which Sandy was a member. Sandy was able to develop and apply her leadership type. The type of leader Sandy is becoming can be used in both formal and informal leadership roles she holds. With a formal structure for a teacher leadership role, she was able to influence other educators as a situation presented an opportunity for her. Sandy was able to influence others in teacher leadership practice. In practice, the situation cued Sandy to contribute to school improvement as a leader, recognizing followership. Figure 4.3 depicts a distributed leadership framework how Sandy may practice teacher leadership.

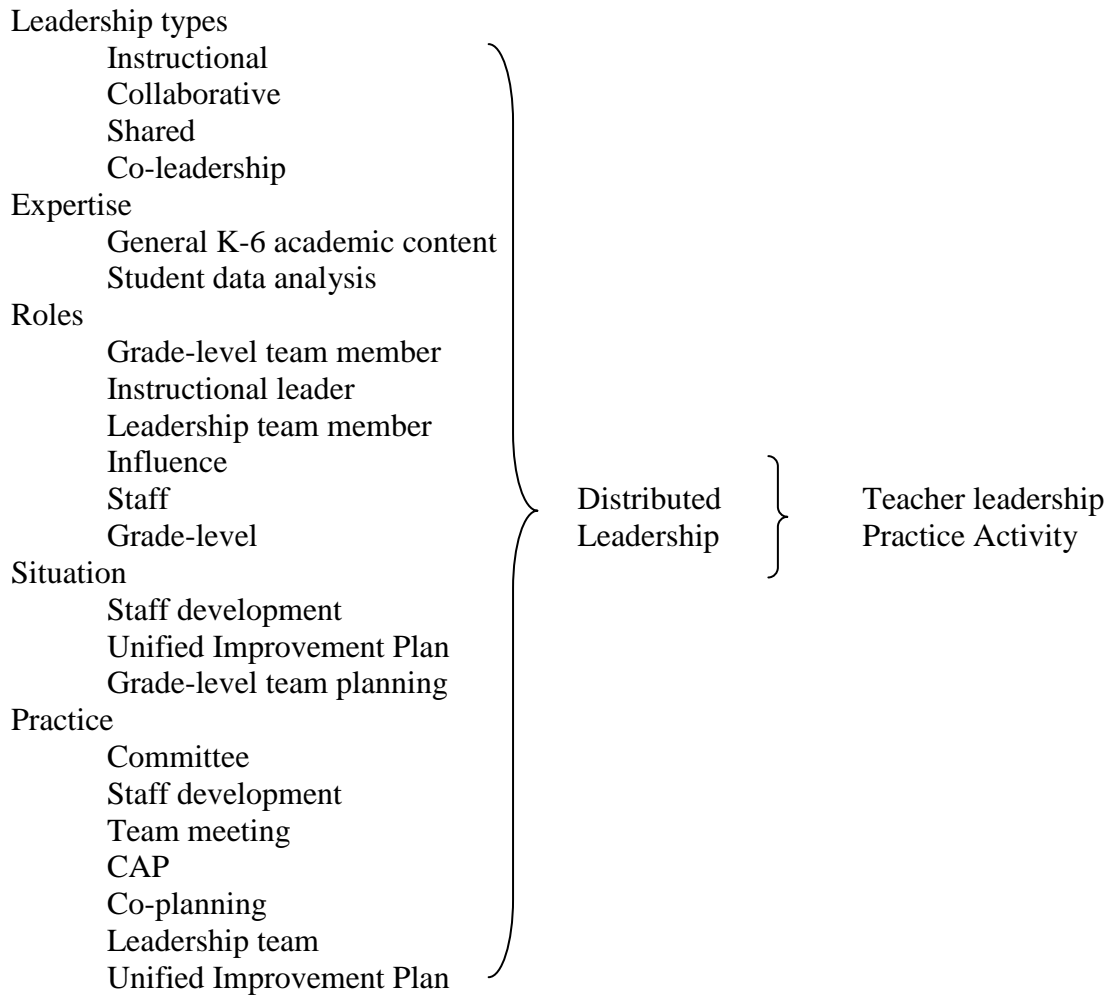


Figure 4.3

*Distributed leadership framework for Sandy*

*Sociocultural construction of a teacher leader.*

Teacher leadership is learned primarily through practice in context. Sandy was learning to be an instructional leader in K-6 public education in one of Jefferson County’s schools. Sandy described herself as developing leader. She hoped to learn more about working with people, “It’s a work in progress.” Sandy’s progress in developing into the teacher leader she aspires to be will involve engaging in a wide range of leadership opportunities in elementary public education.

*Teacher leader, activity, and social structure.*

Teacher leadership in elementary public education means, essentially, ways a teacher can participate in K-6 education in multiple and/or varied ways. Sandy was developing her way of being a leader. As a teacher leader she was becoming a kind of person who positively influences other teachers by practicing her expertise while encouraging others to share their expertise. In one instance, Sandy participated in grade-level team meetings where she would share information pertaining to curriculum during planning time. Together, as a team, they would plan instruction. In another instance, Sandy collaborated with other members of the leadership team to plan and deliver professional development. As a teacher leader she would use time allocated for teacher professional development to promote school improvement efforts such as the work related to the UIP. In yet another instance, Sandy would meet on a regular basis with the leadership team at the school level or the district level. Her attendance in meetings allowed her to learn and contribute to the direction her school was headed, “I’m the ‘let’s go’ kind of person. I think I understand what needs to be done and I like to get it done.” She continues, “I don’t want to be the kind of person that says this is *the* way to do it. Being a leader really is influencing others.” In the many ways Sandy participated in elementary education, she was learning to be a kind of person in relation to others in various social professional communities of practice.

*Leading with intention.*

The idea of a teacher leader as a kind of person may be understood by her leadership practice. Teacher leadership practice should be intentional. The intentionality of practice in the context of K-6 education illustrates Sandy’s teacher leadership. She stated that the intention of teacher leadership was to improve the teaching profession. She believed the teaching profession

could be improved through collaborative learning among elementary teachers. Collaboration can be a way of addressing teacher isolation. Sandy explained that planning together as a team of teachers was a key in overcoming teacher isolation and improving student performance. The social structure of a common team planning time can allow teachers time needed to share ideas on how to meet students' academic needs. Team teaching was another way Sandy practiced intentional teacher leadership. While teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the grade-level team would departmentalize so the students would rotate to each teachers' classroom for different subjects. Team teaching was a way a grade-level team could work together as a whole group and less as teachers in isolation. Peer observation was also mentioned by Sandy as an intentional practice that she felt could be helpful. Peer observation offered teachers opportunities to watch other teachers teach. Coverage for a teacher's class while she was observing another teacher posed logistical problems, so it was not sustained as a regular practice in Sandy's school. Teacher leadership practices include collaborative, on-going peer relationships with intention of improving the teaching profession.

*Tools of teacher leaders.*

Intentional practice of teacher leadership in K-6 public education is mediated with artifacts of social structures. Artifacts of social structures are the tools a person works with that facilitate learning in a social context. Sandy engaged with several socially constructed artifacts. Social structures, as artifacts, that Sandy worked with included organizational routines with the leadership team meetings, grade-level team meetings, and professional development meetings. Organizational routines such as these are representations of the social practice of leaders. Furthermore, Sandy utilized educational documents including student work, student test score data, CAP documents, UIP documents, and a collection of professional literature in her personal

library. These examples of the professional tools she used serve as a substantial part of contemporary cultural history in Jefferson County Schools as related to Sandy's elementary school. Tools and routines of teacher leadership practice are a way of interacting with sociocultural life in elementary education.

*Collegial relationships.*

Teachers who lead in elementary public education is an evolving form of membership. A teacher leader is constantly learning, finding meaning, and caring for others with whom she works. Sandy described herself as, "a developing leader...a work in progress." She seemed to understand that becoming a leader was more than acquiring a position or title. Becoming a kind of leader meant to her long-term participation among fellow teachers. Participating in teams, meetings, and committees were some ways she was able to relate with other educators. She also seemed to understand that learning was on-going. Changes in the Jefferson County curriculum required teachers to review the CAP documents. Sandy believed that teachers such as her needed to continuously look at the curriculum documents and plan lessons accordingly. Teachers, collectively and collaboratively, needed to be constantly planning and replanning their lessons year after year. What is more, the work must be meaningful. According to Sandy, she felt her role as a teacher leader was to have the right attitude about school improvement efforts. The right attitude was to have a positive attitude that the work she and other teachers were expected to do was important and meaningful. She aimed to influence other teachers by collaborating with them to exemplify how the work applied in classroom practice. More so, she aimed to make the work purposeful by connecting it to students. "If I can help understand and make sense of the what the initiative is trying to do for students, that hopefully is influencing how other people feel about [our work]." Additionally, Sandy expressed genuine care for others

with whom she worked. She believed that knowing how to work with people was necessary for success in teacher leadership. A teacher leader needs to know the people she is trying to lead and needs to have a professional relationship with them. Sandy's on-going pursuit of her leadership development included learning, finding meaning, and caring in practice of elementary education.

*Dialogue for learning together.*

The work of teacher leaders in elementary public education can be influential in a school when practice is in relation to others and is dialectically enacted in context. Teacher leaders initiate leadership practice in dialogue with other teachers primarily in their school. Sandy explained how she implemented change in her classroom practice when RTI was introduced at their school. She began by trying RTI in her classroom. After working with RTI for a short period of time, she initiated dialogue among teachers in her school by sharing what she had tried and what worked and did not work. Through dialogue others were able to reason the effectiveness of a new initiative. Together they were able to learn from each others' experience. Sandy envisioned herself to be a kind of leader that collaborates with others. She preferred to think with teachers, not for them. She mentioned that being a leader was about influencing others to share their ways and ideas of practice. She was opposed to the idea of telling teachers her way of practice was *the* way to practice, and expect them to practice as she did. Sharing practice(s) in dialogue is essential to teacher leadership. Dialogue ought to lead to enactment of on-going practice in context. Teacher leadership should call educators to take action in K-6 school improvement. Teacher leadership brings to K-6 public education teacher buy-in to school improvement. Sandy thought teachers bought into school initiatives that they understood and had a say in those initiatives. Teachers had a say in school matters because they knew what the

school needed and what kids needed. A teacher's voice was heard in school improvement as a part of a collaborative process. Teacher representation through teacher leadership in collaboration with a team was a positive change in her school. Teachers were able to say what needed to be improved, how to improve her school, and then take action. Teacher leadership has to do with impacting classroom practices and teachers were the vehicle for doing it.

*Summary.*

Learning to be a teacher leader occurs with practice in context. A teacher leader becomes a kind of person in relation with others in the multiple ways she engages in leadership activities in elementary public education. Teacher leadership practice should be intentional. The intentionality of practice in the context of K-6 education was to improve the teaching profession. Improving the teaching profession can be traced to socially constructed artifacts such as organizational routines and student data. Improvement of the profession stems from on-going pursuit of leadership development included learning, meaning, and caring in practice of elementary education. The practice of teacher leaders in elementary public education can be influential when practiced in relation to others and is dialectically enacted in context. Figure 4.4 illustrates Sandy's development in teacher leadership by engaging in a wide range of leadership opportunities in elementary public education.

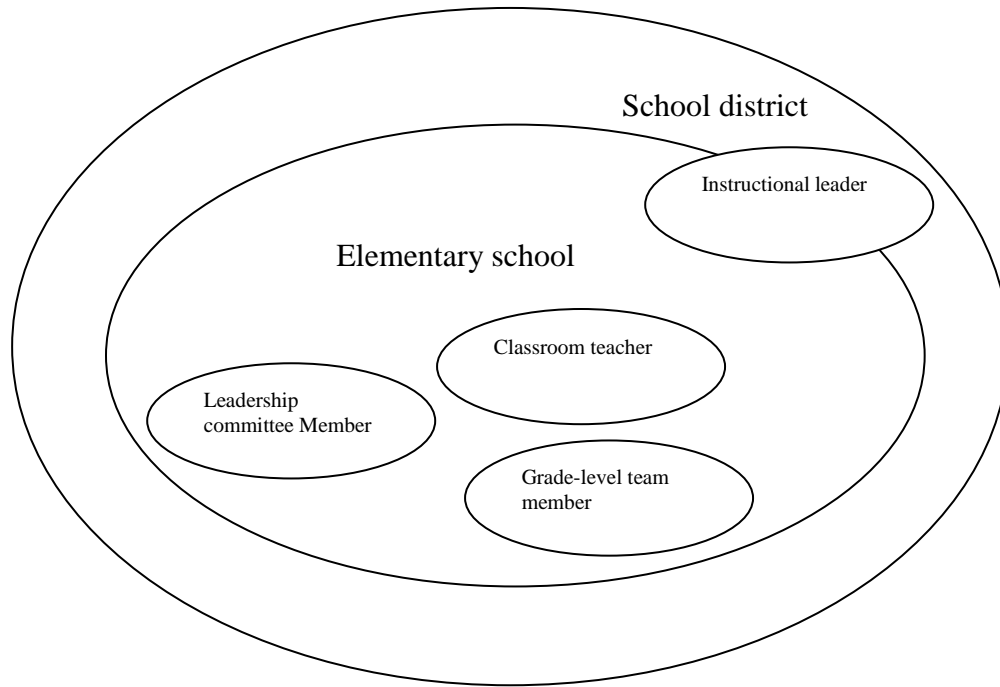


Figure 4.4

*Participation in multiple ways in Jefferson County Schools for Sandy*

## Shelly's Professional Profile

Shelly was a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at one of Jefferson County's north schools. The school served about 425 students pre-kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Five other elementary schools in the area feed into two middle schools and proceed to one high school. These eight schools compose an articulation area in the north area of Jefferson County Schools.

