

Sustainability of Professional Development in a Post-Reform Context:
A Qualitative Study of Shared Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Relatively little is known about the sustainability of educational reforms after the removal external support (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Studies to date have emphasized the significance of leadership continuity to bolster continuation of school improvement (Fink & Brayman, 2006). The purpose of this study was to determine whether and how the learning culture and professional development practices that were initiated during an intensive literacy reform sustained in the post-reform period. Of specific interest was the ways by which principal and teacher leadership influenced sustainability of reform professional learning.

A single elementary school in a rural area of a Midwest state was the context for this qualitative study. The school was identified from among those that participated in the Sustainability Study (York-Barr & Hur, in progress). Interview data were collected over a three year, post-reform period. Interviewees included the principal, the formal teacher leader, and selected primary, intermediate, and special services teachers. Data were analyzed by means of content analysis, involving deductive approach and supported by the qualitative research software, NVivo.

Findings emphasized and illuminated the value of shared and complementary leadership practices between the principal and formal teacher leader at the school. The principal fostered the continuous learning culture by securing resources to support professional learning, by being visible and encouraging with classroom teachers, by conferring regularly with the formal teacher leader, and by including members of the school leadership team in making decisions and monitoring progress. The formal teacher leader fostered a continuous learning culture, largely by working with individual teachers

and providing personalized, positive support. Clearly, the principal and teacher leader shared leadership responsibilities in a complementary way, grounded in strong commitments to continuous school improvement and to each other in this work.

Together, they were the driving force in sustaining a productive learning culture in the post reform period at their school. Questions remain, however, about the extent to which such intensive leadership practices can sustain over longer periods of time, as well as about ways to continually expand the leadership capacity among teachers throughout the school.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Efforts to improve student achievement, from the A Nation at Risk report in 1983 to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, have put schools in the United States at the center of educational reform. These extensive educational improvement efforts created numerous reform initiatives aimed at improving schools and student achievement (Desimone, 2002; Rowan, Correnti, Miller, & Camburn, 2009). In recent years, with the NCLB Act, schools are pressured to increase student achievement aimed at state level standards. This increased accountability for student achievement has forced public schools to be innovative and successful in student achievement and challenged principals and teachers to change and improve their leadership and instructional practices.

Historically, efforts to improve schools and increase student achievement have shown few significant results (Fullan, 2005). Since Tyack and Tobin (1994) raised the question, “Why is it so hard to change schools?” researchers and practitioners have actively tried to find ways for sustaining continuous school improvement. The positive results from school reform initiatives are difficult to discern because of the great variety of reform and the lack of sustainability of reform efforts (Desimone, 2002).

School improvement that has the potential for high levels of student achievement and for sustaining the improvements requires a shift from traditional school culture (Fullan & Earl, 2002; Sarason, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994). In the past ten years, efforts to improve schools focused on fundamental redesign of schools with an emphasis on cultural shift (Rowan et al., 2009). Further, both individual and organizational learning have been emphasized (Desimone, 2002), because only when teachers are engaged in

high quality continuous learning will students demonstrate high levels of achievement (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000).

Professional development for teachers has been increasingly emphasized as a means for establishing a learning culture for teachers that leads to higher levels of student learning and achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1993). High quality professional development is considered to be sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused learning that is aligned with state and local standards that result in an increase of teachers' content knowledge and improvement in instructional practices (National Staff Development Council, 2010). The purpose of professional development is to bridge the gap between where teachers are now and where they need to be to meet the challenges of guiding students to achieve at high levels (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Dimensions of high quality professional development include "rigorous and relevant content, strategies, and organizational supports that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers ... [that] influence the teaching and learning environment" (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

It is well established that leadership, by both principals and teachers, is a key condition for successful professional development. Studies found that principal leadership is essential for successful implementation of professional development. Specifically, principals build trust with school members, provide opportunities for teacher learning, and create structures that support collaboration among school members (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). In addition, principal leadership, second to teacher practice, is found to have the greatest influence on student achievement and school improvement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson,

& Wahlstrom, 2004). Principal leadership is found to influence student achievement through fostering professional development (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996).

Teacher leadership also is identified as critical for professional development. It is found to be strongly related to teacher learning that professionalizes teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Marks & Louis, 1997). This is possible through teachers' participation not only in instructional improvement work but also in organizational level work of reculturing schools (Copland, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Recent educational reform initiatives emphasize the roles of teacher leaders. Their role as reform facilitators, coordinators, and instructional coaches includes supporting change in organizational culture (Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Specifically, these roles are supporting instructional practices of other teachers, developing programs and monitoring the implementation of changes, and working with principals in school decision making (Burch & Spillane, 2003).

Beyond recognition that principals and teachers each have instrumental roles in school improvement, leadership that is shared among principals and teachers is identified as an important factor for successful school improvement, with professional development as the primary shared practice domain. Shared leadership can advance a collaborative school culture that increases the potential for successful professional development and school improvement (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007). Recent studies found that when principals and teacher leaders share leadership responsibilities overall capacity of leadership expands and positively influences school improvement and student learning (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003).

To summarize, schools are under pressure to provide evidence of student proficiency on standardized tests. Principals and teachers, individually and collectively, are challenged to design and support implementation of high quality professional learning that results in improved instructional practice and, ultimately, higher levels of student achievement. Also reported have been the positive impact of professional development and a collaborative learning culture on the instructional capacity in schools (Lambert, 2002; Louis & Marks, 1998). A number of studies conducted in the context of large scale reforms, often referred to as comprehensive school reforms, also have shown the pivotal role of principal and teacher leadership practices for implementation of professional development and increases potential for successful school improvement (Camburn et al., 2003; Desimone, 2002).

Problem Statement

The literature indicates that professional development is a key component for achieving successful school improvement. The literature also reveals specific ways in which principals and teacher leaders support high quality professional development. In many cases, however, studies were conducted during the initial implementation period of school reform. Less is known about what happens after the initial implementation efforts (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000). Of specific interest, and often concern, is what happens after removal of the resources (e.g., personnel, materials, time) that were initially provided to support improvements in practice.

Several recent studies have identified key factors for sustaining school reform over time (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Libert, 2006). Among the key factors, leadership is found as the most

direct and dramatic change force and is critical for the sustainability of school reform.

High principal turnover rates and failed leadership succession, for example, are found to hinder the sustainability of reform when teachers do not receive consistent support from principals (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Sindelar et al., 2006).

As Louis (2006) pointed out, however, most of the factors identified in the sustainability studies, such as leadership turnover, changes in district policy, economic changes of school community, and political demands, are not manageable at the school level. In addition, studies typically emphasize the importance of developing the overall capacity in schools for sustaining a culture of professional learning. Given the relatively few studies that have investigated the specific leadership practices of principals and teacher leaders that result in sustained professional learning beyond the initial reform implementation period, additional research is warranted in this area.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to discern whether and how leadership practices of a principal and teacher leader influenced professional development after removal of the external supports provided by a Reading First reform initiative. The overarching question that guided this research was: In what ways did the reported principal and teacher leadership practices that fostered professional development during implementation of Reading First continue or shift after the removal of external reform support? The sub-questions were:

1. What principal leadership practices that fostered professional development during Reading First continued or shifted after the removal of external support?

2. What teacher leadership practices that fostered professional development during Reading First continued or shifted after the removal of external support?
3. In what ways did the shared leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader that fostered professional development during Reading First continue or shift after the removal of external support?

Study Context

To address the research questions, data were drawn from one of six schools that participated in a study about the sustainability of reform after the removal of external support from Reading First. The original study, referred as to the “Sustainability Study” (York-Barr & Hur, in progress), was a three year follow-up study involving selected schools that were engaged in Reading First in an upper Midwest state. Presented next are brief overviews of the Reading First reform and the Sustainability Study, which served as the broader context for the present study. Also presented is a brief description about the general information, such as demographics, and the leadership and professional development practices at the sample school during Reading First.

Reading First

The Reading First (RF) program was established with the NCLB Act in 2001. It was a Federal initiative that provided funds to state and local educational agencies to advance the quality of reading instruction in primary grades, that is, from kindergarten through third grade. This program focused specifically on schools with substantial percentages of children considered educationally disadvantaged, defined as schools with both high poverty rates and low student achievement. The overall purpose of RF was to provide scientifically proven research-based reading instruction in the primary grades

with the goal of students reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The primary means for achieving this goal was to provide high quality literacy-focused professional development for teachers. In schools that received a RF grant, teachers in kindergarten through third grade, along with special services teachers that supported the students in those grades, participated in the program. The professional development was focused on advancing research-based assessment and instructional literacy practices. In 2006, all 50 states and other jurisdictions of the United States received funding through the RF program. Nationwide, approximately 5,200 schools in 1,550 districts participated in the RF program.

The Midwest state in which the present study was conducted included 29 elementary schools from 19 different school districts in the first round of funding for RF schools (State Department of Education, 2006). In these schools, grant funds were used to hire a full-time literacy coordinator, to purchase instructional materials, and to support participation in professional development programs provided by a University Center in the state. The full-time literacy coordinators, who were selected and hired from among teachers within the participating schools, provided assistance in applying research-based reading instruction and developing the instructional practice of the teachers. Participating schools also received funds to invest in reading instruction materials for students (e.g., leveled books) and for teachers (e.g., professional development texts).

The professional development support provided by the University Center included an external facilitator, a person who collected data, and an extensive number of professional development workshops. External facilitators were licensed teachers with strong backgrounds in literacy education. They were hired by the University Center to

work with identified RF schools. A designated external facilitator for each of the participating schools worked with each respective school two days per week. Primary roles of the external facilitator included supporting implementation of the designated literacy practices (e.g., assessments, instruction), professional learning opportunities for school staff, and the development of literacy focused leadership practices of principals, literacy coordinators, and school-based literacy leadership teams. Data collectors regularly conducted formal classroom observations of kindergarten through grade three teachers and also special services teachers. The collected data were shared with each teacher and used as the basis for coaching support. The workshops provided by the Center introduced research-based literacy strategies. School-based study groups of K-3 and support services teachers met once a week to discuss workshop content and ways to implement the literacy strategies in their specific classroom context.

According to the 2006 State Reading First Report, a substantial number of students from the original 29 RF schools improved their reading abilities. In the final year, two-thirds of the students reached the proficiency level of achievement for the State reading standards. In addition, it was reported that the teachers, literacy coordinators, and administrators were held positive views about RF. The teachers, in particular, reported that they were pleased with using new instructional materials and learning research-based instructional strategies supported by both school level study groups and university level workshops (State Department of Education, 2006).

Sustainability Study

The Sustainability Study was a three year longitudinal follow-up investigation that involved six of the original 29 schools that participated in the first round of RF in the

upper Midwest state. These six Sustainability schools were identified by lead faculty at the University Center as having “boldly” implemented RF. Given the well established research record of reform practices not being sustained after the removal of external support (Desimone, 2002; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006), it was reasoned that if any schools were predisposed to sustain practices, it was likely to be those in which there was evidence of strong implementation. Grounded in a research-based framework, the Sustainability Study sought to identify the extent to which resources, leadership, professional development, teacher knowledge and practice, and school culture endured and influenced continuous school improvement. The primary means of data collection were a survey that was administered to all staff members in each of the schools and interviews conducted with selected school members. Publicly available school level and student achievement data also were collected. A detailed description of the methods used to collect the data for the Sustainability Study that was subsequently used for the present study is described in Chapter Three.

Among the six schools that participated in the Sustainability Study, the present study purposively selected one school for an in-depth study focusing on whether and how the principal and teacher leadership practices fostered professional development after the removal of external support. The selection of the sample school was based on the Sustainability Study research team’s analysis of each of the six participating schools and an overall analysis of the findings across all six schools. The chosen sample school of the present study was identified as having the greatest continuity in principal leadership, teacher leadership, and professional learning practices from among the original six

schools. Specific criteria for the sample school selection are provided in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Last Year of Reading First – Year Zero

Presented here is a brief description about the demographics and the leadership and professional development practices at the sample school, Lakeview Elementary School (LES), at the end of Reading First, just prior to the initiation of the Sustainability Study from which the data for the present study was drawn. Because this description could be considered a “baseline” of practices before the removal of external reform resources, it is referred to here as Year Zero. For ease of reference, Table 1.1 delineates key aspects of Year Zero. Of particular importance is that the leadership of the principal, literacy coordinator, and external facilitator was the driving force of the Reading First implementation. These three formal leaders differentiated their leadership roles, but collectively worked as a team, supporting each other in implementing literacy learning and RF practices. It is also important to note that the job-embedded professional development, such as study groups and peer visits, created opportunities for collaboration among the teachers.

All schools that participated in Reading First were required to develop a sustainability plan at the end of the three year reform period. Lakeview also developed a sustainability plan in the final year of RF. Specifically, the sustainability plan focused on continuing professional development within the school, funding the literacy coordinator position, as well as a Level III University Center support for the initial following year after RF, which included consultant, quarterly literacy leadership team meetings, and classroom observations. Also included in the plan was the expansion of literacy learning

Table 1.1 Lakeview Elementary School: Year Zero¹ Conditions and Practices

| <i>School Information</i> | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served kindergarten through sixth grade/ Enrolled approximately 400 students • 15% of the students received special education/ 56% received free and reduced priced lunch • The total number of full time equivalent staff was 46.32, and 60% having more than ten years of experience as educators | |
| <i>Leadership Practices</i> | |
| Principal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated the interest in Reading First (RF), and was a driving and organizing force for the initiation of RF, as well as the implementation • Worked very closely with the literacy coordinator, the external facilitator, and the literacy leadership team • Supported teacher learning by participating in professional learning and through classroom visits |
| Teacher Leader (Literacy Coordinator) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary roles were assisting literacy instruction of the teachers, leading the literacy leadership team, and coordinating and organizing study groups • Organized leveled-library for students and professional library for teachers |
| External Facilitator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert in literacy who was hired by the University Center • Assisted and supported implementation of the learning structures of RF • Worked closely with the principal and the literacy coordinator in leading literacy implementation - planning, implementing, reflecting on then monitoring RF implementation |
| Literacy leadership team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required from the RF grant to form a literacy leadership team • Grade level representatives in K-3 were nominated or volunteered • Primary role was to lead and guide the professional development |
| <i>Professional Development</i> | |
| Whole School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-wide whole group meetings - functions of building reading knowledge and practice and also forming a professional learning community focused on literacy |
| Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study groups - once a week for an hour / four to five teachers in one group/ cross grade level structure/ reflecting on research articles, sharing student work, and observing then commenting on videotaped classroom practice • Peer visits - introduced in the last year of the RF/ teacher visited other classrooms in the same grade level/ the two teachers and the literacy coordinator met after the visit to reflect on the instructional practices • Workshops, focused on literacy and instruction, by University Center |
| Individual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual coaching conference with the literacy coordinator |

¹ Year Zero refers to the last year of Reading First which was the year before removal of external reform resources and the initiation of the Sustainability Study.

and RF practices to all grade levels, that is, including the intermediate grade teachers in the professional development and literacy leadership team. Located in Appendix A is a comprehensive description of the conditions and practices, including the sustainability plan, at Lakeview Elementary School.

Significance of the Study

As stakes are high for schools to provide quality learning for all students, the importance of school members being continuously active in efforts to improve their practices and their school cannot be stressed enough. The growing interest and efforts to improve schools and provide quality learning for all students are landing more comprehensive school reform initiatives in schools (Desimone, 2002). Recognizing that there are many layers of influence on school level practices, comprehensive school reform initiatives typically focus on restructuring schools as a whole. Reading First, for example, required schools to change their leadership structure (e.g., forming a Literacy Leadership Team, hiring a full-time Literacy Coordinator). One of the goals of the present study was to understand what happened to these required elements of RF after the external reform resources were no longer available.

The significance of this study was twofold. First, this study focused on identifying specific leadership practices of the principal and the formal teacher leader (i.e., literacy coordinator) and also the professional development practices of the teachers. Fullan (2007) has stated, “The implementation of educational change involves change in practice” (p. 30). He indicates that the “change of practice” must be at all levels of school in order to achieve successful change. Second, the goal of the present study was to understand what happened after the period of reform implementation. Most studies have

emphasized early implementation efforts and results. Early implementation results, however, are not necessary enduring. Arguably, successful school reform would be marked by continuation of improvement at the school and classroom levels (Fullan & Earl, 2002).

In this regard, the findings of this study would provide preliminary responses to questions about the sustainability of educational improvement. In addition, results of this study may have implications for future comprehensive school reform initiatives by identifying specific principal and teacher leadership practices that positively influence ongoing, that is, sustain high quality professional development.

Delimitations and Limitations

There are two delimitations and two limitation salient in the present study. First, this study addressed only school level leadership practices and professional development. School improvement by means of professional development may be influenced by other factors. District support, for example, might be a critical factor of supporting any forms of professional development programs; this study, however, focused only on leadership within the school. The second delimitation of this study is that student achievement test scores were not considered in the selection of the schools. This means that findings from the study about the principal and teacher leadership practices supporting professional development would not necessarily suggest corresponding impact on student achievement.

The first delimitation presented above results in the first limitation of this study. School improvement is multi-dimensional, not a single entity (Fullan, 2007). As the focus of this study was on leadership practices and professional development within the school,

the findings of this study would not provide an overall explanation of how other factors of school improvement influenced professional development. The second limitation of this study is the use of interview data only. Although interview data are utilized for understanding individual and group perspective, other qualitative data, such as observation, student test results, would have provided stability (Merriam, 1998) of the collected data, meaning that the concern of subjectivity reduced. Observation data, for example, are considered as non-manipulated where as in the course of interview data collection, researchers interact and “potentially introduce new ideas” (Fontana & Frey, 1994) to the participants. Finally, this study used data that are perceptual. While it is possible that the responses of the subjects will be varied from actual responses, honesty is assumed.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leadership, in many studies, is identified as one of the key factors for successful professional development and school improvement. As professional development is increasingly used for teacher learning, the role of leadership in creating and supporting an environment for successful professional development has never been more important.

This literature review starts with studies of professional development in order to identify key characteristics of high quality professional development. Then studies related to two leadership theories - transformational leadership and distributed leadership - are reviewed. These theoretical bases were chosen because they are conceptions of school leadership that are inclusive of more than just the individual formal leader. Next is a review of studies specific to principal leadership and teacher leadership that support professional development and school improvement. The review ends with a summary of findings from the literature.

Professional Development

Professional development is “considered as an essential mechanism for deepening teachers’ content knowledge and developing their teaching practices” (Desimone et al., 2002, p. 81). The purpose of professional development is to serve as a bridge to fill the gap between where teachers are now and where they need to be for the challenges of guiding students to achieve at higher levels (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Louis and her colleagues, in their multiyear study of school leadership and student learning, identified professional development as a primary vehicle for sustaining school improvement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstorm, Anderson, Michlin, Mascall, Gordon, Strauss, Thomas, & Moore, 2010). Studies identified characteristics of high quality

professional development that could lead to higher student achievement and school improvement. Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) investigated the relationship between professional development elements and school capacity. They identified five dimensions of school capacity: teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; professional community; program coherence; technical resources; and principal leadership. Newmann and his colleagues argued that the ways of which schools contribute to student achievement is that professional development should attempt to address all aspects of school capacity.

Newmann et al. (2000) collected data two times with a two-year interval from nine elementary schools selected through a nation-wide search. The nine schools were selected because they had: a history of low student achievement; progress in student achievement over 3 to 5 years prior to participation in the study; progress attributed to school-wide and sustained professional development; participation in site-based management; and significant development assistance from outside agencies. The first data collection was conducted at all nine schools by interviewing 10 to 12 school staff and representatives from external professional development providers; by observing professional activities and classrooms; and by collecting documents of student achievement, demographics, and fiscal information. The second data collection, with the same data collection methods, involved seven schools that planned to sustain the professional development.

Newmann and his colleagues, based on the collected data, rated the comprehensive professional development level of the schools using variables: initial school capacity; leadership over time; funding per teacher; strength of external

assistance; and district and state policy support. They found considerable variation in the professional development level among the schools. The researchers identified the initial level of capacity, school leadership, funding for professional development, and strong technical assistance from external agencies as reasons why some schools had more school capacity than others. Further, they found that among the five dimensions of school capacity, teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions, professional community, and program coherence were the central ones. Two schools, for example, had different structures of the professional development, such as allocation of time and funds and development of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Both schools, however, focused on the three dimensions of school capacity (teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions, professional community, and program coherence), which led to high ratings in the level of comprehensive professional development. Funding and technical assistance was not strongly associated with professional development, but the authors suggested understanding the school context with the interpretation.

Newmann et al. (2000) argued that schools with a higher level of initial school capacity are more likely to have success with professional development. In addition, they asserted that school leadership has a strong positive association with professional development. Specifically, principals have the most influence over professional development compared to other members, and schools with the same leadership maintained a more consistent focus for school-wide professional development.

Although Newmann et al. (2000) identified the relationship between professional development and school capacity, they did not identify of which characteristics of professional development relate to positive improvement in teacher practice and student

achievement. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) took a more systematic approach to this matter through their study of effects of different characteristics of professional development on teacher learning.

Garet et al. (2001) identified six features of professional development in terms of three structural features and three core features of classroom practice. The three structural features were form of activity (reform types), collaborative participation, and duration of activity. The three core features of classroom practice were focus on content knowledge, opportunities for active learning, and coherence with other learning activities. The authors used a national probability sample of 1,027 mathematics and science teachers from 358 districts nation-wide who participated in the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. Data were from a Teacher Activity Survey conducted as part of the national evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. The data were analyzed using ordinary least square regression. Both the structural features and the core features of classroom practice were set as the independent variables, and teacher outcomes (i.e., teacher knowledge and skills and change in classroom teaching practice) were the dependent variable. Other variables, such as school and teacher characteristics, were included for control purposes.

Garet and his colleagues found that the form of the activity (reform type) had a positive influence on duration. In addition, time span and contact hours, which were measures of duration, affected two of the core features of classroom practice: active learning and coherence. The longer the activities lasted, the more the chances of active learning (e.g., planning classroom implementation and observing other teachers) and coherence of professional development (e.g., aligning goals and standards and

professional communication among teachers) increased. This indicates, “Professional development is likely to be of higher quality if it is both sustained over time and involves a substantial number of hours” (Garet et al., 2001, p.933). The researchers also found that all three core features of classroom practice positively influenced teacher knowledge and skills. Content focus and coherence were found to have substantial positive influence on teachers’ knowledge and skills. Active learning, less than the other two core features, also had positive effects. Further, teacher knowledge and skills had positive influence on change in teaching practice. This means that teachers with professional development experience that focuses on content knowledge with coherence are more likely to change their teaching practices. In addition, collective participation was found to be positively related to coherence and active learning, “which in turn are related to improvement in teacher knowledge and skill and changes in classroom practice” (Garet et al., 2001, p. 936). Teachers, when working together within professional development, would have more opportunities to discuss their knowledge, skills, and needs of students, and therefore, increase the likelihood of changing classroom practice.

Based on their findings, Garet et al. (2001) argued that “sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to have an impact [on teachers’ knowledge and change in their practice] than is shorter professional development” (p. 925). In addition, they asserted professional development should focus on academic subject matters (content focus) with coherence in order to provide opportunities for collective participation that leads to coherence and active learning for teachers because teachers are at the center of school reform and they are the ones who carry out the demands of high standards in the classroom.

Similarly, Ingvarson, Meiers, and Beavis (2005) engaged in a study examining the effects of professional development on teacher learning. The study was based on evaluations of four professional development programs in Australia entitled the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme (AGQTP), which intended to enhance teacher quality. Ingvarson and his colleagues developed a research-based conceptual framework. The framework included background variables of individual teachers and schools, structural features of the professional development program, and opportunity to learn that is an implementation feature of professional development. It also included professional community as a mediating factor and teacher knowledge, teacher practice, teacher efficacy, and student learning as outcomes of professional development. The background variables included teachers' gender and years of experience, school sector, level, and size, and school support for professional development. Structural features were contact hours (duration), time span, and collective participation. The process features of professional development, which was described as opportunity to learn by the authors, included content focus, active learning, follow-up support for implementation, collaborative examination of student work, and feedback on practice. The purpose of the study was to identify which features of professional development impacted teachers' knowledge, practice, and efficacy. Student learning was not included in this particular study.

A total of 3,250 teachers who participated in professional development programs of AGQTP completed a survey asking about their experience of the professional development and the impact of the programs on their knowledge, practice, and sense of efficacy. Using regression analysis, Ingvarson et al. (2005) found, among the variables,

that the process feature, opportunity to learn, had the largest effect on the impact of professional development. Specifically, they found that content focus and follow-up support had substantial influence on teacher knowledge. In addition, active learning and feedback on practice were found to have a strong relationship with teacher practice. Active learning also had a significant influence on teacher efficacy. The authors argued that this suggests active learning is “having a pervasive and generative influence on factors that increase teachers’ confidence and ability to meet student needs” (p. 14).

Unlike the process features, structural features did not have direct influence on either of the impact measures on teachers and student learning. Structural features, however, were strongly related to process features of professional development and the mediating variable, which was professional community. In specific, the researchers found that contact hours (duration) had substantial influence on content focus, active learning, collaboration, and feedback on practice. In addition, time span was found to strengthen the professional community activities. Ingvarson et al. (2005) also found, among the background variables, that school support was found to influence the extent of active learning, follow-up support, and feedback on practice. This means that school support is an “enabling condition” (p. 15) of learning opportunities for teachers.

Ingvarson et al. (2005), based on their findings, argued that professional development should provide active learning opportunities for teachers to learn what students need with content focus and how to approach the needs by getting follow-up support for implementation and feedback on their teaching practices. To provide the opportunities, the authors asserted that there must be school support for enough duration

of the professional development and for securing sufficient amount of time for collective participation.

In summary, the key characteristics of high quality professional development, prevalent in the findings of all the reviewed studies, are centered on providing learning opportunities for teachers. The studies suggested that professional development should focus on the core features of learning: focus on content knowledge and instructional practices; be coherent; and provide opportunities for active learning. The studies also indicated that professional development experiences are more likely to be successful when structural features are present. It is suggested that professional development should be sustained and continuous and provide time for collective participation. The key characteristics of high quality professional development suggested by the reviewed literature could be summarized as: (1) duration, (2) collective participation, (3) coherence, (4) content focus, and (5) active learning.

In addition, leadership support was found to influence the effectiveness of professional development. Leadership support was identified as critical conditions for high quality professional development. These “enabling conditions” will be discussed next.

Leadership for Learning and Improvement

Leadership is identified as one of the key factors for successful school improvement. Findings from the literature suggest that sharing leadership and creating a collaborative school culture increases the potential for successful school improvement because it increases the leadership capacity of the school. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) conceptualized leadership as an organizational quality, as opposed to an individual

quality. This conception of leadership is grounded in the idea that there is more than one leader in an organization. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) explained leadership as an organizational quality in the following way:

Leadership flows through the networks of roles that comprise organizations. The medium of leadership and currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people. And, leadership shapes the systems that produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organizational events. (p. 225)

Pounder, Ogawa, and Adams (1995) also subscribed to the idea of leadership as organizational quality. They argued that, when enacted, this view of leadership positively affects school performance, in that all members of the school, including the principal, teachers, staff members, and parents, can lead and affect the school. In their study, in each of 60 schools in one district, one administrator, one guidance counselor, 20 teachers, two secretaries, and one custodian were surveyed. They had a total of 1,061 respondents. They examined the relationships between overall leadership within the schools and school effectiveness. The overall leadership within the schools was identified as leadership exerted by multiple school members, such as principals, teachers, and secretaries. The authors examined four organizational functions, identified by Parsons (1960) as necessary for organizational effectiveness. These functions were adaptation, goal achievement, integration, and latency. Adaptation is the ability of the organization to control its environment. Goal achievement concerns the ability of the organization to obtain its objectives. Integration is about the unity among members of the organization. Finally, latency concerns cultural patterns, motivations, and commitment of the members (Pounder et al., 1995).

