USING SHARED LEADERSHIP TO ACHIEVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GOALS:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ONE HIGH SCHOOL'S JOURNEY

by

Leigh Ann Putman

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the impact of shared leadership committees on school improvement efforts. The research identified which leadership factors lead to successful shared leadership committees and which supports and structures were needed for the committees to be meaningful in regards to school improvement. Certified staff who had been a part of the shared leadership committees at one high school in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia took part in the study. The participants were divided according to the committee on which they served and two were randomly selected two from each committee for participation in the study. All study participants completed an information gathering survey and some participated in personal interviews, focus groups, or observations with the primary researcher. These educators were selected because they experienced the phenomenon being examined. Surveys and interviews indicated that participants knew that there was a mission or vision statement, but could not articulate what it was. The surveys also indicated that most teachers felt that they could participate in the school-wide decision making process if they desired to do so. In addition, the surveys detected that there was a culture of respect between teachers, but not between teachers and administration. There was also a feeling amongst teachers that there was no time for collaboration on issues of school improvement or instruction. For these reasons, school improvement was not positively impacted by the school's shared leadership committees. Results strongly demonstrated that shared leadership committees in general are very likely to be unsuccessful unless there is time dedicated during the

school day for the committees to meet, there is a well-defined purpose for the committees, there is a choice for each staff member of which committee to serve on, there is administration involvement and oversight of the work of the committees, and there is value attached to the work of the committees.

DEDICATION

  This work is dedicated to my mother, Carolyn. From writing my name for the

first time to writing a dissertation, you have been my biggest cheerleader and most

trusted advisor. You have modeled what it means to have a strong work ethic and to

value education. When I have wanted to give up, the desire to make you proud has

pushed me forward. God's greatest gift to me has been and always will be having you as

my mother.

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List of Abbreviations

AYP: adequate yearly progress

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

LEA: Local Education Agency

GAPSS: Georgia Assessment of Progress of School Standards

CCSSO: Council of Chief State School Officers

NPBEA: National Policy Board for Educational Administration

ISLLC: Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

MLQ: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

GaDOE: Georgia Department of Education

PAI: Professional Evaluation Instrument

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

It is May. The State Department of Education will soon release its preliminary list of schools that did not make adequate yearly progress, and you pray each day that yours will not be on it. As the principal of a large urban high school, you realize that the challenges you must overcome in order to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) are large. Over one-third of your students will not finish high school. Almost one-half of your Hispanic students (one-fifth of the population of your school) will not graduate. Seventy percent of your special needs students, 178 individuals, will leave your watch without a diploma. You feel the weight of this responsibility, as do your assistant principals, but you realize with over 2,000 students and nearly 200 certified and classified staff members, the management of moving the school toward the goals you have set for school improvement is nearly impossible.

Research indicates that successful school leaders are those who recognize that the responsibility for school improvement goals cannot lie with one person. Effective leaders (those who see results in the form of improved student success) distribute responsibility among staff, students, and the community (Spillane, 2006). They create a sense of shared purpose and a learning community in which the organizational goals are everyone's goals. These leaders also realize that there are more factors that contribute to academic improvement than simply developing lofty goals. The structures and processes, in essence, the vehicle, for achieving those goals must also exist before the school can hope

to begin moving toward its desired end (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Hoffman, R., Hoffman, W., & Guldemond, 2001; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Leech & Fulton, 2008). This research will examine how a large urban high school structured its school improvement efforts by utilizing the framework of the Georgia Keys to Quality to establish distributed leadership and shared responsibility for student success.

No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001) was authorized on January 8, 2002. Since this time, public elementary, middle, and high schools have been held to a high standard of performance according to the pillars upon which NCLB is built. The first pillar of NCLB, more accountability for results, has meant that schools are required to meet rigorous standards for all students. They are expected to meet annual measureable objectives (AMOs) on the state-selected standardized test in math, English language arts, and reading. Schools face sanctions if any subgroup of students fails to meet these objectives. The second pillar of NCLB, more choice for parents, means that underperforming schools must provide for either tutoring or school choice for parents of the students in that school. The third pillar, local control and flexibility, allows states and districts some control over how to meet the NCLB demands and what sorts of sanctions are faced in the event that schools do not meet the established goals. Finally, a focus on research-based best practices, the fourth pillar, means that schools must show that they are providing professional learning opportunities and support to teachers using practices and strategies that have been proven through research to be effective means of meeting teachers' needs (NCLB, 2001).

These stringent requirements have meant that leaders have been faced with finding effective ways to increase the academic performance of both students and teachers within their schools. Millions of dollars have been spent searching for the key to improved student academic achievement. Attempts have included extensive school improvement reform models that restructure a school's curriculum standards, models that encourage setting higher expectations for student performance, and magnet models that focus on specific areas of student interest such as technology, dramatic and visual arts, health and human science, and business. As a requirement of NCLB, states must develop a plan for sanctions that will be imposed upon schools in which students consistently fail to meet federal guidelines for performance. In Georgia, for example, schools who have failed to make AYP in the areas of math and/or reading and language arts or who have had excessive student absences (more than 15% of students have been absent more than 15 days) are faced with consequences that grow steeper with each passing year that AYP is not met. In year three of being identified as a "Needs Improvement" school, local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to choose from a menu of consequences; for example, a school could choose to become a charter school, restructure the internal organization of the school (in other words, remove the administration and/or the school staff), or extend the school day for students attending the school to provide more instruction in the areas of need. In the event that these strategies do not work and a school enters its fifth year as a Needs Improvement school, the state of Georgia assigns a full time director who helps to implement school improvement strategies and requires the

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school to sign a contractual agreement that outlines the strategies that will be implemented. These schools are then designated as "State Directed Schools," a moniker no school would want (Georgia State Board of Education, 2005).

It is clear that school leaders can no longer serve singularly as managers who focus on "administrivia" such as bus schedules and basketball games. Research has unveiled that educational leadership is one of the most crucial components of a productive learning environment (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). In order to accomplish the many goals that have been placed upon educators, leaders (especially those in challenging areas such as inner-city schools), must begin to expand their thinking on how their job should be done. School principals are called upon to serve as both managers of people and instructional leaders who set the tone for learning throughout the building. Some studies even suggest that principals should be persuaded to serve as lead learners by establishing pay-for-performance programs that compensate principals based on student performance on state assessments (McNeil, 2007). What school leaders are being asked to do is serve in transformational roles, and ultimately school improvement has become their primary responsibility. Bass (1998) spoke of this kind of leadership when he described leaders who had the ability to steer individuals toward focusing on organizational goals before their own goals.

Just as Jesus carefully selected the 12 who would succeed him and spread his message, so must school leaders share responsibilities for the growth and maintenance of the educational organization that they lead. Distributed leadership has been widely

studied for its ability to build sustainable change within the educational setting. The use of distributed leadership helps to motivate staff members by instilling confidence and expressing trust that members are skilled enough to participate in the decision making process of the organization. These teacher leaders are increasingly being utilized to aid school administrators in the work of the school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Harris (2003) stated that:

> If we are serious about building professional learning communities within and between schools then we need forms of leadership that support and nourish meaningful collaboration among teachers. This will not be achieved by clinging to models of leadership that, by default rather than design delimits the possibilities for teachers to lead development work in schools. (p. 322)

Research on the structures necessary for this type of leadership is scarce. This presents a problem for those intent upon implementing distributed leadership within their organization (Harris, 2002).

Problem Statement

Shared leadership committees have become a popular way for administrators to raise morale and empower staff members in an era when high pressure and busy schedules are the norm for leaders (Hord, 1997; Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Spillane, 2005). Principals and teachers enjoy shared leadership experiences for different reasons. Unfortunately, shared leadership experiences are not always a successful means of improving student achievement, which

is the ultimate goal of any school initiative. Certain structures need to be in place before shared leadership committees can positively impact student academic achievement. Unfortunately, research has not adequately examined which structures must be present before shared leadership committees are able to impact academic progress, nor has research established what obstacles prevent those structural supports from being put in place. This study examined a school that had recently begun using shared leadership committees to discover what supports and structures were needed for the committees to be meaningful in regards to school improvement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the roles and relationships of teachers and administrators at a large urban high school that was undertaking an effort to establish shared leadership, and also identify which structural supports needed to be in place in order for the shared leadership committees to positively impact school improvement goals. The study examined how the Georgia Assessment of Progress of School Standards (GAPSS) were used to a reorganize the school's focus teams to create opportunities for involvement among staff members and if this involvement increased a sense of shared responsibility for the outcomes of school improvement efforts.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this research:

Research Question 1: What are teacher perceptions regarding the ability of shared leadership committees to positively impact school improvement efforts?

Research Question 2: What leadership factors lead to successful shared leadership committees?

Research Question 3: What structures need to be in place to make distributed leadership efforts possible?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was its contribution to the literature on educational leadership in regards to how one distributed leadership method, shared leadership committees, influenced the school environment, teacher morale, and academic results. The study is especially important to school administrators who are often overwhelmed with the volume and variety of their daily duties. They could first use the results of this research to begin putting the correct supports in place that will enable the effective use of shared leadership committees once established. Administrators could then utilize the results of this research to justify creating and sustaining shared leadership experiences in their school, which will empower teachers at the same time that it lightens the load of their responsibilities. By examining shared leadership through the eyes of both the teachers and the administrators, educational researchers may gain unique insight into the perceptions of shared leadership from the perspectives of the people involved.

Research Plan

The study is a qualitative phenomenological study. I employed an internet randomization program to randomly choose teachers to take the surveys from amongst the administrators and teachers who had been a part of the shared leadership committees.

I then divided them up according to the committee that they served on and again randomly selected two from each committee and asked them to participate in the study. All study participants completed an information gathering survey and some participated in personal interviews, focus groups, or observations with the primary researcher. The educators were selected because they were the only people who had experienced the phenomenon that I was examining.

After the individual surveys were completed and returned, I was able to analyze the responses to draw general conclusions about the participants' demographical makeup and perceptions of the shared leadership communities. The surveys were used to direct initial coding procedures and provided questions for the interview process. Because of the emergent and flexible nature of qualitative studies, I employed open-ended questions and conversational techniques (Merriam, 1998). The heuristic nature of the phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1990) allowed me to pursue topics during the conversation that were not originally part of my planned questions. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. I also kept detailed field notes and reflections during each interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed and coded to find themes relevant to my research (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Hoy, 2008). During this time, I was also attending committee meetings to make general observations about the shared leadership committees and was conducting focus groups as well. These also provided information for the questions I would later ask during the participants' individual interviews.

Limitation and Delimitations

  Limitations. There are limitations in this study because of certain weaknesses that exist in the research methodology, design, analysis, and sample. There are some limitations that apply to every qualitative research study, but there are also limitations that apply specifically to this study, and those are explained in this section as well.

  Limitations due to study design. While qualitative research studies are valuable for the insight they provide into thoughts, perceptions, and processes, they are not without inherent weaknesses. For example, the knowledge gleaned using qualitative methods may not generalize to other populations and other settings. These findings may be unique to one particular location or group of people, making transference of the findings to other locations and groups impractical. A related limitation is the inability to make quantitative predictions based on qualitative results. Since qualitative research does not test to determine whether results are due to chance, quantitative predictions are never possible. Qualitative research may also have a lower degree of credibility with consumers of research, especially those who are uninformed about qualitative methods. Therefore, a limitation would be decreased credibility, even if not deserved. Personal biases are much more difficult to control for in qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, research. Personal beliefs, views, and opinions are likely to seep into the findings despite even the most careful controls. Closely related to personal bias is the limitation of objectivity. Qualitative researchers are limited by their own abilities to be objective. Additionally, the participants may feel uncomfortable interviewing face to face, which

may make them reluctant to give truthful answers. Instead, they might give socially acceptable ones.

Limitations due to study sample. There are a number of demographic limitations that were present in this study. The participants were all volunteers, which limits the researcher's ability to gather information about the research topic from all educators involved in the shared leadership committee process. The people who volunteered may have been more negative and saw this research study as an outlet to vent their frustration. There was also a midstudy change of administration at the target school. This limited the ability of the researcher to use the academic results of the students to determine the effectiveness of the shared leadership committees.   It also slightly shifted the focus of the study from just an examination of teacher perceptions of the shared leadership committees to teacher perceptions of shared leadership committees and teacher perceptions of the two administrations.

Delimitations. This study was delimited in several ways. None of the participants were noncertified staff because they were not part of the shared leadership committees. They were encouraged to participate on committees, and did at first, but their participation did not last very long. Another delimitation was my decision to not interview teachers who had just joined the staff because their knowledge of the processes being discussed during those meetings would have been extremely limited.

Definition of Terms

Focus Groups: In the case of Woodruff High School, groups of teachers and administrators were assigned to a team focused on one of the eight School Keys strands (curriculum, assessment, instruction, professional learning, school culture, leadership, parent/family/community support, and planning and organization) for the purpose of school improvement work.

No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Reauthorized in 2002, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was originally established by the Johnson administration and is the main federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. NCLB stands on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and use of scientifically-based best practices in the school setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Georgia School Keys. The Georgia School Keys include school standards that detail eight strands including curriculum, assessment, instruction, planning and organization, student/family/community support, professional learning, leadership, and school culture. These standards, based on the work of well-known researchers including Marzano (2003), describe what effective schools should know, be able to do, and understand about the eight strands identified.

Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards. Developed in 2005, this assessment tool measures a school's performance on the Georgia School Keys

(school standards) through a collection and analysis of data, including interviews, observations, document analysis, and a certified staff survey.

Transactional and *Transformational Leadership.* These two concepts of leadership were first studied by Burns (1978). He described the traditional top-down model of authoritative leadership as being transactional, while he described transformational leadership "as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations, the wants and the needs, the aspirations and expectations, of both leaders and followers" (Burns, 1978, p.19).

Distributed Leadership. Practiced in both business and educational settings, distributed leadership focuses on the distribution of leadership responsibilities. Distributed leadership, according to Spillane (2005), is about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures.

Professional Learning Communities. A school whose staff organize themselves into teams who participate in planning for and monitoring of student achievement and school improvement efforts (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study examined how transformational leaders used distributed leadership to move an organization toward the realization of school improvement goals. The literature herein examined the concept of transformational leadership, its relationship to distributed leadership practices, and the development of professional learning communities as a vehicle for establishing distributed leadership in an organization.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research links the study to an existing theory that helps explain the basis for the study. The theoretical framework helped to guide data collection and analysis during this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Bass: Transactional versus Transformational leadership. The theoretical framework for this study is the theory of transformational leadership (Bass, 1998). Bass, a disciple of Burns, furthered the study of transformational leadership begun by Burns (1978), and established the ideas of transactional and transformational leadership. The main difference between transactional and transformational leadership is the means of motivation used by the leader. Transactional leaders are those who inspire others based upon a system of exchange; in other words, the leader inspires others only enough to produce a desired result. Transformational leaders move beyond the minimum desired result and inspire others to act based on a shared vision for the organization. Bass, along with his fellow researchers, identified characteristics of transformational leaders discussed later in this literature review. Bass believed that transactional and

transformational leadership styles built upon one another (Nguni, Sleegers, & Denessen, 2006), but his research provided proof that transformational leadership was what was needed to sustain change within an organization (Stewart, 2006). Bass believed that transactional leaders and transformational leaders were at the opposite ends of the leadership continuum, but that the two could be complementary of one another. However, an ideal leader would exhibit more transformational qualities than transactional ones.

Spillane: The practices of distributed leadership. Also included in the theoretical framework for this study is researcher Spillane's work examining distributed leadership and its effectiveness within the educational setting. Much of the research prior to Spillane's focused exclusively on the principal or those with leadership designations. Spillane believed that distributed leadership meant that "school leadership practice is distributed in the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation" (Spillane, 2006, p.2). Spillane (2006) states:

> Rather than viewing leadership practice through a narrow psychological
> lens where it is seen as the product of a leader's knowledge and skill, the
> distributed perspective defines leadership practice in regards to the
> interactions of people and their situations. These interactions are
> important to understanding leadership practice. The leadership practice
> aspect then moves the focus from aggregating the actions of individual

leaders to the interactions among leaders, followers, and their situations.

(p. 7)

Spillane urged that distributed leadership be "first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders, leadership roles, or leadership functions" (Spillane, 2004, p. 144). Distributed leadership, according to Spillane, involves two components: the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect. The leader-plus aspect maintains that leadership and management of the day-to-day operations of a school can involve multiple individuals. The practice aspect defines leadership as a practice instead of a designation or title, which allows for leadership to be viewed from a distributed perspective. Instead of leadership resting on one individual, such as a principal or assistant principal, leadership can also involve those outside the formal designation of leader (Spillane, Camburn, Pustejovsky, Pareja, & Lewis, 2006).

Characteristics of Effective Schools

Accountability for increased student achievement in the light of NCLB (2001) has forced schools to examine their existing practices. The public display of student results in newspapers and other media outlets have no doubt heightened schools' and districts' concerns over what works to improve student performance (Reezigt & Creemers, 2005). School districts and states spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on school improvement reform models and programs that claim to be based on research, and when implemented with fidelity, serve as a road map to school success. Because of increased accountability, this time and money spent on school improvement efforts are increasingly under scrutiny.

Researchers have spent time and resources trying to assist educators by examining why some schools' students are more successful than others academically and what characteristics are shared by schools demonstrating success.

Early efforts to identify best practices. This effort to identify the qualities of effective schools is not new. "Equality of Educational Opportunity," also called the Coleman Report, was delivered in 1966 and primarily examined the expected differences between predominantly Caucasian and predominately African American schools in regards to funding and the implications that the funding had for student achievement in those schools. Coleman and his colleagues found that the difference in funding between predominantly African American and predominantly Caucasian schools was less than believed and that funding was not linked to whether or not a school's students would be high achievers (Coleman, 1966). The researchers also found that family economic status was the largest predictor of student success and that the socioeconomic status of a student's peer group could be used as a predictor for student performance (Kahlenberg, 2001). Criticisms of Coleman's methodology led to doubts about whether or not the research could be used to make sound policy decisions (Goldberger & Cain, 1982). However, Coleman's research laid the foundation for further studies in the area of students' ability to achieve despite belonging to a demographic group that was perceived to be disadvantaged.

Later research (Brookover et al, 1979; Rutter et al., 1979; Weber, 1971) disputed some of Coleman's findings and stated that students were capable of achievement at high

levels despite socioeconomic background. Brookover (1979) and Weber (1971) examined schools in the United States, while Rutter's (1979) work centered on schools in England. The goal of the researchers in each case was to identify school factors that contributed to the success of its students. Brookover's work found that schools where the student body was predominantly poor Caucasian and African American students could still achieve at high levels and that factors such as student-teacher relationships and school climate heavily affected the success of students (Moon, 1980). Similarly, Rutter concluded that "not only were pupils influenced by the way they were dealt with as individuals, but there was also a group influence resulting from the ethos of the school as a social institution" (Moon, 1980). In other words, a student can be successful despite his or her parental economic status. Brookover's and Rutter's findings implied that student success is strongly related to what takes place within the walls of the school; these findings contradicted previous research (Coleman, 1966; Kahlenberg, 2001).

Weber's (1971) research resulted in similar findings as Brookover's (1979) and Rutter's (1979), but identified some additional characteristics of effective schools. Weber found that the quality of school facilities, attendance at a preschool, small class sizes, and whether or not the teacher was the same race as his or her students did not affect student success. Weber found that high expectations, positive school culture, individualization, and appropriate evaluation of student progress were characteristics of schools that experienced student success (Weber, 1971). Later research conducted in Great Britain by Mortimore et al. (1988) confirmed these findings and stated that schools

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can have more of a determining factor on student success than a child's family. Mortimore et al.'s found that planning periods for teachers during the school day, teacher involvement in curriculum planning, and progress monitoring for students were important factors in schools that had high rates of student success. Higher order questioning by teachers and student-centered learning were also cited as effective practices.

