

**What strategies do principals in highly effective elementary schools utilize to foster teacher leadership, from both the principal and teacher leader perspective?**

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies used by elementary school principals, in highly effective schools, to foster teacher leadership. This study examined teacher leadership from both the principal and teacher perspective. Multiple case studies were conducted in the examination of three highly effective elementary schools. A qualitative inquiry method was used to examine the research questions related to the role of the principal. This research model allowed an opportunity to interview each principal and teacher in their own environment. Each interview was semi-structured and included a list of established questions that were asked in no pre-determined, allowing for open dialogue. This study found that the development of teacher leadership is carefully and thoughtfully designed in highly successful schools. In addition, the development of teacher leadership programs and opportunities and at the school district level were important in developing successful teacher leaders.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

In today's rapidly changing, highly rigorous schools, the principal's role encompasses many varied areas of responsibility. Effective leaders recognize that they cannot accomplish great things alone (DuFour & Marzano, 2011) and that they must partner with teacher leaders within their buildings to create high performing environments (Wallace Report, 2013). While the demands of the modern principal are almost impossible to meet (Danielson, 2007), the requirement is there for school principals to serve not only as the leaders of learning in their building but also as the leaders who develop teams delivering effective instruction in their buildings (Wallace Report, 2013).

In a study by Spillane et al. (2007), researchers found that 47% of principals perform administrative and instructional tasks with at least one other individual. Of those co-performed tasks, 37% involved the assistance of a classroom teacher with no formal leadership identification. In a later study, Spillane (2016) concluded that even when a principal made a decision, teacher leaders helped make that decision in one out of every three cases. The high involvement of teachers in decision-making may be because "teachers know firsthand what is needed to improve student learning" therefore "promoting and supporting teacher leadership is crucial to the success of any education reform effort" (Dozier, 2007, p. 85).

What holds principals back from sharing the many responsibilities that face them each day? Slater (2016) found that teachers expressed concern over principals who fear a loss of personal power and control. Fullan (1995) described the idea of the sole leader model (i.e., a principal attempting to guide the ship alone) as an outdated method and supported a more inclusive system that supported multiple levels of leadership, all directed at reshaping the culture of the school. Fullan (1985) concluded that by coming together and working as a supportive

team rather than as individuals, teacher leaders and principals could build a new collaborative culture within their school.

Curtis (2013) asserted that teacher leaders spread best practices, support teacher collaboration, and help with differentiation and content-specific issues. The concept of working collaboratively to accomplish a task is a common theme in schools today (DuFour & Marzano, 2011) and is critical for achieving and sustaining high performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Similarly, Angelle (2007) stated, “collaborative leaders recognize that in today’s schools, one person cannot adequately address the needs of all members of the school community. Empowering others to lead alongside the principal builds collegiality and shares opportunities for active participation in the improvement of the school” (p. 232).

Lambert (2002) defined leadership capacity as “broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership” (p. 38) and developed a list of several features that schools with high leadership capacity share. Included in this list are principals and teachers working together; a shared vision; shared knowledge to drive the direction of the school; strong involvement and collaboration across the school; reflection on progress; and a focus on student achievement. These features come together to create the roles and responsibilities which make up shared instructional leadership (Lambert, 2002). To go a step further, Harris and Muijs (2003) stated that through the redistribution of power and leadership, schools began “creating the condition in which people work together and learn together, where they construct and refine meaning leading to a shared purpose or set of goals” and that in turn “opens up the possibility for all teachers to become leaders at various times and suggests that leadership is a shared and collective endeavor that can engage the many rather than the few” (p. 2).

## **Statement of the Problem**

York-Barr and Duke (2004) found there to be many challenges to the success of teacher leadership initiatives within a school, unclear direction for teacher leadership programs, norms of isolation and individualism, changed relationships between teacher leaders and other teachers, role ambiguity, inadequate time for collaboration, inadequate communication among stakeholders, and lack of incentives.

Katzenmeyer and Moeller (2009) reported that “leaders within the school and policymakers outside the school influence the organizational structure. Instead of providing support for collaboration and professional community, schools’ structures often wall off teachers and parcel out their time, which contributes to professional distance” (p. 92). Teacher leadership opportunities are created by removing the barriers that limit a teachers’ influence on only their classroom and by creating leadership opportunities throughout the school (Woods, 2018). Those leadership opportunities that go beyond the common management variety roles to focus more on “instructional improvement and reform goals” (Margolis & Huggins, 2012, p. 968) depend upon a different set of knowledge and skills. In order to take on responsibilities such as observing other teachers, (and being observed) and helping facilitate teacher learning conversations, they are taking on the responsibilities of both teaching and leading (Margolis & Deuel, 2009) and as such, they need the full support of their principal.

Weiner (2011) found that while the relationships between principals and teacher leaders are important, it is unclear exactly “what these relationships look like in practice” (p.8). Mangin (2007) further stated that “little is known about the relationship between principals and teachers or how the principal may influence the effectiveness of teacher leadership roles” (p.320). Murphy (2005) stated that one way for the principal to improve the relationship with

the teacher is to include them in decision making. However, this change in decision making is often not easy an easy shift for the principal because of the traditional school structure and norms (Murphy, 2005).

The research on teacher leadership has established that roles for teacher leaders within a school, are “seldom well-defined” (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007, p. 9). Margolis & Huggins (2012) stated that this lack of clarity in teacher leadership often comes from changes in school leadership and often caused “misuse, underuse, and inefficient use” of teacher leaders (p.956). Do principals simply “regard teacher leaders as a source of extra help in a school that is strapped for human resources” (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007, p. 9) or do they find teacher leaders valuable and find meaningful ways to make them a part of the school culture while helping them develop as leaders? It is the leadership from the principal that affects the definition of the role a teacher leader will play within a school, as well as the teacher’s ability to perform those leadership roles (Margolis & Huggins, 2012).

The importance for the development of teacher leadership by the principal is well documented in the literature. Harris (2003) found that one of the many roles asked of a principal is the development of capital within the school and creation the conditions necessary to support that capital. In addition, Leithwood (2008) reported that developing people was one of the most important practices of successful educational leaders. Additional research has stated that the success of the teacher leadership and the level of support provided by the principal go hand-in-hand (Murphy, 2005). Despite the amount of research available on teacher leadership and principal support, “little research has been conducted on the kinds of conditions that promote support for teacher leaders” (Mangin, 2007, p. 347). Whether the principal is creating opportunities for teacher leadership, developing the relationship with the teacher leader or

defining the role of the teacher leader they play a very important part in supporting teacher leadership at their school. Using a multiple case study format, this study will investigate how Alabama's effective principals support teacher leadership.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Over the last several decades, researchers studied not only instructional leadership, but also various types of teacher leadership (i.e., transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and shared leadership) to define each theory and examine its impact on student learning (Hallinger, 2011). However, the discussion over how, using a specific theory, school leaders contribute to school improvement, is limited (Hallinger, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies used by elementary school Principals, in highly effective schools within the state of Alabama, to foster teacher leadership. Also, this study examined the strategies, as expressed by teacher leaders, used by principals to foster teacher leadership. Both principals' and teachers' responses determined these specific, or intentional, efforts of teacher leaders to make a difference (Woods, 2018). By including the perspective of the teacher, a clearer picture of the specific teacher leadership opportunities that were provided to the teacher by the principal. This helped determine the intentionality of teacher leadership opportunities provided by the principal, rather than just a broad vision or goal of the principal to create teacher leadership opportunities (Woods, 2018).

### **Research Questions**

The central research question of this study was: What strategies do principals in highly effective elementary schools utilize to foster teacher leadership, from both the principal and teacher leader perspective?

1. What strategies do principals say they use to foster teacher leadership in their high-performing elementary schools?
2. What strategies do teacher leaders say their principal uses to foster teacher leadership in their highly effective elementary school?
3. What elements do principals say exist in the school culture that facilitate/enhance teacher leadership?
4. What challenges exist that pose hindrances to the practice of teacher leadership, according to the teacher and the principal?

### **Significance of the Study**

The current organization in many schools creates a situation where the principal can only touch the lives of a limited number of people due to time and responsibility constraints (Katzenmeyer & Moeller, 2009). However, teacher leaders have the ability to collaborate with those principals who are overwhelmed and overburdened with the numerous requirements of their jobs and encourage and support other teachers as well as “influence practice and policies in their schools” in order to create an effective school environment (Katzenmeyer & Moeller, 2009, p. 33).

This study adds to the literature on effective leadership of high-performing schools as well as to the literature on teacher leadership by revealing the strategies that principals in these schools use to support their teacher leaders. Administrators at both the school and district level benefit from the findings of this research and can replicate the strategies identified to enhance teacher leadership in their schools. Additionally, the findings of both specific strategies and the roles and responsibilities used by effective principals can assist the faculty of educational leadership programs as they prepare future administrators for school leadership. Angelle (2007)

stated, “school cultures that support teacher leadership foster a high level of trust between teachers, principals, and the community” (p.6). This study determines, specifically, how effective principals create those conditions and supports administrators in finding roles that will grow teacher leaders.

### **Assumptions**

I made several assumptions in this research study. First, I assume that all participating principals have a desire to cultivate best practices and that they support the development of teacher leaders in their schools. Secondly, I assume that the results of the Alabama Education Report Card accurately present a school as high-performing through their criteria alone. The Alabama Education Report Card is appropriate for this study because it reports testing data from the previous school year and is unbiased toward any one school or school system. I also assume that the high-performing schools identified will be representative of other teachers working in high-performing school districts in other parts of the state and nation. Finally, I assume that the principals interviewed will be willing and able to accurately identify the strategies that they can use to foster teacher leadership and that the teachers will be truthful regarding their perceptions about their principal’s teacher leadership behavior without any leading questions.

### **Delimitations**

I interviewed a purposeful sample of three principals and six teachers identified by each principal as teacher leaders, in three urban elementary schools in Alabama. Based on the 2016-2017 school year Alabama Education Report Card data, I created a list of principals at high-performing schools. All observations and interviews took place in the fall of 2018. The study included only principal and teacher leaders who met the criteria of working in high-performing schools as identified by the Alabama Education Report Card.



## **Definition of Terms**

- Teacher Leader – the practice of collaborating with teaching peers to improve teaching strategies, learning practices, and engagement opportunities while maintaining professional responsibilities within the classroom.
- Distributed Leadership – “leadership that is shared within, between, and across organizations” (Harris et al., 2013, p. 440).
- Shared Leadership – dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals (Pierce & Conger, 2003).
- Democratic Leadership – participation and respect for all and expectations toward everyone as ethical beings (Wood, 2004).
- Parallel Leadership – the process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity (Crowther, 2009).
- High-Performing School – a school that demonstrates high achievement and high student growth.

## **Organization of the Study**

This research study includes five chapters that explore that strategies principals in highly effective elementary schools utilize to foster teacher leadership. Chapter one introduces that topic of the research study and provides a background of the topic as well as the purpose statement, research questions, significance of the study, assumptions, delimitations, and definition of terms. Chapter two provides a review of the literature focusing on teacher leadership and the principal’s role in fostering opportunities for teacher growth. Chapter two also examines high-performing school and teacher leadership capacity. Chapter three outlines

the methods and procedures undertaken in the study. Chapter four highlights the findings of the study and chapter five includes the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for professional practice in elementary schools.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

Effectively operating a school today is a job that encompasses a multitude of responsibilities. School Principals today need to be able to identify quality instruction, understand the curriculum, and provide support to the teacher (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). These expectations to run an effective school demands that these responsibilities not fall on the Principal alone. Not only is the one-leader model unrealistic, but it also does not take into account the considerable talents of other teachers (Lambert, 2002). Effective leaders recognize that they cannot accomplish great things alone (DuFour & Marzano, 2011) and realize that one of the many benefits of having teacher leaders is a reduction in the burden on the Principal (Nappi, 2014). Harris (2003) described one of the roles of a Principal as the role of developing human capital and creating a structure under which teachers can grow and develop.

In an earlier study, Sarason (1990) claimed that “the predictable failure of educational reform” rests, in large measure, on the existing power relationships in schools – relationships among teachers and administrators, parents, and students” (p. 37). These power relationships need not exist given the importance of leadership within a school. Harris & Muijs (2003) advocated for a “power re-distribution within a school” which shifts from “hierarchical control” to “peer control” in order to diffuse and distribute authority to teacher leaders (p. 8).

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Walstrom (2004) determined that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5). Therefore, finding and supporting teacher leaders within a staff has shown to have a positive effect on the school as a whole as “teacher leaders are potentially among the most influential leaders in schools” (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p.140). Not only are teacher leaders the most influential leaders in the school, but they are also the group that is closest to the

students, (Katzenmeyer & Moeller, 2009). Therefore, teachers are the group with the greatest opportunity to improve student learning.

This chapter reviews several areas in the literature to understand teacher leadership accurately, and how, by supporting teacher leadership, schools reap the benefits. First, the chapter provides a working definition of teacher leadership and the value it provides to a school followed by a discussion of models used by school principals to support the idea of teacher leadership. Next, this chapter discusses the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities provided to teacher leaders in a school setting as well as the barriers to teachers becoming effective leaders within a school. Also, the literature review defines high performing schools to determine expectations for school performance within each state in the study, the United States as a whole, and internationally. Finally, through the literature review, this chapter will explore how school administrators in high performing schools are providing opportunities to their teachers that might differ from their counterparts in lower performing school settings and how schools can sustain those opportunities to ensure continuous school improvement.

### **Teacher Leadership Defined**

This section provides a foundation for the stages in the development of Teacher Leadership and an analysis of the most popularly accepted definitions of teacher leadership. The chapter concludes with the working definition of teacher leadership used in this research paper. While the concept of a teacher leader may be easy to imagine, and has even become “embedded in the language and practice of educational improvement” (York-Barr and Duke, 2004, p.255), the definition from the international literature varies greatly with “overlapping and competing definitions of the term,” (Muijs & Harris, 2016, p 438) adding to the confusion over the exact meaning of a teacher leader.

Cangelosi (2009), a practicing administrator who worked to develop an effective leadership model within her school, defined a teacher leader as “one who exhibits a willingness to collaborate, promote an organizational vision in others and has a desire to change for the betterment of the organization” (p 20). York-Barr and Duke (2004) defined teacher leadership as the “process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (p. 287-288). Spillane (2006) defined leadership in schools as “activities tied to the core work of the organization that is designed by organizational members or that are understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices” (p.11). In considering both the expectations of the classroom and the important added role of leadership, Wenner and Campbell (2017) defined teacher leaders as “teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside the classroom” (p.140). Wenner and Campbell (2017) created a definition that grants all teachers the opportunity for leadership yet implied that teacher leaders go beyond their typical duties. Like Werner and Campbell, Danielson (2006) structured the term teacher leader around those who "continue to teach students" and inspired others to follow their lead in identifying opportunities or issues within their school and convincing others to join them in addressing those areas (p. 12).

To create a definition which incorporates the understanding that teacher leaders are first and foremost, teachers – as well as to ensure that the definition includes the importance of collaboration while committing to the real goal of any school – the researcher adopted the following definition, or working explanation of teacher leadership, for use throughout this research paper. Teacher leadership is the practice of collaborating with administrators and

teaching peers to improve teaching strategies, learning practices, and engagement opportunities while maintaining professional responsibilities within the classroom.

Table 1

*Definition of Teacher Leadership*

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Definition of Teacher Leadership</b>
Cangelosi (2009)	A teacher leader is “one who exhibits a willingness to collaborate, promote organizational vision in others, and has a desire to change for the betterment of the organization” (p 20).
York-Barr and Duke (2004)	Teacher leadership, the “process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (p. 287-288).
Spillane (2006)	Teacher leadership can be seen in the “activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members or that are understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices” (p.11).
Wenner and Campbell (2017)	Teacher leaders are “teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside the classroom” (p.140).
Working definition:	Teacher Leadership, the practice of collaborating with teaching peers to improve teaching strategies, learning practices, and engagement opportunities while maintaining professional responsibilities within the classroom.

**The Teacher Leader**

Researchers have documented the value of a teacher to a school and our society. However, the value that teacher leaders within a school provide in the form of strategies, support, and personal commitment has been less well-researched. In this section, current literature discusses research that supports the value of teacher leadership to provide a reason for continued support for teacher leadership.

No matter how teacher leadership is defined, it is commonly accepted that leadership from teachers is a valuable asset to schools. York-Barr and Duke (2004) contended that teacher

leaders hold the center most position in operation and function of both teachings and learning in a school setting. According to Dozier (2011), the promotion and support of teachers are crucial to any reform effort because teachers know firsthand what is needed to improve student learning.

Through professional conferences, university initiatives, and state standards, teacher leadership is gaining increased emphasis on how we ensure continued focus on this topic. In 2014, the National Education Association partnered with the Center for Teaching Quality and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to begin the Teacher Leadership Initiative. The keynote topic at the 2015 International Summit on the Teaching Profession was the United States initiative *Teach to Lead* (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Numerous university programs with certificates and endorsements in teacher leadership appear across the country. These teacher leadership programs are particularly important because while many teachers aspire for future administrative roles, many teacher leaders do not view leadership opportunities within a school as advancement opportunities. Instead, many teachers want to stay close to their students while taking on roles that affect decisions within the school (Katzenmeyer & Moeller, 2009).

Policy makers in Alabama, Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, and Ohio created the *Five State Teacher Leadership Consortium*, to advance teacher leadership by sharing curriculum and policy development. This example of a state partnership showed the willingness for cross-state collaboration on teacher leadership (Herzog & Abernathy, 2011). In both Arizona and Colorado, teacher leadership appears as a standard towards which teachers work in their professional growth (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Another example of a state that encouraged teachers to work towards leadership within their school or system is in North Carolina. Teacher preparation programs in North Carolina require a teacher leadership standard, and the state's teacher

evaluation instrument includes teacher leadership standards required of all teachers (<http://ncpublicschools.org/docs/effectiveness-model/ncess/standards/prof-teach-standards.pdf>).

Teacher leadership plays a vital role in the professional standards for school administrators. The 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders established a focus on promoting student success and well-being. Each standard is grounded in the current research and was designed to ensure that educational leaders are ready to take on the many challenges that face them in their schools every day. Two standards provided particular relevance to the development and support of teachers within a school.

- Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel. Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff. Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Six examines the practices necessary for developing professional capacity within a school in order to promote student success. Standard Seven supports the need to create professional learning communities within a school which helps teachers grow professionally. While each standard focuses on developing school leaders, these two standards focus on teacher development, and the responsibility the principal has in establishing a framework and a culture for future teacher leaders.

Professional organizations and researchers have made support available to schools by offering new methods of developing leadership capacity. One program, Creating Leaders to Accelerate School Success (CLASS) outlines four components, or stages, that school staff can



work through as a professional learning team over a two to three-year timeframe. Component One orients the participants to the program; Component Two nurtures teacher leadership capabilities; Component Three develops parallel leadership relationships and strategies; and Component Four builds the ability to sustain teacher leadership into the future (Crowther et al., 2009). The CLASS program takes a team through a series of exercises designed to challenge thinking, provide support, and develop professional learning capabilities for both the teachers and the administrative team (Crowther et al., 2009).

Danielson (2007) calls teaching a “flat profession” (p.15). In many professions, as years and experience increase, so do the responsibilities. In education, the responsibilities of a veteran teacher are often the same as a novice teacher. Many teachers choose to gain an advanced degree in administration and take that career path, but many others are not interested in that path – but still want to increase their influence over a larger population within the school or school system (Danielson, 2007). Warren (2015) developed four areas that support the understanding that teachers can be leaders without serving in the official role of administrator. Warren provides support in the first area through the idea that the earliest teachers served as both teacher and administrators. Only with the introduction of educational reforms within the United States have the roles of teacher and administrator been divided into two separate responsibilities. Warren identifies the second area as a teacher’s capacity to support and further education within a school.

Further, teachers share specific skills and traits of administrators, such as the ability to inspire, motivate and show integrity. Finally, it is the responsibility of teachers to deliver curriculum to their students. Pounder (1999) found that sharing leadership with teachers may be a critical exercise because it decreases teacher isolation and increases responsibility for the

common good of the school. By fostering, or allowing influence over and taking part in school-wide decisions, teachers create a higher motivation, increased trust and build a greater sense of community among staff members (Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008).