Through a series of path analyses, Pounder and her colleagues found a relationship between overall leadership of the school and both goal achievement and latency in all 60 schools. The overall leadership was not directly connected with school effectiveness, but goal achievement and latency were associated with school effectiveness. This finding, therefore, indicates that “organizational leadership affects organizational performance by shaping the organization of work and by building commitment” (Pounder et al., 1995, p. 583). Another noteworthy finding is the association between sharing leadership and school effectiveness. Specifically, they found that the two domains of leadership, principal leadership and collective leadership by a group of faculty members, “shape latency, or commitment, which then predicts perceived effectiveness and faculty turnover rates” (Pounder et al., 1995, pp. 583- 584). In other words, leadership by both principals and by groups of teachers positively affected the perceptions of school effectiveness and teacher turnover rates.

Pounder et al. (1995) also found that the leadership of principals did not have a direct influence on student achievement. The authors provided three possible explanations for this finding: (1) principals may be avoiding instructional leadership, (2) there may be a need for more inclusive and transformational leadership, meaning instructional leadership alone is insufficient, and (3) the difficult and indirect nature of the work of administrators makes it difficult to measure effects (Pounder et al., 1995). This finding is important to consider given the current emphasis on sharing instructional leadership by principals and teachers.

The findings of Pounder et al. (1995) affirm the assertion of Ogawa and Bossert (1995) that leadership is an organizational quality. Specifically, Pounder and her

colleagues found that leadership could be exerted by anyone in an organization. They stated, “The leadership of people in different roles may affect different dimensions of school organization and thus different outcomes” (p. 586).

Transformational Leadership and Distributed Leadership

This section discusses transformational leadership and distributed leadership. Transformational approaches to leadership aim at fostering capacity development and a higher level of personal commitment towards organizational goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). A distributed perspective of leadership centers on practice that shapes the interactions of leaders, followers, and situation (Spillane, 2006). These two theoretical constructs could be considered extensions of the conception of leadership as an organizational quality. The two leadership conceptions are discussed, each followed by a review of a study that provides knowledge of how transformational and distributed leadership could be useful for school improvement.

Transformational leadership, conceived by James MacGregor Burns, focuses on the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers. Burns (1978) described leaders as those who inspire and motivate followers and who are able to change ways in which followers conceive the goals of the organization. Further, in this transformational process, it is not only the followers who perceive a higher level of commitment, but also the leaders because the leadership is based on the need of followers. Transformational leadership, therefore, could be viewed as a process of building relationships between leaders and followers in order to achieve the purpose of the organization. In other words, the leadership is not defined based on one person’s performance in the organization, but

is identified as an interaction between the leader and followers focused on organizational purpose (Northouse, 2001).

Transformational leadership is often compared with transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is based on exchanging valued things (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). The purpose of the transaction is to meet the needs of both leaders and followers; therefore, transactional leadership cannot be built if leaders and followers are not able to agree upon what they would exchange (Northouse, 2001). The relationships are based on meeting each other's needs, not necessarily with an aim to raise moral purpose or increase motivation. By contrast, transformational leadership is focused on the process of engaging with one another and elevating the motivation and morality of both leaders and followers for their fullest potential in achieving goals of the organization (Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

Empirical studies support the idea that transformational leadership contributes to school improvement (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). A study conducted by Marks and Printy (2003) elaborates how transformational leadership assists in school performance. In their study, Marks and Printy defined transformational leadership as providing intellectual direction for innovation in the organization through empowering and supporting the members of the organization. In addition, they defined shared instructional leadership as "the active collaboration of principal and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment" (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 371). They defined the combination of transformational leadership and shared instructional leadership as integrated leadership.

Marks and Printy (2003) studied 24 schools - eight elementary, eight middle, and eight high schools from 16 states and 22 school districts - to examine the effects of transformational leadership and shared instructional leadership on school performance. They collected school performance data related to pedagogical quality, assessment tasks, and academic achievement by means of a survey, interviews, observations, and documents. Data about principal leadership also were collected through interviews with principals and teachers, observations, and a survey.

Based on their analysis, Marks and Printy (2003) provided two sets of findings. First, they found that transformational leadership is a necessary but insufficient condition for shared instructional leadership. None of the schools were found to have low transformational leadership and high shared instructional leadership. This suggests that principals who do not demonstrate transformational leadership also do not share instructional leadership with teachers. This finding is not surprising because leaders who are transformative inspire and raise the work commitment of followers. The second set of findings was based on multi-level analyses focusing on schools with both high transformational leadership and high shared instructional leadership, which the authors referred to as high integrated leadership. Marks and Printy found that both pedagogical quality and authentic achievement were higher in schools with high integrated leadership compared to the schools with low integrated leadership. This second set of findings indicates that when principals were sharing instructional leadership with teachers by means of transformational leadership, teachers were more likely to provide high quality instruction to students, which led to a higher level of achievement. Based on these findings, Marks and Printy (2003) argued “strong transformational leadership by the

principals is essential in supporting the commitment of teachers” (p. 393). In addition, they suggested the importance of “cultivating teacher leadership for enhanced school performance” (p. 393).

The concept of distributed leadership is relatively new to the field of educational administration, and both definition and interpretation vary at this time. Distributed leadership seems to align with the ideas of leadership being shared, collaborative, and participative (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007). Sergiovanni’s perspective that leadership is not a function of one individual but is a mixture of organizational culture and leadership competence of many actors (Sergiovanni, 1984) also captures the idea of distributed leadership. Two of the most noted scholars in the area of distributed leadership are James Spillane and Peter Gronn, each of whose work is discussed next.

Spillane (2006) stated, “A distributed leadership perspective moves beyond the Superman and Wonder Woman view of school leadership” (p. 3). According to Spillane (2006), the practices of leadership emerge from interactions between the leader and followers within their particular situation. Leadership is not just an action of a leader, but an interaction among members of the organization. He argued that distributed leadership perspective requires two dimensions: leader-plus and practice. Leader-plus refers to the idea that schools need more than one leader. Spillane, however, emphasized that “adding in and adding up... while essential, is insufficient from a distributed perspective” (p. 13). He argued that leadership practice also is essential.

Spillane and his colleagues (Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2000) identified three ways in which leadership could be shared: collaborative

distribution, collective distribution, and coordinated distribution. First, collaborative distribution refers to shared leadership practice when one leader's work becomes the basis for the other and vice versa. Second, the collective distribution is when two or more leaders interdependently work on achieving a shared goal. Finally, the coordinated distribution refers to shared leadership practice that must be performed in a sequential manner. Spillane (2006) explained that the positions and roles of leadership do not matter. What matters is leadership practice.

Gronn (2003) conceptualized a similar yet somewhat distinct form of distributed leadership. He explained distributed leadership as "additive" and "holistic." Additive refers to an uncoordinated pattern of leadership, meaning that all members of organizations might be involved in leadership activities. It is an accumulation or aggregation of the distributed leadership. Holistic refers to consciously managed and synergistic relationships, meaning that leadership is more than the accumulated parts. Gronn (2000) asserted that individual actions in organizations should be understood from the perspective of overall patterns within the organization or relationships among all members, because the actions of individuals are interdependent. In other words, distribution of leadership is "dual-directional arrows which express the interactional relationship between all of the components" (Gronn, 2000, p. 328).

The conceptions of distributed leadership by both Spillane and Gronn require attention because they alert us to shift our thoughts about leadership from one or a few leaders (e.g., principal, teacher leaders) to, using Spillane's term, a "web of leadership." In addition, central to distributed leadership is to understand how the leadership web is

structured and to recognize the “dual-directional arrows” of leadership practices (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, 2006).

A study of distributed leadership by Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003), in the context of comprehensive school reform, shows how distributed leadership might be a useful framework for school improvement. They studied a total of 114 schools. Among the participating schools, 28 were in the Accelerated Schools Project, 31 in America’s Choice, 29 in Success for All, and 26 were comparison sites. The goal of the study was to explore whether the number of formally designated leadership positions was greater in schools utilizing comprehensive school reform programs than in comparison schools. Also of specific interest was to discern the ways in which leadership functions were distributed across the formally designated leadership positions. Data were collected using the School Leader Questionnaire and the School Characteristics Inventory.

Camburn et al. (2003) found that the number of leaders was greater in schools with comprehensive school reform. Specifically, distribution of leadership was evident in the creation of comprehensive school reform coach positions and leadership teams in the schools. In addition, they found that the leadership practice of different types of leaders, such as principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and other leaders, varied significantly. Principals in comprehensive reform schools, for example, were reported to exhibit high levels of instructional leadership, building management, and boundary spanning. Instructional coaches exhibited low levels of building management and boundary spanning but a high level of instructional leadership.

Through an analysis of component measures of instructional leadership, Camburn and his colleagues found that coaches and principals focused on different aspects of

instructional leadership. While coaches focused on assisting in the development of instructional capacities of teachers, principals were more focused on two other functions: setting instructional goals and monitoring improvement. The authors note this finding as “a split of instructional improvement functions” and suggest it as “a possible resolution of the role ambiguity inherent in many organizations” (Camburn et al., 2003, p. 365). This could be especially helpful for schools in the context of school improvement work because it is mostly the principals who are expected to perform the instructional leadership function, which is known to be one of the reasons for the failure of school change and improvement (Smylie & Denny, 1990).

Although the findings of Camburn et al. (2003) are limited to schools implementing comprehensive school reform, it provides an example of how distributed leadership works within schools and how the distribution of leadership could benefit school improvement work through having differentiated leadership practices. While principals struggle to perform instructional leadership by themselves, additional leaders, such as comprehensive school reform coaches in this study, could share the responsibilities of the instructional leadership.

In summary, both transformational leadership and distributed leadership have the potential of advancing a collaborative school culture. Transformation leadership is a process of building relationships among leaders and other members of the organization with an aim toward achieving shared organizational goals. A distributed model of leadership could create school cultures where school members share leadership roles in school improvement processes. At the same time, however, it requires school members to work together for its development. All of these conceptions align with the notion of

“leadership as an organizational quality” (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995) and with what Pounder et al. (1995) emphasized about sharing leadership and school improvement.

Principal Leadership

It is well established that principals play a pivotal role in school improvement work (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). One of the reasons why principals are emphasized in the change process is because of the important role of their leadership in re-creating the school culture (Sarason, 1995). In addition, it is known that principals have various roles in the change process, such as guiding the change, being an instructional leader, and providing support. In this section of the literature review, characteristics of principal leadership that contribute to school improvement and professional development are reviewed. Specifically, the review focuses on which and to what extent leadership practices of principals affect teachers’ learning and classroom practice.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) studied how principal leadership affected the classroom practice of teachers in school change process. They identified three leadership practice domains of transformational leaders as setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. The study, based on these three practice domains, focused on the effects of principals’ transformational leadership on teachers’ motivation, capacities, work settings, and classroom practice, as well as on student achievement. Leithwood and Jantzi defined motivation as qualities of a person willing to assess the need for change. They defined capacity as actual ability of individuals to perform. They defined work setting as the collective ability to perform relevant to the reform and as collective efficacy. They used data from a four-year evaluation of England’s National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. This evaluation involved 2,290 teachers from 655

primary schools who responded to two surveys, one for numeracy and one for literacy. Student achievement data also were used. It was gathered through the British Key Stage Two Test, resulting in two years of numeracy data and three years of literacy data.

To identify direct and indirect effects of principal leadership on teacher practice, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) used structural equation modeling. Principal leadership was the exogenous variable, and teacher motivation, capacities, and work setting were mediating variables. Teacher practices was set as the proximate dependent variable, and student achievement was the dependent variable. Through the analysis of these variables, they found that leadership of principals had direct and indirect effects on teachers' motivation, capacities, work setting, and classroom practices, and on student achievement. The results showed that principal leadership had the strongest effects on work setting, followed by motivation and capacity. In addition, leadership was found to have effects on teacher practice that was mostly through the mediating variables such as motivation, capacities, and work setting. Student achievement was found to be indirectly affected by leadership.

In this study, the authors defined work setting in two ways; collective practices of teachers relevant to reform, including physical and social infrastructure supporting such practices, and the collective efficacy of staff. The finding that principal leadership had the strongest effect on teachers' work setting indicates that strong transformational leadership of principals promotes the collaborative school culture. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) asserted that principals' transformational leadership, in the school change process, "seems to hold considerable promise" (p. 223) for supporting the improvement in teachers' classroom practice. Such improvement occurs through promoting not only the

individual motivation and capacities of teachers, but also by enhancing collective effort for student learning.

Youngs and King (2002) also studied how principal leadership affects teacher learning. Specifically, they examined in what ways principal leadership by means of professional development affected school capacity. This study was an in-depth and follow-up study of Newmann et al. (2000), particularly focusing on principal leadership and professional development. They used the same framework as Newmann et al. (2000), identified five aspects of school capacity: teachers' knowledge, skill, and dispositions; professional community; program coherence; technical resources; and principal leadership. Of the five aspects, the authors focused on three: teachers' knowledge, skill, and dispositions; professional community; and program coherence. Their specific interests were on how principal leadership influenced professional development that addressed the three aspects of school capacity.

The data used for this study were the same data of Newmann et al. (2000). They were collected from nine elementary schools that had: a history of low student achievement; progress in student achievement over 3 to 5 years prior to participation in the study; progress attributed to school-wide and sustained professional development; participation in site-based management; and significant development assistance from outside agencies. Data were collected two times with a two-year interval in between. All nine schools were included in the first data collection and seven schools were involved in the second. The data were collected through interviews with 10 to 12 staff and representatives from external professional development provider, observations of

professional activities and classrooms, and collection of documents of student achievement, demographics, and fiscal information.

Youngs and King (2002) found that the schools with higher comprehensiveness in their professional development had stronger principal leadership over time. They identified two schools that had strong principal leadership and provided the practices of the principals in the two schools. First, the principals were found to practice shared leadership. In both schools, the principals involved teachers in making decisions, such as planning and facilitating activities. In fact, no major changes were made without wide spread support from teachers. Further, it was identified that shared leadership practices led to an establishment of trust among school members. Second, the principals provided structures for teacher learning. The principals arranged schedules of professional development sessions so that most teachers could participate. In addition, the principals allocated funds for teachers to attend local and national conferences and to provide substitute teachers. Third, the principals supported collaborative participation in professional development. They ensured that teachers had common planning time and put a high priority on grade-level and whole school-wide professional development. The principal at one school, for example, designed an activity in which teachers could collaborate with examining student achievement data. Finally, the principals emphasized and promoted coherence. They made sure that the professional development activities were aligned with the school goal, curriculum, instruction, and assessments and that it was sustained over time.

In the analysis of the relationship between leadership practice of principal and the three aspects of school capacity, Youngs and King (2002) found that shared leadership

practice positively influenced professional community. In addition, with the adequate structure provided, teachers actively engaged in professional development activities, which led to enhancing their knowledge, skill, and dispositions. Further, principal leadership that supported collaborative participation and emphasized coherence was identified to strongly influence teachers' knowledge, skill, and dispositions and program coherence.

In the two schools that had the most comprehensiveness of professional development and strong principal leadership, Youngs and King (2002) found that these schools had different structures of professional development. One school had more external resources, such as local and national workshops available, which assisted teacher learning. The principal focused on providing external resources for the teachers, linking external expertise with the teachers and supporting the teachers to attend workshops. The other school, in contrast, had more internal programs for teacher learning. The principal created forums and activities that took in form of grade level meetings, whole staff meetings, and inquiry groups that provided time for teachers to collaborate and learn. Both principals of the two schools, however, maintained the focus of the professional development, established culture of trust and collaboration, and provided structure (Young & King, 2002).

Based on their findings, Youngs and King (2002) concluded that “effective principals can sustain high levels of capacity by establishing trust, creating structures that promote teacher learning, and either connecting their faculties to external expertise or helping teachers generate reforms internally” (p. 665). Further, they argued that principals should build shared commitment to school goals.

In summary, principal leadership, in the reviewed literature, is found to be central in promoting and enhancing the learning experience for teachers. Principals had influence not only on teachers' motivation and capacities, but also on their work setting and classroom practice. It is suggested that principals should practice shared leadership, provide adequate structure for teacher learning, and emphasize coherence for teachers to actively and collaboratively participate in leadership and professional learning activities. This means that principal leadership could positively influence teachers' knowledge, skill, and disposition and classroom practice through affecting the quality of the professional development activities. In both of the reviewed studies, the authors asserted the importance of collective and collaborative school culture. They suggested that principals should create a collaborative school culture where teachers can collectively engage in active learning.

Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership, once again, has emerged as a central dimension in the work of school change (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Although the concept of teacher leadership is not new, it still lacks clear definition (Smylie et al., 2002). Its form, function, and role in school change and improvement work have evolved over time. In this section, three studies of teacher leadership are reviewed: first, a study of early teacher leadership development; second, a study of teacher leadership and professional development; and finally, a study of roles of teacher leadership and school improvement.

In the 1980's to 1990's, teacher leadership focused on professionalizing teaching to improve education (Smylie, 1995). A study of teacher leadership by Smylie and Denny (1990) explored the ways in which teacher leadership was enacted and teachers'

corresponding new roles. The purpose of this study was to identify the types of leadership roles and activities in which teacher leaders engaged and also to discover organizational factors that influenced the practices of the teacher leaders. The study involved 13 second year teacher leaders and 230 teachers in a single district. Smylie and Denny used unstructured open-ended individual interviews and a survey to gain the perspectives of the 13 second-year teacher leaders. A questionnaire also was completed by 230 teachers.

Smylie and Denny (1990) found that teacher leadership, as perceived by both teacher leaders and other teachers, was generally viewed as support for the day-to-day work of classroom teachers. Interestingly, however, the identified teacher leader practices were more focused on administrative duties at the building and district levels. The discrepancy between the perceived teacher leadership roles and the actual performance roles were thought to be due to “structural, normative, and political dimensions of the district and school” (Smylie & Denny, 1990, p. 252). Structural elements such as time and access to teachers and classrooms, professional norms shared by teachers, and the role ambiguity of teacher leadership might have mediated the discrepancy between the espoused and actual performance of teacher leaders.

The identified benefits of teacher leadership, among Smylie and Denny’s (1990) findings, are valuable in understanding how teacher leadership developed. They framed the benefits of teacher leadership at three levels: personal, building, and district. First, the personal level benefits were related to professional growth for classroom practice. Teacher leaders provided opportunities for other teachers to improve their professionalism in teaching and to foster personal growth. Second, the building level benefits included improvements in staff development, curriculum and instructional

innovation, as well as enhanced professional climate. Smylie and Denny found that teachers were more engaged in building level staff development related to curriculum and instruction, which positively changed the professional climate of the school, when teacher leadership was enacted. Finally, the district level benefits, which were identified most frequently, included increased opportunities for teacher leaders to be recognized and rewarded for their professional contributions. In addition, teacher leaders enabled a greater degree of cooperation between teachers and administrators.

Smylie and Denny's (1990) finding that the benefits of teacher leadership was of greatest at the district level is not surprising because in the early development of teacher leadership the focus was on formal roles of a more operational nature. Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995) identified that these roles were traditionally reserved for leaders. They argued "Their [Teacher leaders'] fuller professional role enables them to learn and lead continuously as they inquire together into ever more responsive practice" (p. 88). Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) examined data from in-depth case studies of seven schools with a professional development program implemented in order to identify new roles of teacher leadership that were available with the professional development programs. The data for the case studies were gathered through extensive interviews, observation, review of documents related to professional development, surveys, and teachers' log over one year.

Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) found that opportunities for new kinds of learning with professional development programs created new forms of teacher leadership. They identified four new roles of teacher leadership: teachers as mentors and teacher educators; teachers as curriculum developers and decision makers; teachers as problem solvers and

change agents; and teachers as researchers. First, professional development programs had structured internships that created teacher leader roles as mentor teachers and as teacher educators. In addition, with the close work relationship between veteran and intern teachers, a more powerful learning culture within the schools was created. Further, teachers assumed greater responsibility for collective professionalism with the new teacher leader role. Second, teachers engaged in curriculum development and school-level decision making. Teachers used content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for curriculum development and supported growth and development of diverse students. As teachers engaged in more leadership roles, such as decision making in the areas of curriculum and teaching, they took more responsibilities for improving student learning and schools. Third, as teachers engaged in the decision-making process, they were more involved in problem solving and change. The shared decision-making structure allowed teachers to assume leadership and emerge as leaders. Finally, professional development encouraged teachers to inquire about their practices, individually and collectively. Teachers, as a result, engaged in action research, and this sharing of knowledge and practice affected all teachers.

Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) argued that “the greatest support for teacher leadership is not a formal title but restructured time and relationships that enable teachers to take on the leadership tasks in which they are ready to engage” (p. 103). Further, they suggested that the most desirable form of teacher leadership is not role based, but derives from expertise and experience.

A more recent study of teacher leadership and school improvement (Copland, 2003) explained roles of teacher leaders as agents of “reculturing.” This five-year

longitudinal study explored how leadership roles were distributed among school members in the process of school improvement efforts. The specific context of the study was a large scale reform effort titled the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC). The reform of BASRC was based on the Cycle of Inquiry. The Cycle of Inquiry involved identifying problems and areas of academic focus based on data, refining the focused effort, establishing measurable goals for the school and also grade levels and/or departments, building a concrete work plan at both the school and grade and/or department levels, taking action, and reflecting on and analyzing results from the data. This cycle was expected to promote cultural change, develop consensus and clarity about the problems schools face, and build professionals' instructional expertise to enable them to teach more children more effectively.

The BASRC study incorporated two phases. In the first phase, which involved all 86 schools, Copland (2003) analyzed surveys from 63 principals and 27 teachers of BASRC Leadership Schools. The data collected from the survey revealed that participation in BASRC was perceived to have positively changed the view of teacher leadership. More teachers were involved not only in instructional leadership, such as discussion of teaching and learning and desired learning outcomes, but also in school level decision making. Further, Copland (2003) found that the schools with a high level of adoption of the Cycle of Inquiry also experienced collective efforts of school members for school improvement. The second phase of the study was an in-depth examination of 16 schools, four high schools, eleven elementary schools, and one K-8 school. The schools were identified as "advanced" in terms of their level of adopting the BASRC Cycle of Inquiry. These advanced level schools had characteristics of: the presence of the

inquiry cycle and an iterative process of involving the whole school that is connected to the classroom level; and school members who actively pursued sustainability of the reform. Copland conducted a series of interviews with principals and teacher leaders. He focused on “how” the advanced schools worked with school leadership in the reform process. He found that all of the advanced level schools had shared leadership structures. Specifically, principals, teacher leaders, and teachers were working together in developing vision, planning, and making decisions.

Copland (2003) concluded that the schools with “advanced” level of the BASRC Cycle of Inquiry demonstrated a positive cultural shift because leadership among school members was distributed. Teacher leaders who were hired as coordinators during the reform shared leadership with the principals. They were involved in leadership activities, such as “encouraging, nourishing, bolstering and reminding others... about the shared vision and values that serve as motivation for the work of reform” (p. 391). Copland stated, “[School] Leadership for change comes from within the school, growing out of the inquiry process” (p. 387).

In summary, the findings from the literature suggest that the benefits of teacher leadership are great. In addition, when teachers engage in leadership activities, they can positively impact teacher learning and school improvement. Teacher leaders positively support the change of organizational culture and the work of school improvement by engaging in leadership activities such as redesigning schools, mentoring colleagues, participating in school- level decision making, and fostering professional growth. Research suggests that teacher leaders, alone, cannot provide the positive effects on schools. School context and conditions, such as decision-making structures, a

collaborative school culture, and support from both principals and teachers are necessary for successful teacher leadership.

Summary and Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 provides a visual depiction of the conceptual framework for this study. This conceptual framework is from a synthesis of the literature related to leadership and school improvement, principal leadership, teacher leadership, and professional development reviewed in this chapter.

The reviewed literature suggested five key characteristics of high quality professional development: (1) duration, (2) collective participation, (3) coherence, (4) content focus, and (5) active learning (Garet et al., 2001; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Newmann et al., 2000). First, professional development should be sustained and continuous over time. This includes not only the contact hours that teachers spend in the activities, but also the time span of the activity. Second, professional development should provide structures for collective participation. Time and structure for groups of teachers, such as department or grade level teachers, should be provided for collective participation. Third, professional development, over time, should have coherence. It is suggested that professional development program and activities should be consistent with school goals and aligned with state standards. Fourth, professional development should focus on content knowledge and instructional practices. High quality professional development should provide teachers with learning opportunities to deepen their content knowledge and improve their instructional practices. Finally, professional development should promote active learning. It should provide opportunities for teachers to actively engage in the analysis of teaching and learning. It is suggested that these five

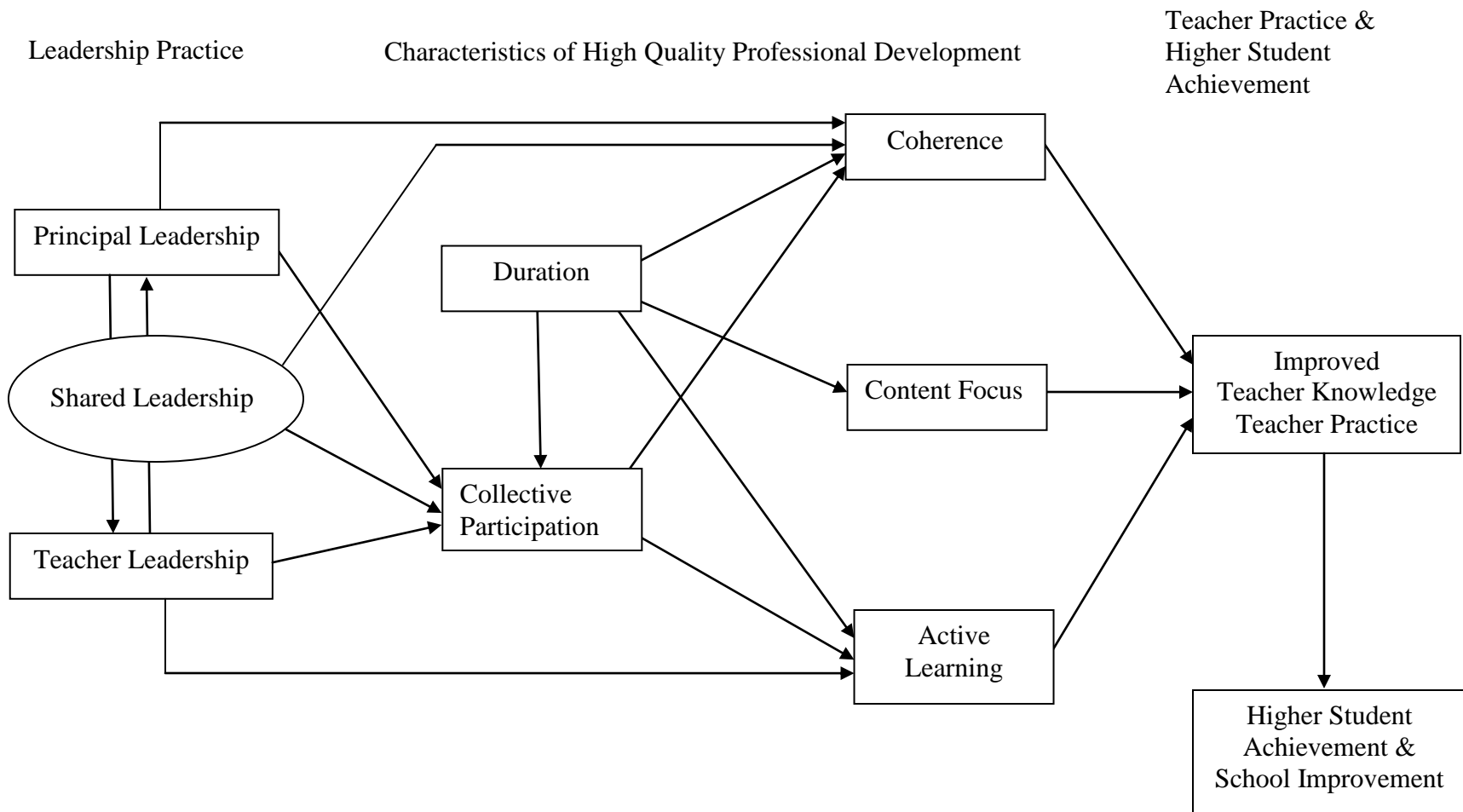


Figure 2.1 Research-Based Conceptual Framework: Leadership and High Quality Professional Development

characteristics of high quality professional development should be focused on teachers' learning opportunities and that support from both principal leadership and teacher leadership must be present.