      A call to action: A nation at risk. Perhaps the largest impetus for school improvement research and reform in the United States was the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) and its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. The NCEE, commissioned by then President Reagan, studied data and research on public schools in the United States in order to make recommendations to the President regarding the state of the nation's schools and ways in which they might improve. The report sparked national debate on the quality of education in the country and identified four main areas for concern: curriculum content, instructional time, expectations, and quality of teaching. The report found that the curriculum content of high schools had been "homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose" and that students had largely moved from college preparatory tracks and vocational tracks to more general tracks (NCEE, 1983). The NCEE found that public school graduation expectations in the United States had become less rigorous, and that "the 'minimum'" had " become the 'maximum,' thus lowering educational standards for all" (NCEE, 1983).

The report also noted what is described as "disturbing" uses of time throughout the public schools in the United States, both in and out of the classroom. The report found that students in the United States attended school for far fewer hours than their counterparts in other countries. Students in the U.S. spent an average of six hours in school each day for 180 days each year. Students in Great Britain, however, spent an average of eight hours in school each day for 220 days each year. The report also cited poor classroom management, misuse of instructional time, and a lack of study skills instruction as culprits in the failure of U.S. schools. Finally, the report criticized teacher preparation programs in the United States and declared that a large percentage of those in the teaching field were being drawn from the lowest performing students in high school and college. The commission stated that far too many methods courses were being taught to teacher candidates at the expense of content courses that would make them more highly qualified to teach, especially the subjects of mathematics and science (NCEE, 1983).

The commission's report also made recommendations, including graduation requirements of four years of English, three years of science and mathematics, three years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science, with an additional two years of foreign language for those on the college bound track. The commission also suggested that public schools, colleges, and universities should increase the rigor and expectations of students and raise requirements for admission. Another recommendation was that school districts require students to attend school for seven hours each day and consider a

200 to 220 day calendar to increase the amount of time students spend learning. The

commission also highlighted changes that should be made in teacher preparatory

programs in order to increase the quality of teachers coming into the profession: for

example, increasing teacher salaries to attract more people to the field, implementing an

eleven month contract for teachers, and involving master teachers in the supervision and

instruction of newly hired teachers (NCEE, 1983).

Disappointing progress: The 1995 and 1999 TIMSS studies. A later report that

called for improvement in American education was the Third International Mathematics

and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995, and the Third International Mathematics and

Science Study (Repeat), sometimes referred to as TIMSS-r, in 1999. The original

TIMMS study conducted in 1995 compared math and science achievement between the

United States and 41 other countries. Grades four, eight, and twelve, were compared.

The study provided a grim commentary on the progress students make in both math and

science as they progress throughout school in the United States. While fourth graders

performed well in both science and mathematics, eighth graders performed only at the

average level. Twelfth graders not only performed well below the international average,

but were among the lowest of all the participating nations. Twelfth graders performed

especially low in the areas of general science knowledge, physics, and advanced math.

The 1999 study allowed for an interesting comparison because the fourth graders

and eighth graders from the 1995 study were the same students who were now eighth

graders and twelfth graders, respectively. The study found that on average, eighth

graders in the United States had made little or no progress in achievement between the 1995 study and the 1999 study. Although students outperformed their counterparts in 17 countries in math and 18 countries in science, they still fell below 14 countries in both (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000). Critics of education pointed to these results as proof that expectations for students in the U.S. in math and science were low compared to their counterparts in other countries, and that standards for math education in the U.S. were not coherent and lacked focus considering the level of study needed for students to perform at the rate of other countries that participated in the TIMSS study (Valverde & Schmidt, 2000).

Looking for answers: What works in schools. From these reports rose many years of research to determine what practices would best allow schools to transform themselves into the institutions prescribed by *A Nation at Risk*. Research in the late 1990's and after the start of the new millennium focused on how best to improve student achievement and what processes and practices should be the main focus of educational organizations in order to reach school improvement goals. During this time, research on school effectiveness and school improvement merged and gave educational professionals research-based strategies for what worked in schools (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). One author to examine this was Marzano (2003) in his work entitled "What Works in Schools." Marzano performed a meta-analysis, or synthesis, of research relevant to the topics of school improvement and characteristics of schools that are successful in raising student achievement, including key research provided by Edmunds (1979), Rutter (1979),

and Levine and Lezotte (1990). Marzano and his colleagues examined 35 years of

research in an effort to summarize the many findings from research on what factors make

a school successful. Marzano placed these factors into student level factors, teacher level

factors, and school level factors. Student level factors that contribute to successful

schools included home environment, learned motivation and background knowledge, and

motivation. Marzano described home environment as being different from

socioeconomic status; rather home environment is a set of behaviors that has a stronger

correlation with student success than household income, parental profession, or parental

educational level (Marzano, 2003). Learned motivation and background knowledge

stressed the link between what Marzano referred to as "crystallized" knowledge, or

knowledge of:

> Facts, generalizations, principles, and academic performance. Motivation
>
> includes factors such as a student's drive for success or failure avoidance, a
>
> student's attributions, a student's need for a sense of self-worth, the students,
>
> emotional dynamics, and the workings of the student's self-system. (Marzano,
>
> 2003, p. 133-134)

Marzano (2003) identified three teacher level factors. Instructional strategies, the

first factor, identifies the need for teachers to use varied research-based strategies in their

instruction. Teachers must also have good classroom management, which is the second

factor. Marzano highlighted the need for positive student-teacher relations in this factor.

The last teacher level factor, classroom curriculum design, involves utilizing research-based protocols for construction of the classroom curriculum (Marzano, 2003).

Finally, Marzano (2003) identified five school level factors. He stated that schools must have a guaranteed and viable curriculum; in other words, teachers must work together to identify the most important content and ensure that the essential content is being taught within an appropriate instructional time period. The second factor, challenging goals and feedback, states the necessity for high expectations for students and feedback that is specific and formative. Parent and community involvement are also a factor identified by Marzano. Parents and community members must be actively involved in the interests of the school. The next factor states that schools must provide a safe and orderly environment in which students can learn. The final factor identified as essential to effective schools is what Marzano called collegiality and professionalism. This factor refers to the way in which teachers interact with one another (Marzano, 2003).

Embedded within the school effectiveness factor is a characteristic that was mentioned repeatedly in research on school effectiveness as early as the late 1970s; the school principal's role in school effectiveness. Researchers including Brookover (1979), Rutter (1979), Lezotte (1979), and Edmonds (1982) included school leadership as one factor that has influence on school effectiveness.

Impact of Leadership on School Improvement

Researchers have worked to identify the many facets of school improvement in which principals play a key role, and the research on this topic is vast. In 1999,

researchers Heck and Hallinger commented that a growing number of research projects in education were focused on information regarding educational leadership and its impact (Stewart, 2006). Early research on school success factors found that principals can make a measurable difference in the success of school improvement efforts. Both Brookover (1979) and Rutter (1979) noted that strong leadership and leadership structures can have a meaningful impact on school improvement success. Subsequent research (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Janzi, 2000; Licata, Teddlie, & Greenfield, 1990) confirmed this early work by emphasizing the importance that school leaders can have on organizational success as well as student achievement. It is clear through a review of the research on the impact of school leaders that the days of principals serving mainly as managers whose tasks center around bus schedules, lunch room duty, and clean and tidy buildings are long gone. Hackman and Johnson (2004) stated that one way to define the difference between management and leadership is to consider efficiency versus effectiveness. Managers may be good at making sure that an organization runs smoothly, but a leader also makes sure that the needs of the organization's members are met so that the organization moves forward. Principals are now called upon to meet these needs by being knowledgeable about curriculum and best practices in instruction, as well as serving as inspirational motivators with clear ideas of what will positively impact the students, teachers, and community stakeholders in their schools. Principals are viewed as instructional leaders whose task is to lead teachers in meaningful, effective professional learning focused on best practices for instruction (Coulon & Quaglia, 1989). They are

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called upon to monitor implementation of classroom best practices and are held accountable for the improvement of student achievement across their schools.

Rutherford established five characteristics of effective school leaders in a study conducted at the University of Texas in 1985. Principals who were true leaders had distinct vision of the direction in which their schools should move in order to improve student achievement, were successful at communicating these goals to teachers, students, parents, and other community stakeholders, managed school resources (human and financial) in a way that created a climate conducive to meeting the goals for the school, monitored frequently to measure their progress toward meeting goals and provided specific feedback to teachers through the use of data to support how well teachers and their students were performing against the goals, and acted upon the results of the monitoring by acknowledging and celebrating successes and providing support for teachers who were not progressing toward meeting both student learning and school-wide goals (Rutherford, 1985).

The Role of Vision and Mission in School Leadership Success

As noted in Rutherford's (1985) study, the establishment of a common vision and mission that is used to drive the work of the school is crucial for school success. Research both in the corporate realm and in the educational world has defined vision in many different ways. Leadership researchers have defined vision as an "end-state" (Gardner & Avolio, 1998, p. 17), as a "strategic umbrella" (Mintzberg & Walters, 1985, p. 265), and as a "broad, overarching value-based goal that represents the leader's

idealized future of the organization" (Ilies, Judge, & Wagner, 2006, p. 15). In other

words, if "a strategic plan is the 'blueprint' for an institution, then the vision is the

'artist's rendering' of the achievement of that strategic plan" (Calder, 2006, p. 81). A

strong leader must utilize what he or she knows are the needs of the school both

culturally and academically. Analysis of student achievement data, demographic data,

process data, and perception data should inform a leader and drive the vision for the

school. Knowing these important statistics can help a leader support his or her vision and

communicate the vision to stakeholders.

A principal's vision for school improvement strongly affects the strategies and

leadership style he or she will use within the school setting (Kruger, Witziers, &

Sleegers, 2007). His or her ability to collaborate with others to make that vision come to

life is an important part of the school reform process. A principal's vision must not only

describe the effort to meet challenges that are in the present, but also communicate a

preparation for future challenges as well (Penlington, Kington, & Day, 2008). A

principal must communicate the idea that a staff should "see it to be it" when it comes to

improving student achievement and meeting school-wide improvement goals.

Communicating this vision to the staff and stakeholders is the first step toward meeting

improvement goals. Research indicates that involvement of the staff and stakeholders in

the development of the school's vision is one way in which effective principals can

establish teacher and community buy-in (Coulon & Quaglia, 1989). Vision is more

powerful when shared, and it is most likely to be shared if developed by the whole of the

organization; it requires group effort and can become an impetus for change throughout an organization (Hatter & VonBockern, 2005). It takes a confident leader to allow vision to be developed collaboratively and then monitor the efforts (Bernhardt, 2004). It also takes a leader who understands the value of input from stakeholders of an organization. The research is clear, however, that this development of a shared vision must be led by a strong administrator who understands the needs of the school and has the strategies to get it there. As Calder (2006) states,

> The important question is, "Can a leader effectively articulate an institution's vision?" The articulated vision should put aside barriers, for the moment, and ask an institution's faculty, staff, board members, and administrative team to look beyond the present to a desired future . . . . A vision should require institutional stakeholders to stretch their expectations, aspirations, and performance; for without that compelling, attractive, and valuable vision, why bother at all? (p. 83)

It is the responsibility of principals to make sure that the school's vision is still at the forefront of the minds of its teachers and stakeholders, although teachers may from time to time be hyperfocused on the minutia of the daily business of school (Schmoker, 1999). No matter how good the dream may be, it means nothing if it does not drive the work of those in the building. Principals must communicate a vision that is often different than what others see for the organization, and they are required to work to facilitate others to develop a common understanding among people with many different interests. This process is crucial to the success of the organization. Walt Disney once

stated, "If you can dream it, you can do it." That may be true, but for a principal at the

helm of a learning organization, bringing the dream to reality requires effective

communication. Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) conducted an interview with a musician

serving under the direction of Comissiona, conductor of the Houston Symphony

Orchestra. When asked, he stated that what he appreciated most about the maestro was

that he was respectful of their time and did not use it ineffectively. He knew exactly what

he wanted and how he wanted it; he had vision. Effective principals must be clear about

the vision for their schools; they must not waste others' time by being unsure of the

direction in which the organization should move. Marzano (2005) called this passion

"focus," and identified this quality as one of the 25 essential responsibilities of a leader.

He stated that research must not only identify the qualities of effective leaders, such as

possessing vision, but must also outline actions that he calls "responsibilities." Focus,

Marzano stated, is the ability for school leaders to be sure that teachers and school

personnel are working toward attainable goals. Marzano lists three characteristics of

focus: development of concrete goals for curriculum, assessment, and instructional

practices of the organization; establishing concrete goals for the general functioning of

the school; and constantly remaining true to the goals established for the organization.

Emotional Intelligence and Successful Leadership

Principals are also responsible for establishing a culture in which school

improvement efforts can flourish. Rutherford (1985) noted that principals must allocate

and manage both personal and financial resources in a manner that creates a climate

conducive to student achievement. This idea was also highlighted in McEwan's (2003) study in which he identified culture builder as one of the 10 characteristics present in successful principals. This creation of a positive school culture is a daunting task for any principal. Many educators have seen numerous school improvement models come and go and have developed a "this too shall pass" attitude when dealing with proposed changes suggested by school improvement models (Holloman, 2007). School-level leaders often have to translate initiatives and directives from district leaders into doable actions. In order to do this, principals must foster relationships with staff members in a way that builds trust; teachers and school personnel need to feel that the leadership has a connection with their own needs and emotions in order to trust them enough to follow. Fullan (2001) stated, "In a culture of change, emotions frequently run high" (p. 74). Fullan also noted that it is important for principals to possess a high level of emotional intelligence in order to create a culture that is conducive to change. Emotional intelligence has been defined as "ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (Moore, 2009, p. 21). Goleman (1998) also described it as:

> Knowing what you are feeling and being able to handle those feelings without having them swamp you; being able to motivate yourself to get jobs done, being creative and performing at your peak; and sensing what others are feeling and handling relationships effectively. (p. 97)

Although some may dismiss the idea that a need exists for principals and school leaders to consider the emotions of staff members when implementing school reform models and advocating for change, research has been clear that effective leaders must have the ability to use others' emotions to their advantage. Goleman (1998) stated that effective leaders share the characteristic of high levels of emotional intelligence and that the higher the level of emotional intelligence, the higher the individual tends to rise in an organization. Leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence know how to communicate with others and know how to utilize the emotions of others in order to meet organizational goals and foster a sense of collaboration and trust throughout the organization (Hackman & Johnson, 2004).

Knowing the effect of emotional intelligence on leadership success has presented leadership preparation programs at the college and university level with new factors to consider when developing leadership preparatory curricula. Technical leadership skills such as preparation of budgets and scheduling are necessary, but possessing little emotional intelligence often renders this knowledge useless (Hackett & Hortman, 2008). Educational leadership preparation programs have begun to recognize the impact of leader dispositions on the success or failure of school-based leadership. They now include the study of dispositions as part of the curricula. Dispositions are defined as not just the abilities and knowledge that a person possesses, but the way in which the person is prone to use that knowledge and those abilities (Perkins et al., 2000).

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) recognized this need for leaders to have emotional competences as much as technical knowledge when adopting revised standards in 2008. The original standards were created in 1996 by state representatives and educational professionals in conjunction with NPBEA and were referred to as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders. These standards have been used to develop state standards for educational leadership and have been considered in the development of leadership preparation programs. Many of the standards include functions, or subsets of the standards, that highlight the necessity of fostering trust and collaboration, a key ability of those with high emotional intelligence. Standard 1a states that leaders must collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission; standard 2b states that leaders must nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations; standards 4c and 4d focus on a leader's responsibility for building and maintaining a positive relationship with families and community partners. Each of the functions of the aforementioned standards requires that principals be able to foster the positive emotions that must be present to develop a sense of trust, as well as deal with the negative emotions that are inevitably present when going through the change process. Leaders who can manage the moods and emotions of others will most likely be successful (Moore, 2009). Research indicates that emotional intelligence is also a key factor in transformational leadership (Goleman, 1998; Reilly & Karounos, 2009).

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Transformational Leadership

Huber and West (2002) established four phases or schools of thought that have been established when examining the literature surrounding effective leadership. The first phase revolved around identifying the personality traits of effective leaders. These ideas have led to trait theories regarding leadership development. The second phase identified by Huber and West examined the common actions of organizations that are successful in meeting goals These actions have led to the development of behavioral theories about leadership. The third phase focused on situational leadership. Leadership skills that are needed may be different based on the context in which the leader is placed, and these behaviors may be interpreted differently by different groups of people based upon the situation. The fourth phase focuses on what affect leadership has on the culture of an organization. This shift changed the focus from transactional leadership (top down) to transformational leadership, or leadership which has the ability to affect the context in which people operate (Leithwood & Hallinger, 2002).

Burns's leadership study. Transformational leadership is a concept studied since the late 1970s by those interested in effective leadership styles. Transformational leadership was first examined by Pulitzer Prize winning researcher Burns in 1978. Burns described leadership as either being transactional or transformational. He described the traditional top-down model of authoritative leadership as being transactional, while he described transformational leadership "as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations, the wants and the needs, the aspirations

and expectations, of both leaders and followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 19). Transactional

leaders develop relationships with their followers so that the mutual goals that have been

established are the driving force of the work being done by the organization. Followers

of transactional leaders realize the power that is held over them and although they

recognize organizational goals, those goals may not be the impetus for their work.

Transactional leadership, then, is more of a social exchange in which the needs of the

leader are most important and the follower's needs and desires are given little

consideration (van Eeden, Cillers, & van Deventer, 2008).

Transformational leaders work to change followers' values and beliefs toward the

organization, realizing that if they can increase the level of motivation among members

of the organization, they are more likely to have everyone working together for the same

purpose (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders also focus on changing the environment

in which people work in order to meet goals for school improvement (Stewart, 2006).

The result is an increase in the level of commitment of members of the organization and

an increased chance at achieving organizational goals. In the words of Burns (1978),

transformational leadership occurs

> When people raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their
>
> purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of
>
> transactional leadership, become fused . . . . But transforming leadership
>
> ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical

aspiration of both the leader and the led, and thus it has a transforming effect on

both. (p. 20)

The movement of transformational leadership marked a movement from a focus on

power-based leadership to a focus on empowerment-based leadership (Dambe & Moorad,

2008).

Bass's expansion of study on Transformational leadership. After Burns

established a base study of transformational leadership, Bass continued to expand the

study. Bass' study focused on leaders in the military, educational settings, and business.

Much of his research focused on the inadequacies in leadership models identified in

Burns' research. Bass sought to prove that unlike a traditional top-down model of

leadership in which leaders were primarily responsible for delivering edicts and ensuring

that followers were compliant, a transformational leader held much more influence over

his or her subordinates because of the relationships carefully cultivated with those

followers.

Bass' development of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was an

important development because it allowed for the quantifiable measurement of the

behaviors of transformational leaders and the outcomes of transformational leadership in

an organization. It also helped to identify four central tenants of transformational

leadership. These four included idealized influence (charismatic leadership),

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Idealized influence refers to the fact that transformational leaders focus on finding ways

to motivate people by serving as role models for their followers (Stewart, 2006). In a school setting, this might mean that if an administrator requires that teachers attend professional learning, the principal himself attends the professional learning as an active participant. He not only talks the talk, but also walks the walk in order for followers to identify with him. Idealized influence also means that leaders are able to communicate their vision for the organization and are able to take steps to achieve goals toward reaching that vision (Stewart, 2006). He shows confidence in the abilities of his followers in order to empower followers and create a sense of ownership that is necessary for the group to persevere. He also acts in morally and ethically sound ways that assure followers that he is true to the group's purpose and goals (van Eeden, Cillers, & van Deventer, 2008).

Inspirational motivation refers to a leader's ability to create a vision for the organization that he can effectively communicate to his followers. By helping followers to see that he is committed to the vision, a leader can inspire others to take action in meeting organizational goals. The leader also inspires others by expressing faith in his follower's skills (Stewart, 2006). A leader who serves as an inspirational motivator is one who recognizes the success of others. In a school setting, school administrators must recognize both the professional and personal achievements of school staff. It is especially important for administrators to recognize best practices when they occur in their buildings. The recognition and sharing of good work will inspire others to continue those same practices and learn from their colleagues.

Intellectual stimulation means that leaders are willing to look at things from different perspectives in order to honor the expertise in their buildings. Followers must feel that their opinions and ideas are valued, and a leader who practices intellectual stimulation allows for the collective creativity that is necessary when developing action steps needed to meet goals.