The literature on school leadership consistently supports that effective leaders provide an indirect, yet significant, influence on a school's ability to improve the achievement of its students (Fullan, 2001). Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001) affirmed that a large portion of the literature in this same area centers on the individual principal as the driving force in leadership, instead of collective action. Muijs and Harris (2016) contend that this may be because "schools as organizations remain largely unchanged, equating leadership with status, authority and position" (p. 437). Fullan (1993) made clear his belief that unless teachers can be allowed to help improve the conditions that surround their classroom they will have little hope of improving the learning taking place inside the classroom. Teachers must have the vision that extends beyond their classroom in order to realize that a student's experience within a school is more than just interaction with an individual teacher, and that depends on the "complex systems in place throughout the school and district." (Donaldson, 2007, p 17). Teacher leaders can have a positive impact in a variety of positions within a school, yet there is a lack of empirical research on just how this happens (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

### **The Principal**

The current literature on teacher leadership has offered a variety of strategies school administrators can use to divide the responsibilities needed to run a school organization effectively. Through an examination of the most commonly researched leadership methods in the literature, Gumus et al. (2018) found that "most of the systematic review studies on educational leadership included all types of educational leadership studies without paying special

attention to the leadership model” (p.26). Klar et al., (2016) described the distribution of responsibilities found in a school in the following terms: distributed leadership, collaborative, collective, democratic, participative and shared leadership. However, Harris et al. (2007) see all descriptors such as distributed leadership as a “convenient way of labeling all forms of shared leadership activity” (p. 338). Wenner and Campbell (2016) in a review of the literature on teacher leadership published since York-Barr and Duke conducted their examination on teacher leadership in 2004, identified the most commonly cited theories on teacher leadership. They found that the most commonly cited theories to be “distributed leadership, democratic or constructivist leadership, structure and agency, parallel leadership, transactional leadership, and communities of practice” (Wenner & Campbell, 2016, p. 148). This chapter further explores distributed leadership, shared leadership, democratic leadership, and parallel leadership to create a foundation supported by the current literature on teacher leadership.

Table 2

*Types of Leadership*

<b>Type of leadership:</b>	<b>Researcher(s):</b>	<b>Definition:</b>	<b>Application:</b>
<b>Distributed</b>	Harris; Muijs; DeFlammis; Leithwood; Klar; Spillane	Leadership that is shared within, between and across organizations (Harris, 2013)	Emphasis on leadership as practice (Spillane & Diamond, 2007)  Focus on interactions between participants rather than the actions assigned (Spillane, 2005)
<b>Shared</b>	Lambert; Katzenmeyer; Moller	Dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals. (Pierce and Conger (2003).	Teachers view the responsibility of the learning of colleagues as an important part of their responsibility (Lambert, 2002)
<b>Democratic</b>	Woods; Kensler; Mullen; Jones	Participation and respect for all and expectations toward everyone as ethical beings (Woods, 2004)	Widen inclusion; everyone should play a part (Woods, 2004) Strong support for continuous professional learning and continuous school improvement (Kensler, 2010)
<b>Parallel</b>	Crowther; Andrews	A process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity (Crowther, 2009)	IDEAS approach to school improvement. (Crowther and Andrews, 2003)

**Distributed leadership.** With the ever-increasing number of responsibilities required of a school administrator on a daily basis, principals are encouraged to distribute leadership to emerging leaders within their building. According to Harris et al. (2007), distributed leadership has become a commonly used term to encompass various forms of shared or collaborative leadership responsibility sharing practices. In a later publication, Harris et al. (2013) described distributed leadership as “leadership that is shared within, between and across organizations” (p.

440). This type of leadership “opens up the possibility for all teachers to become leaders at various times and suggests that leadership is a shared and collective endeavor that can engage the many rather than the few” (Harris & Muijs, 2003 p.2). Yukl (2002) described a simplistic way to understand distributed leadership, “Instead of a heroic leader who can perform all essential leadership functions, the functions are distributed among different members of the team or organization” (p.55). In a review of the literature on distributed leadership, Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) found core elements which separate distributed leadership from others. The first, an emphasis on leadership as practice, as opposed to leadership becoming a role or responsibility (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Harris (2013) added that distributed leadership focuses on the interactions between the participants rather than on the actions assigned. This idea of interactions or relationship is further supported by Spillane (2005) with the idea that “what matters ... is not that leadership is distributed, but how it is distributed” (p.149). Second, distributed leadership supports the theory that leadership is not just for those with situational power, rather a leadership can be widely shared (Harris, 2013). Harris (2016) further stated that distributed leadership supports the idea that individuals outside of formal leadership roles can share their influence and agency. The idea of distributing leadership within an organization, (educational or otherwise) is not a new idea. Bernard (1968) introduced the idea that leadership influence flows throughout all levels of an organization circulating both upwards and downwards, not just in a downward direction as might be assumed.

Distributing leadership responsibilities within a school building has become an increasingly popular method for school administrators to accomplish their ever-increasing required responsibilities (Klar et al., 2016). Klar et al. (2016) caution that, while distributed leadership has become a popular form of leadership, there is little evidence that it yields returns

in increased student achievement. Robinson (2009) and Mayrowetz (2008) support this statement, cautioning that while popular, distributed leadership has not been shown to lead to school improvement, as one would assume it would show. These findings are in contrast to research done by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) who found that by distributing a greater percentage of leadership responsibilities to teachers, there is a greater positive influence on teacher effectiveness and a greater positive effect on student engagement. Leithwood (2007) added that through distributed leadership both teacher and student morale improved. While current literature points to outcomes on both sides, research does not establish links between distributed leadership and student performance. The literature does show a positive relationship between distributed leadership and change in schools (Harris et al., 2007). Harris et al. (2007) highlighted the support in the research for the relationship between the involvement of teachers in the school decision-making process and the strong working relationships to school improvement and change.

Leithwood et al. (2007) conducted a study which determined that “the effects and impact of distributed leadership on organizational outcomes depends upon the pattern of leadership distribution.” Leithwood et al. categorized two important conditions necessary for distributed teacher leadership to be effective.

1. The leadership needs to be distributed to those who have or can develop the knowledge or expertise required to carry out the leadership tasks expected of them.
2. Effective distributed leadership needs to be coordinated, preferably in some planned way. (p.11)

Harris provided further support for the idea that an encouraging school culture helps develop teacher leaders by stating that distributed leadership shows the most success within an

organization when both structural and cultural barriers are removed. While distributed leadership among teachers may be desirable, leaders should take caution regarding the potential difficulties involved. Although formally appointed leaders do not automatically command respect and authority, teacher leaders may be particularly vulnerable to being disrespected and disregarded because they do not carry formal authority. On the other hand, the nomination of teacher leaders by colleagues may not realize potential expertise within the group because colleagues may select their leaders using other criteria, such as popularity (Timperley, 2005).

**Shared leadership.** Lambert (2002) explained that educators have for decades viewed the learning of all students within a school as the role of all teachers and have recently come to view their learning as a primary responsibility. However, we have been slow to see the responsibility for the learning of colleagues as an important part of a teacher's responsibility. Through the understanding that "learning and leading are firmly linked in the community, we take the first step in building shared instructional leadership capacity" (p. 37). Lambert framed three key points which lay the groundwork for the shift in thinking on who can learn and who can lead:

- Everyone has the right, responsibility, and ability to be a leader.
- How we define leadership influences how people will participate.
- Educators yearn to be more fully who they are – purposeful, professional human beings.

Leadership is an essential aspect of an educator's professional life (Lambert, 2002, p. 38). Shared leadership is a master skill which allows teams to function effectively (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). When teacher leaders share their methods and resources, model their teaching, and provide specific feedback to their colleagues, they "empower others to be as effective as possible

with their students” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009 p. 48). Shared leadership can take the form of “peer or lateral influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p.1).

Lambert (2002) identified several examples, which were provided to her by former principal students or educational colleagues, of ways that schools are incorporating and applying various methods of educator participation, or shared leadership.

- Study Groups: teacher groups are reading articles or books in order to challenge their thinking and move to new ways of thinking.
- Action Research Teams: identify a question of practice and research to discover ways to answer the question and lead new action steps.
- Vertical Learning Communities: multiple grade level groups in which teacher leaders are empowered to work with students to make guide instruction, curriculum design, discipline, and family engagement.
- Leadership Teams: teacher leadership teams meet with administration to analyze data in order to create school improvement plans. In one example the representatives are selected by the school staff in order to have representation from teachers (p. 39-40).

Lambert concluded by confirming that today’s effective principal establishes a shared vision with members of the school community and validates leadership in others.

**Democratic leadership.** Democratic Leadership is founded on the ideals of democracy as it “entails rights to meaningful participation and respect for and expectations toward everyone as ethical beings” (Woods, 2004, p. 4). This type of leadership builds upon the belief that “everyone, by their human status, should play a part in the democratic agency-at times a singular



leader; more often through a concrete agency which generates an additional dynamic through working together” (Woods, 2004, p.12).

Kensler (2010) presented the idea of democracy as a system within an organization based on five assumptions established by Merriam (1938). Merriam’s five assumptions are the basic requirements for the practice of democracy and include, “the constant drive toward the perfectibility of humanity; the essential dignity of each; each is worthy of participation; progress through consent rather than violence; and gains should be shared” (p. 39). Kensler explained Merriam’s assumptions as active systems that can exist as a process and individuals can apply in a community of association.

Kensler (2010) provided an example of this is a school setting by positioning schools within a democratic process, stating “more socially just learning environments will result from intentionally re-designing our educational systems to be better reflective of democratic communities or the associated practice of democracy in schools” (p.4). This example, applied to the educational setting, requires positional leaders to ask – “who are the agents of change in this situation and how can we include them in the leadership process?” This “unending aspiration to widen inclusion in the democratic rationalities” (Woods, 2004, p.12) is one way in which democratic leadership differentiates from the other forms of leadership.

Democratic leadership differentiates itself from other types of leadership in other ways. First, whereas democratic leadership stems from an activity or process where a person can initiate change with “others following, contributing and adding to or altering it in various ways” (Woods, 2004, p.6). These types of collaborative environments may take several forms within an organization or team structure, but there is not a lack of hierarchical control within the teams or workgroup. Also, this type of leadership structure may vary between the levels of control, (or

limits) the participants are permitted and may include or exclude certain groups within an organization (Woods, 2004). Also, Kensler et al. (2009) found that in environments where high-trust relationships exist, there is strong support for continuous professional learning and continuous school improvement.

**Parallel leadership.** A final leadership style commonly utilized in schools is parallel leadership. Crowther (2009) defined parallel leadership as “a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity” (p. 53). Crowther illustrates parallel leadership in three qualities, “mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression” (p.53). The advancement of professional learning communities, culture building as well as a whole school focus on teaching and learning are characteristics of parallel leadership (Andrews, 2008). Parallel leadership “makes possible the enhancement of school identity, teachers’ professional esteem, community support, and students’ achievements” (Andrews, 2008, p.49).

A method for school improvement developed by Crowther and Andrews (2003) incorporates the use of parallel leadership as a major component for school success. The IDEAS concept utilizes three facets that operate interdependently. A Researched Based Framework, (RBT) for Enhancing Schools, the ideas process and Parallel Leadership. Parallel Leadership in the IDEAS approach “engages teacher leaders and administrator leaders in collaborative action, while at the same time encouraging the fulfillment of their capabilities, aspirations, and responsibilities” (p.49). The collaboration of teachers in a professional learning community combined with school-wide ownership of teaching and learning is a leadership developing a relationship based on parallelism (Andrews, 2008).

## **Common Themes in Leadership Theories**

While the previous sections sought to highlight the contrasts across leadership styles, many similarities exist within the theories. Angelle (2007) provides a list of common themes that are shared by many of principal leadership:

- Empowering others in the organization
- Promoting a shared vision and communicating it to all stakeholders
- Structuring an organization that promotes collaboration
- Exhibiting high expectations for innovation and effectiveness
- Providing adequate resources
- Trusting, supporting, and caring for others and expecting trust, support, and care in return.

The points listed above provide a shared language that helps to link the four leadership theories outlined above distributed leadership, shared leadership, democratic leadership, and parallel leadership.

**Conditions that promote teacher leadership.** While teacher leadership is important in schools, it cannot flourish unless both administrators and peers support it within the building. Murphy (2005) reminds us that “traditional models of school organization cede power to the principal” (p.134). Therefore, if schools are to increase capacity for teacher leadership, principals and systems who seek this shift must “cultivate denser patterns of leadership in their schools, must learn to think about power differently and must be willing to share the playing field with a wider set of colleagues” (p. 134). Katzenmeyer and Moeller (2009) agree, explaining that the “quality of teacher leadership depends on the school culture,” which is greatly influenced by the school principal. The development of this new type of organizational structure "requires

principals to have an altogether different set of leadership skills that have previously been necessary" (Ash & Persall, 2000, p.15). Murphy (2005) goes a step further stating that a "personal transformation in leadership must accompany the quest to rebuild schooling to cultivate teacher leaders and efforts to nurture the growth of teacher leaders" (p132). This cultivation and growth of leaders require that schools and systems be thoughtful as to how they create a structure for leadership development. Yarger and Lee (1994) explained that "in the absences of conceptual frameworks for guiding program development and evaluation, teacher leadership programs will continue to be sporadic, idiosyncratic events" (p.235).

Through an examination of the literature on teacher leadership, three studies were commonly referenced in the literature (i.e., Danielson, 2007; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Murphy, 2005). These three studies revealed four common themes. Among these themes are creating a clear vision for the school and intentionally allowing teacher leaders to grow within a school; identifying and selecting teachers for leadership opportunities; making the work of teacher leaders legitimate and celebrated, and developing leadership skills through time and resources that help teacher leaders grow in their knowledge and skills. This section discusses these four areas in greater detail as a framework for promoting teacher leadership at the school level.

Table 3

*Common Themes in Leadership Theories*

Danielson (2007)	York-Barr & Duke (2004)	Murphy (2005)	Common Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A safe environment for taking risks</li> <li>• Administrators intentionally grow teachers to become leaders</li> <li>• The absence of the fear of being cut down by teaching peers</li> <li>• Teacher leaders have opportunities to learn leadership skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined student learning and school improvement goals.</li> <li>• How teacher leaders can contribute to accomplishing the school goals, need to be clearly defined</li> <li>• Teacher leadership skills <u>are equally matched</u> to the needed leadership functions.</li> <li>• The purpose of the work done by teacher leaders should be established and communicated, so roles are understood by participants and amongst the staff as a whole.</li> <li>• Time and resources allocated to growing teacher leadership skills</li> <li>• Time for reflection and feedback on task completion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crafting a vision and delineating expectations</li> <li>• Identifying and selecting teacher leaders and linking them to leadership opportunities</li> <li>• Legitimizing the work of teacher leaders.</li> <li>• Providing direct support.</li> <li>• Developing the leadership skill set of teacher leaders.</li> <li>• Managing the teacher leadership process at the school level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a clear vision for the school and intentionally allowing teacher leaders to grow within a school</li> <li>• Identifying and selecting teachers for leadership opportunities.</li> <li>• Making the work of teacher leaders legitimate and celebrated</li> <li>• Developing leadership skills through time and resources that help teacher leaders grow in their knowledge and skills.</li> </ul>

**Creating a clear vision and intentionally allowing teacher leaders to grow.** York-Barr and Duke (2004) maintain that the first stage in the process of developing teacher leadership in schools is the need for schools and districts to create and articulate clear goals for student learning and improvement. Once schools establish student learning goals, they can serve as a focus for resource distribution, (i.e., personnel resources which support teacher leaders). There are many positive aspects of having teacher leaders on staff. However, a common thread to developing teacher leaders is for the principal to become open-minded to giving up some of their perceived power and not see a teacher's influence or leadership qualities as a threat (Nappi, 2014). Research shows that it is not always easy for a principal to relinquish some of their power. Danielson (2007) found that some "administrators jealously guard their turf, apparently fearing that ambitious teacher leaders will somehow undermine their own authority" (p.19). However, Crowther's (2009) research found that "the encouragement of teacher leaders is a function that most school principals embrace enthusiastically because of its potential to contribute to the maturation of the teaching profession, to school capacity building, and to the effectiveness of their roles" (p.80). Murphy (2005) supported the goal for administrators to "broaden leadership structures" and "focus on connecting teachers to new or expanded roles" (p. 85) within their schools. "Principals can build support for a teacher leader's role by explaining its purpose, establishing qualifications and responsibilities, encouraging the applicant for the position, and running a fair selection process" (Johnson and Donaldson, 2007, p. 216). Also, if teacher leadership is to become established, principals need to become active in assisting teacher leaders in creating goals that result in authentic leadership opportunities (Murphy, 2005).

The issue of creating a common vision for teacher leaders can extend beyond the school level. In a study of five school districts, Mangin (2007) found that all five districts had

established a “common vision of the teacher leadership initiative, describing it as a means for helping teachers improve instruction” (p.334). Further, supervisors were able to list specific examples of the roles undertaken by teacher leaders listing “modeling (instruction), providing materials, and offering advice and information related to teaching” (p.334).

**Identifying and selecting teachers for leadership opportunities.** Faculty and staff within a school building can easily identify characteristics of a good leader, and most of the faculty and staff can identify the behaviors that made the leader effective (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). One of those characteristics is that the teacher leaders should be educators who are established and respected by their peers (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teachers who take on leadership roles may see a change in their professional relationships with other teachers due to the change from “primarily horizontal to somewhat hierarchical” responsibilities (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p 288). This idea is further supported in research conducted by Leithwood et al. (2007) which suggests that “the configuration of leadership distribution is important and that certain patterns of distribution have a positive effect upon organizational development and change” (p 312).

Klar et al. (2016) conducted a study that discovered how principals identified teacher leaders and how leaders distributed leadership roles within a school. Klar et al. (2016) found that of the six principals studied, some of the teacher leaders requested opportunities for leadership roles, some were actively pursuing administrative certification and requested a mentor, and others possessed the potential for leadership as determined by the principal. Klar et al. also found that in the instances where principals identified potential leaders, a relationship between principal and teacher already existed which opened a communication to determine the interest level and readiness of the teacher for future leadership roles.

Ash and Persall (2000) remind us that leadership is not role specific, reserved for a select few individuals within a school. In order to share those roles within a school, the principal should "fashion learning opportunities for the faculty and staff so they can develop into productive leaders" (Ash & Persall, 2000 p.16). Also, principals need to be "proactive in helping teachers acquire the skills they need" (Danielson, 2007, p. 19), so teachers are prepared when an opportunity arises.

**Making the work of teacher leaders legitimate.** The literature on teacher leadership suggests that "teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the ways schools operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 255). If teachers are to help schools operate effectively, then principals should "create a culture that honors teachers who step outside their traditional roles and take on leadership projects" (Danielson, 2007, p.19). Principals need to find ways to show that teacher leadership is valued or that the value of teacher leaders' contributions to the school is legitimate (Murphy, 2005). This culture of value begins with the relationship between teachers. Johnson and Donaldson (2007) supported the idea that the "success or failure of teacher leaders will depend on their relationships with their colleagues" (p. 216). Also, "teachers must see the principal's practices and priorities as reinforcing a new set of norms that promote collaborative work, bridge classroom boundaries, and recognize expertise" (p. 216).

Barth (2001) explained that one way that principals can make the work of teacher leaders legitimate is to make it authentic and specific to the talents of the teacher leader. Barth (2001) found that "principals who build a culture in which teacher leadership can flourish are more likely to match an important school issue with a teacher who feels passionately about the issue.



One teacher's passion may be fire safety: another's, the supply closet. Innovative solutions often come from teachers who do not know how to do something but want to learn" (p. 31).

**Developing leadership skills.** While many teachers appear to be ready for leadership roles, we cannot ask them to "assume leadership roles without any preparation or coaching, simply because they appear to know how to work with their colleagues" intuitively (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 44). Danielson (2007) states that while teachers can learn a necessary skill such as curriculum development, instructional support, assessment development, collaboration, and facilitation through school-based professional development, they also need to be supported by university and district professional learning opportunities. York-Barr and Duke (2004) suggest times for teacher leaders to receive feedback on their development as well as time to reflect on growth as a leader. Principals must set benchmarks of progress that are flexible in order to determine if teachers need to make adjustments to the plan (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The responsibility of creating opportunities for teacher leadership can become a partnership between the principal and the teacher leaders, however, continuing the practice can be hard when schools experience a change in personnel. Katzenmeyer and Moeller (2009) found that through their work with principals and school improvement those principals who learned with teachers about school reform were more likely to transfer their learning to professional improvements within their school. However, if those principals transferred to other schools, the initiatives created through teacher partnerships became the responsibility of the new principal, and those teacher leaders who had been co-learners with the former principal became "disillusioned and powerless to sustain their work" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p.75).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) recognized that while the responsibility of developing leadership capacity begins at the building level with the school principal, it is not their

responsibility alone. Superintendents and district staff can support teacher leadership by establishing policy and creating a district culture. Universities help to encourage teacher leadership by developing skills in teachers and by creating beliefs about the benefits of teacher leadership in the teachers themselves, “teachers must participate together as learners and leaders” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 48). Angelle (2007) explained that “principals cannot give empowerment to teachers. Principals can only create the environments and opportunities that lead to and support empowerment” (Angelle, 2007, p. 234). Once principals create those environments and opportunities, teacher leaders can seize the opportunities and find ways to support learning in their schools (Angelle, 2007).

