Lincoln Memorial University

LMU Institutional Repository

2021

Reflective Practice: A Qualitative Study of a Teacher Leader Program

Mark Herron
pianomeh@hotmail.com

Recommended Citation

LMU | Carter & Moyers School *of* Education
LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Final Dissertation Approval
Form 11

Reflective Practice: A Qualitative Study

of a Teacher Leader Program
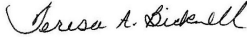
Dissertation Title (Must be typed)

This is to certify that I have examined this copy of the doctoral dissertation by

Mark E. Herron

Candidate's Name

and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee <u>have been made</u>.

Shannon D. Collins	7/21/2021
Committee Chair	Date
signature	7/21/2021
Committee Member	Date
signature	7/21/2021
Committee Member	Date
signature	7/21/2021
EdD Program Director	Date
Teresa A. Bicknell	7/21/2021
Dean, School of Education	Date

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF A TEACHER LEADER PROGRAM

Dissertation

**Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the Carter and Moyers School of Education
at Lincoln Memorial University**

by

Mark E. Herron

July 2021

Dedication

I dedicate this study first and foremost to God because He alone is worthy of my praise for the gifts He has given me and for being my greatest strength and encouragement along this journey. I also could not have had the freedom to think and write to bring this study to completion without the endless sacrifices of my parents, Roger and Phyllis Herron, who have been my greatest teachers, encouragers, and supporters. I am grateful for my friends, family, church family, LMU classmates, colleagues, and members of the Lincoln County Learning Leader program for their interest in my research and for their continued love and support along the way.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for my dissertation chair, Dr. Shannon Collins, for his continued support, guidance, encouragement, and gift of time throughout my entire EdD experience. His wisdom about writing and research proved time and time again to be invaluable. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my other committee members, Dr. Andrew Courtner and Dr. Josh Tipton, who provided wise counsel concerning the research process and teacher leadership. It is undoubtedly due to the tireless efforts of my committee that I was able to complete this study.

Abstract

Because of the increase of the rigor of state standards and of accountability, the

Lincoln County School District sought to become a part of the state Teacher

Leader Network during the 2016-2017 school year as a way to provide teachers

best practices for improving the culture and climate of their schools, participating

in collaborative professional learning, and helping students be more successful on

high-stakes end-of-course assessments. As a result of their efforts, the Lincoln

County Learning Leader program was born, which led to implementing the

professional learning community process in each school as the vehicle to

accomplish the program's objectives. As the researcher, I interviewed 34 of the 48

Learning Leaders in order to collect qualitative data concerning their perceptions

regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher

leader program. The research concluded that Learning Leaders perceived that the

program was valuable in improving the culture and climate of their schools, as

they worked collaboratively through the PLC process to solve complex problems

to help all students learn at a high level.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I: Introduction

"To be a teacher leader means to be a teacher who has the best interest of the

students at the forefront of their teaching practices." -Linda Radecke

Overview of the Study

According to a 2018 Chiefs for Change brief, in response to receiving

Race to the Top (RTTT) federal funding in 2010, members of the state board of

education of a southeastern state adopted the Teacher Leader Model Standards in

2011 and, subsequently, a statewide Teacher Leader Network (TLN)[1]. In a 2015

Teacher Leader Guidebook, the State Commissioner of Education argued that

creating such a network of teacher leaders across the state would have the

following benefits: a) Students would experience greater achievement because of

the increase of teachers' participation in shared leadership; b) Teachers would

share best practices through collaborative work with other teachers; c) Keeping

highly effective teachers and principals would have a positive effect on school

culture. Researchers reported that effective teacher leadership involved teacher

leaders at the heart of shared decision-making and ultimately connected to school

success (Alam & Ahmad, 2017; Huguet, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Voelkel &

Chrispeels, 2017).

According to the state TLN guidebook, Lincoln County (pseudonym)

educators participated in creating a teacher leader program in the third year of the

TLN program during the 2015-2016 school year. The district Network Team

---

[1] In an effort to protect/ensure the anonymity of the district that I evaluated in this study, I made the choice to keep confidential, to the greatest extent possible, all identifying information related to the program including information regarding the state.

offered teachers the opportunity to apply to become a Learning Leader, a teacher

leader in Lincoln County, in April 2016 and selected Learning Leaders in May

2016. Lincoln County Learning Leaders (LCLL) (pseudonym) participated in a

three-day professional development in July 2016 to train for work with their

fellow faculty members on their school's mission, vision, and belief statements.

During the 2016-2017 school year, LCLLs led professional learning community

(PLC) collaborative sessions, attended monthly trainings at the district office, and

offered additional professional learning for faculty during monthly meetings.

LCLLs have continued to model best practices, work with struggling teachers, be

a voice for colleagues, and participate in shared leadership decisions from 2016 to

2021, the time of this current study.

The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs

regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher

leader program. In the following chapter, I provide the reader with an overview of

the problem as that problem relates to effective teacher leadership as well as the

purpose of this study. Furthermore, I explain the theoretical framework through

which I viewed the problem of effective teacher leadership, and I argue the

significance of conducting a study on effective teacher leadership and student

success. Finally, I conclude Chapter I by describing common terms associated

with researching the topic of effective teacher leadership and student success as

well as providing the reader with an overview of the rest of the dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

In a perfect world, all students would have effective teachers every year

who would help them learn and achieve at a high level (Alam & Ahmad; 2017;

Carini; 2018; Danielson, 2006; Huguet, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Sehgal et al., 2017; Shaukat & Sikandar, 2018; Stronge, 2018; Torres et al., 2020; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Wieczorek & Lear, 2018; Will, 2018). Although researchers found *effective teacher* challenging to define, they reported that former students of highly effective teachers went to college, lived in better neighborhoods, and saved more money for their retirement (Stronge, 2018). Stronge (2018) sought to frame *effective teacher* by researching the qualities that reflect what effective teachers did. For example, effective teachers displayed professional knowledge and professionalism. They also demonstrated their advanced skills in instructional and assessment planning, in creating an engaging learning environment, and in instructional delivery (Daily et al., 2019; Palmer, 2018; Sehgal et al., 2017; Stronge, 2018). Likewise, all teachers would have effective principals who would support them and help provide them the resources to be successful (Alam & Ahmad, 2016; Angelle, 2017; Bach et al., 2019; Danielson, 2006; Gülşen & Gülenay, 2014; Huguet, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2018; Khumalo, 2017; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Mungal & Sorenson, 2020; Murphy, 2007; Ni et al., 2017; Preston & Barnes, 2017; Ramazan & Hanifli, 2018; Sehgal et al., 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). All students would have access to resources such as rigorous curricula and up-to-date technology (Duncan, 2014; Marzano, 2003; Sehgal et al., 2017; Tager, 2020). All teachers would have equitable access to up-to-date technology, access to professional learning through collaboration, and, most importantly, access to more time to meet the demands of helping all students succeed (Antinluoma et al., 2018; DuFour, 2014; Duncan, 2014; Murphy, 2007; Tager, 2020). In fact, Childs-Bowen et al. (2000) offered

this definition of teacher leadership, "We believe teachers are leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning; contribute to school improvement; inspire excellence in practice; and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement" (p. 28).

The reality at the time of this study, however, was that there was a disparity between students who had resources and those who did not (Castro et al., 2018; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). The gaps between the *haves* and the *have nots* occurred from state to state, school district to school district, and school to school (Brittain et al, 2019; Chadwick et al, 2018; Ezzani, 2020). Additionally, teachers often found themselves having to scavenge resources to meet the increasing federal, state, and local demands to help students succeed (Garcia, 2019). Teachers also suffered from not having adequate time and training they needed to meet the wide variety of student needs (Antinluoma et al., 2018; DeMatthews, 2014; Murphy, 2007). In an attempt to meet all these disparities, I have mentioned, principals, whose role had been one of manager, were thrust into the role of instructional facilitator (Crow et al., 2017; Danielson, 2006).

Teacher shortage had become an increasing challenge to overcome in providing students with effective teachers who would help them succeed (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Malatras et al., 2017). According to Ingersoll and Perda (2012), 40% to 50% of teachers abandoned their career within their first five years. Will (2021) and Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) reported that the approximate teacher attrition rate per year was eight percent. Castro et al. (2018) found that there was a 10% decline nationwide in enrollment in teacher preparation programs from 2004 to 2012, with some areas

in the US, like California, experiencing a 53% decline during the same time period. Not only had teachers left the profession, but almost 250,000 of the 16% of the workforce who left their schools in 2012 changed schools (Castro et al., 2018). Researchers reported that the highest teacher turnover rates were in the South at16.7% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Castro et al., 2018).

Researchers also said that students did not have access to highly qualified teachers, teachers who had earned full state certification or licensure and who taught subjects they had trained to teach (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Castro et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers said that students of color and low socioeconomic students were more likely to have teachers who were not qualified and therefore less effective, causing harm to student achievement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Castro et al., 2018; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Castro et al. (2018) found that instead of incentivizing teachers to want to teach in areas of considerable shortage, some state boards of education lowered their standards for becoming a teacher. In schools where there were such shortages of highly qualified, well-prepared teachers, student achievement scores decreased. Castro et al. found that teacher turnover negatively affected schools, students, and the surrounding community. Castro et al. also found that teacher turnover negatively affected the relationships among faculty members and the ability to develop trust, a key factor in being able to be transparent about best practices and data and to work effectively in PLCs. Recommendations related to teacher leadership that Castro et al. (2018) made were to offer programs to encourage supportive, collaborative working environments, to train and mentor teachers to reduce the teacher shortage, and to offer teachers opportunities to

further their career by taking on leadership responsibilities without having to leave the classroom.

According to a 2013 document on the state department of education web page, students across the state in which I conducted this study performed below their peers in reading and math. In fact, only 26% of fourth-grade reading students scored proficient or advanced on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam and ranked 41st in the nation. Likewise, only 24% of eighth-grade math students scored proficient or advanced on the NAEP exam and ranked 45th in the nation. In order to help teachers use best practices to encourage all students to learn at a high level, members of the state department of education worked with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) to adapt the NIET teacher evaluation rubric for use with teachers across the state.

Among others, Danielson's (2006) research contributed to the creation of the state's teacher evaluation rubric. According to Danielson (2006), because of principals' and teachers' increased accountability for student success based on endless state and federal mandates, principals had to add the role of instructional leader (Khumalo, 2017; Liu & Hallinger, 2018) to their existing duties as manager while teachers experienced both increased accountability and more rigorous standards without being given more time to meet the new demands. Also, unlike other professionals, novice teachers had to carry the same load as experienced teachers (Danielson, 2006). Because of these challenges, principals and state-level educational leaders looked to effective veteran teachers for help.

Researchers stated that a school's culture determined what teachers did as well as set the tone for teacher leadership (Danielson, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2019;

Schaap & de Bruijn, 2018; Supovitz, 2002; Weiner & Higgins, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leaders helped change the culture from one of autonomy and privacy to one of professional inquiry in which teachers must be open to change to ensure that they are teaching effectively and that student learning is improving (Danielson, 2006; Ronfeldt et al., 2015). One of the effective teaching strategies researchers described was collaborating with other teachers in the same content area or grade level (Berg, 2019; Danielson, 2006; Flood & Angelle, 2017; Fountas & Pinnell, 2020; Gallimore et al., 2009; Goddard et al., 2007; Klein et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019; Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Schaap & de Bruijn, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

To encourage teachers to collaborate and to share best practices to encourage improving student achievement scores, the Lincoln County School District launched the Lincoln County Learning Leader (LCLL) program during the 2016-2017 school year. According to a district email, the district Learning Leader Network Team wrote the following:

> We believe that within the ranks of Lincoln County teachers are some of the most dedicated, capable, and innovative teachers in education. We also believe that a research-based Professional Learning Community culture is a powerful way to allow those educators to impact school-wide culture and student learning in positive ways.

The district Network Team assigned LCLLs to help each school's administration create an effective PLC process by leading PLC meetings. The district Network Team provided monthly ongoing teacher leader professional learning

opportunities and charged LCLLs to encourage a collaborative school culture. As of 2021, the LCLL program has existed for five years, and the number of members of its cohort has grown from 30 to 48. The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program.

Research Questions

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) said the research questions of a study encompass the researcher's beliefs on what are the most important areas to study. As the researcher, I chose the following research questions, which come from the LCLL program goals established in the state Teacher Leader Network 2015-2016 Guidebook. See *Description of Terms* section for an operational description of ***positive changes***, ***learn at a high level***, ***highly effective teams***, ***solving complex problems collaboratively***.

Research Question 1

According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are serving as catalysts for creating ***positive changes*** in the culture and climate of their schools so that all students ***learn at a high level***?

Research Question 2

According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are building ***highly effective teams*** focused on helping students and teachers exceed their own expectations?

Research Question 3

According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are *solving complex problems collaboratively*?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that I chose to guide this study was *adult learning theory* (Knowles, 1980, 1984). I justified using adult learning theory as my theoretical framework because the concept of adult learning satisfied how researchers defined a theoretical framework. For example, Anfara and Mertz (2015) described a theoretical framework as "any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels . . . that can be applied to the understanding of the phenomena" (p. xv). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) said that the theoretical framework undergirded all research, guided the research questions, and offered a lens from which one views one's surroundings and particularly in researching a problem. Other researchers described a theoretical framework as something to frame one's study, to provide precision, and to limit the margins of the research study since it would be impossible to study every related nuance (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The theoretical framework of a study guided the research process in the creation of research questions, in the choice of sampling, and in sampling procedures (Schultz, 1988). Roberts and Hyatt (2019) said that the theoretical framework influenced data collection strategies and analysis as well as interpreting findings.

Knowles' (1980, 1984) explained that *andragogy*, the theory of adult learning, asserted that adults learn differently from other types of learners. LCLL

Network Team members built much of the foundation of the LCLL program on DuFour's (2008) work that focused on adult learners who participate in teacher collaboration through the PLC process. Researchers maintained that making adult professional learning a priority in schools was a best practice in improving student achievement (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Odden & Wallace, 2003; Wright et al., 1997). Knowles' (1980) described five assumptions of adult learners: self-concept, adult learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation to learn.

Knowles' (1980) first assumption about adult learners was that as an adult, a learner has moved from being dependent on another person from whom they can learn to being more self-direct. His second assumption was that as an adult continues learning, they develop a wealth of background knowledge from which they can draw to further their learning. His third assumption was dealing effectively with the problem at hand drives adults' readiness to learn. His fourth assumption was that as an adult, a learner transitions from postponement of the application of their acquired knowledge to immediate application. Because of this transition, the adult learner moves away from subject-centered learning to problem-centered learning. Finally, his fifth assumption was as an adult, the motivation to learn becomes more intrinsic. The LCLL program involved self-directed adult learners who had a continuing collective wealth of professional background knowledge and who participated in solving complex problems to help students master essential learning.

Knowles (1984) continued his study of andragogy and offered four principles. First, effective adult learning requires adults to be a part of the

decision-making concerning their instruction planning and evaluation. Second, the cornerstone for adult learning activities is experience, including mistakes made, during the learning process. Third, adults want to learn about topics that have an immediate application to their job or personal life. Finally, adults focus their learning on problems instead of a particular subject. The LCLL program involved adult learners who collaborated through the PLC process to make collective decisions about their professional learning that they could immediately apply to their professional lives to improve student learning.

Using adult learning theory to guide my decisions about my study of the LCLL program, in Chapter II of this report, I underscored the professional literature that focused on teacher leader programs. This approach led me to highlight the following themes important to researchers as those themes related to teacher leadership attributes that promoted (or deterred) student success: Positive supports, negative barriers, effectiveness of teacher collaboration, and the usefulness of collegial professional development. After I had reviewed the literature, my theoretical framework of adult learning theory helped me develop my research questions (see Chapter I and Chapter III), which were based on the LCLL's program outcomes. Finally, in Chapter IV, I analyzed the data that I had collected for the research project.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program. In a review of the literature, as the researcher, I did not find a clear definition of teacher leader roles, nor research on specific teacher leader

programs. I focused on teacher leaders' personal experiences as participants in a local teacher leader program. Based on the literature, I defined teacher leadership, described a brief historical perspective on teacher leadership, discussed practices of teacher leaders including professional development and collaboration, and identified supports and barriers to effective teacher leadership.

District leaders can use the information gained to strengthen the teacher leader program and better inform future decision-making about the program. Information from this study can also have a positive influence on school culture and school improvement by revealing teacher leaders' experiences and practices that helped students master essential learning, teachers work more effectively and learn through collaborative work, and teachers solve problems they encounter along the learning cycle. Principals, teachers, and teacher leaders in individual schools can have a better understanding of teacher leader roles. I offered implications for practice to help teacher leaders become more effective in their roles. To fill the gap in the literature and to benefit the teacher leaders in the LCLL program, I addressed the program members' perceptions of being change agents for school culture and climate, of working to create highly effective teams, and of working collaboratively to solve complex problems.

To my knowledge of information provided by the district, no researcher had completed a qualitative study of the LCLL program. I completed this study by conducting focus group interviews to gather qualitative data. These focus group interviews helped me to have a better understanding of program participants' specific experiences.

Description of the Terms

Because of the foundational work of DuFour et al. (2008) concerning the collaborative work of PLCs and because of their influence on the LCLL program specifically, I referenced their work in defining most of the terms below.

Highly Effective Teams

DuFour et al. (2008) described highly effective teams as PLCs, communities of teachers with a common interest in helping their students succeed, with an ongoing pursuit of best practices for learning, with a high level of involvement and mutual support, and with a strong sense of unity.

Learn at a High Level

DuFour et al. (2008) described learning at a high level as the belief that students had the ability to master essential learning (i.e., state standards) and that teachers had the capacity to help all students master that essential learning. DuFour et al. also focused on learning rather than teaching. They said the best practice for improving student learning was to invest in the learning of the adults who taught those students.

Positive Changes

DuFour et al. (2008) described positive changes in a school setting as ones that centered around student achievement. The researchers identified six characteristics of PLCs that contributed to positive changes:

- a shared mission, vision, values, and goals,

- a collaborative culture,

- a commitment to collective inquiry to discover best practices in teaching and learning and to identify the current reality of teaching and learning,

- a drive to take action to inspire the most powerful learning,

- "a commitment to continuous improvement" (p. 17), and

- a focus on results.

Professional Learning Community

I defined Professional Learning Community (PLC) based on how DuFour et al. (2010) defined the term. The authors stated the following: "A Professional Learning Community is comprised of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which members are mutually accountable" (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 11).

Solving Complex Problems Collaboratively

DuFour et al. (2008) recognized that teachers could not help all students master state standards, a complex problem, by working alone. Only through the collaborative work of PLCs would teachers be able to achieve such a mammoth task.

Teacher Leader

According to the state 2015-2016 Teacher Leader Network Guidebook, "A teacher leader is a professional educator, who, through transparent practices, acts as a change agent to build capacity in self and others to increase effective educator practices and improve student learning" (p. 6). I have used the term *teacher leader* to coincide with the Teacher Leader Network Guidebook's

description of a teacher leader. To protect the confidentiality of the state and specific teacher leader program, I did not identify more specifically the Teacher Leader Network Guidebook mentioned above.

Organization of the Study

The first chapter introduced the local teacher leader program to be studied. As the researcher, I identified the problem as the local teacher leader program that no researcher had studied qualitatively to discern the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in the LCLL program. I also outlined the purpose of the study, research questions to be answered, and definitions related to the study. I concluded the chapter with an organization of the study.

Chapter II gives the reader insight into the extant literature on the topic of teacher leadership. The three main themes identified in the literature are supports to effective teacher leadership, barriers to effective leadership, and professional learning in the form of professional development and collaboration.

In Chapter III, I describe for the reader the methodology of a qualitative study and the procedures for selecting program participants data collection for the study. I conclude Chapter III by providing a description of the data analysis procedures for qualitative methods.

I share the findings of this study in Chapter IV with a thick, rich description of the qualitative data to help the reader have a greater understanding of the local teacher leader program and its participants' perceptions of their involvement and effectiveness in the program (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I conclude the study in Chapter V with an in-depth analysis of the data I collected. I discuss how the findings relate to the literature and how local program participants can use the results of my study. I also share implications for further research.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

In order to evaluate a teacher leader program, one has to understand what teacher leaders do. The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program. To address the issue of teacher leadership, I reviewed the extant literature apropos to the topic (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Hart (2009) recommended a literature review to help the researcher have a better understanding of the topic, of what other researchers have already contributed to the knowledge base, and of contemporary crucial matters pertaining to the subject. Furthermore, Boot and Beile (2005) described a purposeful review of literature as an asset to thorough, relevant research. This review of literature addressed the following topics: teacher leadership defined; a historical perspective on teacher leadership; and practices of teacher leadership that include professional development and collaboration, supports, and barriers. At the end of the chapter, I included a description of the teacher leader program I studied.

Teacher Leadership Defined

In this section, I attempted to define teacher leadership, a task that researchers have described as difficult because of the breadth of roles teachers play. I shared how teachers have served in either formal or informal roles. Finally, I commented on teacher leaders' role in decision-making.