Finally, *individualized consideration* refers to the fact that a transformational leader is one who meets individuals at their respective levels of competence. He or she evaluates the needs of others before considering how to proceed and develops opportunities for growth for others in the organization. This type of leader also provides on-going support to individuals while respecting their individuality and own personal goals for growth (van Eeden et al., 2008). Bass believed that leaders use both transactional and transformational leadership depending on the situation, but that the most successful leaders relied on the qualities of transformational leadership much more than those of transactional leadership. He also stated that though the two are opposites as far as leadership style, they can complement one another if used effectively (Stewart, 2006).

Transformational leaders and teacher self-efficacy. Researchers have also examined the link between school leadership, especially transformational leaders, and teacher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, first proposed in 1977. Bandura defined self-efficacy as the ideas and beliefs that an individual has regarding his level of skill and ability to achieve a certain goal. These

ideas and beliefs are at the heart of action taken or not taken by that individual. Individuals who feel that they have the skills and abilities to meet a challenging goal will have a greater chance of actually realizing that goal than individuals who have a low sense of self-efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006). Teacher efficacy, then, means that teachers who believe that they have the necessary skills to educate students effectively will be more likely to have confidence and be successful than teachers who do not hold those beliefs (Ross & Gray, 2006). The concept of collective teacher efficacy has been the focus of studies since the mid-1990s. Goddard, Hoy, W., and Hoy, A. (2000) define collective teacher efficacy as ''the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students'' (p. 480). Individual teacher efficacy has an effect on collective teacher efficacy (Goddard, R. & Goddard, Y., 2001). However, the two ideas are different in that collective teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's confidence in the staff or system to which he belongs; it is the belief that organizational goals, whether for student achievement or the overall organization, can be met because of the skills and abilities of the staff as a whole.

The link between principal leadership style and increased teacher self-efficacy has been established, specifically for those leaders who employ transformational leadership characteristics (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995). Bennis and Nanus (1985) and Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) found that because of the relationships that transformational leaders forge with their followers, they are able to inspire people by recognizing their potential and creating an environment that motivates people and instills confidence. Principals

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who are transformational leaders can inspire school staff by communicating a vision for

high expectations and providing needed support to maintain those expectations. This

may mean that the principal provides an opportunity for a teacher to attend professional

learning sessions related to personal professional goals or student learning needs. It may

also mean that a principal spotlights success stories within the school so that the teacher's

achievements can be recognized and other staff members can learn from them. The

principal also has the ability to affect teacher self-efficacy and collective teacher efficacy

in the way he views and responds to successes and failures within the school setting. A

principal who allows for experimentation and reacts to the possible failure of that

experimentation as a chance for professional growth communicates to his staff that

professional growth is encouraged, thus increasing collective teacher efficacy in the

school (Ross & Gray, 2006).

Transforming teachers into teacher leaders. Transformational leaders are also

ones who realize that leadership is not just about management of resources and power

over individuals. Transformational leadership is about empowerment; encouraging

others to take ownership of an organization and its goals is important to the growth and

success of the organization. Empowerment, when examined through the lens of

transformational leadership, means that leaders are concerned with developing the

organization's members, exhibiting moral and ethical leadership, organizing teams

through which the work of the organization is conducted, and sharing the responsibility

for leadership with the members of the organization (Dambe & Moorad, 2008).

However, In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner (1997) assert that effective leaders are ones who accomplish tasks with people and not through them; they embrace others they lead by giving their power away. Leaders who desire to foster a collegial atmosphere use the position of leader to connect with others and encourage their participation in the governance of the organization.

The importance of establishing an atmosphere where teacher leadership flourishes has been mentioned throughout the literature on effective leadership. Harris (2003) described this leadership style as one "facilitating the personal growth of individuals or groups" (p. 314), one in which learning is done collaboratively, and meaning and solutions for issues are met collectively. It does not "imply a leader/follower divide, neither does it point towards the leadership potential of just one person" (Harris, 2003, p. 314). Because the world of education is ever-changing, with one school improvement initiative after another being implemented in relatively short periods of time, leadership cannot be contained in one individual. The talents and knowledge of all members of the organization are needed in order for the organization to meet the sometimes unreasonable demands of accountability systems placed upon them (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Riley, 2000). This type of leadership, called distributed leadership, has been increasingly touted as one of the most effective ways for schools to implement and sustain change.

Distributed Leadership

Much of the research examined heretofore has focused specifically on the principalship, noting that leaders who have a strong, detailed vision and a firm plan for

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achieving the vision are most successful (Johnson, 2008). Researchers increasingly have

begun to note that principals who attempt to lead school reform alone are misguided,

creating a culture in which teachers feel empowered to play a lead role in the decision

making process that takes place in the school is equally important (Johnson, 2008). This

focus on leadership distributed across the members of the organization has been cited as

an innovative leadership style by many in the field, but it is hardly new. In the book of

John, the Bible outlines the purpose of distributed leadership:

> You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go
>
> and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the
>
> Father in My name He may give to you. (John 15:15-16)

Just as Jesus chose the disciples, so must effective leaders choose those who will sustain

what they help to build. School administrators create this culture of collegiality and

shared responsibility for organizational success by focusing on "power through" people

and not "power over" people (Leech & Fulton, 2008, p. 632).

This practice of distributed leadership has been studied in both the business and

education worlds. The concept was first presented in the early 1900s by Follett. Follett

outlined her ideas about distributed leadership in her book *Creative Experience* (1924).

Follett's philosophy on leadership was based on the idea that leaders should focus on

power *with*, rather than power *over*, people. She stated that leaders must be willing to be

led by the overall group, should encourage growth in others by providing leadership

opportunities, and should see leadership as an informal practice in which leadership flows

from one individual to another depending on the needs of the group (Graham, 1995).

Follett expressed her belief about leadership by saying:

> Genuine power can only be grown; it will slip from every arbitrary hand that
> grasps it; for genuine power is not coercive control, but coactive control.
> Coercive power is the curse of the universe; coactive power, the enrichment and
> advancement of every human soul. (p. xii)

Research from the 1960s and 1970s further expanded the idea that leadership is not limited to those in a formal leadership role (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Barnard was one of the first researchers to view organizations as cooperatives in his 1968 book, *The Functions of the Executive* (Ling, 2006). Kerr and Jermier (1978) also explored the idea of substitutes for leadership theory and began to question why a formal leadership role was necessary if members of the group are experienced professionals, implying that leadership distributed across the group would certainly be an appropriate means for management. More modern researchers examining business models of leadership have also touted the effectiveness of the distributed leadership model in the school setting (Leech & Fulton, 2008). This most current research had its origins in the early 1980s and 1990s and investigated ways in which schools could build sustainable leadership models that would remain long after an individual administrator had moved on. By definition, distributed leadership is "a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action" (Bennett et al., 2003, p. 3). Copland (2003) also described this form of leadership as a set of functions or qualities shared across a much broader

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segment of the school community that encompasses administrators, teachers and other professionals and community members both internal and external to the school. Such an approach imposes the need for school communities to create and sustain broadly *distributed* leadership systems, processes and capacities. (p. 376)

Distributed leadership helps to foster a sense of common purpose or vision among staff members, an essential part of establishing a healthy school culture (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005).

Distributed leadership and organizational success. A growing body of research indicates that distributed leadership can have a positive effect on both organizational success and student success (Harris, 2007). Early research on school effectiveness found that the academic achievement of students was greater in schools where leaders shared the decision making process with teachers and where teachers reported that their input was given great consideration when important decisions were being made (Rutter, 1983). More recent research has indicated that schools where distributed leadership practices are common are more likely to have success in improvement efforts (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Shedd and Bacharach (1991) outlined four principles that point to the benefits of this type of structure: increased job satisfaction, improved morale among staff members, increased commitment to common goals for improvement, and a growth in team spirit among stakeholders.

Distributed leadership in the educational setting focuses on what Lambert (1988) described as the "broadbased, skillful involvement in the work of leadership" on the part

of teachers (p. 3). Utilizing teachers as leaders within the school setting can have three purposes, according to Katzenmeyer and Miller (2001). First, teachers can serve as leaders of other teachers. This might include leadership roles such as facilitator, instructional coach, mentor, and professional learning provider. Secondly, teachers can also take part in leadership roles by serving as department chairs and on other task forces that help to keep the school improving as an organization. Finally, teachers can participate in shared decision making by participating in school improvement teams that help to set improvement goals, monitoring progress toward those goals, and fostering relationships with other stakeholders groups such as institutions of higher education, parent groups, and business partners. This distribution of leadership allows for a more democratic form of school governance. It calls for interdependency among the members of the organization (Harris, 2003).

Research examining the length to which schools are already practicing distributed leadership shows that this model is being used to some degree in most schools and districts (Heller & Firestone, 1995; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). The degree to which schools participate in distributed leadership can be influenced by many different factors, including the type of school (Portin et al., 2003), school enrollment and faculty size (Camburn et al., 2003), and the developmental stages of the school's leadership teams (Harris, 2002).

Distributed leadership is not about whether a school claims to use distributed leadership or about the actions of the school principal or other school administrator;

instead, it is about the interactions of people and their situations (Spillane, 2004). For models of distributed leadership to be successful, teachers must be viewed as crucial contributors who are part of a group strategy instead of being viewed as isolated to their respective classrooms (Lambert, 2007). This approach is also important due to the transient nature of the school administrator. When a school administrator leaves his school, improvement efforts often leave with him. Utilizing a model of distributed leadership can promote continuity of school improvement efforts regardless of the length of tenure of the school or district's administration. When teacher leaders are able to aid the transition of new administrators into an existing structure of distributed leadership, it allows them to be more successful in less time. Sudden shifts in administration are more easily dealt with when the responsibility for the management of the organization is not focused on one or two individuals (Hambright & Franco, 2008).

Despite many positive reviews of distributed leadership, some researchers remain skeptical of it being the prescription for school success and the method by which districts allocate resources. Spillane (2004) stated that "distributed leadership is considered by some educators as a cure-all for all that ails a school," but he disagrees with that assessment (p. 149). He cited a lack of empirical evidence to support the positive impact that distributed leadership can have upon school success, but also stated that this does not mean that it is not worthwhile. What is most important is not just that the leadership is distributed across members of the organization; how it is distributed and the structures that are used to organize this type of leadership model is more relevant (Spillane, 2005).

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Research also notes that while many states and districts allocate resources for leadership development, much of this time and money is spent on individuals already in formal leadership positions or those with hopes of attaining such positions. It is also suggested by research that equal allocation of resources between current and aspiring administrators would be beneficial in allowing other members of the organization to cultivate leadership skills (Leithwood & Janzi, 1998). For distributed leadership to take root, schools and districts must begin by what Miller (1998) calls "reculturing" the environment and providing teachers with time in which teacher leadership tasks can be performed (p. 249).

  Structures for distributed leadership. It is reasonable to state that distributed leadership is an effective means to the development of a shared vision for school improvement and the development of a culture supportive of such a vision. What is much more difficult is to identify practical structures for this model of leadership. Research has produced little on the structures of distributed leadership that need to be in place in order to ensure success (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Research on the effectiveness of school administrators has shown that the most successful administrators reach student achievement and school improvement goals in two main ways: the development of skilled teachers and the development of solid school improvement processes (Davis & LaPointe, 2006). Armed with knowledge of the importance that school improvement structures can have within the educational setting, school administrators must closely scrutinize the structures that are in place within their schools and districts to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in decision making.

Principals must utilize the expertise within their own buildings and organize teachers and staff into teams that can take advantage of their skills for the benefit of the organization. School structures that involve teachers' input have a positive relationship with self-improving schools and with outcomes for student learning (Hoffman, R. et al, 2001).

From Traditional Models to a New Way of Thinking

Schools in the United States have long followed the leadership models established by early management theorists. Early management theorist and French mining engineer Fayol believed that the same management techniques that were effective in the business world could also apply to the school setting. In his 1949 work, *Administrative Industrielle et Generale* (as cited in Gordon, 2009), he sought to identify common factors in effective leadership that could be transferable from corporate leadership to school leadership. He found that those factors were planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling the environment (Gordon, 2009). Another theorist, Max Weber, is widely credited as being the father of the bureaucratic organization. His belief was that "patterns or models would increase productivity" (Gordon, 2009, p. 68). His top-down leadership model was based on a hierarchy of power and a division of labor based on function. Taylor furthered this idea in 1967 in his development of the factory model. Considered the father of the scientific management movement, Taylor's model placed great emphasis on centralization, standardization of practice, and a top-down management model that stressed using process over intuition. His feeling was that under this system, a worker was "told just what he is to do and how he is to do it," leaving no

opportunity for input or suggestions for improvement in the process itself (Holt, 2001, p.146). This and other leadership models greatly influenced educational leadership, which was focused on process, not results, and disregarded, even discouraged, the idea that those within the system have a role in determining the path for the organization.

As accountability for student achievement and school success increased, these models no longer provided the proper guidance for today's results-oriented schools and districts. Therefore, educational leadership research began to focus more on the qualities of effective schools, one of which is the establishment of collaborative cultures in which teachers have opportunities for input and control in the school improvement process; these are called professional learning communities. In recent years, research examining professional learning communities has provided insight into developing this type of structure within the school. Austuto et al. (1993) described three communities at work in schools: the community of educators; the community of teachers and students (both inside and outside the classroom); and the community of stakeholders with interest in the school. Seminal research conducted by Hord (1997) focused mainly on Austuto et al.'s first community, that of professional educators. Hord noted that many researchers had focused on the importance of culture to sustainable change in the workplace in the private sector. These same factors, she suggested, were crucial to change in the school setting as well. The factors included valuing and recognizing the contributions of staff members as individuals, fostering a sense of collaboration on important issues such as the creation of shared vision, and analysis of the needs of the organization and the solutions to those

needs. Hord stated that in order to develop the factors that are crucial to sustainable

change, schools must transform themselves from traditional top-down, bureaucratic

organizations into professional learning communities, and that this transformation would

require collaboration and collegiality among staff members. It would also mean a great

investment in teacher training and professional learning, as well as a different model for

school leadership and governance, one that lent itself more to distributed leadership

(Hord, 1997).

Professional Learning Communities

Hord (1997) described five characteristics of professional learning communities:

supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision,

supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. DuFour and Eaker (1998) described

professional learning communities as organizations where all stakeholders take

ownership in the planning, actions, and monitoring of student achievement and school

improvement. Organizations such as these give structure to the distributed leadership

model by developing processes within the school to allow teachers to give input into

daily business. These communities give teachers control over planning not only for

instruction in the classroom, but also for school-wide reform efforts. They allow teachers

to participate in the monitoring process to ensure follow-up and implementation of

initiative efforts. Successful implementation of professional learning communities helps

schools to put distributed leadership into practice.

Senge, in his book, *The Fifth Discipline* (1983), described a learning organization as one in which members continuously collaborate to create the product they wish to see. As in Senge's learning organization definition, professional learning communities operate on the belief that the team is the most important unit in an organization (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003). Successful leadership is more than just management of the teachers and staff; it must also focus on areas that directly impact students and their academic achievement. It is also important that administrators and teachers within a learning community be focused on student achievement goals and promoting a productive learning environment for both students and staff members (Halawah, 2005).

These shared beliefs about the mission, vision, values, and goals of the organization are critical to the development and success of a professional learning community. DuFour, R., DuFour, R., and Eaker (2002) illustrate this idea by comparing these four concepts to the four legs of a table; if one leg is missing, the foundation of the organization is not strong enough to withstand the force of change and will falter. The mission leg focuses on the question, "Why do we exist" (p. 3). Members of the organization must develop a common definition for the purpose of the organization. The vision leg, asks, "What kind of school or district do we hope to become" (p. 3). Members are asked to forecast the desired result of collaboration in a way that will motivate others to want to achieve that vision. Thirdly, the organization must focus on values and ask itself, "How must we behave in order to create the kind of school we hope to become" (p. 3-4). This question addresses what DuFour, R., DuFour, R., and Eaker call the "abc's" of

school improvement: attitudes, behaviors, and collective commitment. Finally, they

describe the last leg as that of organizational goals. Stakeholders must ask, "What steps

are we going to take and when will we take them" (p. 4). This leg requires that members

make plans with measurable goals so that efforts toward meeting those goals can be

tracked and monitored throughout the process.

While much of the literature focuses on the student learning aspect of professional

learning communities, researchers also acknowledge the concept that professional

learning communities affect the organization in its entirety. Hargreaves states that it is an

ethos that infuses every single aspect of a school's operation. When a school

becomes a professional learning community, everything in the school looks

different than it did before---for instance, how time is used, the grouping of

students, the participation of all teachers on learning teams, and the use of

technology to improve staff communication and collaboration. (Sparks, 2004)

The building of a professional learning community is what Fullan (2000) refers to as the

difference between " 'restructuring' and 'reculturing'" (p. 582). Fullan describes

reculturing as the "building of professional learning communities in the school" (Fullan,

2000, p. 582). Fullan is also quick to caution that professional learning communities

should not be viewed as a "new" initiative. Professional learning communities should be

"about establishing lasting new collaborative cultures…they are meant to be enduring

capacities, not just another program innovation" (Fullan, 2006, para. 5).

Impact of professional learning communities. There are many positive outcomes when schools restructure into professional learning communities. Because professional learning communities stress collaboration among administrators, staff, and stakeholders, teachers are less likely to feel isolated in their practice and are more likely to reach out for assistance with issues with which they are struggling. Buy-in regarding vision and mission are greater in professional learning communities, as is the sense of share responsibility for the success of organizational and student learning goals. Teachers are also more likely to have a deeper understanding of the content for which they are responsible because of the collaborative instructional planning that is characteristic of a professional learning community. Low absenteeism and higher teacher job satisfaction are also characteristic of professional learning communities. Perhaps most importantly, schools that are structured into professional learning communities are more likely to have staff who are willing to take on fundamental, systematic changes that are sustainable (Hord, 1997). In perhaps the most comprehensive study of professional learning communities' impact, Newman and Wehlage (1995) examined studies conducted on school restructuring, including the restructuring of 24 elementary, middle, and high schools. The meta-analysis of these various studies led Newman and Wehlage to state that professional learning communities that were based on a common vision, staff collaboration, and a sense of shared responsibility for organizational goals were imperative if schools were to restructure themselves in a way that would increase student achievement.

Summary of Review of Literature

School improvement efforts are not new. As early as the 1960's, researchers had attempted to identify those factors that are the greatest contributors to student success and what can be done by schools to enhance best practices (Brookover, 1979; Rutter et al., 1979; Weber, 1971). This body of work has increased over time. There is no doubt that accountability measures put into place in recent years have led to an even greater expansion of research on what factors contribute to increased student achievement and school success. NCLB (2001) has forced districts and schools to identify and implement research-based best practices that lead to increased student achievement for all students, and no one has felt the weight of this more than school leaders. Leadership has been shown to play a large role in teachers' commitment to the success of the school as an organization (Nguni et al., 2006). Leaders are charged with transforming schools from a building full of individuals working in isolation into a cohesive unit moving toward the same goal.

Bass's (1998) study of leadership expanded the idea that transformational leadership can take the "oneness" out of leadership; that is, leadership is more about a process than a person. Transformational leaders are those who entice others to think beyond their own goals to those of the organization by inspiring all stakeholders to take ownership and encouraging their participation in the organization's day-to-day decision making opportunities (McGuinness, 2009). Transformational leaders are more likely to utilize distributed leadership as a form of school governance and as a means for encouraging

staff buy-in. Distributed leadership means that leadership in the school is no longer the focus of one individual or a highly select group; it becomes a process by which teachers, support staff, and administrator interact to achieve a common goal (Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2009).

Management models have also been a focus of researchers in recent years. Professional learning communities are one structure by which some schools are forming a model for distributed leadership. Hord (1997) described the characteristics of a professional learning community as follows: supportive leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. Through the establishment of professional learning communities, schools have been able to put into place the structures necessary for a flow of communication and decision making in which teachers feel that their opinions and skills are valued and considered, thereby increasing their desire to work toward the ultimate goal of school improvement.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to conduct this study. This section includes a description of the research design, description of the participants, selection of the site, research design, procedures summary, data collection techniques, data analysis procedures, and an analysis of trustworthiness. This study examined the use of the GAPSS Review process to establish professional learning communities aimed at achieving school improvement goals. Professional learning communities were formed around each of the eight strands of the Georgia School Keys in order to establish a model for distributed leadership at the target high school. This study examined how the structure has enabled teachers to become a crucial part of the school governance and how this structure has helped to provide a common vision for school improvement. The study also detailed how the various roles within the school (administrators, teachers, support staff) supported the maintenance of the professional learning communities and how the shared vision drove the daily business of the school.