### **Sustaining Teacher Leadership**

Current literature establishes the ability of a principal to create a structure for teacher leadership in their schools through strategic planning and inclusive practice but “little attention has been paid to leadership succession as a mechanism directly impacting school improvement, via the supply of talented individuals capable of acting strategically, given the position of the school on its own improvement journey” (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005, p 15). Lambert (2007) framed the concern over a lack of leadership in a different light viewing sustainability in schools as a function of leadership. In particular, “a high capacity leadership which demonstrates broad-based, skillful participation in leadership” (Lambert, 2007, p. 312). Fullan (2004) viewed the state of education as being in a critical juncture of sustaining and exceeding current gains while going further into more educational system reforms overall. Fullan (2004) supports the need for sustainable leadership or “system thinkers in action” (p.1). These system thinkers in action will work closely with their schools and at the same time help support the bigger picture through their connections to other parts of the system. These leaders will then “help develop other leaders with

similar characteristics” (p. 1). Fullan (2004) outlined eight elements which enable leaders to become better prepared to lead their organization towards sustainability.

1. Public service with a moral purpose: commitment to improving student achievement, treating people with respect and commitment to improving school and system.
2. Commitment to changing context at all levels: finding strategies that work for the school/community, LEA and system.
3. Lateral capacity-building through networks: sharing quality ideas through social interaction between peers.
4. New vertical co-dependent relationships: capacity building and accountability through self-evaluation.
5. Deep learning: the exchange of ideas and collaborative cultures of inquiry.
6. Dual commitment to short-term and long-term results.
7. Cyclical energizing: looking at short term, long term and plateaus in success.
8. The long lever of leadership: putting into place the first seven elements and having them simultaneously feeding on each other. (Fullan, 2004).

Lambert (2007) provided a list of characteristics for leadership framed around the idea of creating sustainable leadership within a school.

- Leadership is not a trait theory: leadership and leaders are not the same. Leadership can mean (and does mean in this context) the reciprocal learning process that enables participants to construct and negotiate meanings leading to a shared purpose of schooling.

- Leadership is about learning that leads to constructive change. Learning is among participants, and therefore much of it occurs collectively. Learning has a direction toward a shared purpose.
- Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader. Leading is skilled and complicated work that every member of the school community can learn. Democracy clearly defines the rights of individuals to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Leading is a shared endeavor, the foundation for the democratization of schools. School change is a collective endeavor: therefore, people do this most effectively in the presence of others. The learning journey must be shared; otherwise, shared purpose and action are never achieved.
- Leadership requires the redistribution of power and authority. Shared learning, purpose, action, and responsibility demand the realignment of power and authority. How leadership is defined will determine how people participate. If only those in formal roles are called leaders, others will not perceive themselves as leaders.

Lambert (2007) identified various types of Principal leadership traits. Reciprocal learning process (Parallel Leadership), collectively learning or sharing the responsibility for learning, (Shared Leadership), considering the rights of all individuals to participate and the redistribution of power and authority (Democratic Leadership) are all leadership traits found throughout the literature on teacher leadership.

When there is a foundation for the type of leadership that is needed, and there is a plan for the succession of the leader rather than the model of leadership that is “reactive, compliant, and managerial” (Hargreaves, 2005, p.172) succession has a greater chance of success.

Hargreaves (2005) further explained that by developing a leadership pool that is not just “deeper” but is also “wider” schools are better prepared for the succession of a leader. These “pools of growing talent” can be used when a future successor is needed (p. 172).

## **Teacher Leadership**

**Teacher leadership background.** Silva, Gimbert and Nolan, (2000) compiled a historical examination of the three different stages of teacher leadership. The first stage of teacher leadership consists of establishing roles for the teacher (i.e., department head, headteacher, master teacher, or union representative). While these were leadership roles, they were limited to ensuring the efficiency of the system, rather than on actual instructional leadership (p. 780). The second stage of teacher leadership formalized positions such as team leader, curriculum developer and staff development positions. These positions were a contrast to the typical management responsibilities and compared more to pedagogical responsibilities while still removed from leadership positions. The third stage of teacher leadership addressed the need to improve efficiency and effectiveness and allowed teachers to improve their professional practice. These expanded leadership roles for teachers encompass not only school managerial tasks but also the evaluating of educational initiatives and the leadership of professional learning communities (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). It is within this final stage that we see that “leadership is the professional work of everyone in the school” not the “one-person leadership [a model that] leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped” (Lambert, 2002, p .37).

**Teacher leadership roles.** While many states, universities, and professional organizations are making efforts to encourage and support teachers in developing as leaders, Herzog and Abernathy (2011) ask, “how can every teacher possibly be a leader” they further question, “if we try to make every teacher a leader, do we run the risk of watering down the

concept”. By examining the many ways in which teachers can show leadership in their schools, we are better able to answer these questions.

The research on teacher leadership is vast, yet the specific roles that teachers as leaders play within their school lack extensive research because their responsibilities within a school are so varied (Nappi, 2014). York-Barr and Duke (2004) state that the role of a teacher leader is often “ambiguous” and that the ability to succeed as a teacher leader is increased when the roles and expectations are “mutually shaped and negotiated by teacher leaders, their colleagues, and principals” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p 288). There are many areas within a school setting that provide leadership opportunities for teachers and provide a framework that supports the need to efficiently divide responsibilities in order to achieve a meaningful goal for the school. Below is a list of some of those opportunities:

- School-based: Grade-level/team leaders. Faculty Advisory Councils, School Advisory Councils, and Parent-Teacher Associations.
- Curriculum: Reading/literacy and math councils. This could be a vertical team meeting or one representative from a grade level to help align the spiraling of standards being taught.
- Professional development: determining the professional development needs within a school and carrying out the training with teachers.
- Code of Conduct Committees: committees could be formed to deal with bullying prevention, dress code, and so on.
- Social Committees: social committees established to organize different events for faculty members (Mullen & Jones, 2008).

Teacher leadership roles can vary from managerial aspects of leadership, such as selecting textbooks or budgeting for a department, instructional aspects of leadership, such as providing professional development for teachers, leading professional learning communities, and assisting new teachers (Nappi, 2014). Curtis (2013) adds that not only do teacher leaders encourage professional learning; they also spread best practices, support teacher collaboration, offer assistance with differentiation and content-specific issues. Teacher leadership roles vary from assisting administrators in managing the operations of the school facility to teacher evaluation or taking the lead role in creating and facilitating professional learning communities (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Danielson (2007) categorized the roles of teacher leaders in an educational setting into three main areas: within the department or team, across the school, and beyond the school. Leadership within a department or team may require that the teacher has established or created, trust with colleagues. Examples of team leadership may occur in examining student performance or data or conducting an observation of another teacher in order to provide constructive advice. School leadership may come in the form of creating school-wide schedules, leading a discussion on grading policies, or taking on a school-wide team or a program as a school play or club. Teachers who demonstrate leadership beyond the school participate on system or state level committees providing input or presenting material (Danielson, 2007).

Another way of categorizing the roles teachers play in a school is by examining the fundamental types of roles they perform within a school; formal and informal. Many teachers view formal leadership functions as those requiring more responsibility. Formal functions could include subject coordinator or the head of the department, or responsibilities that require a change out of the traditional classroom setting (Ash & Persall, 2000; Gehrke, 1991) and might be

positions that are applied for and chosen through a selection process (Danielson, 2007). In comparison, an informal role taken on by a teacher might include planning, communicating goals, regulating activities, or creating a pleasant workplace environment (Berliner, 1983). These roles might also emerge “spontaneously and organically from the teacher ranks” (Danielson, 2007, p.16) and might not be roles assigned, but rather they are performed to support the school needs. Angelle, (2007) similarly differentiated the roles stating that informal roles encompass classroom-related functions such as planning, communicating goals, and regulating activities, while formal roles entail specific positions, including department head or subject coordinator – positions that remove the leader from the classroom” (p. 235).

In their article, “Ten Roles for Teacher Leaders”, Harrison and Killion (2007) provided a sample of the ways teachers contribute to a successful school in both formal and informal roles.

1. Resource Provider
2. Instructional Specialist
3. Curriculum Specialist
4. Classroom Supporter
5. Learning Facilitator
6. Mentor
7. School Leader
8. Data Coach
9. Catalyst for Change
10. Learner

A study conducted by Lowery-Moore et al. (2016) in which teachers participating in a master’s level teacher leadership program provided feedback following completion of the



program attempted to identify themes in their feelings on their growth as change agents. One of those findings reported that the majority of the students in the program stated that they “did not want to move into formal administrative roles, but instead, they sought to lead from inside the classroom and be change agents as more knowledgeable teachers” (Lowery-Moore et al., 2016, p.14). Katzenmeyer and Moeller (2001) categorized teacher leadership into three groups, all of which are examples of leadership seen from within the classroom.

- The leadership of students or other teachers: facilitator, coach, mentor, trainer, curriculum specialist, study group leader.
- The leadership of operational tasks: keeping the school organized and moving towards its goals through roles such as the head of the department, action researcher, member of task forces.
- Leadership through decision-making or partnership: membership of school improvement teams, membership of committees; instigator of partnerships with business, higher education institutions, LEAs, and parent-teacher associations.

A similar analysis of the roles undertaken on by teachers taking on a leadership role presented by Day and Harris (2003) places the responsibilities into four dimensions.

1. Brokering role: teachers transferring the principles of effective school improvement and implement them in their classroom.
2. Participative leadership: teachers work with peers to form school improvement efforts and take the lead in guiding the initiatives.
3. Mediating role: teachers utilizing additional resources and expertise as well as outside assistance.

4. Relationships role: forming relationships with others where mutual learning will take place.

It is the final dimension that Day and Harris see as the most important as it is this area where mutual learning takes place.

Barth (2001) lists four paths that are available to teachers that vary from the traditional roles taken on by teacher leaders:

1. Lead by following: support the efforts of a teacher who is taking on a leadership role.
2. Join the team: if there is a committee, join it. Groups offer many perspectives that often lead to new and better ideas.
3. Lead alone: conceal attempts to improve your school until success is certain.
4. Lead by example: take the risk to let your example influence others.

There are numerous examples of teacher leadership within a school yet Ash and Persall (2000) remind us that it is not only outside the classroom that leadership takes place. Teachers who collaborate in order to strengthen teaching abilities, create meaningful activities together and participate in school-based action research are all taking on leadership roles and responsibilities.

**Barriers to teacher leadership.** The responsibilities given to teacher leaders within a school need to have value rather than just being a placeholder for meaningless responsibilities. In a study conducted by Mullen and Jones (2008) both teachers and administrators at the same school were asked to create a list of committees at their school. The list provided by teachers was longer than the administrator list. When shown the list, principals admitted to having “forgotten about that committee” (Mullen & Jones, 2008, p .333) which showed a lack of appreciation from the school leader for the contributions of their teachers. Johnson and Donaldson (2011) further

support the concern that there is often an inability to define the role of the teacher leader by principals who often see the role as an extra source of help in a school needing additional human capital. The value and appreciation for the role are vital in supporting teacher leaders. Gigante and Firestone (2008) documented that “they [teacher leaders] want to know that administrators understand the teacher leader role and find it important” (p. 323).

Barth (2001) cites four impediments to teachers developing as leaders within their school. The first is having a plate that is too full. In education, teachers are responsible for so many things; teacher leadership tends to be an addition that some teachers are not able to add to their already full agenda. The second reason, limited amounts of time. With only so many hours in the school day and with responsibilities outside of the school wall there “simply is not enough time to do it all, let alone do it all well” (Barth, 2001, p.447). The Third reason, the increased responsibility, and expectations of standardized testing that consume planning responsibilities and limit professional development for teacher leaders. The final, and greatest obstacle facing potential leaders provided by Barth (2001) is the insecurity of accepting leadership responsibilities and often to follow a leader who does not have formal authority. Barth (2001) describes many of the relationships among teachers as primitive and states that while many school faculties are congenial, a limit number of them would describe themselves as collegial.

Barriers to leadership exist in many settings, therefore, “teachers must be willing to take power and leadership when it is offered to them. Teachers must also be willing to cross the invisible boundaries from follower to leader” (Angelle, 2007, p.232) (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) offer suggestions to overcoming the barriers to teacher leadership, first, by examining the structure of the school and school system and finding a way to shift a teacher in isolation structure. Another way is for teachers to begin to look beyond their classroom of students to a

broader view of the entire school and they should seize opportunities and assume new responsibilities within the school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

A major barrier that teacher leaders often encounter is the barrier created by others within their school. This barrier often occurs when a teacher leader is asked to observe a peer in order to provide instructional support, (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Johnson and Donaldson (2007) found that “colleagues often resist these teacher leaders’ work because they see it as an inappropriate intrusion into their instructional space, an unwanted claim that the teacher leader is more expert than they, and an unjustified promotion of a relative novice to a leadership role” (p.213). Principals can help reduce the barriers to teacher leadership by anticipating the “resistance that teacher leaders might encounter from colleagues and help them broker the relationships they would need to do their work” (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007, p.216).

While the principal is often the provider of support for teacher leadership in schools, Barth (2001) found that the principal can also become an obstacle to a teacher’s aspiration for leadership. Worries such as letting go of power they have worked hard to obtain, understanding that the work of others is still a responsibility that the principal will be held accountable for, and a concern over the time and effort needed to train a teacher leader are all reasons a principal might have second thoughts before utilizing teacher leaders (Barth, 2001).

Harris and Muijs (2003) categorized the barriers to teacher leadership into two areas, organizational barriers, and professional barriers. Several barriers identified in the literature appear in the table below.

Table 4

*Barriers to Teacher Leadership*

<b>Organizational Barriers:</b>	<b>Professional Barriers:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal as barrier (Katzenmeyer &amp; Moller, 2001)</li> <li>• Insecurity to follow the leader without formal authority (Barth, 2001)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of being isolated or ostracized by peers (Lieberman et al., 2000; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2000)</li> <li>• The feeling of being less connected to teaching peers (Troen and Boles (1992)</li> <li>• The plate is too full (Barth, 2001)</li> <li>• A limited amount of time (Barth, 2001)</li> <li>• Increased responsibility (Barth, 2001)</li> </ul>

**Highly Effective Schools**

While the term highly effective is prevalent in educational literature, what quantifies a highly effective school varies from state to state as well as in national rankings. Current literature examines “what constitutes a high performing school” to create a common understanding of what factors contribute to our belief that a particular school is performing above other schools.

In 2015, President Barack Obama and members of Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA makes a shift from high stakes standardized testing and federal regulations but holds on to accountability for student populations often overlooked. The ESSA gives each state greater autonomy in determining how they determine the effectiveness of their schools. Each state must incorporate test scores, graduation rates, and a factor that measures school quality or student success like school climate or achievement in advanced coursework (<http://www.edweek.org/ev/articles/2017/01/04/tricky-balance-in-shifting-from-essa-blueprint.html?intc=EW-QC17-LFTNAV>).

The National Blue Ribbon School Award is given each year to nominated schools across the country for excellence in education. The Chief State School Officer defines Exemplary High Performing Schools using the minimum requirements below:

1. The school must be in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state when schools in both reading and math.
2. For each subgroup, must be in the top 40 percent of all schools in the state when ranked in reading and math.
3. For high schools, the school must be in the top 15 percent of all high schools in the state when high schools are ranked for the year (<http://www2.ed.gov/print/programs/nclbbrs/eligibility.html>).

In Alabama, (the state that will be used to select elementary schools for the interview portion of the study) schools are graded on an A – F scale. Schools are given points in four areas:

1. Learning Gains based on individual students who demonstrate improvement in both reading and math.
2. Student Achievement based on the percentage of proficient students in both reading and math.
3. Graduation Rate based on the percentage of high school students who graduate within 4 or 5 years of first entering the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
4. Local Indicator determined based on one indicator tied to student outcomes.

Based on the total points obtained, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALDOE) awards each school a letter grade. The ALDOE also posts this information on their website (<http://www.alsde.edu/accountability/atof>).

In a report crafted by the state of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instructions (OSPI) reviewing the literature in the field of school improvement with a focus on elementary schools with students who performed at a higher level than their peers serving a

similar student demographic. Through their review, the OSPI researchers created nine characteristics most common to high performing schools.

1. Clear and shared focus: Everybody knows where they are going and why.
2. High Standards and expectations for all students: Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet standards.
3. Effective school leadership: Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change process.
4. High levels of collaboration and communication: There is strong teamwork among teachers across all grades and with other staff.
5. Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with state standards: The planned and actual curriculum are aligned with the essential academic learning requirements.
6. Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching: A steady cycle of different assessments identify students who need help.
7. Focused professional development: A strong emphasis is placed on training staff in areas of most need.
8. A supportive learning environment: The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment.
9. High levels of family and community involvement: There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just teachers and school staff.

In addition to the report on findings of highly effective schools, the OSPI report includes staff, student and community surveys which serve as a resource for schools to use in assessing their effectiveness (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 24).

## **High Capacity for Teacher Leadership in Schools**

To identify schools that meet the criteria of high performing schools, it is important also to examine the characteristics of schools which have a high capacity for teacher leadership.

Lambert (2007) compiled a list of characteristics that help categorize schools with a high capacity for leadership.

- Principal and teachers, as well as a significant number of parents and students, are becoming skillful leaders.
- Shared vision produces program coherence
- Inquiry-based use of information
- Roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility.
- Reflective practice leads to innovation.
- Student achievement is high or improving steadily.

Lambert (2007) stated that “high leadership capacity schools either have achieved or are in the process of achieving remarkable student achievement” (p.313). Schools measure student achievement in a much broader sense than just through test scores. Student achievement includes test scores but also includes portfolios, exhibits, self-knowledge and social maturity (Lambert, 2007).

In 2006, the Mountain Brook School District, a highly effective school system within the state of Alabama based on the Alabama State Report Card, established a program to focus on preparing teachers for leadership roles in their current capacity, as well as in the future job responsibilities. The “Teachers as Leaders” program created a year-long cohort of teachers who participated in a variety of professional learning experiences. When evaluated, the program



yielded highly favorable results from its participants when those participants participated in programs that helped them see themselves in a variety of leadership roles. Those teachers who participated in the program went on to take on many new leadership responsibilities. Several went on to become National Board Certified Teachers; others became mentors to new teachers, chairpersons of professional learning community committees or student teacher supervisors. Also, one participant went on to become a staff development specialist, two for statewide curriculum committees and one became an assistant principal (Searby & Shaddix, 2008).

Mullen and Graves (2000) defined extraordinary principals as those principals who not only involve teachers in the decision-making process but work with teachers to create an environment that supports and inspires teachers to examine their teaching and school practices and encourage them to experiment with new ideas and teaching methods. In a later study, Mullen and Jones (2008) interviewed both administrative leaders and teachers in high performing schools, (schools making a school grade of A as assessed by the Florida Department of Education in 2005). They determined that the support systems that enable the development of teachers as leaders focus on the value and commitment as well as the tone and style of their principal through their:

1. creation of leadership opportunities or committees as conduits for teacher leadership development (i.e., curriculum and professional development);
2. solicitation of teacher input into critical decision making and for all important school matter; and
3. modeling as good communicators who are readily accessible, and who treat teachers as professionals while setting high expectations for performance and achievement.

(Mullen & Jones, 2008, p. 337).

Lambert (2007) defined high leadership capacity in schools as those schools with broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership. Lambert juxtapositions high leadership capacity schools against low leadership capacity schools through an examination of participation patterns in leadership.

#### High Leadership Capacity Schools:

- Principal and teachers, as well as a significant number of parents and students, are becoming skillful leaders
- Shared vision produces program coherence
- Inquiry-based use of information
- Roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility
- Reflective practice leads to innovation
- Student achievement is high or improving

#### Low Leadership Capacity Schools:

- The principal is an autocratic manager, monopolizing decisions for him or herself
- Programs are fragmented and lack coherence.
- Principal and key teachers serve as a skillful leadership team.