Unfortunately, at the time of this study, a clear definition of teacher leadership did not exist because of how broad and encompassing the term *teacher leadership* can be (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Cheung et al. (2018) and Wieczorek and Lear (2018) said that the role of teacher leader is not always

explicit. Since researchers began studying teacher leadership in the early 1980s, teacher leadership has looked different from district to district, from school to school, from PLC to PLC, and even from teacher to teacher (Grant, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Wang & Ho, 2020; Wieczorek & Lear, 2018). Some teacher leaders have served in formal roles, meaning that an administrator or other educational leader has identified a teacher as a teacher leader and moved that teacher away from their regular classroom teaching responsibilities to work directly with other teachers (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). On the other hand, other teacher leaders have worked in more informal roles as teacher leaders (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). These informal teacher leaders have most likely identified themselves as leaders. Unlike the formal teacher leaders, the informal teacher leaders maintained their status and responsibilities as a classroom teacher in addition to their responsibilities as a leader (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Wang & Ho, 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Researchers offered a definition of teacher leadership that included inspiring positive school culture and igniting increased student achievement (Aris, 2021; Brandisauskiene et al., 2018; Crowther et al., 2002; DeDeyn, 2021; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Crowther et al. (2002) said that teacher leadership influences sustained changes to improved lives for community members. Finally, former United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2014) described teachers in leadership as teachers who have a voice with administrators in shared decision-making that affects their students, who participate in professional learning to help themselves and their colleagues grow, and who have a job description that

changes throughout their career based on the individual professional interests of teachers.

Historical Perspective of Teacher Leadership

Between the years of 1986 and 2019, the field of teacher leadership experienced significant changes (Nguyen et al., 2019; Silva et al., 2000; Timor, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to researchers, a trend began to gain momentum in school culture during the first wave of teacher leadership in the early 1980s when experienced teachers led by serving in formal managerial roles such as department or grade-level chairs (Berry et al., 2013; Little, 2003; Murphy, 1990; Nguyen et al., 2019; Silva et al., 2000; Timor, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). These formal roles became a part of the hierarchical structure of many school organizations and have continued to exist at the time of this current study (Murphy, 1990; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The second wave of teacher leadership began in the mid- to late-1980s (Silva et al., 2000; Timor, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The popular reform attitude was to move power from the hierarchical structure to one that encouraged more teacher participation and shared decision-making (Alam & Ahmad, 2017; Huguet, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Murphy & Beck, 1995; Timor, 2019; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Wilson, 2016). Berry et al. (2013) described this wave by saying that teachers assumed instructional roles such as leading professional development sessions, implementing curriculum, and mentoring new teachers. To encourage teachers to participate in assuming these instructional roles, members of some

20

state boards of education around the country offered monetary incentives to teachers as they honed their craft by employing a career ladder system (Little, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Berry et al. (2013) and York-Barr and Duke (2004) reported that educational leaders sought to discover how "to attract and retain intellectually talented individuals, to promote teaching excellence through continuous improvement, to validate teacher knowledge about effective educational practices, and to increase teacher participation in decision-making about classroom and organizational issues" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 256).

The third wave of teacher leadership occurred from about 1990 to 2000 (Silva et al., 2000; Timor, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Wilson, 2016). During this time, the role of teachers as managers changed to one in which educators placed more value on teachers' instructional expertise to help their colleagues and students further succeed (Angelle & DeHart, 2010; Berry et al., 2013; Silva et al., 2000; Timor, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teachers shared their expert knowledge with other colleagues through professional development opportunities (Berry, 2013). Principals realized the value in having successful teachers in their own schools, districts, or regions, for these teachers served as easily accessible experts who "hold tacit or craft knowledge needed to inform and lead improvement initiatives" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 256). The impetus for change during this third wave of teacher leadership was the result of high stakes accountability (Little, 2003; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Little (2003) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) commented that in the late 1990s, administrators at the district and school level enlisted teachers in leadership positions to bear some of the responsibility for student achievement on

high-stakes tests throughout the school. The fact that this effort brought positive results a researcher discussed in a February 13, 2018, *Education Week* article which stated that in Tennessee, researchers had found "that students whose teachers have a leadership role at school perform significantly better on state tests" (Will, 2018, p. 2).

During the fourth wave of teacher leadership, a wave that Berry (2013) described as characterized by *teacherpreneurs*, teachers found solutions to problems instead of merely implementing someone else's solutions. The fourth wave of teacher leadership was still in progress at the time of this study. As of 2021, teacher leaders continued to fill managerial roles such as being department chairs, to lead professional development opportunities for their colleagues, and to collaborate in and led PLCs (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016). Educational leaders such as directors of schools and principals emphasized the importance of a shift in school culture, in which the entire faculty actively contributed to the increase in student success, helping them to buy in to the need for collaboration and instilling a desire for leadership early in their career (Berry et al., 2013: Nguyen et al., 2019; Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). This philosophy indicated that each teacher has the potential for being a teacher leader in and beyond the classroom (Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Whereas teachers had been relegated to the role of an employee who followed directives, administrators empowered teachers to make their own informed decisions that would lead to instructional improvement (Berry et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Like York-Barr and Duke (2004), other researchers described the changes in education that eventually led to the fourth wave of teacher leadership by 2021—a wave that meant teachers and principals became highly accountable for the educational progress of their students (Berry et al., 2013; Danielson, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Researchers also noted that as teachers became more empowered to make decisions that led to instructional improvement, the role of principal moved from being merely a manager to also include becoming an instructional leader (Berry et al., 2013; Danielson, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). As members of state boards of education increased their expectations of teachers and principals, including the expectations for higher standardized test scores, the members of state boards gave teachers no extra time to account for the extra workload (Adams & Gamage, 2008; Antinluoma et al., 2018; Danielson, 2006; Durias, 2010; Hands, 2012; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2009; Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Stein et al., 2016). Danielson (2006), DuFour et al. (2008), and Prenger and Schildkamp (2018) said that teachers needed to focus on data collected from student work like formative assessments and data from summative end-of-course state tests, instead of relying on hope, feelings, or hunches.

The ultimate goal of teacher leadership became clear during the fourth wave of teacher leadership. Researchers described it as impacting the most important people in education—the students (Berry et al., 2013; Danielson, 2006; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). The focus of an effective teacher leader had become the improvement in student achievement. During the fourth wave of teacher leadership, a need existed in 2021 more than ever for teachers to share decision-

making in their schools, to work alongside administrators, and to collaborate with each other to meet the increasing demands that education officials and the public required.

Because of the emphasis on high-stakes testing in the fourth wave of teacher leadership, researchers said the job of affecting student achievement cannot be at the hands of an individual teacher in isolation (Berry et al., 2013; Daily et al., 2019; Demiroz, 2020; Dulay & Karadağ, 2017; Lombardi et al., 2019; Weiner & Higgins, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). For teacher leaders to have been effective in the fourth wave of teacher leadership, they had to collaborate more with other teachers to proliferate and share best practices. Likewise, principals had to become instructional leaders and had to share the role of leadership with teachers because the job of raising students' high-stakes test scores became too great to shoulder alone (Berry et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Practices of Teacher Leadership

As the researcher, I chose for this literature review to analyze the characteristics that influence effective teacher leadership. I analyzed the characteristics that influence effective teacher leadership because the theoretical framework of this study, adult learning theory. The research questions, based on the program goals, also directed me to study the practices of teacher leadership in the professional literature. The research questions involved positive changes in school culture and climate, the work of teacher leaders in highly effective teams, and the collaborative work of teacher leaders to solve complex problems.

24

Professional Development and Collaboration

Professional development became the mainstay of school reform by 2019 (Berry, 2019). In contrast to managerial roles in the previously popular hierarchical, top-down structure, teachers took on leadership roles that included leading professional learning in their own schools (Berry, 2019). Garet et al. (2001) said that educational reform initiatives shifted in that teachers had to take the lead for effective, sustained reform to occur. A teacher's qualifications and their effectiveness in teaching and maximizing standardized test scores became vital to the teacher's job description (Garet et al., 2001). Cuban (1990) said that implementation of high standards was the driving force for education reform, and teachers became their own best resources by sharing their knowledge and experiences with each other through professional development sessions.

Because of the increase of the importance of high standards, teachers' professional development became a major focus (Corcoran, 1995; Corcoran et al., 1998; Nguyen, et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Before implementing more rigorous standards in the late 1980s into the 1990s, teachers focused more on students' abilities to memorize facts (Cohen, et al., 1993; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Porter & Brophy, 1988). After the implementation of higher standards in the late 1980s, teachers placed more emphasis on understanding of subject matter and how students learn (Garet et al., 2001; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Researchers said that ongoing professional learning was integral to any profession but especially to teachers and teaching during the shift to higher standards (Carini, 2018; Garet et al., 2001; Gutierez & Kim, 2017; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017; Wilson, 2016).

Hiebert (1999) completed a review of research for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics on the influence that research has on shaping standards. Hiebert (1999) found that professional development had a positive influence on teachers' classroom practice and student success provided that the professional development met the following criteria:

- Teachers continually collaborated with other teachers in their subject area or grade level to plan instruction.

- Teachers established clear learning goals to ensure student achievement.

- Teachers' professional learning focused on student thinking, curriculum, and best practices for instruction.

- Teachers gathered alternative ideas and methods of instruction to improve student learning.

- Teachers spent time reflecting on the reasons for the effectiveness of alternative ideas and methods.

On the other hand, researchers said that professional development activities such as workshops, institutes, courses, and conferences were not effective because a leader with expertise conducted these professional development activities outside the teacher's classroom, outside the teacher's normal contract hours, and with little relevance to the teacher's needs in the classroom (Foor, 2020; Garet et al., 2001). Conversely, researchers also said that study groups, mentoring, and coaching were effective forms of professional development due in part to their

taking place during a teacher's normal contract hours during the school day and in a teacher's classroom (Garet et al., 2001; Stahl, 2015).

Garet et al. (2001) said that in the early 2000s, the focus of professional development shifted to three areas: (a) content knowledge, (b) active learning, and (c) continuity in a teacher's professional development. When federal, state, and local boards of education increased educational standards, teachers needed to become more familiar with the content knowledge of the courses they taught (Garet et al., 2001; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Central to becoming more expert in their academic fields was their engagement in active learning. Garet et al. described teachers' active learning as participating in discussion and planning with other teachers, observing other teachers, allowing other teachers to observe them, and reviewing student work. Garet et al. (2001) also said that instead of participating in random disjoined professional development activities, teachers' professional development activities needed to connect with teachers' goals, align with state standards and assessment, and increase professional communication through collaboration.

Garet et al. (2001) described the benefits of shifts in focus for professional learning as follows:

- Experienced teachers provided support for new teachers.
- Teachers sustained their professional learning and the change in their practice over time.
- Teachers helped create and sustain a shared professional culture.

- Teachers improved both their individual learning and organizational learning.

Garet et al. (2001) reported that the positive outcomes of teachers' participation in collaborative professional development were as follows:

- Teachers increased both their knowledge and their skill.

- Teachers incorporated more technology, different instructional methods, and various approaches to assessment in their classroom practice.

As an example of effective professional development, Cherkowski and Schnellert (2017) conducted a qualitative case study in which they examined the extent to which teachers' collaborative inquiry professional development enriched their development as teacher leaders. The researchers' two-year study of teacher inquiry teams in a British Columbia rural secondary school involved 18 teachers participating in 20- to 40-minute interviews, observations, participant reflections, and classroom artifacts. Cherkowski and Schnellert (2017) defined collaborative inquiry as "teachers engaged in ongoing inquiry into their practice in order to improve student engagement and learning through job-embedded, continuous, collaborative, active learning" (p. 6). The researchers found that teachers' participating on reciprocal learning teams influenced the development of teacher leadership among the participants of this study (Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017). Cherkowski and Schnellert said that teacher collaboration is tied to improved professional learning and ultimately to an increase in student achievement.

Researchers also found that a strong influence on effective teacher leadership was building relationships with other colleagues and with their principals through collaborative work (Flood & Angelle, 2017). According to Angelle and DeHart (2010), teacher leadership became a more pressing need in schools because of high-stakes accountability and school reform efforts. By 2010, collegiality and collaboration became the norm (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). Kilinç (2014) said a need for collaborative relationships existed to "facilitate student learning and respond to diverse needs of students" (p. 1729). Angelle and DeHart (2010) surveyed 241 teachers in four districts and 23 schools. The researchers compared a four-factor model of teacher leadership with three alternate models (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). Angelle and DeHart found that the four-factor model demonstrated a good fit to measure teacher leadership effectiveness. The four factors Angelle and DeHart described were as follows: sharing leadership (which includes leadership engagement and leadership opportunities), sharing expertise, principal selection, and suprapractitioner. According to Angelle and DeHart (2010), a suprapractitioner is a teacher leader who performs at a level above their regularly assigned classroom responsibilities, both inside and beyond their classroom walls. The sharing expertise factor represented teachers' willingness to offer their pedagogical wisdom to their colleagues (Angelle & DeHart, 2010). Angelle and DeHart's sharing expertise aligned with Garet et al.'s (2001) support for new teachers and shared professional culture. Angelle and DeHart (2010) found that teacher leaders influenced their colleagues by helping them be more confident in their professional work, employ effective teaching strategies, and

have a positive attitude about their work; teacher leaders also helped students

improve achievement and become involved in their own learning.

Supports

The purpose of this section was to demonstrate the relationship between

the methods of support that principals provide teachers and those that teachers

provide each other while pursuing effective teacher leadership practices. During

the review of literature, I noticed that practices described as supports of effective

teacher leadership were also barriers of effective teacher leadership when worded

to the contrary. For example, researchers said that the hierarchical nature of

school organization was a barrier to effective teacher leadership (Alegado, 2018;

Murphy, 2007; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Researchers also said that

reorganizing a school's structure to include teachers in decision-making was a

support to effective teacher leadership (Devos et al., 2014; Murphy 2007; Nguyen

et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

In his 2009 meta study Visible Learning, Hattie identified six areas that

contributed to student learning, two of which focused on the teacher's role in

student learning. Hattie (2009) compared effect sizes of various facets that

influenced student learning outcomes. The number one factor Hattie identified

that related to student achievement was *collective teacher efficacy*. Hattie defined

collective teacher efficacy as teachers' confidence in their belief that they were

able positively to affect student outcomes, provided they fed that belief with the

evidence that they were making a difference. According to Hattie (2009),

collective teacher efficacy contributed to a positive school climate and culture.

Kilinç (2014) studied the relationship between school climate and teacher leadership and found that teachers who worked in a school with a positive school climate were more likely to participate in school improvement. Kilinç (2014) surveyed 259 primary school teachers in Turkey and found that a positive school climate supported teacher leadership. Kilinç said that a directive school climate, one in which administrators guided and supported teacher leaders, was a positive and significant predictor of effective teacher leadership based on school improvement. Conversely, Kilinç said that teachers would not be willing to take on leadership roles in a school whose climate was restrictive, or one in which teachers were not allowed or encouraged to lead. Kilniç (2014) recommended that future researchers employ such research methods as observations or interviews to uncover teachers' impressions of teacher leadership and that results from future studies could help principals create a school climate that would encourage effective teacher leadership.

Similarly, Parlar et al. (2017) examined relationships between a school's involvement in teacher leadership and teachers' professional behaviors. The researchers hypothesized that teachers' professional behaviors influenced professional cooperation. The researchers surveyed 254 primary and secondary school teachers in an Istanbul province, using the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale (TLCS) and the Teacher Professionalism Scale to collect data (Parlar et al., 2017). Parlar et al. (2017) found that a significant positive relationship existed between professional cooperation and school administration support and between the level of having a supportive work environment in a school with a teacher leadership culture and teacher professionalism. The researchers also said that

teachers having a supportive work environment and professional cooperation, the two characteristics of the TLCS which had the highest relationship, were significant predictors of teacher professionalism (Parlar et al., 2017).

Because researchers found that teacher leadership is a key component to support effective school reform (Wenner & Campbell, 2017), researchers such as Mills et al. (2014) studied specific reform initiatives that involved teacher leaders. Mills et al. (2014) examined a specific school reform effort called Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID). The purpose of the researchers' mixed-methods study was to compare whether teachers and administrators agreed on the types of qualities teacher leaders involved in implementing AVID needed. The researchers found that teachers and administrators agreed regarding the importance of a teacher's personal qualities and those related to a teacher's classroom more than qualities related to professional growth and development or those dealing with school and district environments (Mills et al., 2014). Specifically, administrators reported that certain leadership qualities were essential to support effective school reform: open communication with administrators, creative problem-solving, a collegial attitude on campus, organizational skills, and respect for other teachers (Mills et al., 2014).

Teacher leaders supported their colleagues through collaborative professional learning. Cooper et al. (2016) completed a qualitative embedded case study during the 2011-2012 school year in which they examined the leadership practices of 11 teacher leaders in three urban schools to see how teachers worked to improve the pedagogical practices of their colleagues while serving as professional learning community (PLC) leaders and mentors for new teachers.

The researchers found that teachers were able to improve their schools by
increasing the pedagogical scope of other teachers through job-embedded
professional development, in which teachers participated in collaborative,
ongoing conversations concerning teaching and learning (Cooper et al., 2016).
This finding supported researchers' assertion that a healthy school culture
supported teacher leadership in that teachers must practice good communication,
collaboration, and learning, as well as establishing trusting and constructive
relationships (Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr &
Duke, 2004). Cosenza's (2015) findings also supported a focus on collaboration
to build leadership capacity, including cooperating with other teachers to share
best practices, mentoring student teachers, and supporting new teachers. Cosenza
(2015) conducted semi-structured interviews with 22 elementary and middle
school teachers. During the interview, Cosenza asked each participant to define
teacher leadership in their own words. Cosenza (2015) coded five themes
concerning teacher leadership which were as follows: "collaboration, sharing best
practices, taking action, role modeling, and formal leadership roles" (p. 86).
Cosenza then cross-referenced those five themes with the seven domains of the
Teacher Leader Model Standards (2011). Cosenza (2015) found that the five
themes aligned with five of the seven Teacher Leader Model Standards (2011)
that included the existence of a collaborative culture, research to improve teaching
and learning, professional learning, an effort to improve best practices for
teaching and learning, and a commitment to advocate for success in student
learning and in the teaching profession.

Another way administrators supported teacher leaders was to develop a positive principal-teacher relationship and to encourage teacher leaders to participate in making decisions. As discussed earlier, Angelle and DeHart's (2016) factors from their four-factor model of teacher leadership was sharing leadership. York-Barr and Duke (2004) referred to shared leadership as participative leadership. The decision-making process belonged to all the stakeholders in a school, not just to the administrative team. In what was also known as parallel or distributed leadership, teachers' and the principal's collaborative actions help to build and support their school's capacity (Angelle & DeHart, 2016; Bach et al., 2019; Huguet, 2017; Lear et al., 2015). Kilinç (2014) and Parlar et al. (2017) affirmed the necessity for teachers' being a vital resource of the decision-making process to support school and student success. Researchers agreed that teachers' participation in the decision-making process supported effective teacher leadership (Cooper et al., 2016; Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Additionally, Parlar et al. (2017) reported that teachers' professional behaviors supported professional cooperation. The researchers said that having a support culture in schools encouraged teacher leadership behaviors that significantly supported teacher leadership (Parlar et al., 2017). The culture the researchers described included a supportive working environment, professional cooperation, and administrative support (Parlar et al., 2017). Other researchers agreed that these positive characteristics supported teacher leadership (Adams & Khojasteh, 2018; Daily et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Demiroz, 2020; Dulay & Karadağ, 2017; Gülşen & Gülenay, 2014; Lombardi et

al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019; Weiner & Higgins, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Barriers

The purpose of this section was to demonstrate the relationship between the way educators have organized a school's structure and the barriers that members of organizations have created that have impeded effective teacher leadership. The restrictive, hierarchical school structure which has been typical in most schools and school districts has afforded teachers little opportunity to share best practices or participate in decision-making. Rather than being members of a team with goals beneficial to the entire school, teachers have competed to produce the highest student test scores.

One of the factors that inhibited teacher leadership was the way previous generations of educators have structured the organization of a school. According to Moller and Katzenmeyer (1996) and Wenner and Campbell (2017), educators prior to the early 2000s organized schools in a hierarchical manner, in which there was a single leader and followers or, as Murphy (2007) explained, a boss and subordinates. Because of the hierarchical nature of the school organization, distributed or shared leadership, leadership that included teachers as a part of the decision-making process, was not possible (Harris 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2019; Rallis, 1990; Silva et al., 2000; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Coyle (1997) said teachers struggled to see themselves as leaders because of the school's hierarchical organization that did not lend itself to leadership outside that of the boss' leadership. In fact, teacher leaders in such restrictive leadership environments strove to make changes in their schools to improve

35

teaching and learning only to experience defeat (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Wynne, 2001). Because of these kinds of challenges teacher leaders have faced, Liberman and Miller (1999) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) said that it was easier for teacher leaders to embrace the status quo than to think outside the fixed parameters of the traditional structure.

The traditional hierarchical structure in schools created hurdles for teacher leaders (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Heller (1994) said that in such a structure, it was easier to blame someone else for the issues that arose instead of each teacher sharing in the responsibility for student and school success. Little (1995) described "teaching's egalitarian culture" (p. 95) as one where teachers all had similarly assigned roles to be fair to everyone. In the spirit of being fair, however, Little (1995) also said that creating and designating teacher leader roles became problematic.