Qualitative research is strongly tied to the phenomenological approach; in other words, the researcher is seeking to understand what meaning certain events have on individuals in particular situations. It focuses on why something has had a certain effect on people and what understanding can be drawn from those experiences. The main purpose is to understand the experience of an individual or group of individuals from the perspective of those who have participated (Ary et al., 2006). The research conducted in this study aimed to understand the experiences of the faculty and staff of Woodruff High

School and how those experiences led them to meet school improvement goals. It examined the "common human experience" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 461) of the members of the school as they developed structures for distributed leadership.

Research Questions

The research questions found in qualitative research often focus on process and understanding; in other words, why or how something happened and what it means to the individuals and the organization (Ary et al., 2006). The research questions posed by this study sought to better understand how the school utilized shared leadership to achieve school improvement goals.

Research Question 1: What are teacher perceptions regarding the ability of shared leadership committees to positively impact school improvement efforts?

Research Question 2: What leadership factors lead to successful shared leadership committees?

Research Question 3: What structures need to be in place to make distributed leadership efforts possible?

Research Design

Phenomenological qualitative research seeks to explain experiences of human life in order to extract meaning that can be applied to other settings and situations (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Using the phenomenological qualitative approach, this study examined how the faculty and staff of a large urban high school in Metropolitan Atlanta reorganized its leadership structure to reflect the principles of shared leadership and how

this structure initially led to the realization of school improvement goals. The impetus

for this reorganization was the school's participation in a school standards review process

called the GAPSS review. This process examined eight facets of the school and its

structures for implementation of the Georgia School Keys, the standards for all schools in

the state. These standards reflect how schools should be addressing needs in the areas of

curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional learning, leadership, school culture,

family and community support, and planning and organization. Woodruff High School, a

large urban high school of slightly under 2,200 students and 147 staff members,

participated in a GAPSS review in September 2006. After the results of the review were

delivered to the administration, the school staff worked collaboratively to build teams

around each of the eight strands of the School Keys. The purpose of these teams was to

give structure to their school improvement efforts.

Data collection included an initial survey to be administered at a faculty meeting

to ensure a large return. From the survey, a secondary schedule of interviews took place

to follow up on data collected from the survey and additional details. Observations were

conducted in the school and in the classroom to gain an understanding of the culture of

the school and the existing structures for shared leadership and shared decision making.

Documents such as school improvement plans, district improvement plans, and minutes

from leadership meetings were examined for further evidence of share leadership.

Participants

The participants in this qualitative phenomenological study were selected because of their participation and experiences in an event from which I hope to understand and glean meaning. Selected participants for this study included all certified staff members of Woodruff High School in Austell, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. These participants were selected because they were members of focus committees that had been developed around each of the eight strands of the Georgia School Keys. The school had 130 teachers and 17 other certified staff members (media specialists, counselors, and administrators) for a total of 147 certified staff members during the 2010-2011 school year.

Faculty and staff. The faculty and staff of Woodruff High School were composed of educators of varying levels of experience and education. The table below outlines the details of these individuals.

Table 1

Certified Personnel Data for Woodruff High School

		Administrators	Support Personnel	9-12 Teachers
Positions	Number	7	10.00	130
	Average Annual Salary	$77,534.90	$60,072.04	$53,925.61
	Average Contract Days	211	190	190
	Average Daily Salary	$367.21	$316.17	$281.93
Personnel	Full-time	7	10	130
	Part-time	0	0	0
Gender	Male	5	0	53
	Female	2	10	77
Certificate Level	4 Yr Bachelor's	0	0	45
	5 Yr Master's	1	5	60
	6 Yr Specialist's	5	4	22
	7 Yr Doctoral	1	1	3
	Other	0	0	0
Race/ Ethnicity	Black	4	4	44
	White	2	7	78
	Hispanic	1	0	4
	Asian	0	0	2
	Native American	0	0	0
	Multiracial	0	0	2
Years Experience	< 1	0	0	9
	1-10	1	7	72
	11-20	2	1	27
	21-30	4	2	19
	> 30	0	1	3

The teaching staff of Woodruff High School is roughly 40% female and 60% male. Thirty-four percent of the teaching staff hold a bachelor's degree, 46% hold a

master's degree, 17% hold a Specialist's degree, and 3% hold a doctoral degree. Thirty-three percent of the teaching staff is Black, 60% are White, and 7% are Hispanic, Asian, or multiracial. Sixty-two percent of the teaching staff have less than 10 years of teaching experience, 20% have between 10 and 20 years teaching experience, and 18% have over 20 years experience. The average teaching experience of the certified staff members is slightly over 9 years.

Selection of site. Woodruff High School is a large, urban high school with an enrollment of 2,113 students. Table 2 below outlines the demographic details of the student body of Woodruff High School.

Table 2

Demographic Data for Student Body of Woodruff High School

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Am.	White	Multi-racial
% of students	5	31	16	0	44	3

The student population is 31% Black, 44% White, 16% Hispanic, 3 % multi-racial, and 5% Asian. Forty three percent of the students at Woodruff High School qualify for free or reduced lunch. Eleven percent of the students qualify for special education services, and 9% qualify for limited English proficiency (LEP) services. The school is located within one of the largest school districts in the United States, with a spring enrollment in

2010 of 106,619 students. Table 3 outlines the graduation rates by ethnicity for

Woodruff High School.

Table 3

Graduation Rates by Ethnicity

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Am.	White	Multi-racial
% of students	*	72.2	62.5	*	75.9	*

*Note: * indicates that too few students are present to be considered in the overall

population of this study.

Woodruff High School's overall graduation rate for 2009-2010 was 71.8%,

approximately 9.1% less than the state average and 12.9% less than the district average.

Seventy-three percent of male students eligible for graduation graduated, while 81% of

females who were seniors graduated. Other subgroups' graduation rates are as follows:

students with disabilities-33.3%; students without disabilities-66.7%; limited English

proficiency students-43.5%; economically disadvantaged students-87%; and non-

economically disadvantaged students-70.9% (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

Procedures

Data was collected over a period of ten months during the spring semester of the

2010-2011 school years. Prior to data collection, I obtained approval from the Liberty

University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and administration representing the target

school district to conduct research within the school system (see Appendix A). In this

study, data collection primarily consisted of a series of a survey, qualitative interviews,

observations, and document analyses. All data was collected and stored for later coding

and analysis.

       Approval process. Prior to the beginning my research, all required paperwork

was submitted to my dissertation committee members, committee chair, and the Liberty

IRB. Letters (see Appendix B and Appendix C) were obtained from the participating

school district allowing me to conduct the research in one of their high schools. Once

IRB approved my study, I prepared the informed consent form to be signed at the staff

meeting during which I explained the study (see Appendix D). Once I received the

signed consent forms, I distributed the scanable surveys to the participants.

       The researcher's role. In qualitative research, it is important for the researcher

to reveal his or her background as it relates to the selected topic (Ary, 2006). Doing so

allows the reader to put the findings into the context of the experiences of the researcher.

While I am the primary researcher for this study, I have served as a teacher in middle

grades, as an instructional technology specialist, and as a school improvement specialist

for the Southern Regional Education Board in the division of Making Middle Grades

Work. I also have served as a school improvement specialist for the Georgia Department

of Education in the Metro Atlanta area. I currently serve as the executive director of

Metropolitan RESA, a regional educational service agency serving over 700 schools in

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the Metro Atlanta, Georgia area. I have a vested interest in determining how leadership models impact the achievement of students in the school districts with which I work daily.

 Research intent. My interest in the topic of shared leadership as it relates to the Georgia School Keys began with my work for the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). While serving as a school improvement specialist, I served as a team member and team leader of fourteen reviews of the school standards known as the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards, or GAPSS. Schools receiving the review because of their status of "needs improvement" were assisted in follow up by the GaDOE. Those participating on a voluntary basis were not assisted in follow up. Schools not assisted in follow up were often enthusiastic about the follow up they received, but permanent change as a result of the process was rarely noted by this researcher.

 During the process of the observations, interviews, and data analysis conducted for this research, I have been aware that my personal experiences could lead to bias. I carefully worded questions on both my survey and my interview protocol to try to avoid any chance of leading participants. Use of protocols and scripts helped protect from some bias, but personal bias is still a strong concern for any qualitative researcher.

Data Collection

 Data are snippets of information that, when pieced together, can become meaningful based on the perspective of a researcher (Merriam, 2009). These rough

pieces of information are the puzzle pieces that will eventually be snapped together by the researcher in order to build a complete picture and allow for application of the research by others. Data in a qualitative study often includes many different types of datum, including interview transcripts, surveys, field notes, and analysis of documents such as photographs, diaries, and official documents (Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

  Surveys. A survey was used to establish a baseline of information to inform me as I began the focus group interviews with the certified and classified staff. This survey was distributed to the staff at a school-wide staff meeting and conducted using paper and pencil. The surveys were printed in a scanable format, and once the survey had been completed, the results were scanned and were able to be viewed electronically. The resultant data was examined to give me some information about the attitudes and perceptions of the staff toward distributed leadership and the focus team processes currently being utilized at the school. Specifically, this survey collected basic demographic data (name, staff position, years of experience, etc.). It also asked the participants to identify the leadership team on which they serves. Questions about distributed leadership completed the survey. A Likert scale indicating personal importance (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) was used for response options for the questions regarding distributed leadership and the Georgia School Keys.

  In order to ensure content validity and reliability, I sent the questions to three colleagues and asked for input regarding the content of the questions. The questions

were sent to Kathryn Carrollton Matthews, Program Manager for Professional Learning for the Georgia Department of Education; James Kennedy, Assistant Program Manager for Professional Learning for the Georgia Department of Education; and Dr. Rhonda Baldwin, Director of Professional Learning for a suburban school district near Metro Atlanta. Each of these individuals indicated that the questions were likely to garner information that would be helpful in trying to gather data on distributed leadership and the perceptions of teachers' values of distributed leadership. Suggestions from these colleagues were used to clarify questions on the survey. Iterations of the survey are documented and included in the appendix of the study.

Focus group interviews. In qualitative research, the interview is sometimes called a "conversation with a purpose" and is much less structured than that of quantitative research (Ary et al., 2006, p. 480). During this study, hour-long interviews took place in focus groups. Focus groups allowed me to understand more about why the participants felt the way they did about certain subjects. Focus groups were developed based on participation in the school's focus teams (curriculum; assessment; instruction; leadership; professional learning; school culture; school, family, and student involvement; and planning and organization). Each interview consisted of two to three individuals from a particular focus group. These interviews helped to define the purpose of the teams and how successfully they have been implemented.

Observations. Observation is the simplest form of data collection in a qualitative study (Ary et al., 2006). I conducted observations in staff meetings and focus team

meetings in order to gain an understanding of the school's culture. I was a complete

observer, or merely in a public setting observing the events around me. These

observations were recorded in field notes that were both descriptive and reflective in

nature. I utilized an observation protocol to examine the physical setting, the atmosphere,

and my perception of the setting. The data collected allowed me to accurately depict the

school environment as well as the environment within the focus team meeting.

Document Analysis. Qualitative researchers often utilize the study of written

artifacts to aid in their understanding of a phenomenon (Ary et al., 2006). Document

analyses were included in the data used to develop the findings of this study. Official

documents such as minutes from leadership team meetings, school and district

improvement plans, and other planning documents were included in the pieces of data

examined. Information from the documents was coded in the same manner as other

pieces of data.

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative research is often in the form of analytic induction; that is, analysis and

data collection occur in a "pulsating" fashion. Collecting data and analyzing data in a

qualitative study happen concurrently, and data collection and the ongoing analysis drives

how the researcher acts at the next turn of the study (Merriam, 2009). Common words

used to describe qualitative research include reflective, emergent, naturalistic,

evolutionary, and holistic (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall

& Rossman, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Analytic induction was the primary method of data collection in this study.

Coding is the method by which a researcher examines data for patterns or similarities (Merriam, 2009). This study utilized a grounded theory coding procedure (Merriam, 2009). The theories presented in the theoretical framework of this study, Spillane's distributed leadership and Bass's transformational leadership, were the basis upon which coding began. I collected data through the initial survey, subsequent interviews with focus groups, observations, and document analysis. Then, I began examining the data for similarities and differences with regards to the theories that were the framework for the study. Coding then expanded to other categories, but was eventually narrowed in order to identify a limited number of common categories. These codes focused on setting or context codes, codes pertaining to the participants' perspectives, and those that identified the particpants' opinions and attitudes toward the distributed leadership within the school. New codes were added, unused codes were subtracted, and existing codes were either decreased or increased as other patterns were discovered through analysis of the data collected. The coding process was fluid, according to the dictates of the data. Despite the malleable and uncertain nature of qualitative data analysis, I had a responsibility as the primary researcher to provide a clear and correct analysis of the information that was collected.

Credibility/Dependability Issues

Although qualitative analysis has many disparate definitions, the qualitative researcher still must adhere to one of a variety of accepted coding and categorization methods to increase trustworthiness. Not only is that important for trustworthiness, it is also important because it helps the qualitative researcher to manage the plethora of data that is collected (Litchman, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1999; Saldaña, 2009; Seidman, 2005). As previously mentioned, I used the well-accepted qualitative technique of grounded theory coding (Merriam, 2009) during the data analysis process.

In qualitative research, the researcher should be focused on the collection of accurate and comprehensive data. Those involved in qualitative research generally define credibility as the accuracy of what they recorded as happening versus what actual occurred (Ary et al., 2006). Qualitative researchers also often speak of dependability instead of reliability, a term that is more closely associated with quantitative research. Dependability, sometimes referred to as trustworthiness, refers to the ability to explain the variations that are inevitable in qualitative research (Ary et al., 2006). This study sought to increase trustworthiness through the use of multiple techniques to increase the credibility and dependability of the data. Those qualitative techniques were the use of an audit trail, the constant-comparative method, a reflexivity journal, transcription, and triangulation.

Audit trail. An audit trail allows for a researcher to explain how a study will be carried out. The details included in an audit trail include when, where, and why the study

was done (Ary et al., 2006). I maintained an Excel spreadsheet that outlined when events took place, where the event happened, and any other pertinent details. Detailed records on transcriptions from interviews, notes from observations, document review sessions, and dates and times of these events were kept in a manner which would allow an outside researcher to replicate the procedures of the study if so desired. This trail allowed for greater dependability with regards to the procedures used in the study and ensured that findings of the study were based on the data that was collected.

Constant comparative method. The constant comparison method will be used in this research. This method is used in situations where the research calls for multiple data sources and data analysis is begun early in the research process and may be completed by the end of data collection (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). This method allowed me to examine data for similar characteristics and refine categories as the data was being examined. Categories were refined as the data was analyzed; new categories were born, and some categories died as a result. I then looked for relationships between categories in order to find some understanding of the meaning of the data (Ary et al., 2006).

Reflexivity journal. A reflexivity journal was maintained throughout the survey, interview, and document analysis process to allow for the recording of data and reflections on the data. Feedback was obtained from fellow educators to ensure that the findings were consistent with the data collected.

Transcription. One of the most common methods for recording interviews is tape recording the participants' interviews and transcribing the results afterward. Using

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this method allows the researcher to transcribe the exact words used by the participants (Merriam, 2009). Because the length of the interviews conducted was considerable in some cases, I did not rely on field notes written after the fact. A tape recorder was used to record interviews so that the researcher could focus on the questions being asked and answers being given. These taped interviews were then transcribed to capture the conversation accurately. A standard interview transcript form was utilized in order to format the interviews when transcribed.

Triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources, multiple data collectors, or multiple methods of collection of data (Ary et al., 2006). Triangulation allowed for me to ensure that the data found with one method of collection was consistent with the data found in another method. I collected data via surveys, interviews, observations, and document analysis. I found that information collected in the initial survey was confirmed through the interview process with the staff of the school. This was also supported by the analysis of documents, such as school improvement plans and meeting minutes from leadership team meetings. Similar trends were found in these data sources, which increased the credibility of the research project.

Summary of the Methodology

Chapter 3 has outlined the methodology that will be used during this research study. The constant comparison method of collecting data and refining the data as the research was being conducted was used to analyze the implementation of distributed leadership in a large, urban high school. Surveys, interviews, observations, and

document analyses were the data sources that were examined. An audit trail, reflexivity

journaling, transcription of interviews, and the triangulation of data sources contributed

to the credibility of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter Four begins with a restatement of the purpose of this phenomenological

research. Next is a description of how the data for this study was gathered and analyzed.

Following that description is a presentation of the data. The presentation of data includes

information about the shared leadership committees, survey results, observation results,

and interview results that include participants' input regarding the five themes that

emerged from analysis of the data. A summary of results concludes the chapter.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the use of the

Georgia School Keys and the Georgia Assessment of Performance on the School

Standards (GAPSS) review process to establish structures aimed at facilitating shared

leadership. These structures are necessary to identify, examine, and describe the

processes necessary to establish and maintain a shared vision within a secondary

educational setting. The study analyzed a large urban high school's efforts to establish

shared leadership and how these processes led to the achievement of school improvement

goals. This research included an examination of how the GAPSS led to a reorganization

of the school's shared leadership teams in order to create opportunities for involvement

among staff members, and how this involvement has increased a sense of shared responsibility for the outcomes of school improvement efforts.

Phenomenology's goal is to tell a story through the eyes of the participants and describe the most essential elements of an experience. It seeks to highlight the voice of the participants, and so this chapter looks extensively at the proposed research questions by using the words of the participants themselves. Teachers and administrators were asked to reflect on the importance of a school-wide vision and mission. Teachers were also asked to reflect on their experiences participating in structures that had been put into place to facilitate work toward a common goal. Finally, teachers and administrators were asked to reflect on the successes and failures of the structures established at their school and how the process might be improved.

In order to gauge the feelings of the participants regarding the school improvement effort, I distributed a survey that gathered demographic data, identified which leadership team the teacher currently served on, and asked questions on teacher perceptions of distributed leadership in the target school. After reviewing the data and ensuring validity and reliability, I followed up with participants to dig deeper into the survey answers they gave. This follow-up took the form of group interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Following, the findings of these data gathering procedures are presented.

Shared Leadership Groups

The results of this research are reflective of the make-up and work of the shared leadership groups, and the teachers' perceptions of how those groups functioned. Thus, it is important to understand these groups, how they were comprised, and their intended purpose. Originally, there were eight groups, one for each of the eight strands of the Georgia School Keys. The Georgia School Keys (based on the work of Marzano, 2005) are Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Professional Learning, Leadership, School Culture, Planning and Organization, and Student/Family/Community Support. Each group averaged between fifteen to twenty members, depending on the group

Group membership was determined on a volunteer basis. Administration required that everyone participate in one of the committees, but it was up to the teacher to decide which one they signed up for. The idea behind this was that there would be greater buy-in if teachers were allowed to select the committee on which they would serve. Teachers with specific skills were encouraged to sign up for committees that could utilize those skills. For example, if a teacher had a unique ability in technology, he or she might have been asked to participate in the technology committee. It was intended that committees meet once per month. The committee chairperson was responsible for scheduling these meetings, either before or after school. Some chairs tried to rotate meeting times between before school hours and after school hours to encourage better attendance, but the lack of dedicated time during the school day made it difficult for all team members to be present because of responsibilities outside of school.

After the shared leadership committees completed their monthly work, each one then sent a representative to report to a larger school improvement committee. The school improvement committee met with administrators and department chairpersons after their separate shared leadership committee meetings in order to report on progress toward their committee goals. This also allowed for administrators to disseminate information back to the shared leadership committees through the chairperson.

Administrators monitored the shared leadership committee meetings. First, they were assigned to attend committee meetings. However, this did not take place consistently, especially after the first two years. Secondly, committee chairs were supposed to place meeting minutes on the school-wide shared drive so that administrators could monitor the committees in that way as well. It was also left up to other staff members to read the minutes from other committees to stay abreast of what was going on elsewhere in the school. My interviews indicated that very few teachers actually did that. Most of them were relatively uninformed about the work of committees other than their own. The larger school improvement team (one representative from each committee, along with department chairs and administrators) was another way that administrators monitored the work of the committees.