The research regarding leadership and school improvement suggested that sharing leadership practices among school members increases the overall leadership capacity of the school. The conception of leadership as an organizational quality suggests that leadership could be exerted by anyone in an organization (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). To increase the overall leadership of the school, principals must share the leadership roles and responsibilities with school members. Principals should invite teachers into leadership roles and support their leadership work (Pounder et al., 1995). Research found that principals who demonstrate transformational leadership also are more likely to share instructional leadership with teachers (Marks & Printy, 2003). Student achievement, therefore, may be positively influenced by high transformational leadership, because teachers are more likely to provide high quality instruction to students when principals share instructional leadership with them. Distributed leadership, when enacted, also could provide a resolution of role ambiguity by having principals and teacher leaders sharing the instructional improvement functions (Camburn et al., 2003). While principals struggle to perform instructional leadership by themselves, additional leaders could share the responsibilities and increase the quality of instructional leadership by each leader having more time and focus on specific tasks.

In the research regarding principal leadership, it was found that principals' leadership could positively influence teachers' motivation, capacities, work setting, and classroom practice (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). First, when principals practice shared

leadership, provide adequate structure for teacher learning, and emphasize coherence, principals could positively influence teachers' knowledge, skill, and disposition and classroom practice through affecting the quality of the professional development activities (Youngs & King, 2002). In addition, it is suggested that principals should create a collaborative school culture where teachers can actively and collectively engage in professional learning activities. Second, the studies revealed that teacher leaders can serve as resources to other teachers to advance classroom practices (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Also, teacher leaders positively support the change of organizational culture and the work of school improvement by engaging in leadership activities such as redesigning schools, mentoring colleagues, participating in school-level decision making, and fostering professional growth (Copland, 2003; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995).

A theme that emerged from the reviewed literature is the emphasis on shared leadership among school members. In specific, research suggested that sharing leadership practices among school members increases the overall leadership capacity of the school (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Pounder et al., 1995). The literature regarding high quality professional development also emphasizes the importance of collectivism and collaboration among school members. In addition, it is suggested that principals should practice shared leadership for maximizing the learning experience for teachers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the study design and methodology. As previously mentioned in Chapter One, this study purposively selected one sample school from the six schools that participated in the Sustainability Study for an in-depth analysis of the principal and teacher leadership practices that advanced professional development after the external support was removed. This study also utilized the data about the sample school that was collected for the Sustainability Study. In the Sustainability Study, data were collected annually for three years after the external reform support was removed. The means of data collection were a survey, interviews, and documents. Of these data, the present study drew almost exclusively from the interview data. Documents, i.e., school-level report cards published by the state Department of Education also were used, but only to understand and describe the sample school's context of each year.

There are two main sections in this chapter. The first section presents methods used in the Sustainability Study that pertain to the present study. Specifically, the sample selection process, instrumentation of the interview, and interview data collection methods are presented. The second section describes the research design of the present study, including the process used to select the sample school and the procedures used to organize and analyze the data.

Methods - Sustainability Study

Recall that the Sustainability Study was a three year follow-up study of six schools that participated in the first round of Reading First in the upper Midwest state. From 2007 through 2009, in the Spring of each of these years, the Sustainability Study collected data by means of a survey to all licensed staff, small group interviews with

teachers, and individual interviews with the principal and the teacher leader, and to a more limited extent documents. Described below are the sampling process for selecting the school and the interviewees and the procedures used to develop the interview protocols and to collect data through the interviews, as well as sources of the document data collection.

Sample Selection

The sample schools for the Sustainability Study were drawn from the 29 elementary schools that participated in the first round of Reading First funded schools. Key personnel who led the Reading First initiative identified 10 of the original 29 schools that met three criteria. First, these schools were viewed as having demonstrated strong implementation of the leadership, professional learning, and instructional practices that were expected of Reading First schools. Second, these schools had shown positive gains in student achievement. Third, there was leadership continuity in the post Reading First period, meaning the principal and teacher leader (i.e., literacy coordinator) who were present during Reading First continued at the school. This third criterion was defined recognizing the impact of leadership turnover on school practices and culture (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Nine of the original 29 schools met all three criteria and were contacted by the Sustainability Study research team to ask their consideration of participating in the study. One additional school was included even though the third criterion had to be altered slightly. The post-Reading First principal was not the principal during RF, but she had strong prior affiliation with the school and her assistant principals were present during Reading First. Of the ten schools invited, seven schools agreed to participate. Six were public district schools, each from a different independent school district, and one

was a charter public school. In the second year of the Sustainability Study, however, one of the public schools closed, resulting in six schools participating for all three years of the Sustainability study.

Within each of the six schools, the principal and all of the licensed teachers were included in data collection processes, even though Reading First was an exclusively grades kindergarten through three initiative. The reason for this wider inclusion of staff was recognition that school reforms often influence or are influenced by all dimensions of a school to some extent (Fullan, 2007). Similarly, it was reasonable to expect that there might also be school-wide influences after removal of external reform supports. The principal and all of the licensed teachers in each of the schools, therefore, were included regardless of their participation in Reading First and their work experience at the school. Specifically, all licensed classroom teachers, special services teachers (i.e., special education, English language learner, and supplemental program teachers), specialist teachers (i.e., physical education, music, and art teachers) and teacher leaders (e.g., literacy coordinators) were asked to participate in the study by completing a survey at the end of each of the three school years. In addition, the principal, teacher leader, and randomly selected primary classroom teachers, intermediate classroom teachers, and special services teachers were asked to participate in interviews at each school. Three to four teachers from each of three teacher groups (i.e., primary, intermediate, and special services teachers), were selected and asked to participate in a role-specific small group interview. To form these groups, teachers were randomly identified from each grade level using the school roster. These random picks were then reviewed to ensure that at least one of the teachers in each small group interview had participated in Reading First.

Specialist teachers (e.g., physical education, music, art) were excluded from the interview process because of their daily work was distinct from the daily work of classroom teachers in that there was less emphasis on literacy practices.

Instrumentation of Interview

The Sustainability Study employed semi-structured interviews. This method of interviewing involves use of open-ended questions that allow respondents relative freedom in responding to questions. Use of a semi-structured interview format also affords the interviewing researcher flexibility to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondents, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

The Sustainability Study team developed three semi-structured interview protocols: one for principals, one for teacher leaders, and one for the three teacher groups. In the third year, a more distinct interview protocol was developed for use with the special services teacher group, given the emergent need to understand more thoroughly ways in which these teachers viewed instruction, services, and collaboration in relationship to students with special learning needs. All the protocols were constructed in a parallel format. Specifically, all protocols inquired about professional development, teaching and learning practices, student learning, leadership for continuous improvement, and overall annual reflections, as well as, ideas for moving forward. There were subtle differences in terms of language used and the specific probing for understanding. The interview protocols are located in Appendix B.

Interview Data Collection

Interviews were conducted once annually in the Spring for three consecutive years: 2007, 2008, and 2009. All of the interviews were conducted on-site at the schools on dates chosen by the schools. The interviews with the principals and the teacher leaders were conducted individually. Interviews with teachers were conducted in small groups, i.e., primary teacher group, intermediate teacher group, and special services teacher group. As described previously, three to four teachers were randomly selected to participate in each respective group each of the three years of data collection, ensuring that at least one teacher in each group was present during Reading First. The historical perspective and experience was viewed as an important point of continuity, even though the particular participating teachers were not necessarily the same each year of the Sustainability Study interviews.

The interviews started by providing each participant with a consent form that included information about the purpose of the study and potential risks involved. Additionally, a detailed explanation of the study was presented, including background, number of schools participating, specific procedures of data collection, and assurances of confidentiality. After completing the informed consent process, the interviewer asked general questions of each participant, such as how they arrived at their school, years of experience in their current position and as an educator, and participation in Reading First. The background information and descriptive questions were informative but also were intended to make participants feel comfortable. An important first step for interviewers is to build rapport and trust with the participants (Merriam, 1998). Individual interviews with the principals and the teacher leaders each lasted approximately an hour. Interviews

with each small group of teachers were approximately 90 minutes in length. All of the interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. In addition, with two researchers present in most of the interviews, one facilitated the interview while the second captured salient points as the interview progressed. Immediately after each interview, the research team conferred and made notes about key points that emerged during the interview related to each of the areas of inquiry. Ultimately, this assisted with the analysis process (Merriam, 1998). Over the three-year study period, a total of 12 individual and 36 small group interviews were conducted at six schools.

Document Data Collection

There were three sources of documents tapped for the Sustainability Study. The first was from the University Center in which the Reading First grant was situated. During the three years of the Reading First grant, the Center collected documents that included each school's application to participate, as well as various documents that described both processes and results of Reading First participation, such as professional development opportunities, instructional implementation, and levels of student achievement. The second source of the documents was from each of the sample schools. Each school was asked to provide an annual roster of staff. In addition, in the course of interviews, when particular documents or processes were mentioned, interviewers often asked whether copies could be obtained. Examples of such documents were classroom observation protocols used by the principal and teacher leader and the study group protocol used to guide participants through their study process. These documents offered understanding of historical structures and events (Merriam, 1998) and had the advantage of being collected in a relatively easy and "unobtrusive way" (1998, p. 126). The third

source of documents was those publically and electronically available from the state's Department of Education. These documents included the state's evaluation report of Reading First, the state's Reading First model and plan, and the annual individual school report cards. As with some of the documents identified above, these documents were not used as primary data sources, but were utilized for understanding the context of the Reading First program from which the present study was launched.

Research Design and Methods - Present Study

This section provides the research design of the present study that focused on just one of the schools that participated in the Sustainability Study. Specifically, a rationale for qualitative research design and the selection of the sample school are presented. Recall that the present study relied almost exclusively on the interview data. The only documents used were the annual school-level report cards issued by the State Department of Education for the purpose of offering an annual school context. It is also important to note that the sample school was purposively selected as a "best case" for understanding principal and teacher leadership for sustaining professional learning.

There are three sub-sections. The first section presents a rationale for the research design. The second section describes the sample selection process. The third and final section presents the procedures used to organize and analyze the data.

Qualitative Research

The questions that guided this study were addressed within a qualitative research paradigm. Presented in Table 3.1 are the key characteristics of qualitative research that guided the conduct of this study. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand the nature and meaning of the phenomenon being studied through the use of relatively open

modes of inquiry. When compared to quantitative research, qualitative studies are typically more “comprehensive, holistic, expansive, and richly descriptive” (Merriam, 1998, p. 8).

Table 3.1 Key Characteristics of Qualitative Research

| | <i>Characteristics</i> | <i>Phase of Research</i> |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Focus of Research | Quality (nature, essence) | Research design |
| Goal of Investigation | Understanding, description, discovery, meaning, hypothesis generating | Research design |
| Sample | Small, nonrandom, purposeful, theoretical | Data collection |
| Data Collection | Researcher as primary instrument, interviews, observations, documents | Data collection |
| Findings | Comprehensive, holistic, expansive, richly descriptive | Research design |

Note. Compiled by author based on the design framework of Merriam (1998, p. 9)

Patton (1990) explained that qualitative research methods provide both detail and depth. Description of situations, people, events, and interactions are all parts of qualitative data, which allows researchers to capture the meaning of these descriptions in the daily life of the people. The role of researchers, therefore, is not to explain or predict, but to understand, discover, and describe, focusing on “understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive, hypothesis or theory generating mode of inquiry” (Merriam, 1998, p. 4).

As previously mentioned, the primary data source for this study was the interview data collected for the Sustainability Study. Interview data is used “... when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” and “... when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (Merriam, 1998, p. 72). One distinct characteristic of qualitative research is the role of researcher as the primary

“instrument” of data collection. Serving as the instrument of data collection, the researcher “can respond to situation[s] by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information” (Merriam, 1998, p. 20). Data, once collected, are analyzed through the researcher’s perspective and values, resulting in an interpretation of the phenomenon under study. Such interpretation sometimes raises concerns about subjectivity. To minimize these concerns, Merriam (1998) suggested paying close attention to tolerance for ambiguity, sensitivity to context and data, and being a good communicator, which was followed throughout the conduct of this study.

Within the qualitative paradigm, this study was longitudinal in nature, using the data that were collected over the span of three years. A longitudinal study design is distinct in that there are multiple periods of data collection that occur at particular time intervals (Bryman, 2004). It is common to associate longitudinal study design with quantitative research because of the ease of data collection. Anthropological and ethnographic studies, however, typically employ long periods of field work involving multiple periods of qualitative data collection (McLeod & Thomson, 2009). A longitudinal study design is generally used when researchers attempt to identify and understand adaptations, shifts, or progressive developments over time (McLeod & Thomson, 2009). For this study, the longitudinal study design allowed the identification of shifts in leadership practices and professional development that occurred over a period of three years.

Sample Selection

As described in Chapter One, this study purposively selected one school, among the six schools that participated in the Sustainability Study, for an in-depth analysis of

whether and how principal and teacher leadership practices focused on continuing or expanding professional learning in the post-school reform context. Specifically, there were three criteria used for selecting the sample school: evidence of bold implementation of Reading First practices, continuity in principal leadership, and continuity in teacher leadership. Given the purpose of the present study, the sample selection, especially, emphasized on continuity in principal leadership and teacher leadership, meaning the same principal and teacher leader for both during RF and the Sustainability Study. These two criteria are discussed next in detail.

Continuity in principal leadership: Having the same principal increases the likelihood of consistent vision and long-term strategic planning, as well as the potential for positive relationships among school members that support the continuity of school improvement efforts (Florian, 2000). To investigate the influence of principal leadership on ongoing professional development, a school was selected in which the principal was present during Reading First and during the entire three-year duration of the Sustainability study. Importantly, beyond just serving as the seated principal during Reading First, this principal exhibited strong leadership and high involvement with teachers in supporting the initial reform efforts.

Continuity in teacher leadership: During the Reading First, each participating school hired a full-time literacy coordinator with funds made available from the RF grants. These teachers did not have classroom instructional duties. Their primary responsibilities included assisting instructional practices of other teachers, developing programs and monitoring teachers with their implementation of changes, and working with principals in school decision making. Most of the literacy coordinators were hired

from within their respective schools and had a substantial number of years of teaching experience at the school. After the RF, some schools were successful securing funds to continue supporting this teacher leader position; others were not.

All of the teachers who served as the teacher leader (i.e., literacy coordinator) during Reading First remained at their respective schools in the post reform period. Of the six schools that participated in the Sustainability Study, however, five schools continued funding for the teacher leader position. Among the five schools, four kept the same person in the teacher leader role, and of these four schools, two schools had the same principal for the entire period of Reading First and for all three years of the Sustainability Study. Lakeview Elementary School (LES) was chosen as the sample school for two reasons among the two schools. First, analysis of the findings from the Sustainability Study indicated that Lakeview demonstrated the strongest continuity in leadership and professional learning in the post-reform period. Second, in the other school, the teacher leadership position was retained but the amount of time allocated for the position was dramatically reduced which resulted in less direct support of continuous improvement by a formal teacher leader.

Given that changes or reductions in school leadership often disrupt continuity in not only leadership but also continuous development (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Florian, 2000), Lakeview Elementary School was chosen as the individual school for study in the present research. Strong continuity of principal and teacher leadership at LES was viewed minimizing the potential disruptive impact. LES also was viewed as demonstrating the greatest continuity in professional learning practices. It is reasonable to assert, therefore, that the sample school, in many respects, demonstrates an inspiring “best case” situation

for understanding leadership practices of principal and teacher leader for sustaining school reform practices.

Data Organization and Analysis

Analytic strategy provides guidelines for researchers “to treat the evidence fairly, to produce compelling analytic conclusions, and to rule out alternative interpretations” (Yin, 1984, p. 100). Having a theoretical guideline helps to organize findings of the research and to examine alternative findings (Merriam, 1998). The data analysis of this study was guided by the conceptual framework, presented in Chapter Two. In brief, the focus of the analysis was to identify leadership practices of the principal and the teacher leader that influenced professional development and, importantly, how these practices changed over the three-year post reform study period. Also of specific interest was understanding ways in which leadership was shared and differentiated between the principal and the teacher leader.

With qualitative data, unlike quantitative data analysis, there is no sharp division between data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). Also important to note is that “data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous” (Patton, 1990, p. 379). Data management, therefore, needs to be planned before or organized prior to commencing the more formal data analysis process (Merriam, 1998). More specifically, the ways in which “data are stored and retrieved is the heart of data management” (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 430). Assisting in both the organization and analytic work with the data was the computer software program, NVivo. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), such as NVivo and Atlas.ti, became more diverse and functional over the past decade (Yin, 2009). CAQDAS has various functions, including tools that assist with

traditional qualitative analysis, such as coding and content searching, and also tools that assist with analysis techniques that traditionally have required lengthy periods of time, such as linking concepts, mapping or networking, and audio and video analysis (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

Table 3.2 presents the number of interview participants at LES by year. All the interviews were transcribed from the audio recordings. There was a total 15 interviews, involving 33 individuals and resulting in 373 pages of transcripts over the three year post reform data collection period. There were also interview notes taken and conferred by the Sustainability Study research team for each of the interviews. These notes were used to understand the specific context of each interview.

Table 3.2 Number of Interview Participants by Year

| | <i>Principal</i> | <i>Teacher leader</i> | <i>Primary teachers</i> | <i>Intermediate teachers</i> | <i>Special Services teachers</i> |
|--------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Year 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Year 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Year 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 |

Before describing the specific process employed for analyzing the interview data used in this study, an orientation to the approach to data analysis is presented here. Content analysis in qualitative research typically employs an inductive approach (Merriam, 1998) by which themes and categories emerge from the data. Qualitative content analysis, however, also can utilize a deductive approach (Patton, 2002) by which researchers begin analysis by using an initial coding scheme drawn from a theoretical framework. Altheide (1987) described the goal of content analysis in qualitative study as “systematic and analytic, but not rigid” (p. 68). A deductive approach to analysis was used in this study. Additionally, given the purpose of discerning change over time, a time

series analysis was employed. Time series analysis is a way to examine the relationship of events over time, focusing on questions of “how” and “why” (Yin, 1984). Specifically, the findings from each year were compared; year one findings with year two and year two findings with year three. Indicators, such as a principal and teacher leadership that supported professional development, were compared between the years and traced over the period of three years. The specific procedures by which data were analyzed employing both content and time series analytic strategies are described below.

Because the primary interest of this study was to identify leadership and professional development practices and changes in practices over a period of three years post reform, the interview data first were organized by year: year 1, year 2, and year 3. Then, within each year, the five interviews were independently analyzed, followed by an analysis across each year’s interviews to determine common and varied themes. Finally, categorical themes across all three years of study were analyzed to determine changes of time. In the next few paragraphs a specific articulation of the coding process is offered.

Each interview was coded using the coding scheme developed by the Sustainability Study research team. This allowed organizing data into categories and, later in the analysis process, to analyze data such that meaningful themes were identified and presented (Creswell, 2003). Because the present study took a narrower focus of inquiry, only some of the coding schemes were employed. Specifically the coding scheme included three large categories: leadership, professional development, and teacher practices related to professional development. Within each category there were sub-categories identified as shown in Table 3.3.

Data were coded using the NVivo software. The data coding process for each transcript proceeded as follows. First, the transcript was read to gain general familiarity with its content. Second, the transcript was slowly re-read with “meaning chunks” identified and then marked with the respective code. Third, the “meaning chunks” were organized within the coding categories, followed by the researchers analyzing the categorized data then drafting brief phrases of statements that captured salient meaning. For example, all coded chunks labeled “principal leadership” were pulled, re-read, then summary statements crafted.

Table 3.3 Interview Coding Scheme

| <i>Category</i> | <i>Sub-categories</i> | <i>Code</i> | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| Leadership | Principal leadership | PL | |
| | Teacher leadership | TL | |
| | Teacher team leadership | TTL | |
| Professional Development | Individual development | - Job-embedded | PD-I-JE |
| | | - External training | PD-I-ET |
| | | - Research-based &Data- driven | PD-I-RD |
| | Team development | - Job-embedded | PD-T-JE |
| | | - External training | PD-T-ET |
| | | - Research-based &Data-driven | PD-T-RD |
| | School development | - Job-embedded | PD-S-JE |
| | | - External training | PD-S-ET |
| | | - Research-based &Data-driven | PD-S-RD |
| Teacher Practice | Instruction | TI | |
| | Assessment | TA | |
| | Curriculum | TC | |

In addition to the interview data, document data were used, although to a much more limited extent. Specifically, State Department of Education annual school-level report cards were analyzed to understand the school context for each year. Further, “documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct

observation and interviewing” (Patton, 1990, p. 294). Specifically for this study, information about students demographics, including number of students enrolled and ratio of students receiving special services (i.e., English as Secondary Language, special education) and free and reduced priced lunch, and staff information, including number of staff by position, degree preparation, and years of experience, were taken from the annual school-level report cards to present a general orientation to the study context for each year of study.

Data Report

The findings, which serve as the “data report” for this study, are presented first in Chapter 4, Findings, and then distilled and sharpened in Chapter 5, Summary, Implications and Conclusion. Findings are presented in narrative and graphic forms, with an emphasis on the findings that illuminate the principal and teacher leadership practices that influenced professional development over the three-year post Reading First reform period. The findings from each year of the three years are presented in the following sequence: (1) school setting, (2) professional development, (3) principal leadership, (4) teacher leadership, (5) literacy leadership team, and (6) summary of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of this study of Lakeview Elementary School. This chapter is organized in three sections, one for each of the three years post Reading First. Each section includes information about the school context for each year, focused on noteworthy changes in demographics and learning structure that occurred during the school year. This is followed by findings related to professional development activities and leadership practices of the principal, teacher leader, and the literacy leadership team. Each section ends with a summary of the findings for the respective year.

Year One

In the first year after Reading First, Lakeview Elementary School (LES) continued its focus on literacy and improving the reading skills of the students. With limited resources, however, LES had some changes in the leadership positions. First, LES no longer had support from the external facilitator who was provided by the University Center during RF. The external facilitator was the person who held the highest level of literacy expertise and who directly supported not only the teachers but also the principal and literacy coordinator. Second, the literacy coordinator position was reduced from full-time to half-time. Sustaining this position even at the reduced time required approval of funding by the school board. These two personnel reductions decreased the intensity of literacy support and caused shifts in who and how various literacy leadership roles and responsibilities were addressed.

Another post Reading First loss due to a decrease in external fiscal resources was the reduced time for the study groups. During RF, the study groups were reported to have contributed substantially to teacher learning, providing weekly opportunities for the

teachers to learn new literacy instructional strategies and share their experiences using the new strategies in their classrooms. The study groups also contributed to establishing a collaborative environment at LES by encouraging collective participation and having regular weekly time for the teachers to interact. Reduced time for study groups decreased the intensity of job-embedded learning, which was especially problematic for the intermediate grade teachers because it was their first year of explicit participation in literacy-related professional development. Furthermore, the intermediate teachers did not have support from the external facilitator and only limited support from the literacy coordinator.

Lakeview, however, was able to purchase “Level III” follow-up support from the University Center for the first year after Reading First. This included summer workshops, quarterly literacy leadership team meetings, and access to a person who served as data collector for classroom observation. The continuing support from the University Center assisted the work of the literacy coordinator, which was important because of her reduction to half time. Importantly, this allowed her to work more intensively with individual intermediate grade teachers. Overall, the purchased follow-up support from the University Center assisted school staff to maintain an intensive focus on literacy.

In the first year post Reading First, there were no significant changes related to student demographics or the staff profile at Lakeview. The student enrollment was approximately 400 and percentages of children receiving support services remained about the same. There were about 32 full time equivalent teachers, most of whom were very experienced and only one of whom was in her first three years of teaching.

In the following sections, the findings related to the changes in professional development and leadership focused on professional development that were evident in the first year post Reading First are presented. The changes were identified by comparing descriptions of activities during RF with those described after Reading First.

Professional development

The focus of professional development activities continued to be improving literacy instruction. The types of professional development remained the same. These were study groups, school-wide whole group meetings, and peer classroom visits. One significant change in the professional development was the inclusion of the intermediate grade level teachers. Although the fourth and fifth grade teachers began their participation in study groups in the final year of the RF, it was their first year to fully participate in other activities. Also, it was the first year for the sixth grade teachers to participate in any of the literacy-focused professional development. With the inclusion of the intermediate grades teachers and given recognition that the term “professional learning community” had become prominent in the education field, LES changed the name of the study groups to professional learning communities (PLCs). This decision was made by the principal and literacy coordinator, in consultation with the literacy leadership team. The most important reason from their perspective was to separate the small group learning associated with RF (i.e., study groups) that excluded the intermediate teachers from the new more inclusive group learning.

In the first year post RF, the study groups, now called PLCs, met once a month instead of weekly. This was forced by a decrease in funding. The once a month PLC meetings were on days with an early release of students. Teachers participated in their

respective PLC meetings for about an hour. This small group learning was immediately followed by a school-wide whole group meeting. Usually the principal and literacy coordinator monitored the PLC participation of teachers and, by doing so, monitored areas of strength and challenge. The literacy leadership team facilitated the whole group meetings during which teachers shared their experiences related to both learning about and implementing new strategies. On some occasions, the literacy coordinator modeled new instructional strategies for the whole group. On other occasions, the principal facilitated open discussion about professional development needs and concerns and also led school-wide celebrations of accomplishments.

The structure of the monthly PLC meeting remained largely the same as during RF. The cross grade level structure was maintained, but with inclusion of the intermediate grades teachers. The PLCs focused on various literacy topics, such as Early Intervention in Reading, Question Answer Relationship, and small group instruction, which included guided reading and vocabulary. Within the PLC, the teachers used the same protocol as during RF. They maintained a rotation of roles, specifically facilitator, time keeper, and the note keeper. The activities within the PLC included studying research articles, sharing and reviewing student work, and sharing videotaped classroom practices from RF. Individual teachers also continued to keep their own PLC notes, which were reviewed by the principal and teacher leader. The format of individual notes, however, was simplified somewhat given feedback from the teachers that they were “cumbersome” to complete.

The teacher experiences within the PLCs were more variable than during RF. Not surprisingly, teachers who participated in RF, that is, the primary and special services

teachers, were familiar with the routines and knowledgeable about how to engage with the materials. These experienced teachers described active involvement in their learning. One primary teacher, for example, expressed the comfort level that the primary grades teachers had in utilizing research articles with their classroom instruction.

I think we just did some research, or we read research in that area, and it was something that we hadn't implemented yet. And so we thought, "Let's try it."
(*Primary teacher, Year 1 interview*)

One special services teacher also expressed how the PLC and its cross grade level structure benefitted both her instruction and student learning.

That [cross grade level PLC structure] we were fortunate, too... , before we had Reading First, we had just changed our reading curriculum. Well, *our* [special services] reading curriculum. Now I have the same type of stories and vocabulary that they [classroom teachers] do in the classrooms. So it is adding the strategy instruction on top of the topic that we are working on. And I pull a lot of books out of the leveled library, but I always make sure they are in the same theme that I know they [classroom teachers] are doing in the classroom. (*Special services teacher, Year 1 interview*)

The newly participating teachers (i.e., the intermediate grade teachers), however, were new to the process and were hesitant learning about the new literacy instruction.

One intermediate grade level teacher, for example, said that her grade level teachers were unsure about "what and how" they should be teaching literacy. As they learned the new literacy instruction strategies, a gap was created between what they had been doing and what they were now expected to do given their participation in a PLC.