Another barrier to effective teacher leadership in the traditional hierarchical school structure was teacher leaders who worked against the established professional norms and school culture (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Odell (1997) said that if teachers clung to the existing conditions, no one changed to adopt a new way of thinking, one that included teachers in leadership roles and teachers who shared accountability. Keedy (1999) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) acknowledged that traditional norms that were a part of existing school cultures worked against teacher leadership, particularly communication with other colleagues and advocacy. Ainscow and Southworth (1996), Barth (2001), and Wenner and Campbell (2017) agreed that the existing professional norms created barriers that kept teacher leaders from forming effective working relationships

36

with other teachers. Likewise, Little (1988) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) reported that teacher leaders had to be circumspect in their working relationships with other teachers in a traditional hierarchical school structure with traditional professional norms. In summary, researchers confirmed that the success or failure of teacher leadership rested partially on the school culture and climate that educational leaders created (Adams & Khojasteh, 2018; Daily et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Demiroz, 2020; Dulay & Karadağ, 2017; Gülşen & Gülenay, 2014; Lombardi et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019; Snell & Swanson, 2000; Weiner & Higgins, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Murphy (2007) described the "norm of legitimacy" (p. 687) as the practice of what activities teachers did as part of their job. This norm that teachers and principals adopted created a barrier to teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Little (1988) acknowledged that a traditional view of a teacher's job was to be in the classroom teaching students. Fay (1992) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) said that if teachers accepted leadership responsibilities, those responsibilities took them away from teaching students in their own classrooms. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), Nguyen et al. (2019), Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992), and Wenner and Campbell (2017) commented that the stress that teacher leaders experienced worked against the success of other teachers with their students in their classrooms.

Murphy (2007) also described the "norm of the divide between teaching and administration" (p. 687) as the sharply-defined roles of teachers and administrators. Barth (2001) reported that the job of teachers was to teach, while the job of administrators was to manage and guide teachers. Such defined roles

37

inhibited teacher leaders who attempted to step into a role that required them to guide other teachers. Murphy (2007) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) commented that effective teacher leadership required teachers to be responsible for tasks such as leading teachers that administrators have traditionally considered as part of their domain. Traoen and Boles (1994) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) confirmed that teachers felt that they had no voice to affect culture and climate outside their classroom. Little (1988), Bishop et al. (1997), and Brown and Shepherd (1999) agreed that principals did not easily agree to grant teachers power to influence school activities outside their classrooms.

Moller and Katzenmeyer (1996), Snell and Swanson (2000), and Wenner and Campbell (2017) found that an unhealthy school climate and culture were barriers to effective teacher leadership. In a review of teacher leadership literature, Nguyen et al. (2019), Wenner and Campbell (2017), and York-Barr and Duke (2004) found that the success of teacher leadership hinged on the rudimentary conditions embedded in school culture. For example, characteristics of a positive school culture such as peer coaching, participation in shared decision- making, teamwork, and openness had a positive influence on effective teacher leadership. Muhammad (2019) described members of a school culture who chose their own personal outcomes over the goals or aspirations of the team as *fundamentalists*. Conversely, Muhammad described members of a school culture who chose to embrace change, to spend time in self-reflection, and to make purposeful, individual contributions to the improvement of student outcomes as *believers*. Muhammad (2019) indicated that over time, with time

devoted for change, school culture would shift to become more positive as more fundamentalists left and new believers were hired.

In a specific example, Kilinç (2014) researched 259 Turkish primary school teachers' perceptions of school climate and the primary school teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership by examining quantitative questionnaire responses collected at an educational conference. The researcher discovered a negative and significant relationship between a restrictive school climate and teacher leadership (Kilinç, 2014). Respondents offered that a restrictive school environment created routine workloads and low job engagement and satisfaction. Teachers also said that a principal's lack of skills negatively affected teacher leadership success. An unhealthy school climate led to lack of creativity, isolation, and aggression (Kilinç, 2014). Conversely, Kilinç (2014) found that a directive school climate, one in which administrators guided and supported teacher leaders, was a positive and significant predictor of teacher leadership.

To move from a closed school climate and culture, researchers said that teachers and administrators needed to examine the roots of their beliefs (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Hoy & Sabo, 1997; Muhammad, 2019). Researchers found that a positive school climate has a positive effect on the overall effectiveness of a school (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Hoy & Sabo (1997) found that a positive, or open, climate was the result of a principal's attitude toward teachers and their ideas. Muhammad (2019) said that if teachers and administrators wanted to transform their school's culture, they would need to examine why teachers hold onto the beliefs that oppose those of their school or school district. Muhammad (2019) described four kinds of teachers: *believers*, those who made whatever changes

necessary to help students learn; *tweeners*, those who were new to education or to a school and were trying to please their principal and figure out their own job; *survivors*, who were burned out and just trying to stay afloat; and *fundamentalists*, those who held tightly to their beliefs and were unwilling to make changes.

In schools whose culture was built on a top-down hierarchy, teachers had difficulty in having a voice in the decision-making process (Cosenza, 2015; Bradley-Levine et al., 2014; Wenner and Campbell, 2017). Bradley-Levine et al. (2014) completed a study in which they examined a specific school reform called the New Tech High School model. Teachers completed an online survey; 16 teachers and seven administrators participated in semi-structured interviews. Bradley-Levine et al. qualitatively coded their data and found two themes that emerged were shared leadership and policy-making. In autonomous schools and in small learning communities within schools, teachers felt a part of a professional culture where they were fully engaged in the life of the school and able to contribute to school reform (Bradley-Levine et al., 2014). Teachers in New Tech High Schools engaged in school policy development, teacher-led feedback, and the development of rigorous curriculum and engaging instruction based on a critical review of colleagues' teaching and data (Bradley-Levine et al., 2014).

Murphy (2007) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) said in a review of literature on teacher leadership that researchers had highlighted a particular theme throughout the literature: time. Researchers concluded that the greatest barrier to effective teacher leadership was not having enough time (Adams & Gamage, 2008; Antinluoma et al., 2018; Blegen & Kennedy, 2000; Doyle, 2000; Durias, 2010; Fay, 1992; Hands, 2012; LeBlanc & Shelton, 1997; Mangin & Stoelinga,

2009; Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Stein et al., 2016; Wasley 1991; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leaders did not have enough time in their contract day to complete their teaching responsibilities as well as their teacher leader tasks (Adams & Gamage, 2008; Antinluoma et al., 2018; Donaldson, 2001; Durias, 2010; Hands, 2012; Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Stein et al., 2016). Teacher leaders consequently worked extra hours and expended more energy to complete both types of tasks in addition to their contracted teaching responsibilities (Barth, 1988; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Murphy, 2007; Stein et al., 2016). Because of the extra time and energy teacher leaders spent outside their contract hours, teacher leaders reported feeling stressed (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Margolis & Huggins, 2012: Murphy, 2007; Wasley, 1991; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). In fact, teacher leadership responsibilities conflicted with contracted teaching responsibilities (Hart & Baptist, 1996; Hatfield et al., 1986; Killion, 1996; Leithwood et al., 1997; Murphy, 2007; Stein et al., 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Smylie (1996) said that because of teacher leaders' lack of time, student success suffered because teachers did not have enough time to work with them. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) reported that changing the traditional school schedule to allow teacher leaders to have time during their contract day to fulfill their leadership roles came slowly. Blegen and Kennedy (2000) said that the amount of time teacher leaders needed to fulfill their leadership obligations was commensurate to the number of teacher leaders hired. Leithwood et al. (1997) and Wenner and Campbell (2017) said that even though district and school administrators often provided some time for teacher leaders to work, the time they provided was not enough. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) equated finding time

41

for teacher leaders to work with a resource. Likewise, Boles and Troen (1996) said that a teacher leader's workday had to be reconfigured to allow time for teacher leadership work. Boles and Troen (1996) referred to this time as "a resource, not one more reason why teachers are unable to assume leadership" (p. 59).

Researchers also noted that a common topic in the professional literature about teacher leadership was the idea that teacher leaders had to have formal, scheduled time during their work day for leadership responsibilities (Borchers, 2009; Chesson, 2011; Chew & Andrews, 2010: Fay, 1992; Gaffney & Faragher, 2010; Murphy, 2007). Antinluoma et al. (2018) reported that traditional daily teaching schedules did not allow teachers time for collaborative conversations. Liberman (1992) described a myriad of needs of teacher leaders that having more time could support; those needs are as follows: learning, having professional conversation, acquiring or making materials, reflecting, resolving conflicts that arise as a result of differing views on values, and building relationships with colleagues that did not previously exist. Other researchers added that teacher leaders needed time to reflect on beliefs and values (Harrison & Lembeck, 1996), participate in professional development (Blegen & Kennedy, 2000; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), and participate in professional inquiry (Chesson, 2011; Chew & Andrews, 2010; Troen & Boles, 1994). Researchers also reported that teacher leaders needed to have time to be active participants in the leadership process (Wise, 1989), to collaborate (Chesson, 2011; Chew & Andrews, 2010; Harrison & Lembeck, 1996; Wasley, 1991), to participate in shared decision-making (Kahrs, 1996), and to plan (Mitchell, 1997; Wasley, 1991). Silva et al. (2000) summarized

the common theme of time in the teacher leadership literature when they said that unless district and school administrators afforded teacher leaders the time they needed to do effective leadership work, "there will continue to be few stories of successful . . . teacher leadership" (p. 802).

Framework for the Lincoln County Learning Leaders Program

In the following sections, I described the foundations of the Lincoln County Learning Leaders (LCLL) and its formation. In the first section, I discussed the state teacher leader network, which state educators founded as a basis for creating teacher leader programs at the local level. In the next section, I described the LCLL program and its ties to the work of DuFour et al. (2008) with PLCs. Then, I described the goals of the LCLL program, the LCLL program design, program benefits, its impact on teachers, its effect on teachers as leaders, its influence on students, and information about the LCLL program participants.

State Teacher Leader Network

According to the state department of education web site, educational leaders founded the State Teacher Leader Network (TLN) during the 2013-2014 school year to encourage continuing professional learning that would aid in accomplishing professional learning goals and in closing the learning gap for all students in each local school district. School leaders realized the urgency of creating a TLN because of the following four situations:

- State educators revised both the English language arts (ELA) and math standards.

- Teachers learned how to incorporate effective teaching strategies that aligned to the state evaluation model administrators use to evaluate teachers.

- Teachers needed more personalized professional learning that moved away from traditional *sit and get* activities and toward helping teachers solve complex problems through collaboration in professional learning communities (PLC).

- Because of the increase in accountability of student success and high-stakes state testing, school administrators could not alone solve the challenges they faced.

Teachers' involvement in decision-making allowed them to work collaboratively with administrators to achieve shared leadership. State educators summarized the need for a TLN in the mission statement they developed. According to the state education web page, "The mission of TLN is to create exemplary, innovative, relevant, and sustainable teacher leader models that identify, develop, and extend the reach of teacher leaders, resulting in increased teacher effectiveness and improved student learning." State Department educators established the Teacher Leader Network during the 2013-2014 school year (according to state web site).

According to the state department of education web site, State-level educators worked during the 2015-2016 school year to create the third State Teacher Leader Guidebook. District-level educators formed the LCLL Network Team to create a Teacher Leader Model for Lincoln County teachers, which was

comprised of the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and instruction, an instructional coach, a principal, and a classroom teacher (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016, pp. 1-2). "The Lincoln County Learning Leaders Program is designed and implemented to develop Teacher / PLC Learning Leaders capable of leading, facilitating, and mentoring dynamic teams of teachers focused on improving student learning" (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016, p. 3).

The LCLL Network Team created a timeline to implement the LCLL program. Candidates for LCLLs, who were teachers in Lincoln County, completed an application in April 2016. The LCLL Network Team selected 30 LCLLs in May 2016 and notified them. The LCLL Network Team surveyed district leaders concerning how well-aligned schools' PLCs employed best practices. The school board approved the budget for the LCLL program which included a stipend of $1,200 paid to each LCLL ($600 per semester) and $10,000 for a three-day professional development in July 2016. The school board authorized to pay the $1,200 per LCLL from monies in the general budget. The school board authorized to pay the $10,000 for professional development from Title II funds.

The Work of LCLLs

The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program. I based the research questions on the program goals stated in the state Teacher Leader Network 2015-2016 Guidebook. The research questions I developed to guide this study were:

1. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are serving as catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools so that all students learn at a high level?

2. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are building highly effective teams focused on helping students and teachers exceed their own expectations?

3. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are solving complex problems collaboratively?

The three research questions not only had a direct tie to the LCLL program goals, but they also reflected the work of DuFour et al. (2008) who helped me understand better the work of LCLLs. The research of DuFour et al. challenged conventional hierarchical school structure, one in which the principal made all the decisions and was the person most accountable for student success, by charging LCLLs to implement with fidelity the PLC process. LCLL's modeled for other teachers how to focus on student learning, rather than teaching, and how to work more effectively through collaboration, rather than in isolation, to maximize student achievement on high-stakes end-of-course exams. The paragraphs I wrote following this sentence were a description of the work of the LCLLs.

Once the LCLL Network Team notified the teachers who the LCLL

Network Team chose as an LCLL in May 2016, the LCLLs' first work

assignment was to attend three-day professional development training to provide

the new LCLLs the tools successfully to lead their school colleagues in refining

their school vision, mission, and beliefs. DuFour et al. (2008) said that schools

needed to learn from people who led organizations beyond the school walls who

have struggled to answer some of the same questions educators have encountered.

For this reason, in July 2016, the LCLL Network Team hired Solution Tree, a

professional development company and publisher of educational material for K–

12 educators. Again, the purpose of the three-day professional development

session centered on Dufour et al.'s (2008) question of "How can we clarify and

communicate the purpose, vision, values, and goals of our organization?"

(DuFour et al., 2008, p. 3). The presenter from Solution Tree and the LCLL

Network Team charged LCLLs to return to their schools after the three-day

professional development and lead their colleagues in revisiting their schools'

vision, mission, and belief statements. The purpose of this work at the school

level was to assure that each faculty and staff member was aware of the school's

vision, mission, and belief statements and that they had buy-in.

The next work objective for the LCLLs was to model a culture of change

to encourage other teachers to challenge their conventional thinking about

teaching and learning (DuFour et al, 2008). DuFour et al. (2006) described a

Professional Learning Community (PLC) as a team of educators who worked

collaboratively to solve complex problems. The researchers said that teachers who

worked collaboratively not only improved student outcomes but also improved

their own professional learning. The LCLL Network Team asked LCLLs to present to each faculty the basic tenets of a PLC so that each teacher could actively participate in a PLC. LCLLs outlined a shift in thinking from fixed mindset to growth mindset (Dweck, 2007). The LCLLs were tasked to help teachers develop a growth mindset so they could continue learning and growing as an educator and to model that growth mindset for their students to ensure that all students can learn at a high level.

The next work objective for LCLLs was to model effective leadership for other teachers so they could move into the role of PLC leaders and work better collaboratively (DuFour et al., 2008). The LCLLs' involvement in the PLC process ensured that the teachers continued their professional learning and implemented action research projects in their classrooms to solve complex problems. The LCLL leadership believed that each teacher had the potential to be a leader. Teacher involvement in the PLC process gave teachers the opportunity to lead their peers. LCLLs modeled for teachers how to have discussions that focused on improving student learning.

The next work objective for LCLLs was to model ways to create a positive school culture, one that encouraged teachers to support each other through their collaborative work in PLCs to help students master course standards (DuFour et al., 2008). Prior to implementing the PLC process with fidelity, teachers participated in departmental or grade-level meetings, some of which were entitled PLC meetings. LCLLs explained to teachers the need for a shift in thinking regarding the purpose of PLC meetings. Student learning should be the focus of each PLC meeting rather than administrative tasks such as planning field trips,

making announcements, or planning social events. LCLLs specifically emphasized that each PLC meeting should center around the three big ideas of a PLC:

1. Focus on Learning

   o Just because a teacher teaches does not automatically mean that students are learning.

   o Teachers must focus on ensuring that each child is learning at a high level.

   o Four critical questions of a PLC drive professional conversations during each PLC meeting.

   - What do we want our students to learn?

   - How will we know if our students have learned?

   - What will we do if they have not learned?

   - What will we do if they have already learned?

2. Collaborative Culture

   o No single teacher can meet all the needs of each child.

   o Teachers working together can solve more complex problems than teachers working alone.

3. Results Orientation

   o Hope is not a strategy.

   o Teachers must use data to ensure that each child is learning.

The next work objective for LCLLs was to ensure that the PLC process helped other teachers maximize their own professional learning as well as the

professional learning of their peers through collaborative work (DuFour et al., 2008). LCLLs showed teachers how to create a variety of common formative assessments (CFAs) to serve as examples of student work to share during their PLC meetings. Then, PLC teams met to discuss the results of the CFA they had given and to develop a strategy to take with them into their classroom the next day to improve student success. Teachers talked about how they taught various concepts and helped their peers find areas in their own teaching of the concept to improve. Ideally, teachers began to change their individual mindsets from *my* students to *our* students. LCLLs challenged teachers to see that each teacher contributed to the overall success of each student and that each teacher contributed to the overall success of the school as a whole.

LCLLs trained teachers to create effective CFAs. They stressed that a formative assessment was an assessment *for* learning, a part of the teaching / learning process, and an opportunity for students to improve their learning. LCLL's shared four characteristics to determine if an assessment process were formative:

- Is the assessment used to identify students that did not master a course standard?

- Are the students who did not master a course standard required to receive additional supports via a schoolwide system of interventions?

- Are the students who did not master a course standard given another opportunity to master that course standard?

- Do teachers use the results to inform and improve their individual and
  collective practice?

LCLLs shared two web sites with teachers that contained examples of effective
formative assessments and tips for writing CFAs. LCLLs challenged teachers to
have collaborative conversations in PLCs about CFAs that centered around the
following questions:

- What is it we expect students to learn?

  o priority standards

- How will we know when they have learned it?

  o CFAs

- How will we respond when they have not learned it?

  o interventions

- How will we respond when they have learned it?

  o enrichment and differentiation

The next work objective for LCLLs was to encourage a school culture that
inspired student success but that also inspired teachers to experiment with
outside-the-box teaching strategies that would lead to student success (DuFour et
al., 2008). As teachers participated in the PLC process and used the four questions
to drive each PLC meeting, they focused on student work and CFAs. Through the
PLC process, members of each PLC team encouraged each other to implement
best practices to achieve the highest student outcomes. When one teacher on the
team employed a strategy that data from student work and CFAs indicated was
successful, the LCLLs encouraged other teachers, who tried a different strategy

and whose students did not experience the same success, to try a strategy that had

proven to be successful. Teachers felt emboldened to experiment with

implementing a variety of strategies because they would not experience punitive

measures (e.g., a bad evaluation score) if they did not find success with a

particular strategy.

The next work objective for LCLLs was to encourage other teachers to see

the PLC process as a way to continue their own professional learning and

improvement as a part of their daily or weekly work (DuFour et al., 2008). LCLLs

worked with teachers in PLCs to establish a schedule that allowed those teachers

to meet at least once a week to review student work, including CFAs. LCLLs and

teachers who met weekly contributed to teachers' ongoing learning and

continuous improvement of teaching strategies, which ultimately led to mastery of

course standards. In contrast to the once popular and passive *sit and get* in-service

activities that were typically scheduled at the beginning of a school year, teachers

involved in regular, collaborative PLC work had opportunities throughout the

school year to improve their craft through professional learning with their

colleagues.

Goals of LCLL Program / Desired Outcomes

The LCLL Network Team members created the following desired

outcomes or objectives, identified as capacities:

Teachers have the capacity to: connect mission and shared vision

to a moral purpose, inspire others to exceed their own expectations,

solve complex problems collaboratively, build highly effective

teams focused on improving student learning, and serve as

catalysts for positive change of the culture and climate of their

schools. (LCLL Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016, p. 4)

As the researcher, I chose to include the following sections to give further

information about each of the desired outcomes listed above. I titled each section

based on the five desired outcomes beginning with Connect Mission and Shared

Vision to a Moral Purpose.

Connect Mission and Shared Vision to a Moral Purpose. The assistant

superintendent for curriculum and instruction (C&I) described the moral purpose

of educators in the district as expecting all students to learn at a high level.

According to the district web page, the district mission statement was "to educate

students so they can be challenged to successfully compete in their chosen fields."

The district mission statement that emphasized challenging students aligned with

the moral purpose of all student learning at a high level. The assistant

superintendent for C&I stressed the importance that *all meant all* (i.e., no matter a

student's socioeconomic or educational background, all students deserved

opportunities to have the best education possible that would give them the

foundation they needed for success in adulthood).