The school had forty-one staff members; 19 general classroom teachers; 14 specials teacher (art, music, and PE) and academic support teachers (special education and teacher librarian); 5 office staff (principal, secretaries, clinic aide, facilities manager), and 1 instructional coach. The Jefferson County Schools' curriculum was offered by the staff for all general courses.

The school is an elementary school located in a mostly middle-class community. Students who attend the school live in the immediate community. About two-thirds of the student population were white and one-third were minority (Asian, Black, Hispanic, and multi-racial). The mobility rate indicated about 1% of enrollment changed annually. An average of 74% of students 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> performed proficient or above on state assessments in reading, writing, and math.

Shelly and I met at her school for our first interview. We met in the lobby of the school during summer break. Shelly was warm and friendly as we greeted each other and made our way through the vacated school. We sat in the library as she shared with me her teacher leader experience.

Shelly's experience in K-6 public education began when she was hired to be a teacher in the primary grades K-2. She has been at her school for 15 years. She explained that after graduating with her undergraduate degree in 1977, she began working in a pre-school as a

teacher and a director before being hired in Jefferson County Schools. Her experience in pre-school education was a foundation on which she was able to build her repertoire for working with students in the primary grades and becoming a teacher leader. Shelly was a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher and a teacher leader in elementary science. A teacher leader, according to Shelly, is, "...a person who has desire to learn, to take on responsibilities, to help other teachers, and to share information...in that role of leadership."

The principal recommended Shelly for participation in this study because of Shelly's leadership experience in the primary grades at her school and her involvement with the science department at the school-level and district-level. Shelly's work in elementary education seems to be guided by multiple principles of leadership concepts.

*Complexity of teacher leadership in K-6 public education.*

Shelly's teacher leadership role in science provided her a view of where an elementary school can be located in K-12 public education. She explained the organization of a school system to begin with the leadership of a superintendent. The superintendent provided direction to department leaders within central administration. Department leaders would then relay the superintendent's directives to school-level personnel. In Shelly's case, she perceived the superintendent of Jefferson County Schools to gather information by traveling to visit schools within the district. While visiting schools, the superintendent would meet with teachers and observe classrooms to identify district needs. The superintendent provided the science department with direction based on information gathered from school visits. Shelly was involved with the science department as part of DLEA (Department of Learning and Educational Assessment) at the district-level. Her involvement with the science department provided her a

perception of connection between central administration and her elementary school in the area of science.

Although Shelly was able to explain, generally, a way a school system was structured, she was also able to realize how enormously complex it was to provide an education for children in grades K-6. “There are just so many things going on in K-6 education that it’s hard to take all of it in,” Shelly said. Some things going on in her complex world of elementary education included issues with budgets, school choice, curriculum and standards, technology implementation, student needs, and parental support. “It’s just a whole new world for a lot of us,” she said.

*Context.*

Shelly understood the gist of the structure of Jefferson County School District. Within this structure, she was able to contextualize elementary education in K-12 education. She believed that Jefferson County Schools was good at having teachers participate in school and district decision-making. She also felt that there needed to be more teacher leadership in the district. Her role in leadership was primarily related to science curriculum at the school level. Her leadership role was in addition to her full-time teaching responsibilities with second grade students. She taught reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Shelly had two teammates with whom she planned and coordinated grade-level instruction and activities. Instruction planning was guided by the curriculum developed by DLEA. As a team they planned their lessons according to the Jefferson County curriculum documents. Teacher leaders such as Shelly contextualize their work in their school and classroom.

*Relationships among roles.*

Elementary teachers can lead in specific content areas. Typically, elementary teachers have teaching responsibilities across all content areas of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Teacher leaders such as Shelly focus on one area. Her area of focus was science. Involvement with science offered her opportunities to use her role to develop and maintain professional networking relationships among multiple stakeholders. In Shelly's case, the stakeholders connected to her work with science included, teachers, principals, science teacher leaders, and science coordinators in DLEA at central administration. The teachers in her building as well as teachers district-wide were influential in her work. Likewise, her principal at her school and principals at other elementary schools in the district would be beneficiaries of her work. Key stakeholders were the cadre of science teachers and DLEA science coordinators who were revising Jefferson County Schools' curriculum documents to align with the newly adopted Colorado state standards. I observed Shelly working with other science teacher leaders and DLEA science coordinators as they were creating curriculum documents that were to be implemented the following school year. Shelly's network of professional connections showed a way teacher leaders function among related organizational positions, roles, and titles. A teacher leader with a particular focus functions among diverse stakeholders.

*Diversity abounds.*

Shelly's work as a teacher leader with a science focus involved working with diverse stakeholders in elementary education. Stakeholders in the science curriculum work Shelly was a part of included students, teachers, elementary principals, and science coordinators.

Shelly maintained her belief that her work as a teacher leader was in the best interest for the kids. The kids she had as students in her own classroom as well as all students in Jefferson

County Schools were whom she was referring. She recognized her work was limited to her classroom, but in a leadership role she could possibly influence other teacher to improve science instruction. Her influence then could have wider appeal than just her classroom. Shelly found her work with teachers challenging. Working with teachers as adult learners was much harder than working with elementary students as child learners. Adults tend to have a more complex biography than children. Shelly found that adult learners' biographies presented themselves as conflicts. Some conflicts among adults were about experiences, ideas, personalities, priorities, and/or learning style. Such conflicts were not necessarily negative. Although conflict can be difficult, it can also be necessary for growth in complex cultures of K-6 public education. In addition to teachers, Shelly collaborated with principals. Science documents to be implanted in elementary schools district-wide were to be approved by principals. Principals had their own school culture to consider when giving approval for curriculum. Furthermore, Shelly worked in cooperation with district-level curriculum coordinators. They had their agenda of priorities. District-level priorities such as aligning Jefferson County science curriculum with Colorado and national standards, communicating with principals, and improving district science instruction for students were general agenda items. When I observed Shelly in a district-level meeting, these were general agenda items the science committee was working on at that time. The science committee members present on the day of my observation included sixteen teachers; two were men. Across groups of stakeholders, Shelly maintained professional relationships with respect to diversity among them.

*Interaction of motivation, participation, autonomy.*

Shelly explained and demonstrated her source of motivation for participating in teacher leadership work. Repeatedly throughout her interview she mentioned the value she had in

working with children. She stated, “The kids are what motivate me.” She felt that the aim of her work as a teacher leading from the classroom was to attend to the needs kids have in a K-6 public education context and doing what was best for them. She thoughtfully considered other motivators for leading such as pay for her work and title for her role. She thought these were important for teachers to have, but for her, motivation was intrinsically fostered by her “love” for teaching – teaching children and science. Her love for teaching kids and science may indeed be roots of motivation. What was also valuable to Shelly was participating in the science committee. She minored in earth science while in college preparing for becoming a teacher. Her science background provided her with a foundation to build her science instruction and to be a valuable advisor on science matters. She said, “I have a real passion for science, and that its important for kids to learn science.” She claimed that this was the reason why she got started with science teacher leadership. She began as a school-level teacher leader on the science committee. Her membership on the science committee afforded her opportunities to collaborate with other science educators at the district level in DLEA. Collaboration in science meant that she would work to help create new science curriculum for Jefferson County Schools aligned with Colorado state standards. Furthermore, I observed Shelly in collaboration with the science committee, creating science instructional documents to coincide with the Jefferson County science curriculum. The creation of the science instructional documents required Shelly and the others to have autonomy to conduct their task. In conducting the task of creating science instructional documents she referenced science sources such as science text books, science literature, and Jefferson County curriculum, and Colorado state standards. The autonomy she exercised was disciplined within professional constraints. She wasn’t creating science instructional documents haphazard. The creation of science instructional documents was focused

with professional autonomy. Shelly took satisfaction and found meaning in participating in her work in science. Meaning was intrinsically motivated by doing what was in the best interest for kids. Her motivation lead her to becoming a science teacher leader by participating in the science committee. Participation in the science committee granted her professional autonomy. Thus, motivation, participation, and autonomy interact to encourage teacher leadership from classroom-, to building-, to district-levels.

*Sustaining leadership work.*

Teacher leaders can be encouraged to contribute to sustaining school improvement when they have a purpose, focus, and capacity for leading. Shelly's teaching experience began when she was a pre-school teacher and director. She worked at the same pre-school her own tow children attended. "I got to see where kids come from," she said with regard to kids' academic journey. Meanwhile, she maintained her K-6 teaching certification and teacher license. When the opportunity to teach K-6 presented itself, she was ready. She was hired by Jefferson County schools in 1996 to teach in the primary grades K-2. Shelly's academic preparation with a science minor coupled with her experience as a mother of two and having worked in pre-school have formed her purpose to teach and to lead. Her purpose seemed to be driven by doing what was right for kids. Connecting a moral purpose for doing what she believed was right for others to her "passion for science" gave her a focus in her professional work. Her focus on science has been on-going in the fifteen years she has taught in K-6 public education. Her focus developed over time from a classroom-level science teacher to a building-level science committee member, to a district-level science committee member contributing to curriculum development. Her focus has continued to develop over time partly due to her individual academic and professional capacity. Her continued focus can also be largely due to collective capacity. Shelly led with

other science teachers, committee members and department personnel. She recognized and acknowledged that her teacher leadership capacity was supported by a cast of other players. The collective capacity of science committee members was expressed in Shelly's references to the committee's work as a collective effort.

“We would go to meetings and we would talk about [science]... Then this last [meeting] that we did, we talked about what the curriculum looked like. We talked about how the changes in the curriculum made sense. So, with this kind of change, it's going to take time. I mean it was just presented to us this spring. We went to three meetings and we talked about it and we were in a group of K-12 teachers... well actually pre-school through 12th grade. We all talked about it, our experiences, and how the strings of science were going to make so much more sense. Now we need to be part of the training and the conversations at our staff level to make those kind of changes.”

This was further observed when I was present at a science committee meeting. The leadership work at Shelly's table group was a collective effort as they contributed to science curriculum documents. I observed them reading, discussing, and analyzing , science documents. As a group, they collaborated on ideas, content, and assessment. All ideas were welcomed, supported, and/or praised. For instance, a tablemate offered to the group an idea for a lesson, Shelly responded delightfully to her tablemate's idea with, “OO, that's good!” Interactions such as this affirm teacher leadership's purpose, focus, and capacity to encourage sustainability.

#### *Organizational behavior.*

Sustaining teacher leadership over long periods of time may contribute to school improvement. School improvement can be key to systemic change. Teacher leaders such as Shelly become key contributors to educational improvement. Shelly was a science committee member at a time when Colorado was implementing new science standards. Jefferson County Schools was aligning district standards and curriculum with the state standards. The science committee composed of teacher leaders was charged with reviewing science strings K-12 to see if they align with one another. The proposed alignment was considered for its strengths and

viability. Next, the science committee revised science documents. Revisions were suggested based on existing science documents and relative strengths and weakness of the newly developed science documents. After that, the committee began developing science curriculum. Curriculum development involved gathering and compiling instructional resources into Jefferson County CAP documents. The Colorado state standards were the focal point for aligning, revising, and developing science curriculum. The overarching aim in this process was to improve science education in Jefferson County Schools. Teacher leaders were key contributors to making systemic change. Change happens in sustained effort over long-periods of time by teacher leaders.

*Summary.*

Shelly's work as a teacher leader was guided by several principles of practice. Principles in leading guided her from classroom-level, to school-level leadership, and to district-level teacher leadership with a focus on science in elementary education. Table 4.3 summarizes the principles Shelly practiced, her responsibility in conceptualizing each principle, and an explanation of how she applied the principles.

Table 4.3

*Principles of teacher leadership practice for Shelly*

Principle of practice	Teacher leadership application	Explanation
Contextualized leadership	Contextualizing her role in Jefferson County Schools as a whole organization	Shelly described the organization of Jefferson County Schools in general terms as a hierarchical structure with decisions made in a top-down model. In her role as a science committee member, she contextualized current work in K-6 science as a whole new world. She is working at identifying her role as a teacher leader in science at the classroom-level, school-level, and district-level within the school system.
Relationships among roles	Identifying/creating relationships among school district units	Shelly worked directly with science teachers at the school level and science coordinators at the district level. She obtained information and support from meetings she attended with other science teachers and science coordinators at Jeffco central administration. She was developing her professional network at school-level and district-level leadership.
Essential diversity	Working among diverse departments, committees, and individuals	Shelly's case in teacher leadership was explained from a science teacher leader's perspective. She worked with diverse school-level personnel and committees and district-level personnel and departments. She was developing leadership practices collaborate among diverse individuals and groups so that she may contribute to school improvement.
Interaction of motivation, autonomy, and participation	Having a purpose, focus, and willingness to participate in leadership work typically with district-level departments, teams, and committees	Shelly found her work for what she believed was best for children motivating. Membership on a school-level science committee and district-level science committee allowed her to participate in a creating science curriculum documents for Jefferson County Schools. Motivation, autonomy, and participation constitute one another. She was identifying herself as a leader amongst her colleagues at the school and district level.
Sustainable leadership	Continuing with school improvement efforts over time in collaboration with others	Shelly has been able to sustain her teacher leadership work by having a purpose, focus, and capacity. Her purpose was to do what was best of children, her focus was on science, and her capacity was collective with science committee members. Sustaining teacher leadership efforts over long periods of time can be key elementary school improvement.
Systems thinking	Contributing to the educational system as an instructional leader	Shelly contributed to elementary education by becoming a teacher leader at the school and district level through science committee work. Shelly and the science committee worked to make systemic change with aligning standards and curriculum. The aim was to make systemic change in improved science instruction.