I have met resistance with change and with my colleagues, and "Why should we do it this way? What's wrong with the old way?" So that is a challenge. And you do feel like you had success, and you had people requesting you, and you had really what you think was a very successful career, and then suddenly I think you maybe feel like, "Well, now, someone thinks I don't even know how to teach!" So that could be a very frustrating. (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

Intermediate teachers also were cognizant of the fact that the PLCs were substantially less frequent. They viewed this decrease in time as hindering their learning about literacy strategies and their support for implementation. Compared to when the primary grade and the special services teachers had weekly meetings during RF, the intermediate grade level teachers only had an hour once a month PLC meeting. The given time was not enough for them to learn all the new strategies of literacy instruction. One teacher described,

The other issue I had with the PLCs, I learned a lot from it. However, I did one QAR. That is one component of many reading strategies, and I would prefer being inundated with all of them. Because I said to [the principal], “By the time I get all of these, I’ll be retired! So how long is it going to take to get all these [strategies] implemented if we just do a little at a time like that?” (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

Lack of clarity about other professional development also was expressed by the intermediate grades teachers. They specifically commented on classroom visits and observations. As with the PLCs, all intermediate grade teachers were new to being visited and observed in their classrooms. They expressed discomfort with someone coming into their classrooms, and they were not familiar with the process or terminology of the observation protocol. A sampling of comments made about the classroom observations are offered here,

They [data collectors from University Center] are doing [observations] for a solid hour, in our rooms. So every single thing, every single word that is happening is recorded. If a student walks to the garbage can, it is “Student walks to garbage can,” or “Student blows nose.” It was that detailed. (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

I think that [classroom visits and observations] is what some of the resistance has been from, at least in the sixth grade. Because here they are coming into our room with these sheets that we do not even understand what these symbols mean. What did that even mean, what does that look like? So for us, it was, I think, rather than

just accepted, it was “What’s the point when you don’t even know what this means?” (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

Even the little walk through our principal had, before we started this [classroom visits and observations]. She would make a comment, “Well, what was your TOT [time on task] today?” And we would go, “What?” We didn’t even know what that was. That was on our first observations, our first year. And we thought, “What does that *mean*? TOT? Tot? What’s my tot?” (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

Several reasons were discerned that help understand the perspectives shared by the intermediate grade teachers about their participation in the professional development. These were: (1) no formal training, (2) insufficient time, and (3) perceptions about the suitability of the RF literacy instruction for the intermediate grades. First, no intermediate grade teachers had formal training about RF. During RF, the workshops by the University Center provided teachers with opportunities to learn about literacy instruction based on current research, and the PLCs and other professional development activities provided teachers with ways to discuss the strategies, to figure when and how to use the strategies, and to share and reflect on their experiences with implementation. The RF era workshops and the professional development activities were complementary. Without the formal training, the intermediate grade teachers did not have the understandings about why a certain strategy would be useful for literacy instruction. They also did not acquire the background knowledge about the “big picture” of literacy instruction. Not having this background resulted in some degree of incoherence, meaning working on part without understanding the whole. Consequently, their experience within the PLCs and in other professional development seemed incoherent. Many of the primary teachers involved in RF, along with the literacy coordinator, also could see the struggle of the intermediate

grade teachers being expected to learn and implement new strategies devoid of context and exacerbated by time constraints.

Second, most of the teachers, at all grade levels and among the special services teachers, agreed that the once a month PLC for an hour was not enough time to engage with new strategies of literacy instruction.

You have to play catch-up, that's exactly it. And I know that's been part of the problem. They [intermediate grades teachers] feel behind. Now we are only meeting once a month. And that's kind of [hard], and we did try to explain it that way, that it would be really hard to only work on one thing for a few months, because that's only three study groups [PLC]. And then to move on [to another strategy], that's not enough. You really do need more time. I think they [intermediate grades teachers] are coming around, they're feeling more comfortable. I think at first it was hard, and especially when you have people who have been in study groups [PLCs] before and they are talking, and they have this jargon. (*Special service teacher, Year 1 interview*)

The once a month PLC was problematic not only because it was less time for learning, but also because the intermediate grade level teachers wanted to learn more. As briefly mentioned, the intermediate grades teachers expressed their concerns about learning one strategy at a time. Additionally, because the PLCs were cross grade level structured, the intermediate grades teacher were together with the primary grade and the special services teachers who had been learning and studying the new literacy strategies for the past three years. These circumstances raised the level of concerns by the intermediate grades teachers resulting in “feeling behind” and also, sometimes, feeling “left alone” to figure things out. Moreover, there was no external facilitator, and the literacy coordinator time was significantly reduced. In the first post RF year, both the principal and literacy coordinator had to allocate more time than in the past to check in with each PLC. This shift in how their time was spent resulted in less time for them to

monitor progress, identify needs, and support teacher learning. Higher expectations and fewer resources diminished the intensity and depth of focus in the PLCs, as well as reduced learning support from the literacy coordinator.

Finally, because RF was a literacy reform designed for the primary grades, sometimes the components and the related professional development were viewed as not meeting the needs of either the intermediate grade students or teachers. The sixth grade teachers, for example, raised concerns about pressure from the seventh grade teachers about adequately preparing students for seventh grade. One intermediate teacher shared,

In 7th grade, when they [students] go on, I know their English focuses a lot of grammar, and that's something that [is not part of RF]. And creative writing, that's kind of lost in this year's. And that concerns me, because we are the ones that are going to hear [from high school teacher], "What have you been teaching these kids? They don't know their parts of speech." (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

Questions about the appropriateness of RF and some practices were also shared by some special services teachers. One special services teacher questioned the 120-minute reading block that she implemented in her classrooms.

Some of my students have had a hard time with this change, because it's been more focused on reading and for longer amounts of time. And that block of uninterrupted reading, some of my students can't handle that. It gets to be too much. And sometimes we'll see behaviors or we work in a break, or.... So, for some of my kids it has been a hard adjustment. (*Special services teacher, Year 1 interview*)

In summary, in the school year immediately following the last year of Reading First, Lakeview Elementary School continued their focus on improving literacy instruction and increasing the reading skills of the students. The RF types of professional development continued, but were, by and large, lessened. There was just one, instead of four, PLC meetings a month. There was no external facilitator, and the time allocated for

the school-based literacy coordinator decreased from full to half time. These reductions were noticed by RF participants, but were especially challenging for the intermediate grade teachers. To their credit, however, the intermediate teachers, for the most part, were interested in and willing to learn about the new literacy instruction and strategies. They were veteran teachers, most with more than 15 years of teaching experience, and they expressed enjoying the learning and the collaboration with their peers in other grade levels. One intermediate teacher explained,

I think the thing that made me feel more successful is going to other teachers. I learn more from other teachers. Like, at our PLCs I learned a lot from people. And just going to visit, I have a third grade friend who has gone through a lot more, and before every observation I would say, “This is what I’m going to do, what do you think? What am I missing?” She helped me so much. My colleague [name], too, she has had a lot more. She moved to 4th grade from kindergarten, had all the background. So I’d ask her, “What does this mean?” So that helped me understand what it was that I was doing, and those people helped. (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

Teachers involved during RF were supportive of their colleagues in the intermediate grades, remembering that a few years ago, “they were there, too.” The principal and literacy coordinator continued as strong leaders for continuing the RF professional development structures and processes. They also focused much of their support at the intermediate grade level given that these teachers in their first year of experiencing RF-like professional learning opportunities and literacy instruction expectations. Presented next is a more detailed description of the leadership practices demonstrated by the principal and the literacy coordinator in the first year after Reading First.

Leadership

Leadership by both the principal and the literacy coordinator, herein after referred to as the teacher leader, was somewhat necessarily expanded in scope during the first post RF year, especially given that there was no external facilitator and that the intermediate teachers were newly on board. Clearly, there was now a school-wide focus on literacy, including intentional opportunities to learn about strategies, determine when and where to use those strategies in the classroom context, and reflect on implementation. Presented in the following sections are findings from the interviews about ways that the principal and the teacher leader led the continuing school-wide literacy focused professional development. Also, ways in which the leadership team was involved in supporting professional development roles are presented.

Principal

As briefly described in Chapter One, the principal was the driving force of initiating and implementing RF and provided strong support for teacher learning. The principal continued to be the driving force of school improvement in this first post-RF year. She set the expectations and tone, she worked in partnership with the teacher leader, and she directly and indirectly supported teacher learning and implementation. Each of these dimensions of the principal's practices is described in detail in this section.

Lakeview teachers identified specific ways that the principal was involved in supporting their learning and practice. She made frequent classroom visits and checked in with teachers about what they were doing, how they were doing, and what assistance or support they needed. She was described by teachers as listening intently and providing positive feedback. This "visible support" of teacher learning by the principal also was

evident by her presence in PLCs. Although more constrained by time than during RF, she stopped by during PLC meetings to add another level of understanding about how literacy learning was being addressed and to monitor progress of the PLCs in the joint work to support students. By checking in with teachers in both the classrooms and in PLCs, the principal remained informed of and intentionally supported the literacy learning work. This provided the basis by which decisions were made about future professional development and school improvement in support of continuous teacher learning.

In addition to discerning a high level of visible principal support in the context of professional learning, analysis of the interview data emphasized a key role of this principal as seeking resources. More specifically, she (1) advocated for and secured funding for the professional development, (2) managed and scheduled time for the teachers to have more time together, and (3) brought in external support for the learning needs. First, because of the fiscal resources lost from the time of RF, she was able to successfully lobby the district and school board for additional resources. Fiscal resources were needed to continue support of teacher learning by paying stipends or hiring substitute teachers to create time for learning. She also rallied for resources to purchase more leveled books for students, especially important for the intermediate grades as they had few such text resources. Almost all the teachers mentioned the ability of the principal to secure funds. The principal described securing resources as “part of my job.”

I think the principal especially has looked for as many avenues as possible to fund getting more books, getting this [professional development continued]. [She finds ways] whether it's robbing from Peter to pay Paul, at times. (*Primary teacher, Year 1 interview*)

The principal also viewed as central to her work making connections between Lakeview and the surrounding community. She was very active in publicizing the good work and learning at LES and also in supporting broader understanding about what school improvement was. Presenting at the school board meetings, being actively involved in the school district, and building partnerships with other schools and the local community, all were a visible and earnest part of this principal's practices. One example stands out. As part of the process that ultimately resulted in gaining approval for district funds to purchase the Level III continuation of RF services, the principal invited school board members and other district personnel to visit classrooms to witness first-hand how instruction had improved as a result of professional development and intensive support provided at Lakeview. The principal took every opportunity to connect with district personnel. She understood that securing resources, particularly in a rural and low economic area, required understanding and support by district personnel and the community. When a new school superintendent arrived, for example, she did not hesitate to meet him in person and talk about the work at LES. Initially the new superintendent was not supportive of the school level professional development. The principal, however, ultimately acquired additional support. She explained,

When I found out that he [new superintendent] had this job, and he did not want these staff development days, and he did not think that a literary coordinator was necessary. He had been at another district that was part of the RF grant, but I think things had gone much differently in their school, from what I understand. So I met him for dinner one night, before he even started, and I shared with him a little bit of what we were doing, and I thought, "Oh, he can't come in and let things go!" I thought that he needs to see a little of what *we're* doing, so I shared a little bit.
(Principal, Year 1 interview)

Second, teachers acknowledged the extensive work involved in scheduling and appreciated the principal's persistence in scheduling, resulting in time allocated for professional development and time for the required 120 minute block. Common preparation time for grade level teachers also was secured so that the teachers could discuss and align their practices within each grade level. Further, the principal made sure that the district professional development days did not conflict with PLC days at Lakeview.

Finally, the principal brought in external support for teacher learning. This included connecting LES with external partners and bringing in experts. Specifically, the principal reached out and sought external assistance for instructional practices, teacher learning, and data assessments. Instructional coaches and data assessment experts were brought in to work with the teachers in analyzing student data and instructional practices. This was particularly helpful for the intermediate grades teacher because it provided more individual learning time.

With the external facilitator no longer available, the principal worked closely with the teacher leader. They shared responsibilities for the classroom visits and making decisions about the professional development, such as deciding the PLC topics and searching for the learning materials. They also shared the instructional leadership. The classroom visits and the observations, for example, were strategically planned in a way that the principal and teacher leader could provide the maximum benefits for the teachers. The principal explained,

[Teacher leader] and I have had a schedule where she is half time literacy coordinator this year, and she will go in and meet with all of the grade levels during one week. She will have a pre-conference, she will do her visit, and then

she will do a post-conference. And she will do two grade levels and two special services in a week. And then the following week I will come in and meet with those same people. And we rotate through them. When we finish our cycle, then we have a week like this week now, where we are doing walk-through [classroom visits]. (*Principal, Year 1 interview*)

In these post RF classroom visits, the principal role expanded somewhat as compared to during RF. During RF, she conducted classroom visits with the primary purpose of encouraging teachers and identifying their learning and support needs. In the first year post RF, however, she was more directly focused on improving instructional practice. The post visit debriefings took the form of conversations that resulted in highlighting strategies to improve instruction. The teacher leader shared,

I was worried this year, because last year or throughout the grant [RF], we had the external facilitator two days a week, so she [external facilitator] and I would team up, and this year without her I was like, “I can’t do this alone!” But the principal has ... [stepped in even more intensively in the role of instructional leader]. It has just become part of her position now. She always tries to give them [teachers] a reflection question or meet with them about it, after classroom visits. So it’s a different role, for the principal, but it’s working for us. (*Teacher leader, Year 1 interview*)

Increased involvement by the principal leadership in ground level instructional leadership support was a relief for the teacher leader. The absence of the external facilitator meant more leadership responsibilities for the two internal leaders – the principal and teacher leader. It was essential that they work together as a team for continuing the improvement efforts. Their partnership kept all school staff focused on improving literacy instruction and continuing their various forms of professional development.

In addition to maintaining a close and complementary relationship with the teacher leader, the principal also continued her strong engagement within the literacy

leadership team. As she did during RF, the principal continued to focus on creating ways to engage each team member and to build their leadership practices during the first year following RF. One primary teacher shared,

The [literacy] leadership team members get the information out and bring information back. I think the purpose of leadership team is also that if we were to have a new principal or something were to change that way, or not have the literacy coordinator, hopefully the leadership team would be strong enough that the team would carry on this reform. (*Primary teacher, Year 1 interview*)

Members of the literacy leadership team also spoke to the principal's work focused on building their individual and collective leadership capacity. In preparing for the literacy leadership team meetings, for example, the principal would work with a member or two to support them in being prepared to facilitate the leadership team meeting. As much as possible she would assume the position of member during the meetings, rather than being the leader or facilitator. School-wide meetings also were facilitated by the literacy leadership team with an agenda that they, as a team, created. Another example of how the principal involved team members was sharing decision-making processes that dealt with various matters of the professional development, such as, "what kind of things do we need our staff to know?" and "what needs to be done?" The principal knew that the literacy leadership team members served as both a communication channel and a point of peer influence throughout the school. Members solicited input from their colleagues about what they needed to continue to learn and improve their practices with students. Those voices were valued in the decisions that were made.

In summary, the principal leadership practices were focused on continuing the support for teacher learning through multiple forms of professional development. Being

intentionally visible and connected within the school and community, she was able to secure resources that allowed her to create a consistent schedule for embedded professional learning. The visible support was meaningful in that it showed her passion for improving literacy instruction and it set the tone that “this will be done.” Many of the leadership responsibilities were shared with the teacher leader and the literacy leadership team. Without a doubt, however, this principal was at the center of sustaining school-wide development focused on literacy. She and the teacher leader were interdependent in their leadership work, especially as related to influence on classroom instruction. The principal influence on the school literacy leadership team also was a key for continuing the momentum gained during RF. She was intentional in structuring ways to engage team members in taking on specific leadership roles within the team and in building their understanding about why leadership for improvement must be present throughout the building.

Teacher Leader

As mentioned in Chapter One, at the end of RF, Lakeview Elementary School developed the sustainability plan which included a half time literacy coordinator position, and was approved by the school board. The reduction to half time presented a challenge in supporting the wide range of professional development activities and expanding the learning and development to include the intermediate grade teachers. The teacher leader was faced with having to work with more teachers but having less time to do so. Her other roles associated with being literacy coordinator during RF also expanded in the first year post RF.

It was clear that the teacher leader worked more than her half time appointment. Her roles and responsibilities were not much different than in the RF years. The scope of her work clustered into three categories: (1) coordinating, organizing, and supporting the PLCs, (2) assisting teachers with their literacy instruction at the level of the classroom, and (3) sharing in the leadership of the literacy leadership team with the principal. First, related to the PLCs, she was the lead person in coordinating, organizing, and supporting even though the principal and members of the literacy leadership team were involved in some of this work. The teacher leader was much more directly involved in supporting the PLCs. When monitoring the PLC meetings, for example, her focus was on what the teachers needed, rather than just on monitoring the progress being made. She identified specific learning needs then located appropriate materials, such as research articles and other professional texts for the teachers. The principal spoke to the teacher leader's work in this area,

If you look at her [teacher leader's] desk, she's got books all over for research. She would say, "Well, we have a leadership team meeting coming up, and we need to find some good research to support this. It can't just be us saying this, we need something." So she will find some good research about the leadership team. And she finds articles and things for the PLCs as well. (*Principal, Year 1 interview*)

Locating research and other high quality literature around which the teachers would engage was identified as one of the major contributions for continuing the rigor of learning within the PLC meetings that had the effect of maintaining high commitment by teachers in the PLCs. One of the major foci of RF was to provide teachers with research-based literacy instructional strategies, and throughout RF, teachers came to understand what "research-based" meant and grew to embrace reading research articles to undergird

their knowledge and practice of literacy instruction. They were engaged in in-depth discussions about literacy instruction and were committed to improving their classroom practice. They commented that it made them feel very professional and informed from research.

Another way that the teacher leader supported teacher learning within the PLC meetings was by reviewing the notes from each PLC and the individual notes from each teachers. For the teachers, it was a way to ask questions or raise concerns regarding their learning within the PLC. Given the full participation of the intermediate grade teachers, the teacher leader's involvement with PLCs broadened and intensified in this first year post RF.

The second main area in which the teacher leader provided support occurred at the level of the classroom. Classroom visits provided more direct and individualized assistance for individual teachers aimed at improving their classroom practice. The teacher leader spent countless hours working with teachers in their respective classrooms. After each visit, the teacher leader held a coaching conference with the teacher, at the end of which she provided specific guidance and direction for improving literacy instruction. This process was viewed as particularly supportive and helpful by some of the intermediate grades teachers because it was their first year of involvement. One shared,

We have the literacy coordinator [teacher leader]..., I think [she] was really good, because after I would have a really frustrating day, I would come find her and say, "Well, I must not be doing anything right!" And then she says, "Okay, settle down, you're doing..." And then she would give me all these positive things that were going on, and say, "Yes, you were doing these all kinds of things well," and she just was very, very helpful. And she's very non-threatening in her approach, and I think that really helped me. Just these little pointers that then gave me credit for doing what she said I was doing, it's just that I didn't know why I wasn't getting credit for it. So she was just absolutely very helpful to me, and it helped

pull me into more confidence, because I was losing it. (*Intermediate teacher, Year 1 interview*)

In supporting the improvement of classroom practice, as the intermediate grade teacher indicated, the teacher leader's approach was "non-threatening." This non-threatening approach seemed part of what earned the teacher leader a high degree of trust and respect among the teachers at Lakeview. She had spent her entire career at LES and always was one of lead veteran teachers and frequently a mentor for many teachers. All of the intermediate grade teachers interviewed and many teachers in other grades mentioned their comfort interacting with the teacher leader when they were feeling overwhelmed or confused about the literacy instructional practices. The teacher leader also was the only person who reviewed the formal classroom observation data collected by the University Center staff. The data from these more formal observations were very specific about implementation of the literacy strategies. The teacher leader met individually with teachers to review these data together and to identify their learning needs and means of providing support to address those needs. These types of interactions, again, provided evidence about the high level of trust and regard for the teacher leader in the eyes of the teachers at Lakeview.

Finally, the teacher leader supported development work at the school level by sharing leadership roles and responsibilities with the principal and with members of the literacy leadership team. When making decisions about next steps in PLCs or other forms of professional development, the principal relied on the teacher leader for providing a current view about the state of literacy instruction in the classrooms. The teacher leader and principal "spent a lot of time together" reflecting on current practices, planning ahead

for future improvement work and securing resources. They both always participated in meetings at the district level and meetings specifically with the district superintendent and school board members. They were a team when presenting updates and plans for the purposes of securing additional resources to keep the momentum going for continuous improvement at Lakeview Elementary School.

The teacher leader and principal shared the same goal of involving the literacy leadership team members in leadership roles to develop their leadership capacity. The teacher leader stated,

I know that's [collective effort and sharing leadership] made a difference here, because it's hard for one person. I mean, it's impossible for one person to do it. And even our [literacy] leadership team, we just want them to step up more and be more involved, but we see small steps. I mean, it's not just going to happen.
(Teacher leader, Year 1 interview)

One example of intentionally working with the literacy leadership team members was to take on leadership roles involving coordination of the PLC. Decisions made about the PLC study topics, for example, resulted from the collective thinking and process of the team members, not the individual thinking and process of the teacher leader. Literacy leadership team reviewed student data to identify needs of both students and the teachers. This collaborative and participatory approach resulted in PLC topics that were agreeable to the teachers. Consequently, a high level of commitment by the teachers in PLCs was the result.

To summarize, the complementary nature of the principal and teacher leader leadership practices could be captured by the principal's support of teacher learning as "visible" and the teacher leader practices as less visible or "behind the scenes." When the principal was scheduling time for the teachers to participate in the professional

development activities, the teacher leader was focusing on ways that the times would be well spent and meaningful. When the principal visited classrooms and identified areas for improving instruction, the teacher leader coached teachers on ways they could change their teaching practice. Most of the teacher leader's leadership practices were tailored for individual needs of the teachers. The teacher leader guided each individual teacher in making sense of and figuring out implications for refinement of the specific teacher's instructional practices.

In addition to the classroom-level instructional leadership roles, the teacher leader also was involved in decision making at the school level. The principal and the teacher leader focused on collectiveness and involved the literacy leadership team members in the decision-making process. They shared the goal of involving the literacy leadership team in leadership roles and developing the leadership capacity of the teachers.

Literacy Leadership Team

As described in the previous discussions of the principal and teacher leadership practices, the literacy leadership team was a formal leadership structure that influenced professional development at Lakeview. The members of the team represented each grade level and special services teachers. The principal encouraged teachers to take turns for joining the leadership team. In this first year post RF, a sixth grade representative joined the team. The primary roles of the literacy leadership team were facilitating school-wide whole group meetings, coordinating the PLC, involving in decision-making processes of professional development, and communicating information between teachers and the principal and teacher leader.

Summary - Year One

In this first year after RF, diminished resources, along with an expanded scope of involvement (i.e., the inclusion of intermediate teachers), presented challenges for continuing focused and intensive professional learning opportunities at Lakeview Elementary School. Specifically, the time for PLC meetings was reduced to just once a month, the literacy coordinator position was reduced to half-time, and there was no external facilitator. This meant more work with less time for the school level leaders, namely the principal and the teacher leader, to support teacher learning, implementation, and refinement of literacy instruction. Despite these challenges, Lakeview was able to continue most of the professional development activities, at the school, team, and individual classroom practice levels. The PLC, for example, kept the same structures, including using protocols, keeping the cross grade level structure, and focusing on improving literacy instruction. Essentially, the types of professional development activities and the classroom practices identified in the sustainability plan remained intact.

This year was the first year that all teachers, that is, from kindergarten through sixth grade participated in the literacy reform. New to this reform, the intermediate grade teachers reported confusion; they were unsure, and sometimes confused, with the new literacy instruction and also “feeling behind” and “left alone.” Some of the learning challenge and the tension for the intermediate teachers was created by being expected to implement so much likely stemmed from the lack of opportunity to develop background knowledge or to be formally introduced to key concepts and practices. Not surprisingly, therefore, they felt left behind with a long way to go.

The two formal leaders, (the principal and the literacy coordinator) worked intensively in assisting and supporting the teachers, individually and collectively. The principal was active at the district and in the community and managed to secure resources that allowed scheduling PLC time and maintaining modest support for continuous improvement. The principal was very visible to the teachers, engaging with the teachers in the classrooms. This visible support not only showed her passion for improving literacy instruction, but also helped to set a positive and encouraging tone throughout the building. The teacher leader also was in the classrooms supporting teachers, more so in a private and personalized way dealing with improvement of classroom practice. This one-on-one support was especially helpful for the intermediate grade teachers. The teacher leader was viewed as “non-threatening,” and she was trusted and held in high regard. The literacy leadership team also was involved in leading continuous professional development. The principal and teacher leader intentionally worked to develop the individual and collective leadership capacity of the team members. With the sixth grade representative joining, the literacy leadership team had representatives from all grade levels, that is, from kindergarten to sixth. The primary roles of the literacy leadership team included facilitating school-wide whole group meetings, coordinating the PLC, and being a communication channel.

The principal described the teacher leader as her “partner” in supporting the teachers and the professional development. Their leadership practices were complementary. Their partnership contributed to keep the focus of Lakeview on improving literacy instruction by means of continuing their various forms of professional development. Like many of the teachers, the principal expressed a great deal of respect

for the teacher leader. She even indicated that she considered the teacher leader to be her mentor. At the end of the school year, the principal was notified that the teacher leader position was not approved by the school board for the following school year. Further, the teacher leader had decided to retire at the end of the present school year. The principal, along with many teachers, already were worried about the next school year without the teacher leader. The principal, however, indicated that she had plans for the teacher leader.

Year Two

In the second year after Reading First, Lakeview Elementary School was tested in its capacity to continue its goal to improve literacy instruction with an even greater decrease support and resources compared to the previous year. The school board did not approve funding of either the literacy coordinator position or the early release of students for the PLC time. Additionally, the external support from the University Center, which included summer workshops, quarterly leadership team meetings, and a data collector for classroom observation, was no longer available. The lack of support from the district and limited resources brought challenges to continue improving literacy instruction by means of professional development. The absence of the literacy coordinator position, especially, affected the professional development. Organizing and scheduling the PLC alone was a challenge, which was the primary role of the teacher leader. Decreased focus on improving instructional practice in the professional development also was evident. Further, the one-on-one individually tailored coaching for the teachers was no longer available.

The leadership practices of the principal also were influenced by the absence of the teacher leader in the literacy coordinator position. The principal's roles changed to an

even greater extent than Year One post Reading First. She assumed many of the responsibilities of the teacher leader. The principal became even more involved in classroom level instructional leadership roles, allocating greater amounts of time for classroom visits and directly supporting the instructional practice of the teachers. Additionally, ways in which the principal shared leadership roles with the literacy leadership team changed. The members of the literacy leadership team were involved to a greater extent with coordinating and organizing the PLCs, reviewing group and individual PLC notes, and participating in decision-making about professional development.

As previously stated, the principal knew that the literacy coordinator position was not approved for the year (Year Two), and she indicated she had a plan for the teacher leaders. Instead of the literacy coordinator, the teacher leader was hired as a half-time district testing coordinator. Although this position was a district position responsible for coordinating student assessments at both elementary and high school, the principal explained that it was the only way to have the teacher leader “around.” The teacher leader, in this testing coordinator position, found ways to support the teachers at Lakeview. In facilitating data meetings, which was one of the primary roles of the testing coordinator, the teacher leader focused on providing useful information particularly related to the needs of teachers within the PLCs and the learning needs of the students.

In the second year after RF, there were no changes at Lakeview in terms of student demographics. There were approximately 400 students enrolled with 14% identified as special education and 55% as qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. Most of the teachers had remained, with only two new hires replacing the kindergarten

teacher and special service teacher who left LES. The new kindergarten teacher had been a long-term substitute teacher at LES during RF and familiar, therefore, with the professional development and literacy instruction reform. The new special services teacher, however, had not prior experience of RF related practices.

The following sections present findings related to the professional development as well as the leadership practices during the second year after Reading First. First, the findings of the continued professional development and the findings of the changed perception of the intermediate grades teachers of professional development are provided. Then, the findings of leadership practices of principal, teacher leader (as the testing coordinator), and literacy leadership team are presented.