Inspire Others to Exceed Their Own Expectations. The LCLL Network

Team said that LCLLs who model best practices, especially leading and

participating in the PLC process with fidelity, would inspire their colleagues to

rise above their current level of expectations to meet the wide range of needs of

their students. The assistant superintendent for C&I said that teachers'

collaborative work would solve more complex problems than teachers' work in

isolation. LCLL Network Team members challenged LCLLs to transition from

language that centered on teachers' work in isolation to that of teachers' work in collaboration. LCLL Network Team members emphasized changing from *my* students to *our* students. Each student in each school was worthy of investment in their future. LCLLs and classroom teachers could have influence over students that reached beyond their individual classroom walls.

Solve Complex Problems Collaboratively. The assistant superintendent for C&I talked about the previously popular attitude of teachers to go into their classrooms, shut the door, work with *their* students, and not share any teaching strategies with other teachers. He talked about the increase in accountability from the state department of education and from the public in general. The increased accountability had been the catalyst to include teachers in decision-making. School administrators were not able to make decisions alone to meet the ever-increasing demands that educators faced. Teachers' involvement in the PLC process required them not only to work collaboratively but also to be a part of the shared decision-making. The LCLL Network Team commented that one common complex problem that educators faced was meeting the needs of all the varied ability levels in each classroom. When PLC teams looked at student work and data from CFAs and used the four questions to guide their collaborative work, students could have more opportunities for success.

Build Highly Effective Teams Focused on Improving Student Learning. The trainer from Solution Tree said during a professional development session in 2016 that teachers on PLC teams should keep the four questions at the forefront of their collaborative discussions:

- What do we want our students to learn?

  o In July 2017, the Solution Tree trainer, Scott Cunningham, said
    that teachers needed to know the destination of the educational trip
    students would take before they began the journey (i.e., begin with
    the end in mind).

  o The LCLL Network Team members stressed the importance of
    priority standards.

- How will we know if our students have learned?

  o The Solution Tree trainer talked about using data from student
    work and CFAs to determine concretely that students had learned
    at a high level.

  o The LCLL Network Team members offered an analogy of going to
    the doctor for a checkup, the CFA, so that students and teachers
    have time for improvement before the autopsy, the summative
    assessment.

- What will we do if they have not learned?

  o The Solution Tree trainer said that when teachers on a PLC team
    discovered something students had not learned, teachers could
    immediately work on a plan for reteaching so that students could
    have feedback as soon as possible.

  o The LCLL Network Team members emphasized that the greatest
    intervention for students was the classroom teacher. When that

classroom teacher worked collaboratively with their peers, opportunities for student success were magnified.

- What will we do if they have already learned?
  - The Solution Tree trainer said this fourth question was sometimes the most challenging for teachers because of their struggle of knowing how to challenge students once they have mastered a course standard.
  - The Solution Tree trainer said during the August 9, 2017, LCLL meeting that once students have learned what teachers wanted them to learn, teachers could provide enrichment and additional differentiation for those students.

Serve as Catalysts for Positive Change. Cassandra Erkens, a Solution Tree trainer, acknowledged in her July 18, 2016, training presentation that peers were the most challenging to lead. She said that if LCLLs could get 15% of their faculty to buy into creating a culture that embraced a growth mindset and collaboration, members of the school community would see noticeable positive changes in the culture and climate of the school. She also noted the importance of administrators' support of LCLLs by trusting the LCLLs and giving them some independence to make shared, not top-down, decisions. She talked about parallel leadership, in which teachers and administrators were all part of students' educational journey together and that teachers and administrators should have the same end-result in mind: student success.

LCLL Program Design

The LCLL program "is designed and implemented to develop Teacher/PLC Learning Leaders capable of leading, facilitating, and mentoring dynamic teams of teachers focused on improving student learning" (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016, p. 3). The LCLL Network Team believed that all teachers had the potential to become leaders, ones who could inspire their colleagues to accomplish common goals, ultimately leading to student success. LCLLs participated in ongoing summer training and monthly professional learning opportunities. As of summer 2019, LCLLs have led a professional development academy in which teachers from around the district came to learn best practices from LCLLs. The LCLL Network Team designed the program to maximize the benefits of the PLC process.

LCLL Program Benefits

The LCLL Network Team designed the program to encourage a school-wide approach to teaching and learning, one that focused on all students. Teachers worked collaboratively through the PLC process to address school-wide challenges and to plan as a team. Working collaboratively, teachers attempted to help students increase their academic success regardless of the students' socioeconomic, educational, or cultural background. LCLLs attempted to help their colleagues stay committed to their school's mission, vision, and values, as well as committed to continuous school and individual-teacher improvement.

LCLL Impact on Teachers

In the Teacher Leader Model Template (2016), the LCLL Network Team wrote that "teacher leadership is transformational" (p. 7). The LCLL Network

Team indicated that teacher leadership was a key factor in school improvement and in student achievement (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016). The LCLL Network Team underlined the value of teachers working collaboratively through the PLC process to do action research that would help teachers know for sure if students had mastered each course standard so teachers would have time to reteach before students took a summative assessment (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016). The LCLL Network Team wrote that LCLLs could inspire their colleagues and their students to increase success, thus leading to a more positive school climate and culture (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016).

LCLL Impact on Teachers as Leaders

The LCLL Network Team described each teacher as having the potential of being a leader (Teacher Leader Model Template, 2016). Each teacher had the opportunity to participate equally as part of a PLC team to meet the diverse needs of all students, thus demonstrating their leadership skills. The LCLL Network Team designed the program so that teachers would be involved in ongoing professional learning that would improve teachers' teaching and students' learning in addition to developing each teacher's leadership potential. One of the LCLL Network Team's selling points for teachers to become LCLLs was that teachers could extend their realm of influence beyond their own classroom walls without having to become an administrator. LCLLs were both full-time classroom teachers and teacher leaders.

LCLL Impact on Students

The LCLL Network Team challenged all members of each PLC team to review end-of-course (EOC) exam data to identify which standards students had

or had not mastered. PLC teams unpacked standards and identified priority standards in the summer of 2018. PLC teams created pacing guides, CFAs, and summative assessments. PLC team members discussed student work and data from CFAs weekly in order to adjust instruction to help students achieve more success as soon as possible. Effective PLC team members saw improvements in their students' EOC exam scores.

LCLL Participants

At the inception of the LCLL program, the LCLL Network Team chose thirty teachers to participate as teacher leaders during the 2016-2017 school year. The LCLL Network Team chose additional teacher leaders from a pool of applicants during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. At the end of the 2018-2019 school year, the LCLL Network Team requested that LCLLs reapply for the 2019-2020 school year to ensure that the most willing and most effective teachers served in a teacher leader capacity. According to an LCLL Leader Network Team member, 48 teachers served as LCLLs in Lincoln County during the 2020-2021 school year.

On the LCLL application, teachers provided their current teaching assignment (i.e., grade level or content area), number of years of teaching experience, current overall evaluation score, and the names of two teachers who would be willing to attest to the applicant's leadership capacity. On the application, the teachers included the following information:

- listed any instructional leadership experiences that they had

- described what processes and practices should be in place to make a
  PLC highly effective

- described ways teacher leadership could model best practices to
  combat complex problems

- described how teacher leaders could contribute to a positive school
  climate and culture

- described the role data played in adjusting instruction to ensure student
  learning, particularly how CFAs were an integral part of the PLC
  process

- described how they could be a voice for their school and fellow
  colleagues at meetings or events. (LCLL Application, 2016)

The LCLL Network Team members did not set a minimum number of
years of teaching experience, nor did they require that applicants teach a
particular grade or in a particular content area. The LCLL Network Team
members hired *Solution Tree* to train LCLLs in how to implement the PLC
process with fidelity. Their plan included transitioning from *Solution Tree* trainers
to district-level instructional coaches to provide continuing professional learning.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter II, I defined a teacher leader as one who had regular teaching
responsibilities and also worked outside their classroom with other teachers to
inspire positive school culture and to ignite increased student achievement. I
described how teacher leadership moved from encompassing formal roles in a
hierarchical structure of school organizations in 1986 to teacher leaders in 2020

who worked collaboratively to ensure student success. Practices of teacher leaders in 2020 included participating in professional development as continual professional learning, collaborating with colleagues to solve complex problems, exhibiting behaviors that support effective teacher leadership, and identifying behaviors that serve as barriers to effective teacher leadership. Supportive behaviors that influenced effective teacher leadership involved building leadership capacity and building trusting, constructive relationships. Behaviors that prohibited effective teacher leadership included not having enough time to fulfill regular teaching responsibilities and being confined to a traditional hierarchical school organization that did not encourage teacher leaders to take risks.

Finally, I described the background of the state teacher leader network and the creation of the local LCLL program. I highlighted the LCLL program design that encouraged shared leadership through collaborative decision-making, maximum effectiveness of teachers and students, an improved school culture and climate, and empowerment of teachers to solve complex problems together.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program. The LCLL Network Team created the LCLL program to assist teachers in employing best practices to help all students achieve mastery of state standards. The LCLL program has existed since 2016, but according to the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and instruction, a founding member of the LCLL Network Team, no one has conducted a qualitative study of it. Maxwell (2013) advised researchers to create questions that would help increase understanding of the phenomenon and that would direct the research. To understand more fully the LCLLs' perceptions of their involvement and their effectiveness through their work in the LCLL program, I used the following research questions aligned to the program's specific objectives stated to be the desired outcomes to guide my study:

1. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are serving as catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools so that all students learn at a high level?

2. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are building highly effective teams focused on helping students and teachers exceed their own expectations?

3. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are solving complex problems collaboratively?

In this chapter, I included a discussion of my research design, which involved a qualitative study. I also included a description of the role of the researcher and a discussion on qualitative data collection from focus group interviews. Next, I described the sample of the study and the method of analysis. Subsequently, I summarized the procedures I used in completing this qualitative study. To close the chapter, I addressed trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations, and assumptions and biases of the study.

Research Design

At the time of this study and according to the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and instruction, a founding member of the LCLL Network Team, no one had conducted a qualitative study of the LCLL program to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness; thus, as the researcher, I chose to fill this gap of knowledge by completing such a qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the researcher, I chose Knowles' (1980, 1984) adult learning theory as a framework to guide many of the decisions I made regarding the design of my study of the LCLL program. I chose to collect qualitative data to better understand the personal experiences of participants in the LCLL program (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Knowles (1980, 1984) emphasized that adults were self-directed in their learning and that they took responsibility for decisions surrounding their learning.

Knowles' theory aligned with DuFour's (2008) work that teachers and teacher leaders should involve themselves in job-embedded professional learning. The adults who were at the heart of my study were the LCLLs. The adult learning of LCLLs and other teachers occurred primarily through the collaborative work of the PLC process. Knowles (1980, 1984) said that adult learners participated in continued learning and building background knowledge. LCLLs collaborated with other teachers to learn how to solve the problem at hand, another one of Knowles' (1980, 1984) assumptions about adult learning. The problem at hand was improving the culture and climate of LCLLs' schools and helping students master essential learning.

To answer all three research questions, I conducted focus group interviews with LCLLs to determine their perceptions regarding their success stories of the work they had done to help create positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools. I expected the heart of these positive changes to be student learning at a high level. I looked and listened for LCLLs to give examples of their work done as highly effective teams called PLCs to solve complex problems collaboratively. I anticipated that LCLLs success stories would be similar across the school district and grade levels because of the professional learning in which LCLLs had participated throughout the course of the program's five-year existence.

Role of the Researcher

Not only was I the sole researcher for this study, but I was also a participant in the LCLL program. At the time of this study, I taught high school students in Lincoln County beginning in 1995. I had a passion for helping

students achieve their greatest potential and had come to have a similar desire for helping teachers do the same. Because of the gifts and talents I possessed, I felt strongly about remaining in the classroom to teach students while finding ways to help my colleagues discover the best ways to help their students succeed. A member of the LCLL Network Team described the LCLL program, "an innovative teacher leader network," as a way to further my professional career and to have an influence beyond my classroom walls without having to become a school administrator. I was interested in learning more about collaborative professional learning and in receiving further training to implement effective, research-based PLCs throughout my school.

As an LCLL from 2016-2021, I learned best practices in collaborative professional learning and how those practices could best help all students improve mastery of course standards and raise their end-of-course state test scores. I participated in helping to form effective PLCs and led professional development sessions both at my school and across the district. Among the most rewarding aspects of being an LCLL was the opportunity to be a voice for my colleagues and to develop a deeper rapport with my colleagues as we collaborated to help all our students succeed. My personal interest in the LCLL program was to take an honest look at it to see what we were doing that was working and in what areas we needed to improve. In addition to improving the LCLL program, my hope in conducting a qualitative study was that other school districts could also benefit from my research by better understanding teacher leaders' experiences to improve their own teacher leader programs or even creating new teacher leader programs.

In my role as researcher, it was important to remove myself as much as possible from the study to reduce bias. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) indicated that a researcher could be more objective and prevent bias by simply being aware of personal values and beliefs and of how those personal values and beliefs could affect a study. At the time of this qualitative study, I believed that LCLLs should have time during their contract day to complete teacher leader tasks—time that LCLLs would not have to share with completion of their classroom-assigned tasks. I also believed that the following played a crucial role in the success of LCLLs' work:

- the support of each LCLL's principal.

- a positive relationship between each LCLL and their principal.

- a positive school climate, one in which LCLLs were an integral part of the decision-making process.

- LCLLs as a key to effective school reform.

- teacher support through LCLLs' participation in collaborative professional learning.

These personal values and beliefs could have biased my study of the LCLL program by my seeing and hearing what I wanted to see and hear. Even though the personal values and beliefs listed reflected my personal feelings about the LCLL program, Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) said that it was important for the researcher to study the program based on data collected instead of on those personal feelings.

At the time of this writing, I was a veteran teacher with 26 years of teaching experience and five years of experience with the LCLL program. This combined experience allowed me to build credibility (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011) with the other LCLL members. My LCLL colleagues served as my focus group interview participants, and their participation allowed me to collect rich, authentic qualitative data during the study as they provided thick depictions of their LCLL experiences. Keeping my personal bias in mind as I completed this study, I employed triangulation to raise the credibility of the findings of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I included as many LCLLs as possible in the focus group interviews (70.8%) to gain different perspectives and to allow me to compare and cross-check data. I invited LCLL focus group interview participants to review my conclusions to ensure accurate data collection (Cope, 2014). I adequately engaged with the data to the point of saturation, and I used a strategy Merriam & Tisdell called "peer examination or peer review" (2016, p. 249). A teacher leader in another school district who was familiar with a teacher leader program similar to the LCLL program reviewed the findings of this study. After I completed the analysis of data, I employed member checks that allowed me to obtain feedback from focus group interview participants to minimize misinterpreting their experiences with the LCLL program.

As the researcher, I processed the data I collected in a unique way, based on my training, experiences, biases, and other factors. It was imperative that I consider characteristics such as training, experience, ideas, and theoretical framework as I made design decisions. My professional training included earning an Educational Specialist (EdS) degree with a concentration in curriculum and

instruction and pursuing Doctor of Education (EdD) degree with a concentration in curriculum and instruction. Completion of EdD research courses, especially one in qualitative research, helped my understanding of the method of data analysis. I completed Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training for the protection of human subjects at the EdS and EdD levels that helped me study and observe ethically.

Participants and Other Data Sources

Forty-eight Lincoln County teachers participated in the LCLL program during the 2020-2021 academic year. Of those 48 teachers, 14 of them were elementary teachers, 9 were middle school teachers, 9 were high school teachers, and two were alternative school teachers. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) said the ideal number of participants in a focus group interview was six to 10. I used voluntary participants from the pool of the 48 LCLLs to participate in a focus group interview.

Some teachers who participated in the LCLL program during the 2020-2021 academic year were first-year members. Others had up to four years of experience as an LCLL. The varying degrees of experience in the LCLL program influenced the data I collected. Because of the nature of the organizational structure of elementary, middle, and high schools, the implementation of the PLC process looked different from level to level. For example, although elementary and middle school teachers had other teachers in their school with whom they could collaborate (e.g., first-grade teachers) and time during the school day to collaborate, that was not the case at the high-school level where some teachers were the only ones teaching a particular course or where teachers of the same

course did not have the same planning time during the school day to engage in the PLC process. The data I collected were crucial to connect to Knowles' adult learning theory. It was my goal as the researcher to discover LCLLs' perceptions of their effectiveness in meeting the objectives established. I chose focus group interviews to collect qualitative data. I compared the qualitative data with the program objectives to analyze the perceptions of the effectiveness of the work of LCLLs.

Participant Recruitment Process

Once I received permission to conduct this study from Lincoln County's assistant superintendent and received permission from Lincoln Memorial University's (LMU) Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB), I began recruiting LCLLs participants. To recruit participants for this study, I sent an email (see Appendix D) to prospective focus group interviewees inviting them to participate. I explained in the attached Research Information Sheet (see Appendix A) that the purpose of the focus group interview was in partial fulfillment of dissertation research of an EdD degree and that I was studying the LCLL program to study the perceptions of LCLL members regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in the LCLL program. LCLL members did not receive any incentive or compensation for their participation in this qualitative study. I ensured potential participants that I would collect data ethically and that I had gained LMU IRB approval prior to the beginning of data collection. If participants decided to participate, I asked LCLL members to complete and sign the informed consent forms (see Appendix B) and email them back to me. Participants were made aware that they were free to withdraw their

consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. In an effort to protect/ensure the anonymity of the program participants, I asked each potential participant to choose a pseudonym that began with the same letter as the type of school in which they taught. For example, Participant Emily taught in an elementary school, Participant Marsha taught in a middle school, Participant Holly taught in a high school, and Participant Anna taught in the alternative school.

Since 48 Lincoln County teachers participated in the LCLL program during the 2020-2021 school year, I planned to choose between six and 10 participants per focus group interview per the recommendation of Merriam and Tisdell (2016) in order to have five focus groups to interview. By the end of the process, I had conducted seven focus group interviews to allow for LCLLs' busy schedules at the end of the school year and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although each focus group interview did not contain between six and ten participants, having as many LCLLs to participate in this study was of greater importance than Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) recommendation. The number of participants in each focus group ranged from three to 10.

Data Collection

As I stated above, before I began this qualitative study, I requested and received approval from Lincoln County's assistant superintendent in charge of C&I and LMU's IRB. This qualitative study consisted of focus group interviews. As the researcher, I gathered data directly from these focus group interviews to answer the three research questions. In this section, I will explain the form of the data collected as well as my data-collection protocol. I stopped data collection

70

when I had interviewed the focus groups I intended to interview and reached the point of saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicated that the purpose of interviewing is to gain new information about a topic. I used a semi-structured qualitative interview to uncover thoughts and feelings that I could not observe overtly (Patton, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended allowing open-ended questions to encourage original perceptions and additional data. As the researcher of this study, I crafted nine questions based on Patton's (2015) types of questions and tied the interview questions to the research questions for this study, ultimately tying the interview questions to the objectives of the LCLL program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). I developed an interview protocol to ensure that interviews conducted throughout the study were consistent. The interview protocol contained the following six parts: an introduction to the interview, instructions for the interviewer, open-ended questions to ask the participants, follow-up questions, a designated area to record participant responses and nonverbal communication, and a final statement to thank the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To ensure consistency, I used the same interview protocol with each focus group interview.

The purpose of completing the focus group interview was to collect data from participants about their personal experiences in the LCLL program. By employing a qualitative approach, I attempted to obtain a thick, rich description of participants' experiences in the program. According to a member of the Network Team, no one had collected any qualitative data to study the LCLL program. For the focus groups that I assembled to interview LCLLs, I used purposeful sampling

to choose participants for this study (Fitzpatrick et al, 2011), which means that I intentionally chose members from the LCLL program to participate in interviews to gain the most insight and the richest information. The participants were teachers who were members of the LCLL.

Since so much of teachers' work in the LCLL program had been collaborative, I decided to employ focus group, instead of individual, interviews. Hennink (2014) explained that focus group interviews encouraged interaction among the participants and helped participants clarify their viewpoints based on responses from other participants. The 34 focus group interview participants represented each of the 18 schools in the district. I conducted the focus group interviews April 15, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, and 29. Three LCLLs participated in the focus group interview on April 15, three participants on April 19, seven participants on April 20, 10 participants on April 21, 4 participants on April 26, 3 participants on April 27, and 4 participants on April 29.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended employing purposeful sampling when conducting focus group interviews to ensure that the participants were the ones who had the most knowledge about the topic. In this instance, I chose members of the LCLL program to participate in focus group interviews because they were the people who had the most knowledge about how they carried out the program objectives. Knowles' adult learning theory influenced my decision to interview program participants, asking questions related to the LCLL's professional learning (Knowles 1980, 1984). I have included the interview protocol I used with each focus group in Appendix C.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to maintain a safe distance from other people, I conducted focus group interviews via Google Meet. Each focus group interview lasted between one and two hours. After each Google Meet interview I video recorded, I transcribed the interview to prepare the protocols for analysis.

Analytical Methods

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised researchers to audio record interviews and also to take notes during each interview, as well as to type a transcription after each interview for accurate analysis. After I completed each of the seven focus group interviews, I downloaded the Google Meet video. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the superintendent asked that school personnel conduct meetings throughout the Lincoln County School District via Google Meet. I saved the Google Meet video recording on my personal password-protected computer. I then transcribed each interview by typing a transcript that corresponded verbatim with what participants said during the interview. After transcription, I emailed a copy of the transcripts to the participating LCLL members and asked them to read the transcript to make any corrections. I analyzed the transcript along with the field notes I had taken during the interview. I collected and analyzed the data I collected from the focus group interviews simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to keep the data at the forefront of my mind every day. This process also encouraged me not to leave out important analyses and to look for themes and categories as they emerged (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam & Tisdell (2016) advised coding data to be able to recall specific items of the data collected.