Mangin (2007) conducted a study in which he categorized principal support for teacher leadership into three types – high, moderate, and low – based on their levels of knowledge and interactions with teacher leaders. Those principals who were in the highly supportive category were found to excel in two specific areas, they provided support for teacher leaders, communicating an expectation of instructional improvement while “describing teacher leaders as a useful instructional resource” and they communicated an “expectation that teachers would

interact with (their) teacher leaders” (p. 344). In comparison, those principals with low support reported “minimal interaction” (with teacher leaders) and “conveyed disinterest in the position, expressing an unapologetic lack of knowledge and a preference to stay uninvolved” (with teacher leaders) (p. 346). In a separate study, Barth (2001) found that principals that were more secure (possessing a stronger ability) were more likely to share leadership responsibilities than their weaker peers.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented an overview of teacher leadership through a review of the current leadership. Additionally, this chapter included an overview of the foundation and types of leadership models used by principals to promote teacher leadership. Within this overview, the literature points to the specific methods used by principals to promote teacher leadership in their schools. This literature review examined the various definitions of teacher leadership before presenting a working definition of teacher leadership for use in this study. This chapter also provided an outline of the roles in which teacher leaders work and the barriers that limit teacher leaders within the school. Finally, this chapter identified the qualities of schools with high leadership capacity to help lay the foundation for the selection of study participants.

### **Chapter III: Methods**

The mission statements of schools across the nation include broad goals to deliver quality academic instruction, support character development, and provide a safe and nurturing environment. With so much to accomplish, schools cannot meet these goals with only the leadership of the school principal. To lead their schools, principals need a team of leaders providing quality instruction, character development, and a safe school environment each day. Those leaders need to have a voice within their school and need to be able to share their ideas for improving conditions for students across the school. The leaders come from those who are closest to the issues on a day-to-day basis – from teacher leaders serving students daily.

Teacher leadership needs support to be beneficial to the school. This support needs to come directly from the school principal. The amount of support provided by a principal is directly related to how effective a teacher leader can be outside of their classroom (Murphy, 2005). The support for teacher leadership by the school principal is widely understood to be a crucial variable in the overall success of the school (Cheng & Szeto, 2016). While the value of teacher leadership is well-known, the specific supportive conditions provided by principals to teacher leaders is not (Mangrin, 2007). Additionally, according to Cheng and Szeto (2016), a neglected portion of the literature is the teacher perspective on the development of their teacher leadership potential. To better understand how principals support teacher leadership at the school level, a qualitative inquiry identifying the methods and strategies of principals in highly effective schools is needed.

#### **Research Methods**

A qualitative inquiry method is used to examine the research questions related to the role of the principal because it was necessary “to understand how people [principals and teachers]

interpret their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5) and because of the need to “provide rich insight into human behavior” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). The case study method of qualitative inquiry is used to achieve an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system [principals and teachers in highly-effective schools]” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The qualitative research model provided the opportunity to develop a relationship with each participant within their environment as well as allowed subjects the opportunity to share their story (Creswell, 2013). Each interview was semi-structured and included a list of established questions with no pre-determined order allowing for open dialogue and emergent design (Merriam, 1998). I used a multiple case study design because the study contained three cases. While each of the three schools was separate, the study as a whole covers several schools and therefore required a multiple-case design” (Yin, 2003).

### **Research Design**

I gathered data for this study in the state of Alabama following approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board. I interviewed principals and teachers in high-performing schools. I based the conceptual framework for this study design on current literature in the field of teacher leadership. Further, I used a semi-structured life world interview protocol for “obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 3). The semi-structured method was the most appropriate because the subject's experiences within the theme of teacher leadership were very important to the study. In the semi-structured interviews, I used pre-determined questions with prepared follow up questions and conversational questions as needed. Additionally, I

completed a walk-through of each school to get a feel for the school setting and the culture of each elementary school.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question of this study is: What strategies do principals in highly effective elementary school utilize to foster teacher leadership, from both the principal and teacher leader perspective? Four additional sub questions were used to guide the study:

1. What strategies do principals say they use to foster teacher leadership in their high-performing elementary schools?
2. What strategies do teacher leaders say their principal uses to foster teacher leadership in their highly effective elementary school?
3. What elements exist in the school culture that facilitate/enhance teacher leadership?
4. What challenges exist that pose hindrances to the practice of teacher leadership, according to the teacher and the principal?

### **Participants**

The participants for this study consisted of principals and teachers of high performing school in Alabama. I used data from the Alabama State Department of Education Report Card to identify high-performing schools along with personnel information reported by each system to identify schools that met the criteria for this study. To be included in this study, each school must have:

1. An overall school system score of 90% or higher on the 2017-2018 Alabama State Department of Education Report Card.
2. An individual school score of 90% or higher on the 2017-2018 Alabama State Department of Education Report Card.

3. A principal that has worked in their current position for three or more school years.

The Alabama State Department of Education uses six accountability indicators to create an overall grade for each school system. Those accountability indicators include academic achievement, academic growth, graduation rate, college and career readiness, chronic absenteeism and progress in English language proficiency. The Alabama State Department of Education grades all elementary schools on three accountability indicators which include academic achievement, academic growth and chronic absenteeism.

I began by identifying school systems who met the criteria. Once systems were identified, I reached out to seven of the eight Assistant Superintendents of the identified school systems. I currently work in one of the eight identified school systems and chose to not conduct my study in the school system where I work. I communicated the criteria for my study to the Assistant Superintendent of each system and asked for their approval to reach out to the schools in their system that met the individual school criteria, the criteria for the school principal as well as a request to interview teachers in their system. The communication was clear in the intent of the study, the number of principal and teacher leader participants requested, the amount of time each interview was anticipated to take, and the method of reporting findings. From that communication, I heard back from five of the seven Assistant Superintendents. One of systems did not have principals who had been in their current roles three or more years and one of the systems had a retiring principal and a principal who was making changes during the summer that their Assistant Superintendent felt would not make them eligible to participate in my study. Three of the systems met the criteria for the study and were willing to allow me to reach out to individual schools. I then reached out to the schools within those three systems. I received communication back from three schools and those three schools were selected for my study. The

principal of each school was asked to select two teachers on their staff that they felt served as teacher leaders. The three principals and each of their two teacher leader selections made up the nine interview participants for this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies used by elementary school principals, in highly effective schools within the state of Alabama, to foster teacher leadership. Also, this study examined the strategies, as expressed by teacher leaders, used by principals to foster teacher leadership. Both principals' and teachers' responses determined these specific, or intentional, efforts of teacher leaders to make a difference (Woods, 2018). The inclusion of the teacher perspective provided the specific teacher leadership opportunities that were needed for intentionality to turn into action rather than the just the broader vision or goal of the principal to create teacher leadership opportunities (Woods, 2018).

### **Data Collection**

I collected data through face-to-face interviews with three elementary school principals and six elementary school teachers in the state of Alabama. I used open-ended questions to allow "multiple perspectives to emerge from participants" (Creswell, 2016, p. 97). This semi-structured method allowed for planned questions and follow-up questions based on the direction of the interview. I gathered additional data from a walk-through of each elementary school to observe "specific incidents" and "behaviors" (Merriam, 2009, p. 119) and create field notes. I did not use recording devices during observations but did make anecdotal notes following each visit, as suggested by Merriam (2009) that were highly descriptive. These notes provided details of "the participants, the setting, the activities or behaviors of the participants, and what the observer does" (Merriam, 2009, p. 130).



Each principal interview was done in their office, located just off the main office at the front of the school. The average length of each principal interview was forty minutes. Each teacher interview was conducted in a conference room located in the front office, with the exception of one interview, which was conducted in the teacher's classroom. The average length of each teacher interview was thirty-one minutes. I made an audio recording of each interview to ensure the accurate capture of all information.

### **Data Analysis**

Each audio recording was transcribed using a transcription service. I then coded each transcribed document using the *in vivo* coding method using phrases and ideas from the statements made by each of the participants (Saldana, 2016). I applied this method to “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldana, 2016, p. 106). I then organized these codes into themes. Research questions and the interview questions from each principal and teacher interview were organized into a matrix, (Appendix A). Using inductive analysis, I began to make generalizations and draw conclusions from the coded data as well as from the emergent themes and site observation field notes.

In order to incorporate multiple methods of data collection, I employed a triangulation strategy because triangulation, “is a powerful strategy for increasing the credibility or internal validity of your research” (Merriam, 2016, p. 245). I first analyzed the data on high performing schools from the information available from the Alabama State Report Card and created a list of schools that qualified under the set guidelines. I then conducted interviews and analyzed the findings from each principal and teacher interview and finally I gathered observation notes of each school building selected for participation in my study. This method of cross-checking state

report card data, interviews and observation notes proved to be a successful way to determine the validity of all of the collected data.

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

I used several strategies to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of data. The first strategy is evident in the development of the interview questions. I developed questions for both the principal and the teacher interviews by examining the literature in the field of teacher leadership. The second strategy is the implementation of participant validation. Participants were asked to read over the transcribed interview transcripts to ensure accuracy.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations were noted during the course of this study. This study utilized data from the 2017-2018 school year. This data, while accurate in identifying the intended population at the time this study began, is now several years old. School data is reported each year so the qualifying schools for this study may change if new school data were used. It is also noted that there was a lack of racial diversity in the interviewed population from both principals and teachers and that the list of interviewees was mostly veteran teachers, with only one teacher working less than ten years in education. Had more racial diversity and a less experienced population been interviewed, different ideas may have surfaced during the interviews. It is also noted that the majority of teacher leadership opportunities that were listed by teachers centered around serving on leadership teams without significant mention of other opportunities offered at each school. A final limitation in this study is the lack of data on the barriers to teacher leadership offered by the principals or teachers. This may be due to the fact that the of teachers selected to be interviewed was determined by each principal and that those teachers, having been selected for leadership by their principal, did not see a barrier to teacher leadership. Had a larger

population been selected for interviews then barriers to teacher leadership might have been an area that was more evident.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study adds to the literature on effective leadership of high-performing school as well as to the literature on teacher leadership by revealing the conditions that principals in these schools use to support their teacher leaders. Administrators at both the school and district level benefit from the findings of this research and can replicate the strategies identified to enhance teacher leadership in their schools. Additionally, the findings of both specific strategies and the roles and responsibilities used by effective principals can assist the faculty of educational leadership programs as they prepare future administrators for school leadership. Angelle (2007) stated, “school cultures that support teacher leadership foster a high level of trust between teachers, principals, and the community” (p.54). This study determines, specifically, how effective principals create those conditions and supports administrators in finding roles that will grow teacher leaders.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the methods used in this study. It also provided a rationale for the multiple case study method and a sample of the questions that asked of each participant. This chapter also included information related to the development of the instrument, the reliability of the instrument, as well as specifics on survey implementation. I used a qualitative design to determine the strategies used by three elementary school principals to support their teacher leaders as well as the perceptions of the teachers toward the efforts to support them in school leadership.

## **Chapter IV: Findings**

Running an effective school requires the collaboration of many individuals within the school – not just those in formal leadership roles. Teacher leaders are uniquely qualified to support their peers because of past experiences and strategies utilized in their classrooms (Trapanese, 2017). Despite the benefit of doing so, not all principals identify and utilize existing teacher leaders. The ability to recognize a teacher’s potential to lead as well as the ability to provide opportunities for growth is a beneficial skill for any administrator (Smith, 2017). The development of teacher leaders can take many forms depending on the purpose or situation (i.e., initiation and direct leadership; advocacy and encouragement; or providing resources and cultivating supportive organizational context) (Smylie & Eckert, 2018).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies for fostering teacher leadership used by the principals of highly effective schools. By identifying specific strategies from both the principal and teacher leader perspective, principals, district-level leaders, and teacher leaders can better understand the importance of teacher leadership, the roles teacher leaders play in the school, and the barriers hindering greater teacher leader participation. Additionally, schools and school systems can develop structures, practices, and policies that support teacher leadership in schools.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

A qualitative inquiry method was an appropriate approach for this study because I sought to focus on the experiences and perspectives of both the principals and teacher leaders. I selected a multiple case study design methodology to identify how effective principals foster teacher leadership in their schools. I selected a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of

teacher leadership from both the principal and teacher perspective. Each school studied served as a case for analysis. The primary goal of this study was to discover, rather than confirm, themes that emerged from the interviews (Merriam, 1998). I served as the instrument for data collection and analysis.

The criteria for study eligibility included:

- Have an overall school system score of 90% or higher on the 2017-2018 Alabama State Report Card.
- Have an individual school score of a 90% or higher on the 2017-2018 Alabama State Report Card.
- Have a principal who has been in their current position for three years or more.

Status as a Highly Effective School (Highly effective schools in the State of Alabama are defined, for this study, as schools that scored a 90% or greater on the Alabama State Department of Education Report Card for the 2017-2018 school year). Eight school systems in the state of Alabama qualified under the criteria to participate in the study.

I then requested an exempt Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to interview principals and teacher leaders from the eight schools that met the criteria. Once the IRB granted permission, I contacted seven of the eight school systems. I currently work in one of the eight identified school systems and chose not to conduct my study in the school system where I work. I communicated the criteria for my study to the Assistant Superintendent of each system and asked for their approval to reach out to the schools in their system that met the individual school criteria as well as the criteria for the school principal and a request to interview teachers in their system. Three of the systems met the criteria for the study and were willing to allow me to reach out to individual schools. I then reached out to the schools within those three systems. I received

communication back from three schools and those three schools were selected for my study. The principal of each school was asked to select two teachers on their staff that they felt served as teacher leaders. The three principals and each of their two teacher leaders' selections made up the nine interview participants for this study. Before the start of interviews, each principal permitted a walk-through of their school to get a feel for the overall environment. The walk-through helped provide a contextual understanding of each school culture through observations of the school environment. I found my walk-through of the school confirmed what I heard from both the principals and teachers when describing the culture of shared participation in teacher leadership opportunities. I conducted all interviews during the Summer months of 2019. Pseudonyms were used to blind the identity of each school as well as the principal and teachers of all three elementary schools.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question for this study is: What strategies to principals in highly effective schools utilize to foster teacher leadership, from both the principal and teacher leader perspective? (see Appendix A for a complete Matrix of Research Questions) To answer this central question, the following research questions were used:

1. What strategies do principals say they use to foster teacher leadership in their high-performing elementary schools?
2. What strategies do teacher leaders say their principal uses to foster teacher leadership in their highly effective elementary school?
3. What elements exist in the school culture that facilitate/enhance teacher leadership?
4. What challenges exist that pose hindrances to the practice of teacher leadership, according to the teacher and the principal?

## Case Studies

The following section provides a within case analysis for each of the three elementary schools. Following the individual case study, a cross-case analysis is provided to explain the trends across all three schools. Table 5 provides the gender, race, years in education and level of education for each participant.

Table 5

### *Participant Profile*

School	Participant	Gender	Race	Years in Education	Educational Experience
Empower Elementary	Principal Adams	Male	White	17	Ph.D
	Mrs. Bell	Female	White	17	Master's
	Mrs. Clark	Female	White	13	Bachelor's
Inspire Elementary	Principal Davis	Female	White	18	Ph.D
	Mrs. Evans	Female	White	14	Master's
	Mrs. Flores	Female	White	16	Master's
Support Elementary	Principal Green	Female	White	18	Ed.S
	Mrs. Hill	Female	White	23	Bachelor's
	Ms. Ingram	Female	White	5	Master's

The following section will provide a general description of each participant as well as a brief description of each of the three schools.

**Empower Elementary.** Empower Elementary School is located in a suburb of a large Alabama city. Empower Elementary School, established in 1920, was initially built as a high school for the students in this valley. Since 1950, it has been an elementary school, with a current enrollment of approximately 550 kindergarten through fifth-grade students. As you approach Empower Elementary through the surrounding area, you get a small-town feeling with sidewalks lining the streets, hardwood trees surrounding the playground, and a classic brick building that is well kept and inviting. When you enter the school through the front doors you are greeted with vibrant colors and displays showing student work and school pride. The hallway bulletin boards show the hard work that goes on in each classroom. The front desk area is large

and inviting. Two reading therapy dogs rest on cushioned beds waiting on a student who will read to them. Empower Elementary School student population is diverse, adding a richness of their learning community.

Empower Elementary School is a National School of Character, receiving the award in 2006, 2012 and 2017. The character education program at Empower Elementary directs a healthy school culture of respect and responsibility. Empower Elementary was one of five Alabama schools to be recognized as a National Blue-Ribbon School in 2015 for overall academic excellence.

Three educators from Empower Elementary agreed to participate in interviews for this research study. All three individual interviews took place in the principal's office on a summer afternoon soon after the school year had ended for the year. The principal's office provided a comfortable area that was private enough to allow for quiet conversation the principal, Principal Adams as well as both teachers, Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Clark.

Principal Adams currently serves as the Principal at Empower Elementary. After obtaining a teaching degree, Principal Adams taught for five years in the classroom. He stated, "*I knew from the beginning that I wanted to do more than just teach.*" Soon after obtaining a master's degree in administration, Principal Adams obtained the position of assistant principal. He worked in that role for six years, during which time he received his specialist degree. Principal Adams then moved into his current role as Principal, where he has served for six years. While serving as the Principal of Empower Elementary, Principal Adams returned to school to obtain his doctorate.

Mrs. Bell attended college in the state in which she currently teaches. After college, she moved to a neighboring state where she taught kindergarten for four years. She then returned to



her home state and has continued to teach kindergarten and fourth grade for the last 13 years. During that timeframe, she received her master's degree and has worked as an adjunct professor at a well-respected university.

Mrs. Clark "*always wanted to be a teacher.*" As a university student, she received an internship placement in a school located in New Zealand. After starting her career as a teacher, she participated in a program where she swapped classrooms, homes, and cars with a teacher in England. She has taught fourth grade in her current school for 13 years.

The following section will provide an analysis of Empower Elementary School by examining the strategies that are used to develop teacher leadership, the culture in place to encourage teachers to participate in leadership opportunities as well as the barriers that exist at Empower Elementary School in fostering teacher leadership.

***Strategies.*** When asked to describe the type of teacher leadership opportunities given to teachers at their school and in their school system, how teachers are selected for teacher leadership opportunities and the support provided by administrators, the answers from all three participants provided common views on how leadership was distributed at Empower Elementary.

All three participants from Empower Elementary shared similar examples when describing the type of ways teacher leadership is distributed within their school and school system. Mrs. Bell discussed that in the past, she has "lead committees at our school" and that "we have committees that break off and do certain jobs around the school." She also described committees that "do certain (general) jobs around the school and meet once a month" but also referenced system-level teacher leadership responsibilities like the system learning target committee which "writes our learning targets and goes back and revisits those and rewrites learning targets for our specific grade level for the district." Mrs. Bell went on to describe her

new role as instructional coach for the first, second- and third-year teachers at Empower Elementary, a new type of teacher leadership role for the school system. Mrs. Clark referred to similar committees at Empower Elementary, but she and Principal Adams both added the Character Committee, a teacher-led initiative that has made a real impact on the culture of their school. Through the application process for the National School of Character Award (which Empower Elementary has won three times), the teachers reflected on their character education practices. The ideas of teacher-led committees were supported by Principal Adams, but he added that leadership at Empower Elementary often starts when a teacher leader comes with an idea and then gains momentum, in an almost organic way.

When asked about initiatives that are supported at the system level Principal Adams and Mrs. Clark both discussed the support that is offered for teachers seeking their National Board Certification. Principal Adams discussed the teacher mentor that is selected at each school in order to mentor others who would like to work towards National Board Certification. Mrs. Clark went on to describes this support as both “meeting (as a group) to support them (teachers) or to set them up with a mentor in the school or school system.”

Mrs. Clark also described a program within the system in which “people who have shown an interest in administration” are organized into a cohort. The system supports this cohort as they go through classes at a local university as a team. This program was not mentioned by either Principal Adams or Mrs. Bell.

***Culture.*** An example of teacher leadership that was distinctly unique to Empower Elementary and provides evidence to the culture of teacher leadership that has been developed at the school was their Visionary Team. While having a grade-level leadership team was common to all three schools, the method of how the committee was selected was unique to Empower

Elementary. Mrs. Clark described the Visionary Committee as “one that is elected [by the staff], and it is a small team of teachers that meet once a month.” Principal Adams added that as soon as the group is selected at the end of the year, they set the goals for the upcoming school year. Through this democratic method of selection, the teacher buy-in is high, and as Mrs. Clark stated, being on the visionary team, “is a huge honor.”

When asked to describe the types of skills that have been beneficial in teacher leadership roles at Empower Elementary, the theme of working well with others, being approachable and having a desire to develop relationships came through in all three interviews. Mrs. Bell reported that “I get along with everyone in the building and try to have good relationships with co-workers.” Mrs. Clark added that she is “approachable” and that she “likes to get to know my colleagues, so I spend much time with them in and outside the school, so I think I’m involved.” Principal Adams added that skills he has seen as beneficial to teacher leaders as “people who can collaborate well and communicate well” as well as “people who are really good listeners, people who can see competing sides of situation and can help bring some middle ground.”