Professional development

In the second year post Reading First, the professional development at Lakeview continued to be largely aligned with the goal of improving literacy instruction and the reading skills of the students. The topics of the PLC for this year, for example, included Question Answer Relationship (QAR), Literacy Circle, and Comprehension Process Instruction (CPI), which were focusing on literacy instruction. Most professional development from previous years continued, namely PLCs, peer visits, and school-wide whole group meeting. In this second year post RF, the intermediate grades teachers were much more positive about their participation in these literacy focused professional development activities. Although there were some variations in how they perceived the solitary focus on literacy and not having math or writing, the intermediate grades teachers showed comfort in sharing ideas and discussing literacy instructional strategies. Not surprisingly, however, for most of the PLC groups, with the literacy coordinator no

longer available, the intensity and rigor of the activities decreased compared to the previous

In this second year post RF, there were a total of seven PLC groups. Three groups focused on QAR, two groups worked on Literacy Circles, and the other two groups studied CPI. Of these seven groups, five maintained a multiple grade level structure with the intermediate grades teachers, and two groups (i.e., the kindergarten and first grade teachers) focused on early primary grade vocabulary, which appropriately did not include intermediate grades teachers. The learning structure within the PLCs mostly remained the same as during RF. Teachers in their respective PLC maintained the rotation of roles, such as facilitator, time keeper, and note keeper. The activities also remained the same from RF, specifically studying research articles, sharing and reviewing student work, and sharing videotaped classroom practice. Additionally, teachers continued to keep their individual PLC notes.

The meeting time for the PLCs remained the same as the previous year, once a month for an hour. (Recall that during RF, PLCs met weekly.) In this second year posts RF, instead of meeting on days and times when students were released early from school, the meetings were held after school. The school board did support maintaining early release to allow for site-based professional learning. Lakeview teachers, however, were willing to sustain the PLCs by meeting after school until quarter to five and them having a day off in January. While most teachers participated in the after school PLCs, a few left after school hours, leaving the PLC meetings after about 40 minutes. Many teachers, including the principal, expressed their concerns about being interrupted and not having consistent members within their PLC groups. One special services teacher, for example,

shared that the teachers who left were “missing the learning” and that “the integrity of the program [PLC]” was hindered.

One reason for decreased support by the school board and district for early release for professional development emerged in the interviews. Recall that the district had a new superintendent the previous year (year one post RF) and that he was not supportive of the site-based professional development given his prior experience with Reading First in a different district. The principal shared,

I still work with the superintendent sometimes. He doesn't buy into these PLCs like I want. And teachers are willing to do that [PLC] because they're beginning to see the value in that. So I guess our goal is, we need to get to the board and district because we still need time and resources to do what we need. *(Principal, Year 2 interview)*

Lack of support and resources from the district and school board seemed to foster distrust between the teachers and the district and board. One teacher in the primary grade expressed that she felt like she was “up against a brick wall.” Another primary teacher shared,

This year we didn't have early outs... because the school board or district thought we needed more academic time instead of time off to do professional development. Right now our school board does not see the benefit of it [PLC]. And I don't know if anyone else has brought that up, but, we do not get, really, any time [for professional development]. *(Primary teacher, Year 2 interview)*

Another form of professional development that continued despite lacking resources and support was the peer visits. In this second year, the peer visits were coordinated based on the needs of individual teachers. This broadened the opportunities for teachers to collaborate with their peers concerning both their classroom practice as well as student learning. A special services teacher, for example, visited the fifth grade classrooms because, mostly, she served the students in that grade level. Because the peer

visits were arranged based on interests and needs of teachers, much of the coordinating could occur through teachers, frequently, teachers within the same PLC group. Typically, teachers were interested in observing instructional practice or implementation of strategies that were the topic of their PLC. Their visits, therefore, were most often to the classrooms of teachers within their own PLC.

The structure of the peer visits remained the same as during RF. Once a peer visit was arranged, teachers held pre-visit for sharing class objectives and identifying the strategy that would be used. After the visit and observation, a follow-up meeting was scheduled to discuss their observations and learning related to both implementing strategies and student learning. These processes were adapted slightly after reviewing a peer coaching protocol that the principal acquired from the state department of education. This protocol included guiding questions focused on observing instructional practice, such as “what is happening in instruction?” “what strategies do you see?” and “what could you apply to your classroom?” More in-depth discussions of instructional practice and improving student learning resulted.

In the professional development activities, the primary and special services teachers continued their active involvement in learning literacy instructional strategies and sharing thoughts and ideas with their peers. Additionally, in this year, the intermediate grades teachers showed a higher level of comfort participating in the professional development, compared to the previous year. Recall that in the previous year the intermediate grades teachers expressed confusion in learning within the PLC and discomfort being visited and visiting other classrooms. In year two, most intermediate grade teachers expressed that they saw the “benefits to the students” with the new

strategies of literacy instruction implemented in their classrooms. Specifically, they viewed reviewing student work in the PLCs as a chance to think about how they would refine strategies in their own classrooms. Sharing ideas and having discussions with their peers were thought to be beneficial. Further, the intermediate grades teachers were much more comfortable participating in the cross grade level peer visits. One teacher expressed that she “enjoyed” visiting primary grade classrooms. She explained,

I got to visit a book club [focused on literacy instruction] and I just found that was so neat to go and watch. And that was just so good. And then, now I’m doing book clubs, and today I had someone watch me. Then we talked at lunchtime and she gave me feedback on how she thought it was going. They were doing cause and effect and they would say things like, “I infer.” And they were second graders, and I thought, “Yes! Wow!” So that was really neat and I really enjoyed that experience. I was a little nervous about doing this because I thought, “Oh no, one more thing we’re going have to do is this peer visit thing.” But I just enjoyed it so much. (*Intermediate teacher, Year 2 interview*)

The intermediate grades teachers were in their second year of participating in the RF-like professional development, and there was a big change in their views compared to the previous year. Most intermediate grades teachers shared that they became familiar with the routines and knowledgeable with the materials. The primary and special services teacher often “slowed things down” for their colleagues in the intermediate grades. This helped the intermediate grades teachers to “catch up” with the learning and familiarize themselves with the materials. The intermediate grades teachers also expressed that the support from the teacher leader helped them to learn about the strategies of literacy instruction. The teacher leader’s support for the intermediate grades teachers provided a “comfort zone” for learning. Specifically, the teachers described that the one-on-one tailored support gave them confidence about implementing and changing their classroom practice because they became more knowledgeable about the instructional strategies. As

the teachers implemented the new instructional strategies, they saw the difference in student learning. The positive outcome of the students reinforced the teachers to engage in professional development more enthusiastically.

The continued learning structure also was identified as the key to this change of the intermediate grades teachers' participation in professional development. Although the individual learning support from the teacher leader was not available in this second year, the job-embedded learning structure, such as PLCs and peer visits, provided consistent learning time for the teachers. Relevant learning opportunities also were provided by means of professional workshops. The principal encouraged and supported intermediate grades teachers to attend external workshops related to literacy. One workshop that was exclusively for the intermediate grades teachers was about utilizing book clubs. Book clubs were structured to provide students opportunities to read books of interest and interact around the text and with their peers by employing use of a literacy circle, which was one of the topics of the PLC. Many intermediate teachers were utilizing book clubs within their classrooms. The intermediate grades level teachers expressed that having the training through an external workshop was beneficial because they were able to understand the big picture. Further, by attending the external workshops and bringing back their experiences to the PLC meetings, the intermediate grade level teachers developed a stronger sense of belonging and ownership of the professional development and school improvement efforts.

In this second year post RF, the professional development activities continued with the same structures, focus on literacy, and frequency. To some extent, however, the quality and intensity of the learning seemed to have lessened. Some teachers remarked

that they missed the teacher leader and they also missed reading research. For example, most PLC groups were using professional books as their learning material instead of research articles. “Research-based” learning was one of the major components of Reading First, and studying research articles was an activity that assisted the teachers learning about literacy instruction and supported their understandings of implementation in their classrooms. They learned to appreciate reading the actual research and felt well informed by valid resources. Additionally, the individually tailored support for improving classroom practice was no longer available. Although the principal’s classroom visits and observations continued, the number of overall observations was, understandably, less and the instructional focus was less tailored for individual teachers than it had been when the teacher leader also was conducting classroom observations. Although many teachers felt that “everybody moved on to a point where it is ok [without the teacher leader],” they expressed that they missed the support from her and that they needed to have the literacy coordinator position.

In summary, during the second year post-RF, LES continued the same professional development activities but with some modifications. The structure and frequency of the PLCs and the peer visits remained the same, as did the focus on literacy. The intermediate grades teachers had grown to appreciate the professional development. They were active participants and had developed a sense of ownership. Due to the diminished level of fiscal support locally, however, there were some significant challenges. The PLC groups had to meet after school and not all members stayed the entire time. The absence of the teacher leader serving the literacy coordinator was viewed as diminishing the overall quality, intensity and personalization of the professional

development. The principal's classroom visits and observations were continued and were appreciated, although there was insufficient time to provide the one-on-one tailored support to which the teachers had grown accustomed. Additionally, the professional development was found to be less intense.

The challenges caused by the absence of the teacher leader were not only limited to the professional development, but also to the professional learning leadership of Lakeview. The findings of the principal leadership, the roles of the teacher leader as the testing coordinator, and the shared leadership practices of the literacy leadership team are presented next.

Leadership

Although the teacher leader was "around" and able to support professional development in her new position as the testing coordinator, loss of the teacher leader in her former roles had a dramatic impact on the leadership practices of the principal and the members of the literacy leadership. In brief, they had to take on more of the overall leadership functions. In particular, the principal, specifically, took over most of the instructional leadership roles. The literacy leadership team members were more involved with organizing and coordinating the PLC meetings and assisting teachers with their learning needs. In this section, the changes in the second year post RF leadership practices of the principal, teacher leader, and the literacy leadership team are presented.

Principal

My goal is that when these kids leave, they are achieving. That they are happy and healthy and that they are academically where they need to be and ready to go on to college. They are confident. And so, how do you get that out of kids? It's through instruction. And so my role has been to work with teachers to get our kids to that point. (*Principal, Year 2 interview*)

The preceding quotes exemplifies the clear vision and goals the principal held for the students at Lakeview. She knew that high quality instruction was the means for achieving the goals. She also knew the lack of fiscal support from the school board and the district presented challenges to achieving the goal. The principal viewed her role as promoting continuous teacher learning by engaging directly with teachers and inspiring their motivation to learn. The principal continued her support for teacher learning by bringing in external experts and partners, finding resources for teachers, and setting a positive tone for the professional development. Her leadership practices, however, focused most intensively on instruction. With the teacher leader now serving as the district testing coordinator, the principal was the only formal instructional leader in the building. She prioritized her instructional leadership roles as working with the new teachers, assisting all teachers to improve their classroom practices, and supporting the PLCs. Although these roles were not new, they were enacted somewhat differently than in the previous years. In the classroom visits, for example, the principal took on a role of providing specific feedback about instructional practices. Whereas, in previous years, the primary purpose of her visits was to more in formally check-in, monitor practices, and identify potential areas or means of support. Some of the teachers expressed that the classroom visits conducted by the principal in the second year felt like a more “formal evaluation” of their classroom practice. The principal recognized this concern and shared,

The classroom visits and observations are for their own [teachers’] personal goals and development, but I understand that when their *principal* comes in with a piece of paper [observational protocol] and checking things..., it’s hard for them.
(*Principal, Year 2 interview*)

Most of the instructional leadership was led by the principal but also shared by the literacy leadership team members. Specifically, the literacy leadership team was involved in organizing and coordinating PLCs, reviewing the individual PLC notes, and participating in the decision-making process about the focus and forms of professional development. The principal believed in a team approach to leadership for school improvement and identified specific ways to develop instructional leadership capacity of teachers, primary by means of the leadership team. In this second year, for example, the principal invited members of the literacy leadership team to join her to attend an instructional leadership workshop for school administrators. She explained,

Those people [literacy leadership team members] invigorate their grade level, and we've got to have the long lever of leadership, it cannot just be the principal. So keeping the [literacy] leadership team has been important. (*Principal, Year 2 interview*)

From the last year of RF, none of the decisions about the professional development were made by the principal alone. Instead all school members, including the teacher leader, literacy leadership team members, and other teachers, were involved in making the decisions. The continuation of the PLC, for example, was decided based on a school-wide survey asking whether the teachers wanted to continue. Additionally, it was a common practice of the principal to initiate conversations with teacher with the following prompts, “where are we now?”, “are we done yet?”, “can we afford to quit?”, and “what do we need to keep working on?” Teachers viewed the principal as the “motivator” and “supporter” in the school development work. The principal also viewed her role as creating a team environment for continuing professional development.

In summary, taking over most of the instructional leadership roles of the teacher leader, the leadership practices of the principal were increasingly focused on intentionally support of teacher learning to advance classroom practice. The instructional leadership roles were not new for the principal, but especially in the area of classroom visits, the focused intensified such that she provided direct feedback to the teachers. She felt this was an essential support for teachers and given the loss of the teacher leader, the principal stepped more deeply into classroom level development. She expressed concern, however, that such direct involvement might be perceived as “evaluative,” rather than “developmental.” A detailed description of the shared leadership practices between the principal and literacy leadership team is presented later in the Literacy Leadership Team section.

Teacher Leader

In the second year post RF, the title of the teacher leader’s position was K-12 testing coordinator. The position was a part-time, district-wide position, funded by the school district. She worked for two days in a week to serve teachers at both LES and the high school. The primary roles of the testing coordinator were preparing for all student assessments, such as State comprehensive assessments and NWEA, also organizing, coordinating, and facilitating data review meetings with the teachers. At LES, data meetings involved all teachers at a particular grade level, along with the Title teacher who served that grade and the principal. The teacher leader viewed much of this work as similar to work she had previously done as the literacy coordinator, although her responsibilities were now district wide. She indicated feeling comfortable with the testing coordinator responsibilities.

The teacher leader's responsibilities as assessment coordinator did not allow time to continue her direct support for teacher learning in the classroom. She did, however, support classroom instruction in other ways. Because the teacher leader was familiar with the LES teachers and knew their needs, she was able to identify data that would be especially useful for the teachers to inform both instructional practice and professional learning interests and needs. LES teachers had prior experience utilizing student data in to make decisions about professional development. As the principal pointed out, however, they "struggled" to utilize student data to directly inform changes in classroom practice. In the data meetings, the teacher leader guided teachers in interpreting assessment data and figuring out implications for improving classroom instruction. Data about individual students was typically the focus of conversations in the data meetings. Questions that guided the data meetings were focused on how students were progressing, specifically which students had met the benchmarks in specific aspects of literacy and which did not. Conversations were guided to support coming up with ways teachers could modify instruction to better support the literacy learning of students. One primary teacher explained,

We went to [data meetings to] understand what the results were and then how to interpret the data. And that helped to determine what happened in your classroom. It was not a standardized test, it was an individual test. Just to see what their [students'] progress was. And to determine what we needed to improve on and get a pat on the back. You know, you need those positives, as well as what you can always improve on. (*Primary teacher, Year 2 interview*)

Another way the teacher leader supported teacher learning was by participating in the PLCs. The principal was able to schedule the work days of the teacher leader on days of the monthly PLC meetings, and because the PLCs were held after school, the teacher

leader managed to drop in on most of the PLCs. With limited time the teacher leader was not able to provide the kinds of support that she did in the previous years, but her presence was still valued by the teachers. The teacher leader also participated in the literacy leadership team meetings. The principal and the literacy leadership team members asked for her thoughts and input for meeting agendas for the whole group meetings and for making decisions about professional development.

Despite these efforts on the part of the teacher leader to engage with teachers and support their learning, without the teacher leader position focused entirely on literacy development, LES was challenged to provide the same quality and intensity of the site-based professional development. As previously described in the professional development section, the texts used in the PLCs were not assuredly research-based. Locating and distributing the learning materials (i.e., research articles) was one of the primary roles of the teacher leader from RF. Although the principal was more directly involved in this second year post-RF year, it proved exceedingly difficult to access research articles directly aligned with the literacy learning needs of the teachers. Some teachers indicated they continued to connect with the teacher leader, asking research articles. Despite a high desire on the part of the teacher leader (now testing coordinator) to continue supporting teachers in this way, she did not have sufficient time to find articles. She expressed regret because she firmly believed that teachers “need good research for their learning.”

Another area in which LES was challenged to continue providing intensive professional learning support was with new teachers. Teachers, who were interviewed in this second year, expressed a great amount of concern for the two teachers new to

Lakeview. To learn about the school more generally, as well as learn about literacy practice, these new teachers had to rely almost exclusively on support from the principal and from grade level peers. There was no intentional support system in the district or at Lakeview for new teachers. Teachers viewed this as a “huge roadblock” in terms of sustaining literacy practices and professional development. Knowing that LES would be acquiring new teachers the following year due to forthcoming retirements, their concern was heightened to an even greater degree. Teachers emphasized how significant and helpful it would be for new teachers to be supported by the teacher leader. One intermediate grade teacher described her experience with the teacher leader last year when she first participated in the literacy-focused professional development at LES. She shared,

I thought of her [teacher leader] almost that way [support for new teachers] because she was always patting me on the back. Kind of like as a parent, when you're trying to build your kids up and.... But then, I think we will need to have, if we get new teachers, we will need to have [a] mentor. I think that will be important, because I think that if you are new, it is good to have somebody that you can go talk to that will not be evaluating you in any way, and they could have [the teacher leader] (*Intermediate teacher, Year 2 interview*)

Finally, in the previous year, the principal and teacher leader worked as partners in supporting teacher learning and the professional development. In this year, the principal pointed out several areas where she hoped for the teacher leader's “help.” The principal shared that she missed the teacher leader's “eyes and ears and the expectations in the classrooms.” As a veteran teacher, the teacher leader was the ideal person to lead the development work at the classroom instructional level. The principal asked the teacher leader if she would be willing to work one more year as the literacy coordinator. The approval for the position was not certain at time.

In summary, the teacher leader as the testing coordinator found ways to support the teachers in improving their classroom practices by providing useful student data. She facilitated data meetings with the teachers and helped them in understanding and interpreting the data so that the teachers could make changes in their classroom practice. The teacher leader also participated in professional development, namely the PLCs, as well as the literacy leadership team meetings. With the limited time, however, her participation was minimal, and she was not able to provide the kinds of support that she did in the previous years. It was discerned that the absence of the teacher leader as the literacy coordinator brought several challenges. The research-based learning was lacking in the professional development. The principal was without her partner in leading the professional development and school improvement work.

Literacy Leadership Team

As previously noted, the leadership responsibilities in supporting teacher learning and professional development were shared with members of the literacy leadership team. Specifically, the literacy leadership team members were involved in (1) organizing and coordinating PLCs, (2) reviewing the individual PLC notes, and (3) participating in the decision making process about professional development plans. First, the team organized and coordinated the PLC. The team members also monitored the progress of the PLC meetings and identified learning needs of the teachers. This information was shared in the literacy leadership team meetings with the principal, which kept her informed about the teacher needs and served as guidance in making decisions about professional development.

Second, the literacy leadership team members were involved in reviewing the teachers' individual PLC notes. Each month, two members of the team shared this role with the principal. This was a new role for the team members, however, when members found out that the literacy coordinator position was not supported this year, many members "just expected" they would be taking on that role.

Finally, the literacy leadership team was even more involved in decision making about the professional development. The literacy leadership team in previous years had participated in the decision-making process, but in this year, they were in the lead role in making decisions and planning for professional development. The decision to structure peer visits across grade levels, for example, was a decision made by the literacy leadership team. This was based on conversations with their grade level teachers and both hearing and seeing the benefits of the peer visits in other grades. Several interviewees suggested that the decisions made with more direct involvement of the literacy leadership team members were more supported by the teachers at large, because the team members communicated concerns, needs, and interests from their grade level into the decision-making process.

Summary - Year Two

In the second year after Reading First, most of the professional development, such as the PLC and peer visits, continued. The intermediate grades teachers perceived their participation in the professional development much more positively and "enjoyed" learning through the activities. Specifically, they viewed their participation in the PLC and peer visits as an opportunity to think about their implementation of the new strategies of literacy instruction and to share ideas with their peers. This shift in perspective seemed

supported, in part, through helpful and affirming support offered by primary and special services teachers, as well as the teacher leader. Additionally, the job-embedded learning structures of PLCs and classroom peer visits provided consistent learning time, and by attending external workshops, the intermediate grades teachers developed a deeper understanding and sense of ownership of the professional development.

The teacher leader was hired as the district testing. The primary role of the teacher leader was organizing and preparing student assessments and coordinating data meetings with the teachers. In the data meetings that the teacher leader facilitated, she guided the teachers with what the assessment data meant and discussed ways to change and improve their classroom instruction. Although the teacher leader was able to participate in the PLC and the literacy leadership team meetings, without a position solely dedicated to assisting teacher learning and supporting professional development, i.e., literacy coordinator, Lakeview faced various challenges.

Without the teacher leader as the literacy coordinator, the principal was involved in direct instructional leadership roles. She allocated more time conducting classroom visits and assisting the improvement efforts of instructional practice. The direct instructional leadership roles required her to engage with the teachers in a different way. Instead of providing support by encouraging and identifying needs, she was involved in directly assisting the development and improvement work of classroom practice, which was sometimes viewed, by the teachers, as a formal evaluation rather than learning and development.

It was discerned that the principal's "team approach" for school improvement played a significant role in continuing the professional development. The principal

emphasized the importance of involving teachers in leadership roles. The principal and the literacy leadership team shared the leadership roles. Specifically, the literacy leadership team shared the roles in organizing and coordinating PLC, reviewing the individual PLC notes, and participating in decision making about the professional development.

Year Three

Lakeview Elementary School received the “gift” that all teachers and the principal were hoping for. The teacher leader was hired back as the literacy coordinator. She was hired for a total of 72 days for the third school year post RF, which was about two days a week. Teachers expressed a sense of relief and excitement that the literacy coordinator position was approved and that the teacher leader returned. The teacher leader performed the same roles as she did during RF and during the first year post-RF, supporting teacher learning and the professional development. The complementary leadership role between the principal and teacher leader and among the leadership team also returned. In this third year post RF, the teacher leader’s return as the literacy coordinator energized Lakeview.

Three years after Reading First, LES maintained the same school wide goal focusing on improving literacy instruction and increase students’ reading skills. Additionally, LES applied for and received a grant titled Reforming Effective Literacy Instruction (RELI) from a regional cooperative education district. LES’s highly valued external facilitator from during RF returned to LES as the facilitator of RELI grant, herein referred as to RELI facilitator. The grant program included peer visits, instructional modeling by the RELI facilitator, and workshops and discussions of

improving literacy instruction. Teachers explained that the RELI program was like a “mini PLC,” and they felt comfortable working with the RELI facilitator.

In this third year, there was a slight increase in student enrollment with approximately 440 students enrolled, up from 400 the year before. Percentages of students receiving support services, however, remained about the same. Additionally, there were four newly hired teachers and two who changed grade level. Specifically, one kindergarten, two first grade, and one special service teachers were newly hired, and one kindergarten and one fourth grade teachers were new to the grade level.

In the following sections, findings about ways in which professional development and leadership practices continued and shifted during the third year post-RF are presented. The findings of this year are focused on the professional development activities that were sustained over the three years and the leadership practices that fostered the continuation of the professional development.

Professional development

The professional development was described by many teachers as “one thing that we do not want to let go away.” The PLC was viewed as a valuable time to interact with the teachers in other grade levels and as a time to discuss their classroom instruction with an intentional aim toward continuous improvement. The peer visits also were perceived as an opportunity for reflective learning with one another and understanding the instructions in other grade levels. These two forms of professional development had remained during the first two years post-RF and were clearly operation in this third year as well. For most of the teachers, including the primary, intermediate, and special

services teachers, it was their fifth or sixth year participating in the same forms of, largely, job-embedded professional development.

Since the beginning of Reading First, the PLC (labeled “study group” during RF) served as the core form of professional development. In this third year post RF, the PLCs continued and became even more stable and vibrant with the teacher leader returning to the literacy coordinator position. It was not just her roles in supporting teacher learning that stabilized and energized the PLCs, but it was also the sense of security she implicitly offered that was identified by teachers as providing “relief”. They looked forward to the personal support she would provide. Additionally, the teacher leader brought back the focus on research-based learning, with research articles, once again, becoming centrally featured in PLC learning. Further, she continued organizing and facilitating engagement around student assessment data for grade level teacher teams. Having worked as the testing coordinator the previous year, the teacher leader had become even more adept in her own understanding and use of data in ways that directly supported teaching and student learning.

The Reforming Effective Literacy Instruction grant program also lifted teacher learning through the PLC, especially, for the teachers who participated in grant. The RELI grant was a residency program focusing on effective literacy instruction. The RELI facilitator came to LES and worked with the teachers five days for the school year. Two teacher groups, one kindergarten and one Title teachers, participated in the program. Substitute teachers were hired using RELI grant funds. This freed up the teachers to participate in various forms of professional development. The professional development included peer visits, lesson modeling by the RELI facilitator, and intense reflective

conversations about effective literacy instruction. The teachers expressed feeling comfortable and excited by the RELI program, in part because much of the content and activities were complementary to what they had already been doing in the realm of classroom practice and professional learning. One teacher described,

We talk about the research. We talk about what we're already doing and what we'd like to do and what we're willing to do. And that's what we're doing with [professional development at LES].... They're different subject matters. But kind of a mini-PLC. (*Primary teacher, Year 3 interview*)

In this third year post RF, when teachers were asked about the professional development opportunities that they engaged with, most, if not all, teachers first mentioned the PLC. This was also the case among the new teachers. It became clear that most of the teachers preferred job-embedded professional learning opportunities (e.g., PLCs, peer visits) over more context removed learning, such as external workshops. One of the main reasons for this preference was the opportunity to “share ideas” with peers in their school. Virtually all the teachers indicated that PLCs were beneficial because teachers were able to share ideas with one another, that is, to hear and see what other teachers were doing in their classrooms and to share ideas of improving classroom practices. Some remarked further that as they became more familiar with the instructional routines and more knowledgeable of the content, they were able to have more in-depth conversations about teaching, learning, and individual students. Clearly, PLCs were viewed as a time during which their learning needs were addressed and supported. One teacher described PLCs as the “most influential” learning opportunity. Other concurred. An intermediate teacher stated,

I think our PLCs would be probably the most influential to us. I am in a group that, [Name] is not in my group, but I have my other 2 fifth grade teachers, and

there is a 4th grade and a 3rd grade teacher. And we are reading a book that is *Comprehension Beyond the Primary*. We read a chapter for each time, and then we try to make a goal of what we are going to work on. And then we bring in student work and we videotape, we take turns videotaping, and then we share that when we meet..... We've learned through RF that we should have a balance of small group, large group, and individual. So that has been one of our focuses and then PLC and I think it has been really good, because we all share ideas and then we all work on it. (*Intermediate teacher, Year 3 interview*)

Before RF, without the job-embedded learning structures, opportunities for collaboration among teachers were limited at LES. Most teachers were teaching in isolation and no collaborative work occurred among and between classroom teachers and special services teachers. The PLCs changed the way in which the teachers worked together. It was found that teachers engaged in conversations about classroom instruction even outside of the PLC meetings in the areas such as hallways and the teachers' lounge. Additionally, the cross grade level structure allowed the teachers to engage with teachers in other grade levels. The PLC allowed a collective participation and all school members, from kindergarten through sixth grade were on the "same page." As many teachers pointed out, being on the same page was essential for collaborative work and for students to have consistency throughout the school that made their engagement more cogent. Newly hired teachers also recognized and appreciated the value of collaborating in the context of their PLC.