After the first two years of working within this structure, committee members approached administrators about restructuring. They felt that several of the committees, especially the Curriculum Committee and the Instruction Committee, were duplicating each other's efforts and that the committees would be better served by combining their

efforts. The next year, the Curriculum and Instruction Committee was formed, which

was a more favorable structure for the committee members of the two groups involved.

Other teams were renamed to align with certain Georgia School Key strands. Table 4

describes how committees were restructured and how they aligned with the Georgia

School Keys.

Table 4

Result of the Realignment of School Committees According to School Key Strands

Committee Title	School Keys Addressed	Mission/Purpose of Committee
Instruction & Curriculum	Instruction, Curriculum, Professional Development	Create staff development or programming which promote standards based instruction, standards based grading, best instructional practices, effective classroom instruction.
Data Team	Assessment, Professional Development	Review and present achievement data , academic data, testing data, and other instructional data.
Diversity	School Culture, Professional Development	Promote and coordinate programs, announcements and events which support and promote diversity and tolerance.
Staff Wellness and Recognition	School Culture	Promote staff morale, stress reduction programming, positive staff recognition, and staff support in times of need. Includes the Sunshine committee
Family &Community Outreach	Family and Community Outreach, Professional Development	To promote programming and services which address the needs of school family and community members and to work in conjunction with our PTSA

Technology	Technology, Professional Development	To promote the use of technology in the classrooms. To provided training on technology usage for teachers.
Policy & Procedure	Organization and Planning, Professional Development	Reviewing policies and procedures for student/faculty conduct & expectations.
Student Recognition & Incentive	Culture, Planning and Organization, Communication, Student/Family /Community Support, Professional Development	To promote and recognize student achievement, academic success, positive community involvement.

This realignment helped to eliminate some of the duplication of work, but the interviews that I conducted still revealed perceived problems. My teacher interviews uncovered that teachers felt that there were too many committees focusing on too many different things, and that the committees did not necessarily address the real needs of the school.

Results

Survey results. I administered a survey to teachers and administrators in fall of 2010. The purpose of this survey was to collect initial perception data on common vision and mission, collaboration toward meeting school improvement goals, and to what extent a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility existed among the staff and administration. A Scantron form consisting of fifteen items was distributed to administrators and staff who were present at a staff meeting three days prior to the start of the 2010-2011 school years. Not all staff members were present at this meeting. I introduced myself to the staff and explained the purpose of my study and asked for participation in the survey and subsequent observations and interviews. Ninety staff

members who were willing to participate completed the Scantron form using a pencil. I

placed surveys in the school mailboxes of those teachers who were not present at the

meeting and received five additional surveys within one week. A total of ninety-five

surveys were received. Results of the survey were totaled using a Scantron machine.

I developed questions for the survey based on what I wanted to ask in the subsequent

interviews. I shared the survey with three colleagues who helped me to refine the

questions and confirmed that the questions would most likely provide me with

information related to my research questions. Participants were asked to respond using a

Likert scale, with possible answers ranging from one to five. A response of one meant

strongly disagree, a response of two meant *disagree*, a response of three meant *neutral*, a

response of four meant *agree*, and a response of five meant *strongly agree*. Table 5

outlines the responses to each of the fifteen items.

Based on the Likert scale, the "mean" column is a gauge of the degree of

agreement across the fifteen items. That is, a mean closer to 1.0 indicated more

agreement, while a mean closer to 5.0 indicated more disagreement. The item with the

strongest agreement was number one, "Our school has a clearly written mission

statement," with a mean of 1.64. A similar item, "Our school has a clearly written vision

statement," scored 1.78. Approximately 80% of the participants responded agreed or

strongly agreed to items one and two, which dealt with mission and vision statements.

There was a substantial gap between the mean rating on the questions dealing with the

school having vision and mission statement and the third question, "Our staff can clearly

articulate the vision and mission of our school." The mean for this third item was 2.69, indicating that participants disagreed more with this statement than any other statement on the survey. There was also substantial agreement on three other survey items. Eighty-one percent of participants chose agree or strongly agree when responding to the statement, "I have the opportunity to assume leadership roles within our school (serve on leadership teams, serve as department chair, provide professional learning for other teachers) if I choose to do so." Seventy-three percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Providing stakeholders with an opportunity to give input and to participate in shared decision making and problem solving is important." Seventy-one percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "A culture of respect exists between teachers on our staff." Interestingly, participants were not in strong agreement with the statement, "A culture of respect exists between teachers and administrators in our building," with 40% responding either neutral (27%), disagree (9%), or strongly disagree (4%). Thirty-two percent of participants responded either disagree or strongly disagree to the statement, "Our staff can clearly articulate the mission and vision of our school." Thirty-two percent also chose disagree or strongly disagree to the statement, "Our schedule allows for teachers to collaborate on instructional and school improvement issues."

After collecting and examining the data from the initial survey, I obtained the schedule for the meeting of the leadership teams that existed within the school structure. I then conducted observations of four of the leadership committees. These observations

were conducted during the regularly scheduled meeting times of the committees. The

purpose of my observations was to determine if the leadership committees were truly

meeting, and what type of relevant, impactful discussions were taking place regarding

school improvement. I wanted to verify that shared leadership practices were truly being

followed at this school.

Table 5.
Summary of Teacher Responses to the Survey

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
Clear mission statement present	5%	5%	8%	46%	35%	1.64
Vision statement	7%	5%	8%	48%	31%	1.78
Staff can articulate vision/mission	5%	27%	27%	25%	15%	2.69
Vision/mission alignment	3%	3%	26%	45%	23%	1.97
Vision/mission developed collaboratively	3%	7%	22%	49%	18%	2.11
Schedule allows collaboration	7%	25%	17%	39%	12%	2.63
Culture of respect between teachers	3%	1%	24%	47%	24%	1.88
Culture of respect between teacher and administrators	4%	9%	27%	38%	22%	2.14
Culture of respect between teachers and students	1%	10%	28%	49%	12%	2.27

Stakeholders give input	3%	7%	16%	47%	26%	1.87
Teachers give input into school improvement	4%	11%	27%	43%	16%	2.29
Shared responsibility for school improvement	3%	9%	16%	52%	20%	2.02
Leadership opportunities available	2%	6%	10%	49%	32%	1.65
Teachers involved in progress monitoring	1%	9%	17%	59%	14%	2.09
Teacher and administrator collaboration	2%	7%	13%	57%	20%	1.94

Observation results. I conducted observations of the leadership groups, whose purpose was to practice shared leadership by conducting meetings to discuss topics relevant to school improvement. At the point that I began observing, the committees' structure seemed to be breaking down. The plan for the committee meetings was to discuss specific topics assigned by the school administration. These topics were school improvement related. During the course of my observations, I did not witness any instances of administration providing the type of guidance that would allow for productive meetings to occur. The teachers related to me that they were meeting for the sole purpose of fulfilling a scheduled job requirement. The committee meetings were essentially suspended until the new principal could hold focus group sessions in order to ascertain how to improve the process. Six months elapsed between the time that teacher attendance at leadership committee meetings began to drop off and the time when the administration addressed the problem.

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Document analysis results. Qualitative researchers often utilize the study of written artifacts to aid in their understanding of a phenomenon (Ary et al., 2006). I included document analyses in the data used to develop the findings of this study. Documents can be classified as any written, visual, digital, or physical material that can be examined in relation to a study (Merriam, 2009).

In this study, I collected documents related to school improvement goals and committee work, including school improvement strategic plans and minutes from committee meetings. These documents were obtained both from the school's website and the school's shared drive where minutes from committee meetings were digitally stored. I reviewed two years of school improvement strategic plans, including beginning of the year and mid-year plans. I also examined documents provided by the school administrators that outlined the purpose of the teams before they were developed. Woodruff High School participated in a school processes audit specific to Georgia schools called the GAPSS review. During the GAPSS review, schools are assessed on their implementation level of the Georgia School Keys. Schools receive graded rubrics for each standard that identify their implementation level as not addressed, emergent, operational, or fully operational. Once the school has received these rubrics and other suggestions from the audit team, the school improvement plan is developed to reflect how they will work toward improvement on the standards that were graded as either not addressed or emergent.

A Georgia State Department of Education audit team visited the school in late spring of 2009. The audit team's findings included several areas of needed improvement. One of those areas corresponded with the Professional Learning strand of the School Keys. The team noted that teachers needed more opportunities for professional learning, both in their content areas and in best practices in pedagogy. The team also cited the school for a lack of parental engagement, a recommendation that addressed the Student/Family/Community Support strand of the School Keys. The School Culture strand was also addressed in the audit team's recommendation because of disciplinary referrals and suspensions for fighting in classrooms and hallways.

I also reviewed meeting minutes from five of the committees. Committee minutes for all teams reflected a set agenda of discussion. Discussion centered on school improvement goals, revisiting the mission and vision of the committee, and specific actions taken by each committee to address committee goals. Considerable time was also spent disseminating information from the administration to committee members and gathering feedback that the committee chairperson would report to administrators and the larger school improvement team. In some cases, the committee meetings did turn into venting sessions (for example, multiple members of the Curriculum and Instruction committee stated that the professional learning suggestions that they had put forth had been ignored by the district; this made them feel that their work was pointless because their feedback was not being taken seriously), but this was generally limited in all

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meeting minutes examined. Attendance was included in the minutes, and I noticed that in many cases, attendance was sparse.

The final documents included in my document analyses were ones provided by administrators that outlined the original purpose of the shared leadership committees and the desired focus of those committees. Document review reflects that administrators introduced the concept of leadership committees built around the School Keys strands in order to foster distributed leadership, to build consensus among staff in the areas of needed improvement, to foster collaboration on school improvement issues, and to develop sustained processes for the purpose of school improvement. Procedures were outlined for how committees would be formed, what areas of discussion the first meeting should include, and how committees would be monitored. Documents also reflected discussion among administrators about how committees should examine and address the results of the GAPSS review. Review of the Fall 2010 school improvement plan indicated that the areas addressed by the GAPSS review audit team were emphasized during committee meetings. School improvement goals included (a) providing all employees with high-quality professional learning opportunities to promote individual development and improved student performance, (b) providing numerous opportunities for families to become engaged in their child's academic progress and school experiences, and (c) continuing to evaluate and improve the focus on public safety. In addition, percentage-of-growth targets were set for the school. I reviewed these targets

mid-year by examining a second set of documents; those documents indicated that the targets were partially met for the year.

Interview results. Five essential elements emerged that must be in place in order for shared leadership models to work. These elements are themes that were gleaned from teachers' answers to my interview questions concerning their experiences as part of the shared leadership committees.

Dedicated time. The shared leadership committees were supposed to meet once per month, either before or after school. Without dedicated time during the school day, this often proved difficult. Because teachers were asked to voluntarily come early or stay after school meant that some never fully participated. Thomas Francona stated:

> The district was in the middle of furlough days, and instead of asking people to do more, because we couldn't necessarily, that was a company people on company time solving company problems thing, because everybody had different planning periods we made it optional.

Getting teachers to work outside of their mandated schedules proved especially difficult once budget cuts resulted in huge class sizes; Woodruff High School teachers were disgruntled and unwilling to put forth the extra effort that committee work required. Tia Wakefield said:

> We used to have early release time; we used to have that time, and now it's just "catch as catch can" . . . . See, originally, Wednesday afternoons were set aside for professional meetings. The first Wednesday was faculty meeting, the next

Wednesday were the committees, the third was department meetings. So there

was an expectation that those groups would meet. There was an agenda going in

and work product coming out. And then it wasn't turned into, "Well, we'll meet

over lunch," or "We'll meet at 7:30." Because as soon as you do that, no one

meets at all.

Because of lack of dedicated time during the day, teachers felt that the collaboration went

from a pleasant team-building activity to a mandatory monotony. Annette Gonzalez said:

They've forced collaboration on us. We have to be on these collaborative teams,

we have to meet regularly. Your PAI [professional evaluation instrument] is

going to be affected by it, and it was all great guns for the first semester,

everybody panicked about getting together and meeting.

Annette Gonzalez also stated, "I've been forced into a collaborative team, but we don't

meet that often because we don't have as much to collaborate about." Of course, over

time those forced collaborations led to a breakdown of the committee meetings.

Theodore Williams admitted, "We used to have a monthly meeting, but we're not meeting

the way we used to. We haven't had a formal meeting."

Even when the committees did manage to hold a meeting during school hours, it

was done quickly; no common planning time was scheduled by the administration to

encourage those meetings. Discussing the need for a common time to meet and conduct

the shared leadership activities, Theodore Williams said, "I think it would be better if we

had common planning, it would be better if we had time to meet together to discuss these

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things and get it out there." He bemoaned the schedule change that lead to the common planning time being cut. He said, "Now we don't have the time to collaborate. We don't have the staff development days; it's not built into our schedule like it was." Most of the staff seemed to look forward to the time when they would again have common time to address school-wide school improvement issues. Jared Varitek said:

> Next year we'll have common planning in the core areas, which will be a plus. Having any after school meetings this year has been hard. With the staff cuts, getting people to stay after school has been hard. With common planning, we can develop a schedule of meetings. Like every Wednesday, we have faculty meeting, first Wednesday, you have department chair meeting, so you have common planning every day, you know on this day, we're going to look at data. We can have some structured collaboration. Right now it's just haphazard.

Timothy Conigliaro agreed:

> One thing that I would say for next year is something we did at a school I worked at. We had our committees meet at a common time. Now some are meeting in the morning and some in the afternoon.

Several participants mentioned that department meetings were being held, but collaboration with other departments was limited due to the lack of common planning time. Dwayne Evans discussed this problem, "We have department meetings, but not regular collaborations with other departments. That's done on our own." Kailee Fisk mentioned this as well, "The department heads all have fourth block planning, but

departments are all over the place. The rest of us don't have any time for common planning." When asked if there was any time for them to get together for shared leadership committee work, Annette Gonzalez laughed and said, "Oh, no. Even though we've asked for that. It would be nice at least among the people who teach the same subject, but no. There's no common planning, there's no place to meet."

Over time, even the practice of meeting when and where time and space allowed fell apart because of the busyness of the school day. When asked if there was time to meet, Timothy Conigliaro stated:

Well, there is, but it's dictated by the committee. So it's not every committee is going to meet on this date at this time . . . . And we may have a ballgame and administrators are going to get ready for that and can't go. I like having it on the calendar so that it's dedicated time and everyone knows. I missed some of the school safety committee. I have a passion for that, and I could give some input. But I don't know when they're meeting or when I do find out, I'm like, "Oh, I already have something on my calendar," and it is two days away.

Other teachers made similar claims about committee work suffering due to work overload. Kailee Fisk asserted:

We just don't have the time any more. We used to have two planning periods. Department chairs had one planning period that was for planning instruction and one that was for leadership kinds of things. That was taken away with the economic downturn, so it's just hard.

Theodore Williams said that the pace of the school day also works against staff unity. He complained:

> They would try to plan events to build camaraderie among the faculty and staff. And some of that gets lost when you don't have a regular time to meet and make it happen. I find that those things are sometimes more creative endeavors, and I can function better when I have time to do those things.

All of the new requirements from the administration, district, state, and national levels filled each teacher's day and made them unwilling to try to pack extra work into an already busy schedule. One frustrated teacher, Jane Rice, exclaimed, "In my department, we just don't have time. We are just racing to get stuff done."

Well-defined purpose. The first set of committees under Principal Thomas Francona was built around each of the eight Georgia School Keys; he felt that they had a clear and definite purpose. He explained, "I think that we did stick with the eight strands. I still believe in the model of having committees specific to those keys." The teachers also understood that the original intent of the committees was to tackle the Georgia School Keys. Rita Clemens stated:

> There were committees that were created to tackle different areas according to the School Keys, and so there was an objective for every committee, and for every collaborative team there was a purpose. And there was a plan and everybody knew about it. I think that had to do with once you knew there was an expectation and plan, and you had to have some intrinsic motivation to actually get it done.

All those things come into play to make it work. And when one of those things

falls, it doesn't work.

Occasionally, committees were given specific topics to deal with that fell outside of the

Georgia School Key agenda. Sometimes, even entire yearlong agendas were mandated.

However, these topics were generally more narrow and related to equipment, material, or

curriculum issues rather than school improvement topics. Theodore Williams described

such an occasion:

Sometimes it is not up to us. Like the county may say, everyone gets an iRespond

this year, even though we may have people who won't use them. So we talk about

stuff like that and when things like that come through, we generally try to stay on

top of the technology so that at least our people on our committee are not experts

necessarily but are adequately equipped to deal with it so we can answer

questions in departments.

Annette Gonzalez addressed the assignment of topics to accomplish a specific purpose by

noting, "I think that it might have been established so that committee could help with the

development of the curriculum."

A few people found that the committees had well-defined guidelines, agendas,

and structures. Discussing his intent for the shared leadership committees, Thomas

Francona stated:

My vision is to have a monthly meeting with department chairs and committee

chairs. Coming up with a meeting calendar will help with that . . . . So we talk

administratively about what are the three or four key topics that each committee should be working on and should end up in the action plans.

Concerning the presence of agendas that helped define the purpose of the committees, Annette Gonzalez said, "Yeah, yeah, Mr. Overstreet [administrator] always has an agenda, there's always a purpose, what we're supposed to do at that particular meeting." Kailee Fisk agreed, "We were expected to have an agenda, keep minutes, keep attendance, and post the minutes on the share drive. You had to share what you discussed so everyone else could see." Even beyond agendas and guidelines, some teachers felt that the purpose of the committees were clear. Petra Martinez talked about the school's purpose statement and how the committees used it for guidance:

> We had to have a purpose statement. It had to be posted to the share drive. We did revisit that. We worked on the purpose statement that first year and revisited that to see where we were according to the purpose statement.

The committees even seemed to have practical purposes for many school faculty, such as Dwayne Evans:

> Anytime we had new programs or software for students or for teachers, we had to learn that and go and be a support to the teachers and students. End of the year, we were supposed to make sure that all the equipment was working fine-D.V.D. players, speakers, etc.-and we reported that to the office so that there was one big report for the school at the end of the year.

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However, interviews revealed that the majority of staff found committee work to be purposeless, and the groups were very frustrated with lack of focus and duplication of efforts. Annette Gonzalez complained about the lack of direction when she stated:

> They need to have specific guidelines as to what their purpose is; where their parameters are. And they need to be allowed to work within those parameters and not be stifled. They need to be given that . . . empowerment.

Julie Pesky gave a similar opinion about committee purpose, "It was really up to us to figure out what our mission was going to be; what our purpose was. There was never any clearly defined-we made it up as we went along."

That lack of mission and purpose eventually led to the perception among staff that the shared leadership committee meetings were becoming unnecessary. Once they became unnecessary, meetings began to wane. Freida Lynn spoke of this phenomenon, "We used to meet every month. But there's no reason for us to meet. We've been gutted. We haven't been asked to do anything because it's been taken over by somebody else." Administrators knew that a definite sense of purpose and direct instructions were necessary to gain teacher buy-in and perpetuate the committee meetings. Principal Francona stated:

> What I've learned, though, is that you have to give people a task. If it's very nebulous, like Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and they don't see a beginning and an end, it's like giving the committee something with no real purpose. We've tried to say, for example, with professional learning, give me a

yearlong plan that has dates, who's training, and money needed, and I want that

plan by August 1.

Teachers frequently commented that the sense of purpose for committee members

was strong under the former principal, but seems to have faded with the transition to the

new administration. One teacher, Theodore Williams, mentioned this perceived

difference when he said:

I think that the results speak to the success of what we did. We had people from

other schools come into see how it worked and what we did. Now, I almost think

it would be scary to ask. Now is a bad time to look. We lost sight of the thing

that was really helping us. It would be nice to get back there.

When I asked if there are topics they discuss when they meet, Tia Wakefield answered,

but then brought up the recurring theme of the change in administration and how there

has been a loss of purpose:

Yes, looking at classroom walkthrough data. Looking at whether are kids are

being actively or passively learning. Looking at whether kids are engaged. What

does the delivery look like? Also looking at formative and summative

assessments that are being used. We haven't been focusing on that this year. So

where that was the data that drove the discussion in years past, it doesn't exist this

year.