My first analysis of the data began with open coding. Open coding allowed me to be receptive to any insight as I engaged with the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell said that researchers should code their qualitative data "easily [to] retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p.199). As I read the interview transcripts, I made notes next to what participants said that would help answer the research questions for this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) referred to these notes as open coding because at that point, as the researcher, I was receptive to whichever way the data led me. Some of my notes reflected the exact words of the participants or were concepts about which I had read in the literature. I assigned codes to these pieces of data that allowed me to create categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I identified 77 initial categories for the first research question, 43 initial categories for the second research question, and 18 initial categories for the third research question.

After the open-coding process, as I interpreted the data and focused on the meaning of the information, I employed axial coding in which I compared and grouped initial codes (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I began to construct categories based on Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) process of analysis. The categories I created were a result of patterns I identified. As I identified patterns, I began grouping those patterns into categories. I reviewed the categories in an effort to reduce the number of initial categories I had identified and to combine them in conceptually congruent categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), categories that are equal at the same level of abstraction. I identified seven axial codes for the first research question, seven axial codes for the second research question, and seven axial codes for the third research question.

For the concluding step in the coding process, called selective coding, I employed the constant comparative method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), a method used to identify similarities and differences among pieces of data. As I discovered similarities among the categories, I combined categories. These combinations became themes, and I looked to see what relationships existed among the themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I continued working with the codes I had created and looking for relationships among the themes until I reached the point of saturation, which meant that I had gained no new insights or discovered relationships in each category (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I repeated this process for each category. At that point, I had completed the coding process. I based the categories on the theoretical framework for the study, grounded in the literature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Two themes emerged: 1) collaborating and 2) mentoring.

Trustworthiness

According to Boudah (2020), debates in the scientific community have been ongoing as to whether it was appropriate for researchers to apply the experimental notions of validity and reliability to qualitative methods. More fitting for researchers who use qualitative methods is the idea of trustworthiness (Boudah, 2020; Cope, 2014). Simply, trustworthiness is the extent those researchers conducting qualitative studies are able to ensure their readers that a study's findings are *credible*, *transferable*, *dependable, and confirmable* (Boudah, 2020; Cope, 2014). In this section, I will address each area as it pertains to this qualitative study.

Credibility

Credibility of qualitative research is the ability to trust the accuracy of the research findings, based on the data collected from participants' perspectives (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure this study was credible, I begin with myself as the researcher. As the researcher, I was the most significant threat to the credibility of the study because I was the primary instrument of data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My very presence in interviews and observations threatened the trustworthiness of the study. By employing triangulation, I reduced the impact of credibility and transferability threats (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During each focus group interview, I used the same protocol and took field notes. After the completion of each interview, I transcribed the interview and reread through the transcription to ensure that I had made no typing or grammatical errors. Someone else who has had similar teacher leader experiences could recognize the descriptions of LCLLs' experiences. This recognition makes this qualitative study more credible (Cope, 2014).

I emailed LCLL participants to review the transcript from their interview and offered the opportunity to make any corrections. I also offered LCLL focus group interview participants an opportunity to respond to the analysis of their experiences with the program by using member checks (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Maxwell (2013) said that using member checks is the most valuable tool in accounting for bias and for misinformation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) said that interviewing to the point of saturation provided "adequate engagement in data collection" (p. 246), also known as prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Sim & Sharp, 1998) and aids in mitigating threats to credibility and transferability by ensuring the most accurate data possible.

Transferability

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), transferability is the ability to apply the results from a qualitative study to other similar settings. To improve my study's transferability, I gave thick, rich descriptions of LCLLs' experiences within the context of the LCLL program. Providing these detailed descriptions of the work of LCLLs allowed someone outside the LCLL program to draw more meaning from LCLLs' experiences. Another strategy I employed to improve the transferability of this study was to use purposeful sampling (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I purposefully chose to interview LCLLs because they were the ones who knew most about the work of the LCLL program.

Dependability

Dependability is "the stability of findings over time" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). During each focus interview, I used the same protocol and took field notes. After the completion of each interview, I transcribed the interview and reread through the transcription to ensure that I had made no typing or grammatical errors. Someone else who has had similar teacher leader experiences could recognize the descriptions of LCLLs' experiences. This recognition makes this qualitative study more dependable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Another strategy I used to ensure dependability was creating an audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Throughout this study, I created a log that recorded how I based the study's findings on the participants' perspectives instead of on my own preconceptions and biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the audit trail

log, I described how I collected the data, how I developed categories, and how I made decisions based on any problems or issues I faced. In addition, I wrote my reflections and any questions I had. By keeping such a log, I built confidence in how I arrived at my study's findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the ability for other researchers to agree that the researcher's findings are based on the data instead of something the researcher created in their mind (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). By employing triangulation, I reduced the impact of confirmability threats (Korstjens & Moser). During each focus interview, I used the same protocol and took field notes. After the completion of each interview, I transcribed the interview and reread through the transcription to ensure that I had made no typing or grammatical errors. Someone else who has had similar teacher leader experiences could recognize the descriptions of LCLLs' experiences. This recognition makes this qualitative study more confirmable (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

To ensure confirmability of the findings of my study, I also employed a strategy called researcher's position or reflexivity (Probst & Berenson, 2014), which required me to explain my "biases, dispositions, and assumptions" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 249) that affected the interpretation of the data collected during this qualitative study. During the course of this study, I attempted to show that the data accurately reflected the participants', not the researcher's, viewpoints (Cope, 2014). I will include detailed quotes from participants in focus group interviews in Chapter IV.

Limitations and Delimitations

Throughout the course of this qualitative study, I experienced instances that affected my ability to generalize the study's findings that were beyond my control (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). I recognized that these limitations could affect the results of my study and the conclusions I made. I identified two limitations in this study. I invited only the 48 LCLLs to participate in this study. The Network Team had selected those 48 LCLLs before the beginning of this study. To minimize the effect of this limitation, I made sure I included the perceptions of at least one LCLL per school across the district. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic was a limitation because my school district administrators limited in-person access to LCLLs in other schools. To minimize the effect of this limitation, I conducted focus group interviews via Google Meet. Thirty-four of the 48 LCLLs chose to participate in the focus group interviews.

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) defined a research delimitation as something that I, the researcher, did to narrow the scope of this study. I recognized that these delimitations could affect the results of my study and the conclusions I made. I identified five delimitations in this study. I chose to interview only teachers who participated in the LCLL program instead of including teachers who did not participate in the program. This omission may have potentially weakened this study by limiting my ability to understand more fully the impact of the LCLL program on classroom teachers. Because each LCLL was also a classroom teacher and PLC member, I included responses they shared that involved their role as an LCLL, a classroom teacher, and a PLC member.

I chose to collect data from LCLLs who had varying degrees of experience in the program. My decision possibly weakened this study since I did not interview only LCLLs with first-year experience with the program or experience that included all five years of the program. To minimize the effect of this delimitation, I made sure to include LCLLs whose experience represented the program as a whole.

I chose to collect qualitative data via focus group interviews. My decision possibly weakened this study since I did not collect more data from more participants via surveys or questionnaires. I chose a qualitative research method. My decision possibly weakened this study because I did not collect quantitative data. Because I chose to use qualitative methods, that decision weakened the ability to generalize and transfer the findings from the study of the LCLL program.

I chose to conduct focus group interviews instead of individual interviews. My decision possibly weakened this study since responding in front of their peers could have hindered some LCLLs' responses to interview questions. To minimize the effect of this delimitation, I offered each focus group interview participant the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview to see if they needed to make any revisions to their responses.

I chose to complete this study during the spring semester of 2021. My decision possibly weakened this study since I did not conduct focus group interviews over a longer period of time to include more LCLL participants. To minimize the effect of this delimitation, I spent as much time as possible working on this qualitative study outside my teacher and LCLL responsibilities.

Assumptions and Biases of the Study

The assumptions of this study were what I took for granted (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). One assumption of this study was that the sample of LCLL teachers represented the total population of LCLL teachers. Another assumption of this study was that the responses I received from program participants accurately reflected their professional opinions. A final assumption was that participants answered my questions openly and honestly.

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) said that it was important to identify the biases of a study that could affect the collection and analyzing of the data. One of the biases of this study was that I was a member of the LCLL program. Merriam & Tisdell recommended reflecting on my biases as the researcher as I thought about the main themes emerging throughout the study and about how I answered the research questions to minimize my biases. I discussed my attempts to deal with my biases in the section entitled *Role of the Researcher*.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the research design of this qualitative study. I included a description of the role I played as the researcher and a member of the program. Next, I discussed the collection of qualitative data from focus group interviews. I described the methods I used to analyze the data, including taking field notes and transcribing interviews. I discussed ways I attempted to ensure that this study would be trustworthy, outlined limitations and delimitations of the study, and described assumptions and biases of the study.

Chapter IV: Analyses and Results

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I summarized the results of the research I conducted via the seven focus group interviews with LCLLs. To begin, I reported the method of data analysis: how I obtained participants and how I discovered open codes, axial codes, and overarching themes. I listed each of the three research questions for this study and discussed the themes that emerged to help answer the research questions, using data collected from LCLLs' responses to focus group interview questions. The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program. I noticed a lack of research in the extant literature concerning perceptions of teacher leaders in specific teacher leader programs. I hoped that my research study would increase the knowledge base on this topic, positively influence future decisions for the improvement of the LCLL program, and offer guidance to educators wanting to implement a teacher leader program.

I attempted to fill the gap in the knowledge base of the perceptions of teacher leaders by collecting qualitative data from focus group interviews involving as many of the 48 LCLLs as possible. Thirty-four LCLLs (70.8%) agreed to participate in the focus group interviews that provided the data for this study. LCLLs represented each elementary, middle, high, and alternative school in the district in these interviews.

Data Analysis

I created research questions and focus interview questions to gain insight into the perceptions of LCLLs experiences as teacher leaders. I employed

purposeful sampling because I wanted LCLLs, the people at the heart of the program, to provide their perception of the effectiveness of the program. I made an announcement during the April 2021 monthly LCLL meeting to solicit focus group interview participants, followed by an email reminder the same day to all LCLLs. Twenty-two LCLLs agreed to participate in the focus group interviews. I sent another round of emails five days later to LCLLs who had not yet agreed to participate. From those emails, 12 more LCLLs agreed to participate.

I began data analysis by reading each interview transcript. I applied open codes to attempt to reduce the volume of data to information in the text I felt was important to the topic. Seventy-seven open codes emerged for Research Question 1, 43 open codes for Research Question 2, and 18 open codes for Research Question 3. I listed the open codes and grouped them into seven axial codes. The seven axial codes applied to each of the three Research Questions. I selected individual quotes related to the axial codes and reduced the list of axial codes to two overarching themes: 1) collaborating and 2) mentoring (see Tables 1, 2, and 3).

Research Questions

I based the focus of the three Research Questions on the objectives of the LCLL program. Each participant who provided data to help answer these three Research Questions was a current member of the LCLL program.

Research Question 1. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are serving as catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools so that all students learn at a high level? Table 1 details the coding criteria for Research Question 1.

Table 1

Coding Criteria for Research Question 1

Axial Codes	**collaborating**	**sharing**
Open Codes	benchmark scores	good communication
	collaboration	*our* students / team
	common planning	sharing strategies
	common goals	resolving problems
	create something positive	
	do what we ask students to do	
	effective teacher teams	
	enrichment	
	improve instruction	
	involve everyone	
	make mistakes	
	meet student needs	
	break down objectives	
	completely	
	common formative	
	assessments	
	consistency in PLCs	
	data crunch	
	gain confidence	
	Google Meet to collaborate	
	scaffolding	
	step up game	
	student success	
	working together	
	peer feedback	
	reflective practice	
	remediation	
	reteaching	
	set high expectations	
	SMART goals	
	standard mastery	

	students are product	
	students benefit	
	students' deep questions	
	teach to high students	
Axial Codes	**unifying**	**cooperating**
Open Codes	growth mindset	administrative support
	positive change, culture, place, words, attitude, reinforcement	no competition
	resourceful	administrator's inclusion of LCLLs in decision-making
	respect	preparing students for next course, grade, school
	staying on target	LCLLs as liaison
	taking risks	
	teachers feel safe	
	transparency	
	trust	
	value	
	vulnerable	
	supportive	
Axial Codes	**aligning**	**listening**
Open Codes	acceptance of PLC process	formal & informal communication
	alignment	listen to each other
	analyzing standards	
	ancillaries lead to test	
	buy-in from teachers	
	grade-level material	
	grade-level PLCs	
	PLC process fidelity	
	projects	
	high-level questions	
	match questions to standards	
	meeting all the pieces of the standard	
	tests look like standards	
Axial Code	**mentoring**	
Open Codes	build relationships with colleagues	
	help others	
	leadership in and outside the classroom	
	learn from someone	
	LCLLs taking charge	
	asking for help	

	LCLLs as teachers of teachers
	LCLLs planning of professional development
Research Question 1:	According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are serving as catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools so that all students learn at a high level?
	Theme 1: Collaborating
LCLLs are catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools so that all students learn at a high level by:	
	Theme 2: Mentoring

Theme 1: Collaboration. The first theme that emerged as a result of data

analysis was collaboration. LCLLs talked in each of the seven focus group

interviews about working together with other LCLLs and with teachers in PLC

teams to bring about positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools

so that students learn at a high level. The collaborative experiences LCLLs

described indicated that LCLLs perceived that they had been successful in the role

of catalyst, which answered Research Question 1. Table 4 details experiences

LCLLs described that showcased their success in collaborating with other LCLLs

and with teachers (see Table 2).

Table 2

LCLLs' Collaborative Work to Create Positive Changes

LCLLs perceived they were successful as catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools through the lens of collaborative work by:	
• helping to implement the PLC process with fidelity.	• working with administrators to make school-level decisions.

• modeling a growth mindset.	• working with other LCLLs and teachers in their schools to focus on all students vs. their own students.
• setting specific goals.	• establishing norms for each PLC.
• using positive language.	• being vulnerable.
• not competing.	• helping other teachers buy into the PLC process.
• participating in reflective practice with PLC team members.	

During the focus group interviews, I asked participants four questions concerning the objectives of the LCLL program. In the seven focus group interviews, all 34 participants agreed that the LCLL program was a positive change in the culture and climate of their school. Participants also commented that although they had struggled with teacher buy-in when the LCLL program began, by the 2020-2021 school year, they perceived that the collaborative PLC process had become an accepted part of their school's culture and climate. Participant Elizabeth described the PLC process as a practice that began as a required professional activity to one that became embedded in the culture and climate of her school. She said,

> We believe in the PLC process, and we really want to see teachers moving from [a PLC] meeting to really having that process in your school in that culture. There's power in collaboration. We're working together and analyzing data together.

Participant Marsha noted a positive change for which she had been a catalyst in her school. She perceived that not only participating in the PLC process, including focusing on student work in the form of common formative assessments, but also

helping teachers see the value in such collaborative work, had been a positive change in her school since the implementation of the LCLL program. She said that she saw evidence of LCLLs as catalysts of positive change to help students learn at a high level

> . . . when I see teachers conducting [common formative assessments] and really checking their data. I'd say that is a positive change. If you see people doing what they're supposed to be doing and seeing the value in that, that would be a positive change.

The body language and tones of voice I observed during the interviews indicated that LCLLs perceived that they had been successful in transforming their individual school's culture and climate so that all students could learn at a high level. Participant Ellen's example of positive change involved her school's LCLLs, administrators, and instructional facilitator who participated in school-level decision-making, something that was not as successful before the implementation of the LCLL program. She described how LCLLs discussed what they learned from monthly training meetings so that the LCLLs and administrators could decide how best to share that information with the rest of the faculty. She said:

> After we have a Learning Leader meeting on Wednesday, on Friday morning of that week, our administration meets with the Learning Leaders before school just to debrief and decide how we need to apply at school how we're gonna forward that information on to the other faculty.

Participant Elizabeth's perception of success she had seen through the collaborative work of the PLC process centered around *our* students, instead of the pre-LCLL program belief that each teacher was responsible only for their own students. The PLC team should be collaborating to meet specific goals. She said, "Growth towards the specific goals that the school has outlined would be defined as positive change. You have to have that collaboration, that teamwork, that mindset that these are all of our students; we're working on it together."

Participant Marvin perceived that LCLLs were successful in helping each PLC team establish norms and in working with teachers to use positive language to help each team meet the needs of their students. He said:

It's an understood rule—how do we fix that—if you're gonna bring an issue to the table, you need to bring a resolution. So instead of spending 30 minutes talking about what [students] can't do, we established that there's a need, and then that 30 minutes is filled with how we can meet the needs of the students. The norms have brought about positive change.

Participant Hailey felt that LCLLs had succeeded in working with teachers to realize the value of being vulnerable in front of other teachers during collaborative work and to reduce competition among teachers to improve high-stakes test scores. She said, "Before the PLC process, I feel like [our math teachers] were competitive, trying to have the best scores. Then the PLC process was implemented, and now we have to work

together to get all of our students to success." Participant Emma perceived

that LCLLs had worked successfully with teachers to help them buy into

the PLC process in her building. She mentioned that working with

teachers to develop the reflective practice of PLC collaborative work

helped students be more successful. She described success as:

> . . . seeing PLCs consistently meeting with not a lot of gaps
>
> between those meetings and then having reflective practice on
>
> what we're actually doing in that classroom, if it is working, and
>
> what we could do to make it better and more successful for our
>
> students.

Another facet of Research Question 1 was that the collaborative

work of LCLLs focused on helping students learn at a high level. Table 3

lists professional practices that LCLLs have helped other teachers

incorporate into their schools' culture and climate.

Table 3

LCLLs' Collaborative Work to Help All Students Learn at a High Level

LCLLs perceived they were successful in helping all students learn at a high level through the lens of collaborative work by:	
• helping to implement common formative assessments to assess standards regularly.	• focusing on student data, including benchmark data.
• promoting data-driven instruction.	• encouraging teachers and students to ask rigorous questions.
• working with other teachers to improve and increase student engagement.	• focusing on student and teacher learning.
• helping teachers ensure students are prepared for the next grade level.	• helping other teachers learn how to scaffold activities to master all the pieces of a standard.

• encouraging the use of grade-level material.	• setting high expectations.
• helping other teachers build relationships with students.	• working with other teachers to set SMART goals.
• working with other teachers to match test questions to a standard.	• using data to uncover weakness
• using data to share resources to improve test scores.	• using data to provide immediate feedback to improve student learning.
• inspiring trust.	• using state-offered materials

Participant Howard felt successful in his work as an LCLL because of the collaborative work in which he had participated with other teachers in his school to encourage asking more rigorous questions. He said he had observed learning at a high level when he heard "both teachers and students beginning to ask questions that show depth of thought." Participant Marsha felt successful as an LCLL because of working with other teachers to discover ways to involve students more actively during a teacher's lesson. Like Participant Howard, she believed her success stemmed from "when the students are participating in the lesson and they're truly engaged and asking good questions themselves." LCLLs served as catalysts for an improvement in the culture and climate of their schools, as both teachers and students increased the rigor of questions asked.

Participant Heather recounted that a positive change in her school's culture and climate stemmed from collaborating with other teachers to redirect their focus from teaching to student learning at a high level so that students would be prepared for the next grade level. She said:

I have to know what's happening in grades 9 and 10 if I'm going to

be accountable for the learning that's supposed to happen in grade

11. I hope that a lot of our teachers aren't just teaching now but are

trying to get students to learn. And if that's the case, then that

happens at a higher level than if I'm standing up here and giving

you my lecture and I hope you take it all in.

Participant Anna's example of her success as an LCLL that

improved the culture and climate in her school involved collaborating with

other teachers to create scaffolded activities in the classroom that would

help students master all the pieces of the standard taught, as the activities

increased in rigor from activity to activity. She said:

Knowing the students are meeting all the pieces of the standard,

not just part of it, is important—having the expectation of learning

the standard the state has given us and then showing the students

how to get there through scaffolding.

Participant Mindy expressed that she had been a catalyst for

improving the culture and climate of her school when she talked about

collaborating with other teachers to expose students to grade-level

material in class every day. Another part of her successful collaboration

was working with teachers on PLC teams to create frequent formative

assessments on the standards students were learning to know for sure

where students were on the continuum of mastery. She said, "We are

focused on putting grade-level material in front of students every day.

That's rigor. The standard is being assessed, discussed, mastered daily."

92

Prior to the implementation of the LCLL program, teachers across the district did not participate in using common formative assessments to drive instruction.