Another reason why teachers favored learning within their PLCs over other types of learning opportunities was the use of authentic "texts", such as actual research papers and student data. During RF, the purpose of the PLC was to provide learning time focused on new strategies of literacy instruction that were based on current research. The

research-based learning was continuously emphasized after RF, and the teachers “loved” studying research articles. One primary teacher shared,

I read a lot of articles from ASCD [Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development], and I really enjoy their publications. I use a lot of that information in my classroom. And I really love to read the research. I would have never even thought about it, but now it is part of my everyday..., and to even tell my kids what I’m doing as a reader motivates them. (*Primary teacher, Year 3 interview*)

The teachers explained that they enjoyed reading research articles because they helped them to understand the new instructional strategies, and they were able to use the research as a guideline for implementing new strategies. The teacher also pointed out that they trusted instructional strategies that were research-based because “it was not someone talking about things, like at workshops and in books,” but “it was tested, used over time, and was not a flash in the pan because one person thought it would work.” (*Primary teacher, intermediate teacher, Year 3 interview*)

Data-driven learning also was appreciated by the teachers. The research-based and data-driven learning were complementary dimensions of the professional learning. Research articles studied within the PLC were based on the learning needs of the students. The teachers reviewed student work in their PLCs, and the PLC topics also were based on the student assessment data results. Additionally, the learning needs of the teachers were incorporated in the PLCs. Teacher data, such as classroom observation data and teacher surveys, were used to determine PLC topics. Teachers appreciated the decisions made based on data, because they reflected the needs of LES students and the teachers.

Compared to the PLC, the peer visits were less emphasized during RF. Recall that the peer visit was implemented in the final year of the RF. With the relatively short

period of time, however, the peer visits reportedly were viewed as being of high benefit to the teachers for increasing reflection on their classroom practice and subsequently improving their practice. Clearly, peer visits were one of the most preferred forms of professional learning. One primary grade teacher shared,

One thing I know that we're doing more of across the different grades is peer visits, going into each other's classrooms. I had three come in today, so that was fresh in my mind. But going into different classrooms and reflecting on, I think it provides a lot of time for reflection when you know someone is in your room. You are really thinking of the purpose, too, beyond what you do normally.
(Primary teacher, Year 3 interview)

The peer visits were specifically focused on improving instructional practices. Visits were coordinated in ways that allowed teachers to visit other teachers' classrooms to see how literacy instructional strategies were implemented. The protocol used for the peer visits included questions such as what is happening in instruction, what strategies do you see, and what could you apply to your classroom? These questions helped the teachers reflect and engage in post-observation conversations focused on instructional matters. Both the teachers who observed and the teachers who were observed were viewed as learning through the peer visits. On the one hand, the teacher who observed a classroom could reflect on her own practices; on the other hand, the teacher who was observed had to reinforce her practices knowing that someone had chosen or was guided to observe her classroom. Post observation meetings always were scheduled and, sometimes, the teacher leader joined the meeting to offer guidance and direction for improving classroom practice. Teachers also mentioned that peer visits benefited the students. Teachers explained that by visiting other grade level classrooms, they were able

to see how strategies in their grade level transferred to the next grades and that they were able to focus more on what matters to the students. One primary teacher said,

For me, in kindergarten, I can see how what I'm doing is transferred to second grade. And the second grade teacher in my particular group can see where the kids are starting, and we make sure we are teaching kind of the same thing, so that it'll transfer every grade.

(Primary teacher, Year 3 interview)

Another benefit of the peer visits was their function as a learning structure for new teachers. Whether teachers were new to the building or new as a teacher out of college, they needed to learn the literacy strategies on which LES focused. Additionally, because the peer visits already were implemented with a cross grade level structure, the new teachers could visit classrooms based on their needs. Further, the peer visits could be coordinated among the teachers within the PLC group, and the teachers were able to focus on observing the instructional practice which was the topic of their PLC group.

In this third year after Reading First, a strong sense of pride and ownership of the professional development was evident among the teachers. Teachers showed "excitement" about participating in the PLCs and peer visits. And, as the principal pointed out, "the PLC and the peer visits were happening on their own by the teachers." Additionally, the principal, teacher leader, and the teachers shared the importance of continuing the professional development and showed strong support for its continuation. The principal viewed this as a result widespread teacher "collaboration" and "ownership" for professional development.

This year it [sense of ownership] is up. And this year I noticed our PLCs, it used to be that one of us [principal or teacher leader], we would be at most of them [PLC]. And now, I don't know that we have to be at them all the time. I would not want to say we're trusting, but the discussions are more relevant to what they need to be. They [teachers] are on task. They are much more in-depth and

reflective than they have been. And I think it has to be because they see the relevance. They are personally witnessing relevance and seeing the value in it. The whole trust piece, the collaboration, has to be there before that can happen. You are putting yourself out there to bring your scores and say, “Hey, I’ve taught for 25 years, but I’m struggling with this. Can you help me?” That takes courage, and they do that. They take ownership. (*Principal, Year 3 interview*)

Leadership

“Thank goodness she did not go away!” This was the reaction from the principal when she found out that the teacher leader was willing to come back as the literacy coordinator. The principal secured the funding for the position by giving up the dean of students position. The teacher leader was hired for 72 days for the present school year (i.e., the third year post-RF), and also for 54 days in the next year. The teacher leader’s return as the literacy coordinator not only supported teacher learning and professional development but also learning leadership at Lakeview. The shared leadership practice of the principal and the teacher leader was identified as one of the critical factors of continuing the professional development. In the following sections, findings about the leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader that supported the professional development are presented. The findings focus not only on the individual leadership practices, but also on shared and complementary leadership practices.

Principal

The principal was in her eighth year at Lakeview Elementary. She was one of the few leadership persons who remained in the same position at the building and district level over that period of time. This continuity within the principal position was a strong support for the teachers. Prior to the arrival of this principal, LES had a history of high principal turnover. Additionally, because the principal held the same vision and goal over

this period of time, LES built a coherent learning environment. From the time of Reading First, the principal supported the goal of improving literacy instruction and developing the reading skills of the students. In the three years of post RF, all teachers in kindergarten through sixth grade collectively participated in the professional development focused on literacy.

In the third year post RF, as the teacher leader was back, the leadership practices of the principal shifted once again. Her instructional leadership practices closely resembled those demonstrated in the first year post RF. She supported the teachers by listening, finding opportunities for teacher learning, and building connections with external partners.

First, the principal paid close attention to the learning needs of the teachers. Teachers, throughout the three years, mentioned about how good the principal was at “listening” and that she always involved their voice in making decisions. By having conversations with the teachers and dropping into the classrooms, the principal was informed about what teachers needed. In the literacy leadership team meetings, the principal encouraged team members to bring information about their grade levels, along with questions, concerns, and celebrations from the teachers.

The principal also supported the teacher also by finding learning opportunities outside of the school. She described their school development work “not complete,” and actively sought resources (e.g., grants) to support external learning opportunities for the teachers, such as workshops. The application for the RELI grant, for example, was initiated by the principal. She encouraged teachers to apply for the grant and assisted with the application process. Additionally, teachers mentioned how the principal strongly

encouraged them to study for their master's degree. The teachers were supported by the district for their master's credits, and the principal shared this information and encouraged teachers to enroll. The principal said, "I don't know how many of our teachers will not have a master's degree." Many teachers were enrolled in a program, and the number of teachers with a master's degree had steadily increased over the years.

Finally, the principal focused on publicizing Lakeview's improvement work and on creating partnerships with other schools in neighboring districts. This was not only at the district and community level but also at the regional level. At the district and community level, for example, the principal constantly pressed the importance of the professional development. She shared the improvement work of LES in district and school board meetings. She invited stakeholders into the classrooms and showed them how the teacher learning through professional development connected with student learning. Even the teachers were aware of this work. They knew the importance of the principal's advocacy for continuing their professional development activities. One special service teacher stated,

The principal, to make sure PLCs get done. So she does her utmost to make sure that we talk about the benefits of a year-long PLC versus a one-time workshop [in school board meetings]. Trying to convince people that these [types of professional development] are beneficial. She always works on ways to finagle to get them done. Like we went from after school to during the day, and how are we going to do that and how are we going to sell our school board that it's important and valid. So that had been a part of her [principal's] job. (*Special service teacher, Year 3 interview*)

At the regional level, the principal built partnerships with other schools in neighboring districts. She also was active in the regional level professional association. As a result, LES became well known in the region for their success through RF. Many

administrators, including superintendents and principals, as well as teachers, have visited LES to see what the teachers were doing. These partnerships and the visits from other school members were not directly tied with resources or support for teacher learning. The teachers, however, showed a sense of pride of their work as the visitors came into their classrooms. The teachers described those visits as “suit and tie day,” and expressed that they “welcome” anyone who wants to learn from them.

In the previous year (year two post RF), recall that the principal felt she had to increase her instructional support role in teacher classrooms given the loss of the teacher leader. When the teacher leader returned this year, however, the principal continued her expanded roles of classroom instructional support. She also demonstrated direct support of teacher learning: by participating in the PLC meetings, conducting classroom visits, and locating research articles and professional textbooks. These instructional leadership roles were part of the principal’s daily routine. In these roles, the principal always emphasized and modeled being “student focused.” The principal viewed her role as the instructional leader to figure out how to bridge any gaps between students’ learning needs and teacher practice. For example, the learning needs of the students were the priority in deciding the PLC topics as well as in any decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Accordingly, the professional development, the classroom practice of teachers, along with a variety of meetings (e.g., data meetings and faculty meetings) were focused on responding to the question “what can we do for the students?”

A key dimension of the principal’s leadership practice was sharing leadership. The aforementioned roles for supporting teacher learning and professional development were all shared with the teacher leader and the literacy leadership team members. The

principal and teacher leader connected many times daily to share information, thoughts, and ideas for advancing professional development and the work of school improvement. They also both supported improvement in the classroom practices of teachers, but did so in complementary ways. In their daily meetings, they shared information about individual teachers and ideas of how they would support the teacher in improving their classroom instruction. The principal also shared leadership responsibilities with members of the literacy leadership team. The literacy leadership team, for example, took full responsibility for monitoring the PLCs from deciding the topics to making sure of the progress. The principal focused on involving as many teachers as possible in the team and encouraged team members to rotate and invited all teachers to join. The teacher leader shared,

We only have one teacher who has been on the team whole time because we want to get everybody involved. She [principal] will send out an email like, “Are you interested in being on the leadership team? Talk to me.” Usually it’s at the beginning of the year, but it could be anytime during the year. I don’t know, we’ve got quite a few members now, but until someone wants to be off or another grade-level person wants to take their place.... (*Teacher leader, Year 3 interview*)

Teacher Leader

The teacher leader also was one of the continuing leadership persons at Lakeview. She had taught her entire career at Lakeview, over thirty years. Principals and teachers alike trusted and respected her as a person, teacher and leader. The teachers expressed “excitement” at the fact that once again they were able to work with the teacher leader.

The teachers viewed the teacher leader as the instructional leader of Lakeview. Her support of teachers and for teacher learning was appreciated by all school staff. Among her leadership practices, the teachers pointed out three that they were as most

helpful: (1) supporting teacher learning in PLCs, (2) assisting classroom practice improvement, and (3) ensuring, to the extent possible, that instructional practices and professional learning were both research-based and data-driven. First, as previously described in the professional development section, the teacher leader was viewed as re-stabilizing teacher learning within the PLCs upon her return this third year. While the literacy leadership team members were largely responsible for monitoring progress, the teacher leader supported the PLCs by identifying the needs of individual teachers. This was not because the teacher leader spent more time within the PLC, but because she was the expert in literacy instruction and because she spent a lot of time in the classrooms of individual teachers. If the teachers had questions about a literacy instruction strategy or concerns about implementation, the teacher leader guided and assisted the teachers. The teachers viewed the teacher leader as “approachable” and “non-threatening.” One special service teacher explained,

I think she’s [teacher leader]...she came in and watched, in a very non-threatening way. What are you working on and what can I help you with? She’s always very supportive. We did this and this, and here are some things that could have been changed. (*Special service teacher, Year 3 interview*)

Second, it was discerned that the teachers were very appreciative of the individual learning time with the teacher leader. This individual learning was usually through the classroom visits and the corresponding follow-up meeting. As she did during RF and in year one post-RF, the teacher leader conducted classroom visits with all the teachers from kindergarten through sixth grade. Teachers expressed that they were comfortable when the teacher leader came into their classrooms and that they were able to openly share about their instructional practice. As many teachers pointed out, the classroom visits were

not about what was wrong and what was not done, but were about reflecting on practice on and deciding on ways to improve. The individual one-on-one learning support offered by the teacher leaders was an especially great support system for new teachers. LES had many new teachers in the third year post-RF, most of whom did not have any background in RF. The teacher leader offered critical learning support for these new teachers. One primary teacher explained,

For me, coming in brand new...it was just learning. If it wasn't for the teacher leader working so close with me, I probably would not even understand RF right now. She came in [classroom visits] and she had this checklist, she looked for certain things and then we talked about it after. And she always has something you can work on and improve. For me, I really appreciated that the time she came in [my classroom]. (*Primary teacher, Year 3 interview*)

Finally, as presented in the professional development section, research-based and data-driven learning were a large part of the reason teachers enjoyed their PLCs. With the return of the teacher leader came a tightened focus and use of research-based professional learning. Teachers reported that the language of “research-based” was part of the daily commentary at Lakeview. For example, teachers could be heard asking questions such as, “What is the research behind...?,” “Is this research-based?,” and “How does this research apply to my classroom?” The teacher leader also returned to the role of selecting, organizing, and providing student data for review, reflection, and ultimately, instructional planning by the teachers.

In summary, when the teacher leader came back to the literacy coordinator position, it was a relief for the principal not only because of the support for professional development, but also she had her “partner” back. The principal and teacher leader worked as a team, and they strategically planned their complementary roles for advancing

teaching and learning at Lakeview. Specifically, in the classroom visits this third year, for example, the principal visited the classrooms for other content areas, such as math and social science, and the teacher leader kept her visits focused on literacy. This shared leadership practice between the principal and teacher leader was possible because they shared the same goal and interest to sustain the learning work of continuous instructional and school improvement at Lakeview. As important, they held each other in the highest regard as educators and people.

Literacy Leadership Team

In the third year post RF, the literacy leadership team maintained its structure and roles as in the past two years. This year, there was only one teacher out of eight members who had served on the team since RF. The principal tried to involve as many teachers as possible, but she shared that, sometimes, it was hard to rotate the members because the teachers did not want to leave the team. The primary roles of the team remained same. They were organizing, coordinating, and monitoring the PLCs, reviewing the individual PLC notes, and participating in decision-making processes of professional development plans.

Summary - Year Three

Over the three post RF years, the principal, teacher leader, and the teachers at Lakeview continued sustained their focus on improving literacy instruction and professional development as a means for achieving their school-wide goal of improving the reading skills of students. The PLCs and peer visits sustained over the three years following RF. Both the PLC and peer visits provided much benefit to the teachers in terms of learning strategies of literacy instruction and improving their classroom practice.

Additionally, it was discerned that the two forms of professional development, PLCs and peer visits, were highly valued by the teachers and contributed to establishing a collaborative learning culture. Teachers indicated that they enjoyed “sharing ideas” and reflecting on their practices as means of learning as professionals. Teachers also showed a sense of pride and ownership towards their sustained level of professional development. They expressed “excitement” and “enjoyment” about being active participants in ongoing professional development. As the principal pointed out, the PLC and the peer visits were carried on by the teachers. The teachers had grown to assume a high level of responsibility for continuing meaningful, largely job-embedded, professional development.

The principal continued her strong support for the teachers by being a “good listener” and by paying close attention to their learning needs. She maintained instructional leadership practices as her daily routine. The principal focused on the students’ learning needs, and viewed her role as providing whatever it took to bridge the gap between students’ learning needs and teacher practice. Within the community and region, she was a visible and vocal advocate of the continuous improvement work and positive student results at Lakeview. She viewed this as “part of her job.” She was intentional and strategic in getting the word out. This affirmed the work of the teachers and, sometimes, led to procuring additional resources as the community members were able to see the connection between professional development and student learning.

When the teacher leader returned to Lakeview as the literacy coordinator in the third year post RF, she was viewed as, once again, raising the intensity and quality of the professional development. She maintained a strong focus on ensuring that teaching and

learning practices were research-based and data-driven. The teachers, however, were most appreciative of the individual learning support they received from the teacher leader. The principal also was “excited” to have the teacher leader back. They demonstrated a high level of shared instructional leadership practices and partnership in supporting teacher learning and professional development.

In the next Chapter, summary of the findings from the three years after Reading First at Lakeview Elementary School is presented. It is followed by a discussion of the findings related to the conceptual framework of this study and recommendations for school leaders and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The final chapter of this thesis contains two sections. The first section provides a summary of the findings related to each of the research questions based on a study of Lakeview Elementary School for three years after the removal of external support from the Reading First. Additionally, findings are discussed related to the conceptual framework, shown previously as Figure 2.1 in Chapter Two. The second section presents implications for school leaders and recommendations for future research in the areas of principal leadership, teacher leadership, and continuous school development. But first, the reader is reminded of the purpose and the research questions that guided this study.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify whether and how leadership practices of a principal and teacher leader sustained professional development after the removal of external support from the Reading First reform initiative. The over-arching question and the sub-questions that guided this research were:

In what ways did the reported principal and teacher leadership practices that fostered professional development during implementation of Reading First continue or shift after the removal of external reform support?

1. What principal leadership practices that fostered professional development during Reading First continued or shifted after the removal of external support?
2. What teacher leadership practices that fostered professional development during Reading First continued or shifted after the removal of external support?
3. In what ways did the shared leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader that fostered professional development during Reading First continue or shift after the removal of external support?

Summary of Findings and Discussion

This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first section presents a summary of the findings for each of the three research questions. The second section provides discussions of the findings that are related to the conceptual framework.

Summary of Findings

Located in Table 5.1 is a summary of the leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader that focused on professional development for each of the three post Reading First years. A more detailed description of these practices is provided by addressing this study's research questions.

Research Question One: What principal leadership practices that fostered professional development during Reading First continued or shifted after the removal of external support?

After Reading First, the principal sustained the same goal for Lakeview, that is, to continuously improve literacy instruction and increase reading skills of the students. This goal remained consistent over the three post RF years and demonstrated the principal's passion for improving literacy instruction and for setting school-wide expectations in reading. Two principal leadership practices continued to support this school goal. They were: (1) providing visible support and (2) sharing leadership.

First, in the three years of post RF, it was discerned that the principal provided "visible support" for teacher learning. For example, she was present and actively participated in the PLCs to engage in and support implementation of literacy instruction.

Table 5.1 Leadership Practices of the Principal and Teacher Leader by Year

| Professional development | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Leadership | Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
| Principal leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining school goal of improving literacy instruction • Visible support • Shared leadership practice • Securing resources - fiscal, time, and personnel • Instructional leadership supporting teacher learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining school goal improving literacy instruction • Visible support • Shared leadership practice • Direct instructional leadership roles for improving classroom practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining school goal improving literacy instruction • Visible support • Shared leadership practice • Securing resources - fiscal, time, and personnel • Instructional leadership supporting teacher learning |
| Teacher leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of the professional development • Providing assistance for learning about instructional strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data meetings (as testing coordinator) • Providing student data • Participating in PLC and literacy leadership team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of the professional development • Providing assistance for learning about instructional strategies |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing assistance for improving classroom practice • Shared leadership practice | <p>meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership roles were limited but still valued • Shared leadership practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing assistance for improving classroom practice • Shared leadership practice |
| Shared leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared decision making for future professional development plans • Shared instructional leadership • Shared leadership with the literacy leadership team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared decision making for future professional development plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared decision making for future professional development plans • Shared instructional leadership • Shared leadership with the literacy leadership team |

She also showed up in classrooms to engage teachers in conversation about their instructional practices. Teachers knew that the principal was aware of how they taught and how they engaged in learning with their peers.

As stated in Chapter Four, clearly, the principal was a driving and supportive force in sustaining a focus on job-embedded professional learning and high quality classroom instruction. The visible and encouraging support set a positive tone for the learning and development work and had a positive influence on teacher engagement. The principal spent most of her time outside her office, making frequent classroom visits and stopping by PLC meetings. Teachers described her as a “good listener” and an “encourager” for assisting and supporting learning needs and providing positive feedback.

Another principal leadership practice that continued after Reading First was sharing leadership with school staff. During the implementation of RF, the principal, teacher leader, and the external facilitator worked as a team to support teacher learning and professional development. Each of these formal leaders had different roles but, collectively, they monitored the progress of professional development, reviewed student data, and planned future initiatives of the school reform. In the years of post RF, with the external facilitator no longer available, the principal and the teacher leader worked as “partners” sustaining the support of professional development. For example, they worked together in monitoring professional development, deciding the PLC topics, and searching for learning materials. They also shared instructional leadership by each assuming a slightly different focus during their respective classroom visits. Further, the principal and

teacher leader, together, made decisions about future plans related to professional development.

The principal also shared leadership with the literacy leadership team. She always participated in the literacy leadership team meetings, and while working with the team members, her focus was on developing the leadership capacities of the teacher members of the literacy leadership team. Specifically, she employed a “team leadership approach” for overseeing the PLCs and identifying teacher learning needs, taking a school-wide perspective. She did this by asking members to solicit input from their colleagues about what they needed to continue to learn and improve their practices with students.

There were three areas of significantly expanded leadership by the principal after RF: (1) more frequent classroom visits and PLC visits to continue the intensity of this support in the absence of the external facilitator, (2) more direct support and mentoring of new teachers, and (3) countless hours spent securing additional resources for sustaining the learning time for teachers and teacher leader position. These changes in principal leadership were essential in continuing the professional development and maintaining the momentum for teacher learning gained through RF.

After Reading First, the personnel and fiscal resources provided through the grant were no longer available. The principal recognized resources as a valuable asset to continue the professional development. Securing resources became a heightened priority of her job. The principal extensively worked on locating and securing resources for Lakeview. These were not just fiscal resources but also included connecting external support for teacher learning, such as external instructional coaches and professional

workshops. Managing and scheduling time for professional development also was part of the principal's practice in securing resource.

For successfully locating and securing resources, the principal knew that Lakeview needed support from the district and community members. The principal focused on publicizing the improvement work of LES, emphasizing how teacher learning through professional development benefited student learning. One of the ways of publicizing the improvement work was to invite community and school board members and district personnel to the classrooms. The principal also was active in connecting and building partnerships with other schools in neighboring districts and in the region. Lakeview, locally and regionally, became well known for its success through Reading First and its continuous school improvement.

Research Question Two: What teacher leadership practices that fostered professional development during Reading First continued or shifted after the removal of external support?

Even though the teacher leader's position as the literacy coordinator was reduced to half time in years one and three post RF and, during year two, she was assigned the alternate role of testing coordinator, her leadership practices did not change in the area of supporting teacher learning and professional development. She continued as the primary ground-level instructional leader after Reading First.

First, she continued to assume responsibility for coordinating, organizing, and monitoring professional development. Related to the PLCs, for example, she monitored and identified the needs of the teachers as well as the students. She designed the PLC meetings so that the learning topics pertained directly to identified student needs. She

located and distributed study materials, including research articles to support teacher learning about specific literacy instructional strategies. Additionally, the teacher leader assumed the lead role in supporting teachers' visits to other classrooms. She helped schedule peer visits and also participated in the post visit debriefings, during which she provided specific guidance and direction for improving literacy instruction. Although the teacher leader could not be as directly involved in this professional development support role when serving as the district testing coordinator in the second year post RF, she still found ways to support teacher learning and professional development through data meetings.

The second area in which the teacher leader provided direct support was through classroom observations that she conducted (which were different from the peer visits discussed previously). These observations directly supported improvement in teachers' practices by offering feedback tailored to each individual teacher's interests and needs. This personalized one-on-one support for teachers dealing with classroom practice was especially helpful for the intermediate grades level teachers and the teachers new to Lakeview. Many teachers pointed out that they appreciated the "non-threatening" style and personalized approach of the teacher leader.

Finally, as discussed previously related to Research Question One, the teacher leader shared instructional leadership with the principal, at both school and classroom levels. The leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader were complementary. They differentiated and strategically planned their respective roles and practices for supporting teacher learning and professional development, as well as for intentionally developing the leadership capacities of the teachers on the school-level literacy

leadership team. Working with this team, the teacher leader focused on developing members' skill and comfort facilitating leadership team meetings and school-wide group meetings.

Research Question Three: In what ways did shared leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader that fostered professional development during Reading First continue or shift after the removal of external support?

One of the main findings discerned through the analysis of the data across all three post RF years was that the partnership between the principal and teacher leader was core to keeping Lakeview focused on improving literacy instruction by means of varied, intentionally designed and supported professional development. Their collaborative work relationship was sustained, even when the teacher leader position was reduced to half time and when the title and focus of the work changed to testing coordinator.

The principal and teacher leader met almost daily to reflect on the various forms of professional development and to figure out together next steps for supporting continuous teacher learning and improvement. They discussed grade level teaming reflecting on “where do we need to go at each grade level,” “what are some of our weaker spots” and “what is our plan?” These daily interactions were the basis for setting directions and making decisions about school-level job-embedded team learning. They also reflected collaboratively about classroom instructional practices, with the teacher leader sharing in ways that did not disclose conversations held in confidence with individual teachers. Together they decided on how to provide support to individual teachers. Often this led to strategically planned classroom visits and observations that included personalized instructional coaching. To emphasize, it was clear that shared

leadership by the principal and teacher leader was the key to maintaining the school-wide focus on instructional improvement and sustaining the learning structures and culture after the removal of external support from Reading First.

Discussion

In this section study findings are discussed as related to the conceptual framework that was developed after the review of relevant literature. The framework is located at the end of Chapter Two (p. 44). Major dimensions of the framework are the five characteristics of high quality professional development (duration, collective participation, coherence, content focus, and active learning) and the leadership of principals and teachers. Principal leadership has direct influence on coherence and collective participation; teacher leadership has direct influence on collective participation and active learning. Shared leadership between principal and teacher also has direct influence on coherence and collective participation. A theme that emerged from the reviewed literature was the importance of shared leadership among school members. There are two sections of the discussion. First, leadership that supports high quality professional development is addressed. Second, the concept of shared leadership that supports school improvements is presented.

Leadership for High Quality Professional Development

Through a review of research, five core characteristics of high quality professional development for teachers were identified (Garet et al., 2001; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Newmann et al., 2000): (1) duration, (2) collective participation, (3) coherence, (4) content focus, and (5) active learning. It is suggested that professional development should be sustained and continuous over time with opportunities for collective

participation and active learning. The literature also emphasized the importance of professional development being coherent and content focused, thereby leading to deeper understandings about content knowledge and the improved classroom practice of teachers. Professional development at Lakeview Elementary demonstrated these characteristics in the three years post RF. PLC and peer visits continued (duration), all school members were involved (collective participation), and the predominant focus remained on literacy (content focused). Additionally, professional development was aligned with school-wide goals (coherence), and the teachers actively participated (active learning). Principal and formal teacher leadership played a central role in sustaining the focus, depth, and collaborative nature of professional learning at Lakeview.

Leadership for professional development that is shared by principals and teacher leaders also is identified as a central factor in school improvement (Copland, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Youngs & King, 2002). Principals often assume responsibility for ensuring the structures for professional learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Youngs & King, 2002). Teacher leaders are participants in school-level decision making about professional development (Copland, 2003) and, often, in supporting teacher peers in learning about, as well as implementing new practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). At Lakeview, the principal and teacher leader worked as partners to design, monitor, and continually refine school-embedded professional learning. Their practices were aligned with not only the research supported characteristics of high quality professional development, but also research findings that pointed to the importance of shared leadership by principals and teacher leaders that promotes collective participation,

coherence, and active learning. Table 5.2 provides a summary of the leadership practices that supported high quality professional development.

First, collective participation is identified as one of the key characteristics of high quality professional development because when teachers work together and have more opportunities to interact, the likelihood to change classroom practice increases (Garet et al., 2001). The principal and teacher leader at Lakeview planned the professional development to include all school staff, that is, from kindergarten through sixth grade. The inclusion of the intermediate grades level teachers was strategically planned with an incremental approach to provide a buffer so that the teachers were not too pressured. Additionally, the principal created opportunities, such as meetings to review student data and to align curriculum across all grades, for the teachers to collectively engage with each other. The leadership practices of the teacher leader also promoted collective participation. She assisted the intermediate grades teachers and the newly hired teachers when they first joined the professional development. These leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader are consistent with the assertion of Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) and Youngs and King (2002) that leadership should create learning opportunities and promote collective participation. It also aligns with the finding of Copland (2003) that teacher leaders could affect professional development by engaging in instructional leadership roles.