The cause of this loss of purpose and direction were identified by Rita Clemens when she

was asked if there was a formal structure with the previous administration. She said,

"Yes, it was more open and welcoming to teachers for their ideas of what to do. They [past administration] were open to suggestions."

Theodore Williams explained the change more thoroughly when he stated:

> I think we had a better handle on it a few years ago when we first had trouble with not making AYP and decided to rally around ways to fix that problem. Our principal at the time, Thomas Francona, gave us a strong push in that direction to figure out a central theme and what that was. It was valuable when we did it, but I think we've sort of lost sight of that.

Besides the change in administration, loss of staff and budget restraints was also responsible for the change, according to Jane Rice. She said:

> If there was some problem, we could fix it in house. We had a quick response time. Now, because we've lost staff due to budget cuts, we just don't have the people. The committee hasn't been asked, or maybe trusted, to do what we needed to do.

When I asked about the purpose of the shared leadership committees, teachers overwhelmingly mentioned the administration change as the impetus of negative change or loss of purpose. Following are several examples of these sentiments. Tia Wakefield said, "There's an element of frustration in that it really is in transition. So it's frustrating because is there a clear, concise message being sent universally on campus and to our community? I'd say no." Theodore Williams added, "We were given some guidelines of things to discuss at one point. I think that kind of fell by the wayside." Finally, Jane

Rice stated, "We met once a month, there was an agenda. This year, I think the [new] administration has taken it back."

Overall, it seems as if the teachers knew the reasons for the committees, how they should function, and what their specific job within the committee was. Yet, they seemed to be oblivious to how the work of the committees met the purpose of the committee's existence. For example, Dwayne Evans showed ignorance of the purpose of a mission statement when he stated, "I would rather have a very practical hands-on leadership directing us in practical ways rather than the best mission statement and they're sitting up there fat, dumb, and happy and proud of their mission statement not doing anything." The confusion about how the committee work impacted the overall purpose and direction of the school is demonstrated in this quote by Tia Wakefield:

> A clearer statement of vision and purpose, and a correlation thread that runs right through the middle of all of them so that the perception is not that we're all doing five million things, we're all working toward one goal. That's where it falls apart. The disjointedness lets people feel as if, "I'm doing, they're not doing and we're doing all this, but I never see where this goes, and I don't understand how this impacts this," and it never turns into anything. I think when there was a language and a focus that told everybody who you are, what you do, and how it fits with everyone else, I think people valued that professionally. But when it's disconnected and disjointed or it seems as if there's a redundancy, "I'm doing this to satisfy this," but there's another guy who says, "Well, I am doing that to satisfy

this," and we keep both of those things, the effectiveness of both disappears. We need to streamline it, put a singular thread through it, and value it.

Not realizing how the committee work impacted overall school direction was clearly a problem among the staff, but so was the failure to see the importance of having a guiding purpose at all. When I asked if the school had a purpose statement, Dwayne Evans stated:

Yes they do, and I do not know it. Here's the thing: When I went and got trained way back in the stone age with military, we didn't have stuff like that. That was sort of upper management stuff. That kind of stuff is not going to help me teach. It's not going to help me with classroom management. Do we have one? Yes. Is it appropriate political and flowery and all that? Yes. Does it matter to me down here in the trenches? No.

Other teachers were completely off-base concerning the stated purpose of their committees. They could not identify the purpose of the committees or the larger picture; how their committee work was really about improving student academic achievement. One person on the Community Outreach Committee, Cathy Schilling, said, "I think it was to make more connections with the community and to develop camaraderie among the school, better relationships with the students and teachers." Jane Rice felt like the committees were just a "dog and pony" show. She complained, "I mean, we felt like what is the point if we didn't do anything with it? I mean it was almost like, is someone working on their Ph.D. or something?" However, there were a few teachers who did

truly understand that the committees were aimed at school improvement. Theodore Williams described the purpose of the shared leadership committees this way:

> I think it was a big push when we knew the GAPSS was coming and when we needed to pull ourselves out of the death spiral, so it was a big focus then. I don't necessarily feel like it was checking a box on a list, but it felt like we wanted to make it meaningful, not like we were doing it just because we had to do it.

Committee choice. Allowing teachers to choose which committee they served on was important to them. However, the original structure of the shared leadership committees had to be maintained. It seems as if the intended committee membership and hierarchy was known by all. Petra Martinez stated:

> The committees pick the chair. We met first, and the committees selected the chair. And it wasn't the same person all the time. And then, um, you had to have representation from each department, and you had freedom to sign up for whatever committee you wanted to.

Even within the concept of choice, some assignments were made and expectations were maintained. Regarding committee choice, Betty Doerr said, "Yeah, I will tell you that they wanted every department represented on a committee. So if someone was already on that committee you had to pick someone else." Betty Doerr, who wanted to participate on the Technology Committee, also recalled, "I wanted to be on the technology committee. But I was told because there was already someone from my department, I couldn't." The structure of having one person from each department

represented on each committee seemed to be an understood arrangement, according to Theodore Williams, "We had at least one representative from each department, um, when you're outside the core subjects, you have a little more leeway."

Administrators noted that in some cases, they did ask certain teachers to serve on specific committees since they had a special talent (technology, for example), but that assigning teachers to committees was not a good idea because that tactic thwarted teacher buy-in. Several teachers and both administrators mentioned this propensity for certain teachers to be on committees that matched their skills. Petra Martinez said, "Right. I think we might have been a little hand-picked by someone because of our writing experience on the grant committee." Kailee Fisk stated, "With technology, I did ask that they be the person who was a little more tech-savvy so that it was a little easier for me to train them, but other than that, they got to pick one." Thomas Francona also noted that he invited teachers to participate on committees that matched their skills, but that this was always well-accepted by the teachers he asked:

> Another thing, another nuance that we have learned from South Cobb was what
>
> we call "strategic invitations." What that means basically is that you can probably
>
> guess which teachers are going to respond to a whole-school invitation. So what
>
> we do then is we get together as department chairs and administrators and say,
>
> "Tell me the two or three people in your department who are great teachers but
>
> who never get asked to do anything because so and so over here is always
>
> carrying the burden." We will reach out to them before the invite goes out. Like

I'll do that here at Westlake, and we will say, "I think you'll be a great addition, would you show up?" And now we have taken our obvious leaders and we've added some subliminal leaders, if you will . . . . I can't think of a single situation where either myself or another administrator went to a teacher and they weren't honored to have been asked. And usually, I'm pretty honest. I'll say, "You know, we were at an administrative meeting and we were talking about teachers who aren't that involved but could make a huge difference." And usually that teacher is happy to have gotten the invitation. However, I would say this: If somebody doesn't want to do it, okay, fine.

Daniel Evans added, "Other than the handpicked committee/teacher matches, the remainder of the positions on the shared leadership committees were voluntary." The following teacher statements all indicate that their participation was somewhat voluntary:

They didn't force it, they didn't check it, but they did ask that we have some sort of role (Theodore Williams).

Every department got "volun-told" to send a representative to the meeting (Dwayne Evans).

I voluntarily signed up for the professional learning committee when Thomas Francona was here, and we did some things. And it was working. That committee disappeared. So I signed up for the instructional committee (Rita Clemens).

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You got to pick a committee by interest. I guess just magically it balanced out. I've wondered all year (Jane Rice).

People could sign up. It was voluntary (Jared Varitek).

Some teachers indicated that the word "volunteer" was a misnomer. It was actually more of a requirement or an expectation that carried negative consequences if the teacher chose not to participate. For example, Jane Rice said, "You were asked to serve on something. It was your choice. Just please do serve on something. It would've been frowned on it you chose not to do anything." Petra Martinez agreed by stating, "It was expected that you'd serve on a committee. You had to." There were some, even the new principal, who questioned whether it would be in the best interest of the school to have the committees remain voluntary:

There will always be people you'll say, "You'd be really good on this committee," and you try to get them on there. It's been hard this year. It's been a really rough year for morale and expectations, and you try to not burn out the same people who always step up.

The value of volunteerism was questioned by Annette Gonzalez when she said, "Yeah, and unfortunately, they tell you you're supposed to be on a committee, but people sign up and then never show up for their meetings."

I found that many teachers wanted to use their specific skills and interests to enhance the committees, but they felt that they could not do that without having absolute committee choice. Theodore Williams explained:

I think being able to have some buy into what you're doing...to have some choice

in what you're doing...is important. If I were forced to sit on the communications

committee forever, I think that I would learn how to tune it out. I'd be bringing

papers to grade while I'm there instead of thinking about if I can do something to

help the school.

Being able to make a contribution to the committee was the main concern for Theodore

Williams, "I migrated over to technology because I said this is not my forte. I feel like

interest would be best served working with a committee where I feel like I'm best

contributing." The inability to work on a committee that sparked his/her interest was the

primary complaint for Freida Lynn. She said:

To me, it's a preconceived notion that these are the committees: the wellness, the

technology, curriculum and instruction, safety. And you have these set in

probably every school in America. You know, they just have a different name.

And it's not what you're really interested in.

Administration involvement and oversight. Several participants voiced

frustration that Woodruff High School administration monitored the work of the

committees less as time passed. The positive attitude in general and the positive aspects

of the shared leadership committees in particular, seemed to dissipate when the change of

administration occurred. Speaking to me about his old administrator, Dwayne Evans

said:

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[Principal] Francona was a very hands on person. He had his detractors, but I would say generally he had more fans than detractors. I guess with my experience, he thought I'd do something good and have some discipline. He was much more hands on. He would also be a bit more direct and to the point. About the only fault was just his inexperience in classroom. He was just so young. As far as being an effective leader: yeah, he knew the kids; he had visibility. He stopped in to see what we were doing. That doesn't happen much anymore. His management style is much more walking around. While I don't like interference, I do like that fact that he came in and we saw him.

Theodore Williams felt that the change of administration was a big negative for the school. He said:

Our principal changed, and I think that may have affected-it was over the summer that our principal changed. He obviously doesn't know everything we were doing. So I think some of those things [committee issues] were, if not neglected, then just not brought to the forefront.

The new principal, Jared Varitek, partially explained his more hands-off approach to dealing with the staff, the school, and the leadership committees:

What I'm doing differently is that I've divided the faculty up into nine focus groups. I mean custodians, parapros, teachers, food service personnel-any adult who works in the building. They're going to tell me what they feel about this school, what's working and what's in their way, and I'm just going to listen. I am

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going to have someone record. I'm just going to listen to what they feel is important about this school. I'll take all that and compile it. I'm going to do just what you're doing. I'm going to recode it, see what comes out of it, so people can see the common things that we believe. Then I'll bring that back to my administrators and department chairs and we'll look at what people said.

According to the staff, the most negative aspect of the new administration was the change in the structure and function of the shared leadership committees that occurred after the change in administrators. Many teachers mentioned this to me in the interviews that I conducted. For example, when asked about how committee activity has changed since the new administration took over, Tia Wakefield stated, "Once there was a leadership change, that part [committee involvement] dropped off. It really has fallen more on the administrator than involving the teachers."

There was a feeling amongst most staff members that the prior administration was generally far more encouraging than the current administration, but specifically regarding the committees, which made the shared leadership work more enjoyable. Referring to the previous principal, Petra Martinez recalled:

Well, we had different administrators. One thing about Grant-he's a cheerleader. He's very, very positive. He was excited. And when you're excited-you know. There was no not doing it. He was very supportive. There were not a lot of restrictions. You know if you thought of something that would help, he supported

you. And if that required money, he found a way to get the money to help you.

He was quite the cheerleader. It was pretty awesome.

This thought was also mentioned by another participant, Betty Doerr:

And I think before, we had this encouraging leader, rather than-well, there was a

celebratory effect. It was fun. Everybody is busy and we all knew what was

expected, but everything wasn't so mandated and punitive. There was so much

more encouragement. We talk about school culture all the time. We're all busy.

We're all working way too hard. But we're willing to do that if you're working for

someone who appreciates you.

It seems as if "buying in" was not optional when the previous administration was in

charge. However, no one seemed to feel pressured by this fact. Tia Wakefield stated,

"Under Grant, it [teacher buy in] wasn't an option. But he has a spirit about him so that

teachers signed on; kids signed on; parents signed on." Many teacher comments made

clear that there was a trust between administrators and teachers with the former

administration that no longer existed with the new administration. Rita Clemens put this

succinctly by proclaiming, "There was trust from the administration. And I don't feel that

anymore." I felt an overwhelming sense that teachers did not support, encourage, trust,

or believe in the new administration. Betty Doerr gave an example of this sentiment

when she said, "Everything is mandated and it's punitive. I got a mark on my PAI.

Everything is so punitive."

When the shared leadership groups began under the new administration, each administrator was assigned to a group and were supposed to attend meetings. Most teachers stated that the committee involvement and attendance of the administrators was generally consistent. Petra Martinez said, "There was an administrator who attended our meetings."

Another committee member, Cathy Schilling, stated, "I think there was an administrator at all of our meetings." Regardless of attendance, some teachers and administrators stated administration was more involved in the process than it needed to be and had too much control of the shared leadership groups. Annette Gonzalez commented:

> I think that's something that the administration needs to work on-is to give up, to
>
> be able to give up some control, you know, set the guidelines, set the parameters,
>
> you be the judge of that from the beginning, and then let the committees have the
>
> power to do what they need to be doing. Give them the control then. You know,
>
> delegate, don't micromanage.

In support of administrators not becoming overly involved, Principal Francona also stated:

> I think the problem with the principalship is that we try to do it all. And it takes
>
> an incredible amount of energy to get this process started, but once you do, step
>
> out of the way, and go focus your time and energy on someone who doesn't get it,
>
> or a committee that doesn't get it, data that's not trending the way you want it to.

Occasionally, teachers would mention to me that the involvement of the administration in the shared leadership committees was irrelevant to them. Dwayne Evans explained this philosophy by saying:

Administrator involvement is not going to matter one way or another. In some cases, if they're trying to take over, it might be handy to have an administrator there to give input so that they can say, "This is not going to happen." But otherwise, no.

Jared Varitek, the former principal, felt that his involvement in the committee work was counterproductive. He stated, "I try, but sometimes I think I'm a hindrance." However, there was clearly a portion of the staff that valued the involvement and insight of their leadership. Theodore Williams commented, "We would analyze the data and results with Principal Francona and talk about how do we fix this." These feelings were echoed by Jared Varitek. He said, "This year [laughing], the school improvement plan will be visited by a lot of people. Our admin team and department chairs will work together to come up with a draft from those groups."

Even though involvement seemed to be consistent for the most part, administrator oversight of the progress made by the committees seemed to decrease over time. When asked if administrators were monitoring staff attendance at the shared leadership groups, Annette Gonzalez responded:

No, at least not that I know. I don't know if they're getting counted off on PAI for not coming. I attend my meetings; I don't know. But I don't get the feeling that

anything's being done about it since there are so many people who don't come. It

doesn't seem like it. I don't know that it should be.

However, the administrators were firm in insisting that committee oversight was not

lacking. Jared Varitek stated, "I have met with all committee chairs. I used to have a

meeting with just the committee chairs." Thomas Francona explained his oversight this

way:

I can't tell you that happened with incredible consistency, but I think it happened

more than it didn't happen. What happened is that we administratively, when we

were in our school improvement process, we would report out and say, this

administrator was in charge of professional learning and was at that meeting.

Here is what they saw, their concerns, and it was essentially, just as you would

collaborate at an administrative meeting or at a team meeting, like on text books,

that was an agenda item. We would say, "How's the professional learning team

doing? What are they struggling with? What do we need to know as

administrators that could help?" So there was a process as far reporting out.

The new administrator, Jared Varitek, further explained their future plans when he stated,

"We're restructuring our admin team to make sure each committee is covered. One of the

things we want to do next year is train our department chairs and committee chairs on

how to conduct meetings-how to keep records." Timothy Conigliaro commented that he

agreed that the administration was providing adequate oversight of the committees, and

could count on them to know what was happening. He said, "I think collaboration among

the APs [assistant principals] is strong right now. I know I can go to them and ask questions."

Yet, many interviewees expressed resentment that there did not seem to be any consequences for staff who just never participated; accountability seemed nonexistent, even though administrators seemed to be involved in the committees and providing at least marginal oversight of their activities. Jared Varitek mentioned the lack of accountability when he stated, "The biggest thing is having accountability when people meet. Right now we don't have that." One participant contrasted this new lack of accountability with how the system worked with the previous administration:

> There was an expectation at that point that we had to turn in minutes and talk
> about the issues we needed to solve. And there was follow through with that.
> And understanding why we were supposed to turn in our minutes each month and
> all that.

Teachers also mentioned that the expectations that come with accountability should be accompanied by encouragement from administration. Rita Clemens proclaimed:

> I think that there is a lot expected from the teachers with very little support from
> administration. And it might be pressure from above them, but I think that they
> could be different. There could be some way for...this is what is expected, but I
> think you're great and you can do this. That passion is not there.

The work of the committees must be valued. Teachers overwhelmingly felt that the group committee work was no longer being valued by administrators. They told me

that if the committee work was truly valued, there would be some type of reward for committee participants. Theresa Epstein said:

> I think because we have so many things that are taking our time, maybe give us PLUs for that. We could come up with some ways to get credit for our committee work. I think teachers would be a lot more inclined to go. It would be a better quality. We'd feel like, you know, this is my time. We've been asked to give and give and give of our time. I think my committee does an excellent job and I know a lot of people think that.

Teachers stated that making the shared leadership committees valuable to the teachers would, in turn, make it beneficial to the administration and school district. Tia Wakefield's comments reflected this point of view:

> I just think a school that makes membership in the committee and the work product of the committee valuable to the school community is going to have buy-in and participation and tap the resources that are just incredible. That's the name of the game.

> Staff members expressed frustration that the groups worked to make recommendations, but these suggestions were never implemented. Committee members said that their work was impotent and their suggestions lacked weight with their supervisors. Annette Gonzalez stated, "They [committees] should be empowered. There's a word. That's a good word to use. They have to be given that empowerment to work, to be effective." Many shared leadership committee members stated that their

work would only have true value when the administration charged them with tackling real issues rather than wasting time or dealing with issues that were irrelevant to school improvement. Freida Lynn said:

> I think if it were structured around real issues, like here we have a problem with reviewing for the exit exam. So get some people together and let them figure out how to handle that. And then identify other issues at this school and let it be around real committees. The names would change, but it would be more valuable.

The most commonly cited issue concerning the value of the shared leadership committees was the apparent laissez-faire attitude of the administration toward the committees and their work. This attitude subsequently trickled down to the teachers. Rita Clemens stated:

> I joined the communications committee, and then we didn't do anything. And then that went by the wayside. This year I joined the sunshine committee. Same thing. We started strong, we had a few meetings, and then I couldn't get anyone to respond and I was like, "I'm too busy for this." I'm not going to follow up.

Annette Gonzalez echoed this response about what she viewed as the administration's lackadaisical approach to committee work and results:

> The first year, we were really great guns, making out these-I forgot what their called-like a curriculum guide. Then the next year, they were supposed to develop it more thoroughly by putting in assessments and activities and the like. The

second and third year it sort of just tanked. The things we would suggest as a committee were then just not acted upon; for no particular reason. I got off that committee. I said, "Look, we're spinning our wheels, I'm coming to this meeting, we're sitting here talking about the same thing every time we meet; we're just spinning our wheels." So I got on the culture committee. I think I was on that one for two years. And then that one kind of went by the wayside.

Many teachers voiced that this apathy toward committee work stemmed from the administration takeover of the responsibilities formerly given to the committees. They thought that the committees' work was devalued because the new administration was not heeding their suggestions as the previous administration had. When I asked about administration assuming the responsibilities of the committees, Jared Varitek spoke of it as a negative event, "The admin team absorbed a lot of that, to our detriment." Teachers felt that "shared leadership committee" had become a misnomer because leadership was no longer being shared as a result of the administration takeover of the tasks formerly delegated to the committees. Jane Rice commented:

> The committees felt like it was something we had to do, not something we chose to do. It wasn't anything we really gained; it was something we checked off the list. Our committee was good, but it was taken over by something or somebody else. They didn't allow it to function.