Five participants talked about working with teachers on PLC teams to set high expectations to encourage all students to learn at a high level as a facet of improved school culture and climate. Participant Estelle said, "Kids will excel where you set the bar. When we make assessments, we also assess the depth of knowledge of the types of questions we are asking them and what kind of thinking we are having them do." Participant Emma agreed with Participant Estelle and included the facet of helping other teachers learn how to build relationships with their students to increase learning as a part of a healthy school culture and climate. She said, " With those high expectations come relationships. Because when you know your students, then you can present those high levels of learning in their learning style so they can achieve those high expectations."

Participant Marsha perceived that a positive change to her school's culture and climate stemmed from her work with teachers on PLC teams who collaborated while focusing on the data they had collected to ensure that PLC members matched the test question accurately to assess the standard. Participant Heather also talked about collaborating with a high school PLC team of science teachers to use ACT data and focus on the common goal of improving ACT science scores by sharing resources that would encourage student mastery of essential learning and thus improving the culture and climate of her school. She said:

We took the science ACT test. We were looking at previous ACT data. I don't know that that group had sat down and had that conversation about how to improve ACT science scores. Then they started sharing resources. It was an excellent moment where we were all working around one common goal. Everyone had input, everyone shared a difficulty, and it was a beautiful moment of learning.

Participant Marvin perceived that his school culture and climate had improved because of the collaborative work of his middle school math PLC by using state-offered materials to encourage teachers to be able to teach at a high level and to be accountable to administrators for teaching at that level. In his response, he talked about Webb's (1997) Depth of Knowledge that identified the level of rigor of the assessment of a standard. Instead of focusing on the lowest two levels that involved mere recall / reproduction and skills / concepts, levels 3 and 4 focused on strategic thinking and extended thinking. He said, "As a math department, we started using the instructional focus documents that the state provided that puts you on a level three and level four. So that's where we're expected to be at all times in our classrooms." Before the implementation of the LCLL program, teachers had often focused more on teaching pre-requisite skills instead of teaching at the level of rigor the standard required.

Participant Elodie provided a concrete example of collaborative work that positively influenced her school's culture and climate. She

talked with a second-grade PLC team that used benchmark test data to help teachers focus on students' standard mastery in preparation for high-stakes state tests and the importance of PLC members having trust in each other to talk about areas of weakness to increase student mastery. She said:

> [The second grade PLC team members] literally went over each question and discussed why or why not the students overall got it or didn't get it. They made notes about how they could hit those certain things in even the next two weeks before the TCAP, working together, being like, "Only 35% of my kids got this question right." I mean, that's hard as a teacher to admit. And so I was proud of them for having that trust set up that they could talk about that they didn't do so well on a question. And then a few minutes later be able to celebrate something that that same teacher did well.

Participant Elodie felt her contribution to helping students learn at a high level in an effort to make a positive change in her school's culture and climate was in collaborating with teachers through the PLC process in multiple buildings on her school campus, something that was not happening consistently before the implementation of the LCLL program. She said:

> The PLC team over the last four years has made our buildings work together. And then, within each grade level, it's made us be deeper and more together. First grade now plans together, we

95

bounce ideas off one another. It forced us to do more together. I'm

telling you, the power of common planning is one of the best

things ever. And our principals have fought to keep that this year

because they know how important it is to our PLC process.

Theme 2: Mentoring. A second theme which became evident during data

analysis after the focus group interviews was the role of LCLLs in mentoring

other teachers. This theme aligned with the Teacher Leader Model Template

(2016) document the Network Team from Lincoln County submitted to the state

for approval of the LCLL program. The Network Team briefly summarized the

LCLL program by saying, "The Lincoln County Learning Leaders Program is

designed and implemented to develop Teacher / PLC Learning Leaders capable of

leading, facilitating, and mentoring dynamic teams of teachers focused on

improving student learning" (p. 3.). Participants in all seven focus group

interviews echoed these thoughts (see Table 4).

Table 4

LCLLs as Mentors

LCLLs perceived they were successful as catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their schools by:	
• mentoring other teachers to embrace a growth mindset. • mentoring administrators as a result of LCLL training. • seeking opportunities to mentor other teachers. • mentoring other teachers to inspire buy-in to the PLC process.	• mentoring other teachers to maintain a positive attitude. • encouraging the raising up of teacher leaders. • earning the trust and confidence of their colleagues to help them find answers to their questions.

As a catalyst for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of his school, Participant Elliott commented about a time when LCLLs mentored other teachers to embrace a growth mindset, believing that every teacher has the capacity to grow in their professional learning. He said, "We all have something that we could change for the better. So it's just taking that and not being negative about it." The Network Team challenged LCLLs to lead by positive example as they worked with teachers in their schools.

Participant Ellen talked about the importance of mentoring colleagues, even administrators, to bring about positive changes in the culture and climate of her school. Administrators in Lincoln County did not have the same training and rigor of training that teachers in the LCLL program had had. She said:

> There was a time that the other Learning Leader and I actually had to go sit down with our admin and say, "We know we need this information. We need to figure out a more effective way of us working together to pass it on to the teams because we are not actually following through with our PLC processes. When we go back to [our monthly LCLL meeting], we don't have the information we need to take back. We don't have a way of gauging how effective PLCs are being because we're not really doing them." So then when we kind of pointed it out, we were able to really get on track and have their full support with it.

Participant Howard talked about mentoring teachers to become leaders as an aspect of a positive change in his school's culture and climate. This change aligned with the Teacher Leader Model Template (2016)

document the Network Team from Lincoln County submitted to the state

for approval of the LCLL program. The Network Team described the

rationale of the LCLL program by saying, "Every teacher, by definition is

a leader." The Network Team also described the LCLL program by saying

that LCLLs would be responsible for "teacher capacity building."

Participant Howard described building a colleague's capacity. His

colleague, who had not previously been in a leadership position, took on a

leadership role in mentoring other colleagues in her PLC. He said:

> Probably one of the more positive changes I've seen is to have a
>
> few other folks step up within their PLCs to basically become
>
> leaders within those groups. [One colleague, for example,]
>
> organizes everything and gets everybody's input.

Because of Participant Howard's role as mentor through the LCLL

program, he helped his colleague grow in self-efficacy which aligned with

DuFour's (2008) work involving teachers' capacity building to improve

student learning.

Participant Anna had worked in two different schools. She

recounted her experience at her first school and some of the challenges she

faced in mentoring her colleagues. She also acknowledged that her

challenges were greater at the inception of the LCLL program, but she had

seen improvements by the end of the fifth year of the program. She said:

> I was the science PLC leader at [my middle school]. And it was
>
> like pulling teeth sometime because they were very successful.
>
> They said, "Why do we have to come talk to you about it?" And it

98

was a struggle there for a little bit. When they started seeing some

growth, it helped, but there were a couple that never got on board

because they said, "What I'm doing works, and I don't really care."

And they would come and they would go through the [PLC]

process, but I know it never really changed their hearts. They

weren't there because they had buy-in. Some of them said, "I have

more experience than you. I'm not going to talk; you don't know

what you're talking about." And so it was difficult in that setting.

But it's a lot different now.

Because of Participant Anna's investment in mentoring other teachers as a

result of her involvement in the LCLL program, she helped move her

school culture from one of autonomy and privacy, in which teachers

focused on their own students with little-to-no collaboration, to one of

collective inquiry, in which teachers collaborated through the PLC process

to take ownership of *all* learners, thus increasing student mastery of

essential learning (DuFour, 2008).

      Research Question 2. According to teacher leader interview responses in

a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders

regarding how well they are building highly effective teams focused on helping

students and teachers exceed their own expectations? Table 5 details the coding

criteria for Research Question 2.

Table 5

Coding Criteria for Research Question 2

Axial Codes	**collaborating**	**sharing**
Open Codes	clearly identify a need / problem	complement each other
	collaboration	good communication
	co-teachers	provide input to improve
	analyze barriers	accountable talk
	school improvement decision-making	encourage
	work without administrative mandate	*our* students / team
	resolving problems	ownership
	scheduling	
Axial Codes	**unifying**	**cooperating**
Open Codes	administrative support	no competition
	intentional	teacher's physical location
	norms	team cooperation
	scaffolded tasks	working together
	supportive	
	transparency	
	trust	
	vulnerable	
	keep confidence	
	supportive	
Axial Codes	**aligning**	**listening**
Open Codes	data drives instruction	formal and informal communication
	accountability for learning	active listening
	state-level instructional resources	
Axial Code	**mentoring**	
Open Codes	better ourselves	
	build relationships with colleagues	
	help others	
	instructional facilitator	
	answer colleagues' questions	
	document pathways to success	
	gain knowledge	
	time (for LCLLs to attend PLC meetings)	
	pairing new teachers with veteran teachers	

Research Question 2:	According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are building highly effective teams focused on helping students and teachers exceed their own expectations?
LCLLs build highly effective teams focused on helping students and teachers exceed their own expectations by:	*Theme 1: Collaborating*
	Theme 2: Mentoring

Theme 1: Collaboration. The theme of collaboration that emerged as a result of data analysis aligned with participants' responses to interview questions to help answer Research Question 2. LCLLs talked in each of the seven focus group interviews about collaborating with other LCLLs and with teachers to build highly effective teams called PLC teams. Table 7 details experiences LCLLs described that showcased their success in collaborating with other LCLLs and teachers (see Table 6).

Table 6

LCLLs' Collaborative Work to Build Highly Effective Teams

LCLLs perceived they were successful in building highly effective teams through the lens of collaborative work by:

- working with other teachers to emphasize their strengths and to overcome weaknesses.
- using student data collected from common formative assessments to drive instructional decisions.
- inspiring trust.

- helping other teachers to foster a willingness to share resources and strategies.
- working with other teachers to develop a sense of collective ownership through the PLC process.
- working with other teachers to instill the importance of being an active contributor on a PLC team.

• encouraging vulnerability, transparency, and mutual respect.	• listening to other teachers.
• collaborating across the school district.	• not competing.
• helping other teachers to be resourceful and supportive.	• working with other teachers to set goals.
• helping other teachers be unified in a common vision.	• collaborating with their principal in making school-wide decisions.
• collaborating with other LCLLS to gain their principal's trust.	• helping their principal value and understand the work of the LCLL program.

Participant Marsha supported other participants' thoughts about strengths and weaknesses and talked about each PLC team member who had ownership in the collaborative process and was willing to share with other PLC team members. She said an effective PLC team:

would be a team that truly collaborates, that everybody brings something to the table. Not all of us are strong in the same areas. And so our strengths kind of fill in the holes of weaknesses of others. I think it's when we're bringing CFAs, and we're really digging into the data to see what we can do to help that teacher improve their instruction if they need to, or when you're just working together, and no one's really afraid to speak. There's not one person dominating that kind of thing when you truly are working together.

Participant Marsha's example reflects a shift from teachers who worked independently to teachers who collaborated in a highly effective PLC team (DuFour, 2008). Before the implementation of the LCLL program, individual teachers decided what was to be learned and how it should be

assessed. LCLLs received training to collaborate with teachers in their schools to harness the power of the PLC process, driven by reviewing common formative assessments and then building on PLC team members' strengths to ensure that each student represented on the PLC team would have access to best practices to help them improve their learning.

Participant Heather talked about the value of ownership and trust on a highly effective PLC collaborative team. The concepts of ownership and trust reflected DuFour's (2008) work on which the Network Team built the LCLL program. She said:

> There has to be a sense of ownership for each member of that team because if I come in and tell you what to do, then you may or may not do it. If you don't feel like you're part of that team, like you're making a difference and like you're an active contributor instead of a participant, then it's not fun to take all of my worksheets. The real progress comes when we're truly collaborating, but I feel like I have just as much to give as every other member, and I think part of that also comes from the level of trust because if I am worried that you're going to not appreciate what I've given or that you're going to use it because you think that my work is lesser than your work. If we aren't willing to share success and less than success, then we're never going to reach that point where I could actually accept help from another teacher. If we're living in a territorial kind of fear of each other where I don't want to share or be judged,

then we're never actually getting to a highly effective team because we're never going to see the success that we actually could have. Similarly, Participant Estelle talked about two characteristics of a highly effective PLC collaborative team that she has helped instill at her school: vulnerability and transparency (DuFour, 2008). She said:

As far as my [grade level] team, we listen to each other. We work together. If we give a benchmark test, and I have a standard that I just did poorly on, we try to be transparent, and we respect each other enough to do that that way; we let ourselves be vulnerable. And I think that's important. Our motto here at [my school] is do whatever it takes. And to me, that's what makes a highly effective team, that everyone is working together and doing whatever it takes to help those students become successful.

Participant Hailey said that over the course of the LCLL program that teachers and LCLLs collaborated more effectively across the school district. In response to another participant's comment about the need for teachers and LCLLs to work together, she said, "I also think we have been working across the district a lot better—the east end and the west end. We work with the [other high school] math team a lot now, and so I think that's really cool." Prior to the implementation of the LCLL program, teachers across the district did not have the opportunities like after program implementation to collaborate with teachers of the same subject or grade level from another school.

.

In reference to building a highly effective team, Participant Emily talked about the need of reaching out across the school district to collaborate with teachers who did not have another teacher in their building with whom they could collaborate. She said, "We still need to take a whole grade level in middle school [across the district] and take ownership of those students and find out what's going on."

Participants acknowledged that the collaborative efforts of PLC teams has encouraged the use of data from common formative assessments and end-of-course tests to drive instructional decisions. Participant Emily said:

When we were really meeting, I think we [lower-grade teachers] were looking at our data, and we're looking at how everybody builds on top of each other, getting ready to go to fourth and fifth grade where our test results are. And we were looking at where the lower grades have an impact on test scores and making it more data driven.

Participant Elizabeth talked about how collaborative work through the PLC process had unified her colleagues and contributed to building highly effective teams. She said:

I really attribute the success of our team that year to the PLC process because it unifies us, it gave us a goal, it helped us establish a vision together. Because like a lot of teachers, we were working hard separately in all kinds of different directions. If you

can put all of that effort and combine it together, it's extremely

powerful.

Three participants in two different focus group interviews talked

about a video they had watched in an LCLL meeting of a team of middle

school LCLLs talking about how they used data to improve both teaching

and learning. The responses to the collaborative work by the LCLLs in the

video were all positive. Interview participants touted the work showcased

in this video as a highlight of the successes of the LCLL program.

Participants made either vocal responses in support of the collaborative

work in the video or showcased positive body language, such as smiling

and nodding their head. Participant Emma described her experience with

the video. She said, "During our last Learning Leader meeting, we

watched the middle school teachers with their PLC data. I was blown

away. They were just amazing!"

Participant Estelle agreed with Participant Emma about the video

of middle school teachers as a good example of how teaching and learning

have improved as a result of the collaborative work LCLLs have done

with teachers on PLC teams to stress the value of using data and being

vulnerable in collaborative PLC work. She specifically praised the work of

the LCLL members she had seen in the video and related such

collaborative work to similar work in which she has participated in her

own school. She said:

> I agree that it was good to see [the middle school teachers'] data
>
> and how they broke everything down. At [my school], we do

vertical PLCs once every nine weeks after our benchmark tests.

We share our vulnerabilities, and I think that's a key to helping

students. But people will say that we break it down to the standard,

what was our weakest standards, high standards. [Teachers of the

lower grade levels] learn how they could scaffold if their kids are

missing a chunk of what they need to be successful.

Theme 2: Mentoring. The theme of mentoring that emerged as a result of

data analysis aligned with participants' responses to interview questions to help

answer Research Question 2. This theme again aligned with the Teacher Leader

Model Template (2016) document the Network Team from Lincoln County

submitted to the state for approval of the LCLL program. The Network Team

briefly summarized the LCLL program by saying, "The Lincoln County Learning

Leaders Program is designed and implemented to develop Teacher / PLC

Learning Leaders capable of leading, facilitating, and *mentoring dynamic teams of*

teachers focused on improving student learning" (p. 3). Participants in all seven

focus group interviews echoed these thoughts. Table 8 details experiences LCLLs

described that showcased their success in mentoring other teachers (see Table 7).

Table 7

LCLLs' Engagement in Mentoring Other Colleagues

LCLLs perceived they were successful in building highly effective teams by:	
• mentoring newer teachers.	• mentoring other teachers by implementing specific strategies like Tip Tuesday.

Participant Heather recounted an experience in mentoring newer teachers as part of building a highly effective team. According to DuFour (2008), continuous job-embedded learning is the key to improved student learning. Newer teachers' students benefitted from the professional learning their teachers did with veteran teachers on their PLC team. Participant Heather discussed the power of both the newer teacher and the experienced teacher who were able to contribute to the collaborative work of their PLC team. She said:

> It involves [both newer and experienced teachers] in the [PLC] process—we're all looking at standards, we're all looking at data, we're all really digging in our curriculum, and it allows you to both celebrate success with that new teacher and to really focus on goals and having someone new on our team. We were able to make that a norm.

Participant Elodie helped build team capacity by implementing Tip Tuesday at her school, a PLC team activity in which teachers mentored other teachers in an effective instructional strategy. She said, "[On] Tip Tuesday, everybody comes to our grade level with something they need help with. We all contribute something that we need help with in our classroom. It's an easy way to get people talking and sharing ideas."

Research Question 3. According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are solving complex problems collaboratively? Table 8 details the coding criteria for Research Question 3.

Table 8

Coding Criteria for Research Question 3

Axial Codes	**collaborating**	**sharing**
Open Codes	active contributor	exchange of ideas
	collaboration	sharing strategies
	common goals	
	student engagement and	
	motivation	
Axial Codes	**unifying**	**cooperating**
Open Codes	positive culture	build relationships with
		colleagues
		no competition
		full teaching load
		ownership
		resolving problems
Axial Codes	**aligning**	**listening**
Open Codes	trust	formal and informal
		communication
	unity	listen to each other
Axial Code	**mentoring**	
Open Codes	administrative support	
	instructional facilitator	
Research Question 3:		According to teacher leader interview responses in a southeastern school district, what are the perceptions of those teacher leaders regarding how well they are solving complex problems collaboratively?
LCLLs solve complex problems collaboratively:		*Theme 1: Collaborating*

Theme 1: Collaboration. The theme of collaboration that emerged as a result of data analysis aligned with participants' responses to interview questions to help answer Research Question 2. Two participants mentioned the PLC process specifically as the primary means to solve complex problems collaboratively, three participants talked about collaboration specifically as a key factor, two participants mentioned emphasizing teachers' strengths, and two participants talked about the importance of using data. The primary vehicle for LCLLs to use

to solve complex problems collaboratively was the PLC process. DuFour (2008)

talked about the importance of PLC teams who valued commitments, such as

using data to drive instructional decisions and sustained opportunities to engage in

professional adult learning. Table 9 details experiences LCLLs described that

showcased their success in collaborating with other LCLLs and teachers (see

Table 9).

Table 9

LCLLs' Collaborative Work to Solve Complex Problems

LCLLs perceived they were successful in solving complex problems through the lens of collaborative work by:	
• sharing strategies to overcome deficits.	• working with other teachers to develop trust.
• using data to define a problem clearly.	• being transparent.
• participating in accountable talk.	• helping other teachers to have respectful communication.
• working with multiple collaborative teams.	• implementing the PLC process with fidelity.
• using DuFour's (2008) four questions.	• creating assessments to drive lesson building.
• using student learning to drive instruction.	• meeting the needs of virtual students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant Ellen referred to the cornerstone of the LCLL program, the

PLC process as the collaborative vehicle, as an example of success from the work

she had done with other teachers to solve complex problems. She talked about

PLC members sharing strategies with each other to overcome any deficits in

teaching and in student learning. She said:

> When we're analyzing results, we may have a teacher who has a
>
> class that just knocked it out of the park, and [another teacher's

students] didn't do so well. To me, that would be solving a

complex problem—being comfortable with each other and saying,

"Alright, so what did you do to get such results? What strategies

did you use that I can try with the kids in my classroom to get them

up to where your kids were."

Participant Elaine believed that LCLLs were successful in working with

other teachers on PLC teams to help them develop trust to speak openly

about complex problems and to work collaboratively by bringing solutions

to the table. She said:

A big word that applies here is trust, trusting one another. What I

may bring to help solve the problem may get us there a couple of

steps, and then what someone else brings is going to bring us even

closer. And so if you're working together to solve it, then it's just

like with anything else; the more help you have, the easier the job

gets.

Participants Heather and Elizabeth agreed that LCLLs were

successful in using data to solve complex problems collaboratively.

Participant Heather said, "It helps to try to make our solutions and even

our problems as data-oriented as possible. Using data makes that more

objective, and more applicable to either the whole school, the whole

county, the whole grade." Participant Elizabeth added that using student

data made the problem more concrete and easier to solve as a team. She

said:

111

It's really important that the problem is clearly defined so
everybody knows what they're working on. We're all on board that
we understand specifically—this is what the data says and this is
where we need to be. It's really important that you know where you
are and how much ground there is to cover.

Participant Emma felt that LCLLs had been successful in helping
other teachers value transparency and employ good communication to
solve complex problems collaboratively. She said:

That reminds me of the accountable talk that we teach our students,
but we can also do that with ourselves. So, agreeing and
disagreeing respectfully to get the issue at hand solved and to
better our students. We need respectful communication and that
willingness to be transparent and work through those problems.
Because if you don't first identify the problem and admit there is
one, then it's not going to be solved. We need to be transparent
with the data at hand or issue and then exercise accountable talk
and respectful talk to one another to be able to solve the problem.