When asked how the administration supports the development of teacher leadership, all three participants reflected on the individual conversations that are a yearly part of the teacher development process at Empower Elementary. Principal Adams calls each teacher conversation “instructional chats” and asks each teacher, “what are your goals for yourself? What are your goals for your students? What do you need from me? What can I do to support you in that?”. He goes on to say that one of the things that always comes up is the discussion of the personal growth of the teacher. Principal Adams went on to say, “I love to hear what they want to accomplish for themselves. Sometimes I get insights into what they want to do as a professional, and for people who maybe don’t really have something clear-cut or clearly defined for

themselves, I will tell them what I think.” This same yearly conversation was described by Mrs. Bell as “very positive and encouraging” she added “they (administration) always end the meeting with what do you need from us; is there anything we could do for you, and it’s always good to be able to talk and share things.” Mrs. Clark added that she feels that they (administration) “hear those (personal goals” and then they do an excellent job with, hey, there’s this professional development” to help find a way they can help.

**Barriers.** When asked to describe any barriers to teacher leadership, a theme of time was found in both teachers, and a theme of acceptance was described by Mrs. Bell and Principal Adams. Also, Principal Adams felt the ability to distribute responsibilities was a barrier to developing all teacher leaders.

When asked to describe barriers that he saw at Empower Elementary, Principal Adams stated, “I sometimes worry about those teachers who aren’t on grade level because I feel they can sometimes be isolated.” Principal Adams states that he is careful to “not always go to the same person” when selecting for school and system responsibilities. He states that he tries to be intentional to find “people that we know are interested in doing those (educational) things” and to “give them more opportunity to do that.” Principal Adams worries that if the right person is not selected to attend a system meeting (even if they want to attend) because when they come back “it wouldn’t be well-received coming from them.” Mrs. Bell supported the theme of acceptance from when describing how those selected are seen by others who were not selected by stating, “I think you’ll always have one or two that are going to have a grudge.”

Both teachers listed time as their most significant barrier to teacher leadership. Mrs. Bell stated, “it (leadership) can be a great thing, but it can be overwhelming sometimes” she went on to say, “you want to do well, you want to serve, but you can say yes to too many things.” When

asked about barriers to teacher leadership, Mrs. Clark added, “I think time constraints, anytime you sign up to be on another committee ... time constraints are always an issue”.

**Inspire Elementary.** Inspire Elementary serves students in a suburban community of a major southern city in Alabama. Inspire Elementary serves Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The inviting exterior welcomes visitors with a well-maintained brick building and a carefully manicured landscape.

Principal Davis, Principal of Inspire Elementary School, began her career in education as a special education aide and no formal background in education. Principal Davis reported being reluctant to receive a degree in education even though her parents told her education would be a good fit for her. Before beginning her master’s degree in another field, Principal Davis wanted to try working in education. Because she loved it, she went back to school and worked toward an Alternate Master’s (of 5<sup>th</sup>-year degree) in Special Education, after which she taught for 12 years. She then moved to an assistant principal role for three years. She then moved to her current school, in the same school system, to serve as the Principal. She has been in that role for the past three years, during which time she returned to school and completed her doctorate.

Mrs. Evans taught third grade for one year, fifth grade for seven years, and has taught fourth grade for six years. All her teaching assignments have been in different schools. She also has a master’s degree in education.

Mrs. Flores taught first grade for four years at an inner-city school. She then taught first grade for nine years in a neighboring school district. She has a master’s degree in education, is a National Board-Certified Teacher, and has taught for a total of 16 years.

**Strategies.** It was clear from the passionate way all three staff members described the opportunities in their school, and in their system, that teacher leadership is valued by the school

and system leaders. Common descriptions of ways to engage in leadership at the school and system level were provided by all three participants.

Principal Davis described a specific formula that she uses to ensure equitable representation of her leadership teams. She stated that “there is an important feature of having people on your team that represents every area...I have noticed that if you don’t have that, you do have gaps.” She went on to say that “there are four of us that are always on leadership” and “I have one (teacher) from each grade level and then I have a special area representative and a special education representative.” She looks for “drive and motivation” from those selected to be on the team. Mrs. Flores described the leadership team as “more of a collective” and helped establish “the focus for the school year” at Inspire Elementary. Mrs. Evans, who stated that she had just come off of the school leadership team, described the way the administration at Inspire Elementary supports teachers as a complete opposite from her previous system, which left her feeling “kind of done with teaching.”

The themes of support and empowerment were seen in the conversations about the atmosphere of teacher leadership at the system level. Mrs. Evans discussed the application-based process that selects teachers from across the system to learn more about leadership. Mrs. Evans feels that the experience left her with the skills to “work through conflict and be a better listener.” Mrs. Flores discussed how her role a former participant in the teacher leadership cohort has now shifted to facilitator and was leading a session on the day we interviewed on the power of positive peer pressure. Her excitement was obvious when she stated that she was “kind of getting a movement started” for the teacher leadership cohort. Principal Davis described the goal of the teacher cohort as one to build the capacity in teachers to “lead where you are” and not just a training for future administrators, rather to help teachers understand that they can “lead as a

teacher, in my classroom, on my team, in the school, in a variety of different ways to fulfill that (desire to lead) that is in me”. She went on to say that teachers in the program value the cross-district experience of getting to hear from teachers at the high school and the middle schools and other elementary schools.

**Culture.** In examining the culture of teacher leadership at Inspire Elementary, all three educators referenced the thoughtful methods of sharing responsibilities with every single member of the staff. Principal Davis described the shift in culture that occurred a few years ago, away from school committees to action team. She describes these teams as “working together for a purpose, for the common good of the whole school. Everybody in the school is school, teachers, the certified personnel, is on an action team”. Mrs. Evans described the appeal of participation on an action team by stating that “you have an interest, a vested interest in what you’re doing.” Mrs. Flores added, “our whole thing is leading where you are...that’s kind of what our motto is”, (at Inspire Elementary). When asked to describe the types of traits that make teacher leaders effective at Inspire Elementary, all three educators listed initiative (or work ethic) as a valuable skill, and both teachers stated that being a good listener has helped them in their leadership abilities. In addition, Mrs. Evans mentioned that her view of “appreciating not everybody’s like me and everybody works differently” has helped her to work with other teachers.

When discussing professional goals that focus on leadership with each interviewee, all three stated that specific leadership goals were typically not selected by teachers as a professional focus, but Mrs. Evans stated, “she, (Principal Davis) is good about sharing the wealth and seeing leadership in different people and knowing their interests.” Mrs. Flores shared a practice at Inspire Elementary in which teachers posted their professional goals outside their

classrooms so others in the school can see each teacher goal and help support them in reaching that goal. Mrs. Flores added that this method was “just kind of a way to bring that goal back so it’s not just put on a piece of paper” everyone can see the goal and help support that teacher. Principal Davis described her individual conversations with teachers and her method of assisting them in selecting a leadership goal when she stated, “if you wanted to pursue teacher leadership, I say what do you want your goal to be...and I help them make that goal, and we find a standard that meets that goal.” Principal Davis speaks highly of the time she spends with teachers and practice of listening to what teachers want to work on and finding a way to help them grow in that area.

**Barriers.** When discussing the barriers to teacher leadership at Inspire Elementary, there was a common barrier shown in two of the three interviews, not a common connection between the educators, all three listed different barriers from their perspectives.

Principal Davis discussed the difficulty some teachers experience when they are supporting a new idea in the school, and they receive push-back from members of the faculty. She shared a story of a teacher whom she selected for a training experience because she was hesitant about the new initiative at their school and Principal Davis wanted her to see the positives. When the teacher returned with new excitement and “tried so hard to bring her team along. She was negative when she went, but then went, it changed her, but she couldn’t get them, (her teaching team) to see it” and “it really just did her in.” Mrs. Evans supported the feeling of discouraged by negative teachers when she stated, “sometimes there’s pushback from teachers, (when they say) you can’t do that or she listens to you and not us.” Mrs. Flores listed time “giving them (teacher leaders) time to work on things” she added that communicating ideas



between teachers is often challenging without adding numerous unwanted emails to a teacher's already full after schoolwork load.

**Support Elementary.** Support Elementary is located just outside of a major city in Alabama. Support Elementary is tucked in a neighborhood surrounded by homes on all sides. Built in 1920, the classic style appears almost royal in the structure of the facility and grounds surrounding the school. Support Elementary was recognized as a Lighthouse School and served kindergarten through sixth grade.

Principal Green, Principal of Support Elementary, received a bachelor's degree in elementary education and worked for eight years as a fourth-grade teacher. During that time, she worked as a self-contained teacher and a departmentalized teacher and looped up with a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade class one year. During that time, Principal Green went through National Board Training and received her certification as a classroom teacher. Principal Green then moved to a neighboring school district to serve in the role of a Reading Coach for two years. Her love for the experience led her to complete her Ed.S. in Elementary Education and obtain a second master's degree in Instructional Leadership. Though she did not see herself as an administrator, encouragement from a university professor led her to apply for an Assistant Principal position in her current school district. She served in that role for four years before being promoted to Principal of Support Elementary School (pseudonym), a position she has held for four years.

Mrs. Hill has taught for 23 years, 13 of which have been at her current school. She has taught first grade, second grade, and third grade during her 23 years as an educator.

Mrs. Ingram is a special education teacher with five years of experience in two school systems. She has a master's degree in education with an add-on certificate in educational leadership.

*Strategies.* The three interviewees at Support Elementary School shared a common theme of encouragement to participate in leadership opportunities at Support Elementary. All three educators indicated that not only was leadership supported and valued but was expected of everyone at their school. From teachers to students, everyone was taught the importance of leadership and how each person could fit into a leadership role at their school. Principal Green described the changes that she has seen in teacher leadership within the school, from “lead teacher in a grade level to now more interest-based” distribution of leadership roles. Principal Green’s example of her Lighthouse Team as a core group that works to keep the culture of the school in place. That group then serves to “tap other people to help with those (school leadership) roles.” The Lighthouse Team “recruits based on interest or people who have taken the initiative in different ways (around the school).” Principal Green made it clear that “everybody serves on something” at Support Elementary and that the culture of the school is one in which they “consider everybody to be a leader.” Mrs. Hill supported the sentiments of the principal when she stated that “from the moment you are here you are on a committee. It’s just assumed that you have the experience, willingness, and talent to do what you need to make it a better place”. Ms. Ingram pointed out that the Lighthouse Team is led by a teacher, not the school administration. Ms. Ingram explained how she, as a new teacher to Support Elementary, was selected to serve on the Lighthouse Team, “Principal Green knew that I was interested in leadership because I was pursuing that degree and so she asked me if I would want to be on it and it was great.”

The theme across all three interviews for teacher leadership through encouragement and structured support at the system level was explained by Mrs. Hill when she detailed a program in place that has encouraged teacher leaders, called Lead 2010 (the year the program was

established). Teachers apply and begin a multi-year program where teachers learn the culture and foundations of the system then learn about the various opportunities for leadership in the system. She said that “I think they instilled that (teacher leadership) from the very beginning and expect it and encourage it at the same time. I think there’s just an atmosphere where you want to be a leader”. Ms. Ingram described her participation with a group within the Lead 2010 group that she was selected to lead. She describes the group as “(consisting of) eighteen staff members from all over the district with board level, elementary, high school, custodians, everyone is mixed in these little groups. It’s a good opportunity to get to know people who work in the district and share conversations about who we are and what we believe in.” Principal Green added that the Lead 2010 group “does trainings around what leadership principles are most effective or their profile of themselves as leaders” in order to get to know themselves more and develop as leaders.

***Culture.*** In our interview discussions on the culture of teacher leadership at Support Elementary, all three educators shared similar feels on the climate of expected participation in school leadership by all members of the staff. In our interview, discussions on the qualities that have made teachers at Support Elementary ready for leadership creates a culture of sharing leadership responsibilities between staff members a culture that helps teacher grow professionally. Principal Green summed up her philosophy by stating that at Support Elementary “we invest in people to grow wherever they are, and sometimes that takes them on paths here, like within the district and sometimes it takes them other places, and we support that even though it’s hard.”

***Barriers.*** When interviewees were asked to describe barriers to teacher leadership at Support Elementary, the lack of barriers standing in the way at their school was a clear theme for all three educators. Principal Green stated, “We look for people who have initiative and drive

and mold them around their strengths. When we are hiring people, we're looking for what we need, and we're able to take them and put them in a place where they're going to grow in that (environment). We have a pretty positive climate. People genuinely care for each other, and it's not competitive because everybody is uniquely themselves". Ms. Ingram expressed a similar sentiment when asked about her thoughts on barriers, saying, "No, I've never felt that way here." Similarly, Mrs. Hill said, "I don't feel like there's that at all (at Support Elementary)."

### **Discussion of Findings: Cross Case Analysis**

**Research Question One.** The first research question, "What strategies do principals say they use to foster teacher leadership in their high-performing elementary school?" examined the methods in which teachers are selected for leadership positions in each school, each system, and how each principal views their role in developing teacher leaders. The strategies will be presented through four sub-sections:

- Selection for leadership roles within the school
- Selection for leadership roles within the system
- Principals role in developing teacher leadership
- Progression by principal to develop teacher leaders

*Selection for leadership roles within the school.* The first condition that was examined looked into how principals established teacher leadership roles within their schools. While there was a common theme of support for teacher leadership in each interview, how those roles were selected varied between all three principals.

Principal Adams, at Empower Elementary School, described the creation of teacher leadership roles as organic:

*I might have a teacher come to me and say, 'I'm interested in trauma-informed schools,' so we will have a conversation and it sort of takes on a group of interested people and kind of gathers some momentum. Then I just check in with them and say, 'what do you need from me? Where do you think we can go with this? How does this look?' Sometimes those things come to fruition and they just kind of take on a life of their own. Other times, they tend to fizzle and diminish or just go away.*

In addition to organic leadership roles, Empower Elementary has established a school Visionary Team. Principal Adams describes the role of the Visionary Team as integral in establishing the vision of the school for the following year. The Empower Elementary Visionary Team is created democratically when, each spring, faculty vote on which members they would like to represent them on the team. The team revisits the school's mission, vision, and beliefs and holds a faculty discussion on the school's goals for the following year. The next year, the team develops an agenda, separate from the school administration agenda, and meets monthly to discuss.

Principal Davis looks for those teachers who have voiced a desire for leadership and those who have shown leadership traits during the year when selecting teacher for the leadership responsibilities. The school leadership team at Inspire Elementary (pseudonym) is comprised of a set group of four that are always on the leadership team (Principal, Assistant Principal, Counselor, and Instructional Coach). In addition to the set group, Principal Davis selects representatives from all areas of the school – one from each grade level, a special area teacher, and a special education representative.

Principal Davis feels it is beneficial to have representatives from each instructional area on the leadership team to “*avoid gaps.*” Principal Davis also feels it is important to “*pick leaders*

*in your school that are ready to lead and step up.*” These beliefs have been formed by the work of Rick DuFours and the Professional Learning Community model and the idea of gaining coalition by picking teachers in your school that are ready to step up and lead.

Principal Davis also described a team balance in which a member of the team might be a teacher with a less than positive view of the school that was selected so their “voice could be heard.” By joining the team, this teacher can see the bigger picture of the school. Principal Davis feels the leadership team has the pulse of the school and values their feedback. This idea of including someone who needs to see the whole school picture has extended to new teachers who may be ready to lead but have not been with Inspire Elementary very long.

At Support Elementary School, Principal Green feels that the method of selected teachers for leadership roles has changed over time. The school leadership team, the “Lighthouse Team,” started as an application process, with representation from each grade level but is now recruited by the administration based on initiative and drive. When selecting for the team, administration looks at the leadership aspects of each person, not just who will represent a specific grade level. One important factor is that each member must have a connection with the kids, parents, and staff of their school. Principal Green went on to say, “*we consider everybody to be a leader of something*” and that “*everybody serves on some team.*” Also, leadership at Support Elementary School is often grassroots with teachers coming up with an idea and then leading the way.

Table 6

*Selection for leadership roles within the school*

<b>Theme: Support for teacher leaders</b>	
<b>Principal Adams</b>	<i>“We’ll have a conversation and it sort of takes on a group of interested people kind of gather momentum, and I just chink in with them and say, what do you need from me?”</i>
<b>Principal Davis</b>	<i>“I want their (teacher leaders) voice to be heard, and I want the opportunity for them to see and hear and be a part of that (school) vision.”</i>
<b>Principal Green</b>	<i>“We really invest in people to grow wherever they are.” “We consider everyone to be a leader of something.”</i>

***Selection of teacher leadership roles within the school system.*** All three principals shared a common theme of established initiatives at the school system level to support teachers in pursuit of leadership within their classrooms, across their schools, and in their school systems. Principal Adams felt that the teachers are supported by the school system. He provided the example of teachers being offered support through seeking National Board Certification. In his school system, there is an established school mentor for any teacher seeking National Board Certification. Additionally, the school system supports the addition of a teacher leader who serves as an instructional coach for the staff. This instructional coach would be a member of the faculty that receives a coaching stipend for their work in supporting others in their school. Principal Davis described a teacher leadership program at the system level that has been going on for three years. Any teacher is eligible to apply for the system’s leadership program. The idea behind the program is to *“lead where you are, not about becoming an administrator.”* Principal Davis had three teachers get into the program the first year; those same teachers were on the school’s leadership team. The system-level leadership program is led by the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Curriculum Instruction Specialist for the school system. Principal Davis feels the program is valuable because, *“sometimes, teachers would not see themselves as administrators but then through the*

*experience, develop an interest as something they might like to do in the future.*” The goal from the school system program is to inspire teachers to lead as a teacher in their classroom, on their team, in their school, and a variety of ways within the system.

Principal Green described the system leadership program named Lead 2020. This application-based program selects teacher leaders to learn more about system leadership and is led by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the system. The cohort meets every six weeks for training and, at the end of the program, completes an innovative project that may be used within the overall system. Principal Green describes these support initiatives as the culture in the system saying, *“We really invest in people to grow wherever they are, and sometimes that takes them on a path here, like in the district. Sometimes it takes them another place, and we support that, even though it’s hard [to lose good people].”*

Table 7

*Selection for leadership roles within the system*

<b>Theme: Established initiatives</b>	
<b>Principal Adams</b>	<i>“right now the board is supporting, I feel supporting very well, teachers who want to obtain National Board Certification.”</i>
<b>Principal Davis</b>	<i>“we’re very fortunate to have a teacher leaders program at the district level” “anybody is welcome to apply.”</i>
<b>Principal Green</b>	<i>“(system) trainings around what leadership principles are most effective or may their own profile of themselves as a leader.”</i>

***Principal’s role in developing teacher leadership.*** Principal Adams, at Empower Elementary School, stated that through individual conversations (between the principal and teacher) centered around teacher goals for themselves and their students. These individual conversations allow both the principal and the teacher leader to focus on the future. Principal Adams further explained how these conversations have helped learn valuable insights that have made the push toward an administration degree or National Board Certification possible. Through supportive questions like *“how can I help?”* and *“what do you need from me?”*



Principal Adams can direct teachers toward options they might not have seen without a supportive attitude.

Principal Davis describes a very deliberate method of building leadership in those selected by the administration to serve on the leadership that year. Everyone in the school is on an action team, and each team is led by a member of the school leadership team. Those action team leaders meet with the principal to develop goals for the action team. During that meeting, each action team leaders is asked, “*what do you think our goals should be for this team this year?*” The action team leader then sets the agenda and meeting dates with the action team and go about leading the team in accomplishing the action. At the end of the year, the staff votes to determine if that team needs to continue or if the team has accomplished their action and can disband.

Principal Green states that a lot of what is done at Support Elementary School to develop teacher leaders is providing a supportive environment and getting teachers into cohorts. The idea that “*we consider everyone to be a leader of something*” is important because at Support Elementary School, “*everybody serves on something.*”

Table 8

*Principal’s role in developing teacher leadership*

<b>Theme: Encourage leadership in others</b>	
<i>Principal Adams</i>	<i>“how can I help?” “what do you need from me?”</i>
<i>Principal Davis</i>	<i>“What do you think our goals should be for this team this year?”</i>
<i>Principal Green</i>	<i>“We consider everyone to be a leader of something”</i>

***Progression by principal to develop teacher leaders.*** I identified a common theme of thoughtful consideration of teachers, through encouragement and development as leaders, in all three principals. Principal Adams felt that a lot of the foundation for teacher leadership and inclusion in school decision making was already in place before their promotion into the

position. However, Principal Adams did state that being mindful of the opportunities for participation on committees was something that is more present than it was five or six years ago. Opportunities for teacher participation in committees has also increased (i.e., learning target committee, textbook committee, etc.). Principal Davis also shared feelings that through experiences over the last few years, she has developed a personal [leadership] style with the staff and now truly “wants to cultivate leaders.” Principal Green does not see a change in her style that continues to be focused on developing leaders who show initiative.