*Tenets of distributing leadership.*

From classroom to committee and from school to central administration, teacher leadership practice can have an important impact on educational progress. Shelly's practice in teacher leadership was constituted by multiple tenets of distributed leadership.

*Shelly's teacher leadership types.*

A first tenet was leadership practice type. Shelly demonstrated her ability to use shared, participative and collaborative leadership types. Shelly spoke of the value she found with fellow teachers and principals who shared leadership. She stated, a teacher leader was, "...someone who has leadership skills to be able to share information..." She also spoke of having learned to be a leader by, "...having really good principals that were strong leaders who were able to share their knowledge about leadership." I observed Shelly in science committee sharing leadership. She began by modeling her work so tablemates could better understand the task they were given. Tablemates shared their ideas and work while Shelly actively listened by encouraging, agreeing, and/or elaborating on other's contributions. Collaborative leadership was another practice type Shelly applied. Collaborating with grade-level teammates, teachers, principal(s), and district-level coordinators were among those she worked with directly. Her ability to collaborate shone through while working all day on science curriculum documents. Shelly and her tablemates skillfully facilitated the task among them to work toward completion of the revised science curriculum. They all collaborated to manage and organized resources in order to be productive. Participative leadership was a third practice. Given the charge to revise science curriculum documents, Shelly and the science committee member were consulted by the science coordinators in Jefferson County Schools. The science coordinators from DLEA solicited the expertise from Shelly and the other science teacher leaders on the science committee. Their

expertise was taken into account in the final decision-making for the dissemination of the revised science curriculum. Shelly remarked, “It made me feel good that they asked me to look at the standards.” Shelly may have been invited by DLEA to revise science curriculum because of her shared, collaborative, and participative leadership practice types.

*Expertise.*

Shelly’s area of expertise was science. Science was her academic area of strength developed in her educational course work. “I have this love for science,” she admitted. Her love for science was practiced in her classroom teaching of science with second grade students and carried into her work in the science committee. Working with the science committee developed her expertise in a second way. She developed professional relationships with others involved with science curriculum. Professional relationships with science teachers and coordinators aided her in connecting with other science educators to build her authority in science curriculum. Connecting with professional relationships developed her expertise further by acquiring information and knowledge about educational reform in science. Acquisition of information from participating in professional activities empowered her to take personal action to provide insight and guidance to fellow teachers. Shelly’s expertise was evident in her area of strength in science, professional relationships, and professional knowledge. Expertise can make a teacher leader influential in school improvement efforts.

*Situation, roles, and influence interaction.*

A teacher leader who intentionally chooses to lead by taking a role on a committee can have influence on school improvement. Shelly chose to be on the science committee at her school. Her role on the committee was to review science curriculum with other science teachers, to discuss how science instruction looked in practice and to further develop curriculum.

Developments in science were planned to be shared with other teachers through professional development. In Shelly's case, an opportunity to serve on the science committee provided her an ideal situation to step into a teacher leadership role fit with her passion for science. Given the opportunity, she was able to exert some influence in science related situations. A teacher leader plays her role in a given situation in order to influence others in a school improvement effort.

*Teacher leadership in practice.*

While situations, roles, and influence may change, a mainstay of teacher leadership is practice. Practice of teacher leadership can be understood by the leader-follower relationship in a given situation. A teacher leader should not expect to lead all things at all times. There may be situations where a teacher leader is best when following. Shelly explained that to be a teacher leader is, "...a good choice...you need good leaders and good followers,.." she continued, "...[a teacher leader] needs to know the right time to lead and the right time to follow. A good leader convinces you that what you are doing is right and is good for everybody concerned." What was more, Shelly practiced as she said. For example, I observed her during a science committee meeting where she exemplified teacher leader practice. The situation was the creation of science curriculum documents. During the time she worked with other science teachers at her table, she acted as leader most of the time. The other teachers followed her lead. However, she seemed to intuit when she was to act as follower. A tablemate had a science text that she used in her classroom. From that text she planned science lessons for students. She also had samples of student work that resulted from her lesson plans. As this tablemate shared her work she acted as leader in this situation. Shelly and the other tablemates followed. Membership on the science committee provided a structure for teacher leadership practice in various situations where leader

and follower roles vary. Teacher leadership practice in committee was composed of a situation, leader, and followers.

*Summary.*

Shelly was a primary teacher K-2 in an elementary school where leadership was shared by her principal with school-level committees. Shared leadership with the science committee provide opportunities for Shelly to exercise her leadership practice types . Her leadership practice types were applied further at district-level leadership work in an informal role on the science committee provided a structure where she could exert influence in situations related to science curriculum. Her teacher leadership practice while serving on the science committee posed situations where her role as leader or follower varied. A committee structure provided teacher leadership situations for leaders and followers. Figure 4.5 depicts a distributed leadership framework how Shelly may practice teacher leadership.

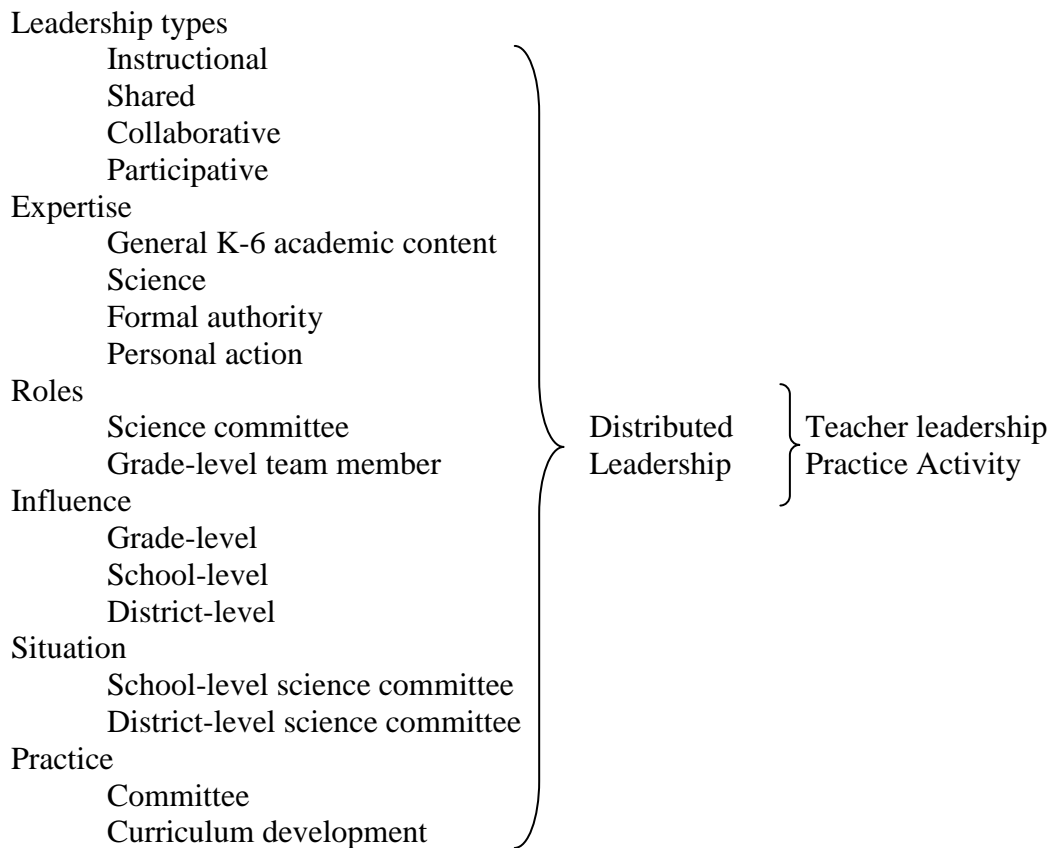


Figure 4.5

*Distributed leadership framework for Shelly*

*Sociocultural construction of a teacher leader.*

Teacher leadership is learned mainly from practice in context with other educators. Shelly’s practice of leadership stemmed from her 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom in a K-6 public elementary school. She practiced leadership at the school level and district level. In school and district contexts, Shelly was belonging to a professional community of elementary educators. More specifically, she was learning to be a teacher leader in relation to other elementary science teachers and having access to opportunities made available to her through membership on the science committee.

*Teacher leader, activity, and social structure.*

Teacher leadership can be socially viewed through ways a teacher participates in varied activities in elementary public education. Shelly was learning to be a leader in relation to activities and social professional communities of practice. For example, she contributed to the development of science curriculum with science committee members. As a committee they wrote curriculum, instruction, and assessment guides. Another example, she collaborated with grade-level teammates by sharing resources in team meetings. Team meetings allowed for planning at a common time for team members. A third example, Shelly coordinated Young Writer's Conference with the help of a first grade teacher from her school. She explained her experience,

“I'm responsible for Young Writers Conference for our whole area. I knew I couldn't do it by myself, so I've asked one of our first grade teachers to help with that. She's been very instrumental in helping with that because I knew I couldn't do all of it. Then we have a team of people and we bring everybody together now and are able to decide what we're going to do. 300-400 students are going to this conference.”

Teachers who lead engage in various activities and interact with their colleagues in socially structured professional communities of practice.

*Leading with intention.*

To be a teacher who leads suggests being a kind of person in communities of practice. Being a teacher leader in community with others can be made more explicit in contextualized practice. Practice in context should have intention for educational improvement. Shelly explained her intentions for being a teacher leader included providing guidance, sharing knowledge, and working with others. From grade-level team meetings she recalled,

“This past year was a really nice year in that we all were on the same page. We all had what we did well and we could work on those strengths. We also helped each other with our weaknesses. I think that's what makes a good leader; to know that they have

strengths, but they also have weaknesses. A lot of times they may have to go ask somebody for help or get someone to work with them.”

This recollection was implied when she spoke of her work with coordinating Young Writer’s Conference. She was able to provide guidance in coordinating the event as much as she possibly could. In the process, she shared what she knew with a first grade teacher. When the time came that she needed help, she had a first grade teacher and a team of other teachers from within the articulation area to seek support. The result was 300-400 elementary students were able to attend the conference. Similarly, I observed her intentions with the science committee. Her tablemates were reviewing science CAP documents. They were sharing resources related to science curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As they were sharing their knowledge, all ideas were welcomed, supported, and praised. When one tablemate shared a science text with instructional and assessment resources that could be used for developing curriculum documents, Shelly recognized it as quality information and responded enthusiastically, “Oo, that’s good!” Shelly was a kind of person relating to other members in a learning community. Teacher leaders in learning communities practiced intentional ways to improve schools.

*Tools of teacher leaders.*

Intentional practice of teacher leadership in learning communities involves engaging in and leaving trace artifacts from activities. Artifacts connect teacher leaders to cultural history of social organizations. Shelly engaged in socially structured professional meetings such as team, and committee meetings. Meetings facilitate practice among Shelly and her colleagues where social tools were utilized. Some tools that Shelly engage with during team meetings included Jefferson County Schools’ curriculum documents, professional literature. Artifacts that she and her team created were lesson plans, student worksheets. She also connected with science

committees and Young Writers' Conference planning committee. Participating in committees connects people to cultural life history. Shelly's participation in the two committees connected her to the historical happenings related to writing teachers and science teachers. Artifacts that she engaged with when participating in the science committee in particular included agenda, curriculum documents, professional literature, and digital technology. Artifacts that the committee created were district-level science curriculum documents. Accessing and creating resources fulfills a mediating function of practice in learning communities. Engaging in and leaving artifacts constitutes teacher leadership activities in elementary public education.

*Collegial relationships.*

Teachers who lead in elementary public education can attend to leadership practice in context and collegiality. Shelly explained, "I think [a teacher leader] is a person who has desire to want to learn more, someone that wants to take on responsibilities, and who wants to be there to help other teachers." Being a teacher leader means continually learning in the social structure of elementary education while caring for other teachers. She described a typical grade-level team meeting where she would most likely lead by facilitating. They would bring their materials to share with teammates. As they viewed CAP documents together, they would match materials to the curriculum. In this process, they would draw upon each others' relative strengths and weaknesses for co-planning lessons. A process of learning to work together takes time in socially structured professional meetings. Shelly's practices and concerns in school-level meetings were applicable to district-level meetings. She began as a member of the school-level science committee. Being a member allowed her to form relationships with science educators from other schools and from central administration. "I have done quite a bit of leadership work through the science department in DLEA at the [central] administration building. [I was] helping

plan curriculum with the new standards. We just did a whole series [of meetings] of looking at the science strings, training teachers, and getting materials together,” explained Shelly. “I have had more of a connection with the people in the science department. We have conversations and email each other.” She was able to help with science planning activities and to attend to science teachers’ needs. Teacher leaders in elementary education attend to leadership practice and collegiality.