Participant Elliott perceived that LCLLs were successful in
working with multiple collaborative teams across grade levels who
participated in solving complex problems. He said:

When I think of solving a complex problem collaboratively, I think
about not just one team doing it because they might see a
perspective that we don't see. I teach kindergarten, so I have a
different perspective on things than the fifth grade teacher, so all of

us getting together and trying to figure it out, they may have the solution to my problem that I hadn't thought of.

Participant Estelle talked about the effectiveness of LCLLs who had helped implement the PLC process with fidelity by working with other teachers to use DuFour's (2008) four questions to drive PLC meetings, creating assessments before designing lessons, and focusing on student learning instead of teaching to drive instruction. She talked about the power of collaboration to make solving complex problems more manageable through the PLC process. She said:

I definitely think it has been effective. I mean, it's commonplace now to meet together for our PLCs to talk about student learning, and to discuss those four questions. I don't think we are exactly where we should be yet, but I think we've got a solid start. When we started having PLCs and documenting an agenda, a lot of people said that we don't have time for this. I feel like I'm really good at helping people simplify things, and this does not have to be complicated. These are things that you do anyway, like you are planning when you're sitting together and you're creating an assessment to build your lessons off of and you're talking about student learning; you are driving that instruction. That's something I've been able to do to ease people because we are overwhelmed.

Participant Hailey recounted a success story of how she led a PLC team collaborating to solve the complex problem of teaching students virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said:

113

When we went home last March from COVID, we decided to kind

of revamp the curriculum, since we had all this extra time. We

were Zooming three times a week. And basically my job was to

take each lesson and make notes. So I was writing out notes

directed for a virtual kid because we knew that was going to be a

thing. We met and revamped the notes, we went over every

homework assessment that we had, we looked at every question we

talked about, and asked what we could add. [Our course] is one

semester, so we don't have a lot of review time for EOC. We

started adding cumulative review questions on every homework.

Everybody in my group was giving input; everyone in my group

was pulling their own weight.

LCLLs' perceptions about solving complex problems collaboratively

aligned with the Teacher Leader Model Template (2016) document sent to

the state prior to the implementation of the LCLL program. According to

the document, solving complex problems collaboratively was a facet of

effective school improvement.

Summary of Results

In Chapter IV, I presented key findings as a result of seven focus group

interviews I conducted. Two major themes developed as a result of data analysis:

1) collaborating and 2) mentoring. The data revealed that LCLLs perceived that

they were catalysts for creating positive changes in the culture and climate of their

schools. LCLLs believed that conducting the PLC process with fidelity supported

student learning at a high level. LCLLs perceived that highly effective PLC

114

teams, comprised of members who worked interdependently toward the common

goal of student mastery of essential learning, were essential to solve complex

problems collaboratively.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

Although considerable research existed at the time of this study in 2021 concerning teacher leadership, as the researcher, I found a lack of qualitative research concerning a clear definition of teacher leader roles, specific teacher leader programs, or experiences of teacher leaders. The purpose of this study was to study the perceptions of LCLLs regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program. Through the theoretical framework of Knowles' (1980, 1984) adult learning theory, I focused on understanding the perceptions of teacher leaders in a specific teacher leader program as they participated in collaborative work. In Chapter V, I presented conclusions based on the findings of this study. I also offered recommendations school and district leaders could consider to improve teacher leadership programs. Finally, I proposed opportunities for future research to build on the knowledge of effective teacher leadership.

Conclusions of the Study

This study's results produced important conclusions. I found that LCLLs perceived that the collaborative work in which they participated helped LCLLs be catalysts for positive change in their schools' culture and climate. Focusing on the common goal of helping all students master essential learning through the PLC process helped LCLLs build highly effective teams. LCLLs also perceived that collaborative work through the PLC process helped them solve complex problems, such as using student data to drive instruction and to improve student outcomes. As the researcher, I found that the qualitative data portrayed two fundamental themes pertinent to teacher leadership: 1) collaborating and 2)

116

mentoring. These two themes rendered insightful information. District leaders and school administrators could use the information gained to strengthen teacher leader programs and better inform future decision-making about teacher leader programs.

School and district leaders should encourage teacher collaboration instead of competition. The PLC process is valuable in moving schools' and districts' cultures from one of autonomy and privacy to one embedded with professional inquiry with the common goal of improvement of student learning. Kilinç (2014) asserted that teachers who taught in a positive school climate were more likely to participate in school improvement. With a shift in focus from independence to interdependence, student outcomes are improved because of the collective professional wisdom of their teachers who collaborate via the PLC process by focusing on reviewing student work and student data to drive instructional decisions.

When teachers and teacher leaders conduct the PLC process with fidelity, that practice encourages job-embedded, continued professional learning. The focus shifts from teaching to learning. By investing in quality adult learning, school and district leaders ensure student mastery of essential learning (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). The work of teacher leaders focuses on the success of every student and every teacher (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). As teacher leaders collaborate, they build highly effective teams through being transparent and vulnerable with their colleagues. Those positive relationships strengthen the growth mindset in a school and inspire outside-the-box thinking to bring about school improvement.

Teacher leaders who work in a school whose culture and climate involves shared leadership find satisfaction in their work. Instead of being part of a culture and climate that requires school and district leaders to issue mandates that require that student learning improve, teacher leaders develop ownership of their school community and their role in helping students and other teachers be successful beyond their own expectations. Teacher leaders are a part of the daily process of making decisions that have a direct and an immediate impact on student learning (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Just as teachers need a mentor to offer them sage advice in best practices that improve student outcomes, teacher leaders also need a mentor to support their professional learning. According to Wenner and Campbell (2017), that feeling of empowerment contributes to school improvement. It also advances other teacher leaders' professional knowledge and skills (Nguyen et al., 2020), not the least of which would include leadership skills (Wang & Ho, 2020). Novice teacher leaders can learn from their mentors' experiences, can have someone to encourage them along their leadership journey, and can benefit from their mentors' professional connections. Teacher leader mentors, especially for inexperienced teacher leaders, should be an integral part of any teacher leader program.

Implications for Practice and Research

Based on the results from this qualitative study, as the researcher, I offer recommendations to improve the practices of teacher leaders at the school and the district level. These recommendations focus not only on adult learning but also on

improving student outcomes of mastering essential learning. Concerning the concept of teacher leadership, I offer three key recommendations.

School and district leaders should seek PLC teams which are functioning the most effectively so those teachers can serve in a leadership role, one in which they can mentor other teachers on best practices. Since focusing on student work and student data are to be a key factor of the collaborative work of PLC teams, having a PLC team that has experienced success demonstrate using student work and student data to drive instructional decisions would benefit teachers and students across the school and district. Such a practice would build collective teacher efficacy and improve student outcomes (Hattie, 2009). Having teacher leaders support their colleagues through a professional learning activity would also encourage further teacher leadership (Cooper et al., 2016).

Because of the success teacher leaders have experienced in implementing the PLC process with fidelity and because student outcomes have improved as a result of the collaborative work of PLC teams, districts should consider an adjustment to the weekly school schedule to allow for uninterrupted time for teacher leaders to work with PLC teams during the contract day. Implementing a late start day during the week would provide teacher leaders a block of time to collaborate with PLC teams to solve complex problems at hand (Knowles, 1980, 1984). Since teachers are usually required to begin their contract day before the student day begins, taking 30 to 45 minutes of instructional time during the school day would return dividends much greater than the loss of instructional time. This practice would counteract the traditional organization of the school day that prohibits teacher leaders from having the time to collaborate because of conflicts

119

with regular classroom responsibilities, a practice which would support effective school reform (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Collaborative work through the PLC process has proven to improve student outcomes (DuFour, 2008). With the addition of technological resources, districts should consider providing opportunities for teachers and PLC teams to collaborate across the district. Instead of having a PLC team meeting at a physical location, teacher leaders and teachers could collaborate via an online platform like Google Meet. This opportunity would allow teacher leaders to work with teachers who are the sole teacher of a subject or grade level at their school. Multiple PLCs could also collaborate across the district in a virtual PLC team meeting to solidify gaps in learning across the district, grade levels, or courses.

Recommendations for Further Research

As the researcher of this study, I did not address situations due to certain limitations and delimitations. These limitations and delimitations could be foci for further studies. One limitation of this study was its completion during the COVID-19 pandemic. A researcher could complete a study during a more normal school year to examine teacher leader perspectives. I recommend that a future researcher conduct interviews in person instead of via Google Meet, the platform I used because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another limitation of this study was the number of teacher leaders who chose to participate in the focus group interviews. A future research could study more than 70% of the teacher leaders of a teacher leader program.

Concerning the delimitations of this study, since only teacher leaders participated, a researcher could conduct another study to include district personnel

associated with the program: school administrators, classroom teachers, the

Network Team. Since I chose to interview LCLLs with varying degrees of

experience as an LCLL, a future researcher could examine the perspectives of

only seasoned LCLLs or first-year LCLLs. Since I chose to complete a qualitative

study, a study could be conducted with quantitative data such as surveys or

questionnaires which would allow researchers to more easily transfer findings to

other teacher leader programs. Using surveys or questionnaires could provide an

opportunity for evaluative measures of the effectiveness of the LCLL program. I

chose to conduct focus group interviews. Future researchers could choose to

conduct individual interviews to gain the perspective of teacher leaders who

might otherwise be influenced by other participants in a focus group interview.

Finally, future researchers could sustain a study over a longer period of time to

see how that affected teacher leader perceptions.

References

Adams, C., & Khojasteh, J. (2018). Igniting students' inner determination: The role of a need-supportive climate. *Journal of Educational Administration, 56*(4), 382-397.

Adams, D., & Gamage, D. T. (2008). A study of leadership effectiveness in a large VET institution in Australia. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *22*, 214-228.

Ainscow, M., & Southworth, G. (1996). School improvement: A study of the roles of leaders and external consultants. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *7*(3), 229-251.

Alam, A., & Ahmad, M. (2017). The impact of instructional leadership, professional communities and extra responsibilities for teachers on student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *31*(3), 383-395.

Alegado, P. J. E. (2018). Breaking the barriers: Teacher leadership in the heart of educational reform in the Philippines. *Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy*, *12*(1), 15-30.

Anfara, V. A., & Mertz, N. T. (2015). *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Angelle, P. S. (2017). Organisational influence of teacher leadership: Perspectives from four countries. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 45*(3), 1-4.

Angelle, P. S., & DeHart, C. A. (2010). Measuring the extent of teacher leadership: Construction, testing, and factors in the Teacher Leadership Inventory. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Denver, CO.

Angelle, P. S., & DeHart, C. A. (2016). Comparison and evaluation of four models of

    teacher leadership. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership, 1*(1),

    85-119.

Antinluoma, M., Ilomäki, L., Lahti-Nuuttila, P., & Toom, A. (2018). Schools as

    professional learning communities. *Journal of Education and Learning, 7*(5), 76-

    91.

Aris, R. F. R. (2021). Teacher leadership: A literature review. *Journal of Contemporary*

    Issues and Thought, 11(1), 45-52.

Bach, A., Böhnke, A., & Thiel, F. (2019). Improving instructional competencies through

    individualized staff development and teacher collaboration in German schools.

    International Journal of Educational Management, *34*(8), 1289-1302.

Barber M., & Mourshed, M. (2007). *Shaping the future: How good education systems*

    can become great in the decade ahead—Report on the International Education

    Roundtable. McKinsey & Company.

Barth, R. S. (1988). Principals, teachers, and school leadership. *Phi Delta Kappan*. *69*(9),

    639-642.

Barth, R. S. (2001). Teacher leader. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *82*(6), 443-449.

Berg, J. H. (2019). The language of teacher leadership. *Educational Leadership, 77*(4),

    86-87.

Berry, B. (2019). Teacher leadership: Prospects and promises. *Kappan*, *100*(7), 49-55.

Berry, B., Byrd, A., & Wieder, A. (2013). *Teacherpreneurs: Innovative teachers who*

    lead but don't leave. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Bishop, H. L., Tinley, A., & Berman, B. T. (1997). A contemporary leadership model to

    promote teacher leadership. *Action in Teacher Education*, *19*(3), 77-81.

Blegen, M. B., & Kennedy, C. (2000, May). Principals and teachers, leading together.

    NASSP Bulletin, *84*(616), 1-6.

Boles, K., & Troen, V. (1996). Teacher leaders and power: Achieving school reform

    from the classroom. In G. Moller, & M. Katzenmeyer (Eds.), *Every teacher as a*

    leader: Realizing the potential of teacher leadership (pp. 41-62). Jossey-Bass.

Borchers, B. T. (2009). A study to determine the practices of high school principals and

    central office administrators who effectively foster continuous professional

    learning in high schools. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global: The

    Humanities and Social Sciences Collection.

    http://search.proquest.com/docview/304932769?accountid=9649

Boudah, D. J. (2020). *Conducting educational research: Guide to completing at thesis,*

    dissertation, or action research project (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Bradley-Levine, J., Mosier, G., & Perkins, T. (2014). Perceptions of teacher leadership

    within the new tech high school model. *International Journal of Teacher*

    Leadership, *5*(1). Retrieved from

    https://lmunet.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?dire

    ct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1137399&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Brittain, J., Willis, L., & Cookson, P. W. (2019). *Sharing the wealth: How regional*

    finance and desegregation plans can enhance educational equity (Research

    Brief). Learning Policy Institute.

    https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-

    files/Sharing_The_Wealth_BRIEF.pdf

Brown, J., & Sheppard, B. (1999, April). Leadership, organizational learning, and

    classroom change. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American

    Educational Research Association, Montreal.

Carini, E. (2018). 21st-Century Teacher Learning: Establishing communities of practice

    as an ongoing, job-embedded, differentiated approach. *Literacy Today, 36*(3), 12-

    13.

Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). The trouble with teacher turnover:

    How teacher attrition affects students and schools. *Education Policy Analysis*

    Archives, *27*(36), 1-32.

Castro, A., Quinn, D. J., Fuller, E., & Barnes, M. (2018, January). Policy Brief 2018-1:

    Addressing the importance and scale of the U.S. teacher shortage. *UCEA Policy*

    Brief.

Chadwick, J. A., Patel, L., & Lindblom, K. (2018). Educational leaders discuss the

    essence of leadership. *English Journal*, *107*(4), 13-19.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Cherkowski, S., & Schnellert, L. (2017). Exploring teacher leadership in a rural,

    secondary school: Reciprocal learning teams as a catalyst for emergent leadership.

    International Journal of Teacher Leadership, *8*(1), 6-25. Retrieved from

    https://lmunet.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?dire

    ct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1146793&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Chesson, L. S. (2011). The nature of teacher leadership in a Boston pilot school (Order

    No. 3446925). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

    (858258515). Retrieved from

    http://search.proquest.com/docview/858258515?accountid=9649

Cheung C., Reinhardt, T., Stone, E., & Little, J. W. (2018). Defining teacher leadership: A framework. *Kappan*, 100*(3)*, 39-44.

Chew, J. O. A., & Andrews, D. (2010). Enabling teachers to become pedagogical leaders: Case studies of two IDEAS schools in Singapore and Australia. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, *9*, 59-74.

Childs-Bowen, D., Moller, G., & Scrivner, J. (2000, May). Principals: Leaders of leaders. *NASSP Bulletin*, *84*(616), 27-34.

Cohen, D. K., McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (Eds.) (1993). *Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice.* Jossey-Bass.

Cooper, K. S., Stanulis, R. N., Brondyk, S. K., Hamilton, E. R., Macaluso, M., & Meier, J. A. (2016). The teacher leadership process: Attempting change within embedded systems. *Journal of Educational Change*, *17*(1), 85-113. doi:http://dx.doi.org.lmunet.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s10833-015-9262-4

Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology nursing forum*, *41*(1), 89-91.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.

Corcoran, T. B. (1995). *Transforming professional development for teachers: A guide for state policymakers.* Washington, DC: National Governors' Association.

Corcoran, T. B., Shields, P. M., & Zucker, A. A. (1998, March). *Evaluation of NSF's Statewide Systemic Initiatives (SSI) Program: The SSIs and professional development for teachers.* SRI International.

Cosenza, M. N. (2015, Fall). Defining teacher leadership: Affirming the teacher leader model standards. *Issues in Teacher Education*, *24*(2), 79-99. Retrieved from

http://link.galegroup.com.lmunet.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/A438562361/PROF?u=te
l_a_lmu&sid=PROF&xid=4dbcaae4

Coyle, M. (1997). Teacher leadership vs. school management: Flatten the hierarchies.
Teacher Leadership, *70*(5), 236-239.

Crow, G., Day, C., & Moller, J. (2017). Framing research on school principals' identities.
International Journal of Leadership in Education, *20*(3), 265-277.

Crowther, F., Kaagen, S.S., Ferguson, M., & Hann, L. (2002). *Developing teacher
leaders: How teacher leadership enhances school success*. Corwin Press.

Cuban, L. (1990). *How teachers taught* (3rd ed.). Longman.

Daily, S. M., Mann, M. J., Kristjansson, A. L., Smith, M. L., & Zullig, K. J. (2019).
School climate and academic achievement in middle and high school students.
Journal of School Health, *89*(3), 173-180.

Danielson, C. (2006). *Teacher leadership that strengthens professional practice*.
Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Cook-Harvey, C. M. (2018). *Educating the whole child:
Improving school climate to support student success*. Learning Policy Institute.

Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1995). Policies that support professional
development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(8), 597–604.

DeDeyn, R. (2021). Teacher leadership and student outcomes in a US university
intensive English program. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic
Journal (TESL-EJ), 24*(4).

DeMatthews, D. (2014), Principal and teacher collaboration: An exploration of
distributed leadership in professional learning communities. *International Journal
of Educational Leadership and Management*, *2*(2), 176-206.

127

Demiroz, S. (2020). The relationship between secondary schools students' perceptions of school climate, their school belonging and their academic achievement. *Education Reform Journal, 5*(2), 60-77.

Devos, G., Tuytens, M., & Hulpia, H. (2014). Teachers' organizational commitment: Examining the mediating effects of distributed leadership. *American Journal of Education*, *120*(2), 205-231.

Donaldson, G. A. (2001). *cultivating leadership in schools: Connecting people, purpose, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Doyle, M. (2000, April). Making meaning of teacher leadership in the implementation of a standards-based mathematics curriculum. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

DuFour, R. (2014). Harnessing the power of PLCs. *Educational Leadership*, *71*(8), 30-35.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work*. Solution Tree.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010). *Learning by doing.* Second edition. Solution Tree.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work: New Insights for Improving Schools*. Solution Tree Press.

DuFour, R., & Marzano, R. J. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Solution Tree.

Dulay, S., & Karadag, E. (2017). The effect of school climate on student achievement. In E. Karadag (Ed.) *The factors effecting student achievement* (pp. 199-213). Springer International Publishing.

Duncan, A. (2014, March 14). Teach to lead: Advancing teacher leadership. Presented at

    the National Board on Professional Teaching Standards Teaching and Learning

    Conference. Retrieved May 2020 from https://www.ed/gov/news/speeches/teach-

    lead-advancing-teacher-leadership.

Durias, R. F. (2010). Teacher leaders of color: The impact of professional development

    on their leadership (Order No. 3437275). Available from ProQuest Dissertations

    & Theses Global. (819911603). Retrieved from

    http://search.proquest.com/docview/819911603?accountid=9649

Dweck, C. (2007). *Mindset*. Ballatine Books.

Ezzani, M. D. (2020). Principal and teacher instructional leadership: A cultural shift.

    International Journal of Educational Management, *34*(3), 576-585.

Fay, C. (1992). Empowerment through leadership: In the teachers' voice. In C.

    Livingston (ed.), *Teachers as leaders: Evolving roles* (pp. 57-90). Washington,

    DC: National Education Association.

Fitzpatrick, J. L., Sanders, J. R., & Worthen, B. R. (2011). *Program evaluation:*

    Alternative approaches and practical guidelines. Pearson Education.

Flood, L. D., & Angelle, P. S. (2017). Organizational influences of collective efficacy

    and trust on teacher leadership. *International Studies in Educational*

    Administration, 45(3), 85-99.

Foor, A. (May 2020). Professional development: Be intentional. Create boundaries. Plan

    to reinvest. Acteonline.org.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2020). Literacy leadership from the classroom: Learning

    from teacher leaders. *The Reading Teacher, 74*(2), 223-229.

Gaffney, M., & Faragher, R. (2010). Sustaining improvement in numeracy: Developing

pedagogical content knowledge and leadership capabilities in tandem.

Mathematics Teacher Education and Development, *12*, 72-83.

Gallimore, R., Ermeling, B. A., Saunders, W. M., & Goldenberg, C. (2009). Moving the

learning of teaching closer to practice: Teacher education implications of school-

based inquiry teams. *Elementary School Journal*, *109*(5), 537-553.

Garcia, E. (2019, August 22). It's the beginning of the school year and teachers are once

again opening up their wallets to buy school supplies.

https://www.epi.org/blog/teachers-are-buying-school-supplies/

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What

makes professional development effective? Results from a national

sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, *38*(4), 915–945.

https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038004915

Goddard, Y. L., Goddard, R. D., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2007). A theoretical and

empirical investigation of teacher collaboration for school improvement and

student achievement in public elementary schools. *Teacher College Record*,

109(4), 877-896.