Table 9

*Progression by principal to develop teacher leaders*

<b>Theme: Thoughtful consideration</b>	
<i>Principal Adams</i>	<i>“I’m always reflective” “How do we make sure everyone is invested in the group?”</i>
<i>Principal Davis</i>	<i>“I want to be cultivating leaders. I want to be getting your ideas and talking and discussing, and so I think that is different.”</i>
<i>Principal Green</i>	<i>No change in leadership style</i>

**Research Question Two.** The second research question examined the strategies that principals use to foster teacher leadership from the teacher’s perspective. The strategies will be presented through two subsections:

- Type of leadership opportunities that are offered to teacher leaders
- Administrator support of teacher leadership

***Type of leadership opportunities that are offered to teacher leaders.*** A common theme across all six teachers interviewed was participation in school leadership teams. While the teams had different names, all of the teams were used to create a school goal and support teachers in reaching those goals. In addition to school leadership, three of the six teachers have also participated in system-level initiatives that are focused on the development of teacher leadership. In looking at years of experience, five of the six have been teaching for ten or more years. All

six teachers exhibited a passion and energy for the teaching profession and shared their stories with, and excitement for, having been involved in the leadership within their school buildings.

Mrs. Bell has led committees in her school for the last several years and has been included in the system's target learning committee. Additionally, Mrs. Bell has served as the school's Instructional Coach. She describes the duties of the Instructional Coach as a teacher who *"works alongside teachers, and we've really forced on our first, second, and third-year teachers and supporting them. Our hope is that we can provide that for all teachers because all teachers really need someone to partner with them all the time."* The position of Instructional Coach is in addition to her regular teaching duties but allows minimal relief time during the day to support teachers in the building.

Mrs. Clark has served on the Visionary Team as well as been a mentor for new teachers. Mrs. Clark has also been asked to serve as a grade level representative and was the lead teacher on a school-wide foundational initiative for the school. Mrs. Clark led the school's Character Education Committee as well. Following the implementation strategies to develop character in students, Mrs. Clark then spearheaded the application process for the National School of Character award, an honor Empower Elementary has received three times.

Mrs. Evans has seen both sides of teacher leadership. The first experience in education left Mrs. Evans disheartened. She states, *"when I left there (former school), I was kind of done with teaching."* However, the next school placement was uplifting, and her leadership characteristics became more apparent than her previous placement. Mrs. Evans was selected to participate in the system teacher leadership cohort and the school leadership team at Inspire Elementary.

Like Mrs. Evans, Mrs. Flores applied for and was selected to participate in the system leadership cohort, an experience that led to other leadership opportunities at Inspire Elementary (i.e., the school's Action Team leader, the book study facilitator, and playing a vital role in supporting instruction in the classroom). On the day of the interview, Mrs. Flores was also leading a session for the current system leadership team. During the interview, she stated, *"I'm leading a session on the power of positive peer pressure, kind of getting a movement started. I guess I'm in the coaching position – I get PLCs started at the beginning of the year and help them get their focus. I guess it's kind of one of my roles in helping facilitate or be a liaison between – do they need help with anybody else or do they need someone to come in?"*

While Mrs. Hill works in a different system than the other interviewees, she participated in the system leadership program, Lead 2010, several years ago. Mrs. Hill noted that *"supporting (teacher) leadership is a strength I noticed from the very beginning"* in our system. While participating in Lead 2010, Mrs. Hill remembered, *"We spent a lot of time at the beginning just learning how the system was founded and the beliefs of the system as a whole and we learned the opportunities for leadership. I think they (school system) kind of instilled that from the very beginning and expected it and encouraged it at the same time. I think there's just an atmosphere where you want to be a leader."*

Mrs. Hill went on to say that at a Support Elementary School, everyone is on a committee: *"It is assumed that each teacher has the experience, willingness, and talent to make this a better place – it is a very promising environment."* Additional experiences have included participation on the Student Support Team as well as the Lighthouse Committee, which helps provide a focus and support structure for the school.

Mrs. Ingram has also participated in the Lighthouse Team for Support Elementary School. Mrs. Ingram was clear to point out that the group is led by a teacher, not a school administrator. She noted that a school administrator selected her because the administrator noted an interest in leadership due to her enrollment in a master’s degree program in educational leadership. This placement on the team helped develop a deeper interest in leadership and created a genuine way to put university classroom learning into effect at Support Elementary School.

Table 10

*Type of leadership opportunities that are offered to teacher leaders*

<b>Theme: Various opportunities</b>	
<i>Mrs. Bell</i>	<i>“led committees at our school” “I’ve also been a part of our learning target committee for the district.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Clark</i>	<i>“I’ve been on Visionary (Team), which is a huge honor” “I’ve been a mentor teacher.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Evans</i>	<i>“Teacher leadership cohort”</i>
<i>Mrs. Flores</i>	<i>“Action teams” “I’m on the leadership team.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Hill</i>	<i>“My first experience with leadership was after my first year. There was a program called Lead 2010.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Ingram</i>	<i>“Lighthouse Team”</i>

***Administrator support of teacher leadership.*** A common theme across all six teachers was support from a former or current administrator. In addition, the theme of relationships was evident in the tone and examples of support from all six interviewees. Five of the six teachers interviewed had worked in systems before their current teaching position. Of those five, four teachers felt supported at their previous placement. Mrs. Bell stated, *“the former principal had a gift for words and encouragement and really spoke that into not only me but a lot of teachers – she brought that out of us and the new principal carried that on.”* Mrs. Bell went on to say that the current principal at Empower Elementary School is very encouraging and gave her the

confidence to do something that was outside her comfort zone. Mrs. Bell noted the importance of getting out of your comfort zone, especially for first, second, and third-year teachers.

Additionally, the administration at Empower Elementary School is always “*trying to pull out that one thing that the teacher could do to help the entire school and plug them into a committee where they can lead and start to speak that leadership into them.*” Mrs. Bell believes:

*We (teachers) go into this profession as a helper, but we also go into it because we enjoy leading, that is why we teach. I feel that everyone in this profession has that in them or they wouldn't have gone into teaching, so letting teachers know they can lead adults as well as children is important.*

Mrs. Clark feels encouraged by finding opportunities to help within the school or through work on a committee or supporting professional development for teachers. Mrs. Evans feels that the current principal has been very supportive, as was the previous principal at the same school who had a “*grandmotherly*” relationship with her staff. Mrs. Evans was the only interviewee that referenced support by an assistant principal. She stated that the relationship with the assistant principal was “*encouraging and instilled confidence in the teachers and allowed us to go to her and just vent when needed.*” She went on to say, “*there was a real relationship there.*” Mrs. Flores was the only interviewee who referenced a negative experience at a previous school stating that her last school administrator “*seemed punitive*” but that her current school administration has been very encouraging. Mrs. Hill and Mrs. Ingram were very complimentary of their current administration, and both felt that the current administration at Support Elementary School saw teacher leadership as important and encouraged leadership from teachers. Mrs. Ingram added that a former Assistant Superintendent encouraged Mrs. Ingram to pursue a leadership degree after noticing energy and excitement for the job. Mrs. Ingram now

works with a local university to support the students who come to Support Elementary School to hold class and then come into classrooms to support the learning from their university course.

Table 11

*Administrator support of teacher leadership*

<b>Theme: Support from principal</b>	
<i>Mrs. Bell</i>	<i>“she had a gift for words and encouragement and just really spoke that into not only me but a lot of other teachers. And I feel like she kind of brought that out of a lot of us.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Clark</i>	<i>“she would ask teachers to do something, and you know, if I was asked to do something I took it as an honor, she thinks I will be good at this.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Evans</i>	<i>“she instilled that confidence and I think just knowing that you can go to an administrator.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Flores</i>	<i>“I’m trusted to do my job without somebody micromanaging.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Hill</i>	<i>“When I came here I felt it was too good to be true. I couldn’t believe the level of respect.”</i>
<i>Mrs. Ingram</i>	<i>“She was the one who said, pursue an add on to your masters if you can, and so I did.”</i>

**Research Question Three.** The third research question examined what elements exist in the school culture that facilitate/enhance teacher leadership. The strategies will be presented through eight subsections:

- Do teachers in your district establish professional goals around developing as a leader?
- What skills have you found to be beneficial for teacher leaders to be effective?
- Why do you think your principal selected you for leadership opportunities?
- What skills have you found to be beneficial in your leadership roles?
- Describe the interactions you have with your principal (i.e., formal conversations, or information conversations)
- What ways do you see other teachers being selected for leadership opportunities?
- How do you see teacher leadership being encouraged within your school system?

- Do you ever establish yearly goals around developing as a leader (professional learning goals)?

The research questions in this section combine response from both the principals and the teachers. Doing so provided an opportunity to explore similar questions from different perspectives.

***Do teachers in your district establish professional goals around developing as a leader?***

I asked Principals if their teachers wrote professional learning goals around developing as a teacher leader. The theme that was common across all three principal interviewees was that teachers did not typically write teacher leadership into professional learning plans. However, Principal Davis said that teachers sit down with the principal each year to write goals and if a teacher is interested in leadership then they write a specific teacher leadership goal together and find a standard to match it to within their teacher evaluation system.

I asked the six teacher participants the same question about themselves. The responses matched the responses of the principals. Of the six teachers interviewed, not one stated that their personal goals for the year were written around teacher leadership. However, all six stated that they do write goals for the year, and two of the six had sat down with their principal to write their goals. Additionally, two of the six teachers stated that though they do not specifically write a goal around their development as a teacher leader, they felt that their principal would support it if they did want to write a teacher leadership goal.

***What skills have you found to be beneficial for teacher leaders to be effective?***

Responses from principals and teachers when asked about the skills that are beneficial for teacher leaders to be effective shared many common themes. I also noted several differences. All three principals noted that they felt initiative and drive were important characteristics in



teacher leaders while this theme was only mentioned by one of the six teachers. All three principals and all six teachers mentioned the importance of collaboration. Once principal and one teacher noted that having quality relationships with other teachers, with parents, and with students was an important character trait for teacher leaders. One teacher also mentioned the ability to delegate responsibilities as important. Another teacher referenced being a good listener as an essential quality of teacher leaders.

***Teacher leadership opportunities.*** When I asked teachers to describe ways that they see other teachers in their school being selected for leadership opportunities, there were no new ideas provided. The teachers had already shared the ways in which teachers are selected when they shared their leadership experiences (i.e., selection for school leadership teams, service on committees, and leading book studies). This should not come as a surprise because the teachers who volunteered for participation in this study were part of the teacher leadership teams. However, teachers did share their insights into how the school administration delegates the responsibility so that no one teacher, or group of teachers, shoulders all of the responsibility. The theme of shared responsibility was evident in each interview. Mrs. Bell described in greater detail the selection process for the Visionary Team at Empower Elementary School:

*In faculty [meetings] we get an entire list of everyone and we circle three or four names on the list and we select the Visionary Team to lead us, which I think has always worked well as the system to not let the administration choose those people, and then they're kind of looked at as you were chosen by them. It's where we've selected you because we feel like you could lead us well. And it always disperses itself. It's really neat. We have special education teachers that get selected. We have a music teacher that got selected. We have classroom teachers. We have our reading coach. We have our technology*

*specialist. It is really based on personality and connection with your peers and who you think will speak well for the kids and the building to do what's best for our kids, and I feel like that's who is selected. It doesn't really matter what your position is, and it really matters just kind of who you are in the building.*

This democratic method of selection was only discussed at one of the three schools (Empower Elementary School). While other schools described a method of sharing or distributing leadership. Mrs. Bell, when describing how the system finds teacher leaders, went on to say, *"I think they are constantly looking for those to step forward and lead and serve on different committees."* Other responses described teachers taking on leadership roles when the teacher saw a need within the school. Mrs. Flores shared, *"we had a teacher this year that just said, 'I want to start a book club at lunch,' so the Librarian did a book club at lunch. Those kind of things where you're just...it doesn't have to come from top down, it's like grassroots."*

All six teachers interviewed shared that they had an administration that was willing to share the leadership and who were intentional in selecting teachers who showed an interest in additional responsibility.

***Leadership within the system.*** When teachers were asked if teacher leadership as encouraged within the system, their answers mirrored that of their principals. The common theme of encouragement from the system and an investment in the development of teacher leaders came through in all six of the interviews with teachers. Mrs. Bell commented that the Central Office was always looking for people to step forward and lead. She went on to say that the Assistant Superintendent asks principals to identify teachers from their school to find groups of teachers to lead committees at the system level. When asked if the system supported and encouraged teacher leadership, Mrs. Clark's impassioned response was, *"Yes! One of the things*

*that (this school system) does a really good job of is that they have a cohort of teachers that they seek out and then support through graduate school to get their administration degree.”* In addition, Mrs. Clark mentioned the support offered teachers seeking National Board Certification. Mrs. Clark stated, *“in recent years, they (the school system) have supported teachers who are getting the national boards, whether it is through meetings of support or setting them up with a mentor in the school or school system who has already gotten theirs (National Board Certification).”*

While all six teachers interviewed felt that teacher leadership was supported at the system level, programs with the express intent to develop teacher leadership were discussed by four of the six teachers interviewed. Teachers described their participation with energy and excitement and noted a real focus on system understanding and leadership skill development as well as an effort to connect the teachers from across the system to one another.

**Research Question Four.** The fourth research question examined the existing elements that may pose as a hindrance to the practice of teacher leadership from both the principal and teacher perspective. The strategies will be presented through three subsections:

- Can you explain any barriers that teacher leaders might face in your school or your school system?
- Have you ever encountered a barrier to becoming a teacher leader?
- Are there things you plan to do differently going into the future to develop teacher leaders?

Responses varied between principals and teachers in their views on the barriers to teacher leadership. Two of the three principals shared barriers they see teachers face, and the third stated that at her school, *“there were no barriers to teacher leadership.”* Teacher responses showed that

four of the six teachers believed that time was a constraint to becoming an effective teacher leader in their school. Principal Adams also indicated that one challenge was the lack of support from other teachers as a possible challenge for teacher leaders.

Principal Davis shared a story about a group of teachers who attended professional development training and came back excited to share with the other grade level teachers. However, one teacher who tried to turn the training around to her team felt defeated stating, “*it really just did her in because she tried so hard to bring her team along.*” A similar sentiment was shared by Principal Adams when he spoke of the isolation felt by teacher leaders. Principal Adams indicated that he tried to be very mindful to not select the same teacher for all leadership responsibilities so as not to create animosity within the faculty.

Principal Green felt that Support Elementary School had no barriers to teacher leadership because leadership was expected from teachers. She states,

*We look for people with initiative and drive so I feel like for us, at least, when we we’re hiring people, we’re looking for what we need and we’re able to take them and put them in a place where they are going to grow in that area but that’s where they want to grow too. And so culturally, in the climate, I feel like it’s really, we have a positive climate. People genuinely care for each other, and it’s not competitive because everybody’s uniquely themselves. In the past, I think there was a dark side to leadership where you might have a point person who’s always the point person because they have exemplary practice. Well we would expect everybody to have exemplary practice and I consider it when we’re having conversations. We’re like we are all on this continuum, so some people might be farther along in the math knowledge, and others may be farther along in small group instruction. But we can learn from each other, and it’s just like the culture*

*we've created. So thinking that way, I think has taken off the pressure of always having this one person we're going to watch use [effective] classroom management.*

In interviews with teachers, four of the six identified time as a barrier to teacher leadership. Mrs. Bell stated, *“you can say yes to too many things, and you can be utilized for a lot of things because they know that you'll say ‘yes.’”* Mrs. Clark commented that *“time constraints are always an issue.”* Mrs. Ingram also expressed, *“I wish I had more time to do all these (leadership) things.”* Mrs. Flores echoed the theme of time as a barrier but went on to explain that the issue has been addressed in her school:

*I think time is huge. We're trying to do some scheduling things where they (teachers) have common planning time. [The school principal] has taken carpool out of the afternoons and given that to some of the aids, so they (teachers) have some common time there. So time is a huge one – giving them (teachers) time to work on things, even if it's going, 'I'll go sub in your classroom.'*

### **Final Thoughts**

As a final question in the teacher interview, I asked each participant if they had anything they would like to add about the development of teacher leaders. This question provided great insight into the thoughts that each selected teacher had about their level of teacher leaders support and the support of other teachers that work in their schools. Mrs. Bell stated, *“They (the school) really push teachers out of their comfort zone. I think they push them to be leaders.”* Mrs. Clark, who has experienced working in another country, viewed education in England as having more middle-of-the-road positions whereas the educational system in the United States had teaching positions and administrative positions. Mrs. Evans expressed admiration for the leadership at the central office level led by a superintendent who assembled a group of teachers

to share about plans for the system and listens to teacher input on how things were going at their school. She described the discussions as “*very open and conversational.*” Mrs. Flores, regarding her feelings about her building’s leadership, stated,

*I think it starts with the culture that you want to help and that you don’t have all the answers. I think you want someone who feels like you have a direction. I think the direction is saying we’re all in this together and we want opinions. I think if you have that, then you have a good school.*

Mrs. Hill shared excitement for the start of a new year created by the superintendent and the energy and atmosphere her superintendent brings to the system. Mrs. Ingram described the administrator’s approach within the school as extending not just to teachers but to students. She states “*the approach to leadership feeds into what our students know about themselves as leaders and I think that is the biggest takeaway is that we are not just operating on our own as teachers trying to develop leadership, we also share that with our students.*”

I asked the same question of the three principals. In sharing their final thoughts, they shared a variety of responses. Principal Adams expressed a concern that

*In a small system like this, you hit a bottleneck, because you end up with really strong staff members. You end up with people that are very capable and would make excellent leaders, but you have the bottleneck because you only have so many positions. So you’re kind of torn between encouraging them to the point that you feel like you’re pushing them out the door versus are they going to get stagnant or even a little bitter because they’ve been here and put in their time.*

## **Summary**

Chapter four reported the research findings for this study. The findings include the strategies utilized by principals in highly effective schools to support teacher leaders. I conducted face-to-face interviews with three principals and six teacher leaders at three different schools. I recorded and transcribed each interview and provided direct quotes from each participant to develop common themes. Chapter five will examine the findings from this study as they relate to the literature on teacher leadership. Also, I will provide recommendations for supporting teacher leaders as well as suggestions for further study.

## **Chapter V: Conclusion**

After evaluating the transcripts from each principal and teacher interview from this study, I discovered several key areas that, when implemented, create a culture in which teacher leadership thrives. Examining the systems in place for fostering teacher leadership at Empower Elementary, Inspire Elementary, and Support Elementary, three highly successful elementary schools helped create a picture of how school staff can intentionally develop teacher leadership. The highly effective principals interviewed were all willing to share leadership and distribute responsibilities to their teachers, creating a cost-effective, generalizable teacher leadership model for other school settings.

### **Summary of the Study**

This study examined the strategies utilized by principals in highly effective schools to foster teacher leadership in their schools. In each of the three schools, I interviewed the principal and two teacher leaders. Both principals and teachers provided insights into how teacher leadership was fostered within their school. The transcripts from each interview were carefully analyzed in order to discover themes that were common in the support of teacher leaders. This chapter provides a review of the methodology, provides findings from the study, and offers ideas for future research.

### **Central Question**

The central research question of this study was: What strategies do principals in highly effective elementary schools utilize to foster teacher leadership, from both the principal and teacher leader perspective?

**Sub-questions.** Four sub-questions helped guide the direction of the interview questions.



1. What strategies do principals say they use to foster teacher leadership in their high-performing elementary schools?
2. What strategies do teacher leaders say their principal uses to foster teacher leadership in their highly effective elementary school?
3. What elements do principals say exist in the school culture that facilitate/enhance teacher leadership?
4. What challenges exist that pose hindrances to the practice of teacher leadership, according to the teacher and the principal?

### **Review of Methodology**

I used a qualitative inquiry method in this study because I wanted to focus on the experiences and perspectives of both the principals and teacher leaders. I selected a multiple case study design methodology to identify how effective principals foster teacher leadership in their schools from both the principal and teacher perspectives. The primary goal of qualitative inquiry is to discover, rather than confirm, themes that emerge from the interviews (Merriam, 1998).

The criteria for study eligibility included classification as a school with an overall school system score of 90% or higher on the 2017-2018 Alabama State Report Card, an individual school score of a 90% or higher on the 2017-2018 Alabama State Report Card, and with a principal who has been in their current position for three years or more. Eight school systems in the state of Alabama met the criteria to participate in the study. I selected three schools for this study. I then asked the principal of each school to select two teachers on their staff that served as teacher leaders. The three principals and each of their two teacher leaders selections made up the nine interview participants for this study. Before the start of interviews, each principal permitted me to go on a walk-through of their school to get a feel for the overall environment.