*Dialogue for learning together.*

Teacher leaders in elementary public education may experience leading occurring in social structures, dialogically constructed in practice for educational progress. Teachers who lead use dialogue with teachers in team meetings, professional training, and committees as a means for school improvement. Shelly explained that it was a good year for her grade-level team because they were united in their vision and goals. “We all had the same vision and all wanted the same thing,” she said. It was not always that way. Her past grade-level teams were divided or conflict amongst team members interfered with team work. Her more current team had a common planning time in the afternoon. They would use their planning time to communicate team needs. She said, “I think you need to learn from other people, but you also need to listen to other people and what their ideas are, too. That’s the perfect team, the ideal situation; when you have a good team that wants to do that, it’s great, and when you don’t, it’s painful.” Team meetings provided a social community to achieve unified team work. A teacher may also want to transform teaching practices by exercising influence. When Shelly’s school was adopting a new reading program, she sensed that some teachers were having difficulty teaching reading with a different resource. She used discretion for when to push and when to back off as she was interacting with other teachers. Talking with them was essential as they

were experiencing a process of transformation. A change process can be more difficult than a transformation. Changing science curriculum to align with district and state standards presented opportunities for Shelly to engage in dialogue with committee members and science teachers. In committee meetings they discussed what changes were made and how it compared to previous curriculum. To lead in a time of change, Shelly delineated several qualities a teacher leader should have to take dialogical cultural action:

- Be organized
- Rally people around you
- Be a good listener
- Accept new ideas
- Teach as well as learn
- Build off of each other
- Don't have to know everything
- Gain the respect of other people

*Summary.*

A teacher who leads learns in social structures and in relation to other educators. A teacher leader engages in various activities within and among professional communities of practice. She practices intentional ways to improve schools. Accessing and creating resources fulfills a mediating function of teacher leadership practice in learning communities. A teacher leader attends to leadership practice and collegiality. Teacher leadership occurs in social structures, dialogically constructed in practice for school improvement. Figure 4.6 illustrates Shelly's participation in multiple ways in an elementary education within Jefferson County School District R-1.

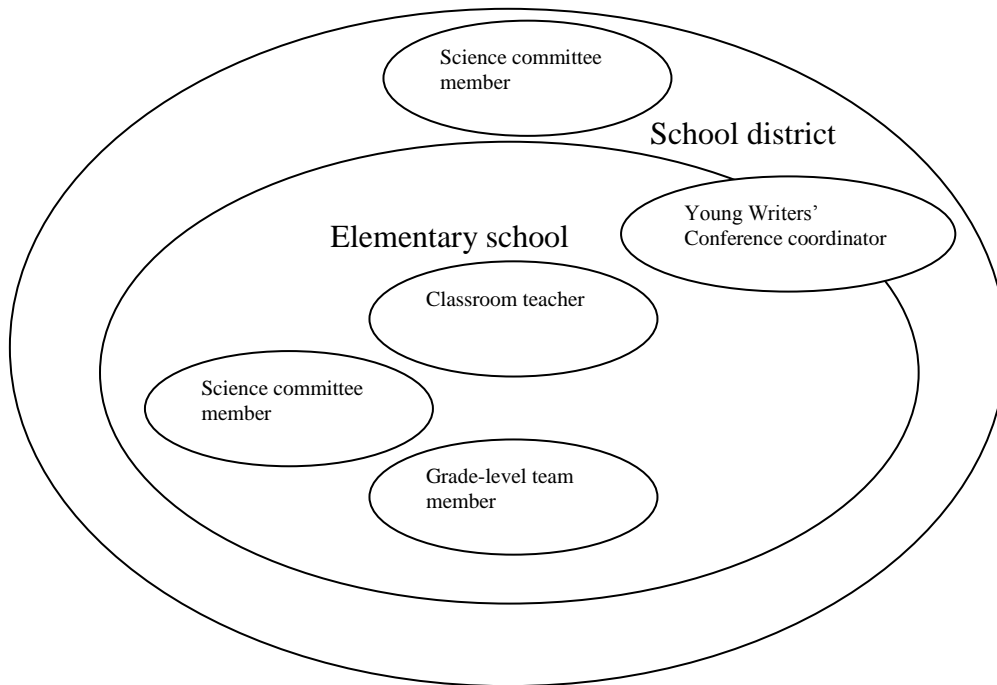


Figure 4.6

*Participation in multiple ways in Jefferson County Schools for Shelly*

## Part 2: Across Case Analysis

In the previous section I presented three cases of teachers who lead in elementary public education. In each case I explained how teachers lead based on principles from complexity theory, tenets from distributed leadership, and constructs from sociocultural learning.

In this section, across-case synthesis is presented to explain an analytic theory of teacher leadership. An analytic theory was constructed from the three case studies. A theory of teacher leadership suggests an explanation of “how” and “why” the teacher leaders in the three cases practiced leadership without a formal title or position. Multiple cases were used for developing a grounded theory to generate theoretical constructs from case-based, empirical evidence. The three cases studied formed the basis from which a theory was developed inductively. A theory was developed from emergent patterns of relationships among constructs within and across cases. An analytic view across cases began with an analysis of the three theoretical constructs of complexity theory, distributed leadership, and sociocultural learning theory. Then, a convergence from a relationship of the three theoretical constructs suggests a theory of teacher leadership.

### *Principle guided leadership.*

The three teacher leaders used several principles of leadership founded in complexity theory. The eight principles identified in each of the case studies and summarized in tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 were similar across cases; however, the application of a particular principle varied among cases. Furthermore, some additional principles were evident that may contribute to a theory that explains teacher leadership. What was most revealing in analysis of the three cases was how principles in practice were aligning with the aims of elementary public education.

Madison, Sandy, and Shelly explained their leadership so that in analysis eight particular principles were identified. This suggested that teacher leadership was guided by principles. The eight principles identified in the cases may be beneficial when generalized to other cases of teacher leadership. Principles that guided teacher leadership such as the eight in this study assist teachers with giving form to a complex school system.

Principle-guided teacher leadership helped Madison, Sandy, and Shelly to make sense and give meaning to their work in Jefferson County Schools. Teacher leadership by principle can facilitate improvement at the school and district level, by aligning roles, personnel, values, goals and educational processes. Teacher leadership may then fulfill a heightened sense of purpose through personal commitment to the mission of public education.

The three teacher leaders referred to Jefferson County Schools as “The District”. “The District” was a way for referring to an ambiguous school system by giving the system a general identity. Identifying with the context of their work allowed them to locate their own identity within the system. The system had organization by which its inner workings could be understood. Although a detailed description of Jefferson County Schools’ organizational structure was at best rudimentary, it was evident that teachers recognized the context of their leadership work was important. Contextual dynamics at the school level or district level can have substantial influence on teacher leadership work. The influence of teacher leadership work is understood in contexts where leadership is practiced.

Teacher leadership involves cohering how the organizational structures function in relationship to one another. A teacher leadership role pertained to relationships among departments, positions, roles, and personnel. Committee involvement seemed to be an entry point for gaining access to valuable professional networks related to each teacher leader’s work.

Networking among the stakeholders was a vital undertaking in order for teacher leadership to achieve its aims. A necessary element for creating and maintaining relationships was communication. Communication was a reciprocal process where the teacher leaders received on-going information and shared information among their constituents. In essence, teacher leaders were relationship builders.

Teacher leadership in this study was found to value the relationships that were building. Common to the three cases was that they each were involved with work composed of individuals with similar interests. Their common interests were a binding feature of their leadership work. A closer view of each case indicated other features of diversity that may be as important or perhaps more important than having a singular interest. Teacher leadership, be it at the district, school or individual level meant engaging others with various organizational views, educational issues, and abundant biographies of individuals.

At first glance, the context of elementary schools of the teachers in this study appeared to be nearly culturally homogeneous in that the staff was predominantly white females. Further consideration indicated differences in features that mattered in teacher leadership. Differences in values and attitudes, experiences, opportunities and learning styles were evident from the cases. Finding equity for teachers with more or less experience so leadership could be shared required cooperation and compromise. Opportunities to contribute to school improvement seemed to be a valued commodity. Teacher leadership was about influencing others to contribute to educational progress. Influencing others in a culture of elementary education was about building relationships with diverse groups and people. Effective teacher leadership seeks diversity.

Teacher leadership can thrive in complex diverse cultures of public education. Madison, Sandy, and Shelly were driven to perform leadership work in Jefferson County School District at

the classroom, school, and district levels. Their motivation to participate in leadership roles included recognition, pay incentive, and students. Whether their initial motive was intrinsic or extrinsic seemed secondary to the sense that they were contributing to their profession in ways that they felt enjoyment. They can be a valued source of energy in co-creating educational reform. Teacher leadership can ignite passion from within the teaching force when professional autonomy and participation in school reform are aligned with the school district's initiatives.

Teacher leadership may be a valuable resource in long-term educational reform; however, like other resources it must be sustained and renewed. The three teachers in this study sustained their work in leadership by having a focus in leadership by having a focus on a particular area such as technology, instruction, or science. Occasionally they need to renew their focus through teamwork. Sustained teacher leadership can be explained as an on-going effort toward a goal with periodic events for renewing personal energy stores. Teacher leadership provided teachers opportunities to pursue professional goals beyond their classrooms. In their pursuit, there were times when they were expected to lead and times when they could follow. Times for following were times for personal energy renewal. Teacher leadership makes use of collective capacity of teamwork for on-going efforts followed by times of renewal.

Sustainable teacher leadership can be a means for systemic change. Systemic change can happen at the school and district level. The three teacher leaders maintained mental models of Jefferson County School District as a hierarchical school system. They were able to situate their leadership within the system, understanding that their work was contributing to improving the school system. Paradoxically, they described the school system in terms of a linear hierarchical model, yet practice occurred in a non-linear process. Although each teacher leaders' case was unique to their situation for leading, the systemic process in practice was similar across cases.

Madison explained a process she used with an instructional coach to implement district initiatives. Sandy explained her work with implementing revised district curriculum. Shelly explained the process she participated in with the science committee for implementing state science standards into district science curriculum. Each case was based on a current district initiative. The initiative had an influence on the teachers' practice. Practice needed to be adjusted so that the current performance level could be influenced by the adjusted practice. The assumption was that there was a need for the initiative in the first place. The expected outcome was for there to be improvement in the performance level. Figure 4.7 illustrates a systemic model representative of how the process was similar across cases.

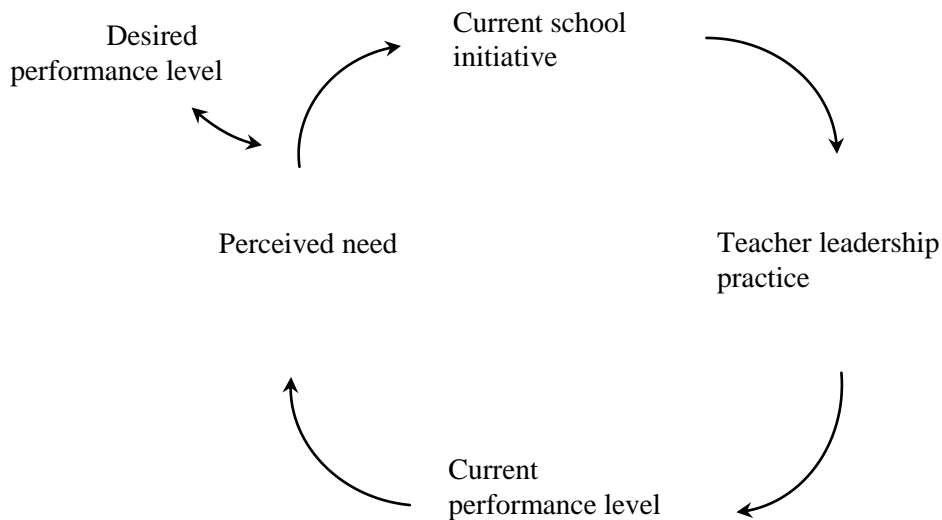


Figure 4.7

*Systemic model of school improvement*

*Summary.*

The principles in this study suggest a given set of principles can guide individuals and groups so teacher leadership can be effective when aligned with Jefferson County Schools' goals. The principles I presented here provided a set that can prove to be beneficial to teacher leaders and can be extended to include other principles from complexity theory such as the principles of specialization, self-reference, and assimilation to name a few. Principle-guided teacher leadership can change educators' view on the education enterprise and reform elementary education.

*Distributing leadership.*

Madison, Sandy, and Shelly were teacher leaders who had full-time teaching responsibilities and practiced leadership beyond their classrooms. All three were recommended by their principal to participate in this study. This indicates that principals valued these teachers' leadership practice in elementary education. Their practice was framed by several tenets of distributed leadership.

Teacher leaders practice leadership types related to distributed leadership. There are many types of leadership that a teacher may use; however, this study focused on leadership types the three teacher leaders used related to distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is a framework for leadership practice. Leaders, followers and the situation form the practice within this framework.

Madison, Sandy, and Shelly developed their leadership from their classroom. Their classroom was their foundation where they developed their types of leadership. Classroom practitioners lead by instructing others. They make decisions in the best interest of the learners.

The instructional transaction between the teacher and learner is a developing process over the longevity of a teacher's career.

The three teacher leaders shared leadership work and information with others. Sharing their knowledge about technology or science or instruction was a way for them to contribute to their work. They seemed to recognize the potential in others to do their part in school improvement, so long as they had the information needed. Teacher leaders believe everyone share in working at improving schools.