Grant, C. (2005). Teacher leadership: Gendered responses and interpretations. *Agenda*,

19(65), 44-57.

Gülşen, C., & Gülenay, G. B. (2014). The principal and healthy school climate. *Social

Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *42*(0), S93-S100.

Gutierez, B. S., & Kim, B. H. (2017). Breaking barriers: Research-based collaborative

professional development between in-service teachers and university researchers.

New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences, 4(1), 261-269.

Hands, C. M. (2012). Supporting teacher leadership for partnerships. In S. Auerbach (Ed.), *School leadership for authentic family and community partnerships* (pp. 173-192)

Harris, A. (2005). *Crossing boundaries and breaking barriers: Distributing leadership in schools*. Specialist Schools Trust.

Harrison, J. W., & Lembeck, E. (1996). Emergent teacher leaders. In G. Moller, & M. Katzenmeyer (Eds.), *Every teacher as a leader: Realizing the potential of teacher leadership* (pp. 1010-116). Jossey-Bass.

Hart, R., & Baptist, B. (1996). Developing teacher leaders: A state initiative. In G. Moller, & M. Katzenmeyer (Eds.), *Every teacher as a leader: Realizing the potential of teacher leadership* (pp. 85-100). Jossey-Bass.

Hatfield, R. C., Blackman, C. A., & Claypool, C. (1986). Exploring leadership roles performed by teaching faculty in K-12 schools. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Chicago, February 1986.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge.

Heller, D. A. (1994). The problem with power. In D. R. Walling (Ed.), *Teachers as leaders: Perspectives on the professional development of teachers* (pp. 287-297). Phi Delta Kappa.

Hennink, M. M. (2014). *Focus group discussions.* Oxford University Press.

Hiebert, J. (1999). Relationships between research and the NCTM standards. *Journal*

for Research in Mathematics Education, 30(1), 3–19.

Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (2001). *Educational administration: Theory, research and practice* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Hoy, W. K., & Sabo, D. J. (1997). *Quality middle schools: Open and healthy*. Corwin.

Huguet, B. C. S. (2017). Effective leadership can positively impact school performance. *On the Horizon*, *25*(2), 96-102.

Ingersoll, R., & Perda, D. (2012). *How high is teacher turnover and is it a problem?* Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Ingersoll, R., Sirinides, P., & Dougherty, P. (2018, Spring). Leadership matters: Teachers' roles in school decision making and school performance. *American Educator*, *42*(1), 13-17, 39.

Jenkins, J, Lock, L., & Lock, M. A. (2018). Leadership-A critical bridge to accountability. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin; Austin, 84*(3), 10-15.

Kahrs, J. R. (1996). Principals who support teacher leadership. In G. Moller, & M. Katzenmeyer (Eds.), *Every teacher as a leader: Redefining the potential of teacher leadership* (pp. 19-40). Jossey-Bass.

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2009). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Helping teachers develop as leaders*. Corwin Press.

Keedy, J. L. (1999). Examining teacher instructional leadership within the small group dynamics of collegial groups. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *15*(7), 785-799.

Khumalo, S. S. (2017). The role of transformational school leadership in promoting teacher commitment: An antecedent for sustainable development in South Africa. *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education*, *10*(2), 22-32.

Kilinç, A. Ç. (2014). Examining the relationship between teacher leadership and school climate. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, *14*(5), 1729–1742. https://doi-org.lmunet.idm.oclc.org/10.12738/estp.2014.5.2159

Killion, J. P. (1996). Moving beyond the school: Teacher leaders in the district office. In G. Moller, & M. Katzenmeyer (Eds.), *Every teacher as a leader: Realizing the potential of teacher leadership*. (pp. 63-84). Jossey-Bass.

Klein, E. J., Taylor, M., Munakata, M., Trabona, K., Rahman, Z., & McManus, J. (2018). Navagating teacher leaders' complex relationships using a distributed leadership framework. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 45*(2), 89-112.

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy*. Cambridge

Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in action: Applying modern principles of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice, 24*(1). 120-124. https//doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Lear, J., Godin, S., Werner, S., & Flamisch, M. (2015). Two-phase development of the instructional teacher leadership rating scale for building school capacity (ITLRSBSC): Model emergence through pervasive empirical grounding and mixed method evaluation design. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education, 5*(Special 2), 2523-2532. doi:10.20533/ijcdse.2042.6364.2015.0343

LeBlanc, P. R., & Shelton, M. M. (1997, Fall). Teacher leadership: The needs of teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, *19*(3), 32-48.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., Ryan, S., & Steinbach, R. (1997, March). Distributed

leadership in secondary schools. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the

American Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Liberman, A. (1992). Teacher leadership: What are we learning? In C. Livingston (Ed.),

Teachers as leaders: Evolving roles (pp. 159-165). Washington, DC: National

Education Association.

Liberman, A., & Miller, L. (1999). *Teachers—transforming their world and their work*.

Teachers College Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Little, J. W. (1988). Assessing the prospects for teacher leadership. In A. Lieberman

(Ed.), *building a professional culture in schools* (pp. 78-105). Teachers College

Press.

Little, J. W. (1995). Contested ground: The basis of teacher leadership in two

restructuring high schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, *96*(1), 47-63.

Little, J. W. (2003). Constructions of teacher leadership in three periods of policy and

reform activism. *School Leadership & Management*, *23*(4), 401-419.

Liu, S., & Hallinger, P. (2018). Principal instructional leadership, teacher self-effects

model. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(4), 501-528.

Lombardi, E., Traficante, D., Bettoni, R., Offredi, I., Giorgetti, M., & Vernice, M.

(2019). The impact of school climate on well-being experience and school

engagement: A study with high-school students. *Frontiers in Psychology,

10*(2482), 1-11.

Malatras, J., Gais, T., & Wagner, A. (2017). *A background on potential teacher shortages in the United States.* Rockefeller Institute of Government. https://rockinst.orgissue-area/background-potential-teacher-shortages-us/

Mangin, M. M., & Stoelinga, S. R. (2009). The future of instructional teacher leader roles. *The Educational Forum*, *74*(1), 49-62.

Margolis, J., & Huggins, K. S. (2012). Distributed but undefined: New teacher leader roles to change schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, *22*(5), 953-981.

Marzano, R. (2003). What works in schools: Translating research into action. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Mills, S., Huerta, J., Watt, K., & Martinez, J. (2014). Avid teacher leadership: Administrator and teacher perceptions of leadership attributes. *Journal of School Leadership*, *24*(1), 146-163.

Mitchell, A. (1997). Teacher identity: A key to increased collaboration. *Action in Teacher Education*, *19*(3), 1-14.

Moller, G., & Katzenmeyer, M. (1996). The promise of teacher leadership. In G. Moller, & M. Katzenmeyer (Eds.), *Every teacher as a leader: Realizing the potential of teacher leadership* (pp. 1-18). Jossey-Bass.

Muhammad, A. (2019). *Transforming school culture: How to overcome staff division* (2nd ed.). Solution Tree Press.

Mungal, A. S., & Sorenson, R. D. (2020). *Steps to success: What successful principals do every day.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Murphy, J. (Ed.). (1990). The educational reform movement of the 1980s: Perspectives and cases. McCutchan.

Murphy, J., & Beck, L.G. (1995). School-based management as school reform: Taking stock. Corwin Press.

Murphy, J. (2007). Teacher Leadership: Barriers and Supports. *International Handbook of School Effectiveness and Improvement Springer International Handbooks of Education,* 681-706. doi:10.1007/978-1-4020-5747-2_37

Nguyen, D., Harris, A., & Ng, D. (2019). A review of the empirical research on teacher leadership (2003-2017): Evidence, patterns and implications. *Journal of Educational Administration, 58*(1), 60-80.

Ni, Y., Yan, R., & Pounder, D. (2017). Collective leadership: Principals' decision influence and the supportive or inhibiting decision influence of other stakeholders. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(2), 216-248.

Odden, A., & Wallace, M. (2003). Leveraging teacher pay. *Education Week*, *22*(43), 6.

Odell, S. J. (1997). Preparing teachers for teacher leadership. *Action in Teacher Education*, *19*(3), 120-124.

Palmer, A. K. (2018). Teacher leaders are critical to improving English language arts instruction. *English Journal*, *107*(4), 10-12

Parlar, H., Cansoy, R., & Kılınç, A. Ç. (2017). Examining the relationship between teacher leadership culture and teacher professionalism: Quantitative study. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *5*(8), 13. doi:10.11114/jets.v5i8.2499

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

Porter, A. C., & Brophy, J. E. (1988). Good teaching: Insights from the work of the
Institute for Research on Teaching. *Educational Leadership, 45*(8), 75–84.

Prenger, R., & Schildkamp, K. (2018). Data-based decision making for teacher and
student learning: A psychological perspective on the role of the teacher.
Educational Psychology, 38(6), 734-752.

Preston, J. P., & Barnes, K. E. R. (2017). Successful leadership in rural schools:
Cultivating collaboration. *The Rural Educator, 38*(1), 6-15.

Probst, B., & Berenson, L. (2014). The double arrow : How qualitative social work
researchers use reflexivity. *Qualitative Social Work*, *13*(6), 813-827.

Rallis, S. F. (1990). Professional teachers and restructured schools: Leadership
challenges. In B. Mitchell, & L. L. Cunningham (Eds.), *Educational leadership in
changing contexts of families, communities, and schools* (Eighty-ninth Yearbook
of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II; pp. 184-209). Chicago:
National Society for the Study of Education.

Rallis, S. F., & Rossman, G. B. (2000). Dialogue for learning : Evaluator as critical
friend. In R. K. Hopson (ed.), *How and why language matters in evaluation*. New
Directions for Evaluation, No. 86, 81-92. Jossey-Bass.

Ramazan, C., & Hanifi, P. (2018). Examining the relationship between school principals'
instructional leadership behaviors, teacher self-efficacy, and collective teacher
efficacy. *The International Journal of Educational Management, (32*)4, 550-567.

Roberts, C., & Hyatt, L. (2019). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive
guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How Teacher Turnover Harms Student

    Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(1), 4-36.

    doi:10.3102/0002831212463813

Ronfeldt, M., Owens Farmer, S., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. A. (2015). Teacher

    collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American*

    Educational Research Journal, *52*(3), 475-514.

Schaap, H., & de Bruijn, E. (2018). Elements affecting the development of professional

    learning communities in schools. *Learning Environments Research*, *21*(1), 109-

    134.

Schultz, J. G. (1988). Developing theoretical models/conceptual frameworks in

    vocational education research. *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, *13*(3),

    29-43.

Sehgal, P., Ranjeet, N., & Mishra, S. K. (2017). Teacher effectiveness through self-

    efficacy, collaboration and principal leadership. *The International Journal of*

    Educational Management; Bradford, 31(4), 505-517.

Shaukat, A. R., & Sikandar, A. (2018). Impact of leadership style of teacher on the

    performance of students: An application of hersey and blanchard situational

    model. *Bulletin of Education and Research, 40*(3), 73.

Silva et al., (2000). Sliding the Doors: Locking and Unlocking Possibilities for Teacher

    Leadership. *Teachers College Record*, *102*(4), 779-804.

Sim, J., & Sharp, K. (1998). A critical appraisal of the role of triangulation in nursing

    research. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*. *35*, 23-31.

Smylie, M. A., & Brownlee-Conyers, J. (1992). Teacher leaders and their principals: Exploring the development of new working relationships. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *28*(2), 150-184.

Smylie, M. A. (1996). Research on teacher leadership: Assessing the state of the art. In B. J. Biddle, T. L. Good, & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), *International handbook of teachers and teaching* (pp. 521-592). Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Snell, J., & Swanson, J. (2000, April). The essential knowledge and skills of teacher leaders: A search for a conceptual framework. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Stahl, K. A. D. (2015). Using professional learning communities to bolster comprehension instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 68*(5), 327-333.

Stein, K. C., Macalusco, M., & Stanulis, R. N. (2016). The interplay between principal leadership and teacher leader efficacy. *Journal of School Leadership*, *26*, 1002-1032.

Stronge, J. H. (2018). Qualities of effective teachers (3rd ed.). ASCD.

Supovitz, J. A. (2002). Developing communities of instructional practice. *Teachers College Record*, *104*, 1591-1626.

Tager, M. (2020). Technology segregation: Disrupting racist frameworks in early childhood education. Lexington Books.

Teacher Leader Model Standards. (2011). Retrieved March 8, 2020, from www.nea.org/resource-library/teacher-leader-model-standards

Timor, T. (2019). How do interns from a teacher training program for academics in Israel perceive teacher-leadership? *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, *23*(3), 1-12.

Torres, A. C., Bulkley, K., & Kim, T. (2020). Shared leadership for learning in Denver's portfolio management model. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *56*(5), 819-855.

Troen, V., & Boles, K. (1994). Two teachers examine the power of teacher leadership. In D. R. Walling (Ed.), *Teachers as leaders: Perspectives on the professional development of teachers* (pp. 275-286). Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Voelkel, R. H., Jr. & Chrispeels, J. H. (2017). Within-school differences in professional learning community effectiveness: Implications for leadership. *Journal of School Leadership*, *27*(3), 424-451.

Wang, M., & Ho, D. (2020). A quest for teacher leadership in the twenty-first century-emerging themes for future research. *International Journal of Educational Management, 34*(2), 354-372.

Wasley, P. A. (1991). *Teachers who lead: The rhetoric of reform and realities of practice*. Teachers College Press.

Webb, N. (1997). Research monograph number 6: Criteria for alignment of expectations and assessments on mathematics and science education. CCSSO.

Weiner, J., & Higgins, J. (2017). Where the two shall meet: Exploring the relationship between teacher culture and student culture. *Journal of Education Change*, *18*(1), 21-48.

Wenner, J. A., & Campbell, T. (2017). The theoretical and empirical basis of teacher leadership: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *87*(1), 134-171.

Wieczorek, D., & Lear, J. (2018). Building the "bridge": Teacher leadership for learning

    and distributed organizational capacity for instructional improvement.

    International Journal of Teacher Leadership, 9(2), 22-24.

Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. G. (2009). *Research methods in education: An introduction.*

    Boston, Mass. etc. Pearson.

Will, M. (2018). In Tennessee, will teacher leadership lead to increased student

    achievement? *Education Week.* Retrieved from

    http://www.edweek.org/ew/contributors/madeline-will.html

Will, M. (2021, February 22). Teachers are stressed out, and it's causing some to quit.

    Education Week.

Wilson, A. (2016). From professional practice to practical leader: Teacher leadership in

    professional learning communities. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership,*

    7(2), 45-62.

Wise, A. E. (1989). Professional teaching : A new paradigm for the management of

    education. In T. S. Sergiovanni, & J. H. Moore (Eds.), *Schooling for tomorrow:*

    Directing reforms to issues that count (pp. 301-310). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Wright, S., Horn, S., & Sanders, W. (1997). Teacher and classroom context effects on

    student achievement: Implications for teacher evaluation. *Journal of Personnel*

    Evaluation in Education, *11*, 57-67.

Wynne, J. (2001, November). *Teachers as leaders in education reform*. ERIC

    Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education. (EDO-SP-2001-5).

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings

    from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(3), 255-

    316. doi:10.3102/00346543074003255

Appendix A

Research Information Sheet

Research Information Sheet

My name is Mark Herron, and I am a doctoral student at Lincoln Memorial University. My dissertation "Reflective Practice: A Qualitative Study of Teacher Leadership in Lincoln County" is a formative internal evaluation to discover the effectiveness of the Learning Leader program in Lincoln County.

I am doing a qualitative study in which I will conduct two-hour semi-structured focus group interviews with Learning Leaders at the elementary, middle, high , and alternative school levels. If you choose to participate in the interview process, neither you nor your school will be identified in my study. The information obtained during the survey and the interview will remain confidential, and will be kept in a secure location. Upon the completion of the study, any identifying data will be destroyed.

There is no compensation offered for participating in this study, and the risks in participating are minimal. My purpose in doing this study is to understand better what is working well in the Learning Leader program and what can be done to improve it. I would appreciate your consideration to participate in this study; however, your participation is strictly voluntary.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns you might have.

Sincerely,

Mark Herron
494 Beechwood Circle
Morristown, TN 37814
herronm@hcboe.net
(423) 587-3597

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Notice of Informed Consent
"Reflective Practice: A Qualitative Study of a Teacher Leadership Program"

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM
Lead Researcher:
Mark Herron, Doctoral Student
Department of Education
(423) 587-3597

Faculty Sponsor:
Dr. Shannon Collins
School of Education

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND TIME COMMITMENT:
This study will include approximately 48 participants for the focus group interview portion which will involve approximately two hours of your time.

PROCEDURES
The following procedures will occur:
- If you are identified as a participant, you will be interviewed and video recorded by the researcher. (This will take approximately two hours to complete.)

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS
Subject Benefits
As a participant, you may or may not benefit from participation in this study. The one possible benefit you may experience from participation in this study may include being able to expound on the research topic which may be therapeutic in nature.

Benefits to Others or Society
This study is designed to discover the perceptions of Learning Leaders regarding their involvement and their effectiveness in a district-wide teacher leader program.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION AND COSTS
Compensation for Participation
You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.
Costs
There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY
You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the researcher immediately**. The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Subject Identifiable Data
- All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.
- All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data.

Data Storage
All research data will be stored on one password protected laptop computer in which only the researcher has access. The video recordings will also be on one password protected laptop computer in which only the researcher has access, then transcribed and erased at the end of the study.

Data Access
The research team and authorized LMU personnel are guided by all HHS and FDA regulations concerning confidentiality and may have access to your study records to protect your safety and welfare. No information derived from this research project enables anyone other than the researcher to identify any single participant, will be used for any purposes other than this study and will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent. Research records provided to authorized, non-LMU entities will not contain identifiable information about you or about any other participant in this study. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you or any other participant in this study.
Data Retention
The researcher intends to keep the research data until the research is published and/or presented for three years after the completion of the study.

NEW FINDINGS

If, during the course of this study, significant new information becomes available that may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you by the researcher listed at the top of the form.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS*

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the researcher listed at the top of this form. If you are unable to reach the researcher listed at the top of this form and have general questions, or you have concerns or complaints about the research study, researcher, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Chair of the LMU IRB, Dr. Kay Paris at (423) 869-6323, or by email kay.paris@lmunet.edu, or in person at 312 Avery Hall, 6965 Cumberland Gap Parkway, Harrogate, TN 37752.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and have been given a copy of it to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with LMU or your quality of education provided to you by LMU. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask questions that you have about the study.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE FOR PARTICIPATION CONSENT

I have read and understand the information above, and I willingly give my consent to participate in this research study. I am 18 years of age or older. My electronic signature is legally binding. Please type your name, which will serve as your electronic signature, today's date, and the name of your school.

⊠ I Accept.
☐ I Decline.

_____
Name of Participant   Today's Date

_____
Name of School

_____   _____
Researcher Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of Researcher

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

(The following questions are a basic outline of how the interview will proceed; probes, however, will be used to uncover additional details.)

Responses are voluntary and anonymous.

First of all, thank you for taking your time to meet with me today and for agreeing to participate in this semi-structured interview. I would like to remind you that your responses are voluntary and anonymous. Before we begin, I need you to verify that this is your signature on the informed consent. I also want you to know that this interview will be digitally recorded and downloaded onto my personal computer which is password protected. Thank you. Let's begin.

1. How do you know what you're doing as a Learning Leader is successful or not?

2. Based on the objectives of the LCLL program, how would you define . . .
   a. positive change?
   b. learn at a high level?
   c. a highly effective team?
   d. solving complex problems collaboratively?

3. Describe how effectively you believe the Learning Leader program is working. Do you have examples of positive changes that occurred in which you were directly involved?

4. How would you describe your principal's support of your work as a Learning Leader?

5. Tell me about a time when you witnessed teachers' working together in their PLC to help students learn at a high level.

6. What is your relationship with your colleagues like now that you are a Learning Leader?

7. Give me an example of something you have seen in a PLC meeting that could be improved.

8. What resource(s) do you need (more of) to do a better or more effective job as a Learning Leader?

9. What else would you like to share with me that we have not already talked about during this interview?

That completes the semi-structured interview process. I thank you for agreeing to participate and for taking the time out of your day to meet with me.

Appendix D

Email to Prospective Focus Group Interviewees

April 14, 2021

Hello, Learning Leaders!

I appreciated having the opportunity to share with you all today a little about my doctoral research. I have scheduled focus group interviews to look at the work you have been doing as Learning Leaders, to see what you think is working well and what needs improvement, and to talk about resources you need to do the work to help students and colleagues succeed.

I have scheduled focus group interviews from 3:15 to 5:15 tomorrow, April 15th; Monday, April 19th; Tuesday, April 20th; and Wednesday, April 21st. If you would be available to participate during any of those times, please let me know. I will send you a consent form and a Google Meet link.

If you would like to participate but cannot meet with me during those times, please let me know. I plan to schedule interviews the following week as well.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you. Thank you in advance for your help!

Mark Herron