The following teacher comment from Annette Gonzalez further explains this phenomenon of administration takeover:

I don't know if any of the committees are being used the way they should. I think a lot of things are being handed down. You know, like "This is what you're going to do." And that makes teachers not want to come to committee meetings because if you're just going to say, "This is what you're going to do," I mean, the whole purpose of having committees is to be able to be a part of what goes on and making decisions. What say do we have, really?

Kailee Fisk discussed how administrative takeover of the committees negatively impacted the value of the committees:

We'd have some great ideas, started out gung-ho, and then the people in upper levels would say, "No, no, no, no." Or "Okay, but you have to change twenty-five things about it;" we backed off. Everybody was just sort of like, "Fine," and we just sort of lost our progress.

Summary

The shared experiences of teachers and administrators at Woodruff High School while attempting to implement structures that facilitate shared leadership were mostly negative. They continually stated that there was not enough dedicated time during the school day for the committees to function effectively; that there were not well-defined agendas, structures, or purposes for the meetings; that true committee choice was not reality, and serving was not completely voluntary; that administration involvement and oversight was adequate, but not necessarily important; and that the work of the committees was not nearly as highly valued by administration as it should have been.

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In order to successfully implement shared leadership committees, teachers perceived that certain elements had to be in place. They wanted time during the school day to meet, they wanted administration to oversee their work, but not take over the responsibilities of the committees, and they wanted the committee work to be purposeful and valued by teachers, administrators, and district staff. Chapter Five examines the results presented in this chapter in light of related literature and identifies how the results can be used to improve practice in the area of shared leadership committees.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Chapter five begins with a summary of the findings that were presented in Chapter Four, followed by a discussion of the implications of those findings in light of the relevant research literature. Next are study limitations and recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with a summary of the primary findings of the research and a conclusion to the manuscript.

Summary of Findings

The results of the teacher survey showed that participants knew that there was a mission or vision statement, but could not articulate what it was. The survey also indicated that most teachers felt that they could participate in the school-wide decision making process if they desired to do so. The survey detected that there was a culture of respect between teachers, but not between teachers and administration. There was also a feeling amongst teachers that there was no time for collaboration on issues of school improvement or instruction.

Document analysis findings. To begin my document review, I examined two years of school improvement plans. These included both beginning of the year plans and mid-year plan reviews. The initial review indicated that the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) audit team had visited the school in late spring of 2009 to conduct a Georgia Assessment of Progress on School Standards (GAPSS) review. This process examined the school's implementation level of the Georgia School Keys, standards used by schools in the state of Georgia. These standards focus on eight strands, or topic areas,

including curriculum, assessment, instruction, professional learning, leadership, school

culture, student/family/community support, and planning and organization. The audit

team found several areas that needed improvement, including the paucity of opportunities

for professional learning, the lack of parental engagement, and the inordinate amount of

disciplinary referrals and suspensions for fighting in classrooms and hallways.

I also examined documents concerning the original purpose of the shared

leadership teams, including minutes from initial meetings and planning documents

regarding the structure of the teams. I found that administrators introduced the concept

of shared leadership committees built around the School Keys strands in order to foster

distributed leadership, to build consensus among staff in the areas of needed

improvement, to foster collaboration on school improvement issues, and to develop

sustained processes for the purpose of school improvement. Procedures regarding when

teams would meet and who would serve on the teams were also outlined at this time.

These documents showed that school improvement goals and percentage-of-growth

targets were set during initial team meetings. Review of the mid-year plans revealed

monitoring procedures were in place and that the targets were partially met for the year.

I also reviewed the documents of the actual shared leadership team meeting

minutes. I found that these meetings did have a set agenda, which was centered on

school improvement goals. The process for disseminating information from the

administration to committee members was in place, but either flawed or not carried out

correctly in many instances. Eventually these meetings lost focus and attendance

suffered because meeting time was before or after school and no dedicated meeting times were set during the school day.

Observation findings. To develop a better understanding of the dynamics of the teams, I observed several teams during their meeting times. During my observations, I discovered that each of the committees had established some structures and procedures. Each team had an agenda that drove the meeting discussion, but many of the teams' agendas no longer reflected school improvement goals. Most of the discussion items tended to be informational in nature. In other words, team leaders were simply passing along information from the school administration. They were not concentrating on strategies outlined in the school improvement plan that were intended to meet school improvement goals. The teams seemed to have lost their original purpose of being school improvement driven. In interviews, teachers noted that the structure was breaking down due to perceived lack of purpose and teacher ambivalence. This apparent lack of purpose and teacher ambivalence was noted during my observations as well. Several of the team meetings that I observed had very low attendance. By the time my research was being completed in late spring, team meetings were suspended due to due to festering teacher apathy and the inability of the administration to refocus the groups on the tasks at hand.

Interview findings. The teacher interviews led to the five major findings of this study. I found that for shared leadership meetings to be successful

- time must be dedicated to hold the meetings during the school day.
- there must be a well-defined purpose for the groups.

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- teachers must be able to choose which committee to serve on.

- there must be administration involvement and oversight .

- the work of the committees must be valued.

Discussion in Light of Relevant Literature

   The need for dedicated time. Dedicated time during the work day should be set

aside for committee work. As Principal Francona stated in his interview, it is important

to have "company people working on company problems during company time." The

only way to ensure that people are allowed to truly focus on solving school improvement

issues is to give them the tools (including the necessary time) to accomplish the tasks.

Hargreaves and Fink (2003) said that the only way to get all members of the organization

involved is to schedule committee meetings when everyone on the committee is at work.

Asking teachers to volunteer their free time before or after school without compensation

will inevitably reduce the buy in, reduce attendance at meetings, and reduce the

efficiency of the committee structure. This is especially true give the condition of the

federal and state economies with reduced budgets, furlough days, increased class sizes,

and increased workloads. It is important to communicate the importance of committee

work by planning for time during the school day to carry out that work. It is true that

schools that are structured around professional learning communities have staff that is

more willing to create and sustain change, but only if they have time to meet with their

respective communities during a time that is convenient (Hord, 1999). At Woodruff

High School, the teachers were given time to meet during school hours at the onset of the

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shared leadership endeavor. This practice ended when the new administration team took over. Teachers were then asked to meet before or after school. Some committees held two meetings, one before school and one after school, in an attempt to accommodate group members and encourage participation and attendance. This altered meeting schedule did not work, and when the practice of using school time to hold committee meetings ended, the committees fell apart soon thereafter. The lack of meeting time and subsequent lack of participation led to a decrease in teacher morale and an increase in frustration toward the committee structure and disregard for its work.

    The need for a well-defined purpose. It was important in the beginning to have a vision that defined the school's needs and goals (Calder, 2006; Iles, Judge, Wagner, 2006). Teachers and committee members needed the freedom to bring the school's vision to life by identifying the school improvement issues that should be addressed through the committees. Woodruff High School defined their vision by aligning their committees strictly to the eight strands of the school keys. This proved problematic because several of the committees-especially the curriculum, assessment, and instruction committees-ended up duplicating one another's work. Even though they were realigned later to prevent this, there was still not a clear definition provided to each committee and frustration arose, which lead to disinterest and abandonment of the mission. Losing purpose was a damaging trend at Woodruff because all members of an organization are needed to meet the demands of the accountability system (Hargreaves and Fink; 2003). Two of the common factors in effective school leaders are the ability to plan and the

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ability to organize (Gordon, 2009). Administrators and committee chairs should plan a very specific scope of work for each committee, and reporting of committee progress should be organized so that it takes place on a frequent basis to ensure that duplication of work (and the inevitable frustration that results) is avoided.

Choice of committee membership. There was an expectation at Woodruff that every member of the faculty and staff would participate on a committee of some sort. There were no assignments made, just an expectation of service on one of the shared leadership committees. There seemed to be some "committee hopping" that went on with some committees; teachers would attend a committee meeting, decide they no longer wanted to participate in that committee, and would attend a different committee meeting the following week. Teachers stated that they wanted to be able to have choice, and that would have been the most ideal situation. Bandura (1977) stated that when a teacher has confidence in his or her skills, it leads to success with students. The teachers at Woodruff had confidence in their ability to contribute to the school's vision when they were allowed to select a job or a committee where they could utilize their specific skill set; and it did lead to improved student performance. In the absence of absolute committee choice, it might have been helpful if there were some thought put into placement according to faculty's strengths and weaknesses rather than the apparent randomness of the assignments that seemed to prevail.

Distributed leadership is a theme that is commonly found in the literature on shared leadership experiences. Leithwood and Janzi (1998) said that equal allocation of

resources would be beneficial in allowing other members of the organization to cultivate leadership skills. For distributed leadership to create and sustain change (Leach & Fulton, 2008), schools must provide teachers with time in which teacher leadership tasks can be addressed (Miller, 1998). However, even equal allocation of resources and time to work are insufficient if the teachers are not vested in the task that the school is trying to accomplish. Thus, one important aspect of distributed leadership at Woodruff was committee choice. Allowing teachers to choose their place of service allowed the distributed leadership model to flourish. When this choice was removed and teacher buy-in subsequently diminished, distributed leadership quickly began to fail.

Administration involvement and oversight. Just as with any other initiative in a public school setting, what is monitored gets done. At first, administrators were very involved and monitored committee work closely through the larger committee, which was comprised of committee chairs and department chairs. However, as time went by and a change of administration occurred, this monitoring rarely took place. Attendance at meetings waned because administration was not holding the committees' members responsible for their lack of participation, a clear understanding of the goals of each committee was not communicated by administrators, and there was a failure of the two-way communication that was originally intended to be part of the structure of the committees. In other words, when administrative oversight of the committees faded, so did the results. The scenario that played out at Woodruff highlights the difference between transformational and transactional leadership (Burns, 1978). Under the

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transformational leader, Dr. Francona, the committees were given oversight and freedom at the same time; no committee members needed to be forced to participate because they felt inspired and felt that they were a part of something great. The change in the school was self-sustaining (Stewart, 2006); oversight and involvement on the part of the administration was not necessary. The transactional leader, Dr. Varitek, had to provide more stringent oversight and be more involved with the committees because the motivation and inspiration was no longer present; thus, once that oversight waned, the committee structure eroded. The involvement and oversight of leadership is obviously important to school improvement efforts (Bookover, 1979; Edwards, 1982; Lizotte, 1979; Rutter 1979), and perhaps moreso when the leader is not effective.

Committees need to feel their work is valued. Committees were assigned tasks, but often their suggestions and recommendations seemed to be ignored; leadership was not truly being shared among multiple individuals (Spillane, 2005). Although administrators and some faculty stated that new county mandates overrode the school improvement recommendations from the shared leadership committees, committee members still felt as if there were no point in spending time and effort on solving issues if their resolutions were not ever implemented. The failure of administrators to communicate those district and county initiatives that had a direct effect on the committee's work was part of the problem. When it began to be clear to committee members that their work played no role in shaping school improvement efforts, they lost interest in the shared leadership committees and no longer believed that their work was

important or necessary. Again, this is why distributed leadership practices are so important in schools, especially in regards to change. Distributed leadership emphasizes the necessity of positive interactions between people. If teachers are given specific tasks to accomplish, and their products are valued and appreciated, they feel important and valued (Spillane, 2006). A teacher who feels that her work is more valued is more confident. At Woodruff, teacher self-efficacy was closely tied to a teacher's confidence in other staff members, administrators, and the school. Teacher self-efficacy results in student success (Goddard, Hoy, Hoy, 2000); therefore, a teacher who feels that her work is valued is more likely to be successful with students.

Student achievement. Rutter (1983) and Leach and Fulton (2008) found that student achievement was greatest when teacher input was given the most consideration during the time that the biggest decisions were being made. This was clearly the case at Woodruff. The former administration gave teachers far greater input (in the form of dedicating time to meet during school hours, allowing committee choice, having a well-defined purpose, overseeing committee work, and appreciating and valuing committee work) through the shared leadership groups, which resulted in being removed from the list of schools that did not make AYP. The new administration acknowledged the importance of teacher input and shared leadership, but did not truly practice those things. The result was that the school failed to make adequate yearly progress during the first year of the new administration; the school was then put on the "needs improvement" list after failing during its second year. All stakeholders need to take part in planning,

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implementing, and monitoring student achievement and school improvement (Dufour & Eaker, 1998) or failure is the inevitable result.

  Differences in administrations. Because of the aforementioned drastic difference in student achievement between administrations, it is important to look at the differences between the two principals. This comparison is not designed to disparage either of the administrators, but rather to delineate the leadership qualities that lead to student success. Leadership style is an important determinant of who will be an effective leader and who will not. Kuger, Witziers, and Sleegers (2007) said that a principal's vision affects his leadership style. Principal Francona's vision for the school was much broader, but seemingly more effective; it encouraged staff participation in processes that would lead to school improvement success. Principal Varitek's vision was rather vague; in interviews, most staff members revealed that they were unsure of the purpose of the vision and felt that it was counterproductive in terms of creating teacher buy-in. Vision was important, but the concept of distributed leadership seemed to be the most significant difference between administrations. Hambright and Franco (2008) found that shifts in administration are easier to deal with when the responsibility for leadership is not focused on one or two people. The shift in administrational teams at Woodruff was focused on one or two administrators, taking away the shared leadership responsibilities that were granted to the school staff under the previous administration. This phenomenon is likely the major reason why the shift to the new administration was so difficult for teachers. The Woodruff situation is a classic example of the failure of power-based leadership

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when compared to empowerment-based leadership (Dambe & Moord, 2008). Harkman and Johnson's (2004) assertion that management equals efficiency and leadership equals effectiveness was certainly true in this case.

Qualities of an effective administrator. Many researchers have studied the qualities of an effective administrator. For example, Gordon (2009) found five common qualities in effective school leaders: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling the environment. Gordon's factors reflect the qualities that one would expect to find in a transactional leader, not a transformational leader. They are more about school and personnel management, as opposed to relationships, inspiration, and encouragement. Principal Varitek had many of Gordon's qualities, yet was not effective. This is an example of the difficulty of pinpointing a definition of "effective leadership." Perhaps this difficulty is a result of the fact that there are multiple variables that influence every leadership situation; community setting, student characteristics, teacher cooperation and ability, and financial situation are just a few of these.

Rutherford (1985) also put forth characteristics of an effective school leader. Rutherford's characteristics of a principal who is able to positively influence student achievement are as follows:

- successful communication with teachers and other school stakeholders
- proper management of school resources, both human and financial
- frequent monitoring of progress toward meeting school goals
- analysis of data to enable specific feedback to teachers

- acting upon the results of the monitoring by acknowledging and celebrating successes and providing support for teachers who are not progressing toward meeting both student learning and school-wide goals

Rutherford's characteristics reflect a transformational leader and apply to Principal Francona, but not Principal Varitek. Because Principal Francona focused on communication with teachers and assisting them in meeting their goals, he fits Rutherford's view of an effective leader. His approach was clearly more effective at Woodruff than the administrator that took his place; the success of the shared leadership committees and school improvement efforts that was enjoyed under his leadership, but waned during Principal Varitek's administration, reflect this positive impact. While it is true that findings on the qualities of an effective leader differ between researchers, the leader with the transformational qualities was certainly more effective at Woodruff. He was very creative in the ways that he included those outside the formal designation of "leader" (Spillane, Camburn, Pustejovsky, Pareja, & Lewis, 2006) in the school's improvement plan and process.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations. There are limitations in this study because of certain weaknesses that exist in the research methodology, design, analysis, and sample. There are some limitations that apply to every qualitative research study, but there are also limitations that apply specifically to this study, and those are explained in this section as well.

Limitations due to study design. While qualitative research studies are valuable for the insight they provide into thoughts, perceptions, and processes, they are not without inherent weaknesses. For example, the knowledge gleaned using qualitative methods may not generalize to other populations and other settings. These findings may be unique to one particular location or group of people, making transference of the findings to other locations and groups impractical. A related limitation is the inability to make quantitative predictions based on qualitative results. Since qualitative research does not test to determine whether results are due to chance, quantitative predictions are never possible. Qualitative research may also have a lower degree of credibility with consumers of research, especially those who are uninformed about qualitative methods. Therefore, a limitation would be decreased credibility, even if not deserved. Personal biases are much more difficult to control for in qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, research. Personal beliefs, views, and opinions are likely to seep into the findings despite even the most careful controls. Closely related to personal bias is the limitation of objectivity. Qualitative researchers are limited by their own abilities to be objective. Additionally, the participants may feel uncomfortable interviewing face to face, which may make them reluctant to give truthful answers. Instead, they might give socially acceptable ones.

Limitations due to study sample. There are a number of demographic limitations that were present in this study. The participants were all volunteers, which limits the researcher's ability to gather information about the research topic from all educators

involved in the shared leadership committee process. The people who volunteered may have been more negative and saw this research study as an outlet to vent their frustration. There was also a midstudy change of administration at the target school. It also slightly shifted the focus of the study from just an examination of teacher perceptions of the shared leadership committees to teacher perceptions of shared leadership committees and teacher perceptions of the two administrations.

Delimitations. This study was delimited in several ways. None of the participants were noncertified staff because they were not part of the shared leadership committees. They were encouraged to participate on committees, and did at first, but their participation did not last very long. Another delimitation was my decision to not interview teachers who had just joined the staff because their knowledge of the processes being discussed during those meetings would have been extremely limited.

Recommendations

Practical recommendations. Professional development is needed at Woodruff in order to train both teachers and administrators how to establish properly functioning shared leadership committees.   This is important because Woodruff was meeting AYP goals when the shared leadership committees were running efficiently and effectively. If the district wants Woodruff to return to the level of student achievement that it reached under the previous administration, they should teach the current staff how to plan, implement, and maintain a shared leadership experience.

An important aspect of establishing and maintaining shared leadership

committees is ensuring that the structures needed for effective shared leadership are in

place. Without the framework for successful committees in place, the committees will

falter and bring student progress to a halt at the same time. These structures include

communication between administrators and the school staff, a plan for leadership

committees that is decided upon collaboratively amongst all school employees, a written

plan (that is followed) that details how the committees will function in terms of

membership and hierarchy, scheduled time during the school year for the staff and

administration to review the committees' work and how they can function more

effectively, and a system of rewards for school success. Without all of these structures

underlying shared leadership committees, they are very likely to fail. When these

structures were in place at Woodruff, the committees, teachers, and students prospered.

When some of the structures were removed, the committees stopped functioning, the

teachers stopped caring, and the students stopped achieving.

Recommendations for future research. The findings of this research study

should provide a foundation upon which future studies can be conducted. Future studies

could build on what was found and investigate aspects of shared leadership committees

that could not be covered in this limited study. A quantitative study should be conducted

that analyzes student scores before and after shared leadership groups are implemented.

Such a study would quantify the effect of the committees through student achievement

test results. Another possible study is to research the leadership qualities that best

facilitate shared leadership. Perhaps traditional leadership qualities are not conducive to a distributed leadership style because traditional leadership qualities are more authoritarian in nature rather than transformational.

Conclusion

This study has presented qualitative evidence suggesting that shared leadership committees are very likely to be unsuccessful unless there is time dedicated during the school day for the committees to meet, there is a well-defined purpose for the committees, there is a choice for each staff member of which committee to serve on, there is administration involvement and oversight of the work of the committees, and there is value attached to the work of the committees. Woodruff High School went through a change of administration that significantly altered the effectiveness of the shared leadership committees. Those changes highlight not only the impact of shared leadership committees on student achievement, but it demonstrates the value of transformational leadership practices and staff morale to student achievement as well.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

IRB Approval Letter IRB Approval 831.032610: Using Shared Leadership to Achieve School Improvement Goals: One School's Journey

Dear Leigh Ann,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human participants , you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. Attached you'll find the forms for those cases.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project. We will be glad to send you a written memo from the Liberty IRB, as needed, upon request.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
IRB Chair, Liberty University
Center for Counseling and Family Studies Liberty University
1971 University Boulevard
Lynchburg, VA 24502-2269
(434) 592-4054
Fax: (434) 522-0477

APPENDIX B: Principal Consent Letter

April 26, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

Leigh Ann Putman, doctoral candidate at Liberty University, has my permission to administer a survey as part of the research conducted at South Cobb High School. This research will be conducted during the 2010-2011 school year (approximately August through October) upon approval from the Liberty University IRB panel and the Cobb County Research and Accountability office.