Sandy exemplified co-leading in her case of starting out in an instructional leader position. Madison and Shelly also co-lead, given particular situations. Sandy's involvement with a school-level leadership team was sustained over a longer duration of time. Her role was to support the school's vision for educational progress. She co-planned professional development with other school-level leaders including the principal and teacher. The team met regularly to plan how to meet school goals as identified in UIP. Co-leading in decision making in elementary schools can be empowering to model school initiatives.

Shelly's case depicts an ideal opportunity for participative leadership. Her case illustrates the potential breadth of teacher leadership. Her participation in science committees transcended her classroom and school. The impact of her expertise in co-creating science curriculum will be evident district-wide. Her involvement in school reform with the revising of science curriculum ought to serve as an exemplar for how involving teacher leaders can have wide-spread effects in elementary education reform.

Teacher leaders' practices are effective relative their expertise. The three teacher leaders were well established first in their teaching ability. Having a command of instruction in their classrooms established early indicators of their potential to lead. Their instructional practices

included knowledge of the general curriculum. Teacher leaders are more than instructors. They were also data analysts and organizational managers. They gather, report, and interpret student data. They manage student performance and classroom resources. Teacher leaders have a skill set that stems from their instructional practices and can be effective in school improvement.

Experience is essential to teachers' capacity to lead. A formal education was a part of the three teachers' developing capacity to becoming a leader. However, a formal education can be common among all teachers. What seemed to be uncommon with the three was how they applied their experiences to guide other educators in changed practices. They provided their knowledge and information so other teachers could share in school initiatives. Teacher leaders tend to relate their practices to new and varied situations as well as relate to diverse people. Teacher leaders' experience accounts for much of their practice to lead. Their experiences from participating in elementary education allowed them to relate their practices to various situations and people.

An assumption of elementary teachers in general is they are knowledgeable of curriculum content. In elementary education teachers most often teach all subjects including reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. Although it can be challenging to be a subject matter expert (SME) in all content areas, an elementary teacher can have certain content areas of relative strength. Teacher leaders find particular content areas of strength on which to focus. In Madison's case, she focused on language development and technology. Her college programs had an emphasis on language acquisition. Technology was an area she enjoyed learning how to use and integrate into classrooms. Sandy focused on curriculum, instruction and assessment. Her experience as an instructional leader motivated her to pursue an Education Specialist degree. Shelly focused extensively on science. Her enthusiasm for science preceded her college

program, and was developed in her college courses, and carried through in her teaching career. Teacher leaders cultivate their focus on areas of strength so they are capable of relating their experience to other educators. Their focused effort guides them in becoming subject matter experts in professional activities aligned with school improvement goals.

Teacher leaders are recognized for their expertise in instructional practices, experience, and participation in professional activities connected to their classrooms and the school system. The teacher leaders in this study were recommended by their principals and identified by their peers for their teacher leader practices at the classroom, school, and district level. Their pedagogy related to a skill set of teacher leader practices. Experience, focus, and participation were characteristics of teacher leaders' expertise. Teacher leaders have expertise in situating practice in a wider scope of organizational aims.

Three factors of teacher leadership considered for effective practice were the situation, the role, and influence. These three factors have shown to have a dynamic relationship among them. A situation where in a teacher leader performs her role affects her ability to influence others. Each of the three teacher leaders shared these three factors in common in their practices. Teacher leaders take advantage when a situation presents itself to play a role so that they can support school initiatives. Madison recognized SmartBoard technology was being implemented in her school. As a member of the technology committee, she furthered her role to learn as much as she could about SmartBoards and use it as often as she could. When SmartBoards were installed she acted as resident expert to support her colleagues through professional development to implement this initiative. Sandy took the opportunity to become an instructional leader when it was first offered in Jefferson County Schools. In her role she worked with the school leadership team to address school needs. Shelly was invited to be member of the science

committee to align and develop science curriculum in accordance to Colorado State standards. Her designation on the science committee utilized her expertise to contribute to a district initiative. Teacher leader practice performed in a given situation allows teachers to be fit in roles that further educational progress.

Teacher leader practice can be explained through the interaction of the situation (S), role (R), and influence (I). What makes this interaction dynamic has to do with how practice was framed. Madison's case followed a model where the situation framed the practice. The situation was technology being implemented in her school. This situation prompted her to exercise her role on the technology committee to offer professional development and individual support to teacher in her school. Sandy's case was formed by a model where the role framed the practice. The role was her being an instructional leader. Her role granted her and the leadership team to formulate school improvement goals. She intentionally related school goals to classroom practices. Shelly's case followed a model where her influence framed the practice. Her influence was evident in her passion, experience, and expertise related to science. Individual qualities such as these contributed to her being invited to have a role on the science committee. The direction given to the science committee was to align and develop science curriculum with state standards. Teacher leader practice was constituted by the same three factors of the situation, the role, and influence. Figure 4.8 depicts how each case framed teacher leader practice according to one factor more so than the other factors. The dynamic interaction of the situation, the role, and the influence can be used as an analytic paradigm to explain teacher leader practice in elementary education.

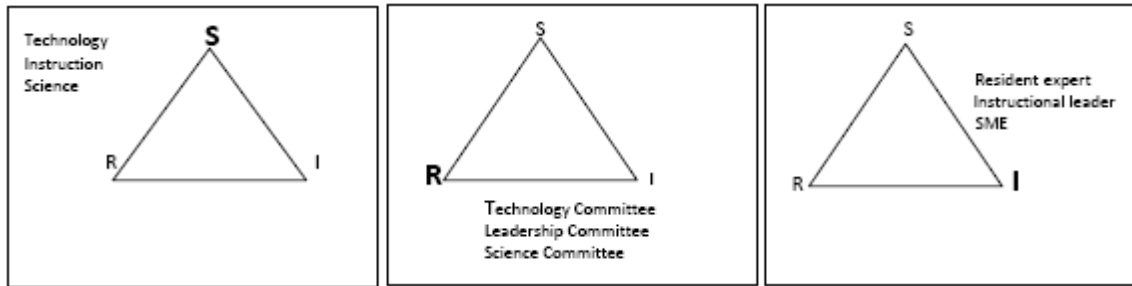


Figure 4.8

*Framing teacher leader practice*

An analytic view across three teacher leader cases placed practice as the keystone. Each case varied on certain tenets related to distributed leadership such as leadership types, expertise, roles, and situations. One aspect shared by Madison, Sandy, and Shelly was practice. Practice was not an idea they spoke of or an object they sought to obtain. Practice for them was about action. It was obvious that leading, following, and teaching were cornerstone actions in teacher leader practice. Closer analysis revealed finer grains that aggregate teacher leader practice in action.

Teacher leaders have a sense of concern for what is important for school improvements. They were caring for students and colleagues. They seemed to be oriented in serving others needs. Also, they were providing their professional services to individuals, groups, or community. They would provide additional instruction for students, and time and effort to committees at the school and district level. Further, they were sharing resources. Unselfishly, they shared their intellectual wealth such as expertise or professional materials. Teacher leaders have selflessness for doing what is right so education could be better for children.

Teacher leaders have a drive to positively affect elementary education. A teacher leader can be influencing to others within her circle of influence. Students, teachers, principals, and parents are likely to be in her circle and be impressed with her work. To influence, a teacher

leader should be convincing so others will follow. Convincing others may not be about a teacher leader having a title or position. It appears to be more about leading by example when a school initiative is being implemented. Implementing change was often the focus of teacher leaders' work. Changes in elementary education were related to aligning practices to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Teacher leaders aim to have a beneficial effect in elementary education.

Teacher leaders have a work ethic especially fit when leading in elementary schools. Working to improve how youngsters learn is multifaceted. Teacher leaders work at honing practice in their classrooms. They share experiences from their classrooms with teammates, faculties and committees. They work to help children and adults learn. Quality work requires continuous planning. Planning instruction, professional development, curriculum documents, and school goals were some examples of teacher leaders planning work. In all their planning, they were contributing toward a better classroom, school, and district. Teacher leaders work for better schooling for youngsters.

Teacher leaders' practice is created first in thought, then in action. They appeared to be as if they were intuiting what others needed in a given situation, be it leading, following, or providing resources. Thinking of the task related to goals came next. Thoughts were made explicit in discussing their ideas with their colleagues. Discussions resulted in activities such as lessons, professional development, curriculum documents, or school improvement documents, for example. Practice for teacher leaders focuses on action.

*Summary.*

This analysis across cases placed teacher leader practice as the keystone. Teacher leader practice was framed by tenets of distributed leadership. Many of the tenets were similar across cases. How the situation, the role, and influence were applied varied from case to case. In re-

examining the data across cases, I identified actions related to practice. Actions emerged from verb forms of how teacher leaders practiced leading. The acts of practice I identified may be a short list of many acts that constitute teacher leader practice. This list focused at a granular level what teacher leaders do to enact leading. Teacher leaders practice leading for educational learning, performance, and change.

*Sociocultural learning.*

A sociocultural view of Madison's, Sandy's, and Shelly's cases provided a perspective of how the three were alike in person, activity, and social world of elementary education. This point of view of teacher leadership suggests that a teacher leader is a teacher who engages in leadership practice activities with others in social structures of elementary public education. The focus on teachers who lead in social practice views the teacher as a leader in activities with members in specific circumstances.

An assumption of a classroom teacher is that they are teacher leaders. The three cases in this study were of teachers who taught in the general classroom and had leadership responsibilities beyond the classroom. Their practices in the classroom were a type of leadership. They were instructional leaders. As teachers who lead from their classrooms, they engage in leadership activities such as planning, coordinating, and decision making at the classroom level. For these teachers, the classroom was a learning community that consisted of teacher and student members sharing in social practice in a learning community. The classroom was a way to understand how teachers who lead in instructional activities with student members in a classroom learning community.

Teachers who have full-time teaching responsibilities and have leadership responsibilities beyond the classroom were of particular interest in this study. The three case studies were full-

time teachers who had leadership responsibilities. Teachers who lead were a kind of person that worked in relation with administrators, teachers, and community members. They were also engaging in school-level work such as committees, initiatives, and professional development in ways that were contributing to and promoting school improvement. The school was a socially structured community of practice composed of educators collaborating in a professional learning community. A school view provided a perspective for understanding how teachers who lead in school-level social structures with teachers and principals in a professional learning community.

Teachers who lead participate in varied ways with teams and committees in social structures of a school district. Teachers who lead interacted with teammates and committee members. They were identified as influencing, encouraging, and sharing in professional relationships. In addition, they gained access to special interest groups such as technology, instruction and assessment, and science extending their expertise to the district level. The district level workplace was a social professional learning community comprised of educators participating in professional learning communities of practice. A view from the district level considers a way for understanding how teachers who lead in multiple and varied ways in complex socially constructed contexts with educators in a professional learning organization.

In public education, teachers who lead engage in on-going practices in a social culture of elementary schools. Teachers who lead related to their colleagues at the school, and district level. They were social agents of public schools. They were a kind of person developing their identity of the educator they were aspiring to become. In so doing, teachers who lead were belonging to social communities of practice. Their activities in practice were on-going and over-time in inclusive ways of collaborating in defined learning communities. Elementary education offers a lens through which a scope for explaining how elementary teachers who lead in practice

by gaining access and belonging to a sociocultural world constituted by stakeholders in the public education enterprise.

A teacher who leads is one who practices leadership in a sociocultural context. Although practice in context was an important element, an additional element in viewing how teachers who lead practice was by their intention. Madison, Sandy, and Shelly participated in intentional practices that began at the classroom level, projected to the school level, and on to the district level, yet the crux of their work was student academic needs.

At the classroom level, teacher leaders' practices are intended to provide for meeting student academic needs. The three teachers in this study developed and maintained teacher-student relationships. Teachers' direct relation with students allowed them to know the students and plan to address the students' needs. Lesson planning was intended for teachers to reflect on student data and plan their lessons accordingly. Having a time to plan was necessary for teachers. Their planning time was a part of their daily schedule. During their planning time, teachers often met with their grade-level teammates or other colleagues to address classroom matters such as curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment. A common planning time for grade-level teams was a structure teachers found valuable. It was a time, though limited, they all had together to think, discuss, and plan for classroom activities. What time they had together with their colleagues was underscored for improving their classroom practices in order to better meet student academic needs.

School-level activities show how teachers who lead projected their practices beyond the classroom intentionally for improving school performance. The three case studies indicated teachers who lead collaborated with their colleagues. Teachers working purposefully in collaboration provide opportunities for sharing knowledge, ideas, and resources. Furthermore,

they deliberately worked in groups to focus on school goals. Vertical teams, learning communities, and professional development were some social structures intended for teachers to engage in co-planning activities related to school improvement. Teachers who lead were able to extend their practices to the school level with intentions of improving school performance.

Extending practices further yet to the district level, teachers who lead cast a broad net onto the sociocultural world of elementary education intending to improve the teaching profession. They were engaging in activities relevant to professional learning communities. Some activities teacher leaders performed included co-planning, peer observation, and collaborative learning. They were also participating in socially structured learning communities of practice. Learning communities in elementary education have varied forms of teams, committees, and school cultures. Moreover, engaging and participating were performing functions of on-going, intentional practice in context. Intentionality of teachers who lead in practice was contextualized in the sociocultural context of elementary public education. Teachers who lead in elementary schools spread influence in the sociocultural world of elementary education.