## Major Findings

In analyzing the results from the study, two major findings developed in the research. The finding that the development of teacher leadership is carefully designed in highly successful schools and the finding that the development of teacher leadership programs and opportunities and at the school district level were important in developing successful teacher leaders. Participants from each school provided valuable insights in the development of these findings. Interviewees from Empower Elementary School included, Principal Adams, Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Clark. Principal Davis, Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Flores represented Inspire Elementary School and Principal Green, Mrs. Hill and Ms. Ingram provided their thoughts at Support Elementary School.

**Teacher leadership is intentional.** One of the themes that emerged from the interviews supports the creation of opportunities and the considerate development of teacher leadership as a purposeful act with effective principals. Principal Davis stated that when selecting teachers for leadership opportunities, he seeks to “*pick leaders in your school that are ready to lead and step up.*” By looking for and identifying those teachers, he can encourage and support their development and promote opportunities for them to lead. The Visionary Team, a democratically selected group of school leaders unique to Empower Elementary, revisits the school’s mission, vision, and beliefs periodically. The Visionary Team also leads a faculty discussion on the school’s goals for the upcoming year. At Support Elementary, Principal Green stated, “*We consider everybody to be a leader of something.*” This mindset was clear in talking with teachers at Support Elementary.

**Support for teacher leadership is available at the school district level.** Five of the six teachers interviewed felt school district-level support as teacher leaders was important in their

own development as teacher leaders. Each mentioned specific school district wide programs designed to develop teacher leadership. When describing their participation in these programs, teachers were excited and energetic. They also noted a focus on understanding school district wide issues and leadership skill development as well as a deliberate effort by the school district to connect teachers from across the district to one another.

### **Findings Related to Literature**

Once I completed the interviews, I gathered the data from all nine interviews for evaluation and analysis. Because leadership styles played such a prominent role in the literature surrounding teacher leadership, I evaluated, analyzed, and categorized each principal and teacher leader interview using the framework of the four leadership styles discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, because the specific methods used to support teacher leaders was so developed in the literature, I included the themes from the literature alongside the finding from the study in order to show how these strategies fit within the context of the current literature and how the data from this study fits within the literature on teacher leadership.

**Leadership styles.** The literature on leadership styles examined in Chapter 2 detailed the four most common types of leadership: distributed, shared, democratic, and parallel leadership. Through interviews with each of the three principals, (Principal Adams, Principal of Empower Elementary, Principal Davis, Principal of Inspire Elementary, and Principal Green, Principal of Support Elementary) and six teachers, (Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Clark – Empower Elementary; Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Foster – Inspire Elementary; and Mrs. Hill and Ms. Ingram – Support Elementary) I could see the leadership style of each principal begin to emerge.

***Distributed.*** Harris (2016) stated that distributed leadership supports the idea that individuals outside of formal leadership roles can share their influence and agency. There were

examples of distribution of leadership in all three schools but was most evident in Principal Davis (Inspire Elementary). Principal Davis has created a set group of four educators that are always on the Inspire Elementary leadership team (Principal, Assistant Principal, Counselor, and Instructional Coach). In addition to the set group, Principal Davis selects representatives from all areas of the school – one from each grade level, a special area teacher, and a special education representative to serve a yearly term on the team.

Leithwood (2007) stated that through distributed leadership, both teacher and student morale improved. This increase in morale was evident in the positive interview comments from all six teachers. Harris et al. (2007) highlighted the support for the relationship between the involvement of teachers in the school decision-making process and the strong working relationships to school improvement and change.

***Shared.*** Lambert (2002) explained that educators have, for decades, viewed the learning of all students within a school as the role of all teachers and have come to view their learning as a primary responsibility. However, we have been slow to see the responsibility for the learning of colleagues as an important part of a teacher’s responsibility. Lambert goes on to state, “By understanding that learning and leading are firmly linked in the community, we take the first step in building shared instructional leadership capacity” (p. 37). Principal Davis described her school teams as “*working together for a purpose, for the common good of the whole school. Everybody in the school, teachers, the certified personnel, is on an action team*”. Mrs. Evans (Inspire Elementary) described the appeal of participation on an action team by stating that “*you have an interest, a vested interest in what you’re doing.*” Mrs. Flores (Inspire Elementary) added, “*our whole thing is leading where you are...that’s kind of what our motto is.*”

Shared leadership is a master skill that allows teams to function effectively (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). When teacher leaders share their methods and resources, model their teaching, and provide specific feedback to their colleagues, they “empower others to be as effective as possible with their students” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 48). Lambert (2002) concluded by confirming that today’s effective principal establishes a shared vision with members of the school community and validates leadership in others.

**Democratic.** Democratic Leadership is founded on the ideals of democracy as it “entails rights to meaningful participation and respect for and expectations toward everyone as ethical beings” (Woods, 2004, p. 4). Principal Adams stated that leadership at Empower Elementary often starts when a teacher leader comes with an idea and then gains momentum, in an almost organic way.

*I might have a teacher come to me and say, ‘I’m interested in trauma-informed schools,’ so we will have a conversation, and it sort of takes on a group of interested people and kind of gathers some momentum. Then I just check in with them and say, ‘what do you need from me? Where do you think we can go with this? How does this look?’ Sometimes those things come to fruition and they just kind of take on a life of their own.*

Democratic leadership differentiates itself from other types of leadership because it stems from an activity or process where a person can initiate change with “others following, contributing and adding to or altering it in various ways” (Woods, 2004, p.6). This type of leadership structure may vary between the levels of control (or limits) the participants are permitted and may include or exclude certain groups within an organization (Woods, 2004). Kensler et al. (2009) found that in environments where high-trust relationships exist, there is strong support for continuous professional learning and continuous school improvement. Such is

the case at Empower Elementary. All three schools discussed having a grade-level leadership team. However, the democratic method in which the team was selected was unique to Empower Elementary. Mrs. Clark described the Visionary Committee at Empower Elementary as “*one that is elected [by the staff], and it is a small team of teachers that meet once a month.*” Principal Adams added that as soon as the group is selected at the end of the year, they set the goals for the upcoming school year. Through this democratic method of leadership, Principal Adams encourages the staff to determine those who will guide the school for the year.

**Parallel.** Crowther (2009) defined parallel leadership as “a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity” (p. 53). Crowther (2009) illustrates parallel leadership in three qualities, “mutual trust, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression” (p.53). Mrs. Flores described the leadership team at Inspire Elementary as “*more of a collective*” and as one that helped establish “*the focus for the school year.*”

The Lighthouse Team concept reinforced by Principal Green at Support Elementary is a core group that works to keep the culture of the school in place. The Lighthouse Team serves to “*tap other people to help with those (school leadership) roles.*” The team “*recruits based on interest or people who have taken the initiative in different ways (around the school).*” Principal Green stated that “*everybody serves on something*” at Support Elementary and that the culture of the school is one in which they “*consider everybody to be a leader.*”

The advancement of professional learning communities, culture building as well as a whole school focus on teaching and learning are characteristics of parallel leadership (Andrews, 2008) and all are present in Principal Green’s leadership approach at Support Elementary.

*Summary of leadership style findings.* Through interviews with principals and teachers, I discovered that all three principals used all four of the leadership styles in varying degrees, depending on the situation. The differences in the styles are often subtle, yet important. The presence of all four leadership styles and the ability to adjust their use based on changing circumstances points to the effectiveness of the principals and teacher leaders.

**Framework of themes.** An extensive review of the literature on teacher leadership (Chapter 2) points to three commonly referenced studies (i.e., Danielson, 2007; Murphy, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). These three studies lay the groundwork for the four specific methods used to support teacher leaders in the literature: creating a clear vision for the school and intentionally allowing teacher leaders to grow within a school; identifying and selecting teachers for leadership opportunities; making the work of teacher leaders legitimate and celebrated, and developing leadership skills through time and resources that help teacher leaders grow in their knowledge and skills. The four major themes from the literature were I included alongside the finding from the study in order to show how these strategies fit within the context of the current literature and how the data from this study supports the current literature on teacher leadership.

*Creating a clear vision and intentionally allowing teacher leaders to grow.* Research shows that it is not always easy for a principal to relinquish some of their power. Danielson (2007) found that some “administrators jealously guard their turf, apparently fearing that ambitious teacher leaders will somehow undermine their own authority” (p.19). However, Crowther’s (2009) research found that “the encouragement of teacher leaders is a function that most school principals embrace enthusiastically because of its potential to contribute to the maturation of the teaching profession, to school capacity building, and the effectiveness of their roles” (p.80).

Murphy (2005) supported the goal for administrators to “*broaden leadership structures*” and “*focus on connecting teachers to new or expanded roles*” (p. 85) within their schools. Also, if teacher leadership is to become established, principals need to become active in assisting teacher leaders in creating goals that result in authentic leadership opportunities (Murphy, 2005). While the development of specific goals centered around teacher leadership was limited, examples of authentic leadership opportunities provided by the school principals were provided by all six of the teacher interviewees. Mrs. Bell stated that she has “*led committees at our school*” and has “*been a part of our learning target committee for the district*”. Mrs. Clark has served on the Visionary Team as well as a teacher mentor and Mrs. Flores has been a member of school Action Team and the school leadership team.

***Identifying and selecting teachers for leadership opportunities.*** Klar et al. (2016) conducted a study that discovered how principals identified teacher leaders and how leaders distributed leadership roles within a school. Klar et al. (2016) found that of the six principals studied, some of the teacher leaders requested opportunities for leadership roles, some were actively pursuing administrative certification and requested a mentor, and others possessed the potential for leadership as determined by the principal. Principal Davis (Inspire Elementary) looks for teachers who have voiced a desire for leadership and those who have shown leadership traits during the year. At Support Elementary, Principal Green recruits teachers for leadership opportunities based on initiative and drive. When selecting for the team, she looks at the leadership aspects of each person, not just who will represent a specific grade level.

Ash and Persall (2000) remind us that leadership is not role-specific, reserved for a select few individuals within a school. In order to share those roles within a school, the principal should “*fashion learning opportunities for the faculty and staff so they can develop into productive*



leaders" (Ash & Persall, 2000, p. 16). Also, principals need to be "proactive in helping teachers acquire the skills they need" (Danielson, 2007, p. 19), so teachers are prepared when an opportunity arises. Principal Davis (Inspire Elementary) described a specific formula that she uses to ensure equitable representation of her leadership teams. She stated that "*there is an important feature of having people on your team that represents every area...I have noticed that if you don't have that, you do have gaps.*" She went on to say that "*there are four of us that are always on leadership*" and "*I have one (teacher) from each grade level and then I have a special area representative and a special education representative.*"

It is important to point out that the three principals in this study provided evidence of identifying and selecting teachers for leadership opportunities and were able to determine ways that teachers could participate in leadership practices. It is not reasonable to assume that each teacher can be the leader in every situation, but the principals in this study worked to find a way to offer opportunities to a large group of the teachers in the school, not just those teachers who have asked for leadership roles, or simply the teachers who the principal felt were ready for leadership.

***Making the work of teacher leaders legitimate.*** Barth (2001) explained that one way that principals can make the work of teacher leaders legitimate is to make it authentic and specific to the talents of the teacher leader. Barth (2001) found that "principals who build a culture in which teacher leadership can flourish are more likely to match an important school issue with a teacher who feels passionately about the issue. One teacher's passion may be fire safety; another's, the supply closet. Innovative solutions often come from teachers who do not know how to do something but want to learn" (p. 31). Making the work of teachers legitimate and connected with their passion was evident in a comment made by Principal Adams when he stated, "*I might have*

*a teacher come to me and say, 'I'm interested in trauma-informed schools,' so we will have a conversation and it sort of takes on a group of interested people and kind of gathers some momentum”.*

***Developing leadership skills.*** While many teachers appear to be ready for leadership roles, we cannot ask them to “assume leadership roles without any preparation or coaching, simply because they appear to know how to work with their colleagues” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 44). Danielson (2007) states that while teachers can learn a necessary skill such as curriculum development, instructional support, assessment development, collaboration, and facilitation through school-based professional development, they also need to be supported by university and district professional learning opportunities. York-Barr and Duke (2004) suggest times for teacher leaders to receive feedback on their development as well as time to reflect on growth as a leader. Principals must set benchmarks of progress that are flexible in order to determine if teachers need to make adjustments to the plan (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Mrs. Clark (Empower Elementary) also described a program within the system in which “*people who have shown an interest in administration*” are organized into a cohort. The system supports this cohort as they go through classes at a local university as a team. This program was not mentioned by either Principal Adams or Mrs. Bell, also from Empower Elementary. Mrs. Clark went on to describes this support as both “*meeting (as a group) to support them (teachers) or to set them up with a mentor in the school or school system.*”

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) recognized that while the responsibility of developing leadership capacity begins at the building level with the school principal, it is not their responsibility alone. Superintendents and district staff can support teacher leadership by establishing policy and creating a district culture. Universities help to encourage teacher

leadership by developing skills in teachers, and by creating beliefs about the benefits of teacher leadership in the teachers themselves, “teachers must participate together as learners and leaders” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 48). Angelle (2007) explained that “principals cannot give empowerment to teachers. Principals can only create the environments and opportunities that lead to and support empowerment” (Angelle, 2007, p. 234). Once principals create those environments and opportunities, teacher leaders can seize opportunities and find ways to support learning in their schools (Angelle, 2007).

Mrs. Flores discussed how her role a former participant in the teacher leadership cohort has now shifted to the facilitator and was leading a session on the day we interviewed on the power of positive peer pressure. Her excitement was obvious when she stated that she was “*kind of getting a movement started*” for the teacher leadership cohort. Principal Davis described the goal of the teacher cohort as one to build the capacity in teachers to “*lead where you are*” and not just a training for future administrators, rather to help teachers understand that they can “*lead as a teacher, in my classroom, on my team, in the school, in a variety of different ways to fulfill that (desire to lead) that is in me.*” She went on to say that teachers in the program value the cross-district experience of getting to hear from teachers at the high school and the middle schools and other elementary schools.

Principal Davis (Inspire Elementary) described a teacher leadership program at the system level that has been going on for three years. Any teacher is eligible to apply for the system’s leadership program. The idea behind the program is to “*lead where you are, not about becoming an administrator.*” Principal Davis had three teachers get into the program the first year; those same teachers were on the school’s leadership team. The system-level leadership program is led by the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and

the Curriculum Instruction Specialist for the school system. Principal Davis feels the program is valuable because, “*sometimes, teachers would not see themselves as administrators but then through the experience, develop an interest as something they might like to do in the future.*” The goal from the school system program is to inspire teachers to lead as a teacher in their classroom, on their team, in their school, and a variety of ways within the system.

Principal Adams (Empower Elementary) did state that being mindful of the opportunities for participation on committees was more present than it was five or six years ago. Opportunities for teacher participation in committees have also increased (i.e., learning target committee, textbook committee). Principal Davis also shared feelings that through experiences over the last few years, she has developed a personal [leadership] style with the staff and now truly “*wants to cultivate leaders.*”

## **Surprises**

I was surprised to discover the lack of barriers to teacher leadership shared by the teachers interviewed in the study. Barriers to teacher leadership described in the literature included a lack of appreciation for work of teacher leaders by principals, too many responsibilities, a lack of time, as well as the barriers created by teaching colleagues. While teacher responses did match some of the barriers described in the literature (e.g., time constraints was mentioned by four of the six interviewees), they did not mention barriers imposed by the school leadership or worry of a loss of power, and only one participant mentioned barriers from other members of the staff. Two of the three principals shared barriers they see teachers face. One principal referenced challenges from other members of the staff and the third stated that at her school, “*there were no barriers to teacher leadership.*” This lack of barriers may be a result

of the culture created by the highly effective principals selected for this study. The principals that were interviewed all valued the role of teacher leader within their schools.

Another surprise discovered in the research was the lack of professional development goals for the specific development of teacher leadership. While there were programs in place for creating yearly professional development goals, the idea of developing a specific professional goal for teacher leadership was not evident in any of the interviews. This was surprising because the creation of teacher leadership goals are supported in many states across the country with teacher leadership appearing as a standard for teacher professional growth in both Arizona and Colorado (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). In addition, North Carolina. Teacher preparation programs require a teacher leadership standard, and the state's teacher evaluation instrument includes teacher leadership standards required of all teachers (<http://ncpublicschools.org/docs/effectiveness-model/ncess/standards/prof-teach-standards.pdf>).

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is in the finding that not only were positive leadership styles evident in the three highly effective schools, but each of the major themes for promoting teacher leadership was evident as well. The literature surrounding teacher leadership and creating supportive school environments points to a definitive framework for use by principals and school systems in the development of teacher leaders. This study found that not only are the leadership styles necessary, but the major themes for promoting teacher leadership are necessary to affect teacher leaders' development in elementary schools. The results of this study support the international literature on teacher leadership and therefore, can be duplicated at other schools to improve teacher leadership.

## **Implications for Practice**

**Implications for principals.** The greatest implication for school principals is the intentional selection and development of teacher leaders and the ability to see all teachers within a school as teacher leaders on some level. Teacher leadership opportunities did not look the same at every school, and the creation of teacher leadership teams was done differently at each of the three schools. Nevertheless, each school had leadership teams on which their teachers felt a connection. Principals should work to find teacher leadership opportunities beyond the school leadership teams and consider the many ways in which leadership can be shared within a school.

In addition, I feel that it is important for principals to be aware of their leadership style and work to be less distributive and more shared, democratic or parallel in their style. While distributive leadership has become a catch-all phrase, the idea that opportunities are distributed as the principal sees fit needs to shift to the mindset of teachers and principals sharing responsibility for the learning, democratically selecting teacher leaders, and working together in parallel partnerships.

**Implications for the school system.** All three school systems researched provided evidence of programs used to develop teacher leaders at the system level. If a school system wishes to continue on a positive trajectory, then the school systems needs to look internally at the teachers who know the school and are willing to share leadership responsibilities. Programs that develop teacher leaders system-wide help create the leaders of the future who are informed and prepared to lead.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

In examining the literature on teacher leadership, the greatest amount of literature on teacher leadership styles was found on distributed teacher leadership and the least amount was

found on democratic leadership and parallel leadership. I believe that future research should focus on how through specific leadership styles highly effective principals are able to create ways for teachers to be involved in school-level leadership.

The research in this study explained that teacher leadership needs to be intentional. In order for teacher leadership to be intentional, it is suggested that further research focus on ways in which leadership goals could be included into yearly professional development goals. While professional goals are used in some areas, the research showed that there is a lack of goal setting within the highly effective schools that were studied and therefore an area for future research.

A final suggestion for future research is in the development and implementation of teacher leadership programs at the school district level. Specifically, what are the goals of school district level teacher leadership programs, how are teachers selected for the programs and who runs the programs at the school district level. In addition, how are school system level programs supported by local universities in order to provide current best practices in the field of teacher leadership.

## **Conclusion**

This study allowed me to interview both teachers and principals on their perceptions of teacher leadership at their school. Themes of support for teacher leaders, creating opportunities for teacher leaders, encouraging leadership in teachers, and collaboration were evident throughout the interviews. While the themes identified matched those found in the literature, thus strengthening what is already known about effective leadership, new for furthering the literature on leadership styles and the creation of system leadership initiatives have been shown to be warranted in further research.

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## Appendix A

### Matrix of Research Questions and Interview Questions



## Matrix of Research Questions and Interview Questions

The chart below aligns the research questions and the interview questions asked in each principal interview and teacher interview. The central research question of this study is: What strategies do principals in highly effective elementary school utilize to foster teacher leadership, from both the principal and teacher leader perspective?

- 1) What strategies do principals say they use to foster teacher leadership in their high-performing elementary schools?
- 2) What strategies do teacher leaders say their principal uses to foster teacher leadership in their highly effective elementary school?
- 3) What elements exist in the school culture that facilitate/enhance teacher leadership?
- 4) What challenges exist that pose hindrances to the practice of teacher leadership, according to the teacher and the principal?