Sincerely,

Mr. Ashley B. Hosey
Principal
South Cobb High School

APPENDIX C: School District Consent Letter

COBB COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 1088
Marietta, GA 30061
Telephone: (770) 426-3300
www.cobbk12.org

August 30, 2010

Ms. Leigh Ann Putman
880 Bellemeade Place
Alpharetta, GA 30004

Dear Ms. Putman:

Your research project has been approved. Listed below are the schools where approval to conduct the research is complete. Please work with the school administrator to schedule administration of instruments or conduct interviews.

South Cobb High School

Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the Office of Accountability and Research prior to implementation. At the conclusion of your research project, you are expected to submit a copy of your results to this office. Results cannot reference the Cobb County School District or any District schools or departments.

Research files are not considered complete until results are received. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact our office at 770-426-3407.

Sincerely,

Dr. Judith A. Jones
Chief Accountability and Research Officer

Faculty/Staff Consent Form For Putman Research Project

My signature below indicates that I have read the information provided and have decided to participate in the study titled "**Using Shared Leadership to Achieve School Improvement Goals: One School's Journey"** to be conducted at my school between the **August, 2010 and October, 2010.** I understand that my signature indicates that I agree to participate in this research project.

I understand the purpose of the research project will be to explore how my school has utilized the Georgia School Keys and the GAPSS process to structure focus teams to meet school improvement goals, and that I may be asked to participate in the following manner:

Complete a survey asking questions about distributed leadership and the focus team upon which I serve.

Participate in a taped interview asking questions regarding the process my school has used to form teams around each of the eight strands of the School Keys and my attitude toward that process.

> Potential benefits of the study are that the school will be able to share the story of how it has utilized the Georgia School Keys as well as the results from the GAPSS review process to structure focus teams.

> I agree to the following conditions with the understanding that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time should I choose to discontinue participation.

The identity of participants will be protected. **(Describe how you will protect the identity of participants.)**

Information gathered during the course of the project will become part of the data analysis and may contribute to published research reports and presentations.

There are no foreseeable inconveniences or risks involved to my child participating in the study.

Participation in the study is voluntary and will not affect either student grades or placement decisions (or if staff are involved-will not affect employment status or annual evaluations.) If I decide to withdraw permission after the study begins, I will notify the school of my decision.

If further information is needed regarding the research study, I can contact **(provide contact information, including phone numbers and addresses).**

Signature _____
               Parent   Date

Signature_____
               Principal   Date

Signature_____
               Classroom Teacher   Date

APPENDIX E: Interview Protocol for Teachers

Interview Protocol

Teacher/Counselor/Media Specialist/Curriculum Specialists

Beginning Script: Thank you for agreeing to a follow-up interview for my research. My name is Leigh Ann Putman, and I am working on my Ed.D. in educational leadership at Liberty University. My study is focusing on using distributed leadership to meet school improvement goals. I am particularly interested in how your school has used the Georgia Keys to Quality (School Keys and GAPSS process) to establish leadership teams around the eight strands of the school standards. I am going to ask some questions regarding your attitudes, beliefs, and opinions on school improvement, distributed leadership, and processes that have been put into place in your school that have allowed you to move forward with school improvement goals. Your responses will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a random, confidential identification number that only I will know, and that is how you will be identified in the study. Please feel free to respond openly as your answers will be confidential. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Questions:

Mission/Vision

Does your school have a mission and vision?

Do you feel it is important to have a common mission and vision for the school?

Does the staff know about the mission and vision?

How was the mission and/or vision developed? Who was involved in the development?

Collaboration

Do you think that teacher collaboration is important?

Research on professional learning communities stresses the importance of "collaborative culture". Would you say that South Cobb has a "culture of collaboration"?

How do teachers at South Cobb High School collaborate?

Focus Team Participation

What focus team (eight strands) do you serve on?

How is the team structured?

How was membership to the team assigned?

From your understanding, what is the purpose of the focus team?

How often does your team meet?

What are the topics of discussion at the meeting? Is there a set agenda?

How is data utilized within the team meetings?

How are results of the meeting shared with the administrators? With the staff?

School Improvement

Have you seen the school improvement plan?

How was the plan developed?

Additional Questions

Your school worked its way off the Needs Improvement list. To what do you attribute that achievement?

How does the community (parents, business partners, etc.) give input to the school?

How do you think the focus team process could be improved?

Are there any other comments you'd like to share?

Ending Script: Thank you for participating in this interview. Your answers will help me greatly in understanding how your school has utilized the School Keys to assist in focusing school improvement efforts. Please remember that your identity will remain confidential. If you have any more information you'd like to share, please feel free to contact me at leighann.putman@yahoo.com. I'll be happy to visit with you again.

APPENDIX F: Interview Protocol for Administrator

Interview Protocol
Principal/Assistant Principals

Beginning Script: Thank you for agreeing to a follow-up interview for my research. My name is Leigh Ann Putman, and I am working on my Ed.D. in educational leadership at Liberty University. My study is focusing on using distributed leadership to meet school improvement goals. I am particularly interested in how your school has used the Georgia Keys to Quality (School Keys and GAPSS process) to establish leadership teams around the eight strands of the school standards. I am going to ask some questions regarding your attitudes, beliefs, and opinions on school improvement, distributed leadership, and processes that have been put into place in your school that have allowed you to move forward with school improvement goals. Your responses will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a random, confidential identification number that only I will know, and that is how you will be identified in the study. Please feel free to respond openly as your answers will be confidential. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Questions:

Mission/Vision

Does your school have a mission and vision?

Do you feel it is important to have a common mission and vision for the school?

How do you communicate the mission and vision to the staff? The community?

How was the mission and/or vision developed? Who was involved in the development?

Collaboration

Do you think that teacher collaboration is important?

Research on professional learning communities stresses the importance of "collaborative culture". Would you say that South Cobb has a "culture of collaboration"?

How do teachers at South Cobb High School collaborate?

Do you participate in teacher collaboration? How often do you attend teacher meetings?

Focus Team Participation

How are the focus teams structured?

How was membership to the team assigned?

On which team do you serve?

How did you communicate the purpose for the focus teams to the staff?

What are the topics of discussion at the meeting? Is there a set agenda? How are the results of meetings reported to you?

How is data utilized within the team meetings?

School Improvement

Describe how the school improvement plan was developed.

How is the plan communicated to staff? To the community?

Additional Questions

Your school worked its way off the Needs Improvement list. To what do you attribute that achievement?

How does the community (parents, business partners, etc.) give input to the school?

How do you think the focus team process could be improved?

Are there any other comments you'd like to share?

Ending Script: Thank you for participating in this interview. Your answers will help me greatly in understanding how your school has utilized the School Keys to assist in focusing school improvement efforts. Please remember that your identity will remain confidential. If you have any more information you'd like to share, please feel free to contact me at leighann.putman@yahoo.com. I'll be happy to visit with you again.

APPENDIX G: Sample Transcript

Transcription of Interview   June 14, 2011

Participant Francona (F): Former Administrator, Woodruff High School

Primary Researcher: Leigh Ann Putman (P)

Length: 40:36.2

P: Looking back on your initial intention with the structure of the committees, as far as

the mission and vision, did you develop a lot of people in the development?

F: The mission and vision for the school was Honor Traditions of the past, Build a

Legacy for the Future. I inherited some three sentence nonsense. My second year, with

the help of Judy Jones, we looked at a chapter out of Doug Reeves book, Disciplines of

Leadership, I think that is what it was called. There's a specific process he outlines for

how to redo a mission/vision statement. So what we did basically was work within our

school improvement committee with different stakeholders represented and I said to our

students, "Give me a plan for how you're going to solicit student input on these topics." I

gave them several topics. Then we asked teacher to go out and get a sample

representation of teachers, parents to get parents, business leaders to get business leaders.

Then we came back to the table, and I don't recall exactly what the topics were, I think it

had to do with academics, extra curricular opportunities, and community. So they then

came back and we tried to essentially pull it all together, find common themes, then

wordsmith it. We followed that process that was outlined by Reeves, and it was simple.

It took about two months, and then we could honestly say that we had input from almost

all our stakeholders. When we wordsmith it, I put about five or six people in the room

and said, "Here are the themes, let's stay true to the themes, and let's wordsmith." The

goal was not to get something like everyone else because most people never remember it.

The goal was to get something more generalized that could cover a lot of things.

P: How did you communicate that back out to parents, students, other faculty members?

F: We did it at the beginning of the school year. At the beginning of the year, we said

this is what we should be about, and we pushed it out into everything we did....athletic

events, websites, newsletters, what have you.

P: As far as collaboration, did you feel like there was a real culture of collaboration at

South Cobb? And when I say collaboration, that could be curricular or referring to the

committee structure. Was there a real desire for collaboration there?

F: You know, I think that there were two types of collaboration that were happening

there around the Keys. I think it was. Initially what we did, is that we made the

committee work mandatory. When I got to Campbell, we stopped doing that. What

happened was that there were a lot of people attending those meetings who weren't really

contributing. So I think that the collaboration was in large part authentic and valuable.

What I learned with time though is that you have to tweak it because at the end of the day

what I need is not more people sitting at the table. I need the most invested people sitting

at the table. So I think that collaboration from a school improvement point was rich. The

other kinds of collaboration was happening between content teams, collaborative teams.

Like people teaching the same Fade and same team. I think at the time when I was at

South Cobb, I thought it was authentic. I thought that we'd made it a priority and

eliminated other distractions. I didn't realize how authentic it could be until I got to

Campbell. We went to common departmental planning, so we got the philosophy that

instead of asking people to teach during the day and we're going to attach something at

the beginning or the end of the day...they perceive that to be something extra...instead we

adopted the idea of company people on company time solving company problems and we

embedded that with common planning. That was incredible. So I think the collaboration

at South Cobb was authentic as it could have been given the model. The model could

have been better.

P: So you initially started with the committees by asking people to participate in one

committee. When you were at South Cobb, did you back off of that, or was that when

you went to Campbell...that it was just an option?

F: When we were at South Cobb, we kept it going full throttle the whole time. However,

when I went to Campbell, the district was in the middle of furlough days, and instead of

asking people to do more...because we couldn't necessarily...that was a company people

on company time solving company problems thing...because everybody had different

planning periods...we made it optional. I didn't see the 100% authentic engagement by

everyone at South Cobb, so it wasn't worth me taking that stance. I also knew there was

a heightened sensitivity due to furlough days.

P: When you went to Campbell, did you implement the same structure around the School Keys?

F: Yes.

P: Did you stick exclusively to the eight strands of the school keys or did you morph them into something that was more appropriate?

F: That's interesting. I think that we did stick with the eight strands. I felt like at Cobb we had too many committees going in too many different directions, so at Campbell, and then again here at Westlake, we combined Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Professional Learning, Operations, and School Culture. So we try to focus on those things and actually get the School Community strand woven through the school council and the PTSA because the parent Foup had ownership of that already. So the model...I still believe in the model of having committees specific to those keys, but the the understanding that some of them can come together because there's so much overlap. Even when you take Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, you still have professional learning...sometimes teachers struggle to figure out the difference.

LP: When you had the committees at South Cobb and at Campbell, did you attend meetings or were there specific ones you attended? How did teachers report back to you about what was happening within the committees so that you felt like you had a handle on what was going on?

F: Well, in theory, what should have happened is that within every committee, there would have been a chairperson and a secretary. They could post those minutes. In a

perfect world, they're sharing that with the entire staff. So the professional learning committee met on this date, discussed these items, this was their agenda, this was their discussion points, and fire that off to the whole staff so that everyone could see it. I can't tell you that happened with incredible consistency, but I think it happened more than it didn't happen. What happened is that we administratively, when we were in our school improvement process, we would report out and say, this administrator was in charge of professional learning and was at that meeting. Here is what they saw, their concerns, and it was essentially, just as you would collaborate at a administrative meeting or at a team meeting, like on text books, that was an agenda item. We would say, "How's the professional learning team doing? What they struggling with? What do we need to know as administrators that could help?" So there was a process as far reporting out.

LP: With it being voluntary, did you find that people still participated and showed up?

F: Yeah. For example, I'll take what's going on here at Westlake. The teachers who want to make a difference, who want to be leaders, will show up. We had five different committees come together this summer, and I'd say we had in the neighborhood of eight to fifteen people show up this summer. At the end of the day, those are the people who want to make a difference and have the capacity to make a difference. What I've learned, though, is that you have to give people a task. If it's very nebulous, like Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and they don't' see a beginning and an end, it's like giving the committee something with no real purpose. We've tried to say, for example, with professional learning, give me a year long plan that has dates, who's training, and money

needed, and I want that plan by August 1. Therefore, their job, and what's bringing them together this summer, is to figure that out. They give it to me, I sign off on it, and then I put it before the staff and say, "This is what your professional learning committee recommended." So that's been something that I've learned...is that the right people show up, but you've got to give them a beginning and an end or their run off on their own and they might come up with something random that isn't that important. So we talk administratively about what are the three or four key topics that each committee should be working on and should end up in the action plans. Another thing...another nuance that we have learned from South Cobb...was what we call "strategic invitations". What that means basically is that you can probably guess which teachers are going to respond to a who a whole-school invitation. So what we do then is we get together as department chairs and administrators and say, "Tell me the two or three people in your department who are Feat teachers but who never get asked to do anything because so and so over here is always carrying the burden. We will reach out to them before the invite goes out...like I'll do that here at Westlake...and we will say, "I think you'll be a Feat addition, would you show up?" And now we have taken our obvious leaders and we've added some subliminal leaders, if you will. So those are a couple of the lessons that we've learned.

LP: If someone says, "No, thank you", do you encourage them again to participate or do you drop it?

F: I'll tell you this, having done this process both at South Cobb and at Campbell, I can't

think of a single situation where either myself or another administrator went to a teacher

and they weren't honored to have been asked. And usually, I'm pretty honest. I'll say,

"You know, we were at an administrative meeting and we were talking about teachers

who aren't that involved but could make a huge difference..." and usually that teacher is

happy to have gotten the invitation. However, I would say this. If somebody doesn't

want to do it, ok, fine. That's the difference from the South Cobb way we did it.

LP: When you were at South Cobb, you guys worked your way off the Needs

Improvement list. Would you attribute any of the structural part of what you

implemented committee wise to the fact that you did that? Do you think that model

assisted you at all?

F: If I looked back on that...I think there were two structures we were building at the

same time, and both of them led back to collaboration and school improvement. One was

very specific to the Keys and one was very specific to instruction. I think that one of the

things we learned to do better, and I saw this at Campbell because we got off the list

while I was there, too...is teachers need to come together, and instead of them being told

what to do...we need to be able to say to teachers, "Tell me what's most important for kids

to learn in your course, establish goals for what the kids need to know based on a variety

of indicators, let's establish what does a successful kid look like coming out of this course

and where to kids traditionally struggle, and let's focus on that. And I'll make sure as

administration that we're on the right page and then when teachers can come together and

work on those types of things, I think that accounted for about 80% of the turn around in terms of AYP. We were focusing on content and coming together at specific intervals during the week and there was a very tight collaboration and tight accountably. We need to see numbers go up. And if you can show me that, we're going to come in and get up in your business. Now the other half of that is that I do think as a school that we were looking at school improvement processes and I think that accounts for the other 20%. So I think that the teacher collaboration was really where the rubber met the road, but the part with the Keys created a culture of improvement over the whole school as opposed to a culture of improvement, say, just in the 9th Fade English department.

LP: Now that you have done that twice, and are headed toward a third time, how do you feel like it has changed your job in any way? Has it improved your job, has it made it harder...?

F: I think it speaks to distributed leadership, and I'm going to tell you...the reason we were successful at South Cobb and at Campbell for the period that we were is that we hired Feat people and then got out of their way. So, I can't give you the exact numbers, but last year out of Cobb County, there were twenty-one non-renewals. Eleven of those were from Campbell. The year before that we had seventeen. I'm pretty confident as a school that we had the highest number of non-renewals in four years. We said, "If you're a Feat teacher, go collaborate with your colleagues, show me that you improving, show me that achievement is going up, and tell me what you need and we'll give it to you." But

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if you're lousy, we're going to come in and help you first, but if you can't show that same

trend as your colleagues, we're going to come in and we're going to run over you. I think

what happened is that the good teachers felt valued, the bad teachers looked over their

shoulders and were forced out and left on their own. That is what I think accounted for

most of the success because we were able to get the right people on the right bus. That's

what I think created that culture moving so fast. That will be the trick here at Westlake.

We've got to figure out who can lead a collaborative conversation around school

improvement, around 9th Fade English, and let them lead it. Tell me what you need, and

we'll get it to you. And the people who are going to sit around and bitch and moan and

complain and not at any point reflect on their own practice...I mean, I want teachers to

reflect on and internalize whether kids are learning or not. It's DuFour's PLC model.

You show me people who are really asking what kids need and why they aren't

learning...that person will be successful.

LP: How is data used at all in those Keys teams? Do you expect them to use data?

F: Well, I think it gets back to that part about being specific about what you are asking

he committees to do, for example, the operations group...planning and organization is

actually what it's called...if you were to ask that group, "Tell me what your priority is?"

"Well, our priority is tardies." That is one of the biggest operational issues that affects

instruction...well, ok so I give it my blessing...my Good Housekeeping seal...for them to

focus on that, then we've got to ask them, "Tell me what data points we're going to track

to know we're getting better at this." So raw data numbers, satisfaction surveys, etc. So I

think that data can be infused in to everyone of those Foups. Like in professional

learning, we had the same conversation. Let's look at successful delivery. We got x

number of people training in whatever, and at the end of the training they rated

themselves on an exit survey of this, this, and this. And simultaneously, we have data on

implementation from walkthroughs or whatever.   So when we look at data points that

monitor both of those, I think the data becomes critical because we have no way...see,

these processes should overlap, really. If we're going to ask a 9th Fade English teacher to

look at data to determine effectiveness, and we're expecting that trend to go up, then we

should ask the school improvement committee, regardless of what they're working

on..."What is your priority? And what are your data points and how are they going

upward? " Otherwise, we don't know that we're improving.

LP: Do you have any closing comments about why you believe in this process:

F: I guess my..what's been my most important thing is that you have to show teachers

that there really are some bottom-up processes, and let them be the authors of their own

solutions. I think you also have to build the capacity of other leaders in the building so

that everything doesn't ride on your shoulders. So that's what the process was intended to

do, and our efficiency and our effectiveness is rooted in whether we can show data that

will back that up. I think the last part is that you have to find the right person to do that.

If you build the system on idiots, so to speak, or on people who aren't going to be here

long term, you just don't have a lot of sustainability. I think the problem with the

principalship is that we try to do it all. And it takes an incredible amount of energy to get

this process started, but once you do, step out of the way, and go focus your time and energy on someone who doesn't get it, or a committee that doesn't get it, data that's not trending the way you want it to.

P: Ok…any question for me?

F: No.

P: Thank you so much!

APPENDIX H: Observation Note Form for Committee Observation

Two Column Note Observation Form
Focus Team Observations
Team Name: Staff Wellness and Recognition Committee (aligned with
Number of Staff Present: 9
Meeting Time: 7:30-8:15 **Meeting Place:** Woodruff HS, Upper Level of Media Center

Agenda Items	Observer Notes
Personal Trainer (Lou George) met with the committee (Tenisha George's husband). Shared an online website (hfpn.com) that allows staff to count calories and manage their health. It allows for planning for exercise and even has videos in it that demonstrate the exercises.	The team met with the personal trainer to examine the program for the staff.
	Staff asked questions about how the program works, what sort of support Lou will provide, etc.
Lou is going to work with the staff to provide access to the program. Fitness was a goal of the staff and he will work with them to design an individualized workout program and allow them to map out their week calorie wise and exercise wise.	Committee identified staff needs through a survey. Fitness and exercise was an interest and they contacted Lou because of that interest. They wanted to find a way to gather together and work out to help manage stress, exercise, etc. One teacher is doing Zumba in her classroom Monday through Thursday to address this as well.
The committee finished up by discussing the teacher shout out…caught you doing something good…to acknowledge teachers. Other than golden eagle or bucket list. It acknowledges good things so that they can support each other.	Committee decided to have him present at the faculty meeting so that the entire faculty can take part in the program.
Also mentioned that during the department meetings, Mr. Hosey said he wants to see an action plan from each committee so that he can see what they're working toward.	