Social structures in elementary education facilitated leaning for teacher who lead. Learning was facilitated by the structures used by the three teacher leaders in this study. Organizational routines were a type of structure. Those activities that were established as routine structures included team meetings, faculty meetings, professional development meetings, committees, and learning communities. Professional structures such as these were socially constructed and defined in context. Resources were another type of structure. Resources that teacher leaders engaged with commonly, some were accessible immediately such as personal libraries, professional literature, teaching guides, curriculum documents, school improvement

documents, and digital technology. Other resources were teacher created materials, lesson plans, and agendas. An additional resource was student data. Student performance data included formative and summative assessment data. Resources as tools considered as structures in social practice mediated learning for teacher leaders. Teachers who lead engage with and leave socially constructed tools that have had a mediating function of learning in the cultural history of a teacher's elementary school. Teachers who lead access and create artifacts when participating in the sociocultural life of elementary education.

In the sociocultural world of elementary education, teachers who lead were developing collegial relationships. Teacher leaders were becoming a kind of person in relation to others in context. This suggests first that teachers were developing their identity relative to others in their social surrounding. Their identity could be understood in an individual personal way. For instance, who they were was attributed to their attitude about education in the scheme of life. Education for others and themselves was a personal value. Their individual personal value system was held in their personality. Their identity could be understood also in a personal social way. For instance, who they were as a kind of person was identified by how they interacted with others. They tended to be concerning, caring, and supporting of people and social activities. This suggests additionally that teachers were building their relationships with others as participants in social situations. Their relationships were with others in practice. Relationships with others included student teachers, teammates, instructional coaches, principals, and colleagues at the school and district level. Equally important to relationships with individuals was relating to groups such as teams, committees, and staff. Practice was the binding substance among relationships with others. In practice, teachers were establishing relationships by connecting, conversing, and/or emailing with each other. Likewise, teachers were also

influencing, consulting, and capitalizing on each others' relative strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, practice among people in social learning communities was characteristically collegial. Learning together was collaborative and purposive in finding meaning. Learning activities such as planning, co-planning, and re-planning, were contributing to improving teachers' work performance. This suggests further that teachers were participating in their socially constructed contexts with others in an evolving effort of membership. Context of participation included place and time. Places where teachers participated with others in practice included social structures such as meetings and committees at the school and district level. Teachers also participated with their colleagues at times that involved school improvement initiatives and changes in curriculum. Such involvement required teachers to have on-going forms of participation in context of elementary schools. Teachers who lead were becoming a kind of member in a professional community of colleagues in elementary education.

Teachers who lead take action in context that was dialectically enacted from practice in social structures intended for school improvement. Teachers being leaders amongst their colleagues engage in discussions of school matters in learning communities such as teams and committees meant for reproducing practices. They meet with team and committee members to interact with one another as they have meaningful conversations about teaching practices. In these cases, meetings were about planning for general instruction, technology, and science. With teams and committees, they were likely to reproduce effective teaching practices that were working well and to avoid what was not working. Teachers as leaders with educators communicate educational initiatives through social professional structures such as team meetings, committee meetings, and professional development meetings structured as part of a process for transforming schools. They participated in professional structures in ways that

promoted effective communication so others could share their ways and ideas. Professional structures that promote sharing of each others' ways provides opportunities for members to relate to one another in a way of experiencing and learning together as a unified community of practice. Teachers who lead with other stakeholders in public education dialogically participated in the social culture of elementary education as agents of change. They were involved in school-level and district-level goals during a time of change. Their involvement was on-going in relation to others in implementing change. When implementing change, they made decisions with stakeholders, not for them, by reasoning and collaborating. For teachers who lead with others, change was a process that was dialogically constructed and was situated in context of time and place. Teachers who lead were active members in the sociocultural world of elementary education, dialogically constituted by social practices and process for reproduction, transformation, and change.

*Summary.*

Across case analysis of the three teacher leader cases viewed teachers who lead as a kind of person in activity with others in a sociocultural world of elementary education. Constructs from sociocultural learning provided a perspective that explains a way of teachers becoming a leader. The constructs were applicable across cases. The extent to which each teacher leader was involved in particular activities and the school system varied across cases. Each teacher leader was on her unique trajectory of being a member in the social world of elementary public education. The data across cases suggested a focus on the teacher in relation to other educators in elementary public education. The teacher (person), in relation with others (activity) in elementary education (context) mutually constituted a way teachers were learning to lead in a defined community of practice.

## Conclusion

The analysis and findings from three case studies of teacher leaders who had full-time teaching responsibilities in elementary public education and whose leadership extended beyond their general classroom teaching responsibilities. The teacher leaders in this study performed leadership responsibilities without a formal position or title. The analysis of the data from the three case studies included an explanation of how they were becoming a leader and why they chose to lead. Three theoretical constructs buttressed this study: (a) complexity theory, (b) distributed leadership, and (c) sociocultural learning. The analysis and findings were presented in two parts.

Part one presented each case with a description of the teacher leader's professional profile as a basis for their leadership. Following the profile, each teacher leader's leadership work was explained relative to their teaching responsibilities. The analysis and findings of each case were derived from transcribed, semi-structured interviews, field notes from observations, and documents provided by the teacher leaders. The analysis and findings reported were presented by individual case. Individual case findings include three sections: (a) the teacher leader's professional context and the teacher leader's principles of leadership concepts, (b) tenets of leadership practice, and (c) constructs of learning toward becoming a teacher leader. The third section contains an explanation as to how the teacher leader enacts her leadership capacity.

Part two presented across-case synthesis that explains an analytic theory of teacher leadership. An analytic theory constructed from the three case studies can be generalizable to theoretical propositions from section two. An analytic theory of teacher leadership offers an explanation of 'how' and 'why' teacher leaders practice leadership without a formal title or position.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 presents a summary and recommendations in two parts. Part one is a summary and implications of this study. Part two provides recommendations for further research.

### Summary and Implications

From complexity theory I identified a set of principles germane to teacher leadership in elementary public education. The principles I identified were a way to explain the role of teacher leadership in a complex organization of public education. The principles in this study suggested a given set of principles that can guide individuals and groups so teacher leadership can be effective when aligned with school or school district goals. The principles I presented in this study provided a set that can be beneficial to teacher leaders. This set of principles can be extended to include other principles from complexity theory including but not limited to the principles of specialization, self-reference, and assimilation to name a few. Principles extrapolated from complexity theory applied to teacher leadership can change educators' views on the education enterprise and reform of elementary education.

This study presented eight principles from complexity theory (table 5.1). Complexity theory suggests K-6 public education be viewed as a complex organization calling for leadership that can transform education from past practices and prepare public education for the twenty-first century (Berlinger & Biddle, 1995; Fullan, 2001). Teachers must be involved with leadership and be supported in context of public school systems. Teachers need to be relationship builders and networkers so that teacher leadership can realize its full potential (Fowler, 2004; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). Teacher leadership involves collaborating with diverse people and groups as part of one's professional aptitude (Fullan, 2001; Timpson et al., 2005). Motivation for teacher leadership included professional autonomy, opportunity, membership, and monetary

incentives. Working in relation with others, autonomy in their work, and intrinsic factors motivate teachers to lead (Stone et al., 1997; Wasley, 1991). Having a purpose, focus, and willingness to participate in leadership work typically with teams, committees, and district-level departments was valuable for teacher leadership as a means to contribute to the professional community (Lambert et al., 1996; Wheatley, 1999). Sustainability of participation was based on continuing with school improvement efforts and being committed to a purpose over time. Sustainability by collaborating with others was a way to maintain capacity to lead (Fullan, 2005; Wheatley, 1999). Holism suggests a way of thinking how systems are created by relational parts. Systems thinking is a means for understanding how teacher leadership is contributing to the educational system. Contributing to a shared vision for school improvement means that one becomes part of systemic change in complex systems (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Senge, 1994; Wheatley, 1999).

Table 5.1

*Principles of teacher leadership practice, applications and implications*

Principle of practice	Teacher leadership application	Implication
Contextualized leadership	Contextualizing one's role as a part in a school district as a whole organization	Teacher leadership requires identifying one's role at the classroom-level within the school system. A school district is constituted of many organizational units. One must be working at identifying one's role as a teacher leader at the classroom-level, school-level, and district-level within the school system.
Relationships among roles	Identifying/creating relationships among school district units	Teacher leadership involves obtaining information and attending meetings the district offers. A teacher leader needs information and support to stay informed on school district initiatives. One works at developing a professional network at school-level and district-level leadership.
Essential diversity	Working among diverse departments, committees, and individuals	Teacher leadership is involved with diversity that is inherent in a school system. Involvement brings about ways to collaborate among diverse school-level personnel and committees and district-level personnel and departments. One must be developing leadership practices to collaborate among diverse individuals and groups so that one may contribute to school improvement.
Interaction of motivation, autonomy, and participation	Having a purpose, focus, and willingness to participate in leadership work typically with teams, committees, and district-level departments	Teacher leadership finds motivation, autonomy, and participation constitutes one another. Professional autonomy, opportunity, membership, and monetary incentives were valuable.
Sustainable leadership	Continuing with school improvement efforts over time	Teacher leadership is sustainable based on commitment to a purpose. Collaborating with others was a way to maintain capacity to lead. Sustaining teacher leadership benefits elementary school improvement.
Systems thinking	Contributing to the educational system	Teacher leadership contributes to a system for educating youngsters. Contributing to a shared vision for school improvement means that one becomes part of systemic change.

The study of teacher leadership can provide much needed understanding about teacher leadership in contextualized roles. Identification of a set of guiding principles along with applications and implications in teacher leadership practice could further empower classroom teachers in public school reform. The eight principles, applications, and implications for teacher leadership delineated above explain how educational and organizational theories apply to issues related to teacher leadership in elementary public education.

If teacher leadership roles can be explained in principle from educational and organizational theory, then teacher leader practice in action can be framed by tenets of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) as depicted in figure 5.1. The distribution of labor is important in a theory of leadership. Several factors were studied related to distributive leadership. Leadership types, roles and positions, influence, context, and expertise are some important factors. If factors are considered with regard to interactions of leaders, followers, and the situation, then practice can be placed centrally in a framework for leadership practice (Blase & Blase, 2001; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). The tenets I used to frame the analysis were related to distributed leadership and pertaining to elementary public education. Although the tenets were applicable across cases, there were variances how the situation, the role, and influence were applied. Consistently, application of the tenets took form as action in practice. From the data, I identified actions related to practice. Actions emerged from the data in verb forms of how teacher leaders practiced leading. The acts of practice I identified I considered to be a short list of many acts of teacher leader practices. Such a list explains what teacher leaders do to enact leading in practice. Teacher leaders practice leading for educational learning, performance, and change.

Distributed leadership is an important construct in a theory of leadership for teacher leaders. Teacher leaders can perceive leading as a lonely job and can be too much for one person. Distributed leadership provides a framework that allows practice to be distributed among stakeholders. Teacher leaders place practice as the keystone (Brooks et al., 2007; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991).

Leadership types are many. I identified a few that were related to distributed leadership and were relevant in elementary education. Teacher leaders practice several types of leadership including instructional, shared, collaborative, co-leadership, and participative. In a distributed leadership framework, teacher leaders should use a variety of leadership types. A type of leadership should fit the situation and interactions with others (Marzano et al., 2005; Spillane, 2006).

Teacher leaders are recognized for their expertise. Expertise was based on experience and preparatory training. They related their expertise and credibility from experience to practice in their particular area of relative strength such as technology; curriculum, instruction and assessment; and science. They situated their expertise in educational goals. Teacher leaders leverage their expertise and credibility in practice as opposed to formal authority to influence others (Hatch et al., 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991).

Situation, role, and influence are factors of teacher leader practices shown to have a dynamic relationship among them. The dynamic relationship among these three factors maintains teacher leaders' practice as the focal point. When considered separately, each factor serves as a frame for practice. For example, teacher leaders recognize a situation where they can fill a role so they can exercise their ability to influence others (Crowther et al., 2009; Hersey et al., 2000; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). Another example, teacher leaders seek and acquire a

role where they can plan a situation to influence others (Gabriel, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Middlebrooks, 2004; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991). A third example, teacher leaders exhibit the ability to influence others, so they access a role that serves a situation (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Margolis, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Within the dynamic relationship of the three factors of situation, role, and influence, practice is centrally focused.

The central focus of teacher leaders in a distributed leadership framework is practice. Practice, in my analytic view, is a verb. Practice, therefore, is what teacher leaders do. They are concerned about improving schools. They work at serving others. Unselfishly, they share their resources. Teacher leaders are driven to affect elementary education positively. They exercise their influence with students, faculty/staff, and community members. They are change agents at a time of school reform. They have a work ethic fit for leading. They work at improving their practices and helping others to learn new practices. Teacher leaders take action when it comes to improving elementary education for youngsters. Figure 5.1 depicts practice as it exists centrally in a distributed leadership framework (Blase & Blase, 2001; Copland, 2003; Spillane, 2006).