Second, coherence in professional development is found to have considerable amount of influence on knowledge and practice of teachers (Garet et al., 2001; Newmann et al., 2000). Research also found that leadership of principals has direct influence on coherence (Youngs & King, 2002). The findings of this study are consistent with the

Table 5.2 Leadership Practices and High Quality Professional Development

| Leadership | Characteristics of High Quality Professional Development | | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| | Duration | Collective Participation | Coherence | Content Focus | Active Learning |
| Principal leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent goal • Securing resources • Publicizing improvement work within community and region • Developing leadership capacity of teachers • Connecting external experts of literacy to assist teacher learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning inclusion of all school members • Encouraging teachers to participate in literacy leadership team • Sharing leadership with the teachers • Creating opportunities for collaboration among the teachers • Identifying the learning needs of the teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent goal • Connecting primary and intermediate grades level teachers to be on the “same page” • Aligning school goal, curriculum, instruction, and assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent goal • Active instructional leadership roles • Assisting teacher learning and supporting PD activities • Finding and encouraging external learning opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting the tone by participating in professional development and learning • Finding and encouraging external learning opportunities |

| Leadership | Duration | Collective Participation | Coherence | Content Focus | Active Learning |
|--------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| Teacher leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active role in seeking and securing resource | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting new teachers Supporting teacher learning about literacy instructional strategies Providing individual support for teachers Sharing leadership roles with literacy leadership team | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisting teachers in learning about and implementing strategies of literacy instruction Assisting teachers in improving their classroom practice Emphasis on research-based and data-driven | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing individual support for teacher learning Coordinate and organize professional development Monitoring professional development identifying teacher needs Facilitating data meetings |
| Shared leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing responsibilities for securing resource Sharing decision making of the professional development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning of including all school members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing same goal for the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom visits for improving literacy instruction Differentiated roles for achieving the goal | |

research that found principals have direct influence on coherence. At Lakeview, the principal sustained the goal of improving literacy instruction and increasing reading skills of the students. She also aligned other school practices such as curriculum and assessments with this goal. Additionally, one of the areas that the principal emphasized was closing the practice gap between the primary and intermediate grades level teachers. The cross grade level structure of the professional development kept the teachers on “same page.” This finding supports Youngs and King (2002) who found that schools have higher comprehensiveness in professional development when principals emphasized and promoted coherence.

Although the teacher leader shared the same the goal with the principal, her leadership practices did not seem to have direct influence on coherence. This finding is consistent with the literature stating that teacher leaders do not have direct influence on coherence. This does not mean, however, that teacher leaders do not have any influence on coherence. Research found that the roles of teacher leaders are not limited to providing instructional leadership but are expanded to participate in school-level decision making (Smylie & Denny, 1990; Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). By engaging in decision making, teacher leaders assume leadership roles and emerge as leaders (Smylie & Denny, 1990). The teacher leader at Lakeview was always involved in school-level decision making, even when she was the testing coordinator in year two. The principal relied on the teacher leader for her knowledge in literacy instruction and the information of specific needs of the teachers. While indirect, the teacher leader influenced coherence of professional development by sharing decision making. This finding supports the

assertion of Copland (2003) that teacher leaders could bring positive cultural shift by sharing leadership roles in developing vision, planning, and making decisions.

Finally, research identified active learning as one of the core features of professional development (Garet et al., 2001; Ingvarson et al., 2005). Specifically, literature found that active learning leads to strong teacher knowledge and practice. Leadership of both principals and teacher leaders are found to have influence on active learning through promoting collective participation. Research suggests, however, that it is teacher leaders who have more direct link with promoting active learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). The teacher leader at Lakeview assisted teacher learning by distributing relevant research articles that the teachers could use as guidance in learning about and implementing strategies of literacy instruction. The teacher leader also supported teacher learning through her instructional leadership practices, such as coordinating and monitoring professional development and assisting teacher practice through classroom visits. The principal's leadership mostly influenced active learning through the promotion of collective participation. The principal, by identifying the learning needs of the teachers and creating a learning environment, promoted collective participation among the teachers in professional development. This finding is consistent with research (Youngs & King, 2002) that principal leadership could affect teachers' active engagement in professional development through providing adequate learning structures that lead to collective and collaborative participation.

There were two findings regarding leadership and high quality professional development that were not consistent with the conceptual framework (shown as Figure 2.1, p. 44). One of the central roles of the principal at Lakeview was to locate and secure

resources, which is not part of Figure 2.1. By securing resources, the principal was able to support maintenance of the learning structures for continuing professional development. Garet et al. (2001) explained the importance of duration for professional development in two ways. First, duration in terms of contact hours, that is, the amount of time within the professional development, influences the depth of learning. More time spent in professional development means more opportunities to engage in discussions about content area learning and finding ways to improve classroom practice. Second, when professional development is continued and sustained over time, teachers are able to practice new instructional strategies and share ideas with colleagues to find ways to improve. The principal at Lakeview actively sought resources, such as fiscal, time, and personnel, within the school district as well as in the region. The teacher leader also was actively involved in seeking and securing resources. From the last year of the Reading First, when she led the development of the sustainability plan, the teacher leader worked closely with the principal in presenting school improvement plans and results to the school board. The resources secured for at Lakeview not only resulted in the duration of the professional development in terms of contact hours but also duration in terms of sustainability over three years. Additionally, the principal's focus on developing leadership capacities of the teachers also seemed to contribute to the duration of the professional development. When the literacy coordinator position was not approved in the second year, the literacy leadership team members were positioned, and more importantly capable, to share the leadership roles with the principal.

The other finding that was not consistent with the conceptual framework was that both the principal and teacher leader had a direct influence on the content focus. Research

on professional development found the importance of focusing on certain content (e.g., mathematics, science) for high quality professional development (Desimone, Smith, & Ueno, 2006; Garet et al., 2001). Specifically, research suggested that when teachers participate in content focused professional development, they are more likely to deepen their knowledge of the content and enhance classroom practice. Both the principal and the teacher leader, in this study, were active in their instructional leadership practices for supporting teacher learning focused on literacy. The principal sustained the same goal to improve literacy instruction at LES and continued high engagement in the work of instructional leadership. Additionally, the principal encouraged the teachers to participate in external learning opportunities related to literacy. The teacher leader had an even greater direct influence on content focus. She was the expert on literacy and literacy instruction, and many teachers emphasized how helpful the teacher leader was in intentionally supporting their learning about and implementation of literacy instruction.

In conclusion, regarding the influence of leadership on high quality professional development, the findings of this study are consistent with the research indicating that principals and teacher leaders affect collective participation, coherence, and active learning. Additionally, this study discerned that leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader could influence both the duration and content focus of professional development. Based on these findings, the conceptual framework was revised, as shown in Figure 5.1. The revised conceptual framework includes (1) principal influence on the duration of professional development, (2) principal influence on the content focus, (3) teacher leader influence on the content focus, (4) the influence of shared leadership between the principal and teacher leadership on duration, and (5) the influence of shared

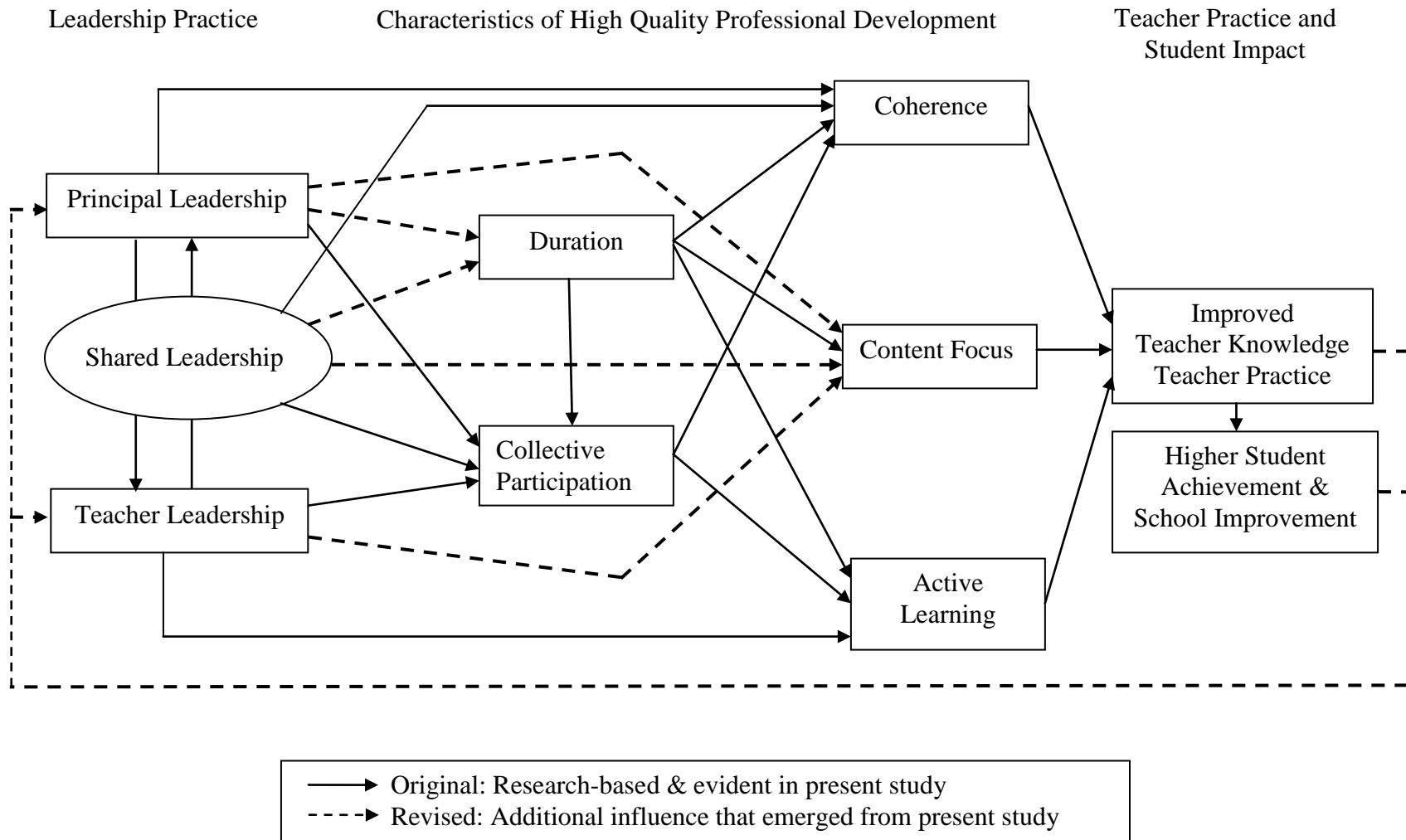


Figure 5.1 Revised Conceptual Framework: Leadership and High Quality Professional Development

leadership between the principal and teacher leader on content focus. Also added in the revised conceptual framework is the influence from teacher practice and student impact to principal and teacher leadership. Although this study did not inquire about the teacher practice and student learning, it was clear from the findings of principal and teacher leadership that their leadership practices were influenced by the positive outcomes of teacher and student learning.

While the findings of this study support and add knowledge to the literature of leadership and high quality professional development, they also add knowledge to the literature of leadership and sustainability of school reform. Research found that leadership is the most significant factor for sustaining school reform, however, little is known about how school leaders sustain school improvement efforts (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Fink & Brayman, 2006). The leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader that were identified through this study add knowledge to the literature about how school leaders can support the sustainability of school reform efforts.

Shared Leadership and School Improvement

One theme that emerged from the review of literature was the importance of sharing leadership among school members for improving school effectiveness. Research suggested that the overall leadership capacity of the school increases when school members share leadership (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Pounder et al., 1995). The more people who are involved in understanding and supporting improvement work, the greater impact on the school. Additionally, studies of transformational leadership and distributed leadership suggested that principals should practice shared leadership for maximizing the learning experience for teachers and enhancing school performance (Camburn et al.,

2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). Transformational leadership by principals supports the commitment of teachers in school improvement and the distribution of leadership resolves role ambiguity. The findings of this study are consistent with the literature that emphasized the importance of sharing leadership for school improvement.

In the course of this study, it was evident that leadership was not only shared between the principal and the teacher leader, but it was also shared with the teachers. All teachers were encouraged to join the literacy leadership team and participate in the meetings. By sharing leadership responsibilities and by participating in decision making, the teacher members of team developed greater ownership of the professional development and school improvement work. The teachers viewed the PLCs as a time for supporting their specific learning needs. Teacher members of the leadership team had a voice in deciding their learning focus for the PLCs. This finding supports the assertion by Pounder and her colleagues that “organizational leadership affects organizational performance by shaping the organization of work and by building commitment” (Pounder et al., 1995, p. 583). It also aligns with Ogawa and Bossert’s (1995) conception of leadership as an organizational quality, in contrast to an individual quality. Additionally, the continuation of the school improvement at Lakeview could be explained as a result of sharing leadership because “they [teachers] had made the decisions and changes their own” (Weiss & Cambone, 1994, p. 295).

Smylie (1992) pointed out the importance of the influence of the principal on teachers’ willingness to participate in school-level decision making. The principal at Lakeview employed a “team leadership approach” for school improvement. She always listened to the teachers and involved them in the decision-making process. The leadership

practices of the principal are consistent with definitions of transformational leadership. For example, Marks and Printy (2003) defined transformational leadership as “providing intellectual direction for innovating the organization through empowering and supporting the members of the organization” (p. 371). Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) identified the three transformational leadership practice domains of setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. The leadership practices of the principal at Lakeview clearly reflected each of these transformative leadership domains. She had a clear goal for LES that was consistent over the three years. This goal played an important role in successful adoption of change in practice (Hallinger & Heck, 2001), and, once shared among school staff, it created a culture of consensus for achieving the goal (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1998). Additionally, the principal focused on developing the leadership capacities of the teachers. Teachers at Lakeview, especially in year three, showed strong ownership toward professional development and a commitment for improving literacy instruction. This finding supports Marks and Printy’s (2003) argument that when instructional leadership roles are shared with teachers by means of transformational leadership, teachers are more likely to provide high quality instruction to students, and it is “essential in supporting the commitment of teachers” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 393).

Research also found that the work relationship between principals and teachers plays a significant role on teachers’ willingness to participate in school leadership (Anderson, 2004; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). For sharing leadership, it is suggested to emphasize the interactive nature of relationship development between principals and teacher leaders. In this study, the principal and teacher leader viewed each

other as partners in leading the improvement efforts at Lakeview. Their leadership practices were differentiated while they worked to achieve the same goal. Their intentional differentiation of roles reduced the ambiguity and uncertainty that often emerges when leadership is shared by principals and teachers, leading to a productive relationship (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). Additionally, it was clear that the relationship between the principal and teacher leader was reciprocal, that is, their relationship was mutual and influenced each other (Anderson, 2004).

The perspective of distributed leadership provides a useful framework for examining the relationship of principals and teachers in sharing leadership. The shared leadership practice between the principal and teacher leader, in this study, could be viewed both as collaborative and collective distribution of leadership (Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2000). In conducting classroom visits, for example, their leadership practices were different but also were interdependent. Another example of their collaborative and collective leadership practices is their team work in locating and securing resources. They both assumed responsibilities for presenting school improvement work at school board meetings and continuing support for professional development.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support the literature that emphasizes the importance of sharing leadership for school improvement. Principals, by sharing leadership with teachers, can create a collaborative school culture that increases the potential of successful school improvement (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994). Specifically, this study supports the assertion of York-Barr and Duke (2004) that “principals play a pivotal role in the success of teacher leadership by actively supporting

the development of teachers, by maintaining open channels of communication, and by aligning structures and resources to support the leadership work of teachers” (p. 288). Additionally, the findings of this study showed that transformational leadership of principals is a necessary condition for sharing leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003) and that it is also important to recognize the reciprocal relationship between the principal and teacher leader (Anderson, 2004; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). The findings indicated that shared leadership practice between the principal and teacher leader could be both collaborative and collective, and that such shared leadership practices could provide a resolution to role ambiguity by having principals and teacher leaders sharing the instructional improvement roles (Camburn et al., 2003).

Implications and Recommendations

In this final section, implications for school leaders and recommendations for future research are presented. The findings of this study suggest recommendations for school leaders and researchers in the area of principal and teacher leadership, professional development, and school improvement. Specifically, three implications for school leaders and three recommendations for future research are provided.

Implications for School Leaders

There are three recommendations that emerge from this study which could be beneficial for school leaders, especially for those who are leading school improvement work in the post school reform period. These recommendations are: (1) maintain a focus on improving instruction, (2) secure resources to continue professional learning, and (3) develop layers of leadership support continuous professional development.

Maintain a focus on improving instruction

For continuous school improvement, school leaders should maintain a focus on improving instructional practices of classroom teachers. Schools, by implementing various school improvement reform initiatives, may gain immediate success. After the implementation period, when the external supports are no longer available, however, the gains may not sustain. Maintaining a coherent focus on improving instruction could lead to higher gains in student achievement (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001).

The principal, in this study, kept the focus on improving literacy instruction throughout the three years after Reading First. The professional development, for example, was focused on improving teachers' literacy instruction. The daily conversations between the principal and teacher leader also was around supporting the improvement of classroom instruction. It was clear that these instructional leadership practices of the principal extended and expanded the learning opportunities for teachers. Specifically, instructional leadership practices of the principal set the tone for teacher learning in literacy instruction and encouraged a culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, the instructional leadership of the teacher leader offered direct support to teachers for improving instruction in their classrooms. While scholars offer varying definitions and enactment profiles of instructional leadership, this study supports the view of Hallinger (2003) who suggested three dimensions of instructional leadership: (1) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school learning climate. (p. 332)

Secure resources to continue professional learning

School leaders must secure and use resources to ensure the continuation of teacher learning that is coherent and that promotes collective participation and commitment of all school staff. This not only means that school leaders should seek and secure resources, but also should pay attention to how resources are allocated, because such action of school leaders could lead to extending the duration of school improvement efforts, allowing all teachers to embrace them in improvement efforts. Clearly, the findings of this study illustrated the importance of school leaders securing and allocating resources. The findings of this study support the recommendations from Plecki, Alejano, Lochmiller, and Knapp (2006) that school leaders should consider: (a) identifying where and how resources can support gap-closing activities, (b) organizing schools to enable the alignment of resources with learning improvement, (c) developing the human capital of the school or district, and (d) managing the politics of learning-focused resource invest. (p. 5)

Develop layers of leadership support continuous professional development

School leaders must be willing to share their power and provide more opportunities for teachers to develop their leadership capacities through experience. Although some research indicates that involving teachers in leadership roles could create tensions among teachers and take away time from their classrooms (Brooks, Scribner, & Eferakorho, 2004), other research finds that teachers are willing to participate in leadership roles and that the benefits are great (Copland, 2003; Ryan, 1999; Smylie, 1992). Specifically, research has identified that teachers themselves benefit from teacher leadership (Ovando, 1984), that decisions and changes are more likely to be sustained

over time (Weiss & Cambone, 1994), and that improvement in teaching practice can result from teacher leadership (Barth, 2001). In this study, it was apparent that the teachers were willing to participate in leadership roles and share the responsibilities. It also was clear that their participation in sharing leadership led to the continuation of professional development and school improvement efforts. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) argued the importance of interaction among principals and individual teachers in the development of teacher leadership. It was suggested that teachers are more likely to express willingness to participate in leadership roles when principals are open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive of the teachers (Smylie, 1992).

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, three potential areas for future research are recommended: (1) roles and function of leadership teams in school improvement effort, (2) ways in which principals and teacher leaders maintain the focus and effort required to sustain (deepen and expand) instructional practice in post-reform periods, and (3) ways in which principals and district leaders work together to align resources for continuous professional learning. First, in the course of this study, it was found that the literacy leadership team played a significant role in the continuation of the professional development. Specific enabling roles and functions of the leadership team were revealed through this study. More investigation of teacher leadership teams from the perspectives of teachers, however, is recommended. While this study identified the roles and functions of the leadership team, it did not focus on the teachers' perspective in sharing the leadership responsibilities. Knowledge of how teachers perceive their participation in leadership roles would benefit our understanding of the conditions that promote teachers'

participation on leadership teams. Additionally, research focused on understanding specific pathways by which teacher leadership teams influence professional development merits more attention. Increasingly, professional development for teachers is recognized as a means for achieving higher levels of student learning and achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1993), but less is known about how teacher leadership teams influence professional development. Further research might also extend from the conceptual framework of this study focusing on shared leadership practices of teacher leadership teams.

The findings of this study demonstrated that shared leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader had positive influence on sustaining professional development as well as on school improvement work. More research, however, is suggested for understanding the leadership practices of principals and teacher leaders in supporting the improvement of teachers' instructional practices. Of particular area that merits more attention is ways in which principals and teacher leaders share instructional leadership for deepening and expanding the classroom practices in the post-reform periods. This study discerned one way that the principal and teacher leader shared instructional leadership, which was differentiating their roles. Further research, with a more systematic approach focusing on teacher practice and student learning could benefit our understanding of how school leaders (i.e., principals and teacher leaders) could sustain the improvement of instructional practices gained through reform initiative.

Finally, although this study did not inquire about how the district influenced leadership practices and professional development, the findings imply that the sustainability of the professional development and the leadership practices of the

principal and teacher leader were highly dependent on the decisions of the central office. The disapproval of the literacy coordinator position in the second year post RF, for example, directly impacted the quality of the professional development. It was also evident that the principal extensively worked for support at the district level. In the course of this study, however, it was not clear how the principal and the district leader, i.e., the superintendent, worked together to align resources for continuous professional learning. Further research in the context of post school reform, focusing on the work relationship between principals and district leaders would profit the knowledge base of understanding the dynamics of supporting continuous school improvement.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to determine whether and how principal and teacher leadership practices fostered professional development after the external support from a literacy intensive school reform initiative were removed. Within the paradigm of qualitative research, the study analyzed interview data from the principal, the formal teacher leader, and classroom teachers of a single elementary school over a period of three years post reform. These data were drawn from a larger study entitled Sustainability Study that involved a total of six schools.

Guided by the conceptual framework (Figure 2.1, p. 44), individual and shared leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader that sustained the learning culture developed during the reform were identified. The principal fostered continuous professional learning by being visible in classrooms, listening and responding to the development needs of teachers, and both recognizing and encouraging teacher growth. The principal also was relentless in searching for and securing resources to sustain

progress. The formal teacher leader fostered continuous professional development by committing to intensive job-embedded learning support that was largely classroom-based which took the form of personalized one-on-one observations, modeling and reflective conversations. The principal and teacher leader, together, facilitated the engagement of the school leadership team members in continuously monitoring and reflecting on grade and school level data to determine next steps for teacher learning and development for advancing instructional practice throughout the school. Collectively, the principal and teacher leadership practices provided a balance of structure and nurture for maintaining the momentum of continuous teacher learning and school improvement. The major finding of the study was that shared and complementary leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader were essential in maintaining the school-wide focus on instructional improvement and sustaining the culture of continuous learning that resulted in instructional and school-wide improvement.

This study demonstrates that the individual and shared leadership practices of the principal and teacher leader can support sustainability of high quality professional development after external supports from school reform initiative are removed. The principal promoted coherence and content focus by maintaining the same goal over the three years. She also advanced active learning through encouraging collective participation. Most importantly, the principal secured fiscal and personnel resources that extended the duration of the professional development that linked to all dimensions of high quality professional development. The teacher leader enhanced active learning and content focus by strong ground-level instructional leadership, which also raised collective participation.

These findings led to a revision of the conceptual framework of the study, as shown in Figure 5.1. Elevated in this revision is the partnership role of the teacher leader with the principal in the work of continuous school improvement. It cannot be concluded that teacher leadership was essential, if only because the study context involved both the principal and the formal teacher leader by design and from the start of reform work, as well as in the post-reform period. It can be concluded, however, that developing the leadership capacities of teachers by creating and supporting various forms of instructionally-focused leadership was an intricate and powerful force at this particular school. The findings from this study corroborate recent research about the importance of formal teacher leaders in professional learning and instructional improvement. The findings add to the literature about sustainability of reform by offering one example of shared principal and teacher leadership in a post-reform context. Further research is recommended in understanding the roles and function of leadership teams in both reform and post-reform contexts.

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APPENDIX A

Last Year of Reading First – Year Zero

Last Year of Reading First – Year Zero

This section provides information about Lakeview Elementary School during Reading First. This description offers the reader the “baseline” of practices before the resources of external support were removed. This year is referred to as Year Zero. In this section, a brief background of the school, such as student demographics and information about the staff, is provided. The application process for participation in Reading First, along with the professional development and leadership practices during RF, also are presented. Specifically, the professional development activities and the leadership practices of the principal, teacher leader, and external facilitator that were mandated by the RF are described.

Lakeview Elementary School

Lakeview Elementary School (LES) is located in a rural town in an upper Midwest state. The town has low economic activity and the majority of the population is White (99%). Based on the 2000 census, the population of the town was about 1,200 with a little more than 500 households. The median household income was slightly more than \$22,000, and, for a family, about \$30,000 for a household. Almost one-fifth of the population was below the poverty line.

Based on the school report card published by the State, during the RF period from 2003 to 2006, LES served kindergarten through sixth grade and enrolled approximately 400 students, almost all of whom were white. Approximately 15% of the students were identified as special education and about 56% received free and reduced priced lunch. There were no students identified as Limited English Proficient. Also during RF, the total number of full time equivalent staff at LES was 46.32, including classroom teachers, the

principal, and other licensed professionals, as well as paraprofessionals and other non-licensed staff. Many of the teachers would be considered veterans with over 60% having more than ten years of experience as educators and just 4% have fewer than three years experience. The entire school district had three administrators.

As described previously, Lakeview Elementary School was one of the 29 schools that participated in the first round of Reading First grant funding. Eligibility criteria included a minimum poverty level of 15%, along with a reading proficiency level on the statewide reading assessment greater than 19.5% of students. LES's reading proficiency rate was about 23 percent.

In the final year of the Reading First, LES showed considerable improvement in student achievement and earned a four star status in reading. Three stars meant that the school met the federal accountability requirements. The additional star was earned because LES had more than 30% of students scoring in the top level. Specifically, 55% of the third graders exceeded and 22% met the state level standard.

Professional Development

Professional development was one of the key components of RF. Required professional development included study groups and school-wide whole group meetings within the school, and attending professional development workshops conducted by the University Center. Study groups and school-wide whole group meetings were utilized for the dual functions of building reading knowledge and practice and also forming a professional learning community focused on literacy. Teachers, for example, after attending workshops, were expected to discuss in their weekly study groups information acquired at workshops to improve their literacy instruction. In addition, teachers had

school-wide whole group meetings to discuss literacy instruction and share ideas and concerns about the literacy intensive professional development.

The study groups met once a week for an hour. Four to five teachers formed one group focusing on a chosen topic area of literacy. At the beginning of each school year, a topic in literacy and literacy instruction was identified based on student assessment data and directions from the University Center. Often in this process, the literacy leadership team, including the principal and the literacy coordinator, administered a survey to solicit input from teachers about what they viewed as important. The structure of the study group was cross grade level based on the chosen topic area. Typically, kindergarten and first grade teachers, and second and third grade teachers were together in the study groups. Other teachers, such as special services teachers, were assigned to the closest grade level group with which they worked. Within each study group, teachers followed a specific study group protocol provided developed by the University Center. The study group protocol included guiding questions for the teachers, as well as group member roles, such as facilitator, time keeper, and note taker. Roles were rotated in different meetings. Additionally, each teacher was required to keep her or his own individual notes from the study groups. Both group and individual notes were reviewed by the principal, literacy coordinator, and external facilitator.