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Questions (IQ) Principal (P) Teacher Leader (TL)</b>	<b>Data Source</b>
1. What strategies do principals say they use to foster teacher leadership in their high-performing elementary schools?	PIQ #1: How are teacher leadership roles selected at your school?  PIQ #2: How are teacher leadership roles selected at your system?  PIQ #3: How do you view your role in developing teachers for leadership responsibilities?  PIQ #6: If you were to think and identify one teacher who is a leader in your school can you think of a story of how they might have developed as a teacher leader?  PIQ #8: Do you feel that your leadership identification strategies have changed over the years	Principal Interview
2. What strategies do teacher leaders say their principal uses to foster teacher leadership in their highly effective elementary school?	TIQ #2: What type of leadership opportunities are you given at your school?  TIQ #5: Have you had a former or current administrator who fostered your teacher-leadership?	Teacher Interview

<p>3. What elements exist in the school culture that facilitate/enhance teacher leadership?</p>	<p>PIQ #4: Do teachers in your district establish professional goals around developing as a leader?</p> <p>PIQ #5: What skills have you found to be beneficial for teacher leaders to be effective?</p> <p>TIQ #3: Why do you think your principal selected you for leadership opportunities?</p> <p>TIQ #4: What skills have you found to be beneficial in your leadership roles?</p> <p>TIQ #6: Describe the interactions you have with your principal, (formal conversations or informal conversations)?</p> <p>TIQ #7: What ways do you see other teachers being selected for leadership opportunities?</p> <p>TIQ #8: How you see teacher leadership being encouraged within your school system?</p> <p>TIQ #10: Do you every establish yearly goals around developing as a leader, (professional leaning goals)?</p>	<p>Principal Interview</p> <p>Teacher Interview</p>
<p>4. What challenges exist that pose hindrances to the practice of teacher leadership, according to the teacher and the principal?</p>	<p>PIQ #7: Can you explain any barriers that teacher leaders might face in your school or in your school system?</p> <p>PIQ #9: Are there things you plan do differently going into the future to develop teacher leaders?</p> <p>TIQ #9: Have you ever encountered a barrier to being a teacher leader?</p>	<p>Principal Interview</p> <p>Teacher Interview</p>

**Principal Interview Questions:**

1. Question #1: How are teacher leadership roles selected at your school?
2. Question #2: How are teacher leadership roles selected at your system?
3. Question #3: How do you view your role in developing teachers for leadership responsibilities?
4. Question #4: Do teachers in your district establish professional goals around developing as a leader?

5. Question # 5: What skills have you found to be beneficial for teacher leaders to be effective?
6. Question #6: If you were to think and identify one teacher who is a leader in your school can you think of a story of how they might have developed as a teacher leader?
7. Question #7: Can you explain any barriers that teacher leaders might face in your school or in your school system?
8. Question #8: Do you feel that your leadership identification strategies have changed over the years?
9. Question #9: Are there things you plan to do differently going into the future to develop teacher leaders?

**Teacher Interview Questions:**

1. Question #1: Please tell me about your career path.
2. Question #2: What type of leadership opportunities are you given at your school?
3. Question #3: Why do you think your principal selected you for leadership opportunities?
4. Question #4: What skills have you found to be beneficial in your leadership roles?
5. Question #5: Have you had a former or current administrator who fostered your teacher-leadership?
6. Question #6: Describe the interactions you have with your principal, (formal conversations or informal conversations)?
7. Question #7: What ways do you see other teachers being selected for leadership opportunities?
8. Question #8: How do you see teacher leadership being encouraged within your school system?
9. Question #9: Have you ever encountered a barrier to being a teacher leader?
10. Question #10: Do you ever establish yearly goals around developing as a leader, (professional learning goals)?
11. Question #11: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about developing teacher leaders?

Appendix B  
Institutional Review Board Documents

Auburn University Human Research Protection Program

EXEMPTION REVIEW APPLICATION

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 04/22/2019 to Protocol # 19-104 EX 1904

For information or help completing this form, contact: The OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE, Location: 115 Ramsay Hall Phone: 334-844-5966 Email: IRBAdmin@auburn.edu

Submit completed application and supporting material as one attachment to irbsubmit@auburn.edu.

1. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION Date

a. Project Title What strategies do principals in highly effective schools utilize to foster teacher leadership, from both the principal and teacher perspective?

b. Principal Investigator Jeffrey Peter Forster Degree(s) PhD.

Rank/Title Researcher Department/School EFLT; College of Education

Phone Number (334) 329-9671 AU Email forstip@tigermail.auburn.edu

Faculty Principal Investigator (required if PI is a student) Dr. Lisa Kensler

Title Professor Department/School EFLT; College of Education

Phone Number (334)844-3020 AU Email lak008@auburn.edu

Dept Head Dr. Sherida Downer Department/School EFLT; College of Education

Phone Number (334)844-3060 AU Email downesh@auburn.edu

c. Project Personnel (other than PI) - Identify all individuals who will be involved with the conduct of the research and include their role on the project. Role may include design, recruitment, consent process, data collection, data analysis, and reporting). Attach a table if needed for additional personnel.

Personnel Name Degree(s)

Rank/Title Department/School

Role

AU affiliated? YES NO If no, name of home institution

Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel?

Personnel Name Degree(s)

Rank/Title Department/School

Role

AU affiliated? YES NO If no, name of home institution

Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel?

Personnel Name Degree(s)

Rank/Title Department/School

Role

AU affiliated? YES NO If no, name of home institution

Plan for IRB approval for non-AU affiliated personnel?

d. Training - Have all Key Personnel completed CITI human subjects training (including elective modules related to this research) within the last 3 years? YES NO

e. Funding Source- Is this project funded by the investigator(s)? YES NO

Is this project funded by AU? YES NO If YES, identify source

Is this project funded by an external sponsor? YES NO If YES, provide the name of the sponsor, type of sponsor (governmental, non-profit, corporate, other), and an identification number for the award.

Name Type Grant #

f. List other IRBs associated with this research and submit a copy of their approval and/or protocol.

**2. Mark the category or categories below that describe the proposed research:**

1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices. The research is not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn or assessment of educators providing instruction. 104(d)(1)
2. Research only includes interactions involving educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observation if at least ONE of the following criteria. (The research includes data collection only; may include visual or auditory recording; may NOT include intervention and only includes interactions). **Mark the applicable sub-category below (i, ii, or iii).** 104(d)(2)
- (i) Recorded information cannot readily identify the participant (directly or indirectly/linked); **OR**
- surveys and interviews: no children;
  - educational tests or observation of public behavior: can only include children when investigators do not participate in activities being observed.
- (ii) Any disclosures of responses outside would not reasonably place participant at risk; **OR**
- (iii) Information is recorded with identifiers or code linked to identifiers and IRB conducts limited review; no children. **Requires limited review by the IRB.\***
3. Research involving Benign Behavioral Interventions (BBI)\*\* through verbal, written responses (including data entry or audiovisual recording) from adult subjects who prospectively agree and ONE of the following criteria is met. (This research does not include children and does not include medical interventions) **Mark the applicable sub-category below (I, II, or III).** 104(d)(3)(i)
- (A) Recorded information cannot readily identify the subject (directly or indirectly/linked); **OR**
- (B) Any disclosure of responses outside of the research would not reasonably place subject at risk; **OR**
- (C) Information is recorded with identifiers and cannot have deception unless participant prospectively agrees. **Requires limited review by the IRB.\***
4. Secondary research for which consent is not required: use of identifiable information or identifiable bio-specimen that have been or will be collected for some other 'primary' or 'initial' activity, if one of the following criteria is met. Allows retrospective and prospective secondary use. **Mark the applicable sub-category below (I, II, III, or IV).** 104(d)(4)
- (i) Biospecimens or information and must be publically available;
- (ii) Information recorded so subject cannot readily be identified, directly or indirectly/linked; investigator does not contact subjects and will not re-identify the subjects; **OR**
- (iii) Collection and analysis involving investigators use of identifiable health information when use is regulated by HIPAA "health care operations" or "research or "public health activities and purposes" (does not include biospecimens (only PHI and requires federal guidance on how to apply); **OR**
- (iv) Research information collected by or on behalf of federal government using government generated or collected information obtained for non-research activities.

- 5. Research and demonstration projects which are supported by a federal agency/department AND designed to study and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs;(iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs. (must be posted on a federal web site). 104(d)(5) (must be posted on a federal web site)
  
- 6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The research does not involve prisoners as participants. 104(d)(6)

**New exemption categories 7 and 8: Both categories 7 and 8 require Broad Consent.** (Broad consent is a new type of informed consent provided under the Revised Common Rule pertaining to storage, maintenance, and secondary research with identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens. Secondary research refers to research use of materials that are collected for either research studies distinct from the current secondary research proposal, or for materials that are collected for non-research purposes, such as materials that are left over from routine clinical diagnosis or treatments. Broad consent does not apply to research that collects information or biospecimens from individuals through direct interaction or intervention specifically for the purpose of the research.) **The Auburn University IRB has determined that as currently interpreted, Broad Consent is not feasible at Auburn and these 2 categories WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED at this time.**

**\*Limited IRB review – the IRB Chairs or designated IRB reviewer reviews the protocol to ensure adequate provisions are in place to protect privacy and confidentiality.**

**\*\*Category 3 – Benign Behavioral Interventions (BBI) must be brief in duration, painless/harmless, not physically invasive, not likely to have a significant adverse lasting impact on participants, and it is unlikely participants will find the interventions offensive or embarrassing.**

### 3. PROJECT SUMMARY

**a. Does the study target any special populations? (Mark all applicable)**

Minors (under 19)

YES  NO

Pregnant women, fetuses, or any products of conception

YES  NO

Prisoners or wards (unless incidental, not allowed for Exempt research)

YES  NO

Temporarily or permanently impaired

YES  NO

YES  NO

**b. Does the research pose more than minimal risk to participants?**

*Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. 42 CFR 46.102(i)*

**c. Does the study involve any of the following?**

Procedures subject to FDA regulations (drugs, devices, etc.)

YES  NO

Use of school records of identifiable students or information from instructors about specific students.

YES  NO

Protected health or medical information when there is a direct or Indirect link which could identify the participant.

YES  NO

Collection of sensitive aspects of the participant's own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior or alcohol use.

YES  NO

Deception of participants

YES  NO

**4. Briefly describe the proposed research, including purpose, participant population, recruitment process, consent process, research procedures and methodology.**

A qualitative research approach will be used for this study to focus on the experience and perspective of principals and teachers in highly effective schools. The purpose of the study will be to determine strategies principals in those schools use to foster leadership opportunities for teachers. The participant population of three principals and six teachers will be generated from data obtained from the 2017-2018 Alabama State Department of Education Report Card. Principals of identified schools will be recruited through a phone call using the IRB Principal Recruitment Script as a guide for the conversation, (Appendix A). A follow up email using the IRB Principal Recruitment Script, (Appendix A) will then be sent with additional details of the study. Once three principals have agreed to participate in the study, each principal will be asked to identify two teacher leaders at their school. Those teacher leaders will then be recruited to participate in the interview using the IRB Teacher Recruitment Script, (Appendix B) followed by an email using the IRB Teacher Recruitment Script, (Appendix B). Data will be collected through face to face interviews with each participant at a time and place convenient to the interviewee and interviewer. All consenting participants will be informed of the purpose of the research study including the research question, instrumentation, method of data collection, data analysis and presentation of data collected through the Informed Consent letter, (Appendix C). All interviews will take place at an agreed upon time and location. Following the transcription of the interview, participants will be provided with the transcribed document to ensure accuracy of statements.

Multiple Case Study design methodology will be used to identify how effective principals foster teacher leadership in their schools. Semi-structured life world interview protocol will be utilized in order to understand the themes of the lived everyday experiences of principals and teachers. A digital voice recording device, (not internet connected) will be used to ensure complete collection of the interview for review. Audio recordings will be transcribed using Rev.com. Rev.com is a transcription service that ensures confidentiality of materials shared with their company. Electronic recordings will be stored on a password protected computer. Recordings will be destroyed after transcription. Printed copies of the transcription will be kept in a locked case. Participants will be given a copy of transcribed material in order to allow member checking for accuracy in interview statements.

**5. Describe how participants/data/specimens will be selected. If applicable, include gender, race, and ethnicity of the participant population.**

The population for this study will consist of all principals and teachers of high performing schools in Alabama. Data from the Alabama State Department of Education Report Card will be used to identify high performing schools based on the following criteria:

1. be identified by the Alabama State Department of Education as significantly above their growth target for the 2017-2018 school year;
2. be identified by the Alabama State Department of Education as having high growth in reading and math;
3. have a principal who has worked in their current position for more than three years.



6. Does the research involve deception?  YES  NO If YES, please provide the rationale for deception and describe the debriefing process.

7. Describe why none of the research procedures would cause a participant either physical or psychological discomfort or be perceived as discomfort above and beyond what the person would experience in daily life.

Participants will be asked interview questions that relate to their work life. All interview questions relate to teacher leadership and are worded in a way as to gain insight, not cause discomfort to the participant.

8. Describe the provisions to maintain confidentiality of data, including collection, transmission, and storage.

A digital voice recording device will be used to record/collect interview data. Audio recordings of each interview will be transcribed using Rev.com. I will submit pseudonyms with the recordings; no real names of participants will be submitted to Rev.com. Rev.com ensures confidentiality of recordings and transcriptions. Electronic recordings of each interview as well as transcriptions and electronic notes will be stored on AU Box, the secure server provided by Auburn University. Printed copies of the transcription will be kept in a locked case and will not include identifiable information.

9. Describe the provisions included in the research to protect the privacy interests of participants (e.g., others will not overhear conversations with potential participants, individuals will not be publicly identified or embarrassed).

In order to protect the privacy of each participant, the location for the interview will be a mutually agreed upon location at a mutually agreed upon time. We will find a quiet location that meets participant needs. Once collected, all recordings and written material will be kept on my password protected computer in a secure location. Participants will not be identified by name and all recordings and identifiable material will be destroyed upon the completion of the research project.

10. Will the research involve interacting (communication or direct involvement) with participants?  YES  NO If YES, describe the consent process and information to be presented to subjects. This includes identifying that the activities involve research; that participation is voluntary; describing the procedures to be performed; and the PI name and contact information.

Prior to meeting for data collection, participants will receive the informed consent document describing the purpose of the research study including the research question, instrumentation, method of data collection, and PI name and contact information. At our meeting, and before the interview begins, I will review the informed consent document with participants. If they agree to proceed with the interview, then they will sign the form and I will keep a signed copy. I will provide a copy of the informed consent for their records.

11. Additional Information and/or attachments.

In the space below, provide any additional information you believe may help the IRB review of the proposed research. If attachments are included, list the attachments below. Attachments may include recruitment materials, consent documents, site permissions, IRB approvals from other institutions, etc.

Appendix A (Principal Recruitment Script – Verbal and Email)  
Appendix B (Teacher Recruitment Script - Verbal and Email)  
Appendix C (Informed Consent)

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Principal Investigator's Signature J P Forster Date 4/1/19

If PI is a student,  
Faculty Principal Investigator's Signature [Signature] Date 4/3/2019

Department Head's Signature Sherida Downer Date 4/5/2019

**INFORMED CONSENT**

**for a Research Study entitled**

**What strategies to principals in highly effective schools use to foster teacher leadership?**

**You are invited to participate in a research study** to determine the strategies principals in highly effective schools use to foster teacher leadership. This study is being conducted by Pete Forster under the direction of Dr. Lisa Kensler from the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology Department at Auburn University. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the principal or teacher of an elementary school which has proven to be successful based on the Alabama State Department of Education Report Card for the 2017-2018 school year.

**What will be involved if you participate?** If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview of approximately one hour in length. In addition, you will be asked to provide the researcher a tour of your school with someone on your staff. Your total time commitment will be approximately an hour and a half. Each interview will be recorded to ensure complete collection of the interview for later review and transcription. Audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription is complete.

**Are there any risks or discomforts?** I do not foresee risks associated with this study. We will be discussing development of teacher leadership, a very low risk topic. However, I will keep our conversation confidential.

**Are there any benefits to yourself or others?** If you participate in this study, you will be adding to the research on effective school leadership that could help other schools in our state.

**Will you receive compensation for participating?** There will be no compensation provided for participation in this study.

**Are there any costs?** The only cost to you will be in the time you give up to participate in our interview.

**If you change your mind about participating,** you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology Department at Auburn University.

Participant's initials \_\_\_\_\_

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this Document for use from 04/23/2019 to _____ Protocol # 19-104 EX 1904
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**Your privacy will be protected.** Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be used in professional presentations or published in a professional journal.

**If you have questions about this study,** please ask them now. If you have any questions later, you may contact me at [forstjp@tigermail.auburn.edu](mailto:forstjp@tigermail.auburn.edu) or contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa Kensler, she may be reached at [lak0008@auburn.edu](mailto:lak0008@auburn.edu)

A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

**If you have questions about your rights as a research participant,** you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)844-5966 or email at [IRBadmin@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBadmin@auburn.edu).

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

_____	_____	_____	_____
Participant's signature	Date	Investigator obtaining consent	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____
Printed Name		Printed Name	

<p>The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this Document for use from <u>04/23/2019</u> to <u>        </u> Protocol # <u>19-104 EX 1904</u></p>
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**Appendix A**

**Jeffrey Peter Forster**

**Recruitment Script (Principal)**

**Verbal Phone Conversation Script/Email Script**

Good afternoon, my name is Pete Forster. I am a doctoral student from the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology Department at Auburn University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to determine what strategies principals use to foster teacher leadership in their schools.

Please do not participate if you have been in your current position for less than three years.

As a participant, you will be asked to sit for an interview on how teacher leadership is fostered at your school. You will also be asked the various teacher leadership opportunities you offer your teachers as well as those opportunities and that you see offered to the teachers in your system through your Central Office. I would also appreciate an opportunity to tour your school to see the many wonderful things going on inside your building.

In addition, I will request that you designate two teachers that you see as teacher leaders in your school to be participants in an interview. During the interview, the teachers will be asked to explain strategies and opportunities that have fostered their leadership in the school and school system.

I do not foresee risks associated with this study. We will be discussing development of teacher leadership, a very low risk topic. However, I will keep our conversation confidential. The benefits from this study will be an increased understanding of how teacher leadership is fostered in schools that have proven to be successful.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please let me know and we can find a date for an interview at your school.

Do you have any questions now?

If you have questions later, please contact me at (334) 887-1970 or email me at [pforster@auburnschools.org](mailto:pforster@auburnschools.org) . If you like to contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa Kensler, she may be reached at [lak0008@auburn.edu](mailto:lak0008@auburn.edu)

Thank you for your consideration.



## **Appendix B**

**Jeffrey Peter Forster**

**Recruitment Script (Teacher)**

**Verbal Phone Conversation Script/Email Script**

Good afternoon, my name is Pete Forster. I am a doctoral student from the Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology Department at Auburn University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to determine what strategies principals use to foster teacher leadership in their schools. Your principal provided me your name as a teacher leader in your school.

Please do not participate if you do not feel comfortable discussing your role as a teacher leader in your school.

As a participant, you will be asked to sit for an interview on how teacher leadership is fostered at your school. You will also be asked to explain the various leadership opportunities offered to teachers at your school as well as those opportunities offered to the teachers in your system through your Central Office.

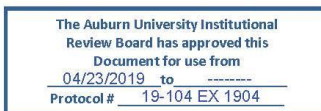
I do not foresee risks associated with this study. We will be discussing development of teacher leadership, a very low risk topic. However, I will keep our conversation confidential. The benefits from this study will be an increased understanding of how teacher leadership is fostered in schools that have proven to be successful.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please let me know and we can find a date for an interview at your school.

Do you have any questions now?

If you have questions later, please contact me at (334) 887-1970 or email me at [pforster@auburnschools.org](mailto:pforster@auburnschools.org) . If you like to contact my advisor, Dr. Lisa Kensler, she may be reached at [lak0008@auburn.edu](mailto:lak0008@auburn.edu)

Thank you for your consideration.



**Beth Spencer**

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**From:** IRB Administration  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 25, 2019 2:17 PM  
**To:** Jeffrey Forster  
**Cc:** Lisa Kensler; Sheri Downer  
**Subject:** Forster Approval, Exempt Protocol #19-104 EX 1904, "What Strategies do Principals in Highly Effective Schools Utilize to Foster Teacher Leadership, From Both the Principal and Teacher Perspective"  
**Attachments:** Investigators Responsibilities rev 1-2011.docx; Forster 19-104 EX 1904 revisions 1.pdf

*Use [IRBsubmit@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBsubmit@auburn.edu) for protocol related submissions and [IRBadmin@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBadmin@auburn.edu) for questions and information.  
The IRB only accepts forms posted at <https://cws.auburn.edu/vpr/compliance/humansubjects/?Forms> and submitted electronically.*

Dear Dr. Forster,

Your protocol entitled "What Strategies do Principals in Highly Effective Schools Utilize to Foster Teacher Leadership, From Both the Principal and Teacher Perspective" has been approved by the IRB as "Exempt" under federal regulation 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Official notice:

This e-mail serves as official notice that your protocol has been approved. A formal approval letter will not be sent unless you notify us that you need one. By accepting this approval, you also accept your responsibilities associated with this approval. Details of your responsibilities are attached. Please print and retain.

Expiration:

Continuing review of this Exempt protocol is not required; however, all modification/revisions to the approved protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.

When you have completed all research activities, have no plans to collect additional data and have destroyed all identifiable information as approved by the IRB, please notify this office via e-mail. A final report is no longer required for Exempt protocols.

If you have any questions, please let us know.

Best wishes for success with your research!

Thanks,  
IRB Administration  
115 Ramsay Hall  
Auburn University  
334-844-5966