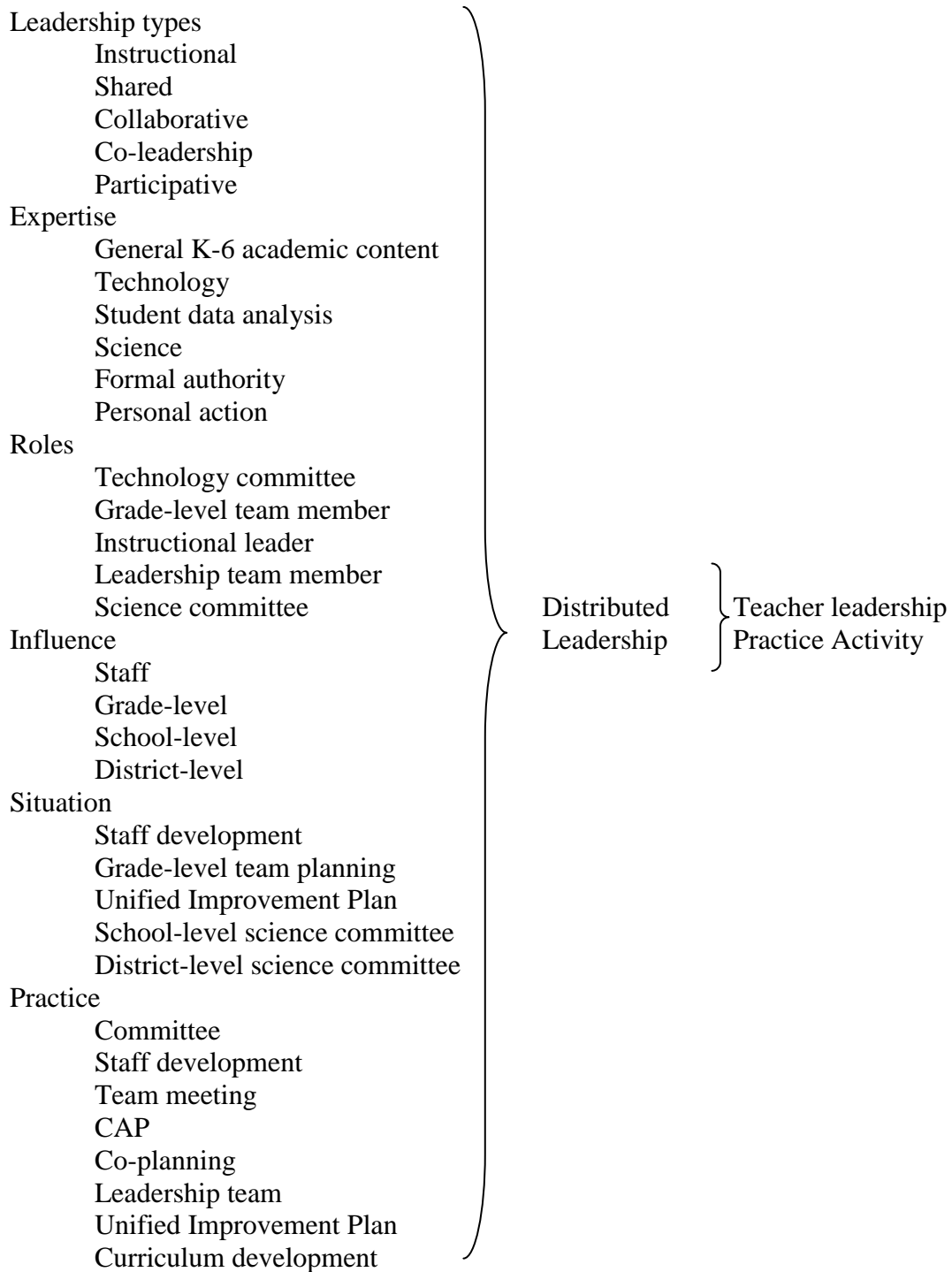


Figure 5.1

*Distributed leadership framework*

Sociocultural learning was a way to analyze how teachers were learning to be teacher leaders in public elementary education. A teacher (person) is learning in characteristic ways by engaging in social processes (activity) in a defined community of practice (world). Teacher leaders participate in various activities in the school system. Participation sets a teacher leader on a trajectory to becoming a member in the social world of elementary public education (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Sociocultural learning theory provides a lens through which the social world and participation in activities that places the person as the focal point. This view suggests practice in social structures as a way of explaining the person as a learner. This perspective maintains an explicit focus on the whole person as inseparable from learning by membership in a learning community. From this view, learning to lead is an activity engaged in by classroom teachers in elementary education (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leander & Osborne, 2008; Spillane, 2006; Wasley, 1991).

A theory that focuses on the person in relation to others in social contexts suggests intentionality of participation in communities of practice as a means to understanding the notion of being a kind of person. Teachers who lead are a kind of person relative to activity and the situation. Some of their activities at the school level included classroom instruction, team work, and committee work. Their participation in these activities was extended to the district level by contributing their classroom experience through teaming in committee work. Teachers who lead are persons who participate in multiple and varied activities and situations with intention. Their intention at the school level is improving classroom practices, meeting student academic needs, and improving school performance. Participating at the district level is for projecting their influence in a broader scope intending to improve the teaching profession. Teachers who lead do

so with intentionality for participating in communities of practice (Blase & Blase, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sato, 2005; Spillane, 2006) .

Intentionally participating in a community of practice involves teachers who lead to engage with socially constructed artifacts. Artifacts of social practice that teacher leaders utilize include school governance structures, professional resources and school performance data. These structures and resources mediate learning for teacher leaders in social contexts. Teacher leaders practice with artifacts of cultural tools. Cultural tools of social practice are integral in leaders' practices. Teacher leaders' tools are intended to support the work of leaders but needed adapting to function properly in a given context (Athanases et al., 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Spillane, 2006).

In the social world of elementary education, relationships among members of a learning community are necessary for reproduction and replication of community practice. It is in relation with others that teacher leaders develop their identity. In addition to identity, they were building relationships with others while participating in social situations. Participating with others in social situations is characteristically collegial, meaning that learning and working together was noted by camaraderie among colleagues. Teacher leaders' relationships are on-going and changing forms of membership in social contexts. Membership in communities of practice implies an evolving relationship of knowing and learning while being concerned for the members of the community. Teacher leaders maintain collegial relationships while leading in social communities of practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Killian & Wilkins, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Spillane, 2006).

Teachers who lead participate in social communities, dialectically constituted in practices intended for educational improvement, progress, and reform. They discuss school matters in

teams and committees structured so practices can be reproduced. With teammates and committee members, effective teaching practices were likely to be reproduced. Teachers who lead communicate with educator’s contemporary educational initiatives through various social professional structures. Professional structures such as meetings promote opportunities for members to work in relation with each other toward a common goal. Teachers who lead dialogically participated in the social culture of elementary education. They are involved with school-level and district-level initiatives during periods of educational reform. Teacher leaders’ participating in the social world of elementary education was on-going, in multiple and varied ways dialectically constituted in communities of practice intended for reforming elementary public education (Friere, 1970; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vella, 2002).

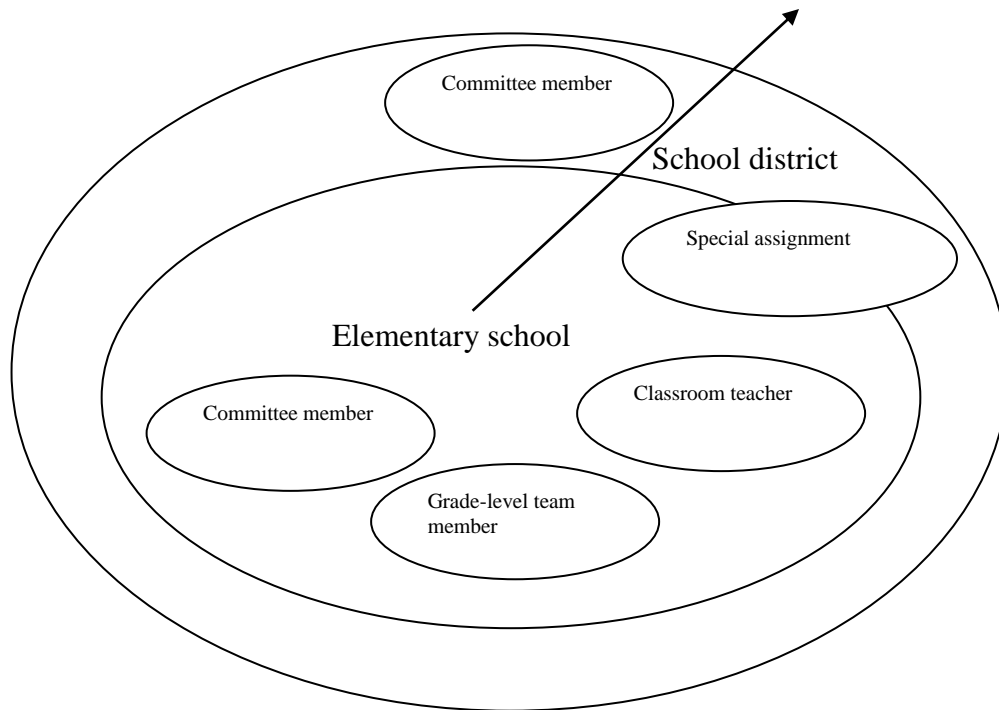


Figure 5.2

*Participation in multiple ways in Jefferson County Schools*

## Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this study presented topics for further research. There are three topics suggested for further research on teacher leadership. The first is to continue identifying principles of practice in teacher leadership. Principles of leadership practice would provide further definition to the role of teacher leadership in public education. Also, identifying principles would provide teacher leaders with guidance in practice.

The second topic is to examine practices of teacher leaders. A study of practice would broaden the scope of leadership types and how leadership types perform in given situations. A focus on practice would benefit teacher leaders in developing expertise in the field of elementary education.

The third topic is to frame how teacher leaders learn in accordance to different orientations to learning in adulthood. Different learning theories would provide learners, instructors, and program developers strategies for enhancing and facilitating learning that is best fit in context for in-service elementary teachers.

## Theoretical Framework

To assist the understanding of my theory of teacher leadership in public elementary education, Engestrom's (1987) activity systems model provides guidance. The activity model focuses on learning processes involving collectives or networks of individuals. A collectivist or social perspective can be applied to every day actions of individuals and the development of new forms of activity collectively created as solution to contemporary issues in public education.

Activity theory (Engestrom, 1987) suggests a three-way interaction among subject, object, and community. What is more, each of the three interactions is mediated with a particular means. The subject – object interaction is mediated with tools; subject- community

interaction is mediated with rules; and community – object is mediated with division of labor. In addition, the outcome resulting from the activity is a sum total effect of the activity system is included in the model. Figure 5.3 illustrates Engestrom’s complete model.

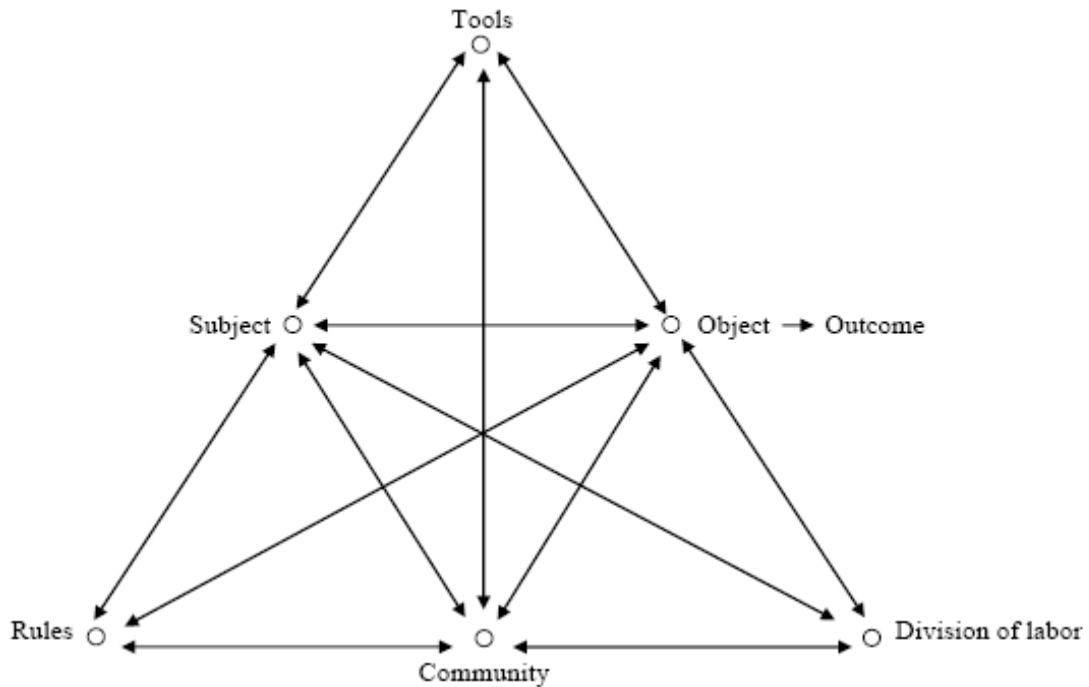


Figure 5.3

*Engestrom’s activity system model*

Given that this study of teacher leaders is a grounded theory from case studies, Figure 5.4 illustrates an emergent theoretical framework for this study. A theoretical framework explains graphically the key constructs that were studied and presumed relationships among them. Furthermore, theory building relies on a few key constructs that subsume a plethora of specifics. Identifying the key constructs and their interrelationship forms my theoretical framework. The three theoretical constructs for this study of teacher leadership are the guiding principles of complexity of their work that allows teacher leaders to participate in a defined *community* of practice, qualities of practices in the distribution of leadership depicts ways in which teacher

leaders can direct their effort toward an object, and sociocultural learning experience identifies the *subject* as a person or subgroup in a learning community. The lines indicate relationships that were shown to exist. The arrows suggest the direction of influence one concept may have on another. Under each theme are related concepts to the theme. The outcome of this study is a theory and a process of teacher leaders' development and practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009).

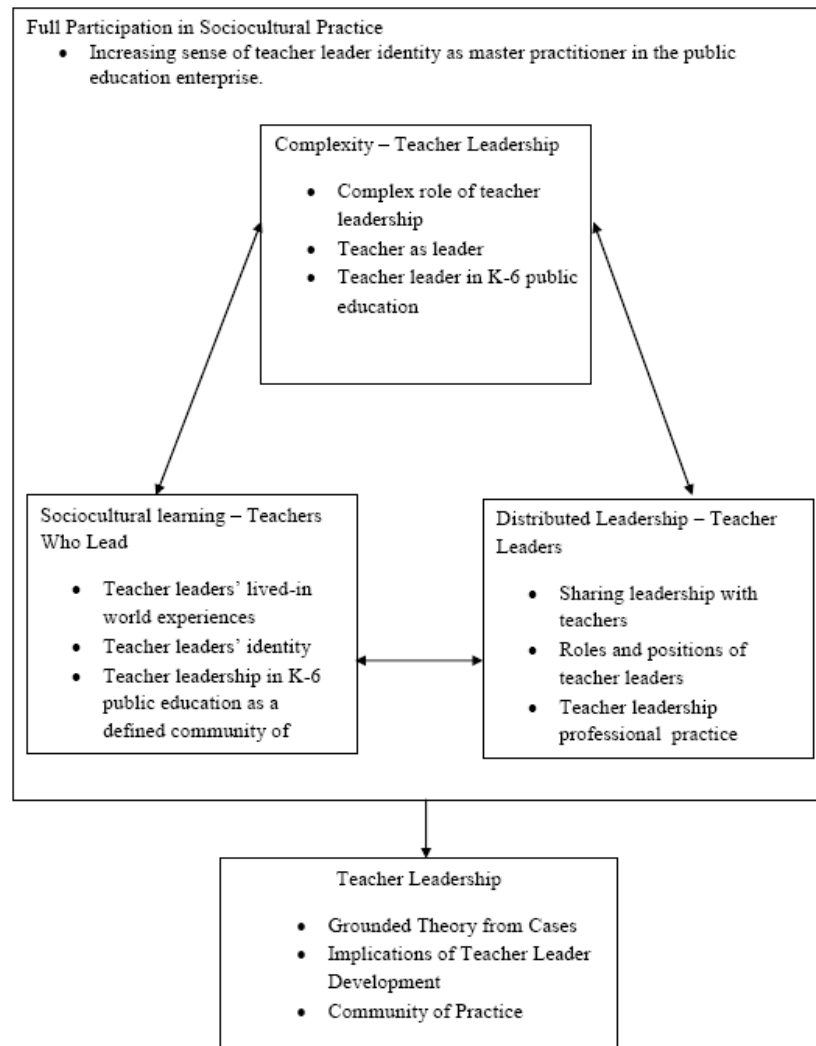


Figure 5.4

*Theoretical framework for teacher leaders*

As an example for how activity theory (Engestrom, 1987) could be applied to my theory of teacher leadership, consider the activity of a teacher leader who participates as a committee member on a new school improvement initiative. The teacher who leads is the subject interacting on the new initiative as the object. The outcome would be a new teaching practice. The teacher who leads utilizes a variety of tools in her work on the object such as computers, professional literature, and curriculum documents. The community includes other committee members with different roles or positions in the school district such as teammates, coordinators and administrators. The interaction among the teacher leaders and the community is mediated by implicit and/or explicit rules such as norms, meetings, and educational standards. The creation of a new teaching practice as the outcome would be the responsibility of the committee. The labor would be divided among the teacher leaders and the other committee members. The relationship among the committee members and the object would be mediated by a division of labor.

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## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT DOCUMENTS

### Telephone Script

My name is Andrew Medina. I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Colorado State University. I am working on a research project under the direction of Dr. William Timpson who is a professor in the School of Education. I am conducting a qualitative research study that will explore teacher leadership in K-6 public education. In particular, I am interested in identifying the practices of effective teacher leadership and the barriers that inhibit teacher leader's participation in public school reform efforts.

I am seeking individuals who are currently teaching K-6 in public schools to participate in my study. Your participation will include an audio-taped interview that will take somewhere between one to two hours. The amount of time will depend on your employment history in public education, your knowledge of teacher leadership, and your experiences related to teacher leadership.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary with no known risks or benefits. Further, while being interviewed you may terminate the interview at any time. If you do choose to participate, you will be asked to review and sign an informed consent, which relays to you that all communications will be kept confidential and you will only be identified by an assigned pseudonym. I will not produce any documents that identify you.

Do you have any questions for me at this time? (If agree to participate, schedule a day/time/place for the interview)

If you have any further questions for me, please contact me at (303) 588-6154 or [andrew.medina@colostate.edu](mailto:andrew.medina@colostate.edu). You may also contact Dr. William Timpson at (970) 491-7630.

## Letter Script

[Date]

[Recipient's address]

Dear (Recipient):

My name is Andrew Medina and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Colorado State University (CSU). To fulfill the dissertation requirement of my degree, I am conducting a qualitative research study that will explore teacher leadership in K-6 public education. In particular, I am interested in identifying the practices of effective teacher leadership and the barriers that inhibit teacher leader's participation in public school reform efforts.

I am requesting your participation in this study due to your experience currently teaching K-6 in public education. If you agree to participate, I would ask that you allow me to interview you for a time period somewhere between one to two hours at a time and place of your convenience. The amount of time will depend on your employment history in public education, your knowledge of teacher leadership, and your experience related to teacher leadership.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and there are no known risks or benefits to you personally. Further, during the interview process you may terminate the interview at any time.

CSU adheres to strict federal regulations when conducting research involving human subjects. If you choose to participate, all communications will be kept confidential and you will be identified by an assigned pseudonym. I will also not produce any documents that will identify you. In order to participate in an interview, you will be asked to review and sign in my presence an informed consent form. This form will indicate that the interview will be audio-taped, which along with the consent forms are required to be stored in a locked cabinet for a minimum of three years. I am working directly under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. William Timpson who is a professor in the School of Education at CSU. He is also serving as the Principal Investigator for this study and will oversee that all tapes and documents are handled appropriately.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study. If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact me at (303) 588-6154 or [andrew.medina@colostate.edu](mailto:andrew.medina@colostate.edu). You may also contact Dr. William Timpson at (970) 491-7630.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Medina  
Ph.D. Candidate, School of Education  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado

## **E-Mail Script**

Dear (Recipient):

My name is Andrew Medina and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Colorado State University (CSU). To fulfill the dissertation requirement of my degree, I am conducting a qualitative research study that will explore teacher leadership in K-6 public education. In particular, I am interested in identifying the practices of effective teacher leadership and the barriers that inhibit teacher leader's participation in public school reform efforts.

I am recruiting individuals who are currently teaching K-6 in public schools to participate in an audio-taped interview that will take somewhere between 30 - 120 minutes at a time and place of your convenience. The amount of time will depend on your employment history in public education, your knowledge of teacher leadership, and your experience related to teacher leadership.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary with no known risks or benefits. Further, while being interviewed you may terminate the interview at any time. CSU adheres to strict federal regulations when conducting research involving human subjects. If you do choose to participate, you will be asked to review and sign an informed consent, which relays to you that all communications will be kept confidential and you will only be identified by an assigned pseudonym. I will not produce any documents that identify you.

I am working directly under the supervision of my advisor, Dr. William Timpson who is a professor in the School of Education at CSU. He is also serving as the Principal Investigator for this study and will oversee that all tapes and documents are handled as required by federal regulations.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study. If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact me at (303) 588-6154 or [andrew.medina@colostate.edu](mailto:andrew.medina@colostate.edu). You may also contact Dr. William Timpson at (970) 491-7630.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Medina  
Ph.D. Candidate, School of Education  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado

## APPENDIX B: LETTER OF COOPERATION

September 1, 2010

Human Subjects Review Committee  
Colorado State University  
321 General Services Building  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-2011

To Human Subjects Review Committee Members:

Dr. William Timpson has requested permission to collect research data from educators at (name of agency). We are aware that the purpose of this study is to explore teacher leadership in K-6 public education and identifying the practices of effective teacher leadership and the barriers that inhibit teacher leader's participation in public school reform efforts.

We understand that Dr. Timpson's study involves interviews of our agency's staff and possibly those that we may refer due to their being able to provide instrumental information for this study. At the time of the interview we will be asked to sign a consent form, which indicates our understanding that the interviews conducted are confidential and only the research team of Dr. Timpson and Andrew Medina will have access to identifiable data. The participation of our staff members and anyone that we refer is strictly voluntary and consent may be withdrawn and participation ceased at any time.

As a representative of (agency name), I am authorized to grant permission to Dr. William Timpson to conduct interviews at our agency.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (phone number).

Sincerely,

[Name of Authorized Representative]  
[Official Title]

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University**

**TITLE OF STUDY: Teacher Leadership: Theory and Methodology of Development**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** William Timpson, Ph.D., RM. 105E EDUCATION BUILDING (1588); 970-491-7630

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Andrew J. Medina, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, andrew.medina@colostate.edu; 303-588-6154

#### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You are invited to take part in this research because you were identified as an elementary teacher who has: a) full-time classroom teaching responsibilities, b) experience in formal or informal leadership positions/roles, c) leadership expertise (knowledge, skills, and practice), and d) recognition by peers (i.e. teachers, principals and other administrators, parents) as a leader.

#### **WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?**

Andrew J. Medina, who is a Doctoral Candidate at Colorado State University, will be the Co-Investigator and researcher for this study. He will be working with William Timpson, Principal Investigator and professor at Colorado State University.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore teacher leadership in K-6 public education. I am interested in the practices of teacher leaders and the barriers that hold back teacher leader's in public school reform efforts.

#### **WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

This study will take place in Denver area K-6 public schools and will last no longer than one year.

#### **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

In a face-to-face or telephone interview setting, you will be asked some open-ended questions that pertain to the following areas: your work as a teacher leader or your work with a teacher leader(s), the role of teacher leaders, how and why leadership was developed, and explanation of leadership practice in K-6 public education. The interview will be audio recorded, and will last between 30 and 120 minutes depending on the experiences you have had and are willing to discuss. I will also set a second meeting time with you to review your interview transcripts and to

ask any follow up questions resulting from our initial interview. Additionally, you may be invited to participate in a focus group at the end of the study. The purpose of the focus group will be for checking and seeking the plausibility of the tentative interpretation of the data with the participants. The focus group interview will be conducted using a discussion protocol (focus group questions will be contingent upon responses from prior interviews) and last about one hour. Interviews and focus group will take place outside of school hours.

Page 1 of 4 Participant's 'initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? (continued)**

Observations are used by the researcher to take field notes on the participant at the site. The researcher may also engage in activities ranging from non-participant to complete participant. Observations will be made as a non-participant at the teacher leaders schools (meetings, classrooms, and activities).

Documents can be useful to the researcher in obtaining the language of the participants, in ease of obtaining information, and in gaining written evidence sparing transcription. Documents are metaphorically voices begging to be heard. The documents for use in this study will be collected between April 2011 and December 2011. They serve as resources throughout the research process. Those collected at the school level may include agendas, school reports, newsletters, and school improvement plans. These provide insight on the sociocultural context of the teacher leaders' work. Additional documents collected from teacher leader's may include newsletters, handouts from presentations, and written communications dated within the last twelve months.

### **ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You would not take part in this study if you have never been a teacher leader or worked with a teacher leader.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

There are no risks or discomforts known with this study. It is not possible to know all risks in research, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to reduce any known and potential risks.

### **WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There are no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study.

### **DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

To take part in this research is voluntary. If you decide to take part in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop at any time with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled by your school or Jeffco Schools. Participating or not participating will not have any effect on your relationship with your school or Jeffco Schools as a district.

## **WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?**

The only cost to you in this study will be the time you spend with the researcher.

## **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?**

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with that from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

Page 2 of 4 Participant's initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? (continued)**

As a participant in the study, you will only be known by a pseudonym that will be assigned by the researcher. Pseudonyms will be kept in sequential order as interviews of participants are conducted and will refer to you as title with a number (for example, Teacher Leader 1). During the study, the researcher will keep a list that links your name to your number only to assure that the research record is complete. This list will be kept until the end of the study. Audio and video recordings will be used during this study. Recordings will be maintained by the researcher in a personal, private digital file. The recordings will also be shared with a transcriptionist. Upon completion of the research project, all recordings will be kept for one year then they will be erased, deleted, or destroyed.

We will make every effort to keep anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key. You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court.

## **CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?**

You would only be removed from the study if you do not meet the participant selection criteria as described under the question of reasons why I should not partake in the study or if you choose to withdraw.

## **Will I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Compensation will not be provided to you for this study.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?**

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State

University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

### WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Andrew Medina at 303-588-6154 or by e-mail at [andrew.medina@colostate.edu](mailto:andrew.medina@colostate.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, IRB Senior Coordinator, at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

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Page 3 of 4 Participants initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

In order to accurately record your comments, the researchers would like to audio record your interview. Do you give us permission to record the interview?

- Yes, you may record my interview.
- No, please do not record the interview.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this consent containing 4 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person providing information to participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Staff

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