A typical study group included activities such as reflecting on research articles, sharing student work, and observing then commenting on videotaped classroom practice. The sequence often was, first, discussion of a research article. The articles were identified by the University Center and the site principal and teacher leader. The articles were recent research publications about literacy instruction theory and strategies. Second,

teachers reviewed student work samples from their respective classrooms as a means of seeing ways in which literacy practices impacted student work as a basis for generating ideas for refining literacy instruction strategies in their classrooms. Finally, videotapes of teachers implementing new literacy instructional strategies were presented and teachers provided feedback on a written form.

Additionally, a teacher peer visit was introduced in the last year of the RF. The peer visits were used as a form of professional development. The purpose of the peer visits was to assist the teachers in gaining knowledge of new strategy of literacy instruction by seeing it in action in a peer's classroom. This was intended to foster and deepen literacy instruction and peer support. Each teacher visited other classrooms in the same grade level based on their specific instructional learning needs followed by a meeting. After each peer visit, the two teachers and the literacy coordinator typically met to reflect on the instructional practices observed and follow-up actions for improving classroom level literacy practices.

Another form of significant professional development was the workshops provided by the University Center focused on five basic components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. These workshops provided formal grounding in reading instruction. The follow-up learning structures (e.g., study groups and peer visits) provided the ongoing, job-embedded means by which implementation and continuous reflection and refinement of practice occurred. Specific emphases included reading structures, including guided reading groups, and reading instructional methods, such as Question Answer Relationship (QAR), higher order questions, and a variety of specific strategies many of which were

visually accessible (i.e., posted) in classrooms and that served as self-cuing strategies for students to figure out what to do when they got stuck during the reading process. All methods and strategies were research-based.

The reading practices also were data-driven. Throughout Reading First there was a relentless focus on the collection and frequent use of formative assessment data to continuously monitor student progress. For example, use of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBLES) assessment system was embedded into regular classroom practice, as was evaluating student work samples. Second, the Northwest Evaluation Association assessment (NWEA) was implemented and resulting data used periodically through the school year. Third, state assessment data were carefully analyzed on an annual basis to direct future literacy improvement and, specifically, the topical emphases for professional development.

The aforementioned professional development activities mandated by the RF grant brought many changes to LES. One of the prominent changes was the opportunity for collaboration among the teachers with a common focus on literacy improvement. Before RF, time and structure for collaboration were limited. Teacher practice was largely isolated, and there was little collective focus or collaboration. The professional development activities of the RF changed the dynamics of work relationships. The study groups and peer visits, for example, provided time and structure for discussion and reflection of teaching and learning among the teachers. In addition, the push-in model used by support services teachers during RF changed the work relationships between classroom teachers and special services teachers. Classroom teachers and special services teachers shared instructional goals and together found ways to achieve the goals and

improve their instruction. Being present in the same teaching environment afforded many “built-in” opportunities to learn from one another.

The opportunities for collective work and collaboration among teachers, however, were limited to the primary grade teachers and special services teachers. Recall that the intermediate grades level teachers were not identified or funded as participants given the constraints of RF. Workshops, for example, were available only for the primary and special service teachers. In this regard, the principal described the RF as a “divider,” and many teachers in grades four, five, and six were resistant to RF and expressed that they felt “left out.”

In the final year of RF, the fourth and fifth grade teachers were invited to join the professional development activities, using site level funds if funding was necessary. The fourth and fifth grade teachers started their own study groups. One fourth grade and one fifth grade teacher also were brought onto the literacy leadership team. Although they were not able to participate in the workshops and other professional development activities, starting the study groups and having a grade representative for the literacy leadership team gave them a sense of what RF was about and some information regarding its goal. The sixth grade teachers, however, did not participate in the professional development and the literacy leadership team. Partial inclusion of the intermediate grade teachers was a specific element of a sustainability plan. This will be described in greater detail later in the section.

Leadership

In this section, the leadership roles and practices of the principal and the teacher leader (i.e., literacy coordinator) during RF are reviewed. In addition, the role of the RF-

supported external facilitator is described. Although the external facilitator was present only during RF, and therefore was not the primary interest of this present study, the facilitator was an influential presence during RF and was a leadership partner with the principal and literacy coordinator. This section starts by describing the principal leadership during RF. This is followed by a description of the leadership practices enacted by the literacy coordinator, the external facilitator, and finally the literacy leadership team.

Principal

Lakeview Elementary School had five principals in the seven years before the principal present during RF was hired. Her degree and teaching experience were at the secondary level. Before becoming the principal at LES, she taught high school Spanish. The principal initiated the interest in Reading First and assumed the primary role in the grant writing team. Her goal, as the newly hired principal, was to improve student achievement, and she viewed RF as the impetus to achieve the goal. Through communications with the University Center personnel and from reviewing the annual RF reports about LES, it was clear that the principal was a driving and organizing force for the initiation of RF, as well as throughout the three years of RF. She made strong efforts to set a positive tone for RF and encouraged staff to “buy-in.” The principal supported teachers in various ways during the RF, including scheduling common planning time, providing planning days by hiring substitute teachers, and resolving schedule conflicts. She was also a very active learner during RF, working in classrooms and with teachers to engage in and support implementation of literacy instruction and related staff learning.

The principal worked very closely with the literacy coordinator and the external facilitator. They met at least every two weeks throughout the three years of the RF. Collectively, they monitored the progress of the study groups, reviewed student data, discussed research that could assist teacher learning and school development, and planned future initiatives of the school reform. The principal interacted with both the literacy coordinator and the external facilitator about the overall plan for RF, and she differentially worked with them individually on particular matters. With the literacy coordinator, for example, the principal discussed specifics in planning and scheduling various aspects of site level RF implementation (e.g., study groups, peer visits), meeting and communications with the school staff and school board, and sharing ideas for articulating both short-term and long-term school improvement goals and strategies. With the external facilitator, the principal focused on tapping the literacy expertise of the facilitator. They discussed dimensions of effective literacy instruction and directions and/or suggestions that would be helpful for the teachers. This personal, focused type of interaction supported the principal in not only gaining knowledge about effective literacy instruction, but also in acquiring data and information to utilize in decision making about future plans of professional development and school improvement.

The principal also worked closely with a literacy leadership team that was formed with the participation in RF. The principal always participated in the weekly team meetings, during which they discussed professional development, such as the progress of the study groups and the needs of the teachers. This kept the principal informed about teacher needs and challenges and served to guide and tailor site-level professional development. Working with the literary team, the principal focused on developing

leadership capacities of the members. Teachers on the literacy leadership team, for example, were positioned and expected to lead development of the sustainability plan. The principal and the literacy coordinator strategically coached the literacy team members to actively lead the work of identifying teacher learning needs, creating a related development plan, and also presenting the plan to the school board.

One area that the principal emphasized during RF was to make sure that the professional development activities were implemented and that the teachers were learning new literacy instructional strategies for improving the reading skills of students. In the second year of the RF, for example, when district-organized professional development conflicted with the schedule of RF study groups, the principal addressed this issue with the district and coordinated schedules in the following year to avoid further conflicts. This coordinated schedule not only allowed the teachers in the kindergarten through third grade to participate in the district professional development, but also enabled the fourth and fifth grade teachers to participate in the RF study groups in the following year. In addition, the principal had planned the inclusion of the intermediate grade teachers in the professional development activities. This was based on her goal “to continue to maintain the rigor and the momentum and the high expectation for students as well as staff in literacy. And take that into a strong K-6 focus, eventually into the high school.”

In summary, the leadership practices of the principal, during RF, focused on the implementation of RF and supporting teacher learning. A primary role during this time was that of encourager for the teachers. She was an active participant in all professional development and developed a greater understanding of classroom practice and connection with each teacher through her ongoing classroom visits. She also was very “hands-on”

with monitoring data about how well students were learning. Her approach to continuous improvement was grounded in sharing leadership with the literacy coordinator, the external facilitator, and the literacy leadership team. She intentionally supported teacher professional learning and both invited and addressed teacher concerns that could have hindered teacher learning. The principal participated side-by-side with the teachers by participating in the study groups and the literacy leadership team meetings. Her decisions were based on the communications and understandings about the needs and interests of both teachers and students.

Teacher Leader – Literacy Coordinator

The literacy coordinator was one of the veteran teachers of Lakeview Elementary School and was highly respected by her school colleagues. She taught her entire career at LES, mostly in kindergarten through third grade. When Reading First began, the principal asked her to participate as the literacy coordinator. The primary roles of the literacy coordinator, during the RF, were assisting literacy instruction of the teachers, leading the literacy leadership team, and coordinating and organizing study groups.

First, the literacy coordinator provided instructional coaching and modeling with a focus on effective literacy instruction. All teachers in RF participating grade levels were observed three to four times a month. One of these observations was conducted by a staff member (data collector) from the University Center. The other two or three monthly observations were conducted by the literacy coordinator. The observation conducted by the Center was used for evaluating the impact of the RF program. The observation data also were available to the literacy coordinator for developmental purposes. No other school staff, including the principal, had access to these data. The literacy coordinator

utilized the data within coaching conferences with respective teacher that occurred after these observations. The coaching conferences were led by the literacy coordinator and included offering suggestions and providing guidance for improving literacy instruction. While the principal's classroom visits served as an opportunity to involve and communicate with teachers about instruction, the literacy coordinator's visits focused were specifically aimed for identifying any problems and for making improvements and changes in literacy instruction concerning ways to increase reading skills of student.

Another major role of the literacy coordinator was to lead the literacy leadership team. She facilitated the monthly team meeting. There were times, however, when she supported teacher members of the team to assume facilitation or partial facilitation leadership responsibilities. The coordinator, for example, would prepare individual members for leading the meetings by meeting with them beforehand to fine tune an agenda and to talk through how to engage members around agenda items. Often times in this process, the principal also was involved. Teacher members of the literacy leadership team also were supported in what and how to communicate with their respective grade level team. Eventually, some stepped up to organize and facilitate school-wide whole group meetings.

A third area of primary responsibility for the literacy coordinator was coordinating, organizing, preparing for, and then monitoring the study groups. She scheduled groups, obtained and distributed study materials such as research articles, and supported use of group learning protocols. She also reviewed the individual study group notes from the teachers and provided suggestions and guidance through those notes, including tailoring support for individual teachers.

In addition to the primary roles described above, the literacy coordinator organized the leveled book libraries for students and a professional library for teachers. First, the literacy coordinator kept track of the leveled books for students so that the teachers could use the books whenever they needed. This library of leveled books ensured reading resources for students to have reading materials that were at their reading level. The leveled library was a substantial and essential part of Reading First. The teachers, for example, used the books in different levels but within the same topical area during instruction so that students could be successful engaging with the text. Professional books and research articles for the teachers also were organized by the literacy coordinator. The teachers used the research articles for increasing their understanding of new literacy strategies and appropriate classroom use.

In summary, during RF, the literacy coordinator leadership roles and responsibilities were critical for the successful implementation of the RF. She was a welcome, steady, and positive support for teacher learning – in the classroom, in professional learning, and in behind the scenes work involved in preparing for observations, for professional learning, and for ensuring appropriately leveled reading texts so that students could engage, practice, and development their literacy capacities.

Teacher Leader – External Facilitator

Each school that participated in Reading First was assigned an external facilitator. These individuals were experts in literacy and were hired by the University Center to work two days a week for the duration of RF at their respective school. Their work ranged from planning implementation with school leaders to finding research articles for the teachers. The external facilitator at LES assisted and supported the teachers with

guidelines and procedures of the RF grant and also provided literacy expertise and supported the implementation process.

The primary role of the external facilitator was to assist and support implementation of the learning structures of RF, primarily the study groups, peer visits, and the school-wide whole group meetings. At most of the schools, these learning structures were not present prior to RF. Specifically, early in RF, the external facilitator assumed primary responsibility for working with the literacy coordinator, principal, and literacy leadership team to organize and structure the study groups. She pulled together materials and clearly identified and described the components of effective literacy instruction. She modeled what the groups should look like and clarified roles of study group members. She also addressed questions about the study group purpose and process and coached the coordinator and principal in specific ways to introduce and engage teachers in the process.

Another major role of the external facilitator was assisting Lakeview staff, including the principal and literacy coordinator, with expertise of current literacy instructional strategies. She supported learning about and implementing the new strategies. Specifically, she provided instructional coaching and modeling in effective literacy instruction for the teachers. She assisted the literacy coordinator in conducting classroom visits and observations. Early in the implementation, the external facilitator modeled what classroom visits and coaching conferences should be like, shared the responsibilities, and worked as a team member in providing individual coaching based on the classroom observation.

Finally, the role of the external facilitator was to generally serve as a partner in leading literacy implementation at the school in whatever ways were deemed supportive of that goal. She worked continuously with the principal and literacy coordinator in planning, implementing, reflecting on then monitoring RF implementation – paying attention to instructional level, team-level, and school-level practices. The external facilitator also played a key role in guiding development of the sustainability plan

Literacy Leadership Team

Also required from the RF grant was the formation of a literacy leadership team. The literacy leadership team at Lakeview was formed with a group of teachers, who were either nominated or volunteered, from each grade level in kindergarten through third and special services teachers. The primary role of this leadership team was to lead and guide the professional development, such as the study groups. The literacy leadership team had weekly team meetings, which included the principal and literacy coordinator, and discussed concerns of professional development, such as literacy instruction issues and learning needs of the teachers and the students.

The literacy leadership team members worked very closely with the principal and the literacy coordinator. In the final year of RF, the team members assumed major roles in developing the sustainability plan. The team members were also actively involved in presenting the plan to the school staff and school board. The specifics of the sustainability plan are presented in next.

Sustainability Plan

As previously mentioned, a sustainability plan was developed in the final year of Reading First. Each school that participated in RF was required to develop a

sustainability plan that delineated specific strategies for sustaining an emphasis on high quality literacy instruction and learning. At Lakeview Elementary School, in the final year of RF, the principal, literacy coordinator, and the literacy leadership team members agreed that they needed to continue an emphasis on literacy development and implementation. The literacy coordinator and the literacy leadership team, with guidance from the principal and the external facilitator, led the development of this plan. Informing the sustainability plan was student assessment data and the annual survey results from the teachers. Key specifications in the Lakeview Elementary School sustainability plan were as follows:

1. A literacy coordinator will be maintained on a half-time basis to continue school change efforts in kindergarten through grade six. Assessment data recording, analysis, and application to change instruction will be a focus for the literacy coordinator in coaching teachers.
2. Study groups will meet each month to focus on a topic identified in the student data.
3. The [literacy] leadership team will expand to include grades four through six. It will meet monthly to discuss topics related to literacy and professional development.
4. Assessments will continue to be administered to monitor student progress and direct instruction. An assessment plan will be created to ensure continuous review of data to meet the instructional needs of students at varying levels.
5. The 120 minute reading block will be maintained in all grade levels. The leveled library will be maintained by a paraprofessional but administered by the literacy coordinator.
6. Intervention using Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) will continue as a push-in model in kindergarten through grade five.

7. External support will be contracted through the University Center to include the highest level of support with consultant visits, [literacy] leadership team quarterly meetings, and observations to provide instructional data.

The sustainability plan mostly focused on continuing the supports and the activities of the professional development, such as maintaining the study groups, the literacy leadership team, and the position of the literacy coordinator. Additionally, the plan included an external contract to purchase a level III support from the University Center. Level III support included continued access to a literacy consultant, classroom observations conducted by the University Center, and quarterly literacy leadership team meetings. Furthermore, the plan included sustaining classroom level instructional practices, such as the 120 minute reading block and the push-in model for special services instruction. The plan, however, had to reduce the amount of time for the literacy coordinator position due to the removal of externally provided RF fiscal support that paid for half of the literacy coordinator's time. Time for the study groups also was reduced. Instead of having weekly meetings, LES planned monthly meetings for the study groups.

Summary - Year Zero

The goal of RF was to improve the reading skills of students in grades kindergarten through three. Professional development was the intended means by which teachers were supported in increasing their knowledge and practice of literacy instructional strategies. At Lakeview Elementary School, study groups were formed, school-wide meetings were held, and the literacy leadership team served as a school-wide means of connecting the needs of teachers with opportunities for learning. Through these professional development activities, teachers engaged in learning research-based

strategies of literacy instruction and in implementing new ways to improve their classroom practices. The professional development activities created opportunities for collective participation and collaboration among teachers.

The leadership of the principal, literacy coordinator, and external facilitator was the driving force of the RF implementation. Each of these formal leaders had differentiated leadership roles, but as a team, they advanced the literacy learning and implementation, supporting each other as a core team.

The results of RF at Lakeview Elementary were extremely positive in terms of student learning in the primary grades. In the last year of RF, over 70% of the third graders met or exceeded the state level standard in reading. RF, however, also had a detrimental impact at Lakeview in that a division was created or accentuated between those involved in RF (i.e., the primary teachers and some special services teachers) and those not involved (i.e., the intermediate teachers).

The desire and plan to overcome the division were evident in the Sustainability Plan. Initial steps were taken in the final year of RF when the teachers in grade four and five started to participate in study groups and as members of the literacy leadership team. Other key elements of the sustainability plan were continuing high quality school-embedded professional learning, continuing the school-based literacy coordinator position, and continuing strategic external support from the University Center. Also explicitly identified was continued attention to implementation of specific literacy practices and ongoing utilization of student assessment data.

APPENDIX B

Interview protocols:

Principal

Teacher leader

Classroom teacher

Special services teacher

University of Minnesota School Change Follow-Up Study, Spring 2009
Year 3 Reflection Questions – Principal

- ***Professional Learning and Development***

What are some of the ways teachers in your school have been learning this past year? How have these learning opportunities influenced their teaching practices? ...student learning?

- *Learning on their own? Group or team learning? School-wide learning? District events?*
- *Who do they get to learn/collaborate with on a regular basis? What is the focus of this learning and how is it decided? How frequently and long do you meet? Materials used?*
- *Think about a PLC/team learning meeting you have observed/participated, if I had been observing, what would I have seen and heard? (roles, structures, topic, conversation, follow-up identified?)*
- *How would describe the impact of PLC/team learning on your teacher instructional practices?*
- *In what ways are YOU supported in your work? Opportunities to learn/reflect on your practice? Ways to create the conditions for ongoing professional learning and development in your school?*

- ***Teaching and Learning Practices***

How would you describe teaching and learning practices in this school?

- *Priorities for what is taught? Instructional strategies valued the most? Monitoring student progress?*
- *For students with identified learning needs (special ed, ELL, Title), what types of support are provided? What does their instructional day look like? How do classroom teachers work / coordinate / plan with special services teachers?*
- *Think of a specific student with learning challenges (special ed, ELL, Title), what does this student's instructional day look like? What works well with this? Challenges or concerns?*
- *In what ways are parents involved in supporting student learning? [consider probe: changing population, school response?]*
- *How would you describe the variation across classrooms and grades? (e.g., primary, intermediate)*

- ***Student Learning***

How do teachers here know when students are engaged in their learning? making progress?

- *Outcomes, evidence of student learning? In general? Specific examples?*
- *How do teachers or teams of teachers respond when students struggle?*
- ***Leading Continuous Improvement***
How has the work of school improvement been led in your school this past year?
 - *How would you describe your role in the work of school improvement and professional learning?*
 - *In what ways do you and [teacher leader] work together in leading this work?*
 - *Are there other people.... teachers, groups of teachers... in your school that are involved (formally or informally) in this work? What are their respective roles, influences? [Probe re: leadership team]*
 - *Are there influences on what happens in your school from outside your school, such as district level involvement, or connecting with other schools inside or outside the district?*
 - *Conversely, are there ways that what happens in this school, influences other schools or people (admin? teachers? central office personnel) in the district or outside the district?*
 - *In what ways do resources (money, people, materials, time) influence this development work?*
- ***Overall Reflections and Moving Forward***
What matters most for continuing to learn and grow as educators in your school so that all children learn well?
 - *As you know, a major objective in this study is to see what types of learning and growth opportunities and supports continue in each of the (previously) RF schools...*

For those of you who were part of RF, what do you see as positive “remnants” of that time for you and for your school?

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PROBE AS NEEDED: Leadership ~ Learning ~ Teacher Practice ~ Materials

As you think about future development or reform efforts that may come with large amounts of external support (and pressure), are there things you might do differently to plan for the ultimate decrease in resources (and pressure)?

For those of you who were not part of RF, what do you see as the most important school, team, or personal practices that will help you continue to learn and grow in your practice?

- *As new teachers join your staff, how are they supported to learn about the expectations in your school for high quality instruction and for ongoing learning and collaboration?*
- *What is most important for you in continuing to refine your leadership and development practices?*
- *What three words would you use to capture what it is like to be an educator at this school?*

University of Minnesota School Change Follow-Up Study, Spring 2009
Year 3 Reflection Questions – Teacher Leader (LC)

- ***Role and Support as Teacher Leader***

How would you describe your role this year as “teacher leader”?

- *Formal responsibilities: overall workscope / expectations? the “real” daily work – visible and behind the scenes? [probe: work with principal, leadership team]*
- *Ways you are supported in your work? Support for your learning and development as a leader? Support offered admin, other TLs? Support in terms of space, materials, other?*

- ***Professional Learning and Development***

What are some of the ways teachers in your school have been learning this past year? How have these learning opportunities influenced their teaching practices? ...student learning?

- *Learning on their own? Group or team learning? School-wide learning? District events?*
- *Who do they get to learn/collaborate with on a regular basis? What is the focus of this learning and how is it decided? How frequently and long do you meet? Materials used?*
- *Think about a PLC/team learning meeting in which you have been part, if I had been observing, what would I have seen and heard? (roles, structures, topic, conversation, follow-up identified?)*
- *How would describe the impact of PLC/team learning on teachers’ instructional practices and on student learning?*

- ***Teaching and Learning Practices***

How would you describe teaching and learning practices in this school?

- *Priorities for what is taught? Instructional strategies valued the most? Monitoring student progress?*
- *For students with identified learning needs (special ed, ELL, Title), what types of support are provided? What does their instructional day look like? How do classroom teachers work / coordinate / plan with special services teachers?*
- *Think of a specific student with learning challenges (special ed, ELL, Title), what does this student’s instructional day look like? What works well with this? Challenges or concerns?*
- *In what ways are parents involved in supporting student learning?*

- *How would you describe the variation across classrooms and grades? (e.g., primary, intermediate)*
- ***Student Learning***
How do teachers here know when students are engaged in their learning?
Making progress?
 - *Outcomes, evidence of student learning? In general? Specific examples?*
 - *How do teachers or teams of teachers respond when students struggle?*
- ***Leading Continuous Improvement***
How has the work of school improvement been led in your school this past year?
 - *Who are the people or groups of people that lead your school improvement or professional learning work? What are their respective roles or influences? [Probe re: leadership team]*
 - *Are there influences on what happens in your school from outside your school, such as district level involvement, or connecting with other schools inside or outside the district?*
- ***Overall Reflections and Moving Forward***
What matters most for continuing to learn and grow as educators in your school so that all children learn well?
 - *As you know, a major objective in this study is to see what types of learning and growth opportunities and supports continue in each of the (previously) RF schools...*

For those of you who were part of RF, what do you see as positive “remnants” of that time for you and for your school?

Are there elements that have gone away that you wish were still present? If so, what are those things and why would you still want them to be present?

PROBE AS NEEDED: Leadership ~ Learning ~ Teacher Practice ~ Materials

As you think about future development or reform efforts that may come with large amounts of external support (and pressure), are there things you think the school might do differently to plan for the ultimate decrease in resources (and pressure)?

For those of you who were not part of RF, what do you see as the most important school, team, or personal practices that will help you continue to learn and grow in your practice?

- *As new teachers join your staff, how are they supported to learn about the expectations in your school for high quality instruction and for ongoing learning and collaboration?*
- *What three words would you use to capture what it is like to be an educator at this school?*

University of Minnesota School Change Follow-Up Study, Spring 2009
Year 3 Reflection Questions – Classroom Teachers

- ***Professional Learning and Development***

What are some ways YOU have had opportunities to learn this past year? How have these opportunities made a difference in your teaching practices? on student learning?

- *Learning on your own? Groups or teams? School-wide events? District events?*
- *Who do you get to learn/collaborate with on a regular basis? What is the focus of this learning and how is it decided? How frequently and long do you meet? Materials used?*
- *Think about your last PLC/team learning meeting, if I had been observing, what would I have seen and heard? (e.g., roles, structures, topic, conversation, follow-up identified?)*
- *How would describe the impact of PLC/team learning on your teaching practice and student learning?*
- *In what ways have the principal and teacher leader (lit coord? Coach?) supported professional learning in this school?*

- ***Teaching and Learning Practices***

What does each of you view as “core” to your personal teaching practices?

- *Priorities for what you teach? Instructional strategies you value most? Ways you monitor student progress?*
- *For students with identified learning needs (special ed, ELL, Title), what types of support are provided? How do you work/coordinate/plan with special services teachers?*
- *Think of a specific student with learning challenges (special ed, ELL, Title), what does this student’s instructional day look like? What works well with this? Challenges or concerns?*
- *In what ways do you or your school involve parents in supporting student learning?*

- ***Student Learning***

How do you know when students are engaged in their own learning? making progress?

- *Outcomes, evidence of student learning and achievement? General, specific examples?*
- *What do you do or how do teams of teachers respond when students struggle?*

- ***Leading Continuous Improvement***

How has the work of school improvement been led in your school this past year?

- *Who are the people or groups of people that lead your school improvement or professional learning work? What are their respective roles or influences? [Probe re: leadership team]*
- *Are there influences on what happens in your school from outside your school, such as district level involvement, or connecting with other schools inside or outside the district?*

- ***Overall Reflections and Moving Forward***

What matters most for continuing to learn and grow as educators in your school so that all children learn well?

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For those of you who were not part of RF, what do you see as the most important school, team, or personal practices that will help you continue to learn and grow in your practice?

- *As new teachers join your staff, how are they supported to learn about the expectations in your school for high quality instruction and for ongoing learning and collaboration?*
- *What three words would you use to capture what it is like to be an educator at this school?*

University of Minnesota School Change Follow-Up Study, Spring 2009
Year 3 Reflection Questions – Special Services Teachers

- ***Professional Learning and Development***

What are some ways YOU have had opportunities to learn this past year? How have these opportunities made a difference in your teaching practices? ... student learning?

- *Learning on your own? Groups or teams? School-wide events? District events?*
- *Who do you get to learn with on a regular basis? What is the focus of this learning and how is the focus identified? How frequently and how long do you meet? What materials do you use?*
- *Think about your last PLC/team learning meeting, if I had been observing, what would I have seen and heard? (e.g., roles, structures, topic, conversation, follow-up identified?)*
- *How would describe the impact of PLC/team learning on your teaching practice?*

- ***Teaching and Learning Practices***

What does each of you view as “core” to your personal teaching practices? [round robin]

- *In teaching kids identified as requiring special services (e.g., special ed, ELL, Title), what do you view as priorities for what is taught? Instructional strategies you view as most effective? Ways you monitor student progress? Locations in which students are taught and by whom?*
- *Related to these special students, in what ways do you work / coordinate / plan / teach with classroom teachers? with other special services teachers? as part of PLCs/learning teams?*
- *Think of a specific student with whom you work who requires special services, what does this student’s instructional day look like? What works well with this? Challenges or concerns?*
- *In what ways do you involve parents in supporting student learning?*

- ***Student Learning***

How do you know when students are engaged in their own learning? making progress?

- *Outcomes, evidence of student learning and achievement? General, specific examples?*
- *What do you do and how do other teachers / teams respond when students struggle*

- ***Leading Continuous Improvement***

How has the work of school improvement been led in your school this past year?

- *Who are the people or groups of people that lead your school improvement or professional learning? What are their respective roles or influences? [probe: leadership team specifics]*
- *Are there influences on what happens in your school from outside your school, such as district level involvement, or connecting with other schools inside or outside your district?*

- ***Overall Reflections and Moving Forward***

What matters most for continuing to learn and grow as educators in your school so that all children learn well?

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For those of you who were not part of RF, what do you see as the most important school, team, or personal practices that will help you continue to learn and grow in your practice?

- *As new special services teachers join your staff, how are they supported to learn about the expectations in your school for high quality instruction and for ongoing learning and collaboration?*
- *What three words would you use to capture what it is like to be an educator at